

**WILLIAM  
GARROTT  
BROWN**

STEPHEN ARNOLD  
DOUGLAS

**William Brown**  
**Stephen Arnold Douglas**

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*Stephen Arnold Douglas:*

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# **William Garrett Brown**

## **Stephen Arnold Douglas**

### **CHAPTER I**

### **YOUTH AND THE WEST**

The ten years of American history from 1850 to 1860 have a fascination second only to that of the four years which followed. Indeed, unless one has a taste for military science, it is a question whether the great war itself is more absorbing than the great debate that led up to it; whether even Gettysburg and Chickamauga, the March to the Sea, the Wilderness, Appomattox, are of more surpassing interest than the dramatic political changes, – the downfall of the Whig party, the swift rise and the equally swift submergence of the Know-Nothing party, the birth of the Republican party, the disruption and overthrow of the long-dominant Democratic party, – through which the country came at last to see that only the sword could make an end of the long controversy between the North and the South.

The first years of the decade were marked by the passing of one group of statesmen and the rise of another group. Calhoun's last speech in the Senate was read at the beginning of the debate over those measures which finally took shape as the

Compromise of 1850. The Compromise was the last instance of the leadership of Clay. The famous Seventh of March speech in defense of it was Webster's last notable oration. These voices stilled, many others took up the pregnant theme. Davis and Toombs and Stephens and other well-trained Southern statesmen defended slavery aggressively; Seward and Sumner and Chase insisted on a hearing for the aggressive anti-slavery sentiment; Cass and Buchanan maintained for a time their places as leaders in the school of compromise. But from the death of Clay to the presidential election of 1860 the most resonant voice of them all was the voice of Stephen Arnold Douglas. It is scarcely too much to say that during the whole period the centre of the stage was his, and his the most stirring part. In 1861, the curtain fell upon him still resolute, vigorous, commanding. When it rose again for another scene, he was gone so completely that nowadays it is hard for us to understand what a place he had. Three biographers writing near the time of his death were mainly concerned to explain how he came to be first in the minds of his contemporaries. A biographer writing now must try to explain why he has been so lightly esteemed by that posterity to which they confidently committed his fame. Blind Tom, the negro mimic, having once heard him speak, was wont for many years to entertain curious audiences by reproducing those swelling tones in which he rolled out his defense of popular sovereignty, and it is not improbable that Douglas owes to the marvelous imitator of sounds a considerable part of such fame as he has among

uneducated men in our time. Among historical students, however seriously his deserts are questioned, there is no question of the importance of his career.

He was born April 23, 1813, at Brandon, Vermont, the son of Stephen Arnold Douglas and Sarah Fisk, his wife. His father, a successful physician, was doubtless of Scotch descent; but the founder of the Douglas family in America was married in Northamptonshire. He landed on Cape Ann in 1639–40, but in 1660 he made his home at New London, Connecticut. Dr. Douglas's mother was an Arnold of Rhode Island, descended from that Governor Arnold who was associated with Roger Williams in the founding of the colony. Sarah Fisk's mother was also an Arnold, and of the same family. Their son was therefore of good New England stock, and amply entitled to his middle name. Dr. Douglas died suddenly of apoplexy in July, 1813; it is said that he held the infant Stephen in his arms when he was stricken. His widow made her home with a bachelor brother on a farm near Brandon, and the boy's early years were passed in an environment familiar to readers of American biography – the simplicity, the poverty, the industry, and the serious-mindedness of rural New England. He was delicate, with a little bit of a body and a very large head, but quick-witted and precocious, and until he was fifteen years of age his elders permitted him to look forward to a collegiate education and a professional career.

But by that time the uncle was married, and an heir was born to him. Stephen was therefore made to understand that the expense

of his education could be met only from his mother's limited means. He promptly resolved to learn a trade, walked fourteen miles to the neighboring town of Middlebury, and apprenticed himself to a cabinet-maker. He worked at cabinet-making two years, and afterwards, even when he had risen so high that many of his countrymen were willing he should try his hand at making cabinets of men, he protested that those two years were by far the happiest of his life, and that he would never willingly have exchanged his place in the Middlebury workshop for any other place whatsoever. As it was, he left it because he was not strong enough for that sort of work.

