CASSIUS MARCELLUS CLAY
ANTISLAVERY AGITATOR, 1840 TO 1860

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The major question facing Kentucky and the nation during the two decades between 1840 and 1860, was slavery. Should the "peculier institution," continue to exist, or should something be done to expunge it? Even if it were decided by the people and the government to eliminate slavery, the question arose - how should it be done? Should there be a gradual evolution or a fast clean break? Should there be compensation to those who stood to lose a large portion of valuable property? What was to be done with the free Negro? Was the Negro ready for freedom? Was his life as a slave preparing him for eventual freedom? If kept in bondage - what of the possibility of insurrection?

These problems and many more faced the nation with the coming of the new decade - the 1840's. But every problem hinged on the ever present question of Negro slavery. The African Negro, living in the United States, under the fetters of slavery posed problems in all phases of American life. This was not just a question for the domestic sociologist, or the plantation owner or staple crop farmer of the South, or the free white laborers of the United States. But because of the sectional split which was developing by 1840 and was widening by leaps and bounds with every new turn of events, slavery had become the major political issue of the day.

The question of containment with the probability of eventual emancipation would expand or germinate into movements in all sections of the country and finally see the development of a national party
with this purpose in mind. This party won the election of 1860, and then came the Civil War. But the twenty year period between 1840 and 1860 witnessed a wide variety of political events leading to this final eventuality. Out of the pages of American history, during this period, came many famous names - John C. Calhoun, Daniel Webster, Thomas Hart Benton, Henry Clay, Thaddeus Stevens, and others. All these men had their own ideas of slavery, and all played major roles. The paths these men took led, each in its own way, into the national turmoil of our republic.

There are many men who played major roles in the twenty years preceding 1860 (and the election of Abraham Lincoln) whose names have not taken on the dynamic quality of those mentioned. Maybe it is because some of them never held national office; or perhaps their roles have not been considered important enough by major historians for research into their lives; or possibly source material is too widely scattered to draw these people into the limelight of recognition.

Cassius Marcellus Clay is just such a man. The paths he traveled and the thoughts he echoed through his native state and country played a major part in the formation of a true national antislavery party - the Republican Party, which forced the impending doom of 1860. Between 1840 and 1860, Cassius Clay was the most active emancipationist in Kentucky and the slave states. It was Cassius Clay who played a major role in dethroning the Whig Party in Kentucky and in the nation; it was Clay who campaigned for the Republican Party and its
candidates in 1856 and 1860, and it was Clay who kept the hope and agitation of the antislavery cause alive in the South until slavery's final strangulation. Yet there is only one major biographer who has tried to tell the story of this vigorous emancipationist. His name and his deeds are mentioned in many books and articles, but only briefly and mostly in works dealing with his native state.

For this reason it is the purpose of this study to trace the activities of Cassius Marcellus Clay through the period of the 1840's and 1850's to the successful formation of the Republican Party and the election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency of the United States.

"The Lion of White Hall," as Cassius M. Clay is called, was born on October 19, 1810. His life spanned a period of ninety-three years, in which time Clay became one of the most important minor figures of his day. Green Clay, his father, was but one of many who emigrated to Kentucky, but unlike many of the pioneers, he was able to wring success from the "Dark and Bloody Ground." Cassius Clay was the youngest son of Green Clay and Sally (Lewis), and was born on his father's estate, "White Hall," in Madison County, Kentucky. His ancestry was Scottish, English, and Welsh; and in him was so strange a mixture of manly vigor, unaltering honesty, indiscreet pugnacity, and wild crusading spirit, as to make him one of the most remarkable of the lesser figures in American history.  

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2 Ibid.
Green Clay, feeling keenly the deficiencies of his own education, made sure that his children received the best instruction attainable. Cassius was early committed to the charge of Joshua Fry, of Garrard County, Kentucky, a wealthy gentleman, who taught a small number of pupils in his own house, more to indulge his love of teaching than with a view in mind to pecuniary response, as he took but few children in addition to his own grandchildren. In 1827, at the age of seventeen, he enrolled in the Jesuit College of St. Joseph's at Bardstown, Kentucky. While there he wrote a letter, to his brother Brutus, which gave ample proof of this young man's interest in the political happenings of his home state. Clay asked his brother:

I have heard that Mr. (Colonel J. Speed) Smith has been chosen Speaker in the Legislature; I should like to know whether it is true or not, and if it is, who opposed him, and what majority Mr. Smith had over his opponent; and all the particulars, and how the representatives from our county voted.

Colonel J. Speed Smith had married Cassius' oldest sister, Elizabeth Lewis Clay, and one may think that his enquiry about Mr. Smith's election might have been merely in a family interest. However, it would not seem so, as Cassius was interested in "all the particulars."

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In 1828, Cassius Clay enrolled at Transylvania University in Lexington, where he pursued the usual routine of study to the middle of his Senior year, when, because of President Wood's leaving to take charge of the University of Alabama, he transferred to Yale College, where he entered the Junior Class, graduating in 1832.

At Yale the young man was brought under the elocutionist powers of William Lloyd Garrison, who was, by this time, well launched upon his dramatic crusade. Soon after Clay's admission to the Junior Class, the College was stirred by the news that "Garrison was going to speak in the South Church." Clay wrote:

I never heard an abolitionist, nor the name hardly, (so complete was 'the isolation of thought between the Liberals of the South and the North') but, I went to hear Garrison. In plain, logical, and sententious language he treated the 'Divine Institution,' so as to burn like a branding-iron into the most callous hide of the slaveholder and his defenders. I felt all the horror of slavery, but my parents were slaveholders; all my kindred in Kentucky were slaveholders; and I regarded it as I did other evils of humanity, as the fixed law of nature or of God....Garrison dragged out the monster and left him stabbed to the vitals, and dying at the feet of every logical and honest mind....I then resolved that, when I had the strength, if ever, I would give slavery a death struggle.

Thus the man, who had been raised in a family of slaveholders, saw for the first time another side to a situation and institution that he had before taken as part of life. Unlike men like Robert Wickliffe of Kentucky, Cassius Clay could see the evils of slavery, not

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6 Greeley, op. cit.


8 Ibid., p. 409.
only the inhumanity of it, but the economic deprivation it seemed to be heaping upon his native state and its white laboring class.

Clay was also beginning to show signs of political interest at this period in his life. In a letter dated June 19, 1831, to Brutus J. Clay, he wrote:

Write me concerning Mr. Smith, his political prospects and private concerns, does he think of leaving Madison County yet? Uncle (James) Garrard is a candidate I learned for the legislature - What prospect? I am in hopes (Henry) Clay will succeed in the ensuing election - his presidential success will depend upon it. 9

In another letter to Brutus, dated December 4, 1831, Cassius showed that at this time his views on slavery were quite mild. He made no commitment, but he did state that "the slave question is now assuming an importance in the opinions of the enlightened and humane, which prejudice and interest can not long withstand." He went on to state that Virginia, Kentucky, and in fact all the slave holding states must soon be free! 10 There is no evidence of plans by Clay to take part in this liberation of slaves. At this time these statements merely seem to be the sentiments of a deeply sensitive individual. These letters demonstrate the enlightened frame of mind in which Clay returned from college.

The early years of his career, Cassius spent in an effort to establish himself in his community and in the sight of its political leaders as an available candidate for responsible office. His first step was to get a background in law. After a summer's vacation from study,

9 Clay, op. cit., p. 8.

10 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
he again entered Transylvania University and in six months completed his law course. Clay did not take out a license to practice, for his purpose in studying law was not to become a barrister, he explained, but "to prepare myself for political life, which was congenial to my taste."\(^{11}\)

Here again is more conclusive evidence of Clay's future plans to become involved with the politics of the day. His political ideas would be woven around his antislavery concepts. Almost all of Cassius Clay's political activity through the 1830's and the early part of the 1840's was of a local and state-wide variety, although he did take part in the presidential campaigns of 1836 and 1840.\(^{12}\)

As soon as he was eligible, in 1835, the people of Madison County chose him as their representative in the state legislature. Clay was appointed the important Committee of Ways and Means, to the Committee on Education, to the Committee on Military Affairs, and to a committee to receive a portrait of Governor Shelby, presented by Robert Wickliffe of Lexington.\(^{13}\)

During this session an attempt was made to amend the constitution. Cassius Clay was against a change in the Slave Non-Importation Law of 1833. This law prevented the importation of slaves into the state for


\(^{13}\) Ibid., citing the Kentucky Assembly, Journal of the House, 1835-36, pp. 29-39.
purposes of sale. In opposing the projected amendment, Clay argued that the time for such a movement was inopportune and referred to the abolitionists of the North as a horde of fanatical incendiaries who were threatening to spread fire and blood through the land. He added that when he saw the discord in the national Congress, when he saw the feeble efforts of colonization "striking off one hydra's head while a thousand sprang up in its stead," he almost lost hope. He almost gave way to the belief that slavery must continue to exist until, "like some ineradicable disease, it disappeared with the body that gave it being."\(^\text{15}\)

Although he was only twenty-six years of age when first elected to the legislature, he soon assumed, both in the legislature and in the state as a whole, the leadership of the antislavery workers, a position he was never to relinquish.\(^\text{16}\)

In a speech, in 1835, he became offensive to the Garrisonian abolitionists, and his antislavery feeling was not strong enough to prevent him from returning to the legislature for two more sessions (1837 and 1840). However, he had brought enough opposition on himself to cause his defeat by 1841. He returned to the legislature in 1837, representing the people of Madison County. The following year he moved his

\(^{14}\) This refers to the movement to send Negroes back to Africa.

\(^{15}\) Greeley, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 46-50.

residence to Lexington, Fayette County, and by 1840, he was again elected to the legislature, this time on the Whig ticket, defeating Howard Wickliffe, the son of Robert Wickliffe, the leading democratic politician and the largest slave owner in the state. It was at this time that Clay became an outspoken antagonist to slavery, when he declared slavery to be "an evil morally, economically, physically, intellectually, socially, religiously, politically - evil in its inception and in its duration." 17 Thus the year 1840 became a turning point in the life of Cassius Marcellus Clay. It marked his coming of age in a crusade that would lead him to all parts of the land in an attempt to destroy, what he felt, was deteriorating his beloved Kentucky, the South, and the nation.

On April 19, 1836, he attended a Whig Party convention in Lexington and served on the Resolutions Committee, and in the summer at the Young Men's Whig Convention in Louisville, he became a member of the Committee of Correspondence. Despite his advancement in the state party, in his home county his campaign for reelection was carried away with the Van Buren whirlwind of that year. On August 5, he told his brother, "The election is over, I am beaten," and blamed his defeat on the advocacy of internal improvements. 18

Defeated in 1836 in his race for reelection, Cassius temporarily retired. During this period he farmed and helped his brother run

17 Ibid.

18 Smiley, op. cit., p. 37.
the family businesses. He ran again in 1837, with more success.

Clay became more involved in the movements of the Whig Party, and on December 4, 1839, he sat as a delegate to the Whig National Convention at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and served as a floor leader for the candidacy of Henry Clay. Despite his efforts on behalf of Henry Clay, the nomination went to William Henry Harrison. Cassius later recalled that this result was a bitter disappointment for him. He was "overcome with a sense of injustice," feeling that his candidate had been "betrayed."^19

Cassius Clay would remain a loyal and devoted admirer of Henry Clay and the Whig Party, until the Kentuckians split in the campaign for the presidential election of 1844.

With the events of the latter half of the 1830's past, Cassius M. Clay had begun to mold himself into a political figure of wide reputation. His ideas on slavery had not yet jelled, but they were fast forming. He had become known state-wide and would become well known nationally by the mid 1840's. Although his election to the state legislature was to be the last elected office he would hold, he would not fade. A man who had planned a political career for himself would be felt greatly in the world of politics, but because of his addiction to the abolition of slavery, he would have no promising political career. If Cassius Clay had been in a free state, things might have turned out

^19Greeley, op. cit., p. 278.
differently for him. But being from a strong slave state, all future attempts at election were doomed. Nevertheless, Cassius Marcellus Clay played a major role in the story of the 1840's and 1850's in Kentucky politics, and a significant, if not major role, in the formation of a national party opposed to the "peculiar institution."
CHAPTER II
COMING OF AGE

The decade of the 1840's was the most significant period in Clay's life. During these ten years his antislavery views formed. Political alliances were made with men of such note as Salmon P. Chase and William H. Seward. Even as a strong Whig advocate, almost entirely through this decade, Clay maintained very cordial relations with Salmon P. Chase as correspondence between the two men indicates. There is no doubt that Clay was better known than any other antislavery adherent in the South. His name appeared in newspapers all over the country, and during the presidential campaign of 1844, accounts of his activities appeared in northern newspapers almost daily.

By 1840, Cassius Clay, having established his residence in Fayette County, decided to run for the state legislature. His campaign found him in need of an issue that would attract the voters. Clay found the issue he needed in the Negro Law of 1833, for his opponent was a son of Robert Wickliffe, leader of the most powerful pro-slave family in the state. This law kept all Negroes out of the state and acted as a tariff barrier to the benefit of the Bluegrass, an area

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1 See correspondence of Cassius M. Clay to Salmon P. Chase, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

2 Smiley, op. cit., p. 45.

already well supplied with slaves. With slave numbers thus inevitably reduced, the value of slave property was enhanced. Some Kentucky residents saw the law as a means of gradually ending slavery by reducing the proportion of Negroes to the total population. The editor of the Frankfort Commonwealth felt that over a period of years the percentage of blacks would be so small that slavery would scarcely be felt in the state.\textsuperscript{4} For this reason the slave owning aristocracy of Kentucky was violently against any such law.

Defending the Law of 1833, Clay campaigned through his district, not only appealing to the slave owner, but to the poor white laborers and mechanics who had to compete against slave labor. He told these people: "Negro slavery degrades the mechanic, ruins the manufacturer, lays waste and depopulates the country." He pointed out that the free state of Ohio had increased her population by sixty-two per cent, while Kentucky had only increased thirty-three per cent even though Kentucky was the older state.\textsuperscript{5}

Behind this issue, Cassius Clay swept to victory in a bitterly fought election. By the time the canvass had ended, Clay had repeatedly denounced slavery in bitter terms. Although he had won this election on an issue of basically emancipationist nature, he would never do so again, for his public denunciations of slavery would bring on defeat in 1841, and end his public elective political career.

\textsuperscript{4} Smiley, op. cit.

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., p. 47.
The most important legislation Cassius Clay took part in during his term in the legislature was a defense of the Law of 1833. In defense of this law, Clay published a pamphlet at Lexington, September 25, 1840. In his pamphlet Clay stated:

In 1700, there were 660,000 slaves, and 1,250,000 whites, in the slave states, being 190 whites to 100 blacks. In 1830, the last census, there were 3,760,000 whites to 2,000,000 blacks, or as 186 to 100. Now in Kentucky in 1790, there were 67,247 whites to 165,359 blacks. Thus, while in the whole slave states there was in 40 years only a small increase of the blacks upon the whites, raising from 100 to 186, instead of 190, in Kentucky in the same 40 years, there was the appalling decrease of from 5 whites to 1 black, to 3 1/6 whites to 1 black, only; and in less than 40 years more, the blacks would have outnumbered the whites! In view of these facts the law was passed, more effectually to prevent the importation of slaves into this state. The effect was as anticipated, and it has rolled back the tide of black population which, like a lava flood, threatened to ruin our beloved Kentucky. Your Senator admits that 60,000 blacks have been sent out of the state; and from the best evidence I have, the whites are, instead of 3 1/6 to 1, as in 1833, now 4 1/2 to 1 black, showing a great decrease in the slave population in seven years, under this wholesome law. To nothing more than this law do I attribute the solvency of our state, when compared with Mississippi and Louisiana, to whom we sold our slaves for the precious metals. And from the whole South our returns were made in money instead of vicious slaves.6

The editor of the Philanthropist,7 although very much in sympathy with the antislavery cause, did not agree with Clay’s reasoning on behalf of the Law of 1833. The sale of human flesh to keep the state financially solvent was something terribly cold blooded, he wrote,

6The Emancipator, November 19, 1840, p. 118, citing the Philanthropist.

7The Philanthropist was published in Cincinnati and edited by Gamaliel Bailey.
On an average, then, for the past ten years, Kentucky has annually exported nearly nine thousand slaves to the South, her annual income from this source being almost seven millions of dollars. There is something terribly cold blooded in the style in which Mr. Clay talks of this horrible traffic. Here is a people professing the religion of the merciful Jesus, excelling all others in its loud boasts of attachment to the principles of human liberty, that depends for the largest portion of its income upon a wholesale traffic in human flesh and blood! - 60,000 human beings, with intelligence, reason, conscience, sold in seven years by a people, who build churches in which they may hear sermons on the law of love, and jails to which they may send their criminals convicted of stealing a loaf of bread. And Mr. Clay with great complacency, boasts that this source is owing the solvency of Kentucky! Suppose she had seized sixty thousand of her white citizens, and sold them to work in the swamps of the South, and taken the proceeds of the sale to pay her debts, the crime would have been no greater, than that which Mr. Clay attributes her present solvency.

The editor of the Philanthropist was not criticizing Cassius Clay, although he did direct some harsh words toward him. He was, in effect, striking out at the slave trade and its brutality all over the South. The editor of the Emancipator pointed out that Clay and Kentucky, being a member of the Confederacy, should take into consideration what was happening in the states where Kentucky slaves were being sent. He questioned the outcome of the black-white ratio in the states of the deep South if Clay's census statistics were correct. This editor seemed to feel that Kentucky should possibly keep her problems at home and try to solve them the best way she could.

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8 The Emancipator, op. cit.
9 Ibid.
In his pamphlet Clay called slavery an evil. He claimed that he was not an emancipationist, far less an 'abolitionist;' "but like nine tenths of the slaveholders, in all the world, rest now where I (Clay) was in the beginning."\(^{10}\) Clay continued:

In part, like them, I know not what to do; partly because if I know, I have not the power to act - but mostly, because there is something in the hearts of all men which teaches them 'tis better to bear those ills we have than to fly to others that we know not of.\(^{11}\)

Clay also compared the free state to the slave state in order to prove that slavery was an economic evil, for the free states in general were more prosperous. He felt there was nothing in Kentucky to make slavery eternal - nothing in the climate, in the soil, in the products, or in the circumstances by which Kentuckians were surrounded that could perpetuate slavery forever. He told the people that revolutions, in time, must and will come:

Let us not be of those who, having eyes, see not, and ears hear not. God grant that we may avoid the dreadful remedy which some of the states have made up their minds to bear - slavery, till extermination shall give to the whites or to the blacks entire supremacy.\(^{12}\)

To Clay, Kentucky was in the heart of the nation and her destiny was intimately bound up in the Federal Government more than any other state. He proclaimed that should the Union fall, Kentucky would become a border state, but while the Union lasted, Kentucky would stand as a mediator between North and South.\(^{13}\)

\(^{10}\) The *Emancipator*, November 19, 1840, p. 119.

\(^{11}\) Ibid.

\(^{12}\) Ibid.

\(^{13}\) Ibid.
This point demonstrated that at this time Cassius Clay's emancipationist theories had not come into full bloom. He had no general theory for immediate or gradual emancipation, (at least no theory of his had appeared in print up to this point) as yet; although he did denounce the institution itself.

The question of repealing the Law of 1833 was an almost regular occurrence in the legislature, the next attempt coming early in 1841. Clay immediately arrayed himself against the bill, referring to it as a reactionary measure. Mr. Calhoun of Breckinridge County reported back the bill to repeal the Law of 1833, desiring to have a vote taken on the amendments which he proposed. Calhoun stated that a majority of the committee to which this bill was referred was opposed to any change in the present law, but from the importance of the subject, they felt it at least just to report the bill and have the action of the House upon it.

Clay stated that, from the position he occupied in his county, the fate of the bill was of great importance to him, aside from the fact that he believed the law to be a good one. He went further by saying that to any amendment which would not disturb the original spirit and intent of this law, he should urge no objection, but he

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proposed to prepare and lay before the House, at a proper time, a substitute to the bill and its amendments. Clay’s amendment provided that a citizen of Kentucky who had recently moved to a southern or western state and desired to return, might bring with him the slaves which he carried with him at the time of his emigration, and that further time be granted those who had incurred the penalty of the law to comply with its requisitions.

There were many and varied opinions among the legislature on this subject. Mr. Sprigg felt that his people did not desire a repeal of the law—nor was he in favor of its modification. Sprigg wanted to avoid the subject. He felt no good could come of its discussion; much evil might. Mr. Speed moved to postpone the amendments. Calhoun, on the other hand, did not want a postponement. He desired to have the bill with its amendments printed, so that all could examine them and come up to the vote understandingly.

Debate on the subject continued; on February 4, Mr. Bullock of Louisville gave his views. He argued that the effect of the repeal of the Law of 1833 would be to inundate the state with the refuse Negroes of the South. Mississippi which was largely indebted to Kentucky, would pour her worthless slaves into Kentucky by the tens of thousands. Bullock believed that the value of the produce of the

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16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
country would be returned to Kentucky in Negroes. At least one million dollars was owed to Louisville merchants by debtors in slave states; inasmuch as their creditors could not collect at present, cast-off and worthless slaves would be brought into Kentucky as settlement. He felt that Louisville would then become a slave market, second only to Washington, D.C. Bullock further urged that to repeal this law now, would be suicidal to Kentucky's best interests because Kentucky would be crawling with the "vilest of the black population of the southern states" before the people of the state could instruct their representatives to replace the law upon the statute book.19

Thus Cassius Clay was far from being the sole defender of this antislavery legislation. On Tuesday, January 5, Clay put forth his defense of the bill. He spoke with great force and clearness for an hour and a half, dwelling at some length on the general question of slavery. His manner was described as deliberate and self-possessed; his style perspicuous, chaste, and polished. 20

Clay asked his fellow legislators:

Shall the slaves of our state be increased? If slavery is a blessing, by all means repeal this law; but if it is an evil, as I hold, as held Jefferson and Henry and Madison, and all the illustrious statesmen of the world from 1776 to the present day, then you dare not touch that law which stands like a wall of adamant, shielding our homes, and all that makes that name most sacred from more than all the calamities that ever barbarian invaders inflicted upon a conquered people.21

19 Ibid., February 11, 1841, p. 141, citing the Philanthropist.
20 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, loc. cit.
21 Ibid., August 12, 1841, p. 37.
Clay refuted the idea of Calhoun, of Breckinridge County, that slavery is sanctioned by the Deity. He opposed this argument upon every principle of truth and expediency, now and forever; "it saps the foundations of human liberty." The young representative gave Biblical examples to support his belief in the evil of slavery. The Jews in Egypt under the Pharaoh resulted in plagues and destruction. Also the Jews held in bondage by Nebuchadnezzar in the Assyrian Empire, resulted in the destruction of Babylon and the utter ruin of the empire.

