

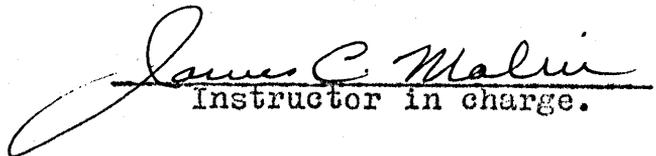
THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP OF JAMES G. BLAINE
(in Connection with the Grant Administration)

by

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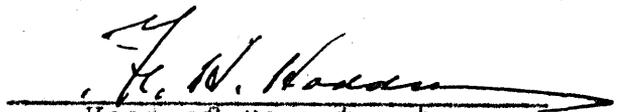

Head of Department.

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PART I Introduction

Chapter I A Brief Review of Mr. Blaine's Early Life
(Prior to his Residence in Maine)

It is a difficult task to attempt to write an accurate account of any great leader. This is particularly true in the case of James G. Blaine, because few men have enjoyed such a widespread popularity as Mr. Blaine and yet few men have been subjected to such violent criticism.

The purpose of the present study is to set forth as clearly as possible the qualities which contributed to the outstanding leadership of Mr. Blaine and to show how his leadership was of primary importance in connection with the Grant administration. There has been no attempt to give more than a brief summary of Mr. Blaine's early life and that merely to serve as an introduction to his more important work as Speaker of the United States House of Representatives.

James Gillespie Blaine was born at West Brownsville, Washington County, Pennsylvania, on the thirty-first day of January, 1830, and was the second son of Maria Louise (Gillespie), and Ephraim Lyon Blaine, --one of a numerous family of sons and daughters, some of whom died in infancy. The Blaine family was of Scotch origin and came to this country before the American Revolution. Ephraim Lyon Blaine,

father of James G. Blaine, married Maria Louise Gillespie, of Scotch-Irish descent. The Gillespies were Roman Catholics. ² The marriage ceremony was performed by a Catholic priest at the Gillespie homestead, "Indian-hill", in Brownsville, and the young couple made their home in Sewickley. From here they moved to West Brownsville not long before the birth of James Gillespie Blaine.

One biographer in his account of Blaine says:

Brownsville, at the crossing of the Monongahela, was an important station on the Cumberland road, the national turnpike between the Potomac and the Ohio rivers...In the years between 1830 and 1840, when the western country was filling up rapidly, and when as yet the railway did not penetrate that region, the national road was the busiest of thoroughfares...Thus, although Brownsville was a country town, its young inhabitants had frequent opportunities to see the great men of the land as the coaches conveying them to and from the capital stopped for change of horses and for meals. Jackson, Clay, and Polk were among those who made use of the national road for this journey. It is not only possible but probably that youthful glimpses of these and other great men may have turned the thoughts of the boy Blaine toward a political career.³

Blaine entered Washington College at the age of thirteen, the youngest member of a class of thirty-three, and graduated four years later. While in college Blaine did not leave upon his classmates the impression that he was destined for a great career but his instructors discerned somewhat more than his fellow students perceived. Blaine, upon graduating, wanted to study law, but as the family fortunes were low he resorted to teaching school to earn the money for future study. He secured a position in the Western Military Institute at Georgetown, Kentucky,

about twelve miles from Lexington. Here he taught Latin,⁴ Greek, and elementary geometry.

In the nearby town of Millersburg was a young ladies' seminary. Here Blaine met one of the teachers in the seminary, Miss Harriet Stanwood, of August, Maine. They were attracted to each other from the first meeting, and after⁵ a short engagement were married on June 30, 1850.

Blaine remained at the Georgetown Institute until the close of the school year in 1851. Then he decided it was time for him to begin his study of law. Therefore he went to Philadelphia where he secured a position as teacher in the Pennsylvania Institute for the Blind. His duties were sufficiently light, and his salary was large enough to enable him to continue his studies for the bar. He⁶ remained here from 1852 to 1854.

Chapter II A Summary of Mr. Blaine's Leadership in the State Legislature of Maine

Mr. Blaine had made numerous visits to Augusta, Maine since his marriage, for this was the birthplace of his wife. While in Augusta he met and became personally acquainted with many of the prominent men of the city, and we are told that "he made a deep impression upon them by his thorough familiarity with the public questions of the day, by the depth and sincerity of his convictions, by the brilliancy of his conversation, and by his easy and distinguished manners."¹

The opportunity came to Mr. Blaine in 1854 to enter journalism at Augusta. He lacked the necessary capital so applied for assistance to his two brothers-in-law, Jacob and Eben C. Stanwood, both prosperous merchants in Boston, who approved the plan and furnished the means to carry it into execution. So Blaine resigned his position at the Institute for the Blind, at Philadelphia, and returned to Augusta. There he purchased an interest in the Kennebec Journal. This position was exactly suited to his tastes and talents.²

In January, 1855, the Republican legislature designated the Journal as the State paper in which all official advertisements were to be inserted, instead of the Age, a Democratic weekly newspaper in Augusta which had

enjoyed the state patronage for thirteen years.

Blaine soon began to participate in public affairs. His first step in that direction was taken in 1856, when he was chosen one of the three district delegates to the Republican National Convention. In the canvass in Maine, which followed, he made his first appearance on the stump.

In 1857 Blaine became editor of the Portland Advertiser, the leading daily Republican newspaper of the state. He continued to reside in Augusta, but was in Portland five days a week. In 1860, the publishers of the Advertiser decided they must have an editor who would reside in Portland and identify himself with the interests of the city as well as with those of the paper. Blaine was not willing to leave Augusta so he resigned his position, and, save that he edited the Kennebec Journal for a short time in 1860, his career as an editor came to an end.

Blaine was early recognized as a political leader. In 1858, less than four years after his removal to Maine, he was chosen one of the two members of the legislature from Augusta. During the first year he took no very active part in the proceedings; but in his second term (in the legislature of 1860), he was one of the most prominent members. He was elected four times to the legislature of Maine, and on each occasion was nominated by acclamation and elected by a large majority. In 1861, beginning his third term, he was chosen Speaker, and had no rival for the nomination either then or in the following year.

One of Mr. Blaine's biographers, in discussing his ability as Speaker, states:

In the chair he showed the quick grasp of public measures, the familiarity with parliamentary law, and the ability to despatch business rapidly, which he afterwards displayed so conspicuously in the office of Speaker at Washington. Even in a legislature consisting largely of farmers, parliamentary tangles will occur. Mr. Blaine was particularly happy in explaining the situation so clearly that no one could make the excuse that he had voted under a misapprehension as to the effect of his vote.

In 1859 Blaine represented Kennebec County on the Republican State Committee of Maine and was made chairman of that committee. From that time until he was appointed Secretary of State, in 1881, he continued to be chairman, and was at the head of affairs for his party as no other man in Maine ever was. For more than twenty years he was the controlling force in the Republican state conventions. He dictated platforms, named the candidates, and had charge of the annual canvass. Although his powers were almost autocratic, Blaine was not a political "boss." According to one writer:

No one ever suspected or intimated that Mr. Blaine used his ascendancy in the Republican party of Maine for purposes of pecuniary profit. He sought no office which that party could give him, save his seat in Congress and for that he was indebted to the people of his district only. Moreover, he never had a competitor for it. Undeniably he enjoyed leadership, as every true leader does. But he neither attained his position nor kept it by the use of terror and threats, the chief weapons in the armory of the boss. Mr. Blaine was too wise a politician not to see that such a policy results inevitably in faction. He was too earnest a party man to desire anything less than a perfectly harmonious party, united in victory, united in defeat, harboring

no jealousies, reserving no punishments for mutineers. He was large-minded enough to have sympathy for, as well as to understand, the momentary hostility toward himself of some politician whose ambition he had not been able to promote. But he was the last man to cherish animosities or to take vengeance upon an enemy.... In another most important particular he differed widely from the typical political boss. Sometimes he did not carry his plans, but defeat or success made no difference in the energy which he put into the ensuing campaign. Nor was it, as in the case of some leaders, a mere pretense of energy, for he won for candidates whom he had not selected victories as notable as for those who were his original choice. Neither as a political chieftan in Maine nor in a national canvass was he ever known to sulk in his tent, however greatly his plans might have been disarranged, no matter how grievous his personal disappointment might have been.

Blaine was not a delegate to the Republican National Convention at Chicago in 1860, but he went as an interested spectator of the proceedings. He not only favored the nomination of Lincoln, but did all in his power to bring it about. After the nomination had been made, Blaine accompanied to Springfield the committee appointed to give Lincoln formal notice of the action of the convention. With the outbreak of the Civil War, Blaine gave his help to the cause in every possible way except that of actual military service. He urged enlistments, gave advice in the selection of the officers of Maine regiments, made frequent visits to Washington to try to ameliorate the condition of the sick and wounded, and did a great deal for the cause of the Union. At an extra session of the state legislature in 1861, and again at the regular session in 1862, Blaine used all the power he could exert as Speaker of the House to secure the adoption of such measures as would strengthen the hands

of the national administration.

The canvass of 1862 was one of great importance. The disasters to the Union cause and certain arbitrary acts of the President, necessary as they may have been under the circumstances, caused many to oppose the Lincoln administration. Blaine, early in the season, foresaw that there would be a fierce political struggle. Furthermore, he was to bear a double burden that year, for not only did he have charge of the state canvass, as usual, but it was clearly understood that he was to be the Republican candidate for Congress from the third district, and he would be obliged to look after his own political fortunes. At the district convention at Waterville on July 8, 1862, he received the first of seven consecutive unanimous nominations as a Representative in Congress.

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In his speech accepting the nomination he said:

I deem it my duty to say that if I am called to a seat in Congress, I shall go there with a determination to stand heartily and unreservedly by the administration of Abraham Lincoln. In the success of that administration, under the good Providence of God, rests, I solemnly believe, the fate of the American Union. If we cannot subdue the Rebellion through the administration, there is no other power given under Heaven among men to which we can appeal. Hence I repeat that I shall conceive it to be my duty, as your representative, to be the unswerving adherent of the policy and measures which the President in his wisdom may adopt. The case is one in the present exigency, where men loyal to the Union cannot divide.¹²

The result of the elections throughout the country came very near being a political disaster. In many of the states the Republicans were defeated and the administration

majority in the House of Representatives was reduced to about twenty. Blaine was elected; but for the first time in ten years one of the Maine districts returned a Democrat.

Chapter III Blaine's Activities in Congress During the Lincoln Administration

The Thirty-eighth Congress met December 7, 1863, and on that day Blaine began a service in Congress of seventeen years, four of which were in the Senate. His committee appointments at first were not to prominent places, and yet, even though the part which he took in the proceedings was modest, he was by no means an obscure member.¹ In March of 1864, he proposed and urged an amendment to the Constitution, to strike from it the clause which forbids the levying of a tax on exports.² The object of this proposition was merely temporary--to enable Congress to impose a duty on exported cotton, but his argument was a general one.³ During the following month Blaine came forward with a measure for the assumption by the general government of the war debts of the loyal states, which he advocated in a carefully prepared speech. He defended his position by citing precedents for the proposed measure and pointed out the similarity between the proposed policy and that of Hamilton as Secretary of the Treasury under Washington.⁴

Mr. Blaine occasionally engaged in debate and did so creditably. When the bill organizing the National Bank system was under discussion, he attacked a provision allowing the banks to charge seven per cent. interest on their loans. He insisted that as long as some of the states

prohibited the charging of more than six per cent. interest, the national banks in those states should not be permitted to charge more than the local state banks. He proposed that the interest should be at the rate established by law in the State where the bank is located, not exceeding seven per cent. Thaddeus Stevens opposed any amendment to change this, so Blaine was unsuccessful in his fight to prevent this injustice. But later Blaine brought the measure forward again, in a slightly different form, and carried his point, on a yea and nay vote. On this amendment Stevens did not answer to his name, although he voted on the roll-call immediately preceding, and on that immediately following.

Upon the opening of the second session of the Thirty-eighth Congress, Blaine won a decided victory over Mr. Stevens. On December 6, 1864, the second day of the session, Stevens introduced a bill, the purpose of which was to place the paper dollar on an equality with the gold dollar. The bill was referred to the Committee of Ways and Means. The fact of the introduction of the bill was not known in Wall Street until after business hours; but the next morning there was a great advance in the premium on gold. Shortly after the reading of the journal at the opening of the session on the 7th, Blaine moved to reconsider the vote referring the bill to the committee. He went on to say that he believed the bill had been "productive of

great mischief in the brief twenty-four hours that it has been allowed to float before the public mind as a measure seriously entertained by this House." He continued further: "The provisions of the bill are very extraordinary, and but for the respect I feel for the distinguished gentleman who introduced it, I should say they were absurd and monstrous."⁷

Mr. Stevens, in his reply to Blaine said:

My friend from Maine (Mr. Blaine) has an intuitive way of getting at a great national question; one which has exercised the thoughts of statesmen of several countries for many years...How the gentleman from Maine, by his intuitive knowledge of these things comes to understand at once what the ablest statesmen of England took months to mature, I cannot very well understand. It is a happy inspiration, but it is a summary way to dispose of the question.⁸

Blaine's motion was carried, by a good majority, and was followed by a motion, which was also adopted, that the bill be laid on the table--which means the rejection of a measure.

In this attack upon the leader of the House, Blaine had, naturally, the support of all the Democrats. But among the minority who voted with Stevens, were such prominent men as Henry Winter Davis, James A. Garfield, Samuel Hooper, Justin S. Morrill, Robert C. Schenck, and Rufus P. Spalding.

A month later, on January 5, 1865, Stevens again brought up the subject, and in giving his own description of what had taken place on the previous occasion said that "the House, partaking of the magnetic manner of my friend

from Maine" immediately laid his (Stevens) bill on the
table. ¹⁰ This was perhaps the first time that the word
¹¹
"magnetic" was used to characterize Mr. Blaine.

PART II THE POLITICAL CAREER OF MR. BLAINE
FROM 1865 TO 1869

Chapter IV Blaine's Activities in the 39th Congress
1865 to 1867

The Thirty-ninth Congress met under widely different circumstances than had the preceding one. Since the close of the Thirty-eighth Congress, General Lee had surrendered, the rebellion had been put down, and President Lincoln had fallen at the hands of the assassin, John Wilkes Booth. Andrew Johnson was now at the head of the Government, and it was with difficulty that he was dissuaded from first inaugurating a policy of revenge, and then from wholly surrendering the Government to the late
1
rebels.

Immediately after the assembling of this Congress, began the great debate on Reconstruction which soon developed into a long war between the President and the party to which he owed his office. Thaddeus Stevens held that the states had taken themselves out of the Union and that they could regain their rights only by readmission as foreign territory. To this theory Blaine never gave his support. He support^{ed}, as a rule, the measures brought forward by the Reconstruction Committee, but he tried to ameliorate the harsh provisions favored by the radical
2
members who controlled the House.

One writer says of Mr. Blaine:

He was as strenuous as the most radical in opposition to President Johnson's policy, and in upholding the principle that the southern states should not be permitted to fall under the domination of the men who had been in arms against, or who had been otherwise hostile to, the Union. He insisted upon effective guaranties against a repetition of their offence, and upon ample protection to the race which the fortunes of war left helpless in the South. To this extent he was a radical of the radicals. But he was strongly opposed to measures which imposed conditions on the south and yet held out to the South no hope that, when the conditions had been met, the states would be welcomed back to their old place in the Union.

