THE SENATORIAL CAREER OF
GEORGE GRAHAM VEST

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PREFACE

G. G. Vest is known to most people, if at all, as the author of the famous eulogy on the dog. To a small group, he is known as the "Senator of two Republics" but to many he is known not at all.

His work as a United States Senator from Missouri has received little attention. The very few accounts of his life are brief and inadequate. Sources are scarce as to his early life, hence this study is necessarily limited to his Senatorial career, although mention is made of his earlier activities. Rather than give a superficial sketch of his whole Senatorial career, it has seemed best to limit this paper to his most important work during twenty-four years in the Senate from 1879 to 1903.

It is hoped that this study will be of value to all interested in Vest and his service to Missouri.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: EARLY LIFE

George Graham Vest was the only son and the youngest of three children born to Harriet Graham and John Jay Vest. He was born in Frankfort, Kentucky on December 6, 1830.

His parents were of a Virginia family and of Scotch-Irish descent. The father was a carpenter and a builder. He was an elder in the Presbyterian Church and the mother was a devout worshiper in this same faith.¹ Young George was in close contact all his boyhood with the King James Bible and the hymns and catechism of Calvinism. For some unknown personal reasons, however, he never joined any church, but his speeches were usually sprinkled with biblical words and phrases, that he had learned in his youth.²

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1. Kansas City Journal, August 10, 1904. Henry Lamm, "Sketch of G. G. Vest." (Reprinted from the Proceedings of the Missouri Bar Association), 1904, pp. 1-16.
 2. Congressional Record, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 3384ff; St. Louis Post Dispatch, August 10, 1904; St. Louis Republic, August 11, 1904; G. G. Vest, "Old Put," Saturday Evening Post, July 2, 1904.

The father was a partisan Whig and was anxious³ that his son believe the principles of that party. Frequently, he would take his boy to attend the famous⁴ political "burgoons" of Kentucky. At these meetings Henry Clay and other noted Kentucky orators often spoke. But the art of speaking and the liking for whiskey, which were much in evidence at these political gatherings, seemed to impress young Vest far more than did the great principles of the Whig party. Later, he used both eloquence and whiskey but for some reason he forsook the political ways of his father.

Tradition has it, that Vest was a precocious lad and his parents were anxious that he receive the best training possible. He attended the private school of B. B. Sayre, who was one of the best educators in that section of the country. B. Gratz Brown and J. M. Harlan attended the school at the time Vest did. These three "sandy-haired" youths were companions and later two of them rendered political service to the state of Missouri⁵ and the other to Kentucky.

3. G. G. Vest, "A Senator of Two Republics," Saturday Evening Post, January 16, 1904.

4. Ibid., pp. 10-11.

5. The Boonville Weekly Advertiser, May 5, 1882.

Brown was prominent in Missouri politics. He served as governor from 1871-1873.

Harlan on November 29, 1877 became an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court, a position which he filled with ability for the rest of his life.

Young Vest was quite fond of Sir Walter Scott's romantic novels and, it is reported, Professor Sayre found that at the age of ten his pupil had read every one of the long list from "Waverly" to "Woodstock". The incidents and characters of Kenilworth, Ivanhoe, Rob Roy and other of Scott's tales remained with Vest until the end of his days and he often adorned a speech with skits from these romantic tales.

At the age of thirteen, Vest was far enough advanced in his studies to enter in the Junior class of Centre College at Danville, Kentucky in the neighboring county of Boyle. Here, too, Vest was associated with a group of students who later attained national importance. Among them were Adlai Stevenson, T. T. Crittenden, John F. Phillips and Thomas H. Swope. Vest seemed to have been unusually fortunate in being associated with people of character and ability. In his senior year at Centre, in 1848, Vest had a severe illness which caused him to lose many days of school. But his record was of such

6. State Tribune (Jefferson City), August 10, 1904.

7. Independence Examiner, January 17, 1930; Sedalia Daily Capital, August 10, 1904.

A. Stevenson was Postmaster General in Cleveland's first administration and vice-president in his second.

T. T. Crittenden became a lawyer of note and governor of Missouri.

J. F. Phillips was a cousin by marriage to Vest. He was Supreme Court commissioner, judge on the Kansas City Court of Appeals and for twenty-two years as judge of the United States district court of the Western district of Missouri.

high standing that he was permitted to graduate with his class receiving the highest honors.⁸

After graduation Vest needed money. As to how he earned this the record is not clear. Some indicate that he taught school; others that he served as a political correspondent to the Louisville Courier Journal. Perhaps he did both. At any rate, we are told, that the editor of the paper, W. N. Haldeman and a local poet, George D. Prentice, were so impressed with Vest's writings that they urged him to adopt political journalism as his life work.⁹

Evidently, Vest thought otherwise, for he entered the law office of James Harlan who was attorney-general of Kentucky and the father of Vest's boyhood companion. Judge Harlan did not deal with his student in the ordinary way. The Federalist was given to Vest to master instead of Coke's Institutes or The Commentaries of Sir William Blackstone. The old lawyer laid special stress upon the political papers of Hamilton, Jay and Madison. He told the young student that the most splendid essays on statescraft anywhere were in these papers. Vest studied all that his Whig preceptor assigned and became exactly what his teacher intended him not

8. Centre College to M. E. Dawes, August 1, 1931; Mrs. Geo. P. B. Jackson to M. E. Dawes, August 5, 1931.

9. Lamm, Vest, p. 5.

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to be--an advocate of states' rights.

To increase his legal knowledge, Vest took a course of lectures on Blackstone under the guidance of Thomas Monroe, judge of the Kentucky Court of Appeals.

Two years later, he entered the law department of Transylvania University at Lexington. He graduated from here on February 25, 1853 as valedictorian of his class, and, if we may believe the local newspaper, a
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 "young man of promise."

The accounts of Vest's activities after graduating differ, some relating that he opened a law office at Owensboro, Kentucky, and others that he went back to journalism. Possibly he did both for a short time, but restlessness or poor business soon drove him from Kentucky, and he laid plans to go to California.

His parents were now dead and his two sisters were married. So bidding farewell to his native state and his sweetheart, Miss Sallie Sneed, whom he had met while attending Centre College, the twenty-three years
 12
 old lawyer started across the continent to California.

10. Kansas City Star, February 28, 1903.

11. St. Louis Republic, August 10, 1904; Mrs. C. F. Norton to M. E. Dawes, January 6, 1932.

12. Lamm, Vest, p. 8. Palmyra Spectator, May 15, 1914, quoted in the Missouri Historical Review, April, 1925, p. 495, "Why G. Vest came to Missouri."

His trip to the far West ended at a Missouri village, called Georgetown. Here he stayed and opened a law office. Tradition assigns various reasons for this. The most common one is that the coach in which Vest was a passenger had a wreck and while waiting for it to be mended, he was employed to defend a negro boy accused of murdering a white woman and her two children. The young Kentuckian cleared the negro and the local people threatened Vest with harm. Whereupon he determined to remain and face the consequence. According to another tradition, some old Kentucky friends lived in and around Georgetown. Doubtless these influenced Vest in his decision to remain in Missouri.¹³ Besides, Vest was in love. If a law office was needed in the village--why go farther from his sweetheart? At any rate, he decided to reside in Georgetown.¹⁴ The following year, 1854, he married Miss Sneed.

To this union, three children were born, Mollie,¹⁵ Alexander Sneed and George Pugh.

In 1856, the Vest family moved to Boonville, Missouri. Here Vest went into partnership with J. W.

13. Boonville Weekly Advertiser, May 18, 1900; Kansas City Star, August 9, 1904; Sweet Springs Herald, August 25, 1904.

14. Sedalia Daily Capital, August 10, 1904.

15. St. Louis Republic, August 10, 1904; State Tribune (Jefferson City), August 10, 1904.

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Draffen and later with Joseph L. Stephens.

Vest soon made a place for himself in the new firm and in local politics. Four years after his arrival in Boonville, he was chosen as a presidential elector on the Douglas ticket from the Cooper county district and elected to the lower House of the state Legislature. Here, he was made chairman of the Federal Relations Committee, for the time being, the most important committee of the House. Early in 1861, Vest became recognized as the leader of the secession faction. He made fiery and eloquent speeches in behalf of the cause as he saw it. 17

When Missouri in a special election in February 1861, declared by a majority of 80,000 to stand by the Union, Vest went with the Claiborne F. Jackson followers who established a rump legislature at Neosho, Missouri. This fugitive body at Neosho passed an ordinance of secession probably drawn up by Vest. Soon after he enlisted and took part in the battle of Wilson's Creek. In the same year, he was elected as a Representative to the new confederate government at Richmond. 18 He served until 1864. In that year Governor Reynolds, who had been

16. John W. Henry, The History of Bench and Bar of Missouri, St. Louis, Mo., 1898, p. 388; Boonville Weekly Advertiser, August 12, 1904.

17. Kansas City Times, August 11, 1904.

18. Independence Examiner, January 17, 1930.

deposed by the Missouri state war convention, but who assumed to be the governor of the seceded state of Missouri after the death of Governor Jackson, appointed Vest as a Senator to Richmond. He held this position until the close of the war.¹⁹ At the downfall of the Confederacy, Vest who had lost his civil rights in the state of Missouri was not sure what the future held for him. Penniless and jobless, he eventually reached his family who had been in Danville, Kentucky during his absence.²⁰

Several months later, Vest brought his family back to Missouri. Here he became a member of the law firm of Phillips and Hicks. In 1869, Hicks dropped out and the firm became Phillips and Vest.²¹ John Phillips had been a Union soldier, and with Vest as his partner, the firm could appeal for business to all factions in Missouri, a practice that was followed by many law firms.²² This Sedalia firm and another one in Warrensburg, composed of T. T. Crittenden, an ex-Union soldier and Francis M. Cockrell, an ex-Confederate, were the two dominant law

19. The Kansas City Star, August 9, 1904.

20. Kansas City Times, August 11, 1904. Mrs. Geo. P. B. Jackson to M. E. Dawes, August 5, 1931.

21. Walter B. Stevens, The Centennial History of Missouri 1820-1921. S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., St. Louis, 1921, Vol. I, p. 951.

22. The Independence Examiner, January 17, 1930; Star Journal (Warrensburg), October 9, 1931.

firms in Central Missouri. These lawyers were known as the "Big Four" and many were the suits tried by them.

In the fall of 1870, Vest took part in a dog trial in the court at Warrensburg. It was during the final plea of this case that he immortalized his name. For here it was that he delivered the renowned eulogy to the dog.²³ It is by this classic tribute that the name Vest is known to many,--to far more in fact than know anything of his long political career.

Other trials and law work continued and by 1872, Vest had reestablished himself enough in politics to be chosen as a delegate to the National Democratic Convention in Baltimore which nominated Horace Greeley for the presidency.²⁴ Four years later, Vest was a candidate for the Democratic nomination for governor of Missouri. Although he conducted an energetic campaign, John Phelps

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23. Walter L. Chaney, The True Story of Old Drum, (pamphlet) also found in The Breeder's Gazette, December 16, 1915; H. H. Crittenden, "Senator G. G. Vest's Famous Dog Speech and the Unpublished Story of His Employment in the Case," from the Annals of Kansas City published by the Missouri Valley Historical Society, 1921, pp. 510-514; E. M. C. French, Senator Vest, Champion of the Dog, Meador Publishing Co., Boston, Massachusetts, 1930; Gustav Kobbi, A Tribute to the Dog, T. A. Stokes Co., 1911.
24. State Tribune (Jefferson City), August 10, 1904; G. G. Vest, "A Senator of Two Republics," Saturday Evening Post, January 16, 1904.

won the nomination and the election.²⁵

Vest was not done, however, and the spring of 1878²⁶ found him a candidate for the United States Senate. He began his campaign early and covered the state thoroughly.²⁷ Generally sober, but at times otherwise, according to contemporary newspapers, he spoke eloquently upon the issues of the day.²⁸ Making full use of his oratorical powers, he attacked the monetary policy of the Republican administration, especially the discontinuance of the free coinage of silver in 1873. This, and other Republican policies, he informed his hearers had caused hard times and depression. He also attacked the proposals of the Greenback-Labor party which had a candidate for the Senate, calling their organization the "Coyote party"²⁹ notable only for its noise.

25. The Daily Tribune (Jefferson City), July 20, 1876. The vote for the Democratic nomination for governor was as follows:

Candidates	1st Ballot	2nd Ballot	3rd Ballot
John S. Phelps	135	148 $\frac{1}{2}$	181 $\frac{1}{2}$
G. G. Vest	101 $\frac{1}{2}$	92 $\frac{1}{2}$	97 $\frac{1}{2}$
J. A. Hockaday	44 $\frac{1}{2}$	42 $\frac{1}{2}$	19
M.V.L. McClelland	31	29	14

Necessary votes for a choice 157.

26. The Peoples' Tribune (Jefferson City), April 17, 1878.

27. Ibid., May 1, 1878; September 4, 1878.

28. Chariton Courier, October 5, 1878.

29. St. Louis Republic, June 17, 1878.

"It is like the first night out on the plain," Vest said. "You lie awake with your gun cocked ready for wolves who are barking around in every direction. The next morning, sleepless and nervous you look around for acres of wolves and you see one poor little devil with the face the size of a quarter of a dollar looking at you over a sand hill."

The other issues of which he championed were the good Democratic doctrine of the restriction of negro suffrage by the use of educational qualifications for voting, and the local interest of government aid to navigation on the Mississippi, in which as Vest rather irrelevantly declaimed lay "the heart of De Soto." He³⁰ conducted a busy and interesting campaign. The crowd was ever ready to listen to the "little giant" as some of his friends began to call him because of his physical³¹ resemblance to Stephen A. Douglas.

In the midst of his campaign, Vest moved his³² family and law office to Kansas City and it was here he

30. The Peoples' Tribune (Jefferson City), January 29, 1879.

31.. St. Louis Republic, January 7, 1900; New York American, August 10, 1904; Boonville Weekly Advertiser, January 19, 1900; Kansas City Star, August 9, 1904.

32. The Peoples' Tribune (Jefferson City), May 1, 1878; Boonville Weekly Advertiser, May 3, 1878.

lived when the legislature, in January 1879, chose him
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 to be Missouri's junior United States Senator.