Clay asked the House:

Why, then, have Asia and Africa been subject to non-slave-holding Europe; and why has South America, with all her slaves rested stationary in barbarism, while North America under a different policy, has risen up first among civilized nations?

He stated that modern slavery was more marked and distinctive in its character. Formerly, the color being the same, it was easy to merge the slave into the freedman, and the freedman into the citizen; but now the difference in color was an eternal badge of servitude and infamy - an impassible barrier between the two races.22

Clay compared the North and South in terms of progress in industry and intellect and found the South falling far short of the North. Slavery, he believed, made the difference. He spoke of production of railroad cars, steamboats, and grist mills with a view toward exportation, which the North had done, but the South and Kentucky still awaited.

He asked the South: "Where are the Irvings and Coopers? Where are the Percivals and Hallecks? Where are the Sillimans and Hares, and Fultons, and Franklins?" He stated: "Our very presses and paper are of yankee

22 Ibid.
manufacture." He admitted that the South had produced intellect in law and politics:

but they only make us the more deeply regret that so much mind should lie forever dormant, perishing in the embryo, or sunk in the stagnant pools of luxury and insolence, which slavery spreads far abroad like the fabled Stygian Lake - an eternal barrier between its doomed spirits and a higher Heaven. 23

Clay challenged Breckinridge's idea to import slaves to clean up the forests of the state.

Take one day's ride from this capitol, and then go home and tell them that you have looked upon the most fertile and lovely land that nature boasts, and have seen it in the space of fifty years, worn to the rock - tell them of the drains, and clay banks, and brier fields, - tell them of the houses untenanted and decaying - tell them of the depopulation of the interior counties, and the ruin of our villages - tell them that the white Kentuckian has fled before the Ethiopian - tell them that you have heard the whites cry for bread, while the blacks were clothed and fed, and laught; and then ask them if they will have blacks to fell their forests? 24

Clay proclaimed slave labor the most wasteful of all labor and that these wastelands could not be seen in the free states. He further told his fellow legislators that the easy life of the slaveholder destroyed his vigilance and activity, superseded the necessity of economy and the habit of accumulation. He felt that it was no surprise that the North was radiant with railroads, while the South, with more natural resources of wealth, lagged behind. Clay told them that all the educated minds were idle and unproductive and that idleness led to crime and sapped the foundations of morality, while it induced physical destitution. 25 It is interesting to note that the

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
editor of the *Emancipator* felt the North was more prosperous than the South, not because she had no blacks, but because she had no slaves.

Here for the first time, Clay put forth his feelings on slavery, and such a demonstration from one occupying his position naturally excited surprise, and provoked that kind of style of opposition in which the slave masters were accustomed to indulge toward any who opposed their policy or condemned their most prized system. It was this group who would now fall on Clay and gain revenge in his race for reelection.

The attempt to do away with or amend the Law of 1833 failed, but the bitter fight carried on into the state legislative elections of 1841.

Cassius Clay was again a candidate for the legislature in April, 1841. Clay's opponent for his seat was once again a son of the "Old Duke," Robert Wickliffe, Jr. The Wickliffes were determined not to let the people of their district forget the fierce denunciations of slavery made by Clay in his defense of the Law of 1833. At this time, Fayette County had more slaveholders than any other county in the state. Clay wrote his brother Brutus on April 19, 1841, informing

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26 The *Emancipator*, op. cit.
27 Wilson, op. cit.
28 The *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 25, 1841, p. 149.
29 Greeley, op. cit., p. XII.
him that when he got to Athens, Wickliffe was there violently attacking his course in the legislature. There was a great deal of excitement arising over this election and Clay's friends and supporters demanded his entire devotion to the canvass. He told Brutus that he was anxious to run this time for the legislature. Clay also wrote his brother: "I must not be beaten in this race - it is the crisis in my life and I must meet it or fall." Clay may have considered this election a crisis in his life, however, it would fall far short of being as menacing as he made it sound to his brother.

The bitterness between Clay and Robert Wickliffe, Sr. carried over into the race with Wickliffe, Jr. The night of April 24, a heated and bitter debate took place in Lexington. Dr. Warfield (Cassius Clay's father-in-law) informed Brutus of the bitterness and warned that a duel was in the making. J. Speed Smith wrote Brutus that a fight could not be avoided. A duel did result, but no blood was shed.

The local newspapers carried articles written (or spoken) by both candidates. Wickliffe published his articles under the signature of "A Whig;" Cassius Clay signed his. One such article signed "A Whig" proclaimed slavery to be sanctioned by religion. Clay answered this by stating: "A Whig's religion commands and defends involuntary servitude, I spurn and trample it under foot, as I do the impotent

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33 Ibid.
defender of such a faith." 35 Clay told the people that from his earliest days to the present time, he had loved his country. He claimed he did rest indolently in the enjoyment of an estate, then the largest owned by any of his age in the state. Also he did not add farm to farm, expelling the free white population. He did the contrary, converting many tenants into freeholders. Clay pledged himself to work for his state's judicial, educational, and internal improvements, measures for the rich and the poor, and measures which "shed wealth and independence and honor upon the whole people." He told his constituents: "I have ever worshipped at the shrine of republican liberty - the deep and unceasing aspirations of my spirit have been the greatest good to the greatest number." 36

Cassius Clay's legislative speeches in defense of the Law of 1833 were republished for the campaign. 37 All this was to do little good. Clay's appeal to the free white laborers of the state failed. Later he claimed that fraud undermined his campaign. 38 To the charge that he himself had practiced fraud, Clay replied, "It is true that we bought votes that offered themselves in the market." 39 In a letter to Salmon P. Chase he declared that slave fanatics refused voters who

35 The Emancipator, August 5, 1841, p. 53.
36 Ibid.
37 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, August 12, 1841, p. 37.
38 Greeley, op. cit.
39 Ibid.
were favorable to his election because they had no "fixed residence."
In other words they were not slaveholders. They themselves had im-
ported into the county hundreds of illegal voters in order to sustain
the "peculiar institution!".

Thus the curtain dropped of Cassius Clay's career as an elected
public official. The bitterness which had developed during this period
of his life, between himself and the pro-slave elements, would continue
through the next two decades. It would grow more severe and even lead
to mob action. Cassius Clay had set his course.

During 1842 and 1843, Clay received a great deal of publicity
from the antislavery forces of the North. He also developed a strong
alliance with Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, and other northern abolition-
ists. Clay wrote Chase after his defeat:

I will not prostitute myself to a lie - and say their oppres-
sion as right - and slavery as a blessing and the foundation
of civil liberty! I shall stand by the land of my birth
and rise or fall with her. I wish to do nothing hasty or
inconsiderate - revolution should be slow - and in pace with
the wills of the people - those who wish to overturn not
only the political but the domestic and social relations
of society ought to be cautiously moved.

He told Chase that he would not leave the state. Clay then went further
saying at this time he could not afford to be branded as an abolition-
ist because if he were, he would lose his power to aid the cause.

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40 C. M. Clay to S. P. Chase, March, 1842, Library of Congress,
Washington, D. C.

41 Ibid.
By mid-April, Clay knew of the invasion of Texas by Mexico. He realized that the United States was being pushed into a war which neither he nor the abolitionists could sanction. He felt that the holding of American citizens who had passports could not be tolerated, but on the other hand, he felt that he could not but respond to the language and spirit of Santa Anna's letter to Hamilton and confessed that Santa Anna was engaged in a noble struggle for the integrity of his empire. Thus Santa Anna asked not in vain for the sympathies of the civilized world against the extension of Negro slavery into the Republic of Mexico. As for the problem of British intervention, Clay felt that the United States had no cause of war against England by the laws of virtue and nature - yet how have our indiscretions again placed us under the trampling foot of the haughty Lion of the Seas - If we go to war upon this subject, we have a divided country at home and doubtful support of France and the organic and determined opposition of the other four great powers of Europe. Thus on all sides we are hemmed in, a bankrupt treasure in the National Government and almost all the slave states in debt, cotton down and prospect of competition from abroad and future decline in price - and yet the South with that infatuation which seems ever to attend them talks of war - and censures that portion of the country where they must rely for the most signal half with the crime of freedom of opinion and of speech. Because they also - they whose soil the foot of a slave has never trod, will not admit with them that slavery is a blessing! And the foundation of civil liberty. I see not where all this will end.

\(^{42}\) C. M. Clay to S. P. Chase, April 15, 1842, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

\(^{43}\) Ibid.

\(^{44}\) Ibid.
The possible annexation of Texas would be one of the leading issues in the presidential campaign of 1844, especially for the people of the antislavery movement. Beginning in late December of 1842, Clay concerned himself with this campaign. Cassius Clay supported the Whig Party and the election of Henry Clay one hundred per cent. 45

With the Whig Party split over the Texas issue, additional complications set in. A third party movement entered the field. The Liberty Party, headed by James G. Birney, spoke of reform which emphasized a single objective: immediate emancipation of the slaves. 46

The leader of this movement in Ohio was Clay's good friend Salmon P. Chase. 47 Chase had written Clay inviting him to join the Liberty Party movement. Clay replied:

I had much reason to fear that Ohio would fail us as a Whig State - Seeing that the Liberty Party are about to set up for themselves - it requires not great discrimination to see that they will take off more Whigs than add - for the Whigs I believe are the true and real lovers of security, of property, life, liberty, and happiness, to the greatest numbers. Were I an Ohioian I might perhaps go with you, but as a Kentuckian I am for Clay - a bank - a binding cinch between the states, a tariff, and the division of the proceeds of the public lands among the states for the purpose of paying state debts and education, or for Congress taking them to pay the same debts upon some more speedy plan.48


48 Ibid.
Clay went on to give his reasons for disapproving of the Democrats.

With these sources of prosperity secured then for Kentucky's coming into that position of free labor by which she may rival and cease to envy the prosperity of younger and more prudent sister states you see plainly that the democracy are the mutual and avowed allies of perpetual slavery - why because they go for victory and the spoils and believing that the South will sacrifice all things to preserve slavery. They see in them - a perpetual ally - suppose the Liberty men sustain them or remain neutral - will you not confirm their power and your own defeat? It seems to me, and I should think in fact that your true interests should lead you in the national canvass (whatever separate organization you might preserve in the state elections) give your support to your mutual allies the Whigs. It is certain the Locos never will gain in the proposed issue the Whig's way.49

Clay told Chase, in this same letter, that he could not properly appreciate his (Clay's) position. He explained that he could not be placed in a group of radical incendiaries such as there were in the Liberty Party. But Clay felt by gradual and quiet interchange of opinion and gradual advance of liberal opinions in the world, Kentucky would be marching on in a true road to deliverance. Clay, it seems, was a party stalwart.

The above letter is concrete proof of Cassius Clay's intentions to do all he could in support of his party and candidate. During 1843, Clay published a number of articles putting forth his personal ideology on the subject of slavery. These articles present a vivid portrayal of the hatred Clay held for the "peculiar institution," and aid in explaining why Clay was sent North on behalf of the Whigs in 1844. To weaken the Liberty movement, the Whigs worked to make their party

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
more acceptable to the abolitionists. 51 A person was needed who subscribed to the economic principles of the Whig Party, and who would at the same time influence antislavery voters. 52 These articles proved Clay to be the man. They brought him wide acclaim among the Northern abolitionists, Whigs, and other antislavery groups.

In an article published in the Cincinnati Gazette, Clay stated that the most lamentable evil of slavery was the practical loss of the liberty of speech, and of the press. He said:

The timid are overwhelmed by the threatening array of physical force; the conscientious, who are naturally lovers of peace and good will, sink under bitter hate, unceasing persecution; the ambitious and spirited are overwhelmed by the unsupportable anticipation of sudden proscription and certain obscurity, and eternal oblivion; thus truth ceases to be a virtue, and hypocrisy a crime - most severe retribution of the isolation of nature's laws - the limbs of the apparent slave are fettered with iron, but the living and immortal spirit of the master wears heavier and more insufferable chains! 53

Clay saw in slavery no strength, a divided nation, sparse in numbers, indolent in production, wasteful in economy, dull in mechanic art, debauched in morals, weak in purpose, possessing many elements of gradual decay and none of regeneration and renovation. He added that all people of intellect and just conscience had left the slave states. 54

51 Smiley, op. cit.
52 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
The editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* called Clay a young man of great talent and popularity, a compliment made in reference to a series of articles Clay published in the *Lexington Intelligencer*. The reason for the publishing of these articles was another attempt on the part of the legislature to repeal the Law of 1833. The bill had passed the House of Representatives but was defeated in the Senate. A club of some seventy or eighty persons was formed for the purpose of putting an end to Clay’s editorial work. The group called themselves the Black Indians and held regular meetings. Violent resolutions were made against Clay and others who opposed slavery. A meeting of some of the citizens of Lexington was held on the subject, and Clay was denounced as a factious and dangerous man, along with the editor of the *Intelligencer*, who had published the articles without any expression of opinion. Both were threatened with personal violence and the destruction of their property. They were told they would be lynched.

The threats of this mob did not scare Clay, a man never afraid to express his own opinion, even in the face of almost certain violence and possible death. He denounced them through any press that

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56 Ibid.
57 *The Emancipator*, May 11, 1843, p. 5, citing the *Philanthropist*.
58 *The Liberator*, March 31, 1843, p. 52.
59 Ibid.
would print his work. Clay believed these seventy-five men were not representative of the people of Lexington, adding:

If they may whip with impunity, they may murder with impunity; and if they may murder liberated blacks and mulattoes at will, how long will it be before the whites, male and female, shall perish at their sovereign will? I tell this band of 'respectable gentlemen' that they must be dissolved. Now the issue is fairly made up between them and the law. The Constitution must be preserved.\textsuperscript{60}

The editor of the \textit{National Anti-Slavery Standard} praised Clay for his action.

In reference to Clay's articles in the \textit{Lexington Intelligencer}, the editor of the \textit{Philanthropist} said: "These articles are full of the old spirit of Washington and Franklin, and Martin, and Henry, and Jefferson on the subject of slavery."\textsuperscript{61}

In his articles Clay began with a description of what would happen to the state if slavery continued to expand. The blacks would outnumber the whites. Arms would be needed to put down domestic insurrection, not foreign invaders. Every phase of life would be degenerate - white labor driven out, manufactories destroyed, cities in ruin, rice fields grown sterile, morals corrupted; more universal debauchery to exist among white males, more mulattoes to stand as eternal curses before the lovely eyes of the wives, daughters, and mothers. Clay declared that eventually this would lead to the South and the southerner falling under the thumb of the Yankee. He asked if the people of Kentucky had not learned from past lessons of mankind. The

\textsuperscript{60}The \textit{National Anti-Slavery Standard}, March 30, 1843, p. 170.

\textsuperscript{61}The \textit{National Anti-Slavery Standard}, June 8, 1843, p. 1.
question was: Should Kentucky remain a slave state forever? Clay begged Kentucky not to go for perpetual slavery. He alluded to Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin and again said: "Go not for perpetual slavery and the slave trade." Here again he boldly denounced slavery publically.

Cassius Clay had not, as yet, devolved any plan for the emancipation of the slaves. He felt that he should not even be connected with any radical antislavery group, such as the Liberty Party, if he wanted to keep his position in Kentucky. He did, however, make it quite clear to all sides that he would not tolerate any emancipation of slave property as long as the Constitution of Kentucky sanctioned slavery. Clay's idea was to call for a constitutional convention, the source of all power, and let that convention remove these "constitutional wrongs" in a manner prescribed by the constitution itself.

At this time Clay still owned a number of slaves, and the editor of the Philanthropist criticized him. The editor referred to Clay's calling the constitution his Bible; if so, his slaves should be freed immediately. The editor pointed out that the motives for holding these slaves had been questioned and found false. Every minute Clay held his slaves he committed a grievous wrong, for he violated the fundamental principles of his Bible.

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62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
Although Cassius Clay did receive negative criticism from some of the antislavery newspapers, they did give him positive criticism also. The editor of the Liberator said:

The course he is now taking will ensure him an elevated standing in the moral world. Indeed, it is cheering to behold, in the moral waste of oppression, such a noble spirit, and hurling defiance upon her enemies. His example proves that the Southern mind and conscience are aroused and we may now expect that the discussion of the question of freedom and slavery will be fully and freely entered into in every part of the land.65

During the latter half of 1843, Clay published a pamphlet titled Slavery In God's House. Here Clay criticized the noble church-going people and the institution itself for living with slavery and giving the impression that all was well. He stated: "I denounce it (slavery) in the name of Christianity, I denounce slavery and the slave trade forever!"66

With no plans of his own to run for political office, Clay stumped for candidates to the legislature who were in opposition to pro-slave aspirants. In 1843, Cassius Clay supported Garret Davis in the legislative race against his old nemesis Robert Wickliffe, Jr. On the afternoon of August 1, Wickliffe had a speaking engagement at Russell's Cave Springs, a few miles from Lexington.67 Clay was also there to defend the Whig cause. Wickliffe charged that the Whigs had gerrymandered Davis into the Fayette district. Clay then interrupted

66. Ibid.
Wickliffe and stated that the charge was a Democratic fabrication. At that point Samuel M. Brown rose and shouted heatedly, "It is not true." Clay called Brown a liar, and in a few seconds both men were fighting. Brown fired at Clay with a pistol, the ball striking just under the fifth rib, when Clay advanced on him with a bowie knife, and cut and gashed his eye, ear, nose, and head horribly; Clay’s life was saved by the ball striking the scabbard of his knife, which hung around his neck.

In a letter to Chase, Clay related his encounter with Brown. He told Chase that this was the first time that numbers had joined in violence against one; nor would this have been countenanced by the public for a moment had it not been for the deep seated anxiety cherished towards himself on account of his views upon slavery. Two of the men who aided Brown were supposed to belong to the "Black Indians." Clay stated that Brown was a notorious gambler who had been engaged in numerous affrays. Cassius went on to say: "I conceive therefore that I had no alternative but to fight in self-defense, and I think the public now agrees that I saved my life by action."

The Russell's Cave incident proved to Kentucky and the world that Cassius Clay was ready to defend freedom of speech by physical

68 Ibid.
combat, if such measures were necessary. Throughout the remainder of 1843, Clay continued his fight for the cause. He laid down his bowie knife and picked up his pen once more. His articles were published in most of the northern newspapers. The New York Tribune, the Emancipator, the Liberator, the National Anti-Slavery Standard, the Anti-Slavery Bugle, and many others carried a number of his articles.

In one such article, Clay stated that slavery was an evil and a cause for the downfall of civilization. Slavery was an evil to the slave, by depriving nearly three million men of the best gift of God to man—liberty. Slavery was an evil to the master. It was utterly subversive to the Christian religion. It violated the great law upon which that religion is based. Clay believed that the evils of slavery had permeated into every portion or phase of western life. He concluded that because of slavery, the free states, which started on an equal basis, had now moved ahead of the slave states in all capacities. He felt that as long as slavery existed there could not exist constitutional freedoms, but there was an answer.

There is one of four consequences to which slavery inevitably leads: A continuation of the present relative position of the master and the slave, both as to number, intelligence and physical power; or an extermination of the blacks; or an extermination of the whites; or emancipation and removal—or emancipation and a community of interest between the races. Clay stated that of these solutions emancipation was the only one that

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72. Ibid.
would work. One-sixth of the Negroes in America were free, and they were not the threat the slaveholders made them out to be. He reasoned that emancipation was safe. 73

Cassius Clay had come of age. He was now an established anti-slavery figure, and was known nationally for his outspoken dedication to the cause. Although he held such views, he remained a staunch Whig and defender of Henry Clay. Cassius had given up the chance to become a leading political figure; he preferred to fight for the day when slavery would come to an end. There is little doubt that Clay could have risen to a governorship, to a chair in the United States Senate, or possibly higher. The fact that he remained in Kentucky stood in itself as a detriment to further political advancement. Yet there can be no doubt that Clay was politically ambitious. He must have felt that slavery would end, in one way or another, and that when it did, he would be in the proper position for political advancement.

73 Ibid.
Cassius Clay's commitment to the destruction of slavery brought him into national politics, for early in 1844, he publicly denounced the annexation of Texas. This speech made in the latter part of December, 1843, received wide notoriety throughout the early months of 1844. It was published in all the leading antislavery newspapers, bringing to Clay the brand of publicity which made him nationally known. The Christian Freeman, of Hartford, Connecticut, praised him as the champion of freedom in Kentucky. It went further by stating that if Kentucky was to be saved, it would not be because of Henry Clay, but to the efforts of Cassius M. Clay. William Lloyd Garrison, in his Liberator, also praised Clay for his speech, but did not go as far as the Christian Freeman. Garrison regretted that Clay owned slaves and was a member of the Whig Party.

In this address, his most famous of speeches on the subject of Texas annexation, given at White Sulphur Springs, Virginia, Clay stated that we had no right to fight for a people who had given up their claim to the Constitution by leaving the country to take grants

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1 The Liberator, February 2, 1844, p. 17. Also the National Anti-Slavery Standard, February 22, 1844, p. 149; the Emancipator, February 8, 1844, p. 161.