Blaine's conspicuous effort during the first session of this Congress was during the debate on reconstruction and his first important intervention in this great work occurred when the Fourteenth Amendment was under discussion.⁴ It was universally recognized by the Republicans that a gross injustice and inequality would result from the provision in the unamended Constitution which would give the South an increased representation in Congress as a result of emancipation. Unless some change were made, the white man who, before the war, cast votes for himself and for three-fifths of the black population, would thereafter vote for themselves and for all the blacks. Thus one white man of the South who had taken up arms against the government would be nearly equal in political power to two men of the North who had remained loyal to the government.

There were many suggestions made so to amend the Constitution as to eliminate this injustice, but all the early propositions made the number of voters in each state

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the basis of apportionment. Blaine objected to taking voters as the basis of representation and pointed out that the proposed amendment would subject the loyal States to gross inequalities of representation. He cited as an extreme case, California and Vermont, the population of which states was nearly equal and each had at that time three Representatives in the House. An apportionment based on the number of voters would, owing to the preponderance of men in California at that time, give to California eight members; yet Vermont would be allowed only three. He maintained that to make the voters the basis of representation would be to cheapen suffrage everywhere. Blaine was the first to propose the principle that was finally adopted, namely, that representation and direct taxes should continue to be apportioned according to the gross population, but that the population should be determined after deducting from the whole number of persons in that state all to whom civil or political rights or privileges should be denied on account of race or color.

A second episode in the long series of dramatic events in which Mr. Blaine figured was his encounter with Roscoe Conkling. This so-called Blaine-Conkling episode took place on the 30th of April, 1866, toward the close of the long session of the Thirty-ninth Congress. The bill for the reorganization of the regular army was under consideration. Blaine was not in charge of the bill, but as a member of the military committee he was thoroughly informed as to the

details of the measure, and as to the reasons for its provisions.

The trouble between Blaine and Conkling had been brewing nearly a fortnight before the final breach occurred. On several occasions Conkling had replied to Blaine in a tone of assumed superiority; however, Blaine took no public notice of it. On the other hand, Blaine opposed strongly and with perhaps too much heat, an amendment to the army bill, proposed by Conkling, with reference to the Veteran Reserve Corps. Blaine declared that Conkling must not have read the bill, since his remarks were based upon a misapprehension of what was proposed concerning the corps.

When the section of the bill providing for the organization of the Provost Marshal General's office was reached, Conkling moved to strike it out altogether, because "it creates an unnecessary office for an undeserving public servant." He then proceeded to make a violent attack upon Provost Marshal General James B. Fry, and insinuated that he had "winked at bounty frauds and other scandalous irregularities." To support his statement that the office was unnecessary he read a letter from General Grant, who expressed the opinion that bureaus should not be multiplied, and that there was no necessity for a Provost Marshal General.

Blaine defended General Fry as "a most efficient officer, a high-toned gentleman, whose character is without a spot or blemish." He broke the force of General Grant's letter produced by Conkling, by reading another letter from

Grant in which he advised that the entire army business relating to deserters and desertion be placed in the hands of General Fry as "the officer best fitted for that position." Blaine thus made it to appear that General Grant opposed merely the formation of another bureau, and that he esteemed General Fry highly and recommended that the whole duty, which, by the bill was to be laid on the Provost Marshal General, should be intrusted to him.

Blaine asserted that the opposition of Conkling to General Fry was due to "the quarrels of the gentleman from New York with General Fry, in which quarrels it is generally understood the gentleman came out second best as the War Department." A heated debate between the two members ensued.¹³ The next morning Blaine rose to a personal explanation and called the attention of the House to the fact that Conkling had so edited his own remarks on the previous day, for insertion in the Congressional Globe, as to render meaningless a part of Blaine's replies. Conkling had said, "I am responsible, not only here, but elsewhere, for what I have said and what I will say of the Provost Marshal General." Blaine commented on the phrase "not only here, but elsewhere" as a duellist's expression. Conkling had changed the sentence so that it read, "I have stated facts for which I am willing to be held responsible at all times and places." He treated the matter with haughty contempt and declared that the changing of the wording made no difference. In closing his remarks Conkling stated, "and I say to him that the time will

be far hence when it will become necessary for him to dispense to me any information or instruction with regard to those rules which ought to govern the conduct of gentlemen." 15

On the 30th of April, (1866), Blaine had a letter from General Fry read to the House in which Fry set forth in detail the circumstances of the several differences between Conkling and himself, fully confirming Blaine's statement that the two men had quarrelled and that Conkling had been "worsted." Copies of official papers accompanied General Fry's letter and these showed that "Conkling had been employed by order of Charles A. Dana, Assistant Secretary of War, to investigate cases of fraud in enlistments in western New York, and that for this purpose a commission as special Judge Advocate was to be issued to him." While Conkling was explaining his connection with General Fry, a Democratic member [Ross, of Illinois] by persistent questioning brought out the fact that Conkling had received payment for his services, under Mr. Dana's order. Conkling, however, denied that he ever received a commission as judge advocate, and asserted that his compensation, which he admitted he had received while drawing pay as a member of Congress, was merely a counsel fee.

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When Blaine obtained the floor he stated that Conkling had taken thirty minutes the other day to explain that an alteration of the reporter's notes was no alteration. Now he had taken an hour to explain that while he and General Fry have been at swords' points for a year, there has been no

difficulty at all between them. Blaine further said that Conkling had attempted to pass off his appearance in this case as simply the appearance of counsel. But Blaine read before the House the appointment under which Conkling appeared as the prosecutor on the part of the Government. In this letter from the Assistant Secretary of War to Conkling it said "the Judge Advocate General will be instructed to issue to you an appointment as special judge advocate..." Blaine then quoted from Brightly's Digest which says, "no person who holds---any office under the Government of the United States whose salary or annual compensation shall amount to the sum of \$2,500, shall receive compensation for discharging the duties of any other office." Blaine further stated that he thought Conkling had not received the money rightfully--but that he would no doubt restore it if convinced he has taken it improperly. Conkling replied that no commission was ever issued to him by the Judge Advocate General--and that no commission, paper, or authority whatever was ever issued to him except the letter of retainer which was just read--and which employed him to act before military courts and before other tribunals. Blaine interrupted with, "Mr. Speaker--." The Speaker asked Conkling if he wished to yield to Blaine. Conkling retorted, "No, sir. I do not wish to have anything to do with the member from Maine, not even so much as to yield him the floor." Blaine replied, "All right."

Blaine, in discussing Conkling's point that a commission never was issued to him, said that "everyone knows that those preliminary authorizations are the things on which half the business arising out of the war has been done. Men have fought at the head of battalions and divisions and Army Corps without having received their formal commissions. The gentleman was just as much bound to respect the law under that appointment as though it had been a formal commission with the signature of the Secretary of War."¹⁸

Then Blaine made a speech against Conkling, using sarcasm to the nth degree. He spoke of Conkling's "turkey-gobbler strut" and said that he knew who was responsible for all that. He continued:

I know that within the last five weeks...an extra strut has characterized the gentleman's bearing. It is not his fault. It is the fault of another. That gifted and satirical writer, Theodore Tilton, of the New York Independent, spent some weeks recently in this city. His letters published in that paper embraced, with many serious statements, a little jocose satire, a part of which was the statement that the mantle of the late Winter Davis had fallen upon the member from New York. The gentleman took it seriously, and it has given his strut additional pomposity. The resemblance is great. It is striking...mud to marble, ...a singed cat to a Bengal tiger, a whining puppy to a roaring lion. Shade of the mighty Davis, forgive the almost profanation of that jocose satire!¹⁹

One writer, in describing the effect that this speech produced upon the House, says:

The members roared with delight all over the House at this attack. There is nothing so relished in the House as personalities in debate. Those who had

suffered at the hands of Conkling, of course, roared the loudest. Mr. Conkling did not condescend to make any reply or to notice in any way Mr. Blaine's speech. He continued his writing. His face was slightly flushed, but he gave no other outward sign of having heard what was said. From that day until the day he died he never spoke a word to Mr. Blaine, and never, apparently, saw him, although for upward of fifteen years he was a member of Congress, later in the Senate, and constantly meeting Mr. Blaine in the limited regions of the social circles of Washington. Wherever his influence could stay the ambition of Mr. Blaine, or defeat his plans, it was always active, although never openly opposing him by name. 20

The circumstances of the encounter have thus been given at length because this episode was followed by consequences which were, according to Stanwood, "detrimental to the fortunes of one of the two men, perhaps of both, if not by consequences important to the course of the history of the country."²¹

Another of Blaine's biographers writes:

The influence of this incident upon both Mr. Blaine's and Mr. Conkling's careers has never apparently been appreciated by any of their biographers... Mr. Conkling's vanity being deeply wounded, he was unrelenting in his determination to punish Mr. Blaine. At every step of Mr. Blaine's presidential ambition he was confronted by the powerful individuality and influence of Mr. Conkling. In 1880, when General Garfield was nominated, Mr. Blaine would have undoubtedly received the nomination, if it had not been for the presence and influence of Mr. Conkling in the Chicago Convention. It was owing to this feeling of resentment against Mr. Blaine, growing out of this incident of 1866, that Mr. Conkling began his war upon the Garfield administration. This led to his resignation from the Senate, and the stirring up of a passion of partisan excitement which gave C@teau his insane pretext for the assassination of President Garfield. 22

Benjamin De Casseres, writing for The American Mercury is of the opinion that "none of the historians has

ever got at the real origin of the Blaine-Conkling feud." He quotes a statement made by General Fry, in a book written in the early nineties: "I believe there would have been a rupture between Mr. Blaine and Mr. Conkling had this [the debate over Fry] never occurred.... There was manifested in the debate bad feeling so intense, firmly rooted and so well grown as to be sure of fruit sooner or later." But De Casseres maintains that the label of "turkey-gobbler," which Blaine gave to Conkling, was the thing that cut Conkling to the quick and caused him to write to George Boutwell: "That attack was made without any provocation by me as against Mr. Blaine and when I was suffering more from other causes than I have ever suffered at any other time, and I shall never overlook it."²³

It is perhaps significant that Alfred R. Conkling, in his Life and Letters of Roscoe Conkling, makes no mention of Blaine's name nor of the encounter with Conkling. He mentions the letter from Fry and quotes the charges against Conkling and then proceeds to give the report of the investigating committee which vindicates Conkling from the charges made against him.²⁴

The second session of the Thirty-ninth Congress met December 3, 1866. The conflict between the President and the Republican majority had reached its height. Practically every measure of a political character which was proposed by the Republicans, was vetoed by the President and then passed over his head. This feeling of antagonism culminated

in the presentation in the House of a resolution to impeach the President. This resolution was sent to a special committee which was to investigate as to whether or not articles of impeachment should be presented. The committee found no evidence to warrant the presentation of such articles at that time, and so the matter was deferred, and the question of impeachment went over to the following Congress.

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The first two months of this session were given over to debates concerning the Southern question. On the 10th of December, only a week after the assembling of Congress, Blaine expressed himself upon the significance of the then recent elections. He pointed out the fact that the people of the North had favored the requirement of negro suffrage--of manhood suffrage--in the Southern states, as a prerequisite to their readmission to representation in Congress. Blaine maintained then, and he held to this opinion when he wrote his Twenty Years of Congress, that if the Southern states had promptly and with good grace accepted the Fourteenth Amendment, there was not in Congress a body of radicals strong enough to have excluded their senators and representatives from their seats. Tennessee had accepted the amendment and was readmitted, but the other states showed a disposition which only tended to intensify the radicalism of the North.

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The Reconstruction Committee had reported a bill quite in accordance with Blaine's view as to the feeling that

prevailed among the Republican majority. It was discussed by various members at the first session of the Thirty-ninth Congress, in the summer of 1866. Now, at the second session, in 1867, its consideration was resumed. Many members had counter-propositions---Mr. Stevens in particular, who proposed a radical measure based upon his theory as to the constitutional result of the war. The bill, in spite of Stevens' strong opposition, was recommitted to the Committee on Reconstruction which soon reported back a bill providing for a military government for the states that had been in rebellion. It declared null and void all legislative and judicial proceedings which might be intended to hinder the officers placed in charge of those states. This bill gave no promise whatever that the civil government should ever be restored, and offered no opportunity to the people of the states to set about organizing such a government.

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After several days' discussion upon this bill Blaine took the floor and expressed his unwillingness to support any measure that would place the South under military government, if it did not at the same time prescribe the methods by which the people of a State could by their own action re-establish civil government. He appealed to Stevens, of Pennsylvania, to admit an amendment to the effect that when any Confederate State shall have given its assent to the Fourteenth Amendment, and conformed its

constitution and laws thereto in all respects, it shall be entitled to representation in Congress-- and then and thereafter the preceding sections of the bill shall be imperative in that state. Blaine maintained that in addition to the proposed constitutional amendment, impartial suffrage should be the basis of reconstruction. Stevens would not consent to the amendment and he was so strong in his leadership that the proposition was rejected. In the Senate the principle of Blaine's amendment was incorporated in a substitute of Senator Sherman, and was adopted by the Senate. It was vetoed by the President, but by a piece of parliamentary strategy Blaine succeeded in getting the bill passed over the veto-- the last day of the session of the Thirty-ninth Congress. The Senate also passed it over the President's veto and it became a law. The famous Reconstruction law was thus finally enacted in spite of every effort of the Executive Department of the Government to the contrary.

Chapter V Blaine's Activities in the 40th Congress
1867-1869

The Fortieth Congress met immediately upon the close of the Thirty-ninth Congress, for, according to Stanwood, "so profound was the distrust of the President on the part of the Republicans that they did not deem it safe to relax, save for brief intervals, the close watch of Congress upon his proceedings. Intending to make the session practically continuous from March until the usual time for meeting in December, they passed an act fixing the 4th of March as the day for the beginning of the first session of each Congress."¹

During this extra session Blaine occupied the Speaker's chair occasionally, and became one of the leaders among the younger members on the Republican side.² A Washington correspondent, writing for a New York paper of that period [in 1868, before Blaine's election as Speaker,] thus describes Mr. Blaine as he appeared to him at that time:

Blaine is metallic; you cannot conceive how a shot could pierce him, for there seems to be no joint in his harness. He is a man who knows what the weather was yesterday in Dakota; what the emperor's policy will be touching Mexico; on what day of the week the sixteenth day of December, proximo, will fall; who is chairman of the school committee in Kennebunk; what is the best way of managing the national debt; together with all the other interests of today, which anybody else would stagger under. How he does it nobody knows. He is always in his place. He must absorb details by assimilation in his finger ends. As I said, he is clear metal; his features are cast in a mould; his attitudes are those of a bronze figure; his voice clinks, and he has ideas as fixed as brass.

Blaine, we are told, performed a great deal of work in the Fortieth Congress which does not appear in the record of debates. Crawford writes of him as follows:

He was on the leading committees in the House and was the originator of bills relating to the army, the navy, post-office, the Congressional Library, the Indian reservations, private relief of individuals, the rights of common carriers between the States, the Treasury Department, the cotton tax, funding bills, the Mexican treaty, foreign commerce, special election cases, river and harbor improvements, House rules, military laws, and even the rearrangement of the rooms in the Capitol. He was very closely associated in those days with Mr. Garfield, of Ohio, who was as much of a worker and student as Mr. Blaine. ⁴

Political excitement was scarcely ever, in the history of the country, more intense than it was on the 4th of March, 1867, the day of the passage of the Reconstruction Act over President Johnson's veto. In both houses of Congress the opposition had almost disappeared and the radical element of the Republican party was in control. Impeachment was in the air. Blaine, however, did not favor impeachment, but he ultimately yielded his judgment, as did every other Republican in the House who had at first opposed the step. Nevertheless, his course at that time and his comments upon the matter in his Twenty Years of Congress ⁵ show that he did so most reluctantly.