33. The Peoples' Tribune (Jefferson City), January 22,
 1879. The vote for the United States Senatorship
 was as follows:

Candidates	First Ballot	Second Ballot
Thomas Allen	6	3
Samuel T. Glover	42	42
George G. Vest	61	71
John S. Phelps	11	7
Charles H. Hardin	8	5
S. S. Laws	1	0

CHAPTER II

SOME SENATORIAL SERVICES AND NATIONAL POLITICS

Vest was almost a stranger to Washington when he marched down the aisle to take the oath of an American Senator on March 18, 1879. But before his first term expired, he had made himself recognized as one of the most brilliant, picturesque and effective champions of the policies of the post-bellum Democracy.¹ His early experiences had made him a democrat in his personal philosophy as well as party affiliation. To him, Thomas Jefferson was the greatest statesman that ever lived, and with that Virginia patriot as his example, Vest had his² criterion for practically all political controversies. His educational training, his political work in the Missouri legislature and in the Confederate Congress, along with his legal experience helped him to cope with the leaders whom he encountered in the Senate.

1. Congressional Record, 46th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 1-2; Kansas City Journal, August 10, 1904.

2. G. G. Vest, "Thomas Jefferson", an address delivered before the Jefferson Club, St. Louis, Mo., October 31, 1895. (Pamphlet published by the Jefferson Club.)

In it were such men as Senators Justin S. Morrill from New England; Roscoe Conkling and Thomas F. Bayard from the Atlantic coast; Allen G. Thurman, David W. Voorhees, William B. Allison and George H. Pendleton from the valleys of the Ohio and Mississippi; John J. Ingalls and Henry Teller from the West; L. Q. C. Lamar, John T. Morgan and Ben Hill from the Gulf and M. H. Carpenter from the Great Lakes.³

Although the intellectual peer of his colleagues, Vest was physically their inferior. In appearance, he was more picturesque than he was impressive. As one paper put it--"he was very small when born and has never been quite able to catch up with his growth.... But what he lacks in height he has made up in breadth."⁴ Judge Henry Lamm says this of Vest, "he had a form of the singular makeup of being almost as tall when sitting as when standing. He had an exceptionally large head and very broad shoulders such as would have marked him as a prominent person in any crowd."⁵ Vest was a few inches over five feet in height and weighed, so F. C. Shoemaker

3. Congressional Record, 46th Cong., 1st Sess., pp.1 ff.; Boonville Weekly Advertiser, May 14, 1880; Kansas City Star, February 28, 1903.

4. Boonville Weekly Advertiser, October 9, 1885.

5. Floyd C. Shoemaker, Missouri's Hall of Fame, Lives of Eminent Missourians, Columbia, Missouri, 1921, pp. 232-246.

tells us, about a hundred and ten pounds.⁶ But other sources state that Vest was much heavier, especially during his early career.⁷ During the latter part of his life and at his death, he weighed less than a hundred pounds.⁸ He had fiery red hair, blue eyes, a sandy, military mustache, a freckled face and a very short neck.

"The only thing noticeable," says a Washington correspondent, "about Vest's habiliments is the wide expanse of his shirt front which is snow white and aggressive. He seems proud of his fine linens as he sits cocked up in an easy position. It appears that he has obeyed the injunction, 'pull down your vest', thus leaving his shirt to roam at will."⁹ Usually, so we are told, Vest wore an old style black frock coat, a broad slouch hat, a black tie and a white shirt. Around his neck, he wore an old time watch chain, one strand of which showed over the expanse of his white shirt front. As the twentieth century dawned with newer fashions, Vest still clung to the old. According to his friends, he was somewhat ceremonious in manner but polite and precise of

6. Floyd C. Shoemaker, Missouri's Hall of Fame, Lives of Eminent Missourians, Columbia, Missouri, 1921, pp. 232-246.

7. Boonville Weekly Advertiser, June 12, 1885.

8. Ibid., February 25, 1900; April 18, 1902.

9. Ibid., January 26, 1883.

speech. He was rather aloof to those whom he did not know. In his prime, it is reported, that Vest could have¹⁰ posed for the traditional ideal Kentucky colonel.

After three months of Senatorial work one paper had this comment to make concerning Vest: "It is gratifying to observe that Vest has at once taken a commanding position as a statesman. He is ready and able in debate...."¹¹ In 1881 a Washington correspondent, writing under the name of Gath, stated that G. G. Vest was the¹² most brilliant man in the Senate. The following year, a Washington correspondent writing for the Chicago Times wrote, "I have rarely seen any Senator have the floor who commands a larger or more respectful hearing than Senator Vest of Missouri. He is not in all respects an attractive speaker or a finished orator as he is ultra partisan. He speaks without notes and the crowd likes that. His voice is neither strong nor clear and at times is squeaky¹³ but he finds words readily." On August 9, 1882 a Jefferson City weekly made this statement: "Missouri

10. Boonville Weekly Advertiser, February 11, 1881; January 16, 1903; Kansas City Star, August 9, 1904; St. Louis Post Dispatch, August 9, 10 and 11, 1904; Independence Examiner, January 17, 1930.

11. The Peoples' Tribune (Jefferson City), July 30, 1879.

12. Boonville Weekly Advertiser, February 11, 1881.

13. Ibid., January 27, 1882.

should be proud of her junior Senator, G. G. Vest. Few men have secured the enviable reputation and leading position he enjoys in the Senate of the United States in so short a time. He has reached this place by sheer force of intellectual power. He is a straight forward, honest man of convictions with the ability and courage¹⁴ to express them."

During his service in the Senate, Vest served on a number of committees. Some of the more important ones were, the Committee on Territories, Mines and Mining, Commerce Committee, Sioux Indian Committee, the Judiciary Committee, the Finance Committee and the Public Building and Grounds Committee. He was chairman of the Public¹⁵ Health and National Quarantine Committee.

He served as the first chairman of the special committee to examine the different branches of the¹⁶ Civil Service. Later he said that, "it was from that

14. The Peoples' Tribune, (Jefferson City), January 25, and August 9, 1882.

15. Congressional Record, 46th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 19; 46th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 2383; 47th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 3574; 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 612; 50th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 16; 53rd Cong., 1st Sess., p. 19; 54th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 421; 55th Cong., 3d Sess., p. 1389; 57th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 388; G. G. Vest, "A Senator of Two Republics," Saturday Evening Post, September 10, 1904, pp. 13-14; G. G. Vest, Saturday Evening Post, May 14, 1904, p. 9.

16. Congressional Record, 46th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 19; 55th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 162.

committee, although I did not report the bill for it was reported by the late Senator Pendleton of Ohio, that the original Civil Service bill emanated."

Vest served on the Public Building and Grounds Committee during his entire Senatorial career. His work in this capacity convinced him that a public architect should be employed to care for the constructive needs of the government. Morrill of Vermont was chairman of this committee. Although he and Vest differed on most political questions, they both agreed upon the necessity for government ownership of all buildings necessary for the transaction of its business. They thought that the United States should not pay rent but use some of the surplus in the Treasury before real estate advanced higher and purchase the sites for erection of suitable buildings in every town and city where necessary.

Because of such exhaustive work demanded of him while serving on the Finance Committee in 1894, Vest claimed his health was so undermined that he never fully regained it. This was during the formation of the Wilson-¹⁷ Gorman tariff and will be discussed later.

These committees along with numerous minor ones in addition to other duties kept Vest busy. Toward the last of his career, it is said that he resented any

17. Vest, Saturday Evening Post, September 10, 1904, pp. 13-14.

effort to call him from the Senate chamber for a trivial purpose. The Kansas City Times relates this story concerning Vest and his attitude toward callers: "Many¹⁸ Missourians," states the paper, "came to Washington at every session and nine-tenths of them sent cards both to Cockrell and Vest. Cockrell never failed to make an appointment through a page for a meeting in the marble room but Vest would take the card and either seek the seclusion of the cloakroom or remain indifferently in his seat.

"When the repeal of the Sherman Purchase Act was pending, Vest was playing a leading part and was very busy. The story is told that a prominent Democrat from Clay county on his way to the Capitol with a member of the Lower House delegation from Missouri, remarked to his companion - 'I think I will go over on the Senate side and see Vest.'

"His friend observed, 'You may go but you won't see Vest.'

"'What do you mean?' asked the Clay county Democrat.

"'Vest won't come out to see you.'

"'Well, I bet a supper he does.'

"'I'll go you,' replied the Congressman.

18. Kansas City Times, August 11, 1904.

"The page took the card in and soon returned to the Missourians.

"'What did Vest say?' asked the man from Clay county.

"'Nothing,' answered the page.

"'Did you hand him my card?'

"Yes, sir. I did,' replied the page.

"The man seemed unconvinced so his companion suggested that they visit the galleries and see if Vest were present. They did. There sat Vest crouched low at his desk indifferent to galleries and everything except legislation."

Although Vest may have refused to see some of the Missouri callers, nevertheless, he was alert to the needs and desires of his state and presented the usual number of bills that were local in character, such as bridge bills, federal building bills, river improvement bills and pensions bills.

Rather typical of these was the presentation of the bill for a pension to the family of General James Shields. This man, a veteran of three wars and a United States Senator from three states, had been Vest's pre-¹⁹decessor in the Senate from Missouri. Likewise, it fell to Vest to help secure financial aid for the St. Louis

19. French, Senator Vest, pp. 22-23.

Exposition held in 1904. He was instrumental in the passage of the bill which furnished \$5,000,000 to the Fair provided St. Louis raised \$10,000,000.²⁰

In presenting or supporting bills of local interest, Vest believed, (as did most senators) that a senator should obey instructions of his state legislature, and usually he did when only an issue of expediency or policy was involved. Yet there were times in which he refused to follow orders. One instance was in 1892 when the Missouri House of Representatives instructed him to vote an anti-option bill which had passed that house by a large majority. Vest favored the object of the bill but he felt that it violated the Constitution, so he opposed the measure. Whereupon he was accused of being interested in option dealing. "When," said he, "I never bought or sold a bushel of grain in my life nor had any interest in any exchange or institution concerning such a business." As a matter of passing interest, the Missouri House reconsidered its action and Vest was left to vote²¹ as he desired.

On another occasion, he voted against an oleo-margarine bill on constitutional grounds calling it a

20. Congressional Record, 56th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 2872-2873; St. Louis Republic, August 10, 1904.

21. Vest, Saturday Evening Post, June 25, 1904, pp. 13-14.

fraud regardless of the fact that he represented one of
the agriculture states. ²² "And yet," commented a newspaper,
"Missouri sent him gladly to the Senate for twenty-four
²³
years."

Not only did the majority of Missourians like the Senatorial service of Vest but they considered him one of the best campaign orators in the country. Consequently, when Presidential elections occurred Vest was very much in demand. Undoubtly the impressions of the Kentucky "burgoos" influenced him on these campaigns as his wit and eloquence were superb. Perhaps, the refreshments that went along with these rallies inspired Vest to greater effort. At any rate, unless prevented by ill health, he was an active worker in all presidential campaigns from 1879 to 1904.

The 1880 campaign was the first one in which he participated after entering the Senate. In this one, he was most active. He was chosen as a delegate at large to the National Convention which assembled at Cincinnati on ²⁴ June 22. Being in New York just before the Convention convened, he in company with Colonel James O. Broadhead

22. Vest, Saturday Evening Post, June 25, 1904, pp. 13-14

23. Kansas City Star, February 28, 1903; Brooklyn Daily Eagle, August 9, 1904.

24. Vest, Saturday Evening Post, January 2, 1904, pp. 10-11.

called upon Tilden at his home in Gramercy Park. Convinced that Tilden was physically unfit to run, Vest urged Thomas A. Hendricks of Indiana to become a candidate for the nomination. Hendricks declared that he did not want his name to be placed before the convention as he needed a rest. He told Vest that Senator Joseph E. McDonald would be placed before the convention and that he (Hendricks) had told McDonald that under no circumstances would he permit his own name to be used. Vest says that he did not suspect at the time that Hendricks had poor health but later found this to have been true. The party eventually selected the military hero, W. S. Hancock and William E. English to oppose James A. Garfield and Chester Arthur. The Democrats made their fight principally on the "great fraud of 1876."

Vest was at his best as he stumped not only²⁵ Missouri but spoke in Indiana, Ohio and West Virginia. According to the press, he was well received and was the central figure in the political gatherings that some times reached 10,000 people. At these "Grand Rallies," Vest often spoke for three hours in a logical and eloquent

25. The Daily Bazoo (Sedalia), June 25, 1880; The Republican (St. Louis), September 17, 26 and 30, 1880; The Peoples' Tribune (Jefferson City), August 18, September 22 and October 6, 1880; The Missouri Republican, October 15 and 17, 1880; Boonville Weekly Advertiser, August 20, 1880.

manner. He denounced the Republican party, the treatment of the freedman, the Civil Service reform "as illustrated by Hayes, Schurz and Co.," and Garfield and his relations with the Credit Mobilier. Vest praised the splendid military and civil services of Hancock and urged his party to right the wrong of 1876 by voting on election day.

Although his party was defeated at the polls, Vest was ready four years later to work for Grover Cleveland and Thomas A. Hendricks, who had been selected to head the party. The Republicans had chosen for their leaders, Blaine and John A. Logan.

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Vest was a busy campaigner in his state. He praised his party, arraigned Blaine's character and denounced the Republican party's record of fraud, neglect of the navy and the tariff. These meetings were gala affairs with torch light parades and hours of logic, eloquence, fun and figures as Vest propounded the political questions of the day. He, along with the rest of the Democrats, urged a change in affairs of the nation.

Their demand was approved by the voters, for Cleveland received 219 electoral votes as against 182 cast for Blaine. Taking the country as a whole, the Democrats had a plurality of a little more than twenty thousand votes.

26. The Republican, September 10, 1884 to September 29, 1884.

Cleveland's administration was beset by troubles from the beginning. The civil service reformers were disappointed with his actions. Apparently, Vest had hoped to have considerable patronage to distribute but he, too, was doomed to disappointment. He and Hendricks soon decided that the new administration had little use for Democrats like them and that the "dogma of civil service reform seemed to be more important with the President than anything else."²⁷ These two further decided that they had little "use for a law which put into office under a Democratic Administration those who opposed the party and whose only qualification was knowledge of how many revolutions a wheel of a certain diameter could make in a mile."