3 The Liberator, February 2, 1844, p. 19.
from Mexico. He also felt that Mexico was being placed on the short end of the rope. Here was a country that in 1829, had outlawed slavery in all of her provinces, but Texas continued to hold on to the institution. Clay claimed that Santa Anna was not the fiend that his opponents had pictured him to be. Also he felt that the United States had no use for the land, for the country already spanned the continent and was now too large to protect. He made the charge that the only reason annexation was desirable was for the slave states to off-set the number of free states. Clay could not and did not stand for annexation on these grounds. He boldly denounced the annexation scheme as unconstitutional and against all reason of nineteenth-century man.

In this speech Clay gave a short discourse on antislavery parties of the North. He stated that the antislavery group was split into three parties.

First, there is the small band of abolitionists who are for violence, if necessary, in extermination of slavery. They are few, indeed, and deserve, as they receive, the execration of good men in both the North and the South. Then comes the Liberty Party, embracing a large portion of the virtue, intelligence, and legal knowledge, the Christianity and patriotism of the North. Taking the ground first occupied by Washington himself, that slavery was the creature of the law, they appeal to the ballot-box, not the bayonet; like the great Irish reformer, having faith in the power of reason, truth, and virtue, they expect to achieve a bloodless revolution, more glorious than any yet arising from force and arms. This party, a few years ago, numbered but seven thousand voters, now in 1843, they poll sixty-five thousand men at the ballot-box; having doubled themselves every year from the time of their organization. At such a continued rate of increase, I leave it to the reflecting to determine how long it will be before they absorb the whole political power of the North. Lastly, there is the great mass of northern men,

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4 The Christian Freeman, February 1, 1844, p. 1.
who are opposed to slavery in principle, but who forbear to take any active part for its removal: not because they do not feel many of its evils, but because they fear the consequences of entering upon untried scenes, preferring according to the oft repeated maxim, to bear the evils they have, rather than fly to others they know not of.\(^5\)

In regard to this analysis of parties, Garrison disagreed with Clay’s evaluation of abolitionist parties in the North. He felt that they would combine and fight and do whatever needed to be done to advance the cause.\(^6\)

The significance of the White Sulphur Springs speech was not immediately felt. After Cassius Clay started his campaign for Henry Clay, later in 1844, the true meaning of his feelings on annexation would play a major role in the split between the two. (A discussion of these events will follow later.) This speech was, however, a sound denunciation of any attempt to spread slavery beyond its present limits.

The *National Anti-Slavery Standard* praised Clay’s speech as a noble, elevating, and stirring appeal. "In the name of truth, justice, and patriotism, we thank the author for his work."\(^7\) The speech was also published in the *Bardstown Gazette* with as favorable comments as an editor dared make.\(^8\) The *Shelby News* also took the occasion to denounce annexation. The *Louisville Journal, Richmond (Virginia) Whig,*

\(^5\)Ibid.

\(^6\)The *Liberator*, February 2, 1844, p. 19.

\(^7\)The *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 22, 1844, p. 194.

\(^8\)C. M. Clay to S. P. Chase, February 26, 1844, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.
and the Baltimore Saturday Visitor all published articles favorable to the cause.\(^9\) The editor of the Emancipator stated that much of the speech excited his admiration. However, the editor was astounded at Clay's remark that "liberty is the soul of the Whig Party." The editor asked for proof of this.\(^10\) The fact that Lewis Tappin published Clay's speech and sold it for two cents a single copy or one cent a copy by the hundred\(^11\) demonstrated the northern abolitionist feeling for Clay. He was accepted as a major factor in the machinery of the cause. By March 28, 1844, between one and two thousand copies of Clay's speech had been ordered for southern circulation.\(^12\)

The southern newspapers connected with the Whig Party failed to publish Clay's speeches,\(^13\) fearing a reduction of voting strength in the South. But at the same time, they did not denounce him as they did not want to lose the confidence of many northern voters. Clay realized that he was not getting the response he desired from southern papers, but continued his praise for the Whig Party. The Mayor of Dayton, Ohio, wrote Clay asking him if he intended to vote for Henry Clay for President. Mayor McKinney also asked if Clay would support a third-party (or Liberty men) should they have a party ticket in Kentucky? On March 20, Clay answered McKinney's letter in a

\(^9\)Ibid.

\(^{10}\)The Emancipator, February 8, 1844, p. 161.

\(^{11}\)The National Anti-Slavery Standard, March 28, 1844, p. 163.

\(^{12}\)The National Anti-Slavery Standard, March 28, 1844, p. 171.

\(^{13}\)The Christian Freeman, February 8, 1844, p. 1, citing the Cincinnati Morning Herald.
straight forward manner: "It is my most decided determination to vote for Henry Clay for President."

He justified his answer by adding:

...men never have, and never will, in all cases think alike; all government is necessarily a sacrifice, to some extent, of individual will; that is the best government to each individual, which fosters or allows the most of what that individual believes to be conducive to his best interests. The question, then, is not, can I find some man to vote for, among seventeen millions, who thinks, in all respects, as myself? Who is the man, all things present and remote considered, that will most probably be able by success, to give effectuation to those great measures which I deem conducive to my welfare, and the welfare of my whole country? This question every voter in the Republic must determine for himself. For myself, after looking calmly upon all surrounding circumstances, conscience, patriotism and (if others prefer the term) enlightened self-interest, constrain me to vote for Henry Clay. The tariff, the currency, the lands, economy, executive and ministerial responsibility, and many other interests, all depend, in my humble judgment on Mr. Clay's election, for beneficial determination.

Clay also stated that he would "just this one time" vote for a slave holder. He did not condemn Henry Clay for owning slaves because he felt that he could not condemn a man for taking part in something which was not looked down upon by the civilization and time in which he lived.

About the time Clay wrote the letter to Mayor McKinney, he was also busy emancipating his own slaves. The Daily Advertiser stated that he emancipated slaves valued at around forty thousand dollars. However, this figure seems much exaggerated. It was his role in the

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15 Ibid.
16 The Emancipator, April 3, 1844, p. 119.
17 Ibid., citing the Daily Advertiser.
18 The Liberator, April 5, 1844, p. 53.
antislavery movement that motivated Clay to manumit a portion of the Negroes he owned. He had received much criticism from the more radical abolitionists of the North for holding them. It was also evident that the longer he remained a slaveholder the easier it was for his opponents to criticize him. This diminished his effectiveness to the cause.

Both the emancipation of his slaves and the letter to the Mayor of Dayton brought much editorial comment in the antislavery newspapers. The editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* criticized Cassius Clay for forgiving Henry Clay because of the blinding influence of education, habit, and surrounding opinion. The editor asked - has not Cassius Clay been exposed to the very same thing? Could Henry Clay remain impassive to all the startling facts brought forward to prove that slavery is sapping the strength of our free institutions, if he had not made up his mind to be deaf and blind to them all? Can a man who consents to stand candidate for the Presidency of a nation, be justified for remaining ignorant on a subject so closely interwoven with every fiber of the nation? To extend our charity so far as to excuse his ignorance as a citizen, is one thing, but whether it does not affect his fitness for the Presidency is quite another thing. Even if he is innocent in his ignorance, it still disqualifies him.

The editor of the *Emancipator* made a lengthly comment on Clay's letter to McKinney. This editor called the whole affair a gross and

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20 Ibid.
palpable inconsistency. He went on to say that C. M. Clay stood alone, the only emancipator known to the public, who intended to support Henry Clay by his vote. The Emancipator even criticized Clay for the fact that the value of the slaves which he liberated meant little to him.

Now Mr. Clay is one of the richest men in Kentucky, and giving freedom to $40,000 worth of slaves leaves him still a very rich man - having enough to meet his most lavish and liberal desires. The editor pointed out that Birney and Brisbane freed their slaves leaving themselves impoverished. Why, then, did they not stand as Whigs? Why should not we follow Birney and the Liberty men; his sacrifice was greater. The editor alluded to Clay's course as inconsistent; one that he did not plan to follow again. He also claimed that the northern Whigs used Clay's emancipation to make political hay.

The leaders of that party might well afford to pay him for his slaves, for the advantages they would propose to derive from it in their great and peculiar work of putting down the Liberty Party. It is not saying a good deal to say, that it may probably do more for that party than a hundred thousand dollars' worth of Junius tracts.

This newspaper called for antislavery men, Whig and Liberty alike, to vote against a slaveholder.

Cassius Clay was now fully embroiled in the campaign of 1844. It appeared to Whig leaders that he was the man to bring in antislavery votes. Editorial comment in the abolitionist papers continued.

21 The Emancipator, April 10, 1844, p. 193.
22 Ibid.
23 The Emancipator, April 24, 1844, p. 199, citing the Cincinnati Morning Herald.
It became clear that Cassius Clay was not well thought of by the editors of the leading antislavery newspapers. His political doctrines were criticized and denounced. It must be said; however, that these editors did give Clay considerable praise for his abolitionist ideas. They simply felt that he was taking the wrong political direction for accomplishing his goal. The editor of the Liberator stated that

Cassius Clay must learn or has yet to learn, that he must not write anything respecting slavery or slaveholders that will be gratifying to such corrupt prints (Whig newspapers), if he would secure for himself a sound antislavery reputation. He also must realize that although he has done a righteous act by emancipation of his slaves, this act alone does not necessarily establish his claim to be regarded as a consistent and faithful friend of freedom - as a trustworthy abolitionist.  

The editor went on to praise Clay for his work in the cause and stated that it might make him a blessing to millions and a brilliant ornament to his country.

At present, his sight is only so far restored as to allow him to see men as trees walking; and therefore he is not qualified to act as a guide, but needs to have his vision anointed afresh. But he inspires us with his faith in his sincerity, in his readiness to be taught, in his resolute courage to carry out his convictions of duty.

There can be no question of Clay's sincerity. His letters to Salmon P. Chase amply demonstrate this fact. He was only sincere in his work for the cause but also in his belief in the Whig Party. Although events would lead him away from the Whigs, he always remained true to his beliefs on the subject of slavery.

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24 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, April 25, 1844, p. 85; the Liberator, April 12, 1844, p. 59.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
Because of his public proclamation to support Henry Clay, Cassius Clay also received harsh criticism from the philanthropist Gerrit Smith. Smith felt that Clay's declaration to vote for Henry Clay would work far less injury than many feared. For first, that vote was too obvious a violation of Clay's (Cassius) own admitted principles, and too obvious an inconsistency with himself to carry much influence with it. Second, it would be regarded as yielding to the pressure of circumstances and to human weakness, rather than as conclusion to wise, deliberate, unbiased reasonings. Third, those among the abolitionists who were hunting for excuses for their intended vote for Henry Clay, would not find any in Cassius Clay's intention to vote for him.

Thus the national political scene shaped up something like this: The Democratic watchword was re-annexation of Texas and re-occupation of Oregon. This had its natural effect, appealing to the imperialistic instinct always dominant in the Anglo-Saxon race. The Democrats nominated James K. Polk for the Presidency. The abolitionists felt that the Democratic plan was simply a plot for more slave territory. Cassius Clay also felt this way. But because Clay felt that Henry Clay was irrevocably bound to oppose the annexation of Texas, he threw his support for Henry Clay. Aside from the White Sulphur Springs

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27 The Emancipator, May 1, 1844, p. 4.
28 Ibid.
31 McElroy, op. cit.
speech, Clay also wrote a letter to the New York Tribune giving his views on annexation. This letter put forward basically what was incorporated in the speech.

Cassius Clay started stumping on behalf of Henry Clay in May of 1844. Disaffected Whigs like the Wickliffes and Thomas F. Marshall were exploiting the Texas question to shake Henry Clay's leadership and had ventured to raise the standard of revolt in Lexington. They attempted to identify Henry Clay's opposition to annexation with abolitionism. In this they were aided by the imprudent utterances of C. M. Clay. On May 13, at a Lexington public debate on the Texas issue, Clay answered Thomas F. Marshall, Lexington lawyer and Democrat. Marshall advocated re-annexation of Texas. Marshall spoke for three hours and finally Clay had his chance for rebuttal. Cassius claimed that the annexation issue would swallow up all party lines.

This shall yet swallow up the murmurings of party - no more the name of Democrat and Whig would be heard. Federalists, Jeffersonians, Abolitionists, Nullifiers, and all other designations - even the Liberty Party - shall be merged. On one side Slavery, Texas, and disunion, on the other, Liberty and Union.

Such a division might convert Birney supporters into Whig voters. In a letter to the Whigs of Ashtabula, Ohio, Clay reaffirmed his intention

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33 Smiley, op. cit., p. 116.
35 Smiley, op. cit.
36 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, June 20, 1844, p. 43.
of adhering to the Whig Party in the ensuing presidential election.\(^{37}\)

Northern Whigs realized the need to reach the abolitionist vote. New Yorker Millard Fillmore told Thurlow Weed, "Cassius M. Clay can do much to aid us."\(^{38}\) Congressman Washington Hunt, of Niagara, New York, supported the idea. Thus it was decided that C. M. Clay would travel the northern states, from Ohio to Massachusetts, stump on behalf of the Whig candidate.\(^{39}\) Before leaving, Cassius visited with Henry Clay and they discussed the mission. Henry had straddled the Texas issue so satisfactorily that he appeased many southern expansionists and "would even take" Tennessee from Polk. He was ready to take any steps necessary to win the election; if Cassius could convert anti-slavery northerners without unduly upsetting southern sentiment, Henry would take the chance. He gave his consent to the mission.\(^{40}\)

Before leaving Lexington, Clay answered a letter from Colonel J. J. Speed of Ithica, New York. In doing so Clay declined an invitation to go to New York, owing to other pressing duties, but he did express his views on the Whig Party.

If Whiggery means anything, it means opposition to tyranny - all tyranny. If it is dear to me at all, it is because it promotes the great principles of equality and individual prosperity, which can only result from real republicanism. I regard no aristocracy in Europe so coercive and anti-republican as Southern Slaveholding.\(^{41}\)

\(^{37}\) The National Anti-Slavery Standard, August 15, 1844, p. 43.

\(^{38}\) Smiley, op. cit., p. 117.

\(^{39}\) Ibid.

\(^{40}\) Ibid.

\(^{41}\) The Liberator, August 23, 1844, p. 134.
He went on to say that although Mr. Clay might lose some three or four slave states which were sure for him before by opposing Texas annexation, he should be able to win over the larger states of the North where his success was before doubtful. Cassius felt that with Polk's election, Texas would come in; with Texas, the North and the South would inevitably split, and the fruits of the American Revolution would be lost. Slavery or liberty was to be determined in some way this coming election - not just the liberty of Negroes, but of whites also. Cassius Clay went further by stating that he did not mean to say that Henry Clay was an abolitionist, but he believed his feelings were with the cause. This letter was read to a Whig meeting held in Ithaca, New York, and Clay received a good deal of criticism from the abolitionist newspapers for some of his views. The editor of the Liberator asked: How can Whiggery be against all tyranny when its leader is one of the larger slaveholders? The Liberator denied that Henry Clay was with the cause. The editor cried: "No truce with tyranny - No union with slaveholders." This, he claimed, was the great issue, the only true issue.

Clay received still more criticism after turning down an invitation from the Liberty Party to address a convention to be held at Pittsburgh, on August 28. The unfavorable editorial comment came

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42 Ibid.
43 The Liberator, August 23, 1844, p. 135.
44 The Emancipator, September 4, 1844, p. 72.
after Clay had started his campaign in northern Ohio. The editor of
the *Emancipator* stated that the Liberty Party was very shocked and
disheartened with Clay.

Mr. and Mrs. Cassius Clay began their journey into the state of
Ohio. They were escorted from town to town by enthusiastic Whigs.
By late August, they reached Jefferson, Ohio. Joshua Giddings, an
Ohio abolitionist Congressman, met the Clays there and accompanied
them into town. After Clay spoke in Jefferson, he headed for Paynes-
ville (sic). Wherever the Clays went, people pushed to see and touch
them. Mrs. Clay wrote: "You see them in flocks peeping in and whis-
pering." She even heard one hostess admonish her son, "now Johnny,
don't get to fighting, remember we've got President Clay in the house."

With more than one Clay in the campaign, matters became confused.46

Clay spoke at Warren, Ohio, and the *Liberty Herald*, an organ of
the Liberty Party, gave an account of his speech there.47 The *Herald*
had advised its Liberty friends to go and hear Cassius M. Clay, and
expressed the confident belief that the Whigs would be disappointed
in the use they expected to make of C. M. Clay, in breaking down or
depressing the Liberty Party. The *Herald* praised Clay for renewing
the fight of freedom in the North.

45 *The Emancipator*, September 11, 1844, p. 77.

46 *Smiley, op. cit.*, p. 118.

47 *The Emancipator*, September 11, 1844, p. 77.
We are glad that he has come among us. We will go home with a better understanding of the state of matters here at the North, in relationship to slavery, after having, by his able and unanswerable arguments against it, done much to give renewed impulse to the ball of Liberty. 48

A correspondent of the Liberty Herald stated that Clay's speech at Warren was the most thoroughly antislavery speech he had ever listened to at a Whig convention. The correspondent felt that no Whig would have listened to this speech had it not been for the expected effect on Liberty men. 49

At Youngstown, Ohio, the same newspaper reported:

He told the people that if he uttered one thing that would discourage or dishearten them he would not speak. He did not ask them to vote for Henry Clay, but to vote as they might conscientiously think right, in the light of the principles and truths that had been discussed in duty to themselves, their country and God - in doing which they could not be wrong. He thinks Henry Clay is so committed against annexation of Texas, that he may be safely calculated upon to oppose it. But he holds the integrity and growth and final triumph of the principles of liberty, paramount to all, and that every voter should be well assured before he casts his vote. 50

It was also pointed out that Clay most significantly disappointed the fond expectations of the Whigs, who were so anxious to herald his arrival. 51

Events at Youngstown and Warren proved to be a prospectus of things to come. The Liberty Party was using Clay to gather their own strength. At every meeting he addressed, Liberty people were in as

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
large attendance as Whigs. They fully agreed with Clay's ideas on slavery and felt that his ideas were similar to their own. Thus, in reality, Clay was strengthening the beliefs of the Liberty Party and damaging the Whig cause.

On September 5, Clay addressed a Whig meeting in Oakland County, Michigan, and on the following day, he spoke before another Whig group in Detroit, and on the seventh, he addressed a mass meeting at Ann Arbor. On September 10, Clay spoke at Erie, Pennsylvania, and the Buffalo Gazette reported that a large crowd was on hand. The Liberty people, of which there were a considerable number present, were especially pleased with the matter of his speech, "as it went to sustain and advocate their views upon the question of slavery and slave power."52

After speaking at Buffalo, New York, on the twelfth and Niagara Falls on the thirteenth, he immediately left for Roxbury, Massachusetts, where he attended a mass meeting of between five and six hundred people. Here he told the people that he was a practical abolitionist and that he intended to vote for Henry Clay. The Buffalo Gazette reported that the text of Clay's speech was decisively a Liberty Party speech throughout,

with the exception of the part wherein he attempted to justify his support for a slaveholder, while holding the opinions which he does upon slavery - its influence and dangerous tendencies to the prosperity of our freedom and our government.53

52 The Emancipator, September 18, 1844, p. 82.

The Gazette further stated that Clay was frequently cheered throughout his speech, but it was evident that his ultra-abolition doctrines were not to the liking of many of the audience.\(^5\)

It was now apparent that Clay was damaging the Whig cause. During his engagement at Buffalo, the Whigs shunned him and expressed their disappointment in him; however it was the Liberty Party which accepted Cassius' views on this occasion,\(^5\) as well as on others. It was apparent to Henry Clay that his kinsman had failed him. Henry realized that southern Whigs had heard too much of C. M. Clay's northern speeches, and that something had to be done. He, therefore, wrote Cassius a letter which never reached C. M. Clay's hand. It was seen by Clay in the Democrat, a loco foco newspaper in New York City.\(^5\)

Henry Clay had sent the letter to Willis Green who forwarded it from Washington, under cover and sealed, to N. B. Blunt of New York. Blunt handed the letter to Horace Greeley, who in turn was to relay it to Clay.\(^5\) The letter never got to Clay and was published in the Democrat instead. Henry told his kinsman, in this letter, that he was well aware that all his efforts were well-meaning. He went on to say:

But you have no conception, unless you had been here, of the injury which your letter to the Tribune was doing; and that was nothing in comparison to that which it was likely to inflict upon the Whig cause in the states of Tennessee, North

\(^5\)Ibid.

\(^5\)Ibid.

\(^5\)The Emancipator, October 9, 1844, p. 93.
Carolin a, and Georgia. Our friend John Speed Smith, as well as others, thought it even endangered the state of Kentucky. This effect resulted from your undertaking to speak of my private feelings and those of my near and particular friends, and your statement that you had been ten years operating in the abolitionist cause.58

The candidate went further and gave C. M. Clay a description of his delicate position.