During the first extra session of the Fortieth Congress the House had under consideration an act supplementary to the reconstruction act which had been passed with so much difficulty in the preceding Congress. All

legislation of this sort was promptly vetoed by the President, and as promptly passed over his objections. ⁶

Immediately after the passage of the supplementary Reconstruction Act, on the 23rd of March, Blaine offered a privileged resolution fixing a day for the adjournment and reassembling of Congress. Garfield called attention to the fact that there were pending before the President several hundred important appointments of post-masters and other officers that should be acted upon before Congress adjourned. Blaine replied that the Senate would remain in session but that there was no need of the House remaining, for if they should continue to sit, and pass general resolutions, they would merely be delaying appointments. They would be made earlier, thought Blaine, if the House would adjourn. Butler, of Massachusetts, maintained that they should decide whether or not to bring impeachment proceedings, for, he said, the people were clamoring for impeachment. Stevens, of Pennsylvania, said that he thought everyone in Congress favored impeachment until after the election of the Presiding Officer of the senate. Since then, many had preferred that the present Executive remain where he was rather than have the present Presiding Officer of the senate become President. Blaine said that he hadn't heard that before; to which Stevens replied that he had heard Blaine make the remark a few days after the election of the Presiding Officer of the senate that "there will be no impeachment by this Congress; we would rather

have the President than the shallywags of Ben. Wade."

Blaine denied this, but Stevens said it was a declaration publicly made--on the floor of the House--but not in debate.⁷ Blaine, with the support of all the Democrats and a considerable minority of Republicans, was successful in the preliminary votes upon his resolution; but by filibustering, the radicals succeeded in post-poning the final vote, and ultimately defeated the measure. Congress, nevertheless, took two long recesses during the summer and autumn, and the question of impeachment was deferred until the second session.⁸

Shortly after the first recess of Congress began, Mr. Blaine, together with Justin S. Morrill, of Vermont, sailed for Europe. The summer session of Congress had been held in their absence, and the Senate and the House did not reassemble until November, 21.⁹

Upon Mr. Blaine's return from Europe the greenback movement was at its height. Pendleton, of Ohio, and Butler, of Massachusetts, had advocated the policy that the principal of the United States bonds, which were known as the five-twenties, could be legally and justly paid in paper currency. Blaine refuted this position and in an able speech covered the whole ground of the argument in regard to the public obligation to pay the principal of the five-twenty bonds in coin. He pointed out that that obligation is established by the uniform practice of the Government to redeem all its funded debt in coin; by the

fact that in the first of the five-twenty loan bills Congress directed the formation of a sinking fund in coin for the purchase and payment of the bonded debt of the United States; by the general understanding in Congress and throughout the country when the five-twenty loan bills were passed; and finally by the pledge of the Secretary of the Treasury when the loan was negotiated---" a pledge made with the knowledge, and rendered binding by the assent, of Congress."

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Blaine went on to discuss the practical side of the question. He showed that the five-twenty bonds could not be paid in paper currency without an almost limitless issue of greenbacks. He held that the remedy for our financial troubles lay not in a superabundance of depreciated paper currency, but rather in the opposite direction-- and he urged the adoption of measures for a steady approach to a specie basis. Blaine continued:

Instead, therefore, of entering upon a reckless and boundless issue of legal tenders, with their consequent depression, if not destruction of value, let us set resolutely to work and make those already in circulation equal to so many gold dollars. When that result shall be accomplished we can proceed to pay our five-twenties either in coin or paper, for the one would be the equivalent of the other...As to the particular measures of legislation requisite to hasten the resumption of specie payment, gentlemen equally entitled to respect may widely differ; but there is one line of policy conducive thereto on which we all ought to agree, and that is on a serious reduction of the Government expenses and a consequent lightening of the burdens of taxation.¹¹

In the following session, on the 7th of March, 1863, Blaine gave a second speech on the subject of finance in

which he refuted arguments brought forward by advocates of payment in greenbacks, and again advocated a policy which, he maintained, would bring the entire currency in due season up to the specie standard--without any "rashness, contraction, or financial convulsion." ¹² Later in the session, on June 23, Blaine made a third speech in which he gave his views concerning the bill to tax United States bonds. He addressed his remarks, not to the "mischievous, demagogue class," but rather, to those who were "sincere and conscientious in their conviction," even though misled. He continued:

The total gold-bearing debt of the United States, the conversion of seven-thirties completed, amounts to a little more than twenty-one hundred million dollars; of this sum total something over two hundred million dollars draw but five per cent. interest, a rate not sufficiently high to provoke hostility or suggest the necessity of taxation. Indeed it may be safely said that there never has been any popular dissatisfaction with regard to the non-taxation of the five per cents., it being agreed by common consent that such a rate of interest was not unreasonable on a loan negotiated at such a time.

The agitation may, therefore, be regarded as substantially confined to the six per cent. gold-bearing bonds, which amounted to the large aggregate of nineteen hundred million dollars. Many people honestly, but thoughtlessly, believe that if this class of bonds could be taxed by local authority the whole vast volume represented by them would at once be added to the lists of the assessor.

Blaine then went on to show that that conclusion was wholly unfounded, and pointed out the fact that if the right of local taxation existed in its fullest extent, only a small part of the total amount of bonds could by any possibility be subjected to any greater local tax

than they already pay. He depicted the disastrous results that would be certain to follow if such a policy were adopted. He urged an adherence "to the steady, straightforward course dictated alike by good policy and good faith."

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On July 2, 1868 Blaine made a quite lengthy speech in the committee of the whole, giving a survey of the financial situation. He stated that he wanted to set right many misrepresentations regarding governmental expenditures. He pointed out that many attempts had been made throughout the country to create the impression that the expenditures of the present Congress were "on a scale of heedless and reckless extravagance." Blaine said he proposed to show that such was not the case, but rather, on the contrary, the expenditures were made with "far more regard to economy than distinguished the last Democratic administration that was in power in this country. The question is one of figures and not of argument, and hence I proceed at once to the figures." Blaine went on to say:

The fact that so large a proportion of our expenditure is the result of the war, and is unavoidable unless we repudiate our obligations to our public creditors and our heroic soldiers, cannot be too often repeated or too thoroughly impressed on the public mind; for it is idle to denounce these expenditures as extravagant unless we are prepared to withhold them; and whoever proposes to withhold them proposes thereby to put the nation at the same time under the doubly disgraceful stigma of repudiation and ingratitude. If the Democratic party choose to assume that position it is welcome to all the glory of it."

By quoting figures to substantiate his remarks, Blaine pointed out that "the Army under the peace establishment of a Democratic administration [Buchanan's] immediately preceding the war cost per regiment largely more in gold than the Army now costs per regiment in paper under the peace establishment as administered by General Grant." Blaine then stated that the comparison in regard to naval expenditures during the two above named periods are "equally suggestive and striking." In the Post Office expenditures the difference is even "more striking than in the relative expenses of the Army and Navy."

Blaine then went on to say:

Consider further, Mr. Chairman, that while the Republican party has been providing the means for these expenditures, they have been at the same time effecting immense reductions in the public debt and continually and largely reducing taxation.... And today the taxes of the Federal Government are so wisely adjusted and collected from such few sources that no man feels them burdensome, oppressive or exacting. Demagogues may misrepresent and partisans may assail, but the people know and feel that today the taxes are levied by the Federal Government are not an oppression to the individual and not a hinderance to the development of the industrial resources of the land.

Blaine concluded:

The history of the Republican party, Mr. Chairman, is indeed a proud record. Inheriting a bankrupt Treasury, a dishonored credit, and a gigantic rebellion from the traitorous Administration which preceded their advent to power in 1861, the Republicans heroically and successfully grappled with and conquered all these obstacles to the life and progress of the nation. They replenished the Treasury; they redeemed our credit; they subdued the mightiest rebellion that

ever confronted civil power since Governments were instituted among men; they struck the shackles from four millions of human beings, and gave them every civil right under the Constitution and laws. And while accomplishing these herculean tasks, the Republican party administered the Government so wisely that prosperity has been all the time abroad in the land; great business enterprises have been undertaken and successfully prosecuted; factories have been built; the forest subdued; farms brought under cultivation; navigable rivers improved; thousands of miles of railway constructed; the continent spanned by telegraph wires; the two oceans well nigh connected by a road of iron; the emigrant protected on the remotest frontier; Territories carved out of the wilderness domain; and new States of promise and power added to the national union.

What other party in the history of this country ever confronted such difficulties? What other party ever gained such victories? But great as its achievements have been, its work is not yet finished. Out of the fierce conflicts of the recent past, conflicts indeed still raging, order and harmony, conciliation and friendship, are yet to be evoked; not, indeed, by unwise concession and timid compromise, but by that firm policy which is based on Right, and under the leadership of one, who, so terribly earnest in war, is yet today the embodiment of peace, the conservator¹⁴ of public justice, the hope of loyal millions!

The question of impeachment was taken up in the second session of the Fortieth Congress and impeachment resolutions were passed by the House on Monday, February the 24th, 1868. On Monday, the 3rd of March, articles of impeachment were agreed upon by the House and on the 5th they were presented to the Senate. ¹⁵ Blaine's participation in the proceedings was slight. At no time did he speak a word in the House on the general subject of impeachment. While he had opposed the impeachment resolutions offered in the preceding year, he now yielded

to the general sentiment of the majority and voted, as
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 did the rest, with his party.

The impeachment campaign extended over more than a year. While Blaine's share in it was slight, he was active in debate upon other questions. Stanwood states:

At the beginning of the Congress he was made by the Speaker a member of the Committee on Rules, of which the Speaker himself is Chairman, one of the most select and important committees of the House. It was a distinct recognition of his skill as a parliamentarian. He was also placed fourth upon another important committee, Appropriations, of which Thaddeus Stevens was chairman,--a committee which at that time reported and had charge of all appropriation bills. 17

One of Blaine's biographers writes:

The most important public utterance of Mr. Blaine during the third and last session of the Fortieth Congress--for during that session he rarely was heard save upon questions arising when appropriation bills which he was managing were under discussion--was a speech on national affairs, delivered on December 10, 1868, on the fourth day of the session, a month after the election of General Grant. 18

Blaine gave a comprehensive review of the past achievements of our government and pointed out the results to be anticipated from the election of General Grant to the Presidency. His speech centered around these four main points: First--"The Union of the States has been maintained and its perpetuity guaranteed, by this election." Second--"The reconstruction laws of Congress have been vindicated and sustained by General Grant's election." Third--"The election of General Grant has settled the financial question." Fourth--"With the

election of General Grant comes a higher standard of American citizenship--with more dignity and character to the name abroad and more assured liberty and security attaching to it at home." In the concluding sentence of this speech is a statement which shows his bent to looking into the future and predicting coming events. He said:

Whatever, therefore, may lie before us in the untrodden and often beclouded path of the future--whether it be financial embarrassment, or domestic trouble of another and more serious type, or misunderstanding with foreign nations, or the extension of our flag and our sovereignty over insular or continental possessions, North or South, that fate or fortune may peacefully offer to our ambition--let us believe with all confidence that General Grant's administration will meet any exigency with the courage, the ability, and the conscience which American nationality and Christian civilization demand.¹⁹

The Fortieth Congress was the last one in which Blaine sat on the floor of the House as a member of the majority party. In the following Congress he was
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elected Speaker of the House.

Blaine had already exhibited ability as a political leader. He was a man of great political sagacity and his party associates placed great confidence in him. Not only was he fair to his own party but numerous examples could be cited of his fairness as a political opponent. When a bill was pending which proposed to exclude the Southern states from the privilege of sending cadets to West Point, he opposed the measure strongly and said he didn't believe in punishing children in the rebel states.

He pointed out that when the war began these persons now eligible to be appointed as cadets were only about ten years old, and he didn't propose to punish them for the faults of their fathers. ²¹ The same scrupulous respect for the will of the people is seen in his stand on the bill concerning land-grants to Southern railroads. Blaine suggested that they wait four or five weeks until the senators and representatives shall have taken their seats so that they could be heard in their own behalf. Blaine went on to say that he greatly distrusted the wisdom of denying to these Southern states the means of finishing their lines of transportation. He maintained that if these lands were ever necessary to those states, they were much more necessary now than they were at the time when they were originally granted. Blaine concluded by saying that he wasn't pledging himself to vote in favor of a renewal of these grants--he hadn't voted for other land grants that session--but he maintained that a snap judgment ought not be taken in this way when the interests of the United States would not be jeopardized by waiting. ²²

In the same spirit of justice he refused to take a questionable advantage even for the Republican party and refused to vote to seat the Republican contestant of a seat in the House whose case rested upon the fact that the person elected had aided the rebellion. Blaine stated that he wasn't going to vote with the House to elect a man that that state didn't want to represent them. He

said, "Let them have another chance. If they send a loyal man here with a majority he shall take the oath. If they send a disloyal man here we will send him back, and we can stand that just as long as the second district in Kentucky can stand it." Blaine continued by saying:

Now it appears to me to be stretching technical construction to the last point, where it cracks and where it breaks, if you are going to hold up nine, ten, or twenty thousand men to an accurate knowledge of the precise political record of the various candidates asking their suffrage. We have a peculiar case pending now, I believe, before the Committee of Elections. One of the gentlemen from Tennessee, who is in sympathy with this side of the House, Mr. Butler, was arrested at the Speaker's desk on the first day of the session and was not allowed to take the oath because he had once taken the oath to support the Confederate constitution. If the Committee of Elections shall report that he is ineligible on that account, why, of course, then his copperhead competitor by this construction comes immediately in.

The term "copperhead" was a "vituperative epithet applied to Northern sympathizers with the South." Eldridge of Wisconsin objected to the word and said that it was not parliamentary. Blaine immediately recalled the word and said, "I never used it before in debate here; I will say his Democratic competitor." The Speaker, however, ruled that the word was permissible, not having been applied to any one in the House, but Blaine insisted on recalling it. "I did not withdraw the word as a question of order," he said. "I should have told the gentleman from Wisconsin that he had made no point of order. As a question of taste I confess that I transgressed, and as a question of taste I change the word.... It was in bad taste, as it

always is, to use offensive political epithets in debate here." Blaine went on:

To resume the line of my argument. I am unwilling, I say, to lay down a precedent affecting the other side of the House that I would not be willing to follow for this side of the House. I do not propose to mete out justice to gentlemen on the other side that I am not willing to have commended to my own lips over here. And it does seem to me that it is a most extraordinary proposition--and I say it with all due respect to the admirable arguments that have been made on that side--the most extraordinary proposition that I ever knew advanced here in an election case, that the House should deliberately declare that a man who has a pitiful minority of the votes in the district shall be declared here entitled to the seat.²³

Many more examples could be given of Blaine's fairness in his dealings in Congress. As a specimen of his parliamentary manner we may refer to his conduct of the Army Appropriation Bill shortly before he was elected Speaker. Before the Clerk proceeded to read the bill for amendment, Blaine said that he desired to make a statement "in reference to the aggregate amount of the appropriation contained in the bill." Blaine stated that it was his conviction that the Army ought to be reduced. He continued by saying:

I had the honor to introduce last year a provision in the Army appropriation bill for the reduction of the Army, which did not meet with the concurrence or approval of the House.... Therefore, the Committee on Appropriations have not this year made any recommendation touching that question. But in order to preserve my own consistency, which is important to me if not to other people, I hold now that instead of sixty regiments, this Congress, or if not, the very next, ought to provide for the reduction of the Army to thirty regiments, or just one half what it now is.