Under Cleveland, the Democrats had control of the Presidency and House, but the Senate was in the hands of the Republicans. Under such circumstances, Cleveland was unable to do little that was striking, and in his message of December 1887, he set an issue by a vigorous attack on the tariff.

The Republicans accepted the issue and the election of 1888 was fought over the tariff. For their standard bearers, Benjamin Harrison, of Indiana and Levi P. Morton of New York were chosen. The canvass was not

27. Vest, Saturday Evening Post, January 2, 1904, pp. 10-11.

marred by the personalities of 1884. Instead of defamation both parties resorted to a more useful device--the political club (there was a Vest club in St. Louis) whose evolution was a feature of this campaign.

28 Vest was an active worker all through this election. He was a leader at the National Convention which met in St. Louis. When he arrived he was met at the train by members of the "Vest Club" and given a reception at the club rooms. "At eight o'clock," says the Globe Democrat, "one hundred and thirty-five members of the club formed in line....., headed by a band and the carriage in which rode Vest and marched to the club rooms". He was the principal speaker at the National Convention. During the course of his talk "wild applause" greeted many of his comments. He reviewed the history of the Democratic party from Jefferson to Cleveland. He denounced the Republican's tariff policy. As for Cleveland Vest said, "I love and honor him for having struck the shield of monopoly with the lance of annihilation. He stands as champion of the blood-bought principles and opposes the encroachments of corporate wealth, for which all true Democrats should honor him. I honor him for action on civil service. If I were in his place, I would

28. Boonville Weekly Advertiser, March 2, 1888; St. Louis Globe Democrat, June 6, October 23, 24 and 25, 1888.

leave no Republican in public office. I would observe the civil service law but put Democrats in the offices. I would have no Republican serving me. I would as soon leave a wolf to guard my breakfast. I would turn the rascals out. Why you can go to Washington today and find Republicans at desks. What Democrat would have the impudence to ask a place under a Republican administration?" Vest claimed that the Republicans hated Cleveland and if by chance he "were removed tonight, they would hold a barbecue and kill the last pig in the lot." He said that the Republicans were trying to catch Irish votes by flattering them. "Even Sherman," said Vest, "begins his speeches with, 'Me Fellow Citizens.'"

He urged the Democrats to get "behind the Cleveland banner of tariff reform and not dodge the issue." To him the election was "the most important since 1800 when Federalism went down before Jeffersonian Democracy." "The Republican party," he said in closing, "have gathered, as a solid phalanx, around monopolies and protected wealth, and the Democrat who abandons Cleveland in his efforts to overthrow it, is a traitor to his party and an enemy to his country."

As the campaign progressed Vest's eloquence grew as he explained how the "great triumvirate of national prosperity"--agriculture, manufacturing and commerce should be equally protected and not one at the

expense of the other two. He said that with every increase of the tariff, the Republicans dropped "one of Bland's silver dollars down into the cavernous recesses of their pockets" and one could "hear the proud bird of liberty scream as it went down to eternal darkness."

Wherever he spoke, Vest urged as he put it "not free trade but freer trade."

There was one incident during the campaign which caused much comment in Missouri and some in the Senate. This was over a letter written by Vest.²⁹ Though a private one, written to a friend in St. Louis in June, it reached the press in August and was used by the anti-Vest papers. The Globe Democrat thought that the Republican Committee should send a vote of thanks to Vest for his letter which would "probably yield twenty or twenty-five electoral votes." For weeks, it printed in italics in several places on the editorial page these words of Vest's: "Mr. Cleveland by his message, for which I sincerely honor him, has challenged the protective industries of his country to a fight of extermination. The fight is to a death."

Vest was questioned concerning the letter. He admitted writing it to the secretary of the "Vest Club"

29. St. Louis Globe Democrat, September 19, 1888 to October 15, 1888; Congressional Record, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 8598 ff. John Sherman questioned Vest concerning the letter.

in St. Louis. It was a confidential letter written hurriedly in the midst of a senatorial debate. He had no idea of it being published, however Vest explained that if all the letter had been published, the context would have been clear to anyone not wishing to take partisan advantage by misconstruing. "I am," said Vest, "no idiot. I made evident my meaning when I said that the protected manufactures who were accumulating their immense fortunes under the present system would not surrender their large profits without a desperate struggle." The anti-Vest papers made light of the explanation and declared Vest would have to work hard to offset the mischief he had done.

Vest worked up until the last day before the election for his party but Harrison won. Vest, however, was not easily discouraged and 1892 found him again working for Cleveland and denouncing the doctrine of high protection as shown in the McKinley tariff of 1890. He declared that he was ready to discuss the tariff "at the dead hour of midnight, at sunrise or sunset and at any place."³⁰ By the time election day arrived, one was convinced that Vest had fulfilled his declaration. During his speeches, he endeavored to show that never before had

30. Congressional Record, 52nd Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 6777 ff.; Boonville Weekly Advertiser, September 2, 1892 ff. papers.

there been such labor disturbance or such hostile and utterly inimical relations between employer and employee. He exhibited twenty-one samples of "absolutely necessary³¹ merchandise," as he said, which were carrying high duties. He had a long list of strikes which he had compiled from newspapers since December 4, 1890. There were iron strikes, steel strikes, clothing strikes and hundreds of other caused, he insisted, by the McKinley tariff. He showed a list of one hundred trusts which he claimed had been created by the high protection policy. "In fact," said Vest, "there are so many trusts that one cannot shoot a gun, bury a corpse or physic himself without paying something to one." He declared that the whole doctrine was in direct contravention of the spirit and the letter of the Constitution. The election was a triumph for the Democrats.

The administration was beset with financial difficulties and problems during its four years in power. As 1896 approached, the party, due to financial dissensions and industrial distress was demoralized and leaderless. Vest, as a later chapter will reveal, had taken his part in criticizing Cleveland and his financial policy but as 1896 neared he urged his party to unite so an old time victory could be won.

31. Congressional Record, 52nd Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 5524 ff.

In the summer of 1895 Vest went abroad. His health was poor and to use his own words, he "needed to gain strength for the hard labor that would be necessary in the coming months."³² The Globe Democrat thought Vest was wise to leave the country while the Democrats were holding a rousing silver convention at Pertle Springs, Missouri.³³

While abroad, Vest freely discussed the silver question. When asked about the prospect of an international monetary conference, Vest remarked. "It is generally conceded that the other Powers are awaiting the action of England and from all accounts England will not alter the gold standard. A prominent English official was here recently (at Carlsbad). A man who has confidence of the New Ministry and he had several long conferences on the subject with John Wanamaker. He said, 'Rest assured that England will not alter the gold standard.'"

Vest believed America should take the lead and show the world that bimetallism would work.

On September 18, 1895, the press reported that the free coinage supporters had lost a valuable ally³⁴ because Vest had changed his view on silver. That his

32. St. Louis Globe Democrat, July 4, 1895.

33. Ibid., August 9, 1895.

34. Ibid., September 18, 1895.

failure to ally himself with the Cockrell-Stone-Bland movement was why he sailed for Europe instead of attending the silver convention at Pertle Springs.

Vest was indignant at such an attempt to "falsify and misrepresent," and it did not take him long, after landing in New York, to tell the "d----- newspapers" what he thought of them. ³⁵ When asked what he would do if a gold man was nominated for the Presidency upon a gold platform, he answered, "I will not be driven from the Democratic party by any set of men. I have given my life to its principle. I shall die in its faith. I will go into that Convention and do all that I can to secure the nomination of some man who believes in bimetallism and in the free and unlimited coinage of gold and silver. ... If the majority of my party override me, I still will be a Democrat. I will support the nominees of that party, no matter what may be placed in that platform."

Vest urged the Democrats to disregard the predictions that dark hours were ahead for the party. He claimed that the people might "as well expect Pike's Peak, scarred and battered by storms of many centuries and towering with its hoary head above its companions ... to be overthrown, as to expect the Democratic party to be

35. St. Louis Globe Democrat, September 19, 1895; September 28, 1895; October 13, 1895.

disbanded" They would laugh to scorn, Republicanism led by McKinley and Thomas Reed.

As to the part, Vest played in the nominating convention, facts are somewhat scarce. That he presented the name of "Silver Dick" Bland, of Missouri, who was the logical candidate for the cause, is known.³⁶ It is claimed that Vest's voice was so weak that few could hear his remarks. Some claimed that Vest was not over enthusiastic about Bland's nomination; others maintain that he was in poor health and did not have the strength to make himself heard. But he was fairly active after the convention, making one of his best campaign speeches in his life at California, Missouri.³⁷

The campaign was a memorable one and Vest did what he could in fighting the battle of the masses against plutocracy. Thousands gathered to hear him as he worked for the "Great Commoner."

Although McKinley and sound money won the election, Vest was not downhearted as he looked forward to the next election "when," so he prophesied "free silver and Bryan would win the day."

36. Boonville Weekly Advertiser, August 30, 1901. Vest claimed that Bland did not care for the nomination because of poor health. Congressional Record, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 3967-3968.

37. Boonville Weekly Advertiser, July 31, 1896 to September 4, 1896 inclusive.

There was no contest for either nomination in the 1900 campaign. Bryan and McKinley again were opponents. On a platform that repeated the currency demands of 1896 and denounced imperialism, the Democrats conducted their campaign. The Republicans took credit for the general and abundant prosperity and their cartoonists emphasized the idea of a full dinner pail as a reason for continued support.

Vest, forbidden by ill health, was not an active worker. He conducted his campaign from the veranda of his Sweet Springs' home seated in a rocker as he held interviews and gave out statements denouncing the imperialistic tendencies of the age.³⁸ However, he prophesied in September that the Republicans would win. His decision, he said, was based on a conversation overheard³⁹ while he was seated in a barber chair at Sweet Springs.

Two farmers were discussing the coming election. Said one, "Bill, what do you think of the election?"

"I dunno, Jim," replied Bill, "I dunno hardly. You know I've allers been a Democrat. Dad was before me and Grandpap before him. But I tell you, Jim, I'm gettin thirty-two dollars a head more for mules thin I ever did.

38. Boonville Weekly Advertiser, October 19 and 26, 1900.

39. Walter B. Stevens, Centennial of Missouri (the Center State) One Hundred Years in the Union, 1820-1921, St. Louis, 1921, Vol. I, p. 653.

Derned, if I don't think I'll hev to put in one fer ole Bill Kinley this time."

"I reckon you'se right, Bill," replied Jim. "I'se allers voted her straight up 'till now. But I'm doin' better on hogs than I ever done. I don't won't enythin' to spoil good times. I don't won't eny change."

Vest decided right then that Bryan had no chance when Missouri Democrats talked like that.

Although Vest did not live through the next election, he made some predictions concerning it saying that silver would not be an issue in 1904 and that Bryan could never be president. "But," added Vest, "our party is not depended on the fate of any one man. It survived the death of Jefferson and will the disappearance⁴⁰ of Bryan."

Vest before the time of the 1904 campaign had indeed proved himself to be no stranger to Washington. No longer did the New York Sun need to ask, as it was reported that it had in 1880, "who this G. G. Vest was?" His efforts in behalf of his state and nation had answer-⁴¹ed the question.

40. The St. Louis Republic, May 13, 1901; Boonville Weekly Advertiser, May 17, 1901; New York World, August 10, 1904.

41. Boonville Weekly Advertiser, March 14, 1880.

CHAPTER III

WESTERN PROBLEMS

Numerous problems confronted the nation during the twenty-four years in which Vest was a member of Congress. He was prominent in a number of the debates which centered around these questions. Although no great measure bears his name, yet through his efforts some constructive pieces of legislature were enacted and some needed policies initiated. He went deep into every subject in which he became interested and gave thorough consideration to the various problems involved. He kept in touch with men in various parts of the country who were in a position to furnish him information on questions of national concern. He made personal trips and investigated at first hand some of the problems in which he became interested.

Vest's outstanding personal achievement was without a question, his work in the interests of Yellowstone National Park.¹ Soon after his entrance into the

1. D. G. Phillips, "A Senator of the Old Republic," Saturday Evening Post, April 11, 1903, p. 12; French, Senator Vest, Champion of the Dog, pp. 47-58.

Senate, he exposed a plot in which grafters were trying to enrich themselves at the nation's expense and from that time until the close of his Senatorial career, Vest was persistent in the effort to save the Park from grafters, vandalism and mutilation. He was equally as steadfast in promoting the welfare of the region, in protecting its wild life and in preserving its forests.

He became interested in the Park by accident although he had camped and fished in it before his election to the Senate.³ Soon after he came to Washington, it was proposed to turn the Park region into a cattle ranch. Vest felt it was his duty to resist such an attempt and was successful in his effort. Several months later, he again defended the integrity of the Park. As he smelt "something rotten" he submitted on December 4, 1882 a resolution "that the Committee on Territories be instructed to inquire as to what legislation, if any, is necessary to protect and to enforce the laws of the United States in Yellowstone National Park."⁵ It was this

2. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 2d Sess., p.3482 ff.; 53rd Cong., 2d Sess., p. 4315.

3. Ibid., 52nd Cong., 2d Sess., p. 2414.

4. Boonville Weekly Advertiser, December 15, 1882; Peoples' Tribune (Jefferson City), January 3, 1883; March 7, 1883; The Missouri Republican, January 6 and 9, 1883.

5. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 71, 193, 998, 2835-6, 3268 ff., 3482 ff.; The Missouri Republican, December 8, 1882.

resolution which helped to knock out the props from under Old Rufus Hatch's proposed monopoly in the leasing of the Park for personal gain.

Vest's interest in the Park was no doubt deepened by his five visits to the region.⁶ According to him, he had spent some of the "happiest moments of his life" in the woods and on the streams of that region.⁷ Then, too, he had a direct material interest in the Park. The preservation of the region helped in flood prevention and thus saved his state the ruinous effects being witnessed upon the banks of the Mississippi River.⁸

The Brooklyn Daily Eagle even went so far as to give Vest the credit for founding the Park.⁹ But this was not true. The Park was set apart by an act of Congress passed in 1872, seven years before Vest entered the

6. Congressional Record, 52nd Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 2416ff. Definite facts as to each of these visits were unavailable. Vest made the statement during a controversy over the Park.