The following year he pursued his studies at the academy of Brandon. Then his mother married again, and he went with her to the home of his stepfather, Gehazi Granger, Esquire, near Canandaigua, New York, and finished his schooling at the Canandaigua Academy, which appears to have been an excellent one. Meanwhile, he also read law, and showed great proficiency both in his classical and his legal studies. Not much is on record concerning his schoolboy life. It is known, however, that he had a way of making his fellows like him, so that they of their own accord put him forward, and that he had a lively interest in politics. It is said that even so early as the campaign of 1828, when he was but fifteen, he organized a band of his playmates to make war on the "coffin handbills" wherewith the Adams men sought to besmirch the military fame of General Jackson, already become his hero. At Canandaigua, four years later, he espoused

the same cause in debating clubs, and won an ascendancy among his fellows by his readiness and the extent of his information. In the life of another man, these boyish performances might be set down merely as signs of promise; but Douglas was so soon immersed in real politics, and rose to distinction with such astounding swiftness, that his performances as a schoolboy may well be accounted the actual beginning, and not merely a premonition, of his career. He was only twenty, when, in June, 1833, he set forth to enter upon it.

Save that he was going West, he does not seem to have had any destination clearly in mind. He carried letters to certain persons in Cleveland, and stopped there to see them, and so made the acquaintance of Sherlock J. Andrews, a leading lawyer of the town, who persuaded him to remain and read law in his office until a year should elapse and he could be admitted to the Ohio bar. However, in less than a week he fell ill of a fever which did not leave him until the expense of it had well-nigh emptied his slender purse. His physicians, fearing he was too slight and delicate for Western hardships, urged him to go back to Canandaigua, but when he left Cleveland he again turned westward, resolved in his own mind never to go back without the evidences of success in his life. It is doubtful if among all the thousands who in those days were constantly faring westward, from New England towns and the parishes of Virginia and the Carolinas, there ever was a youth more resolutely and boldly addressed to opportunity than he. Poor, broken in health, almost



diminutive in physical stature, and quite unknown, he made his way first to Cincinnati, then to Louisville, then to St. Louis, in search of work. Coming almost to the end of his resources, he reasoned that it would be best for him to seek some country town, where his expenses would be slight; and guided merely by a book of travel he had read he fixed on a town which, as it happened, bore the name of his political patron saint. In November, 1833, being now twenty years and six months old, he arrived at Jacksonville, Illinois, with a sum total of thirty-seven cents in his pocket. The glimpses we get of him during his wanderings, from the recollections of certain men with whom he made acquaintance in stages and on river steamboats, make a curious and striking picture of American character. The feverish, high-strung boy was never dismayed and never a dreamer, but always confident, purposeful, good-humored.

He found no work at Jacksonville, and walked to Winchester, sixteen miles to the southwestward, where he hoped to get work as a teacher. The next morning, seeing a crowd assembled in the public square of the village, he pushed his way to the centre and learned that there was to be an auction of the wares of a merchant who had recently died. The auctioneer was in need of a clerk to keep the record of the sales, and the place was offered to the young stranger. He took it, served three days, earned six dollars, made acquaintance with the farmers gathered for the sale, and got a chance in the talk about politics to display those qualities which he never failed to display when opportunity

offered – the utmost readiness in debate, good-natured courtesy, and keen political instinct. A school was arranged for him, and within a week he had forty pupils entered for three months. A lawyer of the place befriended him with the loan of some books, and he gave his evenings to law and politics. When the three months were ended, he went back to Jacksonville and opened an office. March 4, 1834, he was licensed to practice, and from that time he rose faster than any man in Illinois, if not in the whole country, notwithstanding that he rose on the lines along which many and many another young American was struggling toward prominence, and notwithstanding that Illinois was exceptionally full, as later years were to prove, of young men fitted for such careers as Douglas sought – notwithstanding, too, that there had already drifted to New Salem, in the very next county, a young Kentuckian destined to such eminence that the Illinois of those years is oftenest studied now for light on him, and is most amply revealed to us in the books about him.