General Grant as General-in-Chief of the Army during the past year has done everything within the exist-

ing law and under the power that the law confers upon him to reduce the Army. All that it contains now, with its sixty regiments of enlisted and non-commissioned officers, is about thirty-nine thousand. That is nearly the minimum of the Army, and yet we have the same number of officers. There are between twenty-two and twenty-three hundred officers on the pay-roll, which, in my judgment, is a larger number than it ought to be, and more than Congress ought to allow. But as the Army is now circumstanced, with the exigencies which seem to be upon it with reference to Army operations, the Committee on Appropriations have not felt at liberty to readjust its proportions by this bill to what they believe the size of the Army ought to be, but have felt it their duty to report the appropriations for it under the existing law, leaving to the appropriate committees of the House and to the House itself to give directions as to whether the Army should be reduced. With this explanation I ask that the bill be read for amendment.

Brooks, of New York, asked if it was practicable to pass such an act save in this bill under discussion; to which Blaine replied:

I am very glad to answer the gentleman. If by unanimous consent the chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means [Mr. Schenck] or the gentleman from Illinois, [Mr. Logan] who opposed my proposition last year, could to-day move to put a proviso in this bill for the reduction of the Army, I would be glad to have it done. Or if any one else will move it, it will gratify me. I decline to do it myself, because, having been voted down last year, I do not choose to run the hazard of a second rebuff. No one would support such a proposition more cheerfully than myself. It need not be moved now; it can be done at any stage of the bill.

Brooks asked to what committee that business appropriately belonged. Blaine replied, "To the Committee on Military Affairs, of course." Brooks then queried, "Will that committee or the Committee on the Militia have any opportunity to report before the 4th of March?" Blaine answered, "I think not. ...I have a suggestion which I

think is practicable. This is Friday; the bill will be considered about one hour to-day and I think it will be possible to get through it to-morrow, when it will be reported to the House. I will not call the previous question till Monday, which is suspension day. In the mean time if any gentleman can devise a plan for the reduction of the Army which will meet the concurrence of two thirds of the House, it will bring it within the power of two thirds under the rule to act upon the proposition." ²⁴

Wood, of New York, asked Blaine to state why, although the war had been over for almost four years, they were called upon to appropriate such vast sums of money for the support of the army. Blaine replied:

During Buchanan's administration of four years the annual expenditures for the support of the Army, as the gentleman will find by reference to the documents, were \$22,000,000 in gold for nineteen regiments. While I will go as far as the furthest in favor of a just reduction of the expenditures of the Government, I wish the House to understand that the rate of expenditure for the Army under the administration of James Buchanan was greater than at any time during the last eight years. This bill only proposes about seven hundred thousand dollars in paper for each regiment, when during the administration of James Buchanan before the war the cost of supporting a regiment was a little in excess of one million dollars in gold. ²⁵

A little later in the discussion, Farnsworth, of Illinois, said, "I hope the gentleman from Ohio will submit his amendment so that we may have it printed and before us for our consideration."

Mr. Blaine.--That consent having been given, the proper place for the amendment will be at the end of the bill.

Mr. Farnsworth.--Of course.

Mr. Blaine.-- I hope it will be printed for use to-morrow, as I hope to be able to get through with this bill to-morrow. Unanimous consent having been given, it will not be necessary to carry this bill over to suspension day.

Mr. Laurence, of Ohio.-- Will the gentleman yield to me for a moment?

Mr. Blaine.-- Yes sir.

Mr. Laurence, of Ohio.-- I ask unanimous consent of the committee that other amendments may be offered to this bill providing for the consolidation of the regiments of the Army and the mustering out of unnecessary officers.

Mr. Blaine.-- The permission given to the Committee on Military Affairs covers the whole ground.

Toward the close of the discussion Blaine stated:

Before the committee is compelled to rise I desire that some little progress may be made in the consideration of this bill. I wish only to say this for the benefit of gentlemen on my right and my left, this matter is now exactly in the position where it should be. The Committee on Appropriations tried their hands last winter at the work of reducing the Army, and met with such discouraging results from the action of the House that they are not very eager to try their hands at it again. It belongs properly to the Committee on Military Affairs, and I think the responsibility has now been very properly shifted to their shoulders. Unanimous consent having been given for the introduction of a measure looking to the reduction of the Army, the whole question will be opened and all amendments pertinent to the subject will be in order.

Gail Hamilton, in her Biography of James G. Blaine,

writes:

With all Mr. Blaine's foresight and forecast which often left him alone on the mount of vision, with all his undisguised directness and intellectual vehemence, the rectitude of his judgment, the depth and delicacy of his sympathy, his sense of justice, his enthusiasm for humanity, and his overbrimming good-will to men, were always in evidence. His parliamentary skill and power had been attested by repeated temporary service in the chair, and during the winter of 1869, the gossip of Washington in the newspapers began, as early as January, to invest him with the speakership, and his "great popularity with his fellow members" began to be "inferred from his prospective promotion." 27

PART III MR. BLAINE AS SPEAKER, 1869 TO 1875

Chapter VI Blaine's Activities in the 41st Congress
1869 to 1871

The Forty-first Congress met in special session on the fourth of March, 1869, on the very hour following the adjournment of the Fortieth Congress. General Grant was inaugurated President and Schuyler Colfax Vice-President. The retirement of Mr. Colfax from the office of Speaker of the House provided the opportunity to Mr. Blaine to aspire to a position for which he was fitted both by his natural faculties and by his parliamentary training. He was nominated by acclamation and without any real opposition was elected to the Speakership. He had become the recognized leader on the Republican side.

Crawford writes of Blaine as follows:

If he had any special genius at that time it was for hard work. He had a faculty for presenting clearly and forcibly the results of his studies. He adhered very closely to facts, and indulged in but few so-called oratorical flights. He was quite devoted to practical things rather than to the fanciful or the sentimental. It was his fondness for study, his love for logical and mathematical questions which made him such a careful student of the rules of the House. ...

When Mr. Blaine was elected Speaker his official rank was that of third in the Government....According to the then existing law, he was also... [second] in order for the succession to the Presidency in the event of the death or resignation of the two officials above him....In the hands of an able, energetic, well-equipped man the power of the Speaker is very great. With Mr. Blaine the office was made second only to that of the President. 1

Crawford further states:

There were a number of important additions to the membership of this House. ...Mr. Eugene Hale now entered the House, where he was to serve for nine years before going to the Senate. He was Mr. Blaine's personal representative upon the floor during his occupancy of the Speakership chair. Mr. Blaine, Mr. Garfield, and Mr. Hale worked together, both as friends and party leaders.²

At the opening of this Congress Mr. Blaine in accepting the office of Speaker, said:

The Forty-first Congress assembles at an auspicious period in the history of our Government. The splendid and impressive ceremonial which we have just witnessed in another part of the Capitol appropriately symbolizes the triumphs of the past and the hopes of the future. A great chieftain, whose sword at the head of gallant and victorious armies saved the Republic from dismemberment and ruin, has been fittingly called to the highest civic honor which a grateful people can bestow. Sustained by a Congress that so ably represents the loyalty, the patriotism, and the personal worth of the nation, the President this day inaugurated will assure to the country an administration of purity, fidelity, and prosperity; an era of liberty regulated by law, and of law thoroughly inspired with liberty.

Congratulating you, gentlemen, upon the happy auguries of the day, and invoking the gracious blessing of Almighty God on the arduous and responsible labors before you, I am now ready to take the oath of office and enter upon the discharge of the duties to which you have called me.³

Sherman, in discussing Blaine's ability as Speaker, says:

Speaker Blaine enforced the rules of the House of Representatives with that strict impartiality which is characteristic of the Speaker of the English House of Commons, whose tenure of office is not limited by party affiliation. No appeal from Speaker Blaine's ruling was ever sustained by the House.

Making up the long list of standing committees was no light task when it was the Speaker's prerogative to name all of the committees. ...Speaker Blaine devised a scheme of his own for the performance of this duty. He made it known that it would be agreeable to receive suggestions from members-elect, from their friends and from others who knew their qualifications. Then, with the entire list of membership against a group of columns headed, Former Committee Service, if any; Former Public Service; Occupation; Personal Request; Recommended for what Committee; By whom Recommended, he would have excellent groundwork from which to fill the next blank, Committee Assignment.

It was amusing to find so many new members appealing for appointment to the most important positions....

Years afterward in one of the periodic discussions of the old disproved charges it was said that Speaker Blaine appointed on committees members who could and would influence legislation to favor his financial interests, but no specific case was cited and no such charge was ever made while he was Speaker, and, further, no measure was before Congress during his speakership ⁴ the passage of which would affect his personal interest.

Stanwood's account of Blaine as Speaker states:

Mr. Blaine was master of his position from the day when he first took the gavel in his hand. He had the look and the bearing of a leader and commander. His strong and handsome features, his well-shaped person, his easy and graceful attitude, his penetrating voice, his thorough acquaintance with the rules of the sometimes turbulent body over which he presided, the quickness and keenness of his mind in perceiving the relation of a point of order to the particular rule that was involved, and finally a personal magnetism that won for him the unavowed affection even of political opponents against whom he decided such points,---all these characteristics made him a model Speaker, one of three or four great occupants of the chair, hardly second to any one. ... Blaine was a strong partisan, and used the power of his position more than did any of his predecessors, not merely to assist his own party to carry its measures and to defeat the obstructive tactics of the opposition but also to promote or to hinder measures according as they did or did not commend themselves to his individual judgment. In other ⁵ words he constituted himself a political leader.

Toward the close of Blaine's first term as Speaker an event occurred which shows most conspicuously the use of his position to restrain his party associates. Blaine, being one of the most conservative members of his party, disapproved of the radical policy toward the Southern States which General Butler, as leader of a group of Republicans, was pressing upon the House. On February 16, 1871, shortly before the close of the short session, a bill in pursuance of that policy was reported from the Reconstruction Committee, and on February 28th General Butler obtained the floor and called up the bill. Butler, not being a skilful parliamentarian, neglected to move a suspension of the rules, but called for the reading of the bill. During the reading of it, Fernando Wood, of New York, moved a suspension of the rules in order to take up and pass a resolution abrogating the duty on coal. The Speaker permitted Mr. Wood to take the floor and entertained the motion, which was adopted, on the ground that Butler had surrendered the floor for the reading of the bill, that no member had the floor during the reading, and, therefore, Mr. Wood's motion was in order. After the question of duty on coal was decided, Butler moved to suspend the rules and proceed to the consideration of the bill; but it was then too late. He could not get the necessary two-thirds, and the bill failed. Stanwood, in speaking of this incident, is of the opinion that Butler's bill would doubtless have been passed if he had not lost the floor through the ruling

of the Speaker. Blaine thus assumed the responsibility of thwarting the will of the House but the Republicans themselves were glad afterward that the Speaker had saved them from committing a grave political error.

6

In the closing session of the Forty-first Congress, Mr. Cox, a Democratic member from New York, offered a resolution for a vote of thanks to the Speaker. He said:

I have the honor to offer the following resolution:

"Resolved, In view of the difficulties involved in the performance of the duties of the Presiding Officer of this House, and of the able, courteous, dignified, and impartial discharge of those duties by Hon. J. G. Blaine, during the present Congress, it is eminently becoming that our thanks be, and they are hereby, tendered to the Speaker therefor."

Mr. Speaker, before severing our relations as members of this Congress, it is due to the Speaker that this resolution shall receive no mere formal approval. Gentlemen of the Republican party last night testified their signal appreciation of Mr. Blaine by his unanimous renomination as the Presiding officer of the next Congress. Their approval, therefore, of this parliamentary eulogy is already an earnest and a foregone conclusion. From the Opposition here, who are too apt to be harshly critical upon the Speaker of the adverse party, this tribute is but generous, just, and fair; for he has been just, fair, and generous amid our passionate contentions.

Such expressions tend to beget and increase that good-will and agreement which is a part of true logic and rhetoric and is indispensable to the discharge of our duty.

Not alone on committees, but in this House, there is great need of toleration and the amenities of debate. Moderation and benignity are at times impossible here. We reflect here much of the popular passion. Clamor and clashing rule here at times which no Presiding Officer can calm and control. Let us cultivate the charities of debate, and the kind feeling here engendered will diffuse itself through all sections. We may thus remove the prejudices and reproaches hurled

at Congress by the unthinking. We may thus illustrate those virtues which make up the daily beauty of this life and fit us for a better life.

It is because Mr. Blaine has been kind, prompt, able, and honorable, that he has won our regard by contributing to the banishment of bitterness and the diffusion of good will, that I have been delegated by our friends upon this side to present this resolution. If we cannot have a general amnesty for our legislative action, we can at least, by our parliamentary conduct and liberality, have personal and social amnesties; and it is in this spirit, I trust, the resolution will have unanimous concurrence. I move the previous question.

The previous question was seconded and the main
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question ordered; and the resolution was agreed to.

In reply Mr. Blaine said:

Gentlemen of the House of Representatives: Our labors are at an end; but I delay the final adjournment long enough to return my most profound and respectful thanks for the commendation which you have been pleased to bestow upon my official course and conduct.

In a deliberative body of this character a presiding officer is fortunate if he retains the confidence and steady support of his political associates. Beyond that you give me the assurance that I have earned the respect and good-will of those from whom I am separated by party lines. Your expressions are most grateful to me, and are most gratefully acknowledged.

The Congress whose existence closes with this hour enjoys a memorable distinction. It is the first in which all the States have been represented on this floor since the baleful winter that preceded our late bloody war. Ten years have passed since then-- years of trial and of triumph; years of wild destruction and years of careful rebuilding; and after all, and as the result of all, the national Government is here to-day, united, strong, proud, defiant, and just, with a territorial area vastly expanded and with three additional States represented on the folds of its flag. For these prosperous fruits of our great struggle let us humbly give thanks to the God of battles and to the Prince of Peace.

And now, gentlemen, with one more expression of the obligation I feel for the considerate kindness with which you have always sustained me, I perform the only remaining duty of my office, in declaring, as I now do, that the House of Representatives of the Forty-First Congress is adjourned without day. [Great applause on the floor and in the galleries.] 8

Gail Hamilton, in her Biography of James G. Blaine, prints the following letter, which, although unsigned, is probably from Mrs. Blaine.---

Washington, March 4, 1871.

Mr. Blaine has been exceedingly busy these last few days, was up at Congress all last night, and did not get home till near six this morning, then at it again at ten.

We have been to the House, heard a resolution of thanks to the Speaker passed with an eulogistic speech from S. S. Cox. The caucus was held last night, and nominated Mr. Blaine by acclamation. There was practically no opposition. The dissolution and recreation were extremely interesting. At precisely 12 M. Mr. Blaine brought down the gavel and made a little farewell speech; a few minutes of pause, and then the clerk, McPherson, came in, called the roll, and then elected the Speaker by the roll. Mr. Blaine had one hundred and twenty-six votes, one hundred and ten necessary to election. There were no scattering votes. Then Mr. Morgan, the Democratic candidate, and Mr. Dawes, the oldest consecutive member, led him to the chair. He made a short inaugural speech, and Mr. Dawes stood in front of the desk and administered the oath. Then Mr. Blaine swore in the members. It was very impressive. Mr. Blaine's speeches were everything one could desire--short, touching, concise, sufficient, not a bit of spread eagle. The House was as still as emptiness. I heard ~~of~~ every word with perfect distinctness.