7. Ibid., pp. 2416 ff.

8. Ibid., 52nd Cong., 1st Sess., p. 4124.

9. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, September 11, 1904. An interesting article about a "string of jack snipes" which Vest saw in a hotel in St. Joe, Missouri in 1878. They aroused a friendly talk with the man who had caught them. This sportsman told Vest of the wonderful country in Montana and other western states. Vest later joined a party in Omaha and inspected the country. The article continues to describe his founding of the Park.

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Senate. The entire northwestern corner of Wyoming with strips of Idaho and Montana, some 3000 square miles, were included in the Act and remained under the control of the Department of the Interior. Little had been done in its interest. It continued to be inaccessible except by steamboat from Bismarck up the Missouri and then by stage coach and saddle horse south out of Montana, or by horse trails from the railhead of the Utah National railroad, which left a junction point on the Union Pacific and pursued its way in a northerly direction into the wilderness. With the extension of the Northern Pacific westwardly and of the Union Pacific railroad northerly in the eighties, visitors found it more feasible to enter a country which the accounts of explorers and returned travelers brought into public notice.

In 1883, quite a number of people visited the region among whom was a presidential party as the guests of General Philip H. Sheridan. In it were President Arthur, Secretary of War, Lincoln, Chief Justice Waite, Carl Schurz, Roscoe Conkling, Senators Henry L. Dawes,

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10. All discussions as to the founding, the history and administration of the Park are based on the following: (a) United States Department of the Interior, Circular of General Information Regarding Yellowstone National Park, 1931. (b) Hiram Martin Chittenden, The Yellowstone National Park, rev. ed., Cincinnati, 1915, Part I, Chapter I to XV inclusive; Part II, Chapters XI and XII. (c) John Muir, Our National Parks, New York, 1909, Chapters I and II.

Edmunds, John A. Logan and Vest. General W. T. Sherman¹¹ and others were in the party.

¹² Vest was included at the request of General Sheridan. Just why is a matter of speculation. It is reasonable to suppose that Vest's interest in the Park merited such an invitation. He had, also, been taking quite an interest in Indian affairs and a Western trip might influence his Indian policy. Vest was an adept sportsman as well as a friend to the President. No doubt these factors all helped in including Vest as a member of the group. The Jefferson City paper wondered if he were not invited to show him what an ass he had made of himself in exposing plots and leases. Nevertheless, Vest was a member of the group and proved to be one of the best¹³ fishermen of them all.

The trip was one of the most elaborate ever taken through the region. One hundred and eighty horses were used. Special arrangements were made to care for the President's business. About ten days after the party had been on its way, one St. Louis paper discovered the

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11. The Peoples' Tribune (Jefferson City), August 1, 1883; Chittenden, Yellowstone National Park, Chapter IX.
 12. The Peoples' Tribune (Jefferson City), August 1, 1883.
 13. Ibid., August 1 to September 1, 1883 inclusive; The Missouri Republican, August 2 to September 1, 1883 inclusive.

underlying motive and the political object as well as the reason for the "peculiar composition" of the group.¹⁴ It decided that General Sheridan was anxious that the President and the War Department, as well as others get some first hand information about the Indians. Sheridan believed, so the paper stated, in doing away with Indian Reservation and making citizens out of the Red race. It was obvious, said the paper, why Secretary of the Interior Teller was left out and Secretary Lincoln was included.

True, it was that members of the party, among whom was Vest, made speeches, held interviews and attended dances among the Indians while journeying to the Park. But other things demanded attention also, among which were the morning toddies, the catching of trout and the wonders of the region. So no doubt the trip had several motives in view. At any rate the 1883-84 Congress was much interested in the Park and its problems.

It was not enough to create a park and promulgate rules for its administration; a staff must be at hand with the will and power to enforce them. Buffalo, less than two hundred head which here were making their last stand on American soil, elk, deer, antelope, mountain sheep, beaver and many other animals were under

14. The Peoples' Tribune (Jefferson City), August 10, 1883.

the protection of the government. But, according to General Sheridan, 4000 elk had been killed in one winter and that even under closer control,¹⁵ 2000 had been taken by the skin hunters on the borders of the reservations. Many were shot for their antlers, their carcasses being left to rot upon the ground. Even buffalo had been killed for their robes or in sport in the winter of 1885-6. Beaver were trapped for their skins and fish were taken from the streams in large numbers. The governor of Montana complained that this slaughter proceeded almost within sight of the superintendent's house at the Mammoth Hot Springs.¹⁶

Vest denounced such a policy. He was urgent in his demand that the game be preserved.¹⁷

Even the Interior Department seemed to be in league with despoilers and speculators. While Teller was at its head, he favorably entertained proposals for a lease of rights to the Yellowstone National Park Improvement Company organized by some promoters in New York who were to build hotels and especially transportation lines. They would sell their stock in Europe as well as in this country. Their monopoly, Teller said would protect the

15. The Nation, December 7, 1882, p. 477.

16. Congressional Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 7841.

17. Ibid., 47th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 3482 ff.

reservation with the least possible expense of the government. Vest, Sheridan and others remonstrated against such a monopoly.

Vest was instrumental in securing the passage of an act which forbade the granting of leases of not more than ¹⁸ ten acres to any single party.

But the promoters built hotels which were unworthy of the Park; they evaded the terms of their contracts with the government. Game continued to be shot so openly that it was brought to the kitchen doors for sale and served at the public tables. Squatters, in defiance of law built cabins within the reservation and turned out their cattle to graze. Forest fires constantly threatened damages and destruction.

When trappers, squaw men, old frontiersmen and other game poachers and skin hunters were ejected from the Park, they hugged the borders to catch and kill the animals which, by cold in winter, were driven out of the mountains into the lower valleys. In summer they would set fire to the woods and grass near the boundary lines to dislodge the game so that they might bring it within range of their guns.

So much incompetency of administration was due

18. Congressional Record, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 1580 ff.; 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 7844.

less to the men appointed to superintend and police the Park than to the failure of Congress to understand the nature of its trust. The reservation could not be protected against vandalism, nor could the area be provided with roads, bridges, paths and conveniences necessary to tourists, without public appropriation. The grant, prior to 1882 was never more than \$15,000 a year. Vest was responsible for the bill which increased the appropriation¹⁹ to \$40,000 annually.

Senator Ingalls of Kansas and other Senators remonstrated against the government going into the show business. They suggested that the government sell the land in the Park as it did other public land. Besides the opponents did not believe that the mountain wilderness²⁰ was worth the money it took to maintain it.

Such opposition aroused Vest's indignation and he told the Senate it should never have passed the Dedicatory Act if it were not going to preserve the region. Vest conceded that it would be more profitable to the materialistic greed to turn Old Faithful into a Chinese²¹ laundry. But since he was convinced that the Park would serve a great purpose in the nation's life, he worked to

19. Congressional Record, 49th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 1143 ff.

20. Ibid., 47th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 3482 ff.

21. Ibid., 48th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 1612.

save it regardless of profit. "There should be," he said, "to a nation that will have 100,000,000 or a 150,000,000 people a park like this as a great breathing place for the national lung."²²

Up until 1884 there had been four superintendents of the Park. When Cleveland became President in the spring of 1885, Vest, with the support of Cockrell, had a candidate more to his liking ready to replace Robert E. Carpenter, who was then the head man as the superintendent of the Park. Carpenter was soon removed and replaced by²³ David W. Wear of Missouri.

Wear proved to be well qualified for the post. He not only started improvements but tried to reform the administration of the Park. He had \$40,000 for his use in the year ending with June, 1886. He asked for \$150,000²⁴ for the ensuing year. Instead he received nothing.

Vest was powerless. The bad reputé into which the government of the Park had fallen was not easily removed and regardless of the eloquence of Vest and the efforts of others, Congress declined to appropriate money for its continuance. A small sum was granted for road

22. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 3842 ff.

23. Chittenden, Yellowstone National Park, Part I, Chapter XIV; Congressional Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 7915; Boonville Weekly Advertiser, September 17, 1886.

24. Chittenden, Yellowstone National Park, p. 137.

building under the direction of a United States army
²⁵engineer. His office having been abolished, Wear resigned. The Secretary of Interior was thus compelled to call upon the War Department for assistance. The régime of civilian superintendents passed away and that of military ones began.

Vest deplored and denounced this change of administration. He maintained that the War Department was not sympathetic enough to preserve the region and that the soldiers were as unfit to care for the Park as they "would be to become professors of astronomy in any
²⁶college." All who had hoped to hold places under the old order opposed the change; but the sequel proved the wisdom of Congress.

August 20, 1886 marks the turning point in the administration history of the Park. Upon that day Captain Moses Harris relieved Wear and soldiers supplanted the so-called assistant superintendents, as Park police. Harris appealed for appropriations and although Vest did not approve of the military supervisor, he was persistent in his support of bills and measures for the Park.

Although 10,000 visitors were registered at the

25. Congressional Record, 49th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 7915 ff.

26. Ibid., pp. 7915 ff.; 49th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 1147.

hotels in 1888, yet little heed was taken of the needs of the Park. Military protection was continued perforce. What a small band of soldiers with little knowledge of frontier life and woodcraft could do in such a place was done.

For years lobbyists had labored to secure the right of way for railroads across the Park. For twelve years, Vest was a leader in opposing such demands. At last, in exasperation, while it was neither a "comfortable nor a pleasant reflection for a public man to make such an admission," he declared that a "persistent and unscrupulous lobby was able to do almost what they pleased with the public domain." He characterized the railroad lobby as a compact military organization working for one object alone. He said they were aggressive, sleepless, untiring and determined to secure a charter from the United States Congress for the only railroad into the ²⁷ Park. Vest felt that the moment railroads were built through the Park, the original charm of the place would be marred. They would, also, work serious damage to the game and to the forests. When it became apparent that railroads could never be constructed within the Park, it was sought to accomplish the same thing by cutting off a ²⁸ portion of the Park and building railroads in that area.

27. Congressional Record, 52nd Cong., 1st Sess., p. 4119.

28. Ibid., p. 4120.

Vest acquiesced to these demands because he could not help himself and in order that needed legislation for the Park might be passed.²⁹

Eventually, transportation to and within the Park developed. Hotels were improved and new ones built. On September 10, 1891 the Park was enlarged 5000 square miles by the addition of the Forest Reserve region. Vest heartily endorsed this addition.³⁰

The year 1894 was an important landmark in the administration of the Park. On May 4, the desired code of laws was enacted for protection of the Park and wild life. On August 3, an act was passed further regulating the question of leases and privileges. Vest was a member of the conference committee of the first act. He was pleased over it but had hoped for still better regulations.³¹ From then on conditions in the Park improved.

Vest received commendation for his efforts in behalf of the Park from the people in Wyoming and Montana.³² The press thought he deserved the thanks of the country.

29. Congressional Record, 52nd Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 2414-2416.

30. Ibid., 48th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 1580; 50th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 2587.

31. Ibid., 53rd Cong., 2d Sess., p. 4315.

32. Ibid., 48th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 19; 52nd Cong., 1st Sess., p. 4120; 52nd Cong., 2d Sess., p. 4121; Chittenden, Yellowstone National Park, p. 121.

Today, Yellowstone is the largest and is the best known of our national parks. Its administrative policy has been changed and improved but men like Vest, Sheridan and others deserve credit for their efforts in helping to preserve the Yellowstone region.

Vest also took a leading part in meeting the problem of Indian Administration between 1879 and 1903. He felt, as did many others, that the history of the Government's relations with the Indians had been one of violated treaties, broken promises and of partisan prejudice. He supported and offered resolutions, bills and measures to remedy the "abominable, atrocious and revolting" crimes that a "stronger power had perpetrated upon a weaker one."

His interest in the Indian situation was no doubt deepened by his work on the Committee on Territories where as a member of the Indian Commission in 1883, he made an inspection tour of the Indians in the Northwest.³³ Evidently, this trip impressed Vest, as he frequently referred to the sights and conditions of the Indians observed during the tour. He was one of the most persistent senators in urging reform.

At one time, Vest had been the attorney for the Missouri, Kansas and Texas railroad. This concern was

33. Congressional Record, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 3571-3572.

interested in the Indian Territory in Oklahoma. They had a grant of nearly 2,000,000 acres of land in that Territory conditioned upon the fact that the Indian title should be extinguished.³⁴ Just how much this former railroad connection influenced Vest, if at all, in his Indian policy is a matter of speculation. Naturally, it was the part of political wisdom for him to act prudently. Peaceful red men and satisfied white ones were an asset to any Western Senator. The attitude of the average Easterner, also, may have whetted Vest's interest in the Indian's plight. "It is a part of the selfishness of human nature," Vest said in an Indian speech in 1880, "for those to 'jest at scars who never felt a wound.' The last three generations in New England have had no Indian war and they view the question by the light of the domestic lamp and not by that of the burning home. With us in the West, it is a living, practical and real question."³⁵

"Upon no question," Vest told the Senate, "ever brought before the American Senate has there been so much cheap philanthropy and cheap rhetoric as upon the Indian

34. Congressional Record, 54th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 2306.

35. Ibid., 46th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 2250 ff. This was an unusually lengthy senatorial speech for Vest. It was an interesting discussion of the Indian situation. The Daily Bazoo (Sedalia, Mo.), April 6, 1880; Sedalia Weekly Times, February 5, 1880; Peoples' Tribune (Jefferson City), January 26, 1881; Boonville Weekly Advertiser, February 18, 1881.

question." He claimed that "the woodland tales of Cooper, the unerring rifle of Deerslayer, the heroism of the Huron chief, Longfellow's sweet song of Hiawatha and the 'shining water' [had] so enchanted the Eastern press and pulpit that [they thought] the people on the border [were] principally occupied in first robbing the Indians and then murdering them."

Vest declared that it was neither a "namby-pamby sentiment" nor a "lecture room gush" which goaded him to speak. It was a necessity which must be faced. He gave a minute account of the past dealings with the Indians. Among other things, Vest said that out of the 380 treaties made by the Government with the Indians, 379 refused the Red man the right to individual commerce and responsibility. Such a vicious system certainly did not make for advancement and self support. He urged that the system started in 1789 be abandoned. In its place, he suggested, citizenship, tenure in lands in severalty, smaller reservations, better educational facilities, more efficient Indian courts and the turning over of the blanket Indians to the War Department.