At the North, I am represented as an ultra supporter of the institution of slavery, whilst at the South I am described as an abolitionist, when I am neither one or the other. As we have the same surname [sic] and are, moreover related, great use is made at the South against me, of whatever falls from you. There, you are even represented as being my son; hence the necessity of the greatest circumspection, and especially that you should avoid committing me.59

Henry then tactfully told his color bearer to shut his mouth. But even before this letter, Henry Clay had made public repudiation of Cassius Clay. 60

At this time, Cassius Clay appeared in Boston. He spoke before a large crowd and was enthusiastically greeted by many Liberty men. Here he told the listeners that he owed nothing to the Whig Party! "They, with the Democratic Party, have proscribed me for opinion's sake! I stand, therefore, by myself, and speak for myself, upon my own responsibility, trusting to God to secure me justice."61 He went on to speak of the crisis between liberty and despotism and referred

58. The Liberator, October 11, 1844, p. 162, citing the Democrat.
59. Ibid.
60. The National Anti-Slavery Standard, September 26, 1844, p. 65, citing the Lexington Observer and Reporter.
61. The Emancipator, September 25, 1844, p. 86.
to this as the great question. He told the people that there is no freedom of speech, thought, or action. He asked: "Why have we lost the spirit of British Freedom?" He talked about the constitution and stated that the founding fathers never meant for slavery to last and to grow. He stated: "With the acquisition of Wiskonsan [sic] and Iowa to the Union of states, if not before, I trust that slavery falls, and falls forever!" 62

The Essex County Washingtonian reported on another speech Clay made in Massachusetts. The editor referred to the speech as "Whig to the core." There was not a hint of antislavery in it from beginning to end. Clay ridiculed the idea that man-stealing was any disqualification for the Presidency, and quoted a Methodist priest by the name of Bascom, to prove that Henry Clay's character was as good as anybody's outside the church! He said it was not only the law of nature that birds and fish should prey upon each other, but that man should also. 63 The speech sounded unlike anything Clay had ever said and was quite shocking to the audience and the press. 64 It is possible that at this moment Cassius was trying to reverse and undo the damage he had caused. It is also possible that he wanted to show the Whigs how this kind of approach looked in print. This period marks the first phase of Clay's disintegrating belief in the Whig standard.

62 Ibid.
63 The Liberator, September 27, 1844, p. 154.
64 Ibid.
Thus his northern trip failed. All during the course of his campaigning, he refused to advocate the "higher law" doctrine. He consistently maintained the idea that whatever is property is whatever the law makes property. He told northern abolitionists that slavery existed by local law, and that as long as the law existed, so did the "peculiar institution." In other words, he called for a constitutional victory over slaveholders at the polls. He also told the people that he recognized the legality of slavery and would continue to do so until state constitutions could be amended. This position was too radical for southern slaveholders and too mild for those of the Liberty Party who denied that human law could sanction such a condition. Cassius Clay did not seem to take the strong religious undercurrent of the movement into consideration and this proved costly.

As the year and the campaign drew to a close, Clay turned homeward. He spoke at Philadelphia and Baltimore. By the time he reached Wheeling, Virginia, he knew of the Whig defeat. The abolitionist or third party vote amounted to between sixty and seventy thousand votes, most of which it is generally supposed, originally belonged to the Whigs, and but for the existence of this party would have voted for the Whigs. New York State went to Polk by a slight majority. About fifteen thousand votes went for Birney, thus enabling Polk to slip by

65 The Christian Freeman, February 20, 1845, p. 1.
66 Smiley, op. cit., p. 122.
Henry Clay. If Clay had taken New York, he would have won the election. Thus Cassius Clay's mission proved a failure.

Clay now felt that the Whig Party of the North was now prepared to admit that in losing the moral power of opposition to Texas, as a slavery question, all was lost. For while the South, under Democratic rule, was prepared to sacrifice all things to slavery, which the Whigs, of necessity, were doomed to lose many votes in the North, upon minor questions, enabling the consolidated votes of the South, aided by office seekers of the North, to carry the election. Clay now felt that until the spirit of liberty became as strong and controlling in the North as slavery in the South, all efforts could do little good.

In late January, Clay wrote Chase telling him that he (Clay) intended to continue his struggle for the cause. He told Chase that he still felt that he could not afford to come in contact with the Liberty Party and planned to continue his efforts through an isolated position. Clay felt that he had brought the Whigs to a higher antislavery ground than they had ever before ventured to occupy. Clay told Chase that he looked forward to the day when Whigs and Liberty men would join ranks. Combined, the Whigs and Liberty men of the North could elect a President. Clay further related to Chase that he felt Birney had shown himself utterly incompetent to head the Liberty Party.

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68 Smiley, op. cit.
70 Ibid.
His great error was in declaring a preference for Polk. Under the circumstances he thus made many believe sincerely that he was mercenary - he was still more wrong in personally abusing Mr. Clay - he thus irrevocably shut off from himself forever near 200,000 of American voters.72

Owing to his failure in the North, Clay was exposed to severe criticism after the election. "Much enmity and denunciation have been poured upon me here charging me with being the cause of Mr. Clay's defeat by my visit to the North."73 Once again the Whigs shut the door upon Clay. He was unable to get a hearing in their journals.74 He, therefore, decided to establish a press of his own. He said of his press: "It will be our object to separate it as far as possible from all party association standing alone in its merits - at the same time, we will desire and expect aid and sympathy from all true men of all parties."75

Cassius Clay sent William C. Bell into Ohio to establish proper contacts and gain subscribers for the newspaper. Clay wrote Salmon P. Chase and asked his assistance in launching the paper. Clay asked Chase to aid Bell.76 The earliest public notice of the forthcoming

72 Ibid.
75 C. M. Clay to S. P. Chase, January 28, 1845, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.
76 C. M. Clay to S. P. Chase, February, 1845, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.
newspaper appeared on February 19, in the Lexington Observer and Reporter. "Cassius Clay, and others, slaveholders and non-slaveholders, propose to publish a paper devoted to gradual and constitutional emancipation." The Observer felt that Clay had picked the very worst time to begin the agitation of this delicate subject. The Lexington paper did not believe that the country was at all with him on this question and added that the undertaking was hopeless. The abolitionist Henry Wilson stated that the establishment of such a press by a man, with views so radical and a purpose so determined, was naturally regarded by the slaveholders as a challenge to them to come to the defense of their beloved and menaced system. "It was therefore doomed from the start. Probably no journal however mildly and courteously conducted, that contemplated and advocated emancipation, would remain unmolested." Garrison predicted that Clay would not be tolerated in Kentucky unless he became the apologist of slavery, rather than its vigorous assailant. Garrison felt that Clay would not be permitted to continue the publication. The National Anti-Slavery Standard praised the effort.

78 Ibid.
80 The Liberator, February 28, 1845, p. 35.
This is the most encouraging sign that has yet greeted us. Who is fool enough now to say that we are putting back emancipation? An antislavery paper in a slave state! Thank God for that, and may success attend these noble men.81

The Louisville Journal gave Clay's newspaper, the True American, its blessings and praised Clay for his work in the field. It urged all those interested citizens to subscribe to it. The Lexington Inquirer was decided against Clay and stated that it wished to see him cease his operation. "Agitation at this time can doubtless do no good but can do much harm."83 The Richmond Farmer's Chronicle backed the idea of bringing the question out into the light and hoped that reason would win out.

With feelings running high the "Prospectus of the True American" began to appear in newspapers all over the country.85 In it Clay stated that the newspaper would be a bi-partisan sheet publishing all views in order to bring the subject out into the light.

The True American will be published weekly, in the city of Lexington, Kentucky; and it is proposed to make it embrace all the matter common in newspapers; especially will it regard the high place which labor holds in the economy of nature, and insist upon its enjoyment of a fair distribution of the products of capital.86

81 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, February 27, 1845, p. 155.  
82 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, March 6, 1845, p. 159, citing the Louisville Journal.  
83 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, March 20, 1845, p. 167, citing the Lexington Inquirer.  
84 Ibid., citing the Richmond (Kentucky) Farmer's Chronicle.  
85 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, March 6, 1845, p. 159.  
86 Ibid.
Aside from the papers mentioned above, the Courier and Democrat, Shelby News, Frankfort Commonwealth, and Bardstown Gazette were favorable to the new journal. On the other hand, the threatening attitude of other local newspapers, which demanded forcible suppression of the True American before publication began, warned Clay of his danger. Articles had appeared in the Observer and Reporter stating that, freedom of the press notwithstanding, each community had the right to proceed by concerted public opinion to control fanatics that might set up obnoxious presses. That was to say that mob action was right in cases such as that of Clay's proposed paper.

Once the True American got under way, bitter editorials began appearing in pro-slavery journals. Robert Wickliffe published a letter in the Kentucky Gazette under the by-line "A Whig." In it he stated that the subject of slavery should not be discussed and that violence should suppress the True American. Clay answered Wickliffe in a lengthly editorial published in the True American. He stated:

We must frankly admit that we are not so Quixotic as to seek a fight with a mob; we know that we can be overpowered by numbers; yet, from the defence of our known rights, we are not to be deterred by vague threats or real dangers, coming from any man or set of men.

The first issue of the True American was published on June 3, and before the paper was a month old, the editor received an ominous warning written in blood or red turnip juice.

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87 The True American, June 3, 1845, p. 3.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
You are meaner than the autocrats of hell. You may think you can awe and curse the people of Kentucky to your infamous course. You will find, when it is too late for life, the people are no cowards. Eternal hatred is locked up in the bosoms of brave men, your betters, for you. The hemp is ready for your neck. Your life cannot be spared. Plenty thirst for your blood - are determined to have it. It is unknown to you and your friends, if you have any, and in a way you little dream of.

The note was signed, "Revengers." 91

The only thing that such utterances as this attained was to supply food for Clay's editorial appetite. Through the months of June, July, and part of August, he continued an editorial bombardment on the evils of slavery and on those who tried to suppress freedom of the press, speech, and thought. He directed most of his editorials to the free white laborers of the state.

Six hundred thousand Free White Laborers of Kentucky - men, women and children. If slavery deprives us of political and social equality; if it impoverishes us by the ruinous competition of unpaid wages; if it fails to educate our children, and places large farms between us, so that we can't get our own schools; if it degrades labor, so that slaveholders rank us below slaves, some of whom play idlers in the houses of the rich; if it above all, after suffering all these curses, we and ours, are to be involved in the common ruin, which as sure as fate awaits the catastrophe which follows the violation of the laws of God and Nature - shall we any longer support it, by our countenance, or our votes? No! let us say with one loud and unanimous voice, slavery shall die! 92

Clay felt that because of the difficulty in getting his newspaper started that strong editorialship was necessary at the beginning. He hoped, with an early concentrated effort, to show his opponents that he was in the newspaper field to stay and that he meant business.

91 The True American, June 17, 1845, p. 3.
92 The True American, July 1, 1845, p. 3.
With confidence he wrote Salmon P. Chase that he had weathered the early crisis.93

Because of his work at home, Clay was unable to go to the antislavery convention held in Cincinnati. He had been invited but wrote the convention excusing himself. In his letter to the convention, he said that he welcomed all parties in the fight against slavery, but he still claimed allegiance to the Whig Party.94

The paper was but a month and one-half old when J. Speed Smith wrote to Brutus J. Clay warning him of the danger that awaited Cassius if he continued on his course. Smith told Brutus that there was talk of forming a committee for the purpose of putting an end to the True American, one way or another.95 While feelings in Lexington were running high, Clay received more encouragement from the abolitionist newspapers.96 To the further discomfort of the pro-slavery faction, Clay publicly advocated that a state convention be held in Frankfort, July, 1846, to take steps to bring about, by peaceable and constitutional means for the emancipation of the slaves in Kentucky.97 Clay also suggested the publication of a paper in Louisville, "to be owned

96 The Emancipator, July 30, 1845, p. 53; the Liberator, August 1, 1845, p. 121, citing the Greenfield [Massachusetts] Gazette.
97 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, August 7, 1845, p. 40.
98 Ibid.
and conducted exclusively by non-slaveholders and laboring men." Because of such utterances as these Clay was charged by a neighbor with circulating improper papers among slaves. He denied this charge and while he admitted that there were unavoidable evils attending the discussion of such a subject in a community thus situated, he said, these evils "will never grow less, but ever increase, and must be met now or never." 99

The True American kept up its editorial agitation until it was too late to stop its removal. The National Anti-Slavery Standard stated that it was a wonder that Clay's press was allowed to remain as long as it did. 100 A meeting of the citizens of Lexington was held in the court house on August 15. 101 At this time, Cassius Clay was gravely ill. It appeared that he was suffering from typhoid fever. 102 Nevertheless, Clay attended the meeting. In anticipation of an attempt, by those gathered at the court house, to tear down the office of the True American, Clay made his will, armed himself, and sent a bed to his office. It was decided that a mass meeting of the citizens of Fayette and Lexington should be held on the eighteenth. Several thousand persons were present at this meeting. The crowd was so large that the meeting was adjourned to the courtyard. Thomas F. Marshall addressed the crowd at length. His speech was a defense of slavery and the right to own slaves. Marshall justified suppression of the

99 The Emancipator, August 27, 1845, p. 69.
100 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, September 4, 1845, pp. 54-55.
101 Ibid.
press because the safety of the people was the supreme law in such a situation. He conceded Clay's right to publish a paper of emancipationist views, but stated that Clay had become an organ and tool of the abolitionists. After the address the following resolutions were adopted:

1. That no abolitionist press ought to be tolerated in Kentucky, and none shall be in this city or in its vicinity.
2. That if the office of the "True American" be surrendered peaceably, no injury shall be done to the building or other property. The presses and printing apparatus shall be carefully packed up and sent out of the state, subject then to Mr. C. M. Clay's order.
3. That if resistance be offered we will force the office at all hazards, and destroy the nuisance.
4. That if an attempt be made to revive the paper here, we will again assemble.
5. That the chairman be, and he is hereby authorized to appoint a Committee of Sixty of our body, who shall be authorized to repair to the office of the "True American," take possession of the presses and printing apparatus, pack up the same, and place it at the railroad office for transportation to Cincinnati, and report forthwith to this body.103

The Committee of Sixty proceeded to the office of the True American.

The keys were handed over by the mayor of the city. The presses and type were packed and shipped to Cincinnati.104

The breaking point of the pro-slave element of the area was reached because of an editorial which appeared in the August 12 issue. It read:

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. When you have mocked at virtue, denied the agency of God in the affairs of men, and made rapine your honeyed faith,
tremble! for the day of retribution is at hand, and the masses will be avenged.\textsuperscript{105}

This article was written by Nathaniel Ward of South Carolina.\textsuperscript{106} Clay told the people, in an extra, that he had been too sick to do a proper job of editing, but that if he had been well this article would not have appeared in the paper.\textsuperscript{107} All explanations of authorship were forgotten when the readers noted the above paragraph.

The outraged citizens were not too concerned about the safety of the silver plate, but the implied appeal to slave lusts was a flagrant violation of the most sacred taboo of a slave community. That one sentence was directly responsible for the events which have been described above, although the climax had been building over a period of months.

Clay had stated that to avoid trouble he would take a more moderate course. This statement came too late and it might be asked: Why had not a more moderate course been taken earlier? Clay said that he had not foreseen such consequences as had resulted from his earlier course. Those Whigs who might have stood up for Clay were afraid to do so because of Robert L. Todd, Whig, and Moore, Democrat, who were then in a hot race for the state senate seat from Fayette County.\textsuperscript{108}

Newspapers of the day were filled with the events which had taken place in Lexington. Some agreed with the action of the citizens and

\textsuperscript{105}The True American, August 12, 1845, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{106}Ritchie, op. cit., p. 52.

\textsuperscript{107}The National Anti-Slavery Standard, September 4, 1845, p. 55.

\textsuperscript{108}Ritchie, op. cit., p. 60.
others felt that mob rule had taken the place of the law. A Kentucky correspondent for the New York Evening Post wrote:

By my next you may hear of violence and blood-shed—a tale of terrible retributive justice, which should startle from their horrified purposes those wicked fanatics and traitors who so recklessly trespass upon the constitutional rights of the South, and endanger the lives of their white brethren, in their mad crusade for Negro emancipation. 109

The Louisville Journal admitted that Clay's rashness had led to evil when he had intended good, but it denied that he had ever advocated servile war. The Journal also defended freedom of the press and felt that if slavery was that cause of this suppression then it was time to eliminate slavery. 110 The Liberator sympathized with Clay and felt that this was mobocracy in action. 111 The Boston Times sided with the people of Lexington. It called Clay a fanatic and stated that the laws of the people should be upheld and this trouble maker put in his place. The Times went on to urge the people of Lexington to use the legal arm of the law and not violence. 112 A Lewisburg, Virginia paper stated that what happened to Clay in Kentucky would happen to all abolitionists in the South. 113 The Washington Union (the organ of the National Administration) praised the people of

110 Ibid., citing the Louisville Journal, August 21, 1845.
111 The Liberator, August 29, 1845, p. 139.
112 The Liberator, September 5, 1845, p. 141, citing the Boston Times.
113 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, October 16, 1845, p. 77.
Lexington for their orderly conduct in putting down a public nuisance.

This movement in Lexington was that of the people. There was no party spirit about it. Indeed both parties united in it. Of the committee of sixty, we understand forty-four were Whigs. Henry Clay was not present, for he left Ashland on Saturday the sixteenth for White Sulphur Springs, Virginia. But his son and partner J. B. Clay was an active member of the committee of sixty.114

The Rochester, New York, Republican sympathized with Clay until (as they claim) he went too far. They had held him up as a symbol of the cause, but now, after the publication of the brutal editorial, could no longer sanction him. The paper felt that the people of Lexington acted in their own better interest.115 The New York Morning News felt that Clay was utterly unfit for the position to which he ambitiously aspired.116 The New York Journal of Commerce was convinced that Clay not only lacked sound judgment, but good temper; and had in fact very grossly betrayed the trust which he assumed. It went on to agree with Clay's condemnation and felt that there was not a community which would have done differently. Abolitionists, the paper stated, did not join in the condemnation and were therefore a community of servile insurrectionists.117 The American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society sympathized with Clay and praised his intrepid and independent spirit.118

114 The Liberator, September 12, 1845, p. 145, citing the Washington Union.
116 Ibid., citing the New York Morning News.
117 Ibid., citing the New York Journal of Commerce.
Immediate arrangements to continue the paper, in Cincinnati, were made. It was arranged to write and lay out the material in Lexington and send it to be printed in Cincinnati. However, Cassius Clay did not continue as editor. He had never enjoyed the task and realized his own failures as an editor. After the publication of the May 27, 1845, issue, he left the paper and headed for Texas and the Mexican War. John C. Vaughan of South Carolina became the new editor. Before Clay left for Mexico, he carried on various activities in behalf of the cause. His added activities and the incident in Lexington contributed to the public interest in the True American. The subscription list steadily increased.

A part of the Committee of Sixty who removed Clay's printing materials from Lexington, had been tried for a riot by the municipal court of Lexington and acquitted. The defendants' counsel moved that "the jury believe that the True American Press was a public nuisance, and could not exist in its then present location and conduct without being a nuisance, the defendants were justified in abating it." This was accepted by the judge. Thus the people of Lexington made

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119. The Emancipator, September 24, 1845, p. 86.
122. The Liberator, December 5, 1845, p. 194.
123. The Little Fort Porcupine, November 12, 1845, p. 2. (Now Waukegon, Illinois).
the eighteenth of August a complete success over freedom of the press.

Cassius Clay became a martyr in the North. After August 18, he gradually lost a good deal of the following he had built up in Kentucky. Clay wasted little time in taking advantage of his new-found popularity in the North. In January, 1846, he journeyed northward to deliver a series of lectures. On Monday evening, January 12, a meeting was held in the Tabernacle in New York City. The house was packed, and he was received by three deafening cheers for himself and three for freedom of the press. Clay told the crowd that men living in a civilized state should gain a greater amount of liberty than men living in a natural state, that all should have the same rights and liberties. "If a government does not do this - then that government shall perish." This brought on considerable applause, mixed with a few faint hisses, by the crowd. He went on to say that he realized the Negro race had suffered - still his highest motive was achieving complete independence and liberty for the White Anglo-Saxon. This comment brought on much applause. Clay spoke of the morality slavery supposedly had brought to the South. "That is a falsehood, where are all or the majority of divorces?" Along religious lines Clay stated: "Those who hold their fellow men in bondage cannot belong to the church of Him who said, 'do unto others as ye would others do unto you.'" Clay further stated that the North was as guilty because of its upholding of the fugitive slave laws, "and if slavery is extended into new territories, even more so." This address was very well received, although Clay adhered to his old arguments.

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125 Ibid.
On Tuesday, January 13, Clay again spoke at the Tabernacle for the purpose of raising funds to aid the Association For The Relief Of Colored Orphans. He spoke about three quarters of an hour on the high ideals of the association. He also discussed the relations of rich and poor and the competition between labor and capital. "If the worker cannot find employment it is up to the government or society to furnish employment!" Clay also stated that he was in favor of giving public land to those who would settle on it. These last few comments are, indeed, interesting. It appears that Cassius Clay would have no difficulty in finding a place in the "Great Society" of twentieth-century America.

Clay received an invitation, from a group of citizens, to speak at Musical Fund Hall in Philadelphia. He gave an address there on January 14, before the Board of Home Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for the benefit of the poor. His subject was: "Labor, the basis of the rights of property, cannot be the subject of property." Clay told his audience that labor was not a curse, but kept the human being going and was necessary to his very existence - to mental, moral, and physical development. He used the Bible in reference to a defense of man and labor. He said that at first, nudity was not objectionable, but as man's knowledge grew, he knew good from evil. In early Biblical times, labor was a curse. But today, labor

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127 The True American, January 28, 1846, p. 2.
is a source of personal property. If a man worked for something by
his own sweat, it rightfully belonged to him.

Labor, then, and its proceeds, are his whose hands perform
it. It is the most sacred of all property and cannot be
alienated by states or individuals, by any other rules than
those which govern the alienation of other kinds of property.
Slavery then cannot exist except for crime, or by the volun-
tary consent of the enslaved.

Clay concluded that the taking of another's labor is a crime.\textsuperscript{129}

Toward the end of January, Clay started home. On his way, he
spoke in Baltimore. Here he made clear his constitutional views on
the subject:

In all places of exclusive national jurisdiction, slavery
cannot exist constitutionally. With slavery in the states
once admitted into the Union, and thus declared to be
sovereign to a certain extent which the Federal Constitu-
tion limits, the General Government has nothing to do,
within the limits of said state. There is, however, no
obligation on the free states to return slaves from any
slave state, other than the original parties to the Con-
stitution of 1789; for they stand, in the respect, as
foreign nations. Congress has power to prohibit the inter-
ral slave trade from one state to another.