But for the very reason that Douglas rose so fast it is not necessary, in order to understand how or why he rose, to study the conditions and men he had to deal with so carefully as they have done who seek to explain for us the slower progress of that strange career with which his is indissolubly associated. Jacksonville, which was to be his home for a few years, was a small country town, but it was the county seat of Morgan, one of the two wealthiest and most populous counties in the State. A few years earlier, that whole region had been a frontier, but the first

roughness was now worn away. True, the whole northern half of Illinois was practically unsettled, and Chicago was but three years old, and not yet important. But it appears that the general character of the central counties was already fixed, and what followed was of the nature of growth rather than change. Certain small towns, like Springfield, were to become cities, and certain others, like New Salem, were to disappear. Railroads were not yet, though many were planning, and manufactures were chiefly of the domestic sort. But in the matter of the opportunities it presented to aspiring youth the country was already Western, and no longer wild Western. Hunting shirts and moccasins were disappearing. Knives in one's belt had gone out of fashion. The merely adventurous were passing beyond the Mississippi, and the field was open to the enterprising, the speculative, the ambitious.

Enterprise and speculation were in the air, and ambition, if it took a political turn, must perforce take account of them. The whole country was prosperous, and Illinois was possessed with the fever of development then epidemic throughout the West and the South. If one examines the legislation of any of the States west of the Alleghanies during the second administration of President Jackson, by far the most numerous category of bills will be found to deal with internal improvements, particularly railroads and canals. Money, however, was needed for these things, and Illinois, like all new countries, had to look backward to older communities for capital. President Jackson had but lately made his final assault upon the National Bank, the principal

dispenser of capital, by the removal of the deposits, and public opinion was much divided on his course, when Douglas opened his law office and began to discuss public questions with his neighbors. While he still lived at Winchester, he had helped to get subscribers for a Democratic newspaper at Jacksonville, and he soon called upon the editor, who was first surprised at his visitor's youthful appearance and then, as he himself tells us, at "the strength of his mind, the development of his intellect, and his comprehensive knowledge of the political history of his country."

Boy as he looked, and boy as he was, for he had not yet passed his twenty-first birthday, Douglas actually got the leadership of the Jackson party in that neighborhood before he had lived there a month. An enthusiastic supporter of the President's policy on the bank question, he talked about the matter so well on Saturdays, when, according to the Western and Southern custom, the country people flocked into town, that he was put forward to move the Jackson resolutions at a mass meeting of Democrats which he and his friend, the editor, had contrived to bring about. There was a great crowd. Josiah Lamborn, an orator of some reputation, opposed the resolutions. Douglas replied in an hour's speech, discomfited Lamborn, and so swept his audience that they seized upon him and bore him on their shoulders out of the room and around the public square. He was the "Little Giant" from that day, and the speech became a Democratic tradition. Of course, in after years, the men who could say they heard it

could not be expected to admit that he ever made a better speech in his life.

Within a year, he was so well known that he was chosen to the office of public prosecutor, or district attorney, of the first judicial circuit, the most important in Illinois, and his successful candidacy for the place is all the more remarkable because he was chosen by the legislature, and not by his neighbors of the circuit. Moreover, his competitor, John J. Hardin, was one of the foremost men of Illinois. It is true that Hardin was a Whig, and that by this time there was a pretty clear division between Whigs and Jackson men on offices as well as measures, so that the contest was a party as well as a personal affair; but from auctioneer's clerk to district attorney was a promotion hardly to be won in a year by a youth of qualities less than extraordinary.