There were others in the Senate who urged these same policies. The leader in the movement was Dawes from
 36
 Massachusetts. He was chairman of the Indian Commission,

36. The Outlook, "H. L. Dawes," February 14, 1903, pp. 374-376; The American Review of Reviews, "H. L. Dawes," March, 1903, pp. 301-303.

a position which he held for sixteen years. He was the father of the new Indian policy inaugurated in 1887.

Next to Dawes, Vest, perhaps, did more than any other man in the Senate at that time to help secure recognition of the new measure and then to embody it in practical legislation.

The law passed February 8, 1887, known as the Dawes Act, has been acclaimed the "Emancipation of Proclamation of the Red Man."³⁷ This was a step toward dissolving the system of common ownership among the Indians. Vest indorsed this policy with his eloquence.³⁸ "It was," he declared, rather over optimistically, "not only the heroic but the proper treatment" and with such treatment civilization would come to the race "like the morning light slowly across the horizon."³⁹

It is needless here to trace the successive steps of a process which has necessarily changed its method but which has accomplished some improvements in Indian welfare. Some of these are scrupulous honor in

37. Indian administration discussions are based on the following: Francis E. Leupp, In Red Man's Land, A Study of the American Indian, New York, 1914, Chapters I to VII inclusive; Francis E. Leupp, The Indian and His Problem, New York, 1910, Chapters I, II, IV, XVI, XVII; William Christie Macleod, The American Indian Frontier, New York, 1928, Chapters XXIX, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXV and Conclusion.

38. Congressional Record, 46th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 2250 ff.

39. Ibid., 51st Cong., 2d Sess., p. 2903.

observing treaties with Indians and honesty in payment of his promised rations and supplies; the discontinuance of treaties made with the Indian race as though they were foreign nations; the gradual obliteration of reservation lines; his full citizenship under the law and the partial substitution of schools for supplies and of books for beef

Side by side with the change the Government undertook in the matter of land tenure among the Indians, it set up a general educational policy. Interest in the Indian's welfare no doubt motivated Vest in his spectacular participation in this phase of Indian management. Indian education as formerly conducted in the United States was in no way the outcome of any deliberate plan⁴⁰ on the part of the Federal Government. In fact, after the Revolution little heed was paid to Indian education for over thirty years. But in the first quarter of the 19th century a religious revival directed attention to Indian education as a Christian and national duty. Congress responded in 1819 with an appropriation of \$10,000 in addition to certain treaty obligations. In 1820 the President was authorized to apply this sum annually in aid of societies and individuals engaged in the education of

40. Leupp, In Red Man's Land, Chapters II, III, IV, and VI; Leupp, The Indian and His Problem, pp. 29, 32, 45, 50, 53, 115, 132, 135-136, 138, 141, 142, 148, 150, 202, 210, 234, 318, 355; Macleod, The American Indian Frontier, Chapters II, XXII, XXV and Conclusion.

Indians. These sums increased with time.

The task of teaching was at first left in the main to religious societies which maintained missions on the frontier. Later, the Government had its conscience stirred as to its own obligation toward a race which it had assumed an unsolicited guardianship. Hence, the appropriations for Indian education had reached \$100,000 in 1870 and has steadily increased since. Between 1890 and 1901, all public appropriations to the mission schools were discontinued. This policy called forth much comment in Congress.

It was in the early nineties that the controversy over Government appropriations for mission schools waxed the warmest. This was due chiefly to the great "A. P. A." wave which swept the country. This was a secret, oath-bound, anti-Catholic political society known⁴¹ as the American Protective Association. It is said to

41. Alexander Milne, The A. P. A. (a letter to the editor) The Nation, 57: (November 9, 1893), p. 347; E. M. Winston, "The Threatening Conflict with Romanism," The Forum, 17: (June, 1894), pp. 425-433; W. Gladden, "The Anti-Catholic Crusade," The Century Magazine, 25: (March, 1894), pp. 789-795; F. R. Coudert, "The American Protective Association," The Forum, 17: (July 1894), pp. 513-523; W. J. H. Traynor, "The Aims and Methods of the A. P. A." The North American Review, 159: (July, 1894), pp. 67-76; J. L. Spalding, "Catholicism and Apaism," The North American Review, 159: (September, 1894), pp. 278-287; W. J. H. Traynor, "Policy and Power of the A. P. A.," The North American Review, 162: (June, 1896), pp. 658-666.

have been founded in Clinton, Iowa in 1887. Its chief doctrine was "that subjection to and support of any ecclesiastical power not created and controlled by American citizens and which claimed greater sovereignty than the government of the United States of America, is irreconcilable with American citizenship." It opposed the holding of offices in national, state or municipal government by any subject or supporter of such ecclesiastical power. Another of its aims was to prevent all public encouragement and support of sectarian schools.

Vest loathed this organization and apparantly took delight in antagonizing it. During the Senatorial controversy over Indian school appropriation for sectarian purposes, he invariably favored the Jesuit schools and worked for their betterment. He declared that the Jesuit system was efficient and effective while the Protestant mission schools were not "worth a dollar to the Indian or the cause of civilization.⁴² He ridiculed their "old broken down preachers and defunct politicians." He had not the "slightest sympathy with that detestable prejudice based upon the idea that any church can attack the liberties of the American people." He thought that "only cowardice or ignorance" could foster such an opinion.

42. Congressional Record, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 4065 ff.; 55th Cong., 1st. Sess., p. 734.

Said he, "I do not choose to give utterance to my religious convictions in order to influence any human being, but I shall say for the purpose of showing that I am entirely disinterested so far as religious demoninations are concerned that I am a Protestant and have not the slightest sympathy with any dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church. I was born and reared a Protestant and expect to die one. ... I was reared in the old Scotch Presbyterian Church ... and my earliest impressions were that the Jesuits had horns and hoofs and tails and that there was a faint tinge of sulphur in the circumambient air whenever one crossed your path. ... Some of the best people I have ever known are members of that demonimation and I have no doubt that the ... Catholic Church has done more ... practical charity than any other denomination that has ever existed."

He urged the "insectivorous politicians" who were afraid of the A. P. A. votes to go to the Flathead Reservation in Montana and see what Father De Smet was accomplishing. "Call it fanaticism, if you like," declared Vest, "but it does the work." He gloried in the fact that he was instrumental in securing \$10,000 for a

43. Congressional Record, 48th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 4065 ff.; 50th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 734, 1407 ff.; 55th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 734; 56th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 3884 ff.

⁴⁴
Jesuit school.

The A. P. A. became enraged at such utterances and passed a resolution unanimously demanding that Vest be impeached. Vest considered this the greatest honor received in his life. Apparently, he dismissed the charge with the statement that "the knowledge of the Constitution of this country developed by that organization in demanding the impeachment of a United States Senator for uttering his honest opinion in this chamber puts them beyond criticism. It would be cowardly and inhuman to say one word about ignorance so dense as that."

Over this ten years only the Catholic schools with one or two exceptions had been asking support of their schools and in 1901 this support was withdrawn from them. Thus ended a colorful chapter in Indian school administration.

When Vest took his seat in the Senate, a broad wedge of territory separated the thirty-four organized states of the East from their sister commonwealths in the West--Oregon, California, Nevada and Colorado. Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, the Dakotas and the Indian land in what is now Oklahoma still remained territories. This region was rapidly filling up.

44. Congressional Record, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 3884 ff. This went to an industrial school at St. Ignatius in Montana.

In time, the citizens of these territories began to clamor for admission as states. As has been the case from the beginning of the Republic, the admission of new states was a subject of political controversy and intrigue at Washington. Vest, like others before, engaged in it. He opposed the admission of any state which was probable to be Republican in politics.⁴⁵ But eventually, the Democrats came to terms and accordingly on February 22, 1889, the two Dakotas, Washington and Montana were admitted simultaneously. Wyoming and Idaho came in a year later. An agreement about the Indian Territory was also reached in 1889.

This area consisted of a large tract which shortly after the Civil War the Seminole Indians sold to the Government with the understanding that no white man but only colonies of Indians and freedmen should settle there. Nevertheless, the cattle kings had enclosed large tracts of the territory. The cattle men and other settlers clamored for this land to be opened for settlement.⁴⁶ Kansas real estate men added their voices to the demand that Oklahoma must be opened. Western Senators, including Vest, were also interested.

45. Congressional Record, 50th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 2100 ff.

46. Roy Gittinger, The Formation of the State of Oklahoma, Berkley, Calif. (University of California Press), 1917, pp. 79-130.

One of the first bills that he introduced when he came to the Senate was one for the organization of the Oklahoma Territory.⁴⁷ He favored negotiations with the Indiana for a complete cession of any title they had to the land in the Cherokee Outlet. "The man is a lunatic," he declared, "who does not see that the Indian Territory can not remain in its present condition. ... The history of the acquisition of all our territory from Plymouth Rock to Rio Grande teaches the lesson that the white race must possess the continent. In my own state of Missouri, we had the same thing and it resulted in the Platte Purchase being added. The borders of [this region] were crowded with white men who insisted that they must go in and that they could not wait for the action of Congress... It ended as all such controversies have ended The indomitable and inevitable tendency of the race to which we belong settled the question."⁴⁸ Vest urged that the question be settled by law instead of blood. For ten years Vest was a leader in keeping this question before

47. Congressional Record, 46th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 1314, 1602; 46th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 103; Sedalia Weekly Times, February 5, 1880; Boonville Weekly Advertiser, February 18, 1881.

48. Congressional Record, 46th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 2250 ff.; 46th Cong., 3rd Sess., pp. 779 ff., 870 ff.

⁴⁹
Congress.

It at length became obvious that the condition on which the land had been bought could not be complied with and in 1888-89 Congress appropriated \$4,000,000 to buy it. On April 22, 1889 some of the land was opened for settlement.

Vest was also interested in the problem of justice and maintaining order in the Indian Territory. He felt that the farce of administering justice in the Indian Territory and in "No Man's Land" was a blot upon the judicial system of the United States.⁵⁰ He proposed bills for creating a greater number of courts and for more efficient ones. He claimed that the Indian Territory was a "depot for crime." He gave statistics and examples of how the United States conducted the courts. According to him, the government employed bandits as United States marshalls to hunt the Indian and then the victim was tried by some "foreign tribunal in a distant state" where justice was rarely given. He proposed courts nearer to the scene of crime and officers of higher calibre to help

49. Congressional Record, 48th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 916 ff.; 50th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 2592 ff.

50. Ibid., 52nd Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 17.

⁵¹
keep peace.

By 1893, the situation had become such that Congress began to correct it. In 1896 Congress declared it to be the duty of the United States to establish a government which would rectify the inequalities that existed in the Territory. In 1898, the Curtis Act was passed which among other things, provided for the enlargement of the jurisdiction of the United States courts to include all causes of action irrespective of all parties involved.⁵² Vest, as well as others, had been an earnest worker for these laws and at last could see some fruits for his endeavors.

Immigration was another problem Congress had to solve. Although not so active in this controversy, Vest voiced his opinion concerning it. As did most Southern bred men, he favored restriction. Prior to the Civil War, the immigration situation caused no concern but the industrial development after the war caused such an inflow of immigration that in 1883 more than 700,000 came to

51. Vest introduced a bill in each Congress from 46th to 50th for the establishment of a United States court in the Indian Territory and his bills were uniformly reported by the Committee. Congressional Record, 46th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 1298; 47th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 22, 3966; 48th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 18, 1142; 49th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 128, 6480; 50th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 24, 858. In 54th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 2305 ff., Vest was still working for improved courts.

52. Leupp, The Indian and His Problem, p. 210, 235, 244, 261, 269, 332; Macleod, The American Indian Frontier, pp. 373-375, 440-444 and Conclusion.

America. A number of these were Chinese who came to the Pacific coast to take advantage of the opportunities offered there in railroad construction and other industrial work. California objected to so many Orientals in her midst. To Arthur's administration belongs the credit of having practically settled the Chinese question.

In 1882, Congress passed a bill suspending the immigration for twenty years. This, the President, vetoed on the grounds that the suspension was too long a period to be in conformity with our treaty agreements with China. Congress then passed the Act of May 6, 1882 suspending the immigration laborers for ten years. Arthur signed this act which proved to be the high water mark of anti-Chinese agitation. It inaugurated the exclusion of Chinese labor.

Senator Hoar of Massachusetts was the leader of the party opposed to restriction of Chinese immigration. He believed in equality of races. Senator Ingalls of Kansas believed that the proposal violated the Burlingame treaty but he favored a ten year restriction as did the majority of moderates. The extremists lead by Senator John F. Miller of California wanted a twenty years restriction.

Vest said little, although he denounced the "aesthetical doctrine" of Hoar. He claimed that the principle of any good government was one which protected

the life, liberty and property of the citizens but in return those same citizens should help share in supporting their government.⁵³

"Do these almond-eyed idols of the Massachusetts Senator assume any responsibility?" asked Vest.

"No," he cried. "They are like parasites which fasten themselves upon vegetables and upon animals and feed and feed until satiety causes them to release their hold." He was willing to "fling wide the portals to the thrifty Germans, the generous and gallant Celts, the hardy Scandinavian" but not to the Chinese. As to the Burlingame treaty, Vest believed Congress would be justified in breaking it because it was better not to encourage another race problem. He supported the subsequent immigration laws of 1888, 1892 and 1902 which were along the line of definition, greater stringency and a more effective method of enforcement.

Whether working on Western problems or on other matters, Vest's wit was often welded in a sly manner. On one occasion he was making a speech in the Senate when Senator William A. Peffer of Kansas, William M. Stewart of Nevada and John Sherman of Ohio all addressed the chair. Vest looked amazed and he, too, addressed the

53. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 3355 ff.; 50th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 8215 ff.; 52nd Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 4191 ff.; 57th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 4031-4033.

chair. Receiving no recognition from that source, Vest changed his tactics by declaring his desire to make a parliamentary inquiry. This time his appeal was not lost as the chair ignoring Peffer, Stewart and Sherman said, "The gentleman from Missouri will state it."

"I believe I was addressing the Senate," Vest said, "and had the floor but it seems I have no longer got it. If I can't get it any other way I rise to a parliamentary inquiry to find out how I lost it."

There was much laughter as Vest was granted
54
the floor.

54. Congressional Record, 54th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 1865;
Cole County Democrat (Jefferson City), August 12,
1904.