He concluded by stating that he should ever use all honest, honorable,
and constitutional means for its utter overthrow.\textsuperscript{130} These constitu-
tional views are the source of Clay's individualism. No other group
or few single individuals, who were considered true fighters in the
cause, held such views. This ideology was the cause of much criticism
from fellow abolitionists, especially from those of the Garrisonian
school.

\textsuperscript{129}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{130}The Liberator, February 6, 1846, p. 22.
Cassius Clay was also invited, by a group of citizens, to speak in Wilmington, Delaware. He appeared there on January 26 and addressed a large crowd. 131

The National Intelligencer tried to hush the action of northern Whigs in favor of Clay by intimidation, and the New York Courier and Enquirer sought, by abuse, to stop all friendly public manifestations. However, Clay felt that these efforts produced no such effect. Clay never witnessed greater enthusiasm toward a private individual. He was even invited to address the Legislature of the State of New York. Clay also received requests to address audiences in Boston, Brooklyn, New Haven, and many other places. Because these requests were so numerous, he decided to end his trip in Wilmington as he felt it impossible to fulfill all the invitations he had received. 133

Cassius Clay returned to Kentucky, and for the next three and one-half months continued to edit the True American. He published editorials attempting to rally the white laboring class. He also attempted to polish up his tarnished image. During these few months he kept up a correspondence with Salmon P. Chase. He assured Chase that his position on the Liberty Party had always been respectful and kind. He told Chase that he deemed it most important to make antislavery converts in all parties. Yet he stayed with the Whig Party, even

131 The True American, February 11, 1846, p. 2.
132 The True American, January 28, 1846, p. 3.
133 Ibid.
though some of them would have little to do with him. "It does not become me to denounce all for the sake of a few. And even they may come over to us when it is time," he wrote Chase. Clay felt that "nothing will avail until common calamity shall purify and unite all the elements of antislavery." Clay wanted all elements of the movement to have a fair hearing in the True American and encouraged them to do so. He also started to use the word abolitionist in print instead of emancipationist. He stated that he was doing this in order to familiarize Kentuckians with it and do away with prejudice.

In late April of 1846, Mexico and the United States went to war. Clay editorialized, attacking the war and President Polk. He attacked the Whig press for backing the war, but at the same time he pleaded for patriotism. He felt that the citizens should stand up for their country in time of war, even if they felt the government was wrong in its cause. He said:

We have denounced the annexation of Texas, as a boldly viscous scheme, and a war with Mexico as kindred with that disgraceful and degrading act - degrading alike to the Government and the consummated, and the people that submitted to it.

Thus Clay felt it his duty to aid his country in a war which he condemned in his very own newspaper. At the first call to arms against

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136 The True American, June 10, 1846, p. 2.

137 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, June 15, 1846, p. 15.
Mexico, Cassius Clay had promptly dropped his feud with the slaveholders and replaced his pen with a gun. He enlisted in the Lexington Light Infantry, whose captain he had been in earlier days. Before leaving for the front; however, the company assembled in the court house yard, and on the spot where he had been recently denounced as a "damned nigger agitator," he was unanimously chosen to lead the old infantry into action.138

John G. Fee, a friend of Clay, writing later remarked that Clay entered the Mexican War as an act of expediency. That is to say, an act by which he hoped to enhance his political fortunes.139 It is perfectly plain that this move certainly put Cassius Clay back in a position he once held, in Lexington and Kentucky, before August 18, 1845. Clay, no doubt, realized that such a move would enhance his popularity.

Clay explained his reasons for going to war by saying:

War exists. It has been declared by a government chosen by the people themselves. We submit, therefore as good citizens, to the law of the land, and give that Government our support. Resistance to it now would be rebellion; in general, anarchy, in its worst form, would be the result.

Clay praised the Whigs for opposing the war, but when it came, they rallied as one man in support of the government. Clay stated that the preamble to the resolutions in Congress, declaring that war existed by the act of Mexico, was a lie. "In taking this step," he said, "we


139 Ritchie, op. cit., p. 74, citing John G. Fee, Autobiography.
shall neither shut our eyes to a vile and wicked policy, nor close our lips against the mercenary spirit which has involved the country in the horrors of war.\textsuperscript{140} Clay wrote to Chase on June 30, from Louisville. He told Chase that he was going to Mexico to prove that he was the enemy of slavery, not of the people. Clay felt that this had made his position much stronger and the northerners should rejoice in the vantage ground which he had gained. He stated:

If it be right to repel immediate, it is right to repel remote danger. National instincts of self-existence approve my course and I do not fear to trust my reputation in this respect to the honest and wise now and hereafter.\textsuperscript{141}

With Clay’s departure, the \textit{True American} ran into difficulty. Mary Jane Clay wrote a series of letters to Brutus J. Clay, which demonstrated the desperate financial plight of the journal. Mrs. Clay stated that it cost $6,636.00 to run the paper for one year. With subscription cancellations pouring in, and no new subscriptions being taken, the paper was in danger of financial failure. Mrs. Clay wrote to Brutus Clay that she had thought about closing the paper, but was afraid to take upon herself the responsibility for stopping the issue of the \textit{True American}.

Cassius Clay left John C. Vaughan in charge of the \textit{True American}, with Paul Seymour as the business agent. Mr. Seymour contacted

\textsuperscript{140} The \textit{National Anti-Slavery Standard}, June 25, 1846, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{141} C. M. Clay to S. P. Chase, June 30, 1846, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

\textsuperscript{142} Mary Jane Clay to Brutus J. Clay, July 9, 1846, Clay, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 125-26.
Mrs. Clay, asking for money, in order to pay the bills induced by the publication of the paper. Mrs. Clay, in turn, requested large sums from Brutus to meet these expenses. The newspaper was losing money at the rate of five hundred dollars per month.\textsuperscript{143}

In a letter to Brutus, from Lavaca (on the Gulf of Mexico), Cassius stated: "I want the paper continued till my return, when I will take such action as I deem most advisable, all things considered."\textsuperscript{144} By this time Mrs. Clay had already sent a letter to Seymour to discontinue the paper.\textsuperscript{145}

In mid-July, 1847, Mary Jane Clay wrote Brutus:

I am led to think that it would be well to take council upon the propriety of making an arrangement with us to have 'the Examiner' sent to those persons to complete their time. The amount on the books of the True American for their incomplete subscriptions was thirteen hundred dollars.\textsuperscript{146}

Cassius had desired to complete these subscriptions through the New York Tribune.\textsuperscript{147} Apparently, Clay was not aware of the arrangement made with the Examiner.

Cassius Clay's decision to fight in the Mexican War brought on a great deal of comment from the abolitionist journals around the


\textsuperscript{144} C. M. Clay to B. J. Clay, October 12, 1846, Ibid., pp. 131-33.

\textsuperscript{145} Mary Jane Clay to Paul Seymour, October 9, 1846, Ibid., p. 129.

\textsuperscript{146} M. J. Clay to B. J. Clay, July 14, 1847, Ibid., pp. 137-38.

\textsuperscript{147} C. M. Clay to B. J. Clay, June 18, 1847, Ibid., pp. 138-39.
country. The National Anti-Slavery Standard stated that he had sold the cause "down the river."\textsuperscript{148} The Pennsylvania Freeman asked: "Can it be that he is such a fool?" This paper maintained that by a single stroke, Clay dashed to earth prospects of usefulness and immortal fame. The Freeman accused Clay of looking to elevate his popularity and further his political ambitions in one stroke.\textsuperscript{149} Burritt's Christian Citizen and the Baltimore Saturday Visitor bombarded Clay with more editorials of the same vein.\textsuperscript{150} The Boston Christian World stated that Clay had left the true battlefield for the false one.\textsuperscript{151} The Haverhill (Whig) Gazette stated that Clay had left the pen and resorted to the sword to carry on the fight. The Gazette called this inconsistent. "Henceforth, the name of C. M. Clay is lost to the cause of freedom."\textsuperscript{152} The Liberator stated that it had done everything possible to assist the True American and Cassius Clay, but it could no longer do so. The Liberator bitterly condemned Clay for this act.\textsuperscript{153} The Christian Citizen asked: "If a man is accessory to a crime, does not the law hold him equally responsible?"\textsuperscript{154}

\textsuperscript{148} The National Anti-Slavery Standard, July 2, 1846, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{149} The Liberator, July 3, 1846, p. 106, citing the Pennsylvania Freeman.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., citing the Baltimore Saturday Visitor and the Christian Citizen.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., citing the Boston Christian World.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., citing the Haverhill Gazette.
\textsuperscript{153} The Liberator, July 10, 1846, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., July 17, 1846, p. 113, citing the Christian Citizen.
this case, the Mexican War. The New York Weekly Chronicle stated:
"There is a set of men who will do anything to keep their name before
the public, and Cassius Clay is one of them."155 Marie W. Chapman,
a noted Massachusetts abolitionist, publicly denounced Clay through
the presses of the National Anti-Slavery Standard.156

As stated, Clay's leaving for Mexico brought on the blight of
the True American. The antislavery newspapers called for the sub-
scribers to the True American to cancel them. The Liberator urged
that C. M. Clay was the True American and the True American was C. M.
Clay. The Liberator stated that when Clay went to war he gave up the
cause; those people who dropped the True American had good reason to
do so.

The idea of Mr. Clay and the True American were one and
indivisible. The one was the voice, the utterance, the
organ of speech of the other. You could not separate
the two. And the idea of Mr. Clay's tongue pleading
for emancipation in Kentucky while his hand was fight-
ing for slavery in Mexico, was too preposterous a one
to be entertained. We think that his supporters in the
North right by withdrawing their countenance and aid from
him. And we cannot recommend their restoring either to
the True American, until it has taken a new attitude and
is surrounded with new circumstances.157

The Emancipator took the opposite view. It pointed out that
one thousand subscribers in the North dropped the True American,
causing it financial difficulty. But the Emancipator felt that the

155 Ibid., citing the New York Weekly Chronicle.
156 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, August 20, 1846, citing
the Liberator.
newspaper should not be punished for the mistakes of C. M. Clay.

The True American has not gone to Mexico. The True American does not advocate the War, but continues to oppose it. It has not even defended the course taken by C. M. Clay, but thinks him in the wrong. It has merely done him the justice of vindicating his motives, but it dissent from his conclusion.

The editor asked: "Why stop supporting the True American? Why manifest your opposition to Clay's action by giving up a paper which is also opposed to it." The Emancipator concluded its plea by saying:

"If one wants to aid the anti-slavery cause continue to support the True American. If you have already dropped it - renew." 158

The limited support of some journals was not enough to help the True American remain solvent. It published a notice of discontinuance on October 21, 1846. 159 The tremendous amount of northern criticism did little to change the course chosen by Clay. These denunciations or any others did not move him one iota from the advocacy of such principles as he chose to follow; or the choice of such means for their ultimate success. 160

His reasons for going to war were sound. All civilized mankind had faced similar situations. Clay felt that one must either go with the government or dissolve it. He spoke of a partnership which the individual had taken part in. "Regardless of right or wrong - we must go along with that government until such time as necessary changes

158 The Emancipator, October 28, 1846, p. 105.
159 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, October 29, 1846, p. 87.
can be made." He felt that as bad as the Mexican War and Texas had been to the cause, they were not as bad as revolution and disunion. He claimed that if he committed a crime in joining the army, then so did every other soldier who believed the war unjust. He put forth the idea that every man who opposed the war and still paid his taxes to support it was also guilty of the crime of which he was accused. 161

With these views in mind, it is difficult to say that Cassius Clay was wrong in going to Mexico. Even if he was looking to further his political career and his personal position in Kentucky, it cannot be denied that he did the noble thing, justified by the views he expressed. Although Clay received twenty five hundred dollars in a suit against James B. Clay and Thomas Waters, for their part in the August 18 affair, it was little compensation for the damage done to the True American. 162 Only through his going to Mexico did he regain the image he had held in Kentucky.

Cassius Clay received little military glory during the Mexican campaign. He was a good officer. His company was one of the best disciplined, and off duty he became one of the men, never using his rank. 163 Clay's military career was cut short by his capture. He and thirty men under the command of Major John P. Gains were on patrol. The purpose of the mission was to probe enemy strength on the Saltillo front. On January 23, 1847, this patrol, along with Captain Clay, was

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161 Ibid.
162 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, April 20, 1848, p. 186.
163 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, November 5, 1846, p. 91.
captured at Encarnacion, about forty-five miles from Buena Vista. 164

A card was published in the Lexington Observer and Reporter, October 23, 1847, signed by five of Captain Clay's men, in which they praised the courage and self-sacrifice of their leader. They told how, after their capture, when an order had been given for the massacre of the American soldiers, Clay had asked that the privates be spared. With the cocked pistol of a Mexican major at his breast, the Captain had looked him fearlessly in the eye and exclaimed:

"Kill me - kill the officers, but spare the men!" Then, on the weary journey to Mexico City, as the ragged, barefoot soldiers were marching forty miles a day over rough mountain trails, Clay had made his exhausted men take turns in riding his own mount, while he walked grimly behind. During the long confinement, he had tenderly nursed the sick and had sold his mule, buffalo-rug, watch, and all his wearing apparel except the tattered uniform on his back, to buy medicines and supplies for his soldiers. 165

After almost a year in captivity, Clay was released in a prisoner exchange and returned home. 166 It is interesting to note that during his absence he wrote no letters touching his views upon political subjects, and no one was authorized to speak in his behalf. 167


165 Townsend, op. cit., p. 60.

166 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, November 18, 1847, p. 99.

167 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, January 14, 1847, p. 130.
Upon his return to Lexington, Clay was given a public reception, at which an address of welcome was delivered by Robert S. Todd, the father-in-law of Abraham Lincoln. One of the Committee of Sixty who had stormed the office of the True American was the grand marshal at the event. Others of the Committee of Sixty attempted to make political bribes if Clay would stop his attack on slavery. ¹⁶⁸ Thus Cassius M. Clay was once again looked upon with honor by the people of Kentucky. He now readied himself for the upcoming elections, both locally and nationally.

CHAPTER IV

FROM WHIG TO REPUBLICAN

Cassius Clay had learned a great deal from the events of the past four years. For him Henry Clay was no longer the standard bearer of the Whig Party. Henry Clay had disillusioned his kinsman too many times, and after the August 18 affair, there was little friendship left between them.

With the presidential election coming up, Cassius Clay saw his chance to even the score between himself and Henry. Henry Clay was still desirous of the Presidency and decided to go after the nomination. After Henry had publicly announced his intentions, Cassius Clay wrote a letter to Henry Clay. In it Cassius gave his reasons for taking a definite stand against Henry. Cassius reminded Henry of the fact that he ran away on August 14, 1845, to Virginia Springs, leaving his friends and family to "murder him in his sick bed." Cassius felt that even after Henry's last defeat, he still had every intention of seeking the nomination in 1848. He was also told by his friends in Congress that Henry could not be elected and that Henry Clay's name would again bring defeat to the party. Cassius waived objections to his private character and to the "ill luck that attached to him like fate," adding that all of Henry's measures, except the

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Missouri Compromise, had been erased from the statute books. Cassius charged that Henry had three times, as a candidate for the Presidency, brought the Whigs defeat. When Harrison had raised them into a majority, Henry's bank movement against Tyler reduced them again to a minority. In 1844, when the Democratic Party was split into fragments by some fatality he again became the Whig candidate and was defeated, when other Whigs, postponed for him, would have been elected.

At the time in the campaign when success seemed certain, his Gazette letter, disclaiming any sympathy with emancipation, and his Alabama letter, saying that he would "not reject a permanent acquisition of territory on account of a temporary institution," changed the fate of the struggle, disgusted the Whigs of the North, and left them nothing to contend for. Cassius Clay went on to say that when all was lost, the Whigs sympathized with him, paid his debts, and raised monuments to his memory; but no sooner had the Whigs brought themselves up again from the minority in which he had left them, by voting supplies for the war, and availing themselves of popularity, and the Whig generals had reaped its glory, leaving all responsibility for loss of honor, men, and money to the administration, and the success of the party once more became certain, than Henry "reluctantly consented to run again!" This letter was printed in most of the abolitionist newspapers. Thus the split between two old allies was made permanent and public.

\[^{3}\text{Ibid.}\]
Although the "Lion of White Hall" was firmly against the nomination of Henry Clay, he was still a Whig. The Whig Party, at this time, was split over the coming presidential campaign. The friends of Henry Clay, who had lost the election in 1844, by such a narrow margin, hoped to see him a candidate again, but influential party leaders felt that if nominated again he could not win.

The Whig State Convention was held at Frankfort, on February 22. Many of the members of the convention were for Zachary Taylor and another group was for Henry Clay. The split was so deep that these groups had to meet in separate rooms. Taylor's strength was so great that the Clay Whigs would not permit a vote for fear their candidate might lose. Finally a compromise was made. One of the senatorial delegates to the national party convention would be committed to Henry Clay and the other to Taylor.

With this as their base, Cassius Clay and the other Taylor Whigs campaigned for the nomination of their candidate. Cassius wrote an open letter to a New York pro-Taylor paper, stating that Henry Clay's own state had repudiated him. Cassius boldly announced that the state "cherishes the long service of Henry Clay, but also believes that Mr. Clay cannot be elected." Without the backing of his home state, the

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5 Van Deusen, op. cit., p. 386.


"Great Compromiser" lost the Whig nomination to Taylor.

Cassius Clay wrote Horace Greeley in an attempt to persuade him to back Taylor. He told Greeley: "I know no morality based upon any other principle, than to look around you and make the best of all the circumstances that occur." He went on:

Taylor is a slaveholder by birth and habit - Cass a slaveholder politically by calculation. Which is the better man? I say Taylor. How do they stand committed? Taylor says nothing of the subject of slavery, but claims Washington as his model, and declares in favor of the supremacy of Congress. Cass holds that Congress cannot legislate against the admission of slavery into the new territories, and of course must veto any bill prohibiting its introduction. As men, then, Taylor is preferable to Cass. Now as to parties. Who will be most apt to stand for liberty, the Whigs or their opponents? Let Texas speak! Let the Mexican War speak! Let those who openly avow in convention all of Mexico and Cuba speak!9

Cassius Clay had picked the right man to back in the election of 1848, but he was not very active in the campaign. David L. Smiley, C. M. Clay's biographer, feels that the reason for this was the fact that he no longer wished to work with the Whig Party, whose members had joined the Democrats to attack his press.10 In addition, he was becoming more sympathetic to the Liberty platform. He wrote Chase that he was pleased at the result of the Van Buren movement. "I hope that by another presidential year we will come together." The Taylor candidacy, he said, was effecting that result: "Taylor will be elected, which will drive more of the democracy into antislavery

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8 The Liberator, July 28, 1848, p. 118.

9 Ibid.

10 Smiley, op. cit., p. 133.
formation, also many Whigs." These facts cannot be denied, but in addition, Clay must surely have taken into consideration the feelings against him by more radical antislavery people. Garrison, in his Liberator, denounced him for going to war. Clay received a great deal less publicity from the newspapers of the North, and this lack of notoriety was evidence of the bad graces he had fallen into in that camp. He, therefore, was far less active in the election of 1848.

Following the election of Taylor, Clay turned to the domestic problem of slavery at home, for with the legislative repeal of the Negro Law of 1833, many Kentuckians became alarmed. The state was now opened for an unlimited increase in the slave population. A tremendous protest arose and demands for constitutional revision were the primary aims. The protests were so strong that the assembly reluctantly voted to call a constitutional convention for October, 1849, to settle the question of slavery in Kentucky. The promotion of such a convention was not a new idea. As early as 1844, agitation for such a convention had taken place. In 1845, a meeting of the working men of Paducah was held for the purpose of amending the constitution, and in 1846, a bill for a convention to propose

12 The Liberator, July 28, 1848, p. 118.
14 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, December 19, 1845, p. 115.
15 The Emancipator, July 2, 1845, p. 37.
amendments to the Constitution of Kentucky was lost in the Senate, twenty to eighteen. The fear that a general discussion of the slave question would arise, no doubt, brought about the result. 16

Clay played a major role in the fight for the convention. Through the columns of the Louisville Examiner, he proposed a convention of the antislavery men of Kentucky, to be held in Louisville, for the purpose of organization, with a view to secure the adoption of some emancipation amendments in the new constitution. 17 A spirited meeting of the Friends of Emancipation in Madison County, Kentucky, was held at Richmond on May 2. 18 It was called to order by William Rodes, and Ezekiel H. Field acted as president. The resolutions adopted approved the call of a state convention to meet at Frankfort on April 25, not in Louisville as Clay had suggested. Delegates were appointed to attend the Frankfort Convention; Cassius Clay was among those appointed. This meeting further declared, first, that they believed slavery to be an evil and an insuperable obstacle to the future prosperity of Kentucky, and that should any practicable plan for its removal be suggested, they would happily adopt it. Second, that the principle involved in the Law of 1833, prohibiting the importation of slaves into this Commonwealth, was wise and salutary, and a clause equivalent to that law should be embodied in the new constitution. Finally,
it was decided that no constitution ought to be adopted by the people, which did not provide for its alteration, whenever experience should point out any objectional feature, to be first considered by the legislature, and then at the polls. 19

At this time, Cassius began the advocacy of an emancipation party and action through such an organ. Clay said: "Slavery is legal tyranny over natural right; and every just man will seek uncompromisingly its overthrow. The people made it, and the people can unmake it." He went on to say: "When will come a better time than now to organize a party based upon expediency - upon right? Yes, Kentuckians, the time has come!" 20

On the appointed day, April 25, the Convention of Emancipationists met in the capitol building with one hundred and fifty delegates from twenty-four counties. Both parties and all classes of opponents of slavery were there. 21 In order to prevent division and also escape the dangers of being too specific, the convention adopted no direct plan of emancipation, but reasserted the old principle of gradual emancipation, to operate only on those born after the system should be set up, and to be connected with colonization. With this general statement of principles, it was resolved that only those candidates should be voted for who were against the further importation of slaves into the state, and for the right of the people, incorporated in the

19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 W. E. Connelly and E. M. Coulter, op. cit.
new constitution, to substitute "a system of gradual, prospective emancipation of slaves." 22

Now the battle to elect delegates to the constitutional convention began. The major issue was slavery versus emancipation. In Fayette County, the pro-slavery Union Party nominated Judge Aaron K. Wooley, son-in-law of Robert Wickliffe, and his kinsman, Robert N. Wickliffe. The Emancipationists selected Dr. Robert J. Breckinridge and Samuel Shy as their representatives. 23 The struggle was particularly bitter in Clay's home county, Madison. Though not himself a candidate, Clay attended the meetings of the various candidates and often thrust himself into the proceedings. 24 Clay made an antislavery speech at Lancaster, Garrard County, Kentucky, on May 28. There was a large crowd, and the debate was very able and interesting. 25 This was typical of the campaign.