Chapter VII Blaine's Participation in the 42nd
Congress, 1871 to 1873

The Forty-second Congress opened on the 4th of March, 1871 and the House of Representatives was organized without delay. Mr. Blaine was re-elected Speaker,-- receiving 126 Republican votes to the 92 Democratic votes cast for George W. Morgan, of Ohio. The election showed that the Democrats had made an obvious gain in the country at large and for the first time since 1861 the Republicans failed to command a two-thirds majority in the House.¹

Mr. Blaine was sworn in by Mr. Dawes, of Massachusetts, who, upon Mr. Washburne's retirement, had become the member of longest continuous service. Just before taking the oath of office, Mr. Blaine said:

Gentlemen: The Speakership of the American House of Representatives has always been esteemed as an enviable honor. A re-election to the position carries with it peculiar gratification, in that it implies an approval of past official bearing. For this great mark of your confidence I can but return to you my sincerest thanks, with the assurance of my utmost devotion to the duties which you call upon me to discharge.

Chosen by the party representing the political majority in this House, the Speaker owes a faithful allegiance to the principles and the policy of that party. But he will fall far below the honorable requirements of his station if he fails to give to the minority their full rights under the rules which he is called upon to administer. The successful working of our grand system of government depends largely upon the vigilance of party organizations, and the most wholesome legislation which this House produces and perfects is that which results from opposing forces mutually eager

and watchful and well-nigh balanced in numbers,

The Forty-second Congress assembles at a period of general content, happiness, and prosperity throughout the land. Under the wise administration of the national Government, peace reigns in all our borders, and the only serious misunderstanding with any foreign Power is, we may hope, at this moment in process of honorable, cordial, and lasting adjustment. We are fortunate in meeting at such a time, in representing such constituencies, in legislating for such a country.

Trusting, gentlemen, that our official intercourse may be free from all personal asperity, believing that all our labors will eventuate for the public good, and craving the blessing of Him without whose aid we labor in vain, I am now ready to proceed with the further organization of the House; and, as the first step thereto, I will myself take the oath prescribed by the Constitution and laws. [Loud applause.]

At the opening of the Forty-second Congress, Butler, whose defeat still rankled in his breast, again offered his bill concerning the Southern states. At the same time he also had a caucus of Republican members called to consider the bill. In order to head off the movement, Blaine drew a resolution which provided that a select committee be appointed to sit during the recess to investigate the condition of the southern states. He took the resolution to General Butler, who suggested an amendment, but who said he wouldn't consent to being made chairman of the committee for he saw that the purpose was to defeat his own scheme.

On the 15th of March, the resolution was presented by Mr. Blaine's colleague, Judge Peters, of Maine, and it was adopted. Mr. Peters then remarked that since he had

offered the resolution just adopted, he did not wish to be placed upon that committee. Butler then said, "And I wish to state that under no circumstances do I desire to be placed upon that committee"--to which Cox, of New York, replied, "Nobody wants you on the committee." Just before the close of the day's session, the Speaker announced the committee under the resolution that had been adopted that day, and appointed General Butler as chairman. The House was then declared adjourned.⁴ General Butler was highly offended at being appointed, after he had refused to have anything to do with the committee, and prepared a long letter to his party associates, stating his reasons for refusing, and had the document printed and distributed at large.⁵

The next day, General Butler found occasion to say on the floor what he had said in his letter. He claimed that the resolution was carried by a trick and made insinuating remarks against the Speaker. Mr. Blaine called Mr. Wheeler, of New York, to the chair, and for the first time during his Speakership took the floor. He then proceeded to pay his respects to General Butler in terms which were not lacking for plainness of speech. Blaine stated that he could have found plenty of members to have served on the committee without Butler being on it; to which Butler asked why he didn't find such a committee then. Blaine replied:

Because I knew very well that if I omitted the appointment of the gentleman it would be heralded throughout the length and breadth of the country by the claguers who have so industriously distributed this letter this morning, that the Speaker had packed the committee, as the gentleman said he would, with "weak-kneed Republicans," who would not go into an investigation vigorously, as he would. That was the reason. [Applause.] So that the Chair laid the responsibility upon the gentleman of declining the appointment.⁶

After uncomplimentary speeches on either side,

Butler said:

I will state what I said when he Blaine came to my seat yesterday and showed me the resolution and asked me to go for it, and said I should be chairman of the committee under it. I said, "I will be damned if I will. Great laughter. I will have nothing to do with it." I am sorry to be obliged to use the word here--and apologize for it--but when asked to betray my associates with whom I had voted in caucus it seemed a very good one to meet the exigency. [Laughter.]

Butler continued:

But all this abuse of me, this getting exceedingly wrathful by the Speaker against me, does no harm, and will not frighten anybody. It will not hurt anybody. The calling of hard names will do no harm to me here or in the country.

If I could have been killed by being called hard names I should have died long, long ago. [Laughter.] I have withstood the rough side of a rougher tongue than the one just wagged at me. I have seen abuse with more ingenuity, but not more malignity, launched at me. And I have survived, and shall survive long after the Speaker has filled the presidential chair; very long.

A little earlier in the debate Butler had slightly said that he was "aware of the new-fledged hopes of the highest place in the future of the Speaker, arising from the quarrel which has been unfortunately forced upon the Republican party at the other end of the Capital

of which he is waiting to take advantage."

In his concluding speech, Butler made the remark: "I admit my ignorance of parliamentary law; and I thank God I know no more about it than I do, because I see how it affects a man's mind who has made it a study. [Great
8
laughter.]

Stanwood, in commenting upon this incident, says:

It was not dignified. Neither Mr. Blaine in his sharp defence of himself, nor General Butler in his rejoinder, was careful to choose words approved by parliamentary law and custom. Moreover it must be admitted that greater circumspection of speech is expected and is due from the Speaker than from any private member, --vastly more than was expected from General Butler, who carried to Congress the manners and the vocabulary of a police-court lawyer. The provocation to Mr. Blaine was great, for he was attacked for doing what, as a member of the House, he had a right to do; he was accused of springing a surprise when he had fully discussed the matter with the very person who brought the accusation; he was charged with party treachery in that he went against the decision of a caucus which he did not attend, although the fact that the party was, on the whole, on his side appeared in the vote on the resolution, which was supported by a majority of Republicans. Nevertheless, richly deserved as was his chastisement of Butler's arrogance, one cannot help regretting the whole incident. It is a striking commentary upon the General's lack of serious conviction, notwithstanding the violence of his language, that on the very next day he went in a most amiable mood to the Speaker's desk and invited Mr. Blaine and members of his family to accompany him on an excursion to Fortress Monroe and Norfolk.⁹

Gail Hamilton, in her Biography of James G. Blaine, prints a letter, which, although no name is attached to it, was doubtless written by Mrs. Blaine.

Washington, March 17, 1871.

I suppose you have seen the Butler-Blaine fight in all the papers. The boys came from Andover Thursday morning. Mr. Blaine said it would probably be lively

at the House and we went up. Judge Kelley was speaking when we went in. Presently I was startled by Walker's saying: "I declare, he is going for him"; and I then saw that Mr. Blaine was leaving his Speaker's chair and taking a place on the floor. He did come down like a sledge-hammer. Butler was really cowed. You know how impetuous Mr. Blaine is, and it was lightning and thunder all together. Mr. Peters, who sat in front of Butler, told Mr. Hale that Butler shook so that he (P.) could feel it where he sat. Butler has brow-beaten witnesses till all the world exceedingly feared and quaked, so that he has, in a certain sense, had free course; but this time he was faced down and pounded and battered, and very much surprised. I was surprised too to see how little he had to say in reply. He left nearly every point un-touched, throwing out a few wild shots. But yesterday he went up to the desk and chatted with Mr. Blaine just as if nothing had happened, and the whole gallery of reporters rushed down to the front seat and look over below to see it--frightfully disgusted, no doubt, that it was all talk and no tussle. 10

On the 16th of August, 1871, Blaine made a political speech at Saratoga Springs, in which he contrasted the economies of the Republican administration at Washington with the reckless expenditure and gross corruption of the government of New York City under Tammany. Mrs. Blaine, in writing to her son, Walker, who was in England at the time, tells of this event.---

August, Monday evening, August 21st, 1871.

My dear Boy.---The great event since I wrote you a week ago is your Father's Saratoga serenade speech, which he made last Wednesday evening, and which he considers, though this of course is in confidence, a great strike. An immense crowd assembled to hear him, and he has been overwhelmed with congratulations. I think myself he was most happy, and perhaps I should be more difficult than almost anyone else to please. All the papers have said their say about it pro and con according to the tone of the journal. ...No tongue can adequately portray my loneliness since I came from Boston

the day after you sailed. I seem to myself to lead two lives entirely distinct from each other-- the one when I am with your Father, all variety, wide-awake, gay; the other all Aunt Susan, sewing machine, children. Another telegram we have also had this afternoon from Mr. Alexander telling of the arrival of the Tripoli at Queenstown only last night. Was it not a long passage, and how did you stand it? I long to hear, not only this, but that you are well and happy, and sure of enjoying all that the liberality of your Father had planned for you.11

Another letter from Mrs. Blaine to Walker throws some interesting light upon the personality of Mr. Blaine:

Augusta, Thursday afternoon,
October 5th

My dear Walker.-- It is a very close sultry afternoon, and although there is not a particle of fire in the furnace, I find myself very uncomfortable sitting at my sewing in my room, so I have come down into the back parlor for the sake of the fresher air. In the library Mr. Sherman [Mr. Blaine's private secretary] is diligently at work making an accurate list of committees, together with the resignations of new members and the "outs"-- a very nice job indeed. And I heard him tell your Father yesterday he thought he had gone over the names in his anxiety some thirty times. ...Your dear Father, I am happy to say, has been out for a walk, and as he turns his face toward, I am in hopes his admiring constituency will have the pleasure of seeing him. I think perhaps he never stood so high¹² with them before, certainly he never stood higher....

On the 9th of October, in another letter to Walker, Mrs. Blaine writes:

...A week yesterday morning since we heard from you. Your Father sits in the parlor toasting his feet over the fire, a suspicious dampness having settled upon them in the garden, where he and Tom Sherman have been exercising, or exorcising, which you will. I have just been saying to him--"Am I not better to thee than ten sons?" "Yes," said he, "and if you are better than twenty, I still want the sons." I thought he was uneasy about you, but he says not; still, my dear boy, be particular to send off a letter if of ever so few lines, by frequent mails.

Your Father and Mr. Sherman are desperately busy over the committees. It is the secret of the power of the Speaker, and like everything else worth anything, is a rock of offense and a block of stumbling to many, though to others the chief corner stone.

Friday your Father expects to go to Boston to participate in the honors to be paid the President, all of which he will see and a part of which will be, as he is himself the city's guest. Tuesday he expects simply to come through town with the President on his way to Bangor. The President stops, I believe, about twenty minutes only. He, your Father, hates it, but I suppose it would not do for the President to come into Maine and the Speaker not be here to see him....13

In a letter to Walker dated October 19, Mrs. Blaine writes:

...Father is in Bangor, accompanying the President. I took H. and J.-- and drove as near the depot as I dared Tuesday afternoon. There was a great crowd and Grant was as miserable as is his wont on such occasions. I did not see him, as I sat high up the hill in the carriage, neither did I see the other dignitaries who were present. But I saw, best of all, your Father, who, as soon as he had introduced the President to Mayor Evolyth, hunted us up and spent a delightful quarter of an hour at the carriage. Joe says there were many comparisons drawn between the bearing of the President and the Speaker. Probably the latter never stood higher in the affections of his fellow citizens than he does at this moment. After an embarrassed stay of fifteen minutes, the cars left. I think from the newspaper accounts that the whole celebration at Bangor must be a great success. Your Father told me that he dined at Mr. Hooper's Sunday evening with Agassiz, Longfellow, Holmes, Lowell and other Savants; enjoyed it extremely. 14

A letter dated Augusta, October 23, says:

My dear Walker,--This is a summer day with us, no wrappings needed, a haze like that of Indian summer hanging over all the out door world. Your Father sits here at the table toiling away over his committees. Hard, hard work! As fast as ^{they} gets them arranged, just so fast some after consideration comes up which disarranges not one but many, and over tumbles the whole row of bricks. It is a matter in which no one can help him.

...The doorbell has been ringing the whole morning, your Father seeing not one in twenty who call. ...

Friday morning I had a telegram from your Father saying he would not be at home until afternoon. He had left Bangor the night before with the President and gone through to Portland, then after a wearisome procession, at one o'clock he took leave of His Excellency and set his face homeward, and here he now is and here he expects to stay for at least a week. I suppose there never was anything like the time that they had in Bangor; the speeches were good as they could be, underlying the speeches was the best of feeling. Hospitality flowed like a river, and not one untoward circumstance marred the perfect whole. Your Father stopped with Mr. Hamlin, and was obliged to borrow his host's dress coat to wear to one dinner and reception. Don't you think he must have looked funny? As Hannibal never wears coats of any other cut, of course he had one in reserve for himself.

...Your Father is waiting to take my letter to the postoffice, so must say good-night to my dear boy. I long to see you--no words can express how much. I have every confidence that you will not abuse your Father's indulgence. If you make any mistake, be sure to write me or him all about it. Do not be afraid under any circumstances of giving us your fullest confidence. When your Father was in Bangor he saw a great deal of Rear Admiral Alden. He sails very soon for Europe--takes out General Sherman. His ship is the Wabash, the flagship of the European squadron. He has invited you to go with him, but your Father felt obliged to decline because he wants you to improve your stay in Paris by the acquisition of French. Good-night, be a good boy, and Heaven bless and keep you, ---

Mother 15

Further insight into Mr. Blaine's personality is gained from the following extract from a letter written by Mr. Blaine to Walker and dated Augusta, October 26, 1871:

...So long as there is perfect and absolute frankness between us, I feel at ease in regard to you; but where concealment begins, trouble begins...

We stripped the house yesterday of every spare piece of clothing for the Wisconsin and Michigan sufferers, so while you are enjoying yourself in Paris this winter, your pleasure will not be decreased by knowing that your former clothing is warming the backs of some destitute lads on the shores of the North-western Lakes. ¹⁶

A letter from Mrs. Blaine to Walker, dated Augusta, November 12, 1871, gives a glimpse of Mr. Blaine's home life and of his devotion to his family.--

...Father left for New York Wednesday. I could hardly let him go, I needed his reviving society so much, but he had wool and cotton manufacturers to meet in Boston; dinners, breakfasts and luncheons, all or some, to give and take in New York, and over and above all pressure to resist or permit of congressional committees. He had to go, but felt that my desire to keep him was all right and natural, so, with a man's appreciation of a woman's nature, he promised to buy silk dresses for M. and Alice, to say nothing of half a dozen for myself.... Since your Father left I have heard from him several times. He spent Thursday evening at Aunt Eliza's, -- Everyone pleasant and pleased to see him, but he sighs after his own bright fireside, indescribably dear to him. ¹⁷

From Mr. Blaine to Walker:

Washington, December 8, 1871.

...You will have seen before this all about my committees in the New York papers.