CHAPTER IV

FINANCIAL AND MONETARY PROBLEMS

Probably the most important problems that Vest's generation of statesmen dealt with were financial and monetary. Although Vest himself was no great authority in this field, it was the subject of his thought and oratory on many an occasion. Invariably, he ranged himself on the side of the underdog on all of these questions, taking the inflationist or anti-contractionist side. His Missouri farmer constituency, together with the traditional friendliness of the St. Louis bankers toward the silver miners, helped to accentuate¹ his normal tendency in that direction.

Three financial problems confronted the country at the close of the Civil War. One, the refunding of the national debt, was solved during Grant's term and was comparatively easy to settle. The two remaining ones, the final determination of the status of greenbacks in the currency system and the comparative treatment of

1. The Outlook, August 20, 1904, pp. 919-920.

gold and silver were by no means so easy of solution, because they went to the root of the financial system. Out of the conflict over the inflation and contraction of the currency grew the struggle over "free silver" which was not ended until the campaign of 1900. For years, the question of the ratio of gold and silver had been a problem. Finally, in 1873 without the attention of anyone being attracted to the affair, silver was dropped from the metals that were to be coined and gold left as the single standard.

Although not a member of Congress at the time that silver was demonetized, Vest frequently referred to the act. On one occasion when free silver was the topic of the day, Vest told his constituents that the act of 1873 "was the commencement of the outrage against silver....I know the men who voted for it had no suspicion that it struck down silver....I say that if the bill was not slipped through Congress with the intention that the demonetization of the silver dollar should not be known, the act....was the most extraordinary legislative proceedings known to civilized world. No correspondent of any newspaper knew it and they are most acute men....The bill of 1873 was born in fraud, conceived in iniquity and is the greatest legislative crime ever committed in the annals of the United States". According to Vest, when the people found silver had been

demonetized, "they rose as one man" and in 1878 passed² the Bland-Allison bill.

On June 25, 1879, three months after Vest had taken his Senate seat, he introduced a resolution for free coinage of silver--"that the complete remonetization of silver and its restoration to a perfect equality with gold both as coin and bullion are demanded alike by dictates of justice and wise statesmanship." The resolution by a vote of 22 to 23 was referred to the Finance Committee because to use Vest's own expression, "that body was 'the tomb of the Capulets' for all silver legislation. Even the Democratic chairman of that committee was opposed to silver and the resolution was never heard from again."³

During the eighties, the value of silver in relation to gold steadily declined, until the ratio was twenty-two to one. In 1890 the subject of silver coinage came up in an unexpected form, and for eight years was the most serious financial and political problem. Although Vest declared there was nothing new that could be said on the subject, he never lacked for words or ideas in discussing it.

2. St. Louis Globe Democrat, October 13, 1895.

3. Congressional Record, 46th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 2312, 2369, 2372, 2343 ff., 2430.

In 1890, the Sherman bill, which provided for the purchase of 4,500,000 ounces of silver monthly and the issue of notes on that basis redeemable in gold or silver at the discretion of the Treasury, called forth much oratory from Vest.⁴ He objected to the bill and especially the part which gave the Secretary of the Treasury discretionary power over silver coinage. To him, the one thing that would bring silver up to a parity with gold was equality by law. To have silver follow gold "as the tail follows the kite," said Vest, was detestable. He opposed the measure because it made silver a commodity. He declared it to "be the worst measure for silver....that could be placed upon the statute book".

Regardless of the denouncements of Vest and others, the Sherman bill became a law. Contrary to the expectations of the proponents of it, the price of silver fell gradually until the value of the bullion in a dollar was sixty cents in 1893 and forty-nine in 1894.

The financial situation when Cleveland's second administration began on March 4, 1893, was complex and critical. He demanded as the first condition of relief the suspension of silver purchases. The silver advocates, however, were still powerful in both parties, and Pres-

4. Congressional Record, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., p. 4236.

ident Cleveland was at a disadvantage in not having the undivided support of his own party. Vest claimed that he never thought Cleveland was entirely sincere and honest in some of his actions concerning the financial situation. In explanation of this assertion, Vest says-- "I visited Lakewood at Cleveland's request about ten days before he was inaugurated and we had an earnest talk about silver. He agreed with me that it was a dangerous point before our party and that it should be adjusted satisfactorily, if possible, so as not to divide the party. He finally asked me to see Bland and see if he and his friends would be satisfied with the re-enactment of the Bland-Allison law. I promised to do so and that I would inform him in Washington of the result. I saw Bland who insisted that \$4,000,000 should be coined each month and not \$2,000,000 or that the maximum amount in the Bland-Allison law should be coined and that the minimum amount should be stricken out. He consented at last to the re-enactment of the law as it stood on the statute book but not cheerfully, indeed, quite reluctantly.

"When I called on the President later, he gave me to understand that no compromise on the silver question was possible and he said that the only honest proposition he had heard was that to remove the tax on the notes of the State banks....I understood afterwards

from several members of the House that Cleveland had sent for Speaker Crisp about the same time and asked him if the Bland-Allison act could be passed in the House, but of this I have no personal knowledge....It is hardly necessary for me to say that I have used no epithets in speaking of the President and have not accused him of treachery. He made the impression on me that he would favor the enactment of the Bland-Allison law as a compromise and I would certainly not have approached Bland but for this belief."⁵

According to the press, it was generally believed that Vest was with the Administration and would support Cleveland in his monetary policy although the Globe-Democrat stated that "Vest had not committed himself to his friends but was studying the question."⁶

By June 30, 1893, the financial situation had reached such a critical stage that Cleveland issued a call for a special session of Congress for August 7, and urged the immediate repeal of the Sherman silver purchasing act. He had by the use of patronage won over a number of silver Democratic Senators to his point of view. They, on the excuse of solving the depression, insisted on repeal, with free coinage sometime later. The other

5. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, July 4, 1895.

6. Ibid., January 12, 1894.

silver men tried to prevent it by a filibuster on the grounds that there had been no popular mandate for repeal---the election of 1892 having been fought on the tariff issue. Vest was a leader in this. One of the longest speeches that he ever delivered in the Senate was given August 14, 1893.⁷ Among other things, he said, "I have been a steadfast and unflinching friend of the President. I defended him when assailed in the canvass for nomination. I defended him in the campaign and in speeches I made to the people of Missouri. I declared that Cleveland was a bimetallist and that we only differed in regard to the ratio at which the coinage of silver should be had. I had the right to make that statement because he had accepted the nomination upon a platform that pledged the Democratic party to bimetallism. It was as well known that the Democratic party stood upon the doctrine of bimetallism as that it met in Chicago and nominated Grover Cleveland for the President of the United States." Vest went on to compare the 1892 platforms of the two parties and read the plank from the Democratic one concerning money. "The platforms," said Vest, "of the political parties are mere traps to catch votes without sincerity and without honesty. It is time that the people should know whether politics is a

7. Congressional Record, 53rd Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 290ff.

juggle and fraud or whether when the great political parties which seek to control the destinies of a free people meet in council and make solemn declaration of policy and principle, they are worthy of confidence. We are told," continued Vest, "that the repeal of the Sherman act, or the purchasing clause of it, is all that is necessary at the present conjuncture and that the clouds will be lifted from business....and the sun of prosperity again beam upon every portion of our land." Vest attacked the purchasing clause most bitterly. "Its malign and distorted features," he said, "look out upon a land staggering and reeling upon the verge of bankruptcy. Its putative fathers have bastardized it and are falling over each other now in a vigorous attempt to prove that they never favored it and are not responsible for its existence." Vest had no love for the purchasing clause but he feared the unconditional repeal of it. "Suppose," said he, "we repeal....it,....and bring in a free coinage bill and suppose both branches of Congress should pass it by a fair majority, we have every reason to believe that the President....would veto it and we have not the constitutional majority to pass it over his veto....You cannot make the Sherman act a stalking horse for monometallism."

Before he finished, Vest had reviewed most of the history of money from prehistoric days unto August 14,

1893. He entertained the Senate with poetry, stories, financial reports, tables and statistics. He wondered what Jefferson would think of a system whereby a dozen New York financiers could so control the currency of a nation as to produce a money famine and then exact their own terms from the people. The Senate may have been in doubt as to Jefferson's reaction on the subject but by the time Vest completed his speech, there was not a single doubt as to how the Missourian viewed the situation or what he would do, "For," said Vest, "if I can by any possibility by legislation, tentative or otherwise, keep this great disaster from the people, I will take the responsibility of even a mistake on my part rather than perpetrate what I consider such an outrage."

Other silver Senators filibustered through the summer and early fall. Senator John P. Jones of Nevada made a single speech that filled a hundred dreary pages of the Congressional Record. Feeling ran high. In the West, Senators like Vest, Jones and William V. Allen were looked upon as heroes; in the East as villains.

Later, Vest turned against the filibuster and demanded a vote on the bill. There were those who thought that by such a stand, the ill feeling between the Administration and Vest would be relieved. But such was not the case.⁸ At any rate, on October 30, 1893, the

8. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, January 12, 1894.

purchasing clause was repealed but the volume and content of the currency was still unsolved.

The government's financial situation continued to be difficult and the gold reserve continued to decrease. Cleveland, much to the disgust of Vest and others, finally resorted to a new devise.⁹ A contract was made with J. P. Morgan and a group of bankers for the purchase of gold.

There was so much adverse criticism in regard to the bond transaction conducted by Cleveland that the Senate adopted a resolution instructing the Finance Committee to inquire into the situation. Vest was one of the five Senators chosen to investigate. The committee, after questioning Secretary Carlisle, went to New York to see Morgan and August Belmont. They testified that no government official was interested directly or indirectly in the bond issue. When asked to whom and for what price they had sold the bonds, they declined to answer because their counsel had advised silence. Vest felt that the general power existed in either branch of Congress to punish for contempt witnesses summoned before a Congressional Committee who refused to answer proper questions. He had, however, to acquiesce to the decision of the other four members as they opposed any further

9. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, January 12 to February 4, 1894.

proceeding against Morgan and Belmont and so the matter
¹⁰ was dropped. As a matter of passing interest, however,
 Vest was correct in his opinion as Harry F. Sinclair
 was sentenced to a ninety-day jail term for contempt of
 the Senate during the Teapot Dome investigation.

Early in January of 1895, Vest presented to the
 Senate, a currency bill which he thought might form the
¹¹ basis for something that had a chance of enactment.
 During the making of it, he consulted Senator Roger Q.
 Mills and others in order to gather suggestions as well
 as support. The bill as presented by Vest contained
 seven provisions. The essential features were that all
 Treasury notes and gold and silver certificates should
 be destroyed and an equivalent amount of notes payable
 in standard gold and silver coin should be issued; all
 gold certificates that were then outstanding were to be
 paid in gold coin and the silver certificates in stan-
 dard silver coin or coin notes; all acts authorizing
 national banks to issue bank notes were to be repealed
 and those banks were not to issue any more such notes;
 the Secretary of the Treasury was to have coined the
 silver bullion held in the Treasury purchased under the

10. G. G. Vest, "A Senator of Two Republics," Saturday Evening Post, September 10, 1904, pp. 13-14.

11. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, January 12 to 16, 1895.

Sherman act including the gain of seigniorage and that silver bullion brought to any mint should be coined into standard dollars of $412\frac{1}{2}$ grains. The bill provided that the director of the mint was to retain as seigniorage and cover into the Treasury the difference between the New York market price and the coined value of the bullion. This was to be used for current expenditures of the government.

The Globe-Democrat thought Vest's currency measure was a mess and that it would be fought by Wall Street, the mining camps, Cleveland, Bland, Republicans and Populists.

Apparently, no one did take the bill seriously; however, about two weeks after Vest had submitted his bill, he had a telegraph from the St. Louis Merchants' Exchange asking him to submit a resolution. This in-¹²dorsed the President's message in regard to financial matters and the issue of gold bonds. While Vest submitted the resolution, he was frank to state that it did not represent the intelligent opinion of the majority of the people in Missouri. He told the Senate that this same organization asked him to vote for the unconditional repeal of the purchasing clause of the Sherman Act. In closing his brief remarks concerning the resolution, Vest

12. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, January 31, 1895.

said, "Am I now because I am a Democratic Senator to be made a party to a system against which I am irrevocably opposed, because the President of the United States has a different opinion in regard to this question, am I to be made accessory to a financial system which I believe is for the absolute oppression of the great mass of people....? When through my whole career, I have denounced that legislature which gave to national banks the power to issue money prepared for them by the Government and to be loaned to the people, am I to be now made accessory to the perpetuity of that system?....I have for months remained silent so that it may not be said that I had added to the discord which has existed....in the great party of which I am a humble member. I will not go with the President of the United States in perpetuating the single gold standard and in fastening the national banking system as banks of circulation upon the people of the United States. Therefore, if the Merchants' Exchange wants their resolution looked after someone else must do so."

As the 1896 election approached, Vest was ever ready with his sarcasm and eloquence to further the silver cause but he rarely missed a chance to score Cleveland. He told the Senate that if the "President would pretermitt hunting ducks in North Carolina and silver Democrats in Kentucky long enough to come West"

he could really see sincere, "God-fearing, self-respecting [and] law-abiding people....who knew their own rights and interests."¹³

As heretofore stated, Vest supported Bryan in the election and when the results of the combat were known, Vest prophesied that the struggle for free silver would never cease until bimetallism was the settled policy of the United States. By speeches and articles,¹⁴ he continued his effort in trying to make it a policy. And when on March 14, 1900, the gold standard was an established fact, Vest, though feeble and scarcely able to stand, made his last valiant but ineffectual fight¹⁵ against, as he said, "the vilest monopoly ever created."

Thus the war of the standards was closed, but the currency question continued to haunt the paths of politicians and financiers long after Vest left the Senate--in fact even to this very hour.

13. Congressional Record, 54th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 2917.

14. G. G. Vest, "The Future of Bimetallism," The Forum, Vol. XXIV, September, 1897, pp. 520-26.

15. Congressional Record, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 1773-4; Boonville Weekly Advertiser, February 23, 1900.