Clay returned to his home county, and on Thursday, June 15, at a regimental muster at Walden's, in Madison County, the candidates spoke. Mr. Willis, William Chenault, and Squire Turner were the pro-slavery candidates and Curtis F. Burnam was the only emancipationist candidate. Clay was at this meeting and was to have spoken before

22 Ibid.


Turner. Turner went ahead of Clay alleging that Clay was not a candidate and the crowd was fast dispersing. Turner made a long speech. Clay then took the stand and bore more heavily in his remarks upon Turner than upon either of the other candidates. It was evident that there was some unpleasant feeling between them. 26

On the next day, Friday, another discussion took place at a regimental muster at Foxtown. Willis spoke first, Turner next. When Turner had spoken about an hour, Clay appealed to him to give Burnam an opportunity to defend the emancipationists and their views; but Turner refused, and spoke half an hour longer. During that half an hour, he read a portion of the article that caused the removal of the True American to Cincinnati. Clay now appealed to the people to say whether it was fair that this article should be read, unless accompanied by the statement so often made by Turner, that the article in question was written by a South Carolina planter, and sent to his office and printed while he (Clay) was lying sick with typhoid fever. Clay claimed the article was as repulsive to his feelings and views as it was to Turner's or any other man's, and if he had not been confined to his bed, it would have never appeared in his newspaper. Mr. William L. Neale, the printer of the True American, was on the grounds and would confirm the statement. 27

Turner continued his speech after this interruption, and when he concluded, Clay took the stand for the purpose of making a kind of

27 Ibid.
apology to the people for the interruptions he had caused. He again stated that he thought each party was entitled to be heard, and that each should be allowed a fair division of the time, the friends of right and justice, by such a course, having nothing to lose. If the emancipationists held incendiary notions, and advocated principles opposed to the best interests of the country, the people would judge them correctly and put them down, while if their principles were founded on right and justice, it was certainly not wrong that they should be known in order that they should be upheld and supported. 

After making his explanation, which did not take more than two minutes, Clay was stepping down, when Richard Runyon, a lawyer of Richmond, at a considerable distance off, asked him questions, and Clay, with the consent of Chenault, who claimed the stump, attempted to answer him. Some misunderstanding occurred in reference to the disposition of the school fund, in which Runyon pronounced a statement made by Clay as false and untrue. Clay referred to an act of the legislature in proof of his assertion, and finally told Runyon, who had interrupted him before, that he was "a mere tool of Turner and was obeying his master." Clay left the stump in perfectly good humor, not expecting trouble, when Turner remarked that "Runyon was not his tool." 

Clay answered that whether Turner knew it or not, he was evidently his willing tool. Upon hearing this, Cyrus Turner, the son of
the candidate, stepped up to Clay, said his statement was a damned lie, and struck him in the face. A melee was the result. Clay was stabbed from behind by someone, beaten over the head with a stick wielded by Alfred Turner and pummeled perhaps by others, while Thomas Turner snapped a revolving pistol four times at his head, bursting a cap each time. Cassius did not draw his knife, nor shake off the hold of those who were clinging to him until he felt the blood spouting forth from his side. With what seemed super human effort, he shook off those who held him, engaged Cyrus Turner, and stabbed him in the lower part of the abdomen.

The end of the melee found rumors circulating that Clay had died of his wounds and that Cyrus Turner would recover. The exact opposite took place; Clay recovered, and in eighty-four hours Turner was dead.

Runyon wrote an account of the affray at Foxtown and made an effort to see that it was published, in all papers which gave publicity to Clay's account. In his version, Runyon denied acting as the agent or tool of anyone; avowed he had never intended to insult Clay, as Cassius had charged, and asserted that he thought Clay was friendly disposed toward him up to the time of the trouble. Runyon said he was willing to have any neighbor judge between his and Clay's conduct. He charged that Clay's action was calculated to create political

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30 Ibid.
32 Ritchie, op. cit., p. 83, citing the National Era, July 19, 1849.
effect. In the closing part of Runyon's circular, he made the following characterization of Cassius Clay:

I now say and proclaim, in the name of the people of Madison, that any emancipationist can come here and address any crowd of us and be treated with attention and respect. He need not pack a carpet bag with a knife seven inches long and an inch and an eighth in breadth, and other more efficient weapons. ... And I say to them that now that, if emancipation be the cause of liberty ... and they permit a man of violence and blood to thrust himself amongst them and assume to be their leader, God himself will damn that cause, and blast all its hopes till better men in better times shall become its defenders ... There is no need of pistol, bowie knife, bludgeon or armed desperado with personal insult in his mouth to advocate the cause. 33

By December, the grand jury of Madison County, after an investigation of the Foxtown rencontre, in which Cyrus Turner was killed by Cassius Clay, failed to find sufficient reason for an indictment against him. 34 The matter was dropped. Clay had feelings of his own on the subject. He believed in a man's right to self defense. He knew Turner was a man capable of any criminal act and Runyon as not much better. Clay was sure that there had been a plot to kill him on that day. 35

As a result of Clay's wound, he was forced out of the campaign. The fight also aroused much opposition to emancipationists in general. Cyrus Turner became a martyr, Cassius Clay was confirmed as a "damned nigger agitator," and respectable emancipationists would not be associated with this kind of an affair. 36 The result was complete defeat

33 Ibid.
34 The Emancipator, January 23, 1850, p. 3.
35 The Emancipator, August 23, 1849, p. 2.
36 Smiley, op. cit., p. 142.
for the emancipationist candidates. Silas Woodson, from Knox County, was the only emancipationist delegate to win a seat in the convention.\footnote{Mac Swimford, "Mr. Justice Samuel Freeman Miller (1816-1873)," \textit{The Filson Club Historical Quarterly}, 34:37, January, 1960.}

With the convention in the hands of the pro-slavery element, there was no chance of the emancipationists getting any of the provisions they desired into the constitution.\footnote{The \textit{National Anti-Slavery Standard}, November 22, 1849, pp. 101-102.} The convention decided that article seven of the new constitution would cover the subject of slavery. The new amendments were:

Section one - Forbad the General Assembly to pass laws emancipating slaves without consent of their owners, or without the equivalent in money.

Section two - Took away the power to prevent slaves being brought into the state from other slave states, provided their servitude was continued.

Section three - Directed laws to be passed to permit owners to emancipate their slaves, on the condition that provision be at the same time made for their removal from, and against their return to the state.

Section four - Gave power to prevent slaves from being brought into the state as merchandise.

Section five - Forbad the importation of slaves from foreign countries.

Section six - Directed laws for the protection of slaves from injury to life or limb by their owners, and in failure of such, required
that slaves be sold for the benefit of the owners.

Section seven - Provided for compensation to be made for any slave executed.

Section eight - Gave power to the law for the removal from the state of all free Negroes or Mulattoes.

Section nine - Took the return to or refusal to leave the state, by any free Negro or Mulatto, a penitentiary offense.

Section ten - Provided that in trials of Negroes for felony no grand jury was necessary; but nothing should be enacted to deprive them of an impartial trial by a petit jury.39

After the new constitution was written, Clay engaged himself in a program of showing up the grammatical blunders and absurdities of it. He stated that the document was blind, deaf, and dumb - without sensation. He pathetically exclaimed: "Who shall deliver us from the death?"40

Clay wrote a letter in relation to the Constitution of Kentucky which gave his personal feelings on some of the provisions. He said:

Foreigners are to be excluded - we are to surround ourselves with a Chinese wall, for fear of taxation and representation must be violated, least the river counties endanger the old hunkerism of slavery! A man born and raised in a county in his old age cannot vote, unless in the precinct after sixty days residence, for fear of the laboring men - the floats who favor the abolitionists! The right of suffrage is taken away from all Kentuckians who have not resided in a county for a year, though born in the state, for fear of the importation of laboring men, floats, who are for the abolitionists.41

39The Emancipator, October 25, 1849, p. 3.

40The Emancipator, March 21, 1850, p. 2.

41The Emancipator, April 4, 1850, p. 4.
Clay was bitterly opposed to the rule that the constitution could not be amended for seven years. This was done, he said, for fear of the abolitionists. "Life, liberty, and property, are to be jeopardized for the purpose of securing to the slaveholding aristocracy the power of oppressing the African, and expelling the laboring Whites from our state."\(^{42}\)

Thus for Kentucky and the emancipationists of the state, the new constitution was a total failure; however, it appeared to be a great victory for the perpetualists.

This defeat did not stop Cassius Clay. He continued to write and lecture on the subject of slavery.\(^{43}\) His determination to further the cause led him to become a candidate for Governor in 1851.\(^{44}\) Clay's intention was to put an end to the Whig Party in Kentucky. He realized that he could not get enough votes to win himself, but he hoped to defeat the Whigs by throwing the election to the Democrats.

The Whig State Convention met at Frankfort, February 22, 1851, and nominated Archibald Dixon for Governor and John B. Thompson for Lieutenant-Governor. After making the nominations unanimous, the convention passed resolutions supporting national unity, the Compromise of 1850, the new state constitution, the United States Constitution and all laws made under it, and the efforts of Henry Clay to maintain the Union.\(^{45}\)

\(^{42}\) Ibid.

\(^{43}\) The Emancipator, December 19, 1850, p. 1.

\(^{44}\) The National Anti-Slavery Standard, April 10, 1851, p. 182.

\(^{45}\) Wallace B. Turner, "Kentucky State Politics In The Early 1850's," The Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society, 56:130, April, 1955.
The Democratic Convention met at Frankfort on January 8, and nominated Lazarus W. Powell for Governor and Robert N. Wickliffe for Lieutenant-Governor. The emancipationists held a convention at Lexington on March 1, and nominated Cassius Clay. George Blakley, Jr. was nominated to run for Lieutenant-Governor on the emancipationist ticket.

The Democrats had taken the lead in advocating the adoption of the new constitution, and they sensed their favorable political position. Reforms introduced by the new constitution were claimed as evidence of Democratic political wisdom. The Whigs claimed to be the Union Party. To this the Kentucky Democrats countered that they had supported the compromise and that more northern Democrats than northern Whigs had voted for it. The Democrats also maintained that, except for the leadership of Henry Clay, the Compromise was a Democratic measure.

Clay wrote to William Seward that feelings were bitterly against him, but he hoped to establish freedom of debate, as he had freedom of the press in Kentucky, and organize "a party of true progress."

"I think I will get from five to ten thousand votes, which will be a very good nucleus for future action."

The Whigs objected to this

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46 Ibid., p. 131.
47 Ritchie, op. cit., p. 117.
49 Turner, op. cit.
50 C. M. Clay to W. H. Seward, April 24, 1851, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York.
third party movement on the ground that the slavery issue in Kentucky had been settled by the new constitution and that further agitation at that time was not only useless but harmful.\textsuperscript{51} This bitter opposition did not stop Clay. He carried on a canvass throughout the state in an attempt to gain votes for his cause.\textsuperscript{52} Probably the most significant point Clay used for a campaign issue was the fugitive slave law. He bitterly opposed this law.\textsuperscript{53} Had he left it alone, he might have received a great deal more votes.\textsuperscript{54}

With the canvass over and the votes counted, the Democrats had elected a Governor, their first in twenty years. Powell defeated Dixon by eight hundred and fifty votes.\textsuperscript{55} Clay got three thousand six hundred and twenty-one votes, most of them presumably from Dixon. Although the Whigs won over all other statewide offices, their victories were generally by narrow margins, except for John B. Thompson, who was elected Lieutenant-Governor by more than six thousand votes. Also up for reelection was the congressional seat from the Ashland District, a traditionally Whig stronghold. Leslie Combs, the Whig, was defeated by John C. Breckinridge, Democrat. Breckinridge's majority was five hundred votes, whereas the district had usually

\textsuperscript{51}Turner, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{52}The National Anti-Slavery Standard, June 26, 1851, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{53}The Bureau Advocate, May 21, 1851, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{54}The National Anti-Slavery Standard, April 22, 1852, p. 189.
\textsuperscript{55}E. M. Coulter, "The Downfall Of The Whig Party In Kentucky," The Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society, 28:164, May, 1925.
gone Whig by fifteen hundred votes. Whigs carried only five of the nine congressional seats. In the state legislature they maintained only a narrow margin of twenty to eighteen in the Senate and fifty four to forty five in the House. The election was ominous for the Whig Party. 56

Clay received six hundred and seventy votes in Fayette County. Dixon beat him by forty eight votes, and Clay beat Powell by sixty. Clay wrote to Seward that if it had not been for sickness among the poorer classes, he would have beaten Dixon in Fayette County. "Everywhere in the state I excited enthusiasm among the largest audiences here - but party ties and the reign of terror yet defeats us." Although defeated, Clay felt that he had achieved freedom of debate. 57

The National Anti-Slavery Standard believed that nine-tenths of those who stayed away from the polls were emancipationists, who were looking to see the "drift of things." The Standard was much encouraged by the outcome in this election and felt that the time was near when there would be only two parties, one for liberty and union, the other for base submission to the slave power. 58

The Democrats appeared to be united. It is also probable that they were beginning to recruit to their own ranks some of the strong


57 C. M. Clay to W. H. Seward, August 8, 1851, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York.

58 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, September 11, 1851, p. 63, citing the Boston Commonwealth.
pro-slavery Whigs. In fact, the Whig Party's last success in Kentucky was in 1848. After the death of Henry Clay in 1852, there was no one strong enough to hold the Whigs together. Even John J. Crittenden was not able to do so. The conservative element went with the Constitutional Union Party; the antislavery element joined the Republican Party; and the pro-slavery group became part of the Democratic Party. These changes did not come about immediately, but were complete by 1860. The Know Nothings won the state in 1855, but the Democrats took over in 1859. Clay's role in all these changes was an important one. E. M. Coulter feels that Clay's race for Governor contributed to the final and total downfall of the Whig Party in Kentucky. 59

Clay's purpose was to lead his emancipationists to victory over slavery in Kentucky. Salmon P. Chase wrote Clay asking him to attend the Free Soil Convention coming up in Cleveland. Clay answered Chase by stating:

I regard the liberation of my own state as the main objective in my life, and would not willingly do anything to jeopardize that great end. At the same time I feel that aid of public sentiment in the North is necessary to success here, and would make any personal sacrifice to forward the great cause of liberty to all North and South for it is at last one cause. I fear I shall not be able to attend the convention at Cleveland on the (September) 24, though they have my hearty sympathy. 60

However, after some contact with Chase, Clay made arrangements to meet him on the twenty-third, near Cincinnati, and journey to Cleveland together. 61

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59 Coulter, op. cit., pp. 65-70.
60 C. M. Clay to S. P. Chase, August 12, 1851, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.
61 C. M. Clay to S. P. Chase, August 27, 1851, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.
Some of the most distinguished leaders of the Free Soil Party in the West attended this meeting. Giddings, Chase, Lewis, Bradburn, King, Brisbane, and others were there. Clay addressed the meeting in a speech which was received with great enthusiasm. He renounced and denounced the Whig Party.

I have acted, as many of you know, with the Whig Party. I advocated the election of Henry Clay, and subsequently of General Taylor, confiding in the promises which they made me. If there can be any blame attached to me in the matter, it is in acting so long with a party that has proved recreant to every principle of liberty and Republicanism. The time has come when I must separate myself from that party.

Clay went on to state that the Whig Party embraced the landed property holders; "they are, and always have been, the conservatives of this country; and it is they who will, in the final struggle, join the slave interests of the South." 63

Cassius Clay had now become part of the Free Soil Movement. Convinced that the Free Soil Party best suited his ideal of a party in the election of 1852, he told his friend William H. Seward that he would "go for the Free Soil candidate 'sure!'" 64 His reasons were; he could not go for the Compromise of 1850, or those people who did not denounce it. 65

62 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, October 9, 1851, p. 78.  
63 Ibid., citing the Cleveland True Democrat.  
64 C. M. Clay to W. H. Seward, April 26, 1852, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York.  
65 Ibid.
In 1852, John P. Hale and George W. Julian were nominated for the offices of President and Vice-President respectively on the Free Soil ticket. On June 7, 1852, a large meeting of Free Democrats took place in Richmond, Kentucky. Clay was present and took a leading part in that meeting. He introduced and discussed at length a series of resolutions setting forth the principles of the party. The first principle consisted of a statement of general opposition to and a condemnation of slavery. Slavery was there spoken of as a local institution thus foreshadowing the Republican position toward it. The second declaration affirmed that slavery must not spread, another anticipation of the doctrine of the Republicans. The third resolution called on the party to use every legal means for the overthrow of slavery, and the fourth declared that emancipationists had lost faith in both the old parties because they shielded slavery. The remaining resolutions provided for permanent state organization, for appointment of delegates to a national convention to be held in Cleveland, Ohio, and for a permanent state central committee. Clay was among those to make up the State Central Committee. Because of the role Clay played in the Free Democratic Party, some suggested that he become the party nominee for the Presidency in 1852. He was not in favor

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68 Ritchie, op. cit., p. 120, citing the National Era, July 22, 1852.
of his own candidacy and announced that he would not support a campaign for his nomination. 69

Clay felt that the slave question did not hang on the old parties. He said: "I see them in the coil of the boa which will strangle them." 70

He therefore threw his support to Hale and Julian and the Free Soil Party. He encouraged his Free Democracy to do its part for the Free Soil cause. Clay, however, did not take an extensive part in the campaign of 1852. Following his policy as a Free Democrat, he hoped to bring about such a Free Soil Party, as would be agreeable to southern men who held antislavery views. 71

On the invitation of Cassius Clay and John G. Fee, George Julian came to Kentucky. Julian, accompanied by Clay, spoke in Bracken, Mason, and Lewis Counties. Of this experience Julian wrote:

I would not have ventured on this experiment alone, but I felt reasonably safe with Clay on the stand beside me, his right hand in the neighborhood of his revolver and ready for any emergency which the exercise of free speech might produce. 72

Clay continued stumping throughout the state for Hale and Julian. 73

However, the outcome of the election was victory for the Democrats and their candidate Franklin Pierce. Hale received only 155,825 votes

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69 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, July 22, 1852, p. 34.

70 C. M. Clay to W. H. Seward, August 24, 1852, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York.

71 Ritchie, op. cit., p. 120, citing the National Era, July 22, 1852.

72 Clark, op. cit.

73 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, September 23, 1852, p. 71.
compared to 1,385,453 votes for Winfield Scott, Whig candidate, and 1,601,117 votes for Pierce.\textsuperscript{74} An emancipationist ticket was not yet consolidated enough to make a serious run for the Presidency.

Cassius Clay was not willing to give up. For the next three years he carried on his personal campaign, making speeches and writing letters. Clay spoke in Cincinnati in March of 1853.\textsuperscript{75} In May, he wrote a letter to the Anti-Slavery Convention held in Cincinnati, calling upon the abolitionists to keep up their agitation.\textsuperscript{76} During May, Clay traveled to Boston to address an audience in Belknap Church. Here, he again renewed his allegiance to the cause, Kentucky, and the "General Government."\textsuperscript{77}

Clay along with Joshua Giddings went to Illinois in 1854, to give their support to Owen Lovejoy, who was running for the State Senate.\textsuperscript{78} Clay's main purpose in going to Illinois was to help organize the Republican Party. Clay also campaigned in Kentucky for John Cabell Breckinridge, who was running for Congress against the Whig, Robert P. Letcher.\textsuperscript{79} In December of 1853, Clay wrote a letter to the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{74}Williams, Current, and Freidel, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 766.
  \item \textsuperscript{75}The \textbf{National Anti-Slavery Standard}, March 10, 1853, p. 165.
  \item \textsuperscript{76}The \textbf{National Anti-Slavery Standard}, May 12, 1853, p. 202.
  \item \textsuperscript{77}The \textbf{Liberator}, May 27, 1853, p. 93.
  \item \textsuperscript{79}Lucille Stillwell, \textit{John Cabell Breckinridge} (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Limited, 1936), p. 50.
\end{itemize}
Convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society, he joined with them in the cause for freedom.

When the Republican Party was formed in 1854, in Michigan and Wisconsin, Clay immediately became a part of it. He was no longer known as a Free Democrat. The new party incorporated the principles for which Clay had been struggling to gain: the legal recognition of slavery where it existed but opposition to its extension, protective tariffs, and a friendship or interest in the mass of free laborers. Clay wrote his good friend Chase that he was continuing to press the cause into the mountains by "papers and priests." He also informed Chase of his opposition to the Nebraska Bills. Clay was most bitter against the Nebraska Bill and wasted little time in putting forth public denunciation. He argued that the North must punish the traitors who voted for the Nebraska Bill; that they must make arrangements to have every election, even in the smallest, turn upon the repeal of the bill; and that there must be a union among all parties to put down the strength of the slave power.