I am keeping bachelor's hall--none of the family being with me. ...They will come on after the holidays. It seems lonely to be here by myself after such pleasant and lively times as I have had for the past two winters. We expect, however, to take a recess on the 21st till after New Year's, and you may depend I will promptly report in Augusta.

Your expressions of confidence and affection are very grateful to me. A child can scarcely know or appreciate the deep love and solicitude of a parent. Your welfare and success in life are objects of daily care, and I trust of daily prayer, with me.

You are my pride and my hope, and if anything should go wrong with you I think it would kill me. But I have the greatest confidence in you. My sending you to Europe was surely a great proof of this at your tender age--trusting you all alone. There are few boys at sixteen whom I would so trust. . . .¹⁸

As the presidential election of 1872 drew near, discontent with the administration became very pronounced. Besides the natural enemies of the Republican party, there had developed a formidable opposition within its own ranks. In New York City, the Sun was printing a daily double-column headed "Useful Horace Greeley" and "Useless S. Grant." The Post and the Herald denounced the administration and the Tribune, which only a short time before had declared that Grant was the logical candidate, better fitted for the presidency in 1872 than he had been in 1868, now turned away from their support of him and joined the others in the cry that there were at least half a dozen better candidates.

At Washington the anti-Grant faction consisted of a group of Republican senators, such as Carl Schurz, Reuben E. Fenton, Thomas W. Tipton, Lyman Trumbull, and John A. Logan. This cabal was headed by Charles Sumner and its members had submerged the various questions on which they had differed, and had united on the one issue, "Anything to beat Grant!"¹⁹

Blaine, although oftentimes impatient with the President's views, or perhaps lack of views, continued to hold respect for Grant--for his patriotism, for his

achievements, and for his standing with the people. He not only refused to join the movement that was being waged against Grant, but he tried to convince its advocates of its futility--but to no avail. Mr. Blaine wrote a public letter of remonstrance to Charles Sumner when the latter joined the movement against Grant. Blaine wrote:

Your letter of July 29 has created profound pain among your former political friends throughout New England. Your power to injure President Grant was exhausted in your remarkable speech in the Senate. Your power to injure yourself was not fully exercised until you announced an open alliance on your part with the Southern secessionists in their effort to destroy the Republican party. ...

It is of no avail for you to take refuge behind the Republican record of Horace Greeley. Conceding for the sake of argument (as I do not in fact believe) that Horace Greeley would remain firm in his Republican principles, he would be powerless against the Congress that would come into power with him in case of his election. We have had a recent and striking illustration, in the case of Andrew Johnson, of the inability of the President to enforce a policy or even a measure against the will of Congress. And besides, Horace Greeley has already in his letter of acceptance taken ground practically against the Republican doctrine so often enforced by yourself of the duty of the National Government to secure the rights of every citizen to protection of life, person, and property. ...

Your argument that Horace Greeley does not become a Democrat by receiving Democratic votes, proving it by the analogy of your own election to the Senate, is hardly candid. The point is not what Mr. Greeley will become, but what will be the complexion of the great legislative branch of the Government, with all its vast and controlling power? You know very well, Mr. Sumner, that if Mr. Greeley is elected President, Congress is handed over to the control of the men who have persistently denied the rights of the black man. What course you will personally pursue toward the colored man is of small consequence, after you have transferred the power of the government to his enemy.

The colored men of this country are not as a class enlightened, but they have wonderful instincts, and when they read your letter they will know at a crisis in their fate, you deserted them. Charles Sumner, co-operating with Jefferson Davis, is not the same Charles Sumner they have hitherto idolized, any more than Horace Greeley, cheered to the echo in Tammany Hall, is the same Horace Greeley whom the Republicans have hitherto trusted. The black men of the country will never be ungrateful for what you have done for them in the past, nor in the bitterness of their hearts will they ever forget that, heated and blinded by personal hatred of one man, you turned your back on the rights of the millions to whom in past years you have stood as a shield. ...²⁰

Gail Hamilton, in her Biography of James G. Blaine,

writes:

As early as July Mr. Blaine marked out an honorable course towards Mr. Greeley. In a speech at the Lincoln County, Maine, Republican Convention he said: "The Republicans will make no attack on the personal character of Mr. Greeley, for they know nothing against him. He enjoyed Republican confidence and admiration in an extraordinary degree until he showed a willingness to become identified with a party which, according to his own repeated declarations, has made an unpatriotic and mischievous record since 1860, and is unworthy to be trusted on a single question of interest and importance to the people of the United States. Let it be the only indictment against Mr. Greeley that he has consented to stand as the candidate and representative of that party."²¹

According to the opinion of Paine, in his book, Thomas Nast, the presidential campaign of 1872 was distinctly a campaign of caricature--"the first great battle of pictures ever known in America."²² Thomas Nast, the famous caricaturist and native of Bavaria, pledged himself to Grant and through the power of his drawings was to a considerable degree responsible for the defeat of Horace Greeley. Matt Morgan, also a caricaturist, had been brought from England to oppose Nast in his work of upholding

Grant. At the outset the Nast pictures were, for the most part, not bitter. But as Morgan's portrayals of the President became more abusive, in such cartoons as Grant as Belshazzar--Grant leering and sodden on his throne--Grant as drunken Jeremy Diddler, dancing before Tweed--the pictures of Nast became more reproachful. Before long, letters came pouring in to the office of Harper's Weekly, begging Nast to cease. But Nast received scores of letters of commendation as well. Every newspaper in the land printed column editorials for or against him, comparing his work with that of Morgan, according to their political convictions. Paine tells us:

The campaign of caricature ravaged on. Each week Morgan strove to rise to new heights of vilification--each week Nast produced more of the blighting testimony from Greeley's own pen, illustrated in a manner more savage and more scathing. Greeley whitewashing the Tammany Tiger-- ... Greeley clasping hands across the wide grave-fields of Andersonville, the "Bloodiest of Chasms"-- Greeley clasping hands with the Shade of Wilkes Booth over the grave of Lincoln: pictorial ferocity could go no further, and the terrible shots did not fail of their mark--the political apostasy of Horace Greeley....

It is hardly necessary to say that the pictures went too far....The Post in a two-column editorial lamented that such means were considered necessary to the end in view....

The personal following of Horace Greeley was enormous and the Republican managers became alarmed as to the effect of his superb oratory. 24

Blaine, in his Twenty Years of Congress, says of Greeley: "He called out a larger proportion of those who intended to vote against him than any candidate had

ever before succeeded in doing."

When election day came with its overwhelming defeat for Mr. Greeley, he was crushed and heartbroken. This political disaster to Mr. Greeley was followed by tragic events. His wife had died during the last days of the canvass and was buried before the day of election. Yet in spite of everything, he promptly returned to the editorship of the Tribune. But his physical strength was gone, and his intellectual powers gave way. In less than a month after his crushing defeat, he died.

26

During the Presidential campaign, the Democrats, seeking to make new issues, persistently charged that the Republican party had grown corrupt, and that the country could be safely trusted only in their hands.

The first great scandal was that of the famous Crédit Mobilier. The original publication was made September 4, 1872, in the New York Sun and soon it became the subject of numerous other publications. Mr. A. M. Gibson, of the New York Sun, unearthed what he said was the authentic history of the Crédit Mobilier. He charged that corporation of having bribed certain members of Congress, during the years 1867 and 1868, with gifts of the company's stock, in return for which these members were to influence favorably all legislation relating to the Union Pacific Railroad.

The Speaker and other prominent members of Congress were charged with having accepted stocks of the Union

Pacific Road as bribes from Oakes Ames, a member from Massachusetts, who was at the head of the Cr dit Mobilier Company.

In a public speech before a great assembly which he was addressing in Cleveland, Blaine made answer to the charge and not only denied the accusation most emphatically but asserted that he had never received or owned, directly or indirectly, a single dollar of stock in the company. Shortly afterward, the Tribune announced that it took "pleasure, therefore, in withdrawing in the promptest and fullest manner the imputations upon Mr. Blaine."

Two men, against whom the charges had been brought, had agreed to demand an investigation, so on the first day of the third session of the Forty-second Congress, Mr. Blaine called a Democrat to the chair, and, on the floor of the House, offered a resolution for the appointment of a select committee to investigate the whole matter.²⁷

The investigation brought startling disclosures involving the Vice-President, the Vice-President-elect, party leaders such as Patterson, Dawes, Garfield, "Pig Iron" Kelley, and Brooks, the floor leader of the Democrats in the House. The Republican press rushed to the defense of the accused men and the Albany Journal asked "Who would hesitate on a question of veracity between Ames and men like Colfax, Garfield, and Kelley?"²⁸

The New York Tribune, on February 19, 1873, printed the following statement: "Well, the wickedness of all of

it is, not that these men were bribed or corruptly influenced, but that they betrayed the trust of the people, deceived their constituents, and by their evasions and falsehoods confessed the transaction to be disgraceful." Nast replied with a cartoon depicting Justice standing protectively before the accused statesmen, and, with flashing eyes, pointing contemptuously at the editors who had been most "shocked and outraged" by the exposures, and with a stern rebuke Justice is saying to these "saints of the press": "Let him that has not betrayed the trust of the People, and is without stain, cast the first stone."²⁹

Bowers, in discussing the report of the committee, says it was a whitewash and was recognized as such at the time. He states:

The partisan nature of the Report was glaring. The Vice-President, Vice-President-elect, the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, the Appropriation Committee, the Judiciary Committee, the Naval Committee, the Banking and Currency Committee, and "Pig Iron" Kelley, party leader, all exonerated; but Brooks, the lone Democrat, was tied tight to Ames, who had no political significance...

Such brazen partizanship aroused the Democrats, for they had not defended Brooks, the New York World had bitterly attacked him in January and the Democratic members of the committee had shown him no mercy.... "The Republican Party," said The World, "has determined to punish Oakes Ames for exposing the venality of the Republican leaders, and James Brooks, the only Credit Mobilier Congressman who was NOT bribed, because he is a Democrat...."³⁰

Crawford, in commenting upon the report of the committee, says:

The work of the committee was to a certain extent farcical. It was necessary to have a scapegoat to satisfy public indignation. The committee weakly reported in favor of punishing one Republican and one Democrat. They selected Oakes Ames in the House and recommended him for expulsion on account of his alleged bribery of members. They then voted in favor of expelling Mr. Brooks, a Democratic member from New York. The findings of the House Committee were taken up in the Senate as a basis for a resolution favoring the expulsion of Senator Patterson of New Hampshire. This latter resolution was changed to one of censure. It is possible that this mitigation of the punishment recommended was owing to the fact that the Senator's term was within a few days of expiring. ³¹

Gail Hamilton, in her Biography of James G. Blaine, states:

The investigation brought great distress to worthy members, great anxiety and anguish to their wives and families. Mr. Blaine was indefatigable in defending and advising those who were the objects of attack.... "Sam Hooper," of Boston, it used to be said, walked daily back and forth before the Speaker's chair with his pockets stuffed full of Credit Mobilier stock, a single dividend bringing \$100,000, not only unharmed, but unassailed and undisturbed; and Bingham, of Ohio, when asked if he had any, shouted, "Yes, and only wished he had ten times more,"---and him, too, the bullets carefully passed by on the other side; but gentle and scholarly men, in the natural timidity of their unwontedness, suffered many a pang, and the door-bell sometimes rang Mr. Blaine from his bed at midnight to counsel and console. ³²

The whole affair was one of unutterable regret and cast a shadow over Grant's second inauguration.

Toward the close of the Forty-second Congress there was pending in the House a bill providing for the increased salaries of the President, Justices of the Supreme Court, and members of the President's cabinet, to take effect after the fourth of March, 1873, and an increase to seven thousand

five hundred dollars a year for the Senators and Representatives, and to ten thousand dollars for the Speaker, to date from the fourth of March, 1871. If those who managed the affair had been content with making the increase of the pay of members begin at the same time that the increase of the President's salary was to go into effect, there would have been, very probably, less popular opposition to the measure than was actually aroused. But by making the salary of Congressmen retroactive, it would have meant that each member who had already served two years on the old salary would receive a bonus of five thousand dollars. If the increased salary of the Speaker were made to run back for two years he would have received more pay than the Vice-President and the Cabinet.

Blaine strongly opposed the "salary grab," as it was called, and asked unanimous consent to offer an amendment which, he said, "will affect whoever shall be speaker of the House of Representatives hereafter, and does not affect the speaker of this House, but leaves him upon the same plane with the vice-president and cabinet officers!" Then with a deaf ear to objections, he quietly wrote into the bill the word "hereafter" following the words "the speaker shall receive," and declared the amendment adopted. The bill passed both houses so amended. From near and far came the cry against this "grab" and the members who had taken the extra pay made frantic haste to return it to the

Treasury. Blaine had no apologies to make and nothing
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to be returned.

Chapter VIII Blaine's Part in the 43rd Congress

It was intended by the friends of General Grant that his second inauguration (March 4, 1873) should be even more impressive than the first; but the weather was unfavorable--one of those cold, gloomy days which are rather exceptional in the climate of Washington.

In his inaugural address Grant gave free expression to what he termed the mistreatment and abuse he had received at the hands of political opponents. He had become very impatient at the continued misrepresentation and slanderous abuse and looked forward, he said, "with the greatest anxiety for release from responsibilities which at times are almost overwhelming," and from which he had "scarcely had a respite since the eventful firing on Fort Sumter, in April, 1861, to the present day." He continued:

My services were then tendered and accepted under the first call for troops growing out of the event. I did not ask for place or position, and was entirely without influence or the acquaintance of persons of influence, but was resolved to perform my part in a struggle threatening the very existence of the Nation. I performed a conscientious duty without asking promotion or command, and without a revengeful feeling towards any section or individual. Notwithstanding this, throughout the war and from my candidacy for my present office in 1868 to the close of the last Presidential campaign, I have been the subject of abuse and slander scarcely ever equaled in political history, which to-day I feel that I can afford to disregard in view of your verdict which I gratefully accept as my vindication. 1

Seitz, in his work The Dreadful Decade, is of the opinion that Grant felt that he had been abused without

cause. "That he was unconscious of doing badly would seem clear enough from the fact that his second administration was no improvement on the first."

The Forty-third Congress assembled December 1, 1873. Mr. Blaine was for the third and last time elected Speaker. Crawford tells us that Blaine did not have the same intimate relations with President Grant that he had had with Mr. Lincoln. He states:

Mr. Roscoe Conkling had become the devoted friend and ardent supporter of General Grant, and for this reason it is not natural to suppose that the President could have had at the same time an intimate friendship with Mr. Blaine. Mr. Blaine, however, never opposed General Grant in any way when he was in office. He gave a hearty support to the acts of the administration under Grant, and speaks in the highest terms of this great General in his history. ...

The policy of scandal investigation and defamation continued during the Forty-third Congress, and the "scandal-mongers" found lively occupation in attacking the methods of expenditure of every dollar appropriated for the improvement of the National Capital. The Republican majority in Congress appropriated great sums for this purpose. Crawford, in commenting upon this, says:

It is probably that the contractors made money and in some instances frauds were practiced upon the District administration, but in the main the expenditures were made wisely, and the changes secured at the Capital have transformed a pretty₄ provincial village into a handsome modern city.