CHAPTER V

THE TARIFF

Of all issues about which Vest became a leader in the Senate, the tariff takes first place. He was one of the best equipped tariff debators in the chamber.¹ He could talk as fluently of rates upon the topics of brooms, straw matting, tallow, white pine, salt, bacon, corn meal, wire nails, tin plates, hides, matches, white lead and magic lantern slides as he did on any other subject. He gave out figures and facts about fish, alcoholic perfumery, anvils, onions and apple cider that were interesting as well as instructive as he worked for lower duties.² Although he usually talked to deaf ears, yet he never wavered in his arguments for lower rates, regardless of the high protectionists' majority. Many a

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1. Peoples' Tribune (Jefferson City), August 9, 1882; Evening Telegram (New York), August 9, 1904; The Nation, January 15, 1903, pp. 44-45; St. Louis Republican, August 10, 1904.
 2. Congressional Record, 55th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 1867; 1846; 2117; 1523 ff.; 1771 ff.; 1769; 1577; 1451; 1424; 2789; 1239; 1373; 1760; 1269; 1426; 1755; 1750-51; 1420. 47th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 2623 ff.

humdrum tariff controversy was lifted to an animated plane by Vest's information and wit. He kept a scrap book in which were clippings from newspapers concerning duties.³ He had experts in the Treasury Department compile facts comparing tariff rates.⁴ He kept files of testimonies and letters concerning tariffs from magazine editors, farmers and business concerns.⁵ Moreover, Vest was never a dry tariff speaker.

Early in his Senatorial career, he declared that his party stood for "revenue as the principle and protection as the incident," while with the Republicans it was reversed.⁶ After having had experience in framing tariff legislation, Vest was convinced that the whole system for protection was utterly indefensible, and false in fact and in theory.⁷ He believed it to be "legalized robbery,"⁸ and an "interdependent mutuality of greed."⁹ He compared protection to the drink habit,

3. Congressional Record, 50th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 475.

4. Ibid., 50th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 9458; St. Louis Globe-Democrat, October 2, 1894.

5. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, October 23, 1894; Congressional Record, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 9934 ff.

6. Ibid., 47th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 2623 ff.

7. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, October 2, 1894.

8. Boonville Weekly Advertiser, September 12, 1884.

9. The Nation, January 15, 1903, pp. 44-45.

saying, "the more you take of it, the more you want,¹⁰ and if you stop there is delirium tremens economically."

He thought all tariff laws taxed one class or section for the benefit of another. He claimed that the protected industries were like a brood of English sparrows, for said he, "When one gives a cry of distress, the air is¹¹ darkened with the whole brood rushing to its rescue."

The first tariff controversy that Vest encountered was during the revision of the tariff in 1883. Due to the growing surplus in the Federal Treasury, it was deemed wise to cut down the revenue by a revision of tariff duties. After much bickering a bill for a slight reduction in duties became a law March 3, 1883.

As far as Vest was concerned, he declared in 1882 what his policy was to be concerning protection. Among other things he said, "I might as well say now what I think and believe and declare the principle upon which I shall vote in regard to this high protective system....It is no protection for the farmer but he must pay dearly for manufactured goods....I am against these monopolies. I am against any system of laws which taxes one class or section for the benefit of another. Within the scope of a tariff for revenue I shall vote to foster

10. Congressional Record, 55th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 1420.

11. The Nation, January 15, 1903, pp. 44-45.

but a tariff for protection to any interest over and above the limit of a tariff for revenue is in violation of the Constitution. The cornerstone of our government is 'equal rights to all, exclusive privileges to none'." Vest favored lower duties on all items in the 1883 bill except on zinc.¹² He claimed that two-thirds of the zinc produced in the United States came from Missouri and Kansas and that the industry needed protection, that is, within the limit of a tariff for revenue. Later some Missourians questioned him about his zinc vote.¹³ Whereupon Vest stated that he expected to be misunderstood. "No Democrat," said he, "could look for a fair treatment at the hands of the Associated Press." He defended his vote by citing statistics and stating that the duty of one and a half cent per pound was not at all prohibitory but that it would produce a larger revenue and a larger competition between foreign and domestic zinc. Vest did not explain how a tariff on zinc could make more competition. He said he also favored the duty because it did not mean a monopoly. As a matter of fact, the duty on zinc was not increased but some of the Republican

12. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 6346 ff.; 47th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 1718 ff.

13. Peoples' Tribune (Jefferson City), February 7, 1883; Boonville Weekly Advertiser, April 13, 1883.

Senators lectured Vest on his zinc vote, accusing him¹⁴ of betraying his party.

Looking at the 1883 tariff bill as a whole, it retained, substantially unchanged, the high level of duties reached during and after the Civil War. Neither party seemed pleased with the bill but it was not until 1887 that the question was taken up seriously. In December of that year, President Cleveland confined his message to the need of taxation reform. His outspoken attitude had the effect of committing his party to a policy of opposition to the protective system. As a result of the President's speech, two tariff measures were formulated. One, the Mills' bill, making reductions on practically every manufactured article, sponsored by the Democratic House; the other, a substitute measure prepared by the Republican Senate, which proposed to readjust rates upward. From January until October these measures agitated Congress and the country. Neither were expected to reach the stage of enactment. Both served simply to give concrete expression to the platforms of the two parties for the campaign.

When the Mills' bill reached the Senate, Senator Sherman of Ohio dubbed it as a "meagre measure which would tend to break down several important industries" of

14. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 1530-31.

the country and would "nibble away" at others. To him, the proposed bill was just a free trade measure that would hurt the North but protect the South.¹⁵ In answer, Vest demanded a definition of free trade from "that distinguished authority whose smile upon his impassive countenance was like an Arctic sunbeam playing across a glacier."¹⁶ Vest claimed that the proposed House bill would reduce the taxation "hardly six per cent" and that his party did not propose to injure any industry; however, it did aim to reform the inequalities of the tariff.

Senator Hoar asked Vest if the Democrats proposed to overthrow the protective system. Vest replied that the Democrats expected to overthrow that part of the system which collected money from one man to enrich another as well as that part which "hypocritically protected labor but instead protected the manufacturer."¹⁷

Such arguments in the Senate were common during the summer and fall preceding the election of 1888. As stated in a previous chapter, the election was over the tariff issue. It seemed to indicate, if by a narrow margin, that the Republicans had the popular verdict in favor of high protection as they won the campaign. At

15. Congressional Record, 50th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 8597.

16. Ibid., pp. 8597 ff.

17. Ibid., p. 8598.

least Sherman announced such a belief in the lame duck session of 1888-89. Vest denied this assertion. He said that the tariff question would be with the people as long as the country endured because the tariff "involved a fundamental difference in the construction of the Constitution aside from the policies of the government."¹⁸

When the newly elected Congress met for the 1889-90 session, the Republicans who held a majority in both Houses, proceeded at once to formulate the tariff measure known as the McKinley bill.

The Senate bill of 1888 was brought forward and served as the basis for the new bill which was to equalize duties upon imports and to reduce the revenue of the government. After long and wearisome debates, it became a law October 6, 1890.

To Vest the McKinley bill was "no longer protection but pure, simple, naked plunder."¹⁹ It may be," said Vest, "that the people of the United States will submit to this system. Wrongs crystallized by custom and panoplied with privilege and power have often become hoary with age. Monstrous evils have existed for centuries, while the patient, uncomplaining multitude have watched the stars and waited for deliverance. The Bastille

18. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, December 12, 1888.

19. Congressional Record, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 7803 ff.

frowned in dark and sombre terror upon the populace of Paris while king and courtier, philosopher and patriot passed away. It seemed eternal, but at last it fell, and the nightmare of the ages ended. We boast of our free institutions, of liberty and equality; but who can call himself a freeman, save in mockery, when by force of law the proceeds of his life and labor are unjustly taken to enrich another? The struggle for human rights is not ended, nor can it be until the unequal and unjust system of taxation which now with the mask of protection rides like a booted and spurred highwayman over the land is trampled under foot by an outraged people."

Throughout the long debates over schedules and items on the bill, the protectionists argued for their principle, even maintaining that restrictive duties were no longer regarded as a temporary stage toward industrial freedom, but a principle which ought to be permanently adopted. Protection was affirmed on practically all items.

Vest was especially bitter in his denouncement²⁰ of two new principles of the bill. These concerned sugar and the recognition of commercial reciprocity. In regard to sugar there was to be a grant of a bounty of two cents a pound for fourteen years on the production

20. Congressional Record, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., p. 9934 ff.

of it within the United States. Raw sugar was to be admitted free. As to reciprocity, the President was empowered to levy duties on certain articles by proclamation should he deem it necessary.

To Vest these two principles were outrageous. He opposed them at every opportunity and when the entire tariff bill came up for the final debate, he was fully armed for the combat. Six hours had been set as the limit for the debates. Three hours were allowed to each side.²¹ Senator Frank Hiscock of New York was the principal Republican speaker. He praised the proposed McKinley bill, and attempted to show that it would benefit the country. During his remarks he referred to the Democratic party as being made up of "ruffians, charlatans and habitual slanderers."

Vest was the principal Democratic speaker. He answered Hiscock's criticism of the Democratic party in true Vest-like manner. Said he, "the Democratic party and every gentleman in it can treat his assertion with contempt. The party to which we belong midst all its misfortunes and mistakes has a record that no other political organization in this or any other country can produce. For a century, in peace and war, sunshine and shadow, our flag has floated in every township, county

21. Congressional Record, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 9935 ff.

and state in the Union and will continue to float until the centuries cease to exist.

"We have met lions in debate and we can afford to disregard the snarlings of the Senator from New York. The bear hunter, torn and lacerated in many a deadly conflict, where life was the forfeit of the game, will turn aside from a smaller animal whose only means of offense and defense is the noisome filth with which it poisons the surrounding atmosphere."

Vest then attacked the pending bill. He reviewed past tariff bills and tried to show that the proposed measure was the evil culmination of the protective principle. To prove this Vest fitted out a Kansas farmer in a suit, an overcoat, a hat, a woollen shirt, a cotton shirt, a cotton cravat, a pair of blankets, a pocket knife (as the farmer might be a Yankee and want to whittle) and a dress for his wife. Vest showed that the farmer's purchase would have amounted to \$31.51 under the tariff then in force, whereas under the proposed McKinley bill, the cost would be \$50.57. Vest said that with the farmer getting fifteen cents a bushel for corn, it would take over 300 bushels to pay for the fifty dollar purchase.

"There," said Vest, "is the whole of the tariff. It is worth all the theories, all the vituperative eloquence, all the appeals to the old flag and an

appropriation which the Republican party can make in the next year. This thing has come to an apex. The people will rebel against the piling up of enormous fortunes at the expense of the middle and poorer classes of the country."

As to the sugar schedule, Vest claimed that it was a concrete example of how lobbies and powerful trusts could influence legislation. He tried to show that the \$20,000,000 yearly would be put into the pockets of the sugar trusts and would give them the raw material free.²²

In censuring the reciprocity feature, Vest displayed the jealousy that has always existed among members of the various branches of the government. To his mind, this feature would grant to the executive branch a legislative privilege. He alluded to the time when the head of Charles I rolled off his shoulders because he had usurped the tax-levying duty of Parliament. Vest reminded the Senate that the Revolutionary War was fought over the principle of taxation without representation, hence he believed it unwise to grant one man the power to place a duty on certain articles. Despite the arguments of Vest, David Turpie of Indiana and Zebulon B. Vance of North Carolina as well as other Democratic Senators, the McKinley bill became a law.

22. Congressional Record, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 9937 ff.

Immediately following the passage of it, the November Congressional elections were held. The party which had espoused the extreme protective policy suffered a crushing defeat. The tariff question, also, played a leading part in the 1892 presidential election. Here, also, the Democrats won, gaining control of all branches of the federal government in the Fifty-third Congress for the term 1893-95. This was the only time during Vest's twenty-four years in the Senate that his party had control of all branches of the government.

The Democrats were justified in acting on the theory that the popular will had declared itself against the policy of high protection. But the enthusiasm which the victory had aroused was soon dampened. While the tariff had been the main issue in the election, it was suddenly pushed aside by the commercial crisis of 1893. President Cleveland called the Fifty-third Congress in special session on August 7 to repeal the purchase act. The outcome of this session made it difficult for the tariff measure when it finally did appear. Then, too, the Democratic majority in the Senate was small. Some of these Senators were only half-hearted on the general question of tariff reduction and others represented states which had strong interest in particular duties. This added further to the difficulty. Thus, there was a great need of skillful and tactful management to avoid

further disunion and at the same time to formulate a tariff measure which would pass the Senate and receive the approval of Cleveland as well as the Democratic party.

At the extra session, no attempt had been made to deal with the tariff but committees had been organized and two months after the convening of the regular session of Congress, the House passed the Wilson tariff bill by a large majority. This bill proposed some important remissions of duty and in all directions made considerable reductions. In addition, the bill contained an income tax provision.

It was when the proposed bill reached the Senate that trouble began. Here it was referred to the Finance Committee of which Vest was a member. This committee referred the bill to a sub-committee composed of three Senators, namely Isham G. Harris of Tennessee, James K. Jones of Arkansas, and Vest. The latter, in an article written in 1904, gives an account of what went on in the committee.²³ He writes that after three weeks of work spent in revising the House bill, a measure was prepared which fulfilled, so the three men decided, the Democratic promise of the 1892 election. The bill was

23. G. G. Vest, "A Senator of Two Republics," The Saturday Evening Post, September 10, 1904; Congressional Record, 53rd Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 8512 ff.; St. Louis Globe-Democrat, August 16 and 17, 1894.

then submitted to a caucus of Democratic Senators. "There followed," writes Vest, "three days of wrangling and acrimonious debate such as I had never heard before or hope to hear....One of the Louisiana Senators, Senator White who had been recently appointed Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States and had been confirmed by the Senate, but who had retained his seat for the purpose of taking part in the tariff legislation, declared that the sub-committee might just as well have gone into his State with a bowie knife in one hand and a torch in the other as to have proposed such a bill."

Vest was so disgusted that he almost resigned from the committee. The three men decided, however, to find out what course the Administration would follow, if a measure were proposed which could pass the Senate. "I said," wrote Vest, "that I did not propose to be accused of selling out to trusts, to be besmirched by falsehoods nor to be left to bear the whole burden for legislation not in consonance with my convictions and which the administration might declare itself not to be in any way responsible." According to Vest, the Administration said it would support the measure that the committee prepared as it was necessary to pass a tariff bill or else have the Democratic party discredited before the country. After this assurance, the committee prepared a measure which eventually passed the Senate by a vote of 39 to 34.

