

NULLIFICATION AND SECESSION IN THE UNITED STATES

A HISTORY OF THE SIX ATTEMPTS
DURING THE FIRST CENTURY
OF THE REPUBLIC

BY

EDWARD PAYSON POWELL

"An Indissoluble Union under one Federal Head."

GEORGE WASHINGTON, 1788.

"A Federal Republic in which States Form the Central Principle."

GEORGE CLINTON.

"Freedom of Religion ; Freedom of the Press ;
Freedom of Commerce."

THOMAS JEFFERSON.

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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CHAPTER VI

SOUTH CAROLINA NULLIFICATION IN 1832

THE era of factions as we have seen began as soon as the Union was formed. It continued through the administrations of Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison. The English party and the French party, with constantly shifting degrees of zeal, divided the people. Other questions complicated matters, but at the bottom it was, down to the war of 1812-14, a factious antagonism between those who would submit to English imposition and those who would not. New England had been the stronghold of the English faction not only because it was New England, but because it had so far been, not a manufacturing, but a trading section, and its trade was in the main with Great Britain. The second war with England had ended in such a manner as to greatly foster national unity, and to lessen sympathy for the power we had twice crippled. Unification and homogeneity of sentiment had been vastly increased by the wise and generous administration of Jefferson. Monroe's administration, extending from 1816 to 1824, was the era of calm and peace. Federalism, dead as a party, was now also dead as a factional issue. The Spanish faction was assimilated. The English faction had faded out.

There was at last an American people rapidly becoming autonomous. The colonies had become cemented into a nation. The process of opening great turnpikes and canals was going on with rapidity, to connect the different sections. Calhoun and Webster and Clay were soon to be the leaders at Washington, in place of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe. They were not Federalists ; neither were they Republicans.

During all the era of factionalism there had been more or less also of sectionalism. It had at times shown a vicious readiness for making disturbance. It entered strongly into the attempts of New England to secede. Still it had been possible to elect peaceably four out of the first five Presidents from Virginia. Monroe, the last of these, was as popular in New England as in the Carolinas. Jefferson had met Adams half way, and their last days were of one mind,—till their spirits flew away together as a symbol of national harmony. The fact was that through all this period the Federalists were for the most part right-hearted while they were wrong-headed. We were sons of England. Blood is thicker than water. We never intended to give up our Anglo-Saxon heritage, or our English language. To pull the root of our institutions out of English life and history we could not if we would. Our instincts, our prejudices, our vices, and our virtues were of the English stock. The only trouble was that England had not yet learned to meet her children as part and parcel of herself. The paternalism that made her hold the rod over us must be given up. The Federalists had been inclined to submit to the rod ; the Republicans refused.

In 1823 occurred the final act in this era of faction. It was the more welcome that it was unexpected.

Through the Napoleonic wars with England we had suffered outrage and spoliation from both powers, because of our neutrality. But Napoleon was at last dead in his cage at St. Helena, and the European despots were restored to their thrones. A coalition of Russia, Austria, and Prussia, called the Holy Alliance, was formed to sweep out of Europe all remnants of popular government. *Dei gratia* was once more the watchword ; the people were to be ruled in the name of God, both in state and church. Louis XVIII. of France although not of the Alliance was of the same temper. While he suppressed popular government in Naples he marched his armies into Spain and restored the Bourbons. A conference was summoned to meet at Paris to consider next the condition of affairs in America. The South-American dependencies of Spain had revolted and set up republics. The despots proposed to reduce these, and divide them among themselves. This could not have been done without fatal consequences to the United States. The battle was being drawn between popular government and legitimacy. It took in all the world. The odds were terribly against republicanism and freedom. Castlereagh had committed England to the legitimists. But Castlereagh committed suicide, and Canning was called to the ministry.

Now occurred what was truly the greatest event of the nineteenth century. Canning refused to send delegates to Paris ; and instead turned to the United States and said, "The hour has come when once more we must stand together." To the legitimists he said : "Your opinion that all power is derived from God-appointed monarchs strikes at the fundamental principle of the British constitution. It is false. We will not deny that all power originates with the people."