The Forty-third Congress met in a period of discouragement and disaster. Deep depression reigned throughout the country after the financial panic which had swept

over New York in the preceding September (1873.). As a result of this economic situation, Congress had before it many financial measures to consider. The inflationists and those who advocated cheap-money now became violent in their denunciation of the financial policy of the Republican majority and the people who were ruined by the panic of 1873 soon joined their ranks. Diverse propositions were offered in the House and in the Senate to increase the greenback issues and to enlarge the issues of the national bank notes.

5

Blaine continued to support the previous policy of the Republican party but nothing definite was accomplished during the first session. The Congressional election, however, which followed the close of the long session, resulted in an overwhelming majority for the Democrats. Consequently, the Republican majority, which was soon to pass from power in the House, took steps, during the short session which followed the Congressional election, to provide for specie resumption, and to put the nation's finances on as sound a basis as possible before turning the control over to the opposition. This act for the resumption of specie payment was passed by a vote of 125 to 106, every Democrat in the House voting against the measure. The closeness of the vote was occasioned by a number of Republicans voting with the Democrats, not because they were opposed to resumption, but because they believed that the country was not yet prosperous enough to maintain specie payments so soon.

6

A week before the close of the Forty-third Congress, and of Mr. Blaine's service as speaker, there occurred in the House a sharp contest over a bill known as the "force bill," which proposed to regulate elections in the South. The purpose of this bill was to prevent the whites from terrorizing the negroes and thus getting control of the state governments. The radicals among the Republicans were extremely eager to get this bill passed, for with the convening of the next Congress, the unlimited power which the Republicans had exercised since 1861 would have passed from their hands to that of the Democratic majority.⁷

Mr. Blaine, however much he may have sympathized with the radicals in their attempt to increase the political rights of the freedmen, was not in favor of the drastic measures proposed to carry out their objective.⁸

The bill was reported in the House on February 18, 1875. On the 24th, at the beginning of the session, there was a dispute as to the order of business. Coburn, of Indiana, who had introduced the bill on the 13th, wished the House to consider his bill, but General Garfield, who was opposed to the force bill, asked for the consideration of the sundry civil appropriation bill. The House sustained Mr. Garfield by a vote of 147 to 101, the Democrats and the conservative Republicans voting in the affirmative, the radical Republicans in the negative.⁹ After several hours' consideration of the bill, Garfield moved that the House

take a recess until half past seven o'clock, to enable him, as he said, "to go on with the sundry civil bill." Coburn moved to amend the motion so that the evening session could be devoted to the consideration of his bill, but the Speaker replied that "that could not be done except by general consent." Mr. Randall objected, for, he said, "we want to finish these appropriation bills."¹⁰

The House accordingly took a recess until evening, it being the general understanding that the House would resume its session and go into committee of the whole to continue its consideration of the sundry civil appropriation bill. Mr. Blaine appointed a member to act as Speaker pro tempore until the House should go into committee of the whole and intended to absent himself during the evening. General Butler, in the meantime, quietly got word around to his associates that by attending the evening session in force they might succeed in reversing the morning decision and secure consideration of the force bill. Accordingly, that evening, when Garfield moved that the House go into committee of the whole, Butler opposed the motion, and upon a call for the yeas and nays Garfield's motion was not agreed to. The Democrats proceeded to filibuster, by motions to adjourn, and by withholding their votes and thus preventing a quorum.¹¹

Mr. Blaine was immediately sent for. He was attending a dinner party, but came in haste and took his place, during a roll-call, and assumed the gavel. Stanwood tells

us that "he was in full evening dress, having gone directly from the dinner-table to the Capitol."¹²

That was a memorable session of the House. It began at half-past seven in the evening and was in continuous session until ten minutes past four o'clock the next afternoon. During all that time Mr. Blaine left the chair only during roll-call--such refreshments as he needed were brought to him at the desk.¹³ Sherman in writing of this incident says: "With the most exasperating maneuvering of parliamentary tacticians on the floor he remained composed, unvexed, absolutely impartial in his rulings."¹⁴

The New York Tribune wrote concerning Blaine's conduct of this session:

Never during his whole service as speaker of the House has Mr. Blaine displayed to better advantage his exceptional ability as a parliamentarian and presiding officer, or his power to dispose instantly of the most perplexing questions. His rulings invariably were approved by both sides of the House, and if the Democrats appealed from them, it was generally for the purpose of delay and not because¹⁵ of any doubt as to the correctness of his decisions.

The Boston Daily Advertiser wrote: "Notwithstanding the persuasion, blustering and covert threats, Speaker Blaine discharged his duty with a consistency and impartiality for which the Republicans in the House may find reason to congratulate themselves."¹⁶

Starwood comments upon the event as follows:

At the close of the long contest he was "weary but alert," as one of the newspaper correspondents remarked. Seldom has a presiding officer been called upon to perform a more perplexing and thankless task. A large majority of the Republican members desired to bring the bill before the House. Some of them went to him and

urged him to make rulings favorable to them. He refused emphatically to stretch the rules for their benefit. On the other hand, he decided many questions adversely to the Democrats. In short he presided with absolute impartiality. As soon as dilatory motions had been exhausted and the Republicans mustered a quorum of their own members, the contest was at an end, and Mr. Blaine firmly put down the filibustering which the Democrats endeavored to continue. His eminent fairness throughout the long session was generally recognized, and no doubt the members on both sides of the House remembered it when, a week later, they joined in the remarkable demonstration in his honor at the close of his service as Speaker. 17

On the fourth of March, 1875, in the closing hour of the Forty-third Congress, Mr. Blaine addressed the House for the last time as speaker. He said:

Gentlemen: I close with this hour a six years' service as Speaker of the House of Representatives-- a period surpassed in length by ^{two} of my predecessors, and equaled by only two others. The rapid mutations of personal and political fortune in this country have limited the great majority of those who have occupied this chair to shorter terms of office.

It would be the gravest insensibility to the honors and responsibilities of life not to be deeply touched by so signal a mark of public esteem as that which I have thrice received at the hands of my political associates. I desire in this last moment to renew ^{to} them, one and all, my thanks and my gratitude.

To those from whom I differ in my party relations-- the minority of this House--I tender my acknowledgments for the generous courtesy with which they have treated me. By one of those sudden and decisive changes which distinguish popular institutions, and which conspicuously mark a free people, that minority is transformed in the ensuing Congress to the governing power of the House. However it might possibly have been under other circumstances, that event necessarily renders these words my farewell to the Chair.

The Speakership of the American House of Representatives is a post of honor, of dignity, of power, of responsibility. Its duties are at once complex and continuous; they are both onerous and delicate: they

are performed in the broad light of day, under the eye of the whole people, subject at all times to the closest observation, and always attended with the sharpest criticism. I think no other official is held to such instant and such rigid accountability. Parliamentary rulings in their very nature are peremptory: almost absolute in authority and instantaneous in effect. They cannot always be enforced in such a way as to win applause or secure popularity; but I am sure that no man of any party who is worthy to fill this chair will ever see a dividing line between duty and policy.

Thanking you once more, and thanking you most cordially, for the honorable testimonial you have placed on record to my credit, I perform my only remaining duty in declaring that the Forty-third Congress has reached its constitutional limit, and that the House of Representatives stands adjourned without day. [Earnest and prolonged applause in all parts of the Hall.]

In Crawford's work, Life of James G. Blaine, there is a paragraph in which he discusses Blaine's ability as Speaker. He says:

Mr. Blaine now closed a six years' term period as presiding officer in the House of Representatives. He had been elected for each of his three terms without opposition, and at the expiration of each term of service the House had passed a resolution of thanks and approval for these services. These resolutions were invariably proposed by a Democrat. Mr. Blaine always spent more hours in the chair than had been the custom. He was very rarely absent from his post. His strength and iron frame enabled him to undergo the longest sessions of the House without apparent fatigue. No one could count a rising vote as quickly as he. It was one of the sights of the time for a visitor to watch Mr. Blaine when he stood erect facing a standing House, for the purpose of counting the ayes and noes. With the head of the gavel clutched in his right hand, he moved its handle with almost lightning-like rapidity as he turned from the right to the left. His announcements were made with such a brief interval for counting that they were often disputed, but the count of the tellers always verified his declaration. He was always courteous, quick, and fair. He never lost his head, and in the face of the most furious scenes of disorder, when parliamentary points were being made on every side, he was serene, composed, and master of the situation. His clear

voice would ring out above the din, while his furious manipulation of the gavel in time destroyed the covering of the desk, which was regularly renewed at the close of each session.¹⁹

Stanwood, in commenting upon the attitude of the House toward Blaine at the close of his Speakership states: "Nothing could exceed the cordiality of Mr. Blaine's associates of both parties, when he laid down the gavel at the close of his service in 1875."²⁰

The Boston Daily Advertiser on March 5, 1875, said:

In the House there was a most gratifying demonstration in favor of Speaker Blaine. As he spoke the last words of his valedictory and stepped down from the desk, the House rose in unison and every man joined with equal heartiness in a round of applause such as never was heard before in the Capitol. It had hardly died away when it swelled again into a perfect storm, accompanied by cheers, and soon for a third time the applause swept through the hall as the Speaker stood at the clerk's desk, bowing his thanks and shaking the hands of members who thronged about him.²¹

PART IV MR BLAINE AS MINORITY LEADER, 1875 TO 1876

Chapter IX Blaine's Role in the 44th Congress,
1875 to 1876

The Forty-fourth Congress assembled on the 6th of December, 1875. In the Congressional election of 1874 the Republicans had met with an overwhelming reverse and the new House of Representatives was controlled by a Democratic majority of about two thirds. Mr. Michael C. Kerr, a Democratic member from Indiana, was elected Speaker of the House. This was the first time since the war that a Democratic Speaker presided over the House.

In a letter to Mr. Blaine, dated November 21, 1874, Mr. Kerr had written:

Absence from home for a few days prevented a more prompt acknowledgment of your very kind letter of th. 13th inst. Accept my sincere thanks for your congratulations and the kindly references to the Speakership in connection with my name. Permit me to say in all frankness that I do not look upon the event to which you refer as at all probable. It is no doubt possible, and if it should happen, I am sure no reflection would give me more disquiet than that which makes me realize the essential difficulty there would be in an untried hand attempting to preside over such a body after one who had performed that duty with such signal ability and success as you have done. Without reference to that matter, however, I shall be very glad to meet you in the 44th, and there renew our service together.

Crawford, in his Life of James G. Blaine, speaking of Mr. Kerr, says:

Michael C. Kerr, of Indiana, the Speaker of the House, was a fair-minded and honorable man. He was, however, an invalid, in the last stages of consumption, and could give but little attention to the duties of

his office. This office was dominated entirely by Southern influences, and it was Southern men who led in proposing resolutions of inquiry and who were most active in prosecuting investigations. The Star chamber investigations of the various committees went over every one of the old scandals of the period following the war. Whenever any evidence was taken in their secret sessions, it straightway found its road to some opposition newspapers. The sessions were secret only in name. In this way officials were done great injustice. They were given no opportunity for their defense and their explanations or their testimony, when given to the public after the original publications had but little effect.²

Mr. Blaine, now the minority leader, confronted the Democratic majority and won a parliamentary victory before the new House had been in session three hours. The question was upon the admission of a member-elect from Louisiana as having prima facie a right to the seat. Affairs in Louisiana had for a year or two been similar to that of a revolution. Two persons claimed the governorship and there were rival legislatures. An investigation was made, after which a compromise was effected. William P. Kellogg, Republican, was recognized as governor, and the Democrats were allowed to organize and control the legislature.

Louisiana was entitled to six members in the House; four of the members-elect presented credentials signed by both claimants for the governorship. One, whose seat was not disputed, offered credentials signed by Governor Kellogg alone. For the seat for the fifth district, Frank Morey presented credentials authenticated by Governor Kellogg; William B. Spencer offered a certificate of

election attested by John McEnery, the Democratic candidate for governor.³ During the swearing in of the members-elect, Mr. Fernando Wood, of New York, asked that Morey, of Louisiana, be required to stand aside, and accordingly he was not permitted to take the oath with the other members of the delegation. After the rest of the members had been sworn in, Wood offered a resolution referring the credentials of both claimants to the Committee on Elections, with instructions to report as soon as possible which of the claimants should be admitted as a member of the House.

Blaine opposed that resolution on the ground that it implied that the governorship of Louisiana was still a matter of doubt and that it was not a settled matter. He pointed out that no department of the Government had recognized Mr. McEnery as governor. Furthermore, he called the attention of the House to the fact that one member had already been sworn in with only the certificate from Governor Kellogg. Mr. Wood remarked that it was unchallenged--to which Blaine retorted, "But if the governor of Louisiana is not competent to give a certificate, why should it not have been challenged?"⁴

In the debate which ensued, leading members on both sides of the House participated. After much objection to the original form of the resolution, Wood yielded to a resolution of Lamar, of Mississippi, which provided simply for the reference of Mr. Morey's credentials to the

Committee on Elections, with instructions to report on his prima facie right to a seat. On the first test vote the Democrats had a majority of one only. The Speaker stated that the motion was evidently not sustained by a majority. Blaine then took the matter in hand and offered a resolution that Mr. Morey be sworn in as a member of the House. This was agreed to, "and Mr. Morey, having presented himself was duly qualified by taking the oath prescribed by the act of July 2, 1862."⁵

Stanwood, in commenting on the above parliamentary victory of Mr. Blaine, says:

This was but one of several occasions on which Blaine displayed a remarkable adroitness of parliamentary strategy, that enabled him to carry his point on a party question in a body politically opposed to him. In accomplishing this feat he was aided greatly by the weakness--attributable solely to the inexperience--of his opponents. They had been in a minority so long, most of them during their whole public lives, that they had learned only the tactics of opposition. They knew how to obstruct and to defeat a measure, not how to carry it. Mr. Blaine on the other hand, was equally versed in both arts. Indeed his first training in public affairs, as a journalist, was as a stout opponent of the administrations of Pierce and Buchanan, and all his life he was never a more redoubtable antagonist than when he could refer to the language of denunciation and ridicule.⁶

A few days after this, occurred an event which was to have a greater effect upon Mr. Blaine's fortunes as a public man, than he could possibly have realized at the time. Mr. Randall, of Pennsylvania, moved to consider the amnesty bill providing for the removal of the disabilities, imposed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, from all

those upon whom the disability still remained. Mr. Blaine desired to offer an amendment excepting Jefferson Davis from being granted amnesty and providing that all other persons should be relieved of the disability as soon as they should appear before a court of record and take an oath of allegiance to the United States. ⁷ At the beginning of the debate Blaine made a speech in which he arraigned Jeff Davis as the "author, knowingly, deliberately, guiltily, and willfully, of the gigantic murders and crimes of Andersonville." ⁸

We are told by Blaine's biographers that he made the speech with all his characteristic energy and vigor and that it came as a stinging blow to the Southern leaders. Up to this time there had been a great deal of talk about harmony but this speech tended to reopen old wounds and had the effect of "waving the bloody shirt." ⁹

Many Republican newspapers--especially those of radical tendencies--were loud in their praise of the former Speaker. But the Democratic papers, and a few Republican ones severely condemned the speech. The Worcester Daily Spy wrote:

Whatever may be thought of the justice or wisdom of Mr. Blaine's position in regard to excluding Jefferson Davis from the general amnesty, every unprejudiced person who compares his speech with that of Mr. Cox in response to it, must admit that the former is vastly superior in dignity, temper, force and pertinence. Mr. Blaine is charged with reviving the animosities of the war period, but this is unfair; the question was opened by Mr. Randall's bill. The proposed measure is of great importance as all

acknowledge, and no one can deny that there are reasons worthy of consideration for Mr. Blaine's amendment....Mr. Blaine expressed no bitterness toward the southern people: he uttered no reproaches against them for treason or cruelty; he distinctly approved the policy of welcoming them all, with one exception, back to the highest privileges of citizenship, without condition, except that each person should openly acknowledge his citizenship. Mr. Blaine's speech was earnest; his denunciations of the atrocities inflicted upon our soldiers were bitter; but he said nothing irrelevant, nothing unworthy. Even those who think his policy mistaken, must admit that he advocated it with pertinent and forcible arguments, and that, while he recalled unpleasant memories, he was discriminating in his censure, and that he said nothing of which the substance or manner was adapted to needlessly exasperate his opponents.¹⁰

Opinions differ as to Mr. Blaine's motives in making the speech. Some regard it as a political move, solely for the purpose of attracting further attention to himself as a candidate for the Presidency; while others, his admirers, regard the speech as the act of a statesman. But the affair was unfortunate, to say the least, and was, without a doubt,¹¹ unwise and inexpedient.