The election was in February, 1835, and Douglas held the office the better part of two years. A justice of the supreme court had declared, on hearing of the legislature's choice, that the stripling could not fill the place because he was no lawyer and had no law books. Nevertheless, he was an efficient prosecutor. No record of his service is available, but there was a tradition in later years that not one of his indictments was quashed. Certainly, his work in the courts of the district increased his reputation and strengthened his hold on his own party. In the spring of 1836, the Democrats of Morgan held a convention to nominate candidates for the six seats in the house of representatives to which the county was entitled. This was a novel proceeding, for the system

of conventions to nominate for office was not yet developed; the first of the national party conventions was held in preparation for the presidential campaign of 1832. Douglas was a leader in the movement, and as a result of it he himself was drawn into the contest. Morgan was a Whig county, but the solid front of the Democracy so alarmed the Whigs that they also abandoned the old plan of letting any number of candidates take the field and united upon a ticket with Hardin at its head. No man on the Democratic ticket was a match for Hardin. One of the candidates was withdrawn, therefore, and Douglas took his place, and he and Hardin canvassed the county together in a series of joint debates. Mainly through his championship, the convention plan was approved, and the Democrats won the election; but Hardin's vote was greater than the weakest Democrat's, and so the rivalry between him and Douglas was continued in the legislature, where they took their seats in December, 1836.

In that same house of representatives were John A. McClernand, James Shields, William A. Richardson, and other men who rose to national distinction. Abraham Lincoln, a Whig representative from Sangamon County, was already well known for his ungainly length of body, for his habit of reasoning in parables which were now scriptural and now vulgar to the point of obscenity, and for a quaint and rare honesty. He was four years older than the new member from Morgan, and nearly two feet taller. Douglas, many years later, declared that he was drawn to Lincoln by a strong sympathy, for they were both young men

making an uphill struggle in life. Lincoln, at his first sight of Douglas, during the contest with Hardin for the attorneyship, pronounced him "the least man he ever saw."

Douglas was the youngest member of an unusual house, but he at once took his place among the leaders. When the governor's message, animadverting severely on the President's course with the Bank, brought on a discussion of national party questions, he and Hardin seem to have won the chief honors of the debate. He was appointed chairman of the Committee on Petitions, to which numerous applications for divorce were referred, and introduced a resolution which passed and which put an end to divorces by act of the legislature. On the great question of the hour, the question of development and internal improvements, he declared that the State ought to attempt no improvement which it could not afford to construct and to own. He favored a few specific enterprises and the making of careful surveys and estimates before any others should be taken up. But it was the very height of "flush times" in Illinois, and the legislature added millions to the vast sums in which the State was already committed to the support of canals, railroads, river improvements, and banks. It was but a few weeks from the adjournment in March to the great financial panic of 1837, which crushed every one of the state-aided banks, stopped the railroad building and river dredging, and finally left Illinois burdened with an enormous debt. There was a special session of the legislature in the summer, occasioned by the depression and hard times which had followed so hard

upon the flush times of the winter, but Douglas was not there to tax his associates with their unwisdom. He had taken another step in his unexampled career of office-holding by accepting from President Van Buren the office of register of public lands at Springfield, the growing town in Sangamon County which the legislature had just made the capital of the State, and where, within a few years, Shields, McClernand, Lincoln, and other rising young men were gathered.

From this time, Douglas and Lincoln knew each other well, for they lived together several years in an atmosphere of intimate personal scrutiny. For searching study of one's fellows, for utter disregard of all superficial *criteria* of character and conventional standards of conduct, there is but one sort of life to be compared with the life of a Southern or Western town, and that is the life of students in a boarding-school or a small college. In such communities there is little division into classes, as of rich and poor, educated and illiterate, well and obscurely born. On the steps of the court-house, in the post-office while the daily mail is sorted, in the corner drug store on Sundays, in lawyers' offices, on the curbstone, – wherever a group of men is assembled, – there is the freest talk on every possible subject; and the lives of men are open to their fellows as they cannot be in cities by reason of the mass or in country districts by reason of the solitude and the shyness which solitude breeds. Against Douglas there was the presumption, which every New England man who goes southward or westward has to live down, that he would in some