With the repeal of the Missouri Compromise thousands of antislavery men in various sections of the state of Illinois were aroused to action. They felt that the existing situation should be vigorously

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80 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, December 10, 1853, p. 115.
81 Ritchie, op. cit., p. 122.
and publicly condemned and in looking around for a fearless spokesman, they selected Cassius M. Clay and invited him to make a series of speeches in Illinois. Clay’s speaking engagements included Chicago, on July 4, 5, and 6, Ottawa on July 7, Bloomington on July 8, Springfield on July 10, Alton on July 11, and Quincy on July 12. He addressed the people without distinction of party on the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the opening of all territories of the nation to slavery. Clay also spoke in Burlington on Friday, July 14, Davenport on July 15, and Roche Island on Monday, July 17. In addition to these engagements, he received an invitation to speak at Galesburg.

Clay delivered a forceful speech to a large audience in Chicago on July 4. He said that when it became plain to him that slavery was to become the governing principle of the Union, he would be against the Union. He told the audience that: "If you want me to love the Union you must make it lovable." He urged northern men to stand firm at the present crisis, and not be alarmed by threats of disunion from the South. Clay asked:

What have you to fear if the 800,000 slaveholders should dissolve the Union? Let them go off if they will! But they will not go. They expect to play the same game of brag, which you have played with so much success; but when they find out you are in earnest, they will acquiesce.

Clay admitted, or at least implied, that the slaveholders have controlled

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the National Government up to now, but he felt the North could shake
them off without destroying the Union. 87

When Clay reached Springfield, the Democratic officers in charge
refused him the use of the rotunda of the State House. It was, there¬
fore, necessary to adjourn the meeting to a neighboring grove. This
measure served to draw him an even larger audience. 88

A lectern was hastily constructed, and Clay launched a terrific
attack upon those who were either responsible for or condoned the re¬
peal of the Missouri Compromise. 89 Clay began by saying that he found
himself somewhat in the condition of John the Baptist, who came preach¬
ing in the wilderness. Even in his own state, a slave state, the
common courtesy of citizenship had never been withheld from him; no
court house or state house door had ever been shut in his face. There
was a spirit of magnanimity among Kentuckians that was "superior to
such meanness as that." To those who had refused him courtesy today,
it might afford some satisfaction to know that his father, grandfather,
and kindred had fought on nearly every battlefield in the country from
the days of the Revolution, and had "helped to purchase with their
blood these privileges which are now enjoyed by men of today." At
least he felt himself "no intruder in his capital city of the West." 90

88 John G. Nicolay and John Hay, Abraham Lincoln A History
89 Townsend, op. cit.
90 Ibid.
As to his principles and doctrines, Clay remarked that he stood before his audience as the advocate of constitutional liberty. The Declaration of Independence asserted an "immortal truth." It declared a political equality - equality as to personal, civil, and religious liberty.

It was a modern doctrine that slavery was supported by the Constitution when, in fact, it was contrary to the letter and spirit of that immortal document and to the history of its formation. Slavery was simply tolerated by the framers of the Constitution, but now like the porcupine in the fable, it thrusts out its quills and pronounces itself well satisfied, and if its neighbors don't like it, they may do better somewhere else. It is not the part of freemen - American freemen - to act as bloodhounds for the slave-hunters.

Clay informed his audience that so long as slavery continued to be a local institution it should be left to itself. He stated that he would oppose any crusade from the North against the South, but when it became aggressive and proposed to extend itself over free territories, he would arise and stigmatize it "as it deserves." He dwelt at length upon the "Nebraska and Kansas outrage." The territory included in this bill was ten times larger than the state of Illinois. It was to be the central point in the great heart of an American civilization. Through it would pass the line of travel from the Atlantic to China and Japan.

As men of commerce, mere men of the world, conscious that slavery leads back to barbarism, we cannot look with indifference upon the concession of this vast region to slavery - the German, the Irish, the British, the American unite in declaring on this soil must be planted free institutions.

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91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
Clay closed his address of two hours and a half with a stirring appeal for a militant organization of freemen which would strike at the monster aggressor whenever it could be reached under the constitution - an organization of men of whatever politics, of Free Soilers, Whigs and Democrats, who with past animosities and, repenting past errors which all have been guilty of, unite in hurling down the gigantic evil which threatens even our liberties. When men violate the Constitution, put them down. Repeal unconstitutional enactments, restore liberty to Kansas and Nebraska, slavery must be kept sectional and liberty a national institution, and then the Ship of State will again set forward in her glorious career of Constitutional Liberty. 93

The Springfield newspapers were divided in their estimate of Clay's speech. The Register, smarting under the castigation, referred to the speaker as the "notorious abolition missionary of treasonable extremes. Sentiments more atrocious never found a place in the heart of the foulest traitor that ever meditated the destruction of his country." 94

The Illinois State Journal took a different point of view. They pointed out that about fifteen hundred had turned out to hear the "great speech" of C. M. Clay.

He spoke boldly, proudly, his sentiments - in the face of contumely and insults thrown upon him... Cassius M. Clay has made several speeches in different parts of the state. We believe he has been, in every place with the exception of this, respectfully treated. 95

The Galesburg Free Democrat was shocked at the treatment received by Clay in Springfield.

93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
Shame on such intolerance and bigotry! Let the name of A. Staine, Secretary of State, and John Moore, Treasurer, be remembered forever in connection with this disgraceful act.96

Upon his return from Illinois, Clay wrote to Chase, giving his opinion of the situation there. He was encouraged, he wrote, by his reception in that state, but felt that more speeches, and a more thorough canvass was necessary, especially in the southwest part of the state - "among the ignorant from slave states."97 Clay also informed Chase that he felt the new name of the party, adopted in several states, was significant.98

After a brief rest at White Hall, Clay again took to the road. In early December, 1854, Clay spoke in Cincinnati. Here he warned the southern white man that his traditional rights were gradually disappearing. Later, Hinton R. Helper of North Carolina would agree with this idea in his much publicized, The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It.99 Clay continued his lectures on behalf of the cause and the Republican movement. Early in 1855, he made a trip to Boston where he addressed the Mercantile Liberation Association. His subject was "The Beautiful." The Liberator stated that the speech was generally regarded as a failure. While in Boston he also spoke

98. Ibid.
at Tremont Temple, on the subject "The Despotism of the Slave Power."
The _Liberator_ reported that Clay redeemed himself for his previous
address in Boston. Clay wrote to William Seward, from Utica, New
York, that in his humble way of nightly lectures, mostly on the des-
potism of slavery, he felt that he was doing a good service for the
common cause.

During 1855, Cassius Clay ran into financial difficulty and was,
therefore, forced to devote much of his time to his personal means.
However, he kept in constant contact with the key members of the Re-
publican movement. He also did whatever possible for the cause at
home. On July 2, 1855, he spoke at Mount Vernon, Kentucky, on the
Kansas - Nebraska Act. He denounced, in the bitterest words, the
old Democratic and Whig Parties, and said they could not be trusted.
He also denounced the Know - Nothing Party, which had arisen in Ken-
tucky at this time. Clay claimed that the Republican movement was
now in ascendancy, that their cause was now secure, and went on to
show the strength of the party, even suggesting that the Negroes of
the South outnumbered the whites and could be counted upon for added
strength in the South. When the Reverend John G. Fee was forbidden

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100 The _Liberator_, January 5, 1855, p. 2.
101 C. M. Clay to W. H. Seward, February 6, 1855, University of
Rochester, Rochester, New York.
102 C. M. Clay to S. P. Chase, May 18, 1855, Library of Congress,
Washington, D. C.
103 The _National Anti-Slavery Standard_, July 28, 1855, p. 1,
citing the Richmond _[Kentucky] Messenger._
to speak in Lincoln County, Clay reacted. At Mount Vernon, he called
on the people to meet at Dripping Springs, Lincoln County, where Fee
had not been allowed to speak. He told them to arm themselves and
meet there in three days. On the appointed day, Clay traveled to
Lincoln County, and both he and Fee spoke. Once again Cassius
Clay felt that he had upheld freedom of speech in Kentucky. The
National Anti-Slavery Standard praised Clay for his action. It said
that he achieved greater results than mere triumphs over physical force:

His is effecting slowly, but surely, a change in popular
opinion in Kentucky. There is an intense excitement through­
out all that part of the state. Excitement begets debate,
and debate elicits thought, and all help on the cause of
Truth.\(^{106}\)

In February, 1856, a special convention of the new Republican
Party was held in Pittsburgh. Some of the organizers, led by Missouri's
Francis Blair, suggested a more moderate policy toward slaveholders.
Governor Kinsley S. Bingham of Michigan was the leader of the "irrecon­
cilables."\(^{107}\) In order to counter the opinion of those who wished
to take a safer approach, Bingham read a letter from Cassius Clay.

The convention then adopted a stronger antislavery resolution than
they had planned.

\(^{104}\) Ibid.

\(^{105}\) The National Anti-Slavery Standard, August 4, 1855, p. 1,
citing the Cincinnati Gazette.

\(^{106}\) Ibid.


\(^{108}\) Ibid.
With the Republican Party set up nationally, Clay took steps to organize the Republicans of his own community. A mass meeting was held in Madison, Kentucky, for the purpose of appointing delegates to the National Republican Nominating Convention and organizing a county Republican Association. The meeting was held in the courthouse, and a large crowd was on hand. Clay offered a constitution for a Republican Association, on the basis of the Pittsburgh Platform. His constitution stated:

This Society disclaims any right to interfere, except by moral influence, with slavery in the local sovereignties of South Carolina, or Mississippi, or Missouri, or any other state, North or South; but avows the right and intention of using all political and moral means for the overthrow of slavery in Kentucky and the Union - which the Constitution of Kentucky and the United States - to which we owe allegiance - allows us.

William Stepp was elected president and John G. Fee corresponding secretary of the Association. Delegates were also chosen to the national convention. John G. Fee, A. E. McWilliams, J. H. Rawlings, and Barrson Burnam would represent the Republicans of Kentucky.

At this time, Clay's financial problems became burdensome. For several years Clay had been a dealer in hogs, and a heavy decline in hog prices attributed to his financial problems. Because of these problems, Clay was forced to sell some slaves. Many of Clay's enemies took this opportunity to blacken his character. Articles appeared in

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110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
112 The Daily Quincey [Illinois] Whig, March 7, 1856, p. 3.
many newspapers around the country questioning his consistency. Clay explained that the slaves were left to his children by his father. Clay stated that he could not free these slaves as he would have violated the rights of the heirs and been denounced as a Negro thief. There were twenty-two slaves, and they were sold to two relatives. The entire group was placed on Clay's farm in Madison County and kept together. Nevertheless, this event gave the opposition a chance to scorn Clay as a hypocrite who denounced the institution of slavery but yet reaped its benefits.

Clay did not let his personal problems stand between him and the campaign. He even had aspirations for the nomination in 1856. He wrote Salmon P. Chase:

Vaughn of the Chicago Tribune is out for Fremont; if so, he has violated his pledge to me, to bring out my name through the Leader, of which he was then Editor, backed by a concerted movement from Illinois.

The preliminary convention at Pittsburgh, February 22, had named Philadelphia as the place and June 17, as the date for a nominating convention. On the first informal ballot William L. Dayton, of New Jersey, received two hundred and fifty nine votes and Abraham

Lincoln, of Illinois, one hundred and ten; the remaining votes were scattered among thirteen other candidates. Cassius Clay received three. Finally, John C. Fremont and William L. Dayton were nominated for the offices of President and Vice-President respectively. Clay was not disappointed that his name did not get further mention. He felt that the time was not right for himself yet. He did not push his name before the members of the convention or among Republican leaders.

A platform was also chosen at Philadelphia. It was all that any Republican could desire. The principle of non-extension was kept secure in it, while the personality of the candidate was being used to attract a variety of less radical voters. The first two resolutions were used for orientation. They placed the party on the ground which of necessity it took in defense against the accusation of being sectional and unconstitutional. "Freedom was national; slavery, sectional," and under the Constitution, Congress had no power to legalize it in any territory.

Cassius Clay felt strongly about the Philadelphia Platform and wasted little time endorsing it. He assured the people of Virginia that Fremont and the Republican Party proposed to carry out, in good faith, their Philadelphia Platform:

119 Crandall, op. cit., p. 186.
120 Ibid., p. 195.
which whilst it embraces simply the old doctrines of Wash-
ington and Jefferson and Madison with regard to slavery
extension, also strictly regards state rights, as also
laid down by more illustrious citizens of Virginia: regard-
ing slavery as a sectional and municipal institution, to
be then sustained or abolished, who are responsible for its
existence, and the more immediate recipients of its good or
evil consequences.  

As in 1852, Clay's major campaign effort was in the free states,
where he made numerous appearances. He spoke in Indiana, Illinois,
Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York. Wherever he went, large
crowds greeted him. Clay felt that success would come to the Repub-
licans, and he wrote to Chase: "Things look well everywhere and we'll
win now. Indiana certain!"

What was probably Clay's best speech of the campaign was given
in New York City before the Young Men's Republican Central Committee,
in the Tabernacle. The New York Daily Tribune praised this speech.
Cassius M. Clay made last evening at the Tabernacle one of
the best speeches that has been made in our city this season -

121 C. M. Clay to G. R. Smith, September 17, 1856, Clay Papers,
University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky.
122 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, August 16, 1856, p. 2,
citing the Indianapolis State Journal, August 5, 1856.
123 Smiley, op. cit., p. 159.
124 Jacob Ruhl Bartlett, John C. Fremont And The Republican Party
125 The Summit Beacon, September 24, 1856, p. 2, citing the Pitts-
burgh Gazette.
127 C. M. Clay to S. P. Chase, October 9, 1856, Library of Congress,
Washington, D. C.
128 The New York Daily Tribune, October 25, 1856, p. 3.
perhaps the very best. In force of statement, fullness of illustration and cogency of reasoning, it has had no superior.129

Clay addressed this group with a view toward his future political ambitions. As a background for his claim to high office, he reviewed his entire war upon slavery. He put forth his familiar contention that slavery prevented southern economic expansion. He compared the North and South by saying the South had enslaved the Negro, the North steam, water power, chemistry, and electricity. He told the New Yorkers that if southerners would harness that power, the whole of southern economy would prosper. Yet the South would not give up its preference for cotton.130

"Of the great number of good speeches made by members of the Republican Party during the Presidential campaign of 1856," wrote Hinton R. Helper, "it is we believe, generally admitted that the best one was made by Cassius M. Clay of Kentucky, at the Tabernacle in New York City, October 25, 1856."131

Despite Clay's confidence, Buchanan and the Democrats won the northern states of Illinois, Indiana, and Pennsylvania.132 In Kentucky, Fremont and Dayton received only three hundred and fourteen votes, while Buchanan and Breckinridge got 69,509 and Fillmore and

129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
132 Smiley, op. cit., p. 162.
Donelson of the American Party received 63,391.\textsuperscript{133} However, there was a bright side of the picture for Republicans. Fremont received 1,339,932 votes as compared to 1,832,955 votes for the victor, Buchanan.\textsuperscript{134} Clay felt that the deciding factor in the Republican defeat was that both candidates were from the same side of the Mason-Dixon Line. "It gave our enemies vantage ground just where we were weakest!"\textsuperscript{135}

Although his Kentucky following had withered away under the glare of the sectional controversy, Clay's fierce ambition would not let him admit defeat. In the years between the election of 1856 and 1860, his political ambitions would drive him to new heights in the party ranks. Clay was one of the leaders in the southern organization of the Republican Party, and the "Lion of White Hall" wanted recognition for his life-long battle for the cause.

\textsuperscript{133} Lucille Stillwell Williams, "John Cabell Breckinridge," The Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society, 32:311, October, 1934.

\textsuperscript{134} Williams, Current, and Freidel, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 766.

\textsuperscript{135} C. M. Clay to S. P. Chase, March 6, 1857, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.
CHAPTER V

END OF AN ERA

Cassius Clay looked back on the election of 1856, with a feeling of hope toward the future. He wrote to Chase, early in 1857:

"Another time I think we will win with a clear banner of religion and political liberty and 'constitutional' opposition to slavery everywhere." He also took this opportunity to express his own political ambitions. He told Chase that he was ready to take a second place to Chase or Seward but "not to new comers!" Following this remark he once again stated his firm belief in the need for carrying the cause of freedom and Republicanism to the finish.

Upon returning home from the campaign of 1856, Clay found awaiting him an invitation from the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society to speak at their convention in Boston. Unfortunately, he did not receive it until after the affair had already taken place. He, therefore, wrote this group a letter thanking them for their kind invitation. In this letter he expressed many of his views. He told the Society that to fight against a wrong was just as patriotic as anything one could do for his country. He expressed the feeling that he was not afraid of the taint of disunion. He would not let this "deter him

1C. M. Clay to S. P. Chase, March 6, 1857, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

2Ibid.

3The Liberator, March 20, 1857, p. 46.
from doing justice to those who, in struggling for others' weal, so neglect their own." He told the organization that he was for the Union or any government, just so long as it protected his rights.

"For any man to say that he loves that which brings only oppression is simply a lie! It is worse - it is adding falsehood to cowardice!"

He set forth the belief that there was more safety in the Union than out of it. "When, if ever, I shall change this, my position, then I would war as heartily upon the Union as I would upon a highway robber."

He told his brothers to the cause that he stood by the Constitution and two-thirds could crush slavery, and would. "In the mean time each member of the Republican Party, living in the slave states, can meddle with slavery, and will, to its final overthrow!" Clay felt that the Republican Party would stand by the Constitution and would ever war upon slavery everywhere! "By our action slavery shall die!"

On July 4, 1857, Clay delivered an address at Berea, Madison County, Kentucky. Between two and three thousand people assembled on that day in a beautiful grove where the necessary preparations had been made. The audience was called to order by William Stepp. John G. Fee offered a prayer, and the Declaration of Independence was read by William Chase. After the appropriate exercises had been concluded, a speech was delivered by Clay. He held the attention of the audience for two and a half hours. His address was full of earnest thought, beautifully and eloquently expressed, and abounding with facts which

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5 The Liberator, August 7, 1857, p. 122, citing the New York Daily Tribune.
show conclusively that the question of freedom was the great practical question of that day, and especially appropriate to discuss on July 4. Clay stated that he came forth on this day to keep the vital spirit of the Revolutionary fathers alive. He spoke of slavery as being cruel not only to the black man, but to the non-slaveholding whites.

He spoke of the social equality existing between the capitalist and the labor of the North, and the excellent system of public schools in the free states, compared with the schools in the slave states. He spoke of the vaunting claims of democracy, and the "Manifest Destiny of the Anglo-Saxon race." He said if slavery was admitted to be right, the corner stone of our Republican institutions - the best social system in the world - whatever you might call it, it would not be democracy for 350,000 slaveholders to rule over 25,000,000 people.

In regard to Manifest Destiny, he spoke of the warning voice of history. He spoke of the mighty empires of the past, of Babylon, Greece, Rome, Spain, and other nations, all of which claimed in their day power and prosperity, that they would take over the world, because it was their Manifest Destiny.

Where are these nations now? Men of America, take warning, for there is no eternal law which can be violated without incurring its penalty, and the violation of a moral law brings with it the most severe penalty. Slavery conflicts with the great laws of brotherhood taught by the Saviour. 7

Clay resolved that the late decision in the Dred Scott Case was a gross usurpation of power, contrary to the letter and spirit of the

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6 Ibid.  
7 Ibid.
United States Constitution, and the precedents put forth by the founders of the Nation. It was "a direct attempt to overthrow the liberties and rights of the people, and concentrate all power in the hands of the Slave Oligarchy." 

Thus the defender of liberty in the South wasted little time reaffirming his principles in the face of a Republican defeat. Through such utterances, Clay clearly demonstrated his sincerity for the cause. There is no denying that Cassius Clay was politically ambitious, but he put these ambitions second to the Republican cause.

During the year 1858, Clay was fairly inactive, but he kept up continuous correspondence with William H. Seward. These letters give considerable insight on Clay's feelings toward the future of the cause and the Republican Party. Clay told Seward that southern opposition was building toward the Democrats. He, therefore, felt that Missouri and some other southern states might be lured into the Republican camp in 1860. He felt that Illinois was sure for the Republicans and he felt that it might turn out that the Republicans could get along without Pennsylvania. Clay was also disappointed that the old pioneers of the party had been overlooked in the last canvass, but he was consoled by the fact that it may have drawn new sections into the ranks who would not otherwise have come into the party. He did hope for a better division among the different sections in the next election.

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8 Ibid.

Clay felt that the moderate Whigs would be forced to aid, directly or indirectly, the Republican Party. For whatever might be their attachment to slavery and the status quo, the propaganda threatening the Union would force them into opposition. Clay was ready to go to Washington to confer with Seward about the upcoming election. Cassius told Seward that it would be a gross mismanagement if the Republican candidate did not win in 1860.

Clay also advised Seward that it would be wise to make friends with as many southerners as possible. He also proclaimed that the Republicans must urge defecting Democrats to join their ranks: "They should be encouraged to do so, by such means as influences such men." Even though Clay felt this way about getting all the support possible he was against any compromise. "The battle is to be fought by the free states, and their views should be kept always foremost." Clay advised Seward to let Kentucky and Pennsylvania manage the canvass in their own way so as to defeat, if possible the Democracy, but in Indiana and Illinois, the Republicans could win with their own principles. He also informed Seward that his name was now before many Kentuckians, "and many old hard mill pro-slavery Whigs say Seward before Buchanan or such!" Clay pushed Seward's name in Kentucky by distribution of his speeches.

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10 C. M. Clay to W. H. Seward, April 18, 1858, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 C. M. Clay to W. H. Seward, July 10, 1858, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York.
14 Ibid.
Although Clay did not receive any recognition from the party by being nominated for high office, the Republicans of Madison and adjoining counties saw fit to honor him in their own way. He was presented with an elegant hickory cane, cut on Kentucky soil. The cane was mounted with a gold head-piece, inscribed: "Presented to C. M. Clay, by the Republicans of Kentucky, 1858." On the cane were carved the initials of the thirteen original states on thirteen knots with silver plates. On the sides of the head-piece was engraved the following:

To Cassius M. Clay, the poor man's friend, who said, 'Kill me, but spare my men.'

