

**BIOGRAPHY OF
MILLARD
FILLMORE. 1856**

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Biography of Millard Fillmore. 1856 by Ivory Chamberlain

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IVORY CHAMBERLAIN

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INTRODUCTION.

In the spring of 1853, MILLARD FILLMORE, the subject of the following biographical sketch, retired from the Presidency. Several of our most illustrious statesmen, who, at the commencement of his administration, were master-spirits in the national councils, had been gathered to their fathers. CALHOUN, indeed, had been summoned away before the dispensation of Providence which placed a new pilot at the helm of State, and before the portentous storm, then raging, had gathered all its blackness. His last speech in the Senate, read for him by a friend because he was too feeble to deliver it, is pervaded by dark forebodings scarcely relieved by a gleam of hope. His two great compeers, who sympathized in his apprehensions, although they did not share in his despondency, were still spared to the country, and, at the commencement of Mr. FILLMORE's administration, were leading members of the Senate. CLAY had, some years before, bid a formal, and, as he supposed, a final farewell to this theater of his labors; but a great and perilous crisis had now summoned him again to the service of his country. WEBSTER,

then also in the Senate, had recently put forth one of the most powerful efforts of his eloquence for the preservation of the endangered Union. Although, to use his own language, "the imprisoned winds are let loose"—although "the east, the west, the north, and the stormy south, all combine to throw the whole ocean into agitation, to toss its billows to the skies, and to disclose its profoundest depths," he would neither shrink from his duty nor abandon hope. "I am looking out for no fragment," he says, "upon which to float away from the wreck, if wreck there must be, but for the good of the whole, and the preservation of the whole; and there is that which will keep me to my duty during this struggle, whether the sun and stars shall appear, or shall not appear for many days."

It was in the midst of an agitation which thus aroused the energies—in the midst of dangers which thus alarmed the apprehensions of our greatest and most experienced statesmen, that the administration of MILLARD FILLMORE commenced. Before he had been two months in power, there was a lull in the storm—the crisis had passed—and although a heavy ground-swell continued, for some time, to mark the violence of the recent tempest, the country was fast settling into tranquillity. As the ablest men of both political parties had lent their influence to secure the compromise, so they now united to give it stability by all the combined weight of their characters. Two years afterwards, both the great political parties, into which the country was then divided, solemnly endorsed it, in their national conventions, as the FINAL SETTLEMENT of a most dangerous controversy.

But no sooner had the administration which had brought about this auspicious result retired from power, than other counsels began to prevail. The first Congress that met after the inauguration of President PIERCE, signalized itself by carrying out his wishes in the repeal of a compromise of more than thirty years' standing, regarded by the country as an inviolable compact. Thus were the flood-gates of sectional agitation wantonly re-opened, and during the whole period of the present Democratic administration, the country has been distracted by heated controversies, on a subject which it was supposed the compromise of 1850 had withdrawn forever from the arena of national politics.

We are still in the midst of these controversies. Two of the three great parties into which the country is now divided, insist on making the slavery question the leading issue in the approaching presidential campaign. Granting the importance of this question to be as great as these parties contend, in whose wisdom can the American people so fully confide to preside over its settlement, as in that of the statesman who, three years ago, extricated the country from the same dangers into which the Democratic party has re-plunged it? He who has once piloted the tempest-tossed ship into a safe harbor, is the most suitable man to be again placed at the helm, when her moorings have been wantonly severed, and she is again drifting on the same stormy sea, exposed to be split on the same dangerous rocks.

But the present importance of the slavery question is greatly over-rated. The repeal of the Missouri compromise, which had no other object than to gain the favor of the South