measure hold himself aloof from his fellows. But the prejudice was quickly dispelled. No man entered more readily into close personal relations with whomsoever he encountered. In all our accounts of him he is represented as surrounded with intimates. Not without the power of impressing men with his dignity and seriousness of purpose, we nevertheless hear of him sitting on the knee of an eminent judge during a recess of the court; dancing from end to end of a dinner-table with the volatile Shields – the same who won laurels in the Mexican War, a seat in the United States Senate, and the closest approach anybody ever won to victory in battle over Stonewall Jackson; and engaging, despite his height of five feet and his weight of a hundred pounds, in personal encounters with Stuart, Lincoln's athletic law partner, and a corpulent attorney named Francis.

On equal terms he mingled in good-humored rivalry with a group of uncommonly resourceful men, and he passed them all in the race for advancement. There is some reason to believe that Lincoln, strange as it seems, was his successful rival in a love affair, but otherwise Douglas left Lincoln far behind. Buoyant, good-natured, never easily abashed, his maturity and *savoir faire* were accentuated by the smallness of his stature. His blue eyes and his dark, abundant hair heightened his physical charm of boyishness; his virile movements, his face, heavy-browed, round, and strong, and his well-formed, uncommonly large head gave him an aspect of intellectual power. He had a truly Napoleonic trick of attaching men to his fortunes. He was a born leader,

beyond question; and he himself does not seem ever to have doubted his fitness to lead, or ever to have agonized over the choice of a path and the responsibilities of leadership. Principles he had – the principles of Jefferson and Jackson as he understood them. These, apparently, he held sufficient for every problem and every emergency of political life.

He believed in party organization quite as firmly as he believed in party principles, and in the summer of 1837 he had a hand in building up the machinery of conventions and committees through which the Illinois Democrats have governed themselves ever since. He defended Van Buren's plan of a sub-treasury when many even of those who had supported Jackson's financial measures wavered in the face of the disfavor into which hard times had brought the party in power, and in November, although the Springfield congressional district, even before the panic, had shown a Whig majority of 3000, he accepted the Democratic nomination for the seat in Congress to be filled at the election in August, 1838, and threw himself with the utmost ardor into the canvass. The district was the largest in the whole country, for it included all the northern counties of the State. His opponent was John T. Stuart, Lincoln's law partner, and for five months the two spoke six days every week without covering the whole of the great region they aspired to represent. The northern counties had been filling up with immigrants, and more than 36,000 votes were cast. Many ballots were thrown out on technicalities; most of the election officials were Whigs. After

weeks of uncertainty, Stuart was declared elected by a majority of five. The moral effect, however, was a triumph for Douglas, who at the time of his nomination was not of the age required of congressmen.

He announced that he would now devote himself to his profession. But it was by this time very difficult, even if he so wished, to withdraw from politics. He was constantly in council with the leaders of his party, and belonged to a sort of "third house" at Springfield which nowadays would probably be called a lobby. During the winter there was an angry controversy between the Democratic governor and the Whig senate over the question of the governor's right to appoint a secretary of state, the senate refusing to confirm his nomination of McClernand on the ground that the office was not vacant. The question was brought before the supreme court, whose Whig majority, by deciding against the governor, strengthened a growing feeling of discontent with the whole judiciary among the Democrats, and Douglas took strong ground in favor of reorganizing the court. In March, addressing a great meeting at Springfield, he defended the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions of 1798, and when the presidential campaign opened in November he had a debate with Lincoln and other Whig orators. He was, in fact, the leading Democratic orator throughout the campaign in Illinois, and there is no doubt that his enthusiasm and his shrewdness had much to do with the result there. Of all the Northern States, only Illinois and New Hampshire went for Van Buren.