The Republican Party now began propaganda moves toward success in the election of 1860. They found that Hinton Helper's book The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It, was helpful to the cause. The Republicans, therefore, decided to print one hundred thousand copies of the book at a cost of one dollar per copy, compressing the printing into about two hundred pages bound in a soft cover. They also proposed to raise sixteen thousand dollars by voluntary subscriptions. A person giving thirty two dollars got two hundred copies, which he was to circulate free. Cassius Clay was in charge of this project in his section of the country. The Republicans wanted Helper's book distributed among the border, free, and slave states gratuitously. They pointed out that Helper was raised in North Carolina and learned the benefits of free labor versus slave in California.

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16 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, December 4, 1858, p. 2.
17 The Liberator, April 2, 1859, p. 60.
Clay was in favor of running a Republican ticket in Kentucky in 1860. He felt that the southern opposition to the Democrats would delight in a Republican success and aid the party indirectly all they could. However, after attempts at coalition, Clay lost faith in the American Party and decided that a Republican ticket in Kentucky was out of the question. Furthermore, he could not come up with a man to run for Governor and he felt that if he did it was already too late to start a campaign. At Covington, Kentucky, on July 30, 1859, Clay publicly denounced both candidates for the office of Governor. He called Both Bell and Magoffin political quacks. His speech was a straight out manifesto, closing with an appeal to the non-slaveholders of Kentucky to make preparations to share next fall in the national victory of the Republicans.

The Republicans of Kentucky held their convention in Newport, in late November of 1859. The meeting was held in the office of the only surviving abolitionist newspaper in the state. Clay supported this newspaper and was an admirer of William S. Bailey, the editor. The Free Democrat had been in financial trouble and Clay had asked for the support of the people in order to sustain it. With the

19 Ibid.
20 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, August 6, 1859, p. 3.
21 The Liberator, December 2, 1859, p. 191, citing the Cincinnati Gazette.
22 The Liberator, February 13, 1857, p. 2.
Republican meeting inside the office of the Free Democrat, the house was surrounded by groups of "rounders," some of whom, in a state of semi-intoxication, made their way into the room and at every opportunity interrupted the meeting. Clay and George D. Blakey were chosen as delegates to the National Convention. Four resolutions were put forth and adopted at this meeting.

1. Resolved, by the Republicans of Kentucky, that they affirm and stand by the Philadelphia platform of 1856.

2. That they are in favor of law and order, of state sovereignty, of national supremacy, of the Constitution and the Union.

3. That they are determinedly opposed to servile insurrection and illegal interference with slaves from at home and abroad.

4. That they stand by and defend the freedom of speech, the liberty of the press, like all other policies and institutions, open to the will of the legal majorities, the omnipotence of conventions, and the progressive civilization of ages.  

On November 16, 1859, Clay again made a speech on behalf of the Republican Party. Although candidates had not as yet been chosen, Clay was campaigning hard for the cause. He was keeping himself before the public as he had done for the past twenty years, this time possibly

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23 The Liberator, December 2, 1859, p. 191, citing the Cincinnati Gazette.
24 Ibid.
25 The Liberator, December 9, 1859, p. 196, citing the Cincinnati Gazette.
with ulterior motives. He was now seeking his reward for the loyalty, devotion, and self-sacrifice he had shown to the cause which led to the formation of a party he helped bring into existence. On November 16, Clay was at Covington, Kentucky. Here he discussed the John Brown affair:

I say it (Kansas) is nothing but a personal feud - a guerilla warfare, and carried on by Brown, upon the principle that where every he found a slaveholder, he should make war upon him.26 This affair would play a large role in the coming events of the next decade in the South and cause a great stir in Kentucky. Clay claimed that the Brown raid had no connection whatever with the party associations in the United States. Clay blamed the Democratic Party for breaking the Missouri Compromise and causing the bloody situation which existed in the Kansas Territory. He also denounced Stephen A. Douglas.

Soon after his speech in Covington, the excitement which came with the John Brown raid resulted in violence. On December 17, the slaveholders of Madison and surrounding counties held a meeting. They decided to eject John G. Fee and all people connected with the movement.27 Because of this action, twelve families were forced to flee to Cincinnati, Ohio, and the sanctuary of a free state.28 Fee, the radical in the cause, did not believe in man-made laws (according to Clay). He felt

26 Ibid.
that slavery was wrong, and therefore the law was wrong. "Iniquitous laws should be broken." He was a preacher and believed in the higher law doctrine, pacification and non-resistance. All these ideas were utterly contrary to those of Clay, and although the two men worked for the common cause, they bitterly disagreed on the method of carrying the cause to a successful conclusion. Clay could not defend Fee or his compatriots, and he was condemned for not going to the aid of his fellow antislavery agitators. He, therefore, wrote a letter to the Richmond Messenger stating his views.

He stated that it was well known that on July 4, 1858, he had publicly denounced the doctrine of the "Radical Abolitionists," and the Reverend John G. Fee, that there "is no law for slavery." He pointed out that he had also sent a letter addressed through the press to James Davis, repeating his disavowal of any such political sentiment. Clay stated:

I have again and again declared that whilst I was willing to defend the liberty of speech and the press to the uttermost, as the duty which I, in common with every citizen of the commonwealth and this nation of freedom, owed to my country - that I did not believe the radical doctrine right, and, therefore, I would not jeopardize my life in any such false issue.

Clay felt that Fee or any other man should be expelled from the state if they so violated the law. He then defended his own views and those of the Republican Party. He would not let the lynch law committee run him out, and he stated so.


31 Ibid.
In the midst of the Madison County disturbance, Clay filled two important speaking engagements. The first was at Frankfort, January 10, 1860. Clay spoke from the steps of the capitol building for more than three hours. The streets were filled, and it was rumored that Clay would be attacked if he persisted during the present excitement. Beyond shutting him out of the state house, no incidents occurred. A large number of Democratic State Convention delegates were on hand, as this convention was to be held in Frankfort that same night.

Clay alluded to the expulsion of John G. Fee and the others from Madison County, and declared Fee a pure and upright man, although he (Clay) did not agree with him in his assumption of not being amenable to laws, and had warned him that he would not back him in those views. Clay stated that he fought under the Constitution and the laws, but the act of driving Fee out was lawless and unjustifiable. Fee and his associates preached no new god, but had built saw mills and school houses; and tonight the neglected youth of the mountain district, who had no other teachers and no other friends, as the reports in the state archives attest, condemn their expulsion. Fee had no Sharpe's rifles, had never approved of the act of John Brown, but was a peaceable and devoted Christian preacher. Clay told his audience that he had written these facts to the Madison County papers but the letters

33 The Liberator, January 27, 1860, p. 13, citing the Cincinnati Commercial, January 11, 1860.
had not been allowed to reach their destination in time, and the most useful teachers and workers of Madison County were driven out. Clay then proceeded to an elaborate argument in vindication of the principles of the Republican Party against the uspersions of Breckinridge and Magoffin.

Following the Frankfort engagement, Clay traveled to New York City to address the Young Men's Republican Club. Here Clay denounced Vice-President John C. Breckinridge for attacking the principles and aims of the Republican Party. This speech was fundamentally the same as the Frankfort speech. He gave basically the same account of the Fee trouble in Madison County.

While in the East, Clay gave a speech in Hartford, Connecticut, on February 25. This led to the one distinguishing feature of the campaign of 1860, the Wide Awakes, bands of torchbearers who in a simple uniform of glazed cap and cape, and carrying colored lanterns or blazing coal-oil torches, paraded the streets of almost every town of the North throughout the summer and fall, arousing everywhere the wildest enthusiasm. Their origin was purely accidental. While Clay was in Hartford a few ardent young Republicans accompanied him as a kind of body guard, and to save their garments from the dripping of the torches a few of them wore improvised caps and black glazed cambric. The uniform attracted so much attention that a campaign club

37 Nicolay and Hay, op. cit.
formed in Hartford soon after adopted it. This club called itself the Wide-Awakes. Other clubs took up the idea, and soon there were Wide-Awakes drilling regularly from one end of the North to the other. 38

Clay returned to Kentucky to carry on the campaign. He discovered that the excitement created by the Brown raid had not subsided. Proslavery agitation had grown worse. Clay had a speaking engagement in Richmond, Madison County, Kentucky, on April 4. Madison County had been the scene of trouble earlier that year. The pro-slavery men in Madison County armed themselves with shotguns and pistols and declared that Clay should not keep his engagement at Richmond. Obtaining a cannon from Lexington, they planted it in the public square of the county seat and arranged with Captain John Hunt Morgan to march his "Lexington Rifles" to their assistance, if necessary. 39 Not to be intimidated by these warlike demonstrations, Clay was on hand at the appointed time and place with two big navy revolvers and his trusty bowie-knife. The crowd shouted to "shoot him through the head." Clay ignored these yells and delivered an inspired address. He denounced the pro-slavery faction with his usual violence, explaining the principles of the Republican Party and strongly urging the nomination of Abraham Lincoln for President. 40

Things were happening rapidly in Kentucky. William S. Bailey's


39 Townsend, op. cit., p. 283.

Ibid., p. 284.
newspaper, the *Free Democrat*, was overthrown. John G. Fee and the Reverend John G. Hanson, who had earlier left the state, had returned. They were both living in the area of Bracken and Mason Counties. They were forced, by a committee of fifty, to leave the state again. By April 14, Hanson had returned to Berea three times and was again in the area, with the avowed intention of staying. A portion of the committee was hastily gathered (about eighteen or twenty) for the purpose of removing Hanson from the county limits.

On March 3, at Berea, the committee learned that Hanson was at a near-by house. They went to the house, searched, and found nothing. On the way home near Slate Lick Springs, the committee came across some thirty men, headed by Green Haley, and armed with rifles and shotguns. The leader of the Revolutionary Committee Reuben Monday rode forward and asked if the party was for peace or war. The answer was that they understood the committee had Hanson under arrest and that they intended to rescue him. A fight ensued with the Haley group seeking shelter in a nearby house. The committee soon ran out of ammunition and returned to town. One man was killed and another wounded.

The following day, March 4, the committee again met and conducted a thorough search of all houses and places of possible concealment, for miles around. No enemy was found. On this day the committee numbered about one hundred and sixty men.

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41 The *Liberator*, April 13, 1860, p. 59.
42 The *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, April 14, 1860, p. 1, citing the Mountain *Richmond Democrat*.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
Cassius Clay was sure that the purpose of the leaders of the attack upon the "Radicals," at Berea, was to suppress Republicanism in Kentucky, and aimed more especially at himself. He felt that Hanson's return to Berea did not create a great deal of excitement. But when he arrived in Berea on Saturday, the story was spread that he was there to marshal his forces against the Revolutionary Committee. This, Clay believed, brought on the incidents of March 3 and 4. Clay advised Hanson to leave the state, and thus save himself and Clay's friends from the conflict which he knew was premeditated by the Revolutionary Committee. Clay was told by a member of the Committee that he was the one they were really after.

Clay learned that the Committee was considering forcing him to leave the state. Clay defended himself by saying:

I regarded the radical doctrine that, there is no law for slavery, as revolutionary. While I am opposed to slavery on all possible grounds, my love and respect for my Constitution and my country override all other political considerations. My theory is that slavery is a creature of the law, and subject to the support, modification, increase or destruction, as any other policy, and to be reached in the same way only - by moral suasion, by speech, by the press, by the laws and by the Constitution; that so long as it constitutes property, by law, the laws must be respected and enforced in good faith; that the majority have the right to rule, because we know no better or other way of promoting the ends of government, the safety and happiness of the whole of the governed; that if the slaveholder thus rule, we acquiesce. And therefore the Republicans of Kentucky have been opposed to, and have steadily denounced, any illegal interference with slaves, from home, at home, or abroad; they have given no countenance to the escape of slaves, to insubordination, or to servile insurrection.


\[46\] Ibid.

\[47\] Ibid.
Clay had gone to Berea along with John H. Rawlings for the purpose of furthering the Republican cause and to make sure that Republicans understood the situation. Clay told them that whoever stood in defense of Hanson would do so at his own risk. But if they were attacked for their Republican beliefs - they would fight. 48

Clay's appeal was successful and the excitement gradually died away. 49 By taking such a stand against the radical doctrine, Clay managed to keep such an unlawful stigma off his Kentucky Republican Party. This surely kept bloodshed at a minimum. However, the radical abolitionists in the North did not take this position. They felt that Clay had deserted Fee in his time of need. The editor of the Liberator felt that he would cause insubordination in the ranks. The Chicago Tribune also agreed with his viewpoint. 50

Clay was encouraged by many tokens of his popularity and made an effort to secure the support of Thurlow Weed. He hoped Weed's political strength could get him the presidential nomination. Clay wrote him stating that William H. Seward was his first choice for the nomination, but if newcomers were to enter the balloting, then he would enter the race himself. 51 He told Weed:

There is widespread and increasing belief that in that event I will be chosen for these reasons:

48 Ibid.

49 The National Anti-Slavery Standard, April 21, 1860, p. 2, citing the Cincinnati Commercial.

50 The Liberator, May 11, 1860, p. 74.

51 C. M. Clay to T. Weed, March 8, 1860, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York.
1. I am a Southern man, and the cry about sectionalism will be silenced.
2. I am a tariff man; and Pennsylvania must be consulted in that.
3. I am popular with the Germans everywhere, and not offensive to the Americans.
4. I have served the party longer than any other man without contemporary reward as others have had.
5. There are elements in my history which will arouse popular enthusiasm and insure without fail success.
6. That I will form a Southern wing to the party which is necessary to a safe administration of the government, and thus put down all hopes of disunion.

He could list other attributes, but he felt these reasonably sufficient.

"I think I am the second choice of all the old line candidates' friends," he stated.  

The Republican National Convention assembled in Chicago, May 16, 1860. The nomination of Seward seemed inevitable, although Bates of Missouri, Cameron of Pennsylvania, and Chase of Ohio had very strong backers. Outside of Illinois, Abraham Lincoln's strength was as yet unknown. Conservatives among the Kentucky delegation from the Bluegrass region were for Lincoln, while the radical element from the eastern part of the state and counties along the Ohio River were for Chase and Seward. By the afternoon of the second day it was apparent that the nominee must be a man conservative enough on the slavery question to hold the border states. On the night before the balloting, Lincoln's friends from the Bluegrass were busy in a final desperate effort to swing the wavering delegations to their candidate. This group made their way through crowded hotel lobbies, private suites, barrooms and other public places pleading the availability of Lincoln.

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52 Ibid.
Two disturbing questions arose about Cassius Clay in connection with the Chicago Convention of 1860. First, he had privately stated that he would support Seward for the nomination for President. Second, there is a dispute among historians as to whether he was at the convention at all. Clay stated in his memoirs: "I did not attend the convention." Yet Addison G. Proctor, the last surviving delegate to the convention, at Chicago, stated that Cassius Clay was the spokesman for the Kentucky delegation which lobbied, the night before the balloting, for Lincoln's nomination. The historian, William Townsend, called Proctor's attention to Clay's statement; he still insisted that Clay was in Chicago that night, whether he was at the convention or not. Clay must have realized that he could not get the nomination and that Seward could not hold the border states if nominated. For this reason, Clay chose to go for Lincoln.

The next day Abraham Lincoln was nominated on the third ballot. Clay received one hundred and one votes for Vice-President, but Hannibal Hamlin was chosen over him. A few weeks later, the southern Democrats nominated John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky for President. Northern Democrats chose Stephen A. Douglas and John Bell represented the Union Party.

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54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Smiley, op. cit., p. 166.
Clay wrote to Lincoln on May 21, and promised his unwavering support in the campaign. After the convention, he returned to Kentucky. On June 4, Clay opened the campaign for Lincoln with a speech at Richmond, Kentucky. On July 7, Clay spoke in Louisville alluding to Lincoln as a poor young Kentuckian who had made his way up in the world until he now occupied the proud position of leader of the Republican Party. His speech was received with much enthusiasm.

Cassius Clay spent the remainder of July campaigning in Indiana, speaking in the upper Wabash, centering around Logansport. After Clay had concluded his campaign in Indiana, Lincoln wrote him. Lincoln thanked him and asked him for his opinion regarding the prospects of victory in that state. Lincoln later wrote asking Clay to fill a series of engagements in Illinois along the Wabash and Ohio Rivers. The route, however, was changed after Lincoln had consulted his advisers, and Clay traveled north from Clark County, rather than southward as Lincoln had originally suggested. Lincoln felt that this route would be better, as travel would be entirely by railroad and the crowds would be larger. Following the campaign in Illinois,

59 The Liberator, June 29, 1860, p. 102, citing the Cincinnati Gazette.
60 Zion's Herald And Wesleyan Journal, July 18, 1860.
63 A. Lincoln to C. M. Clay, August 10, 1860, Ibid., p. 92.
Clay traveled to Michigan. He had speaking engagements in that state from October 9 to October 24.

With the election of Abraham Lincoln, Cassius Clay's long fight to see his ideals and beliefs head the government became a reality. Clay's reward for his contribution to the Republican victory was far less than he had hoped for. Before Clay started the campaign, he had received a letter from Lincoln. Here the candidate stated: "I shall, in the canvass, and especially afterwards, if the result shall devolve the administration upon me, need, the support of all the talent, popularity, and courage, North and South, which is in the party." This led Clay to believe that he might receive a seat in the cabinet. Clay's course had connected him with the radical wing of the party and, as far as Lincoln was concerned, made him unacceptable as a member of the administration. Clay's reward came in the form of the foreign ministry to Russia, which he held from 1861 to 1862 and from 1863 to 1869.

In the early part of 1861, Cassius Clay left for Russia. The battle to end American Negro Slavery ended with the start of the Civil War. It ended for Clay with his departure for Russia. Thus, it was the end of an era in his life. There can be no denying the importance of his role in this episode in American history. Clay was probably the most important southerner to fight for the cause. His goal, from

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64 The Waukegan Weekly Gazette, September 29, 1860, p. 2.
65 A. Lincoln to C. M. Clay, May 26, 1860, Basler, op. cit., p. 53.
the beginning, was the formation of a party with the very platform the early Republicans stood for. His devotion cannot be disputed, and his vigor was unsurpassable. His sacrifices were probably as great, if not greater, than any person who took part in the anti-slavery movement. Clay was never afraid to place his life in jeopardy to uphold his opinions. Other prominent southern antislavery men such as Professor Benjamin Sherwood Hedrick, Daniel R. Goodlow, and Hinton R. Helper, all from North Carolina, and James G. Birney of Kentucky did not defy the mob as Clay did; rather they left the South. In his fight against slavery, Clay demonstrated the belief that preservation of freedom of the press in a society was a noble ideal. He always upheld the law regardless of personal beliefs and sanctioned only constitutional methods of change. There can be no question that Cassius Marcellus Clay possessed all the qualities that go into the making of a great American.

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The two decades of American history from 1840 to 1860 were turbulent years - expansion, Indian wars, and sectionalism. Sectionalism agitated in part by the slavery question. It was an era of forming and reforming ideas and ideals. Some citizens refused to become involved. Others were in part molded by the frequent arguments and debates. This study concerns one of the latter: Cassius Marcellus Clay. The purpose was to show the tortuous trail followed by the Bluegrass Kentuckian, during these twenty years, until his political activities became enmeshed into the newly formed Republican Party and its first successful presidential candidate, Abraham Lincoln.

As a young man (born-1810) Clay's antislavery views had not yet formed, but by 1840 he was rapidly becoming a southern antislavery agitator. The beginning of the period under study found Clay publicly denouncing the "peculiar institution" and in 1844 he campaigned in several northern states on behalf of the Whig candidate, Henry Clay. In brief, his efforts were a failure. Cassius found it seemingly impossible to compromise his moral position, even for his distant relative, the "Great Compromiser." But his failure aided him in making up his mind. Now he would fight slavery by any and all means.
His initial attempt, a newspaper in the city of Lexington, lasted but three months. A mob of pro-slavery citizens not only dismantled his printing plant, while Clay lay ill, but threatened him with bodily harm if he did not desist.

The incident ended his newspaper career, but his call for an end to slavery grew stronger, although his next action seemed contrary to his abolitionist beliefs. Cassius enlisted to serve in the Mexican War. His explanation was simple - his nation came first.

Clay's return from the military found him immersed in state and national politics. Many of his political friends would be the founders, in 1854, of the Republican Party. The Free Democrat candidate for President John P. Hale, was the recipient of Clay's support in 1852. In 1856, he campaigned for the Republican Party candidate, John C. Fremont, and in 1860, actively supported the election of Abraham Lincoln. His political activities were double tracked. First, Clay was politically ambitious and wished to further his own career. Second, all his political activities were directed toward his anti-slavery ideologies. Although he changed party allegiance several times, he never altered his ideas on slavery. His convictions became stronger and political changes were necessary to parallel growing anti-slavery sentiment.

Cassius M. Clay was an antislavery southerner who became newsworthy in the eyes of the antislavery newspaper editors. From 1840 to 1860, he received more notoriety than any other southern antislavery crusader. Clay's approach to the slavery problem was far different than that of the northern abolitionists. He believed that as long as
a state constitution sanctioned slavery he would do nothing unlawful to abolish it. He followed a course that attempted to change laws and constitutions by legal means. Thus Clay cannot be placed in the same category as the abolitionists of the North. This position brought harsh criticism from the northern abolitionist newspapers. Clay publicly defended himself; he was a prolific speech maker and letter writer. Most of his material was printed in the antislavery newspapers of the day. As the last days of the crusade drew near, Clay's role as an antislavery agitator came to a conclusion. His reward for the role he played in Lincoln's presidential campaign was the ambassadorship to Russia. This removed Cassius Clay from the American scene and dropped the curtain on his antislavery agitation.

Accepted by:

__________________________________________, Chairman

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