In other words Canning withdrew England from the alliance with despotic governments, and proposed a limited alliance with the United States. The English-speaking race in his judgment was once more called to fellowship and to co-operate in the name of liberty. The whole history of England had been violently wrenched to bring us into conflict. Let us once more become a united folk.

Our minister, Mr. Rush, hastened dispatches to Washington, containing Mr. Canning's proposition. Monroe and his cabinet were astounded beyond measure. John Q. Adams, Secretary of State, rose to a full measure of the greatness of the occasion. Calhoun endorsed it with the fiery enthusiasm of his youth. But Jefferson was still alive, and was revered as the Sage of Monticello. The documents were forwarded to him for his advice. In October of 1823 he answered as follows: "The question presented by the letters you have sent me is the most momentous which has been offered my contemplation since that of Independence. That made us a nation; this sets our compass. While Europe is laboring to become the domicile of despotism our endeavor should be to make our hemisphere that of freedom. One nation most of all can disturb us in this pursuit. She now offers to lead, aid, and accompany us. By acceding to her proposition we detach her from the band of despots, and bring her mighty weight into the scale of free government. With Great Britain withdrawn from the scale, and shifted into that of our two continents, all Europe combined would not undertake war." It was a glad hour for this great mind.

The advice of Jefferson was followed. Mr. Monroe, as Canning requested, took the initiative, and in De-

ember sent a message to Congress in which he said, "We should consider any attempt on the part of the Holy Alliance to extend their system to any nation of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety." This was the Canning-Monroe Doctrine, or as Jefferson called it, "the American System." It was the proclamation that America and England formed once more one people, with one great mission, and that together we should civilize the earth. The era of faction ended in America. The greatest marvel is that this sublime event, hardly surpassed in nobility of purpose and consequences by any event in the history of man, has been so little apprehended by the American people. The era of sectionalism was already upon us; and politicians observing the surface facts only, saw in the Monroe Doctrine defiance hurled by America at all the world. It has even been assumed of late to involve a protectorate of the American continents. Meanwhile the Canning proposition enabled the United States to move forward, fearless of all foreign interference, to spread a homogeneous population from ocean to ocean; while England carried a civilization equally great into Asia, Africa, and Australia. It was this alliance that led on to the fact that English-speaking Anglo-Saxon ideas now gird the globe; while the language of Milton is the language of one-third of the human race; and the hope of a Federal Union, linking all continents, is not as far away as, in 1823, was the union of fifty States, bound by steel rails and English instincts.

We pass, by the way of this transitional event, into the second era of American history. Two forces were already at work long before the end of the era of factions to create the era of sectionalism. Tariff legislation and slavery were twins in bringing into antagonism

the North and the South. The Louisiana purchase and the invention of the cotton gin created a great slave market which Jefferson in vain tried to close. Virginia found it more profitable to breed slaves than to grow tobacco. Instead of being abolitionists like Jefferson and Madison and Monroe, her statesmen became first apologists for slavery, and then its advocates. South Carolina, which never separated religion and politics, became economically and piously attached to the domestic customs which were now to be excluded from all territory north of Virginia and Kentucky. New York closed up the Northern platoon of freedom by abolishing slavery in 1817; the act to be completed in 1827.

Slavery began to take possession of legislation at the South. Virginia in 1819 threatened the enslavement of all free blacks. Georgia taxed every free negro twenty dollars a year, and expelled him from the State for non-payment of taxes. This was a dangerous edge to an endless wedge—for injustice knows no limit to its demands. Mississippi and Alabama forbade legislative emancipation. If the free negro fled across the Ohio he was arrested as a tramp and imprisoned. There was no chance for him. A dozen States forbade the teaching of a black man the alphabet. The slave trade, notwithstanding the act of 1807 prohibiting it, was still carried on. In 1819 a more stringent act was passed. Even Northern negroes were kidnapped and sold at the South. Jefferson still pleaded for some scheme of abolition, and tried to devise a plan for deporting the blacks to a favorable clime. Just before his death he wrote, "I leave this to those who will live to see the accomplishment, and to enjoy a beatitude forbidden to my age. But I leave with the admonition