Meanwhile, however, he had practiced law with such success that no account of the Illinois bar of those days omits his name from the list of eminent attorneys. It was noted that whereas Lincoln was never very successful save in those cases where his client's cause was just, a client with but a slender claim upon the court's favor found Douglas a far better advocate. He never seems to have given much time to the reading of law or to the ordinary drudgery of preparing cases for trial, but he mastered the main facts of his cases with the utmost facility, and his mind went at once to the points that were sure to affect the decision. Early in his experience as a lawyer he had to be content with fees that seem absurdly small; once, he rode from Springfield to Bloomington to argue a case, and got but five dollars for his services. But he was a first-rate man of business, and soon had a good income from his profession.

In January, 1841, the legislature, now Democratic in both branches, removed the Whig incumbent from the office of secretary of state, and the governor at once appointed Douglas to succeed him. That office, however, he held less than a month, for the legislature had also reconstructed the supreme court in such a way as to increase the number of judges, and in February, being then less than twenty-eight years old, he was named for one of the new places. One of the reasons why the court was reconstructed was its opposition to the Democratic position on the franchise question. Douglas, arguing a famous franchise case before it, had made himself the champion of unnaturalized inhabitants

claiming the right to vote, and had thus established himself in the good-will of a large and increasing constituency throughout the State. Under the new law, each justice was assigned to a particular circuit, – Douglas to the westernmost, whose principal town was Quincy, on the Illinois River, where he made his home.

The Mormon settlement of Nauvoo was in that circuit, and the most interesting of all the cases brought before Judge Douglas grew out of the troubles between the followers of Joe Smith and their neighbors. On one occasion, Joe Smith was himself on trial, and the Christian populace of the neighborhood, long incensed against him and his people, broke into the court-room clamoring for his life. The sheriff, a feeble-bodied and spiritless official, showed signs of yielding, and the judge, promptly assuming a power not vested in his office, appointed a stalwart Kentuckian sheriff, and ordered him to summon a *posse* and clear the room. By these means the defendant's life was saved, and Douglas, notwithstanding various decisions of his against them, earned the gratitude of the religious enthusiasts. There is a story that some years later, when he was no longer a judge, but a major in a militia regiment sent on an expedition against Nauvoo, he was ordered to take a hundred men and arrest the "twelve apostles." The Mormons, outnumbering the militia, were fortified for defense. Major Douglas, however, proceeded alone into their lines, persuaded the twelve to enter their apostolic coach and come with him to the Christian camp, and so brought about an agreement which prevented a fight.

Both as a judge and as a member of the council of revision Douglas stood out with commendable firmness against the popular feeling, strong throughout the country during the hard times, and which in some of the States got a complete ascendancy over courts and legislatures, in favor of the relief of debtors. He enforced the old laws for the collection of debts, and he baulked several legislative schemes to defraud creditors of their due by declaring the new laws unconstitutional. For the rest, his decisions have seemed to competent critics to show that he possessed unusual legal ability and grasp of principles and a corresponding power of statement, scant as his legal training was.

According to the American usage, he was "Judge Douglas" all the rest of his life, but the state bench no more satisfied his ambition than the other state offices he had held. In December, 1842, when the legislature proceeded to ballot for a United States senator, his name was presented, though again his age fell short of the legal requirement, and on the last ballot he had fifty-one votes against the fifty-six which elected his successful competitor. The next year, being nominated for the lower house of Congress, he accepted, and at once resigned his place on the bench, though the district had a Whig complexion. At the end of a canvass which left both himself and his opponent, Browning, seriously ill, he was elected by a majority of several hundred.

On his way to Washington, he visited Cleveland, where his westward journey had come so near an abortive ending, and then his home-folk at Canandaigua. He was but thirty years old, yet

he had held five important political offices, he had risen to high rank in his profession, he was the leader of the dominant party in a great State; and all this he had done alone, unaided. Few aged men have brought back such laurels from their Western fortune-seeking. In December, 1843, he took his seat in the House of Representatives and began to display before the whole country the same brilliant spectacle of daring, energy, and success which had captivated the people of Illinois.