The House, however, refused to concur in the Senate amendments and asked for a conference. "After more than two weeks of toil," wrote Vest, "we were still unable to agree....and without notice to the Senate conferees, Mr. Wilson read in the House of Representatives a letter from President Cleveland stating that the Senate bill then pending was an act of treachery and dishonor to the Democratic party." To Vest this was not only a tactless act but it so aroused his indignation that on August 15, 1894, he turned the "calcium light", as he termed it, on the Senate. According to the Globe-Democrat, Vest spoke to a crowded chamber, and he spared no one. His speech, says The Globe, was in his own defense and vindication.

However, the Wilson-Gorman bill, without the signature of the President, became a law August 27, 1894. Vest believed that Cleveland should have vetoed the bill and given his reasons for so doing. "As it was," wrote Vest in 1904, "he furnished the Republicans with an unanswerable argument against all that we could say upon the tariff question during the approaching canvass." Vest concludes his article by writing--"I look back upon the Wilson-Gorman bill as a nightmare from whose effect I have never fully recovered. Before the conference ended, three of the conferees had broken down. Wilson was attacked by facial erysipelas and in a few days so was I. We sat opposite each other our faces

discolored by iodine and looked like two Indians painted for a war dance....Senator Harris also went on the sick list and told me....that he dated the failure of his health from the effects of overwork over the....bill of 1894. Senator Jones was also stricken down with angina pectoris and was compelled to go abroad in order to get relief. I have myself never been able to recover from the exhaustive labor to which I was subjected."

Senator Hoar taunted Vest with the idea that the measure had missed its aim and instead of hurting the New England manufacturers as intended, it hurt the corporations in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. This ridicule reminded Vest of the man who threw a stone at a yellow dog but instead hit his mother-in-law. Admitting his mistake, the man exclaimed, "While I am sorry that I missed the mark, I am glad that my effort is not altogether in vain."²⁴ The Wilson-Gorman act put a number of articles on the free list and reduced duties on practically all items. Duties were re-imposed on sugar, but the bounty of 1890 was discontinued. Reciprocity was practically abandoned.

The income tax was another feature of the bill. It provided for a tax of two per cent to be levied on all incomes above \$4000. Vest favored this feature and

24. Kansas City Times, August 11, 1904.

he claimed that it was through his efforts that this part²⁵ of the measure was presented in its final form. He thought that the income tax feature was the best part of the act as it was a tax in just proportion to the protection given by the government. Under the Republican taxation policy, Vest claimed that the poor man paid as much to the support of the national government as did the multi-millionaire. "It was," said Vest, "a notorious fact that money bonds and personal property largely escaped all taxation, leaving the burden to fall upon land which could not be concealed or removed."

Vest admitted that the income bill had defects because it was formulated under pressure. If he could have had his way more time would have been given to it instead of various items in the tariff schedule. But Vest thought defects would occur in any measures when the Senate, as he put it, "stands around like a lot of muscovy drakes, bowing and quacking at each other"²⁶ instead of actually getting down to real work.

The income tax had been popular with the Populist party. The adoption of a limit of exemption at \$4000 was largely the result of their efforts. Almost the entire support of the measure came from the South

25. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, October 2, 1894.

26. Congressional Record, 53rd Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 1012 ff.

and the West. A year after the Wilson-Gorman bill passed, the income tax provision became inoperative because it failed to stand up under judicial review. Vest denounced this decision. He declared that the absolute power of the Supreme Court was a menace to the land.

Due in part to the financial depression, inept leadership, lobbies and selfish interests, the Wilson-Gorman tariff, whether a good measure or not, was never popular with the public. Unrest prevailed throughout the country. As the election of 1896 neared, Vest urged his party to greater loyalty so they could "win an old time victory", as he said.²⁷

What might have been the outcome of a campaign in which the tariff was the single issue cannot be said; though the general conditions at the moment certainly were favorable to the party not in power. But the currency question and not tariff was the leading issue of the election. While the Republicans won, the national legislature was not so altered as to give them a free hand on the currency, at least in the Senate. But on the tariff situation something could be done. The state of finances made this a safe move because since 1893, there had been a deficit in the current operations of the Treasury, due to several forces but alleged for partisan

27. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, October 2, 1894.

purposes, to be because of the inadequate legislation of 1894. Hence, President McKinley, in calling the extra session of 1897, asked Congress to deal solely with the import duties and the revenue. Eventually the act of 1897, known as the Dingley Tariff, was formulated. It raised the protective rates to their highest point since the Civil War.

Mellowed with the years and weakened in health, Vest was not so active in the debates of this measure. Perhaps his experience in the formation of the Wilson-Gorman bill tempered his remarks. Nevertheless, he was chosen as a conferee in the final conference of the joint²⁸ committee when the Dingley measure was under discussion. During the early stages of the bill, Vest assured the Republicans that his side of the house proposed not to²⁹ make factious opposition to the measure. There was, however, plenty of serious opposition to the bill before and after it became a law on July 24, 1897.

Vest felt the high duties were an outrageous oppression on the common people just to feed the "cor-³⁰morant greed of the trusts." He especially was interested in the hide item on the tariff schedule. His interest

28. Congressional Record, 55th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 2447.

29. Ibid., p. 1240.

30. Ibid., pp. 1311; 2767; 2789; 2793.

in this item was no doubt deepened because of the fact that Missouri was a leading state in shoe manufacturing. In the House, hides had been placed on the free list but the Senate had levied a twenty per cent duty on them which eventually was reduced to fifteen per cent in the final bill. Vest opposed the duty because he claimed that Armour, Morris, Swift and all other packers would reap the profit instead of the cattle raisers. Vest claimed that he knew the twenty per cent rate would never be accepted especially after the Rhode Island Senator, Nelson W. Aldrich, got up from his sick bed to attend³¹ the final conference meetings.

On one occasion after a trying session on the tariff question, the story is told that Vest, Aldrich and Quay were riding the cars home from the debates when a poor, raggedy, under-nourished newspaper boy boarded the car. Vest refused to buy a paper. Aldrich remarked as he started fumbling for some pennies, "Oh, come Vest, let's encourage the infant industry." But the Rhode Islander could find no pennies so he asked Vest to loan him three cents. As Vest did so he grumbled, "Yes, that's the way with you Republicans. You are always willing to encourage infant industries at some other person's expense."³²

31. Congressional Record, 55th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 2789.

32. Kansas City Times, August 11, 1904.

The Dingley tariff was the fruit of the complete identification of the Republican party with the interests of business. For nearly ten years it remained on the statute books. However, during this period there was one duty which was suspended for a time. This was the anthracite coal duty and Vest was the leader in securing this suspension as a later chapter will reveal. After years of labor on the tariff question, Vest was to close his Senatorial career with a tariff victory. This was a rare occurrence for Vest as his party was usually in the minority and was very much so in the last few years of Vest's Senatorial life. Perhaps this is the reason that the press called it a most "dramatic controversy."

CHAPTER VI

THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT

Vest's essential conservatism is most apparent in his attitude toward the progressive movement. He was an uncompromising foe to woman suffrage, direct election of Senators and prohibition, if indeed, the last can be called progressive. Although his speeches in regard to these matters were few and brief, they contained a touch of individualism and sparkle for which Vest was noted. To him it was pleasing to see the twentieth century dawn with the three measures making little headway.

Between 1880 and 1900, suffrage petitions bearing the signature of thousands of men and women were laid before Congress. Vest opposed this movement mainly on the grounds that it would prove an inconvenience to women, children, homes, and especially men.¹ He, also, contended that women had not been created for the purpose of becoming "ward politicians" as he put it, hence,

1. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 120-1, 145; 49th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 986 ff.; The Peoples' Tribune (Jefferson City), December 21, 1881.

they lacked the necessary political ingredients to make wise voters.

Among other things, Vest said: "What man can, without aversion, turn from the blessed memory of that dear old grandmother or the gentle words and caressing hands of that blessed mother gone to the unknown world, to face in its stead the idea of a female justice of the peace or township constable?"

As for Vest, when he left his day's work, he did not care to be greeted by a female politician. "I want," he said, "to go back to the jurisdiction of the wife, the mother and instead of a lecture upon finance or the tariff or upon the construction of the Constitution, I want those blessed details of domestic life and domestic love.

"I care not whether the mother is called upon to decide as a juryman or jurywoman the rights of property or rights of life, whilst her baby is 'mewling and pucking' in solitary confinement at home. There are other considerations more important and one of them is to my mind insuperable. I speak now respecting women as a sex. I believe that they are better than men, but I do not believe they are adapted to political work of this world. I do not believe that the Great Intelligence ever intended them to invade the sphere of work given to men, tearing down and destroying all the best influences

for which God has intended them. Women are essentially emotional....We need more logic into public affairs and less feelings....There are kingdoms in which the heart should reign supreme. That kingdom belongs to women.... the realm of love, the realm of the gentler and the holier and kindlier attributes that make the name of wife, mother and sister next to that of God himself."

During the course of his talk, Vest presented and quoted from two pamphlets written by women who opposed woman suffrage. Whereupon, Senator Hoar declared that Vest's speech was a refutation of its own argument. "Everybody knows," said Hoar, "my honorable friend from Missouri is one of the most brilliant men in this country. He is a logician, an orator, a man of large experience and a lawyer and yet when called upon to put forth this great effort of his this afternoon, what did he do? He furnished the gush and the eloquence but when he came to any arguments, he had to call upon two women....to supply that."

Perhaps Vest thought there was some truth in Hoar's remarks, but nevertheless, he claimed that "not all the arguments that could be piled Pelion upon Ossa" could induce him to favor this "political monstrosity" as he called it. Enough Senators, as well as other people were opposed to the measure that it was over fifteen years after Vest was dead that the right of

suffrage was granted to all women.

As to the election of Senators by popular vote,² Vest felt such a thing would be dangerous. He claimed that the measure would create new temptations to fraud and corrupt practices. He denied that the general indictment which had been brought against the Senate as then constituted was true. "Who pretends to say," he asked, "that this body of Senators, ninety in number, is not equal in integrity, in intelligence, in all the great qualities of a representative capacity" to any group selected by popular vote? Vest quoted statements to show that Madison, Hamilton and Jefferson opposed the idea of popular election of Senators. "I probably belong," said Vest, "to a past school in public life, but I think the Constitution should be approached carefully. I believe the men who made the Constitution....prescribed the form to be adopted....in order to avoid this desire on the part of the demagogues to achieve their own purposes by flattering the people." Vest insisted that adroit politicians, desiring to make an impression for purer politics, had instigated the agitation. "If," said Vest, "the fountain is impure so will the stream be....Yet we are told that if we change the form of

2. Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 6595 ff.; Kansas City Star, March 8, 1903.

election we will get rid of the impurity...." To Vest this argument was futile and reminded him of a story. "I am," he explained, "a Western man and so I will use a Western illustration of the countryman who on a hot day was taking a bag of corn to the mill. He saw that his horse was laboring under the heat and burden imposed upon him and in order to relieve the animal, the rider got off, took the bag of corn upon his own shoulder, got back upon the horse and congratulated himself that he had found a remedy."

Other Senators objected to the proposal. Failing to make an impression on the Senate by a frontal attack in 1893, 1894, 1898 and 1902, the advocates of popular election tried a rear assault. They began to apply the principle of direct election by state action. This method gained headway, but Vest had been dead eight years before the Senate yielded to the popular demand for a change in the method of election of Senators.

Of the three measures heretofore mentioned, prohibition called forth the most opposition from Vest.³ His position on this question was not surprising. He was a notorious drinker himself. Then, too, a large

3. The Peoples' Tribune, September 27, 1882; Boonville Weekly Advertiser, April 13, 1883, May 18, 1883; St. Louis Globe-Democrat, October 25, 1888; Congressional Record, 52nd Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 852 ff., pp. 2171 ff.; 55th Cong., 3rd Sess., pp. 2703 ff.

percentage of his constituents were Germans and brewing was one of Missouri's largest industries? Vest was a⁴ close friend to Adolphus Busch, the St. Louis brewer. No doubt these factors influenced his prohibition stand.

Although Vest was one of the most pronounced anti-prohibitionists in the Senate, yet he received numerous prohibition petitions from various parts of Missouri.⁵ His colleagues must have looked on this as a huge joke. Vest, a notorious drinker and anti-prohibitionist presenting prohibition petitions! He eventually adopted a peculiar form of presenting them. In an attempt to show that they were not a spontaneous outgrowth of prohibition sentiment in Missouri, but were prompted by some local or Eastern propaganda, he presented them in this manner: "I am in receipt of a communication from the National Temperance Society Publication House of New York, sending me a petition of citizens of the Twelfth Congressional District of Missouri praying for prohibition of alcoholic liquor in that district. I present these papers and move their reference to the Committee on the District of Columbia."

Vest denounced the prohibition movement as a "piece of crank legislation" promoted by "pseudo-phil-

4. The Missouri Statesman (Columbia), October 28, 1904.
Vest, in his will, left a cane to Busch.

5. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, February 1, 1888.

anthropists," as he said, "who had nothing else to do." He urged all people who loved personal liberty to fight the issue. Especially, did Vest urge his party to oppose it. Just as the Democrats had opposed "Federalism, Black Republicanism, Know Nothingism, Proscriptionism, Reconstructionism, Proconsulism and Greenbackism," said Vest, so would they fight prohibition until it would "die a dog's death and be carried to the potter's field."

In speaking about the regulation of the liquor traffic in the District of Columbia and in Alaska, Vest said, "Unless you have public sentiment and public opinion to maintain your laws in favor of temperance, the evil is but....intensely aggravated." Using an illustration to prove that human nature rebelled against restraint, he said: "If the Mississippi River ran whiskey, if every stone on its banks was a lump of sugar and every shrub a mint and everybody could go there and drink without let or hindrance, fewer people would drink than if you put up a fence with placards upon it declaring that no man should touch the liquid in that river."

Vest was well aware of the evils of intemperance but to him a law on that statute books would do little to remedy "the greatest evil," as he said, "that ever afflicted the human race. I think," he continued, "it is the fabled Pandora's box, out of which comes all the crimes known to civilization or barbarism. There

never has been a people discovered no matter what their condition who did not have a stimulant, unless it be the American Indians who had tobacco and when whiskey was introduced amongst them they made up for lost time....If I had the power by any sort of legislation known to the ingenuity of mortal man, to destroy the last drop of alcoholic stimulant upon