It is hard to determine the effect that this speech had upon Blaine's political fortunes, but on the whole, the effect was harmful. Up to this time he had been classed as a conservative Republican but by his speech on this subject he ruined that reputation, and from that time on he found among those with whom he had been accustomed to cooperate, his most determined opponents in his party. Then too, before that time many influential Democrats regarded him with a not unkindly feeling; but the relentlessness with which they attacked him a few months later shows that they did not

forget his imperious bearing on that occasion. Before this incident he had scarcely a political enemy; after it his enemies were countless.

Mr. Blaine was already considered a promising candidate for the Republican nomination for President at the election of 1876. There was some talk of a third term for President Grant but the movement was not strong, so the way seemed open for a new man. A resolution offered early in the session by Mr. Springer, of Illinois, placed Mr. Blaine in a peculiar position. The resolution stated that in the opinion of the House, any departure from the time-honored custom whereby Presidents of the United States retired from office after their second term would be "unwise, unpatriotic, and fraught with peril to our free institutions." The resolution was passed, yeas 233, nays 18. Mr. Blaine, although present in the House, did not answer to roll-call. He was as strongly opposed, however, to the third term as was any one, but to have voted for the resolution might have been regarded by some as helping to further his own interests by thus removing an obstacle from his path.

Mr. Blaine was the most prominent man mentioned as the Republican candidate. His record was one which satisfied his party and his success as Speaker concentrated public attention upon him. The Southern members of Congress, as has already been mentioned, were strongly opposed to

Blaine after his Andersonville speech and when it became evident that he was to become the leading man of the Republican party, they bent every effort to see if perhaps they might find some means to discredit him in the public eye.¹⁴

Thus it was that on the eve of the national convention, the persecutors who had labored in vain to condemn him in connection with the Crédit Mobilier and the Union Pacific Railroad scandals, now launched another equally venomous attack, their object being to prevent Blaine's nomination for the Presidency. Their attack was based on alleged transactions with the promoters of the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad Company. It was rumored abroad that certain incriminating letters had been found, which, when revealed, would ruin forever his prospects as a Presidential candidate. These letters, which came to be called the "Mulligan Letters," were not Mulligan's at all. He had stolen them from his employer, Warren Fisher Jr., with whom Mr. Blaine had had business dealings for many years.¹⁵

James Mulligan had been employed as a confidential clerk years before, by Mrs. Blaine's brother, Jacob Stanwood, a merchant of Boston. In addition to his salary he had an interest in the business. When the day of settlement came, Mulligan claimed thirty thousand dollars. Mr. Stanwood thought this amount too high, so by mutual consent, Blaine was engaged to go over the accounts, it being agreed that

the finding should be accepted by both parties. Blaine found the records to show that Mulligan's claim was by far too large. This did not suit Mulligan and he vowed revenge upon the arbitrator. Later, when in the employ of Fisher, he took possession of such of Blaine's letters to Fisher as he thought could be made to appear damaging to Mr. Blaine.

With the national convention approaching, Mulligan seized the opportunity to wreak his vengeance. He made a memorandum in which he gave his own version of the contents of each letter and it was this that he intended to give to the investigating committee which had been ordered by the House of Representatives.

On the day before Mulligan was to appear before the committee, Blaine called upon him at his hotel. He claimed that the letters were not rightfully Mulligan's, that only Fisher or himself, was entitled to possess them. He urged Mulligan to give them back to Fisher and Fisher made the same request. Mulligan allowed Blaine to take the letters for examination, but would not give them up to anybody. When Mulligan asserted his intention to publish the letters, Blaine decided to keep them and quietly putting the package into his pocket, walked out. Sherman tells us that after Blaine had left the room he heard Mulligan shouting to Fisher: "Holy Moses! He's got me memorandy, too." ¹⁷

The next day the committee demanded the production of the letters, but Blaine declined to produce them at that time. He consulted the best lawyers available, who, after examining the letters, advised him to resist every demand for their surrender; not that they were in any way incriminating, but that they had no relevancy to the matter under inquiry and that the demand was illegal as well as unjust. One adviser was Judge Black, a Democrat; the other, Senator Carpenter, a Republican.

Acting on this advice, Blaine defied the power of the House to compel him to produce the letters. But having vindicated his right to maintain the privacy of his own correspondence, he determined to read them to the House.¹⁸

Then occurred a dramatic scene scarcely equalled in the House. Blaine said:

...I am not afraid to show the letters. Thank God Almighty I am not ashamed to show them. There they are, [holding up a package of letters.] There is the very original package. And with some sense of humiliation, with mortification that I do not pretend to conceal, with a sense of outrage which I think any man in my position would feel, I invite the confidence of 44,000,000 of my countrymen while I read these letters from this desk. [Applause.]¹⁹

After reading the letters Blaine said:

Now, gentlemen, those letters I have read were picked out of correspondence extending over fifteen years. The man did his worst, the very worst he could, out of the most intimate business correspondence of my life. ...

There is one piece of testimony wanting. There is but one thing to close the complete circle of evidence. There is but one witness whom I could not have, to whom the Judiciary Committee, taking into

account the great and intimate connection he had with the transaction, was asked to send a cable dispatch, and I ask the gentleman from Kentucky if that dispatch was sent to him?

Mr. Frye. Who?

Mr. Blaine. To Josiah Caldwell.

Mr. Knott. I will reply to the gentleman that Judge Hunton and myself have both endeavored to get Mr. Caldwell's address and have not yet got it.

Mr. Blaine. Has the gentleman from Kentucky received a dispatch from Caldwell?

Mr. Knott. I will explain that directly.

Mr. Blaine. I want a categorical answer.

Mr. Knott. I have received a dispatch purporting to be from Mr. Caldwell.

Mr. Blaine. You did?

Mr. Knott. How did you know I got it?

Mr. Blaine. When did you get it? I want the gentleman from Kentucky to answer when he got it.

Mr. Knott. Answer my question first.

Mr. Blaine. I never heard of it until yesterday.

Mr. Knott. How did you hear it?

Mr. Blaine. I heard you got a dispatch last Tuesday morning at eight o'clock from Josiah Caldwell completely and absolutely exonerating me from this charge and you have suppressed it. [Protracted applause from the floor and in the galleries.] I want the gentleman to answer. [After a pause.] Does the gentleman from Kentucky decline to answer?

Sherman tells us that "for fifteen minutes the House went wild with cheering, shouting, exultation that could not be checked."²¹

Mr. Knott admitted having received the dispatch, but denied having suppressed it. He said that, far from suppressing it, he had within thirty minutes after having received it, read it to several men. Knott continued by saying "To tell the truth about it, after the day that I received it I gave but little, if any, thought at all to it until the subject was brought up here."²⁵

Blaine offered a resolution instructing the committee to report to the House whether it had sent any telegram to Josiah Caldwell, in Europe, and received a reply, and, if so, why it had been suppressed. Thus Blaine put the committee on the defensive and its task now was not so much to convict Blaine as it was to clear Knott.²³

The New York Tribune, in commenting on the incident of the Mulligan Letters, says :

The triumph of the ex-Speaker was very freely commented upon by his associates on the floor, and by prominent persons who heard his masterly vindication, and with rare exception the voice was unanimous that he had taken the straightforward manly course. Among those who were heard to express their ideas upon the subject were the following gentlemen: ... "Dan" Voorhees, who, while a member of the House, was regarded as one of the most ultra of Democratic partisans, said to-night that it was the most brilliant, bold, and daring attack he ever knew in his life. Mr. Blaine was like a horseman riding at a frightful pace against a stone wall. He must either clear it or be dashed to pieces against it. But he had cleared it with plenty of room to spare....

Mr. Steele, delegate from Wyoming, an old soldier, a Democrat, and a man not likely to lose his head, said that if to-day's business did not nominate Mr. Blaine, it ought. "I believe," said he, "it is worth to Blaine half a dozen State conventions."

Col. John E. Schley of West Virginia, also a delegate, said he was a little doubtful about Mr. Blaine, but now he could not be driven away from him with a double-barreled shot-gun.²⁴

The Chicago Weekly Inter Ocean wrote:

There are some interesting incidents to show the effect of the speech. Yesterday a prominent Congressman and delegate to the Cincinnati Convention said.... "I can't vote for Blaine, as I intended; I can't vote for a man who has something to conceal." This afternoon he crowded up at the conclusion of Blaine's speech and was one of the first to congratulate him. Tonight he is a jubilant Blaine man. In the lunch room, soon after Blaine had finished, a member of the House was heard to remark: "Well, gentlemen, I have been a Bristow man till now, but when a man can get the Confederates down three times in one session as Blaine has I am for him." A Democratic member of the House went into the ladies' gallery at the conclusion of the debate, and remarked to his wife in a tone that was audible to everyone around him: "The scene here today will nominate and elect Blaine as sure as fate.".... This illustrates the effect produced. To quote a remark made by one of the House oracles: "That Democratic bull gave Blaine a terrible shaking up that time, but he has lit on his feet." He always lights on his feet.²⁵

The Forty-fourth Congress was the last in which Mr. Blaine was a member of the House of Representatives. He was appointed in July of 1876 to fill the vacancy in the Senate, caused by the appointment of Senator Lot M. Morrill, of Maine, to the office of Secretary of the Treasury. At the next session of the legislature he was unanimously elected for the full term of six years. This was the first time in the history of the election of a United States Senator that any one had ever received the unanimous vote of the Legislature.²⁶

PART V SUMMARY

Chapter X Blaine as a Political Leader

It is a difficult task to attempt to assign to a public man his true place in history. It is especially difficult when one has to deal with a figure in history over whom such fierce controversy raged as it did over Mr. Blaine. That, however, has not been the task of the present study, but rather, the writer has attempted to show what it was that made Blaine the outstanding leader which he admittedly was. Opinions differ greatly as to Blaine's character. Some writers laud him to the skies and would have their readers believe him to have been some sort of a saint; others make him out to be a sly, cunning, politician whom no one could trust. But on one point do his biographers all seem to agree--they admit that he had a remarkable personality and unusual qualities of leadership.

A few quotations from writers of different political views may serve to show the unanimity with which Blaine was regarded as a true leader.

Sherman, his private secretary, writes of him:

For over twenty years the vast majority of the rank and file of the Republican party looked to him as their leader, the one man whose accession to the presidency they desired. No public man in our history since Washington, Chief Justice Marshall and Lincoln has been so loved by countless thousands who never saw him, or so wickedly traduced by political opponents. ¹

Rhodes, in his History of the United States, says of Blaine:

He was a capable and popular man. ...His personal magnetism fitted him for leadership; and, though living in Maine, his greatest popularity was in Pennsylvania and the West. He had also the qualities of a parliamentary leader although he had never a chance fully to display them for during his first service in the House he was dominated by Stevens and shortly after his death became its Speaker. Amiable and personally attractive, few public men have had a constituency easier to persuade than he; the masses adored him. ...²

In The Last Quarter-Century, Andrews speaks of "the spontaneous wide spread, persistent, often delirious enthusiasm for James G. Blaine, of Maine." He continues:

Over Blaine men went insane in pairs, for his "magnetism" either strongly attracted or strongly repelled whatever came within his field. Hatred of him was rancorous, and it usually told, since his long public career, like an extended sea-coast, was at a disadvantage on the defensive. Love for the man was equally uncompromising, most so at the West, while the defection from him was most pronounced in the East. People not the reverse of sensible likened him to Clay, some of them to Washington. In West Virginia a man risked his life by holding to the rear platform of Blaine's private car as it left the station, begging for some memento of the hero to hang in his house and show his children. Mr. Blaine himself thus described another illustrative incident: "I had the felicity of N_____'s company, who dwelt at length on the greatness and grandeur of my character. He intimated that compared with me Abraham Isaac and Jacob were "small potatoes"---- all of which in a car and in loud voice, with many people listening, may be called pleasant entertainment." ³

Oberholtzer writes of Blaine:

His manners were gracious; he was a fascinating orator. Men said that he was "magnetic." At any rate he had the power of drawing others to him, and soon extended his friendships among the people, as some public characters have the power to do, until

vast numbers of them spoke his name and were ready to share his own trust in himself as a leader. Not since Clay, said some, not since Schuyler Colfax, said others, had there been a public man with the ability to awaken in the imagination even of those who had not seen him, who might, indeed, never know him, except through hearsay or the newspapers, an admiration, which so nearly reached the stage of personal fealty.⁴

Woodrow Wilson, in speaking of Blaine, says that he had "a personal hold upon the members of the House such as no man had enjoyed since Henry Clay."⁵

Crawford writes more at length and gives what he believes to be the reasons for Blaine's popularity:

No political leader in this country has ever had a more devoted following. ...Wherever he went... [during the campaign of 1884] he was greeted by such cries of frantic enthusiasm as to thrill the blood of the most sluggish and indifferent. Surely there must have been something noteworthy in the character of such a leader who could, by the mere magic of his presence provoke such demonstrations of devotion.

The outward reasons for Mr. Blaine's popularity before a crowd would not be apparent to a casual observer. There have been many men in the political world of the United States who possessed higher gifts of eloquence. He had nothing of the affectation of the so-called orator. His manner was very simple and very direct. His voice was not particularly agreeable when raised to the key necessary for the delivery of a public address. It had a metallic note, however, which vibrated upon the ear and in such a way as to produce a thrill of emotion. There were notes of enthusiasm and of feeling which must have had behind them deep passion to have produced the corresponding effect upon the assembled listeners. Yet Mr. Blaine nearly always spoke without the semblance of great emotion. He gave, however, an impression of sincerity, and of being very much in earnest. He was very careful in his choice of words. He avoided the use of the superlative, and was very sparing in the use of adjectives. With him the thought was the important thing and it was his constant desire to make the sentences employed as a medium for communicating the thought as simple as

possible, so that the form of the sentence would not attract particular notice, leaving the mind free for the impression of the idea. In his judgment the man who had the best literary style was the one who apparently had none. In other words, he should be so simple and so direct that the reader or listener would forget that there was such a thing as style.⁶

Thus it is seen that Blaine had an almost magical influence, which was attributable solely to his magnetic personality. Not only did his sway extend over those who knew him but he had a devoted following far beyond those whom the sound of his voice could reach.

It can be said, therefore, that Blaine's influence was of a broader and more far-reaching character than can be estimated by a mere consideration of the public acts in which he participated. His was an influence upon the general tendency of the political thought of his fellow countrymen and was one which has scarcely been equalled either before or since.

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