## CHAPTER II

# THE HOUSE AND THE SENATE

It was the aggressive energy of the man, unrestrained by such formality as was still observed by the public men of the older Eastern communities, which most impressed those who have left on record their judgments of the young Western congressman. The aged Adams, doubtless the best representative of the older school in either branch of Congress, gave a page of his diary to one of Douglas's early speeches. "His face was convulsed," – so the merciless diary runs, – "his gesticulation frantic, and he lashed himself into such a heat that if his body had been made of combustible matter it would have burnt out. In the midst of his roaring, to save himself from choking, he stripped and cast away his cravat, unbuttoned his waistcoat, and had the air and aspect of a half-naked pugilist. And this man comes from a judicial bench, and passes for an eloquent orator!" On another occasion, the same critic tells us, Douglas "raved an hour about democracy and anglophobia and universal empire." Adams had been professor of rhetoric and oratory at Harvard College, and he was the last man in the country to appreciate an oratorical manner that departed from the established rules and traditions of the art. Ampère, a French traveler, thought Douglas a perfect representative of the energetic builders of the Western commonwealths, and predicted



that he would come into power when it should be the turn of the West to dominate the country. "Small, black, stocky," so this observer described him, "his speech is full of nervous power, his action simple and strong." Douglas, however, quickly adapted himself to his new environment, – no man in the country excelled him in that art, – and took on all the polish which the Washington of that day demanded, without any loss of fighting spirit or any abandonment of his democratic manners and principles.

He soon got a good opportunity to plant himself on a powerful popular sentiment by urging, in a really excellent speech, that the country should repay to the aged Jackson the fine which had been imposed upon him for contempt of court during the defense of New Orleans. An experienced opponent found him ready with a taking retort to every interruption. It being objected that there was absolutely no precedent for refunding the fine, "I presume," he replied, "that no case can be found on record, or traced by tradition, where a fine, imposed upon a general for saving his country, at the peril of his life and reputation, has ever been refunded." When he visited The Hermitage during the following summer, Jackson singled him out of a distinguished party and thanked him, not without reason, for defending his course at New Orleans better than he himself had ever been able to defend it. Douglas won further distinction during the session by defending, in a report from the committee on elections, the right of the several States to determine how their representatives in Congress should be chosen. Later, in a debate with John J. Hardin, his rival

in Congress as in the Illinois legislature, he contrasted the Whig and Democratic positions on the questions of the day with so much force and skill that the speech was used as the principal Democratic document in the presidential campaign of 1844.

In Congress, distinction does not always, or usually, imply power; but Douglas was consummately fit for the sort of struggling by which things are in fact accomplished at Washington. Whatever the matter in hand, his mind always moved with lightning rapidity to positive views. He was never without a clear purpose, and he had the skill and the temper to manage men. He knew how to conciliate opponents, to impress the thoughtful, to threaten the timid, to button-hole and flatter and cajole. He breathed freely the heated air of lobbies and committee rooms. Fast as his reputation grew, his actual importance in legislation grew faster still. At the beginning of his second term he was appointed chairman of the House Committee on Territories, and so was charged in an especial way with the affairs of the remoter West. In the course of that service, he framed many laws which have affected very notably the development of our younger commonwealths. He was particularly opposed to the policy of massing the Indians in reservations west of the Mississippi, fearing that the new Northwest, the Oregon country, over which we were still in controversy with Great Britain, would thus be isolated. To prevent this, he introduced during his first term a bill to organize into a territory that part of the Louisiana Purchase which lay

north and west of Missouri. As yet, however, there were scarcely any white settlers in the region, and no interest could be enlisted in support of the bill. But he renewed his motion year after year until finally, as we shall see, he made it the most celebrated measure of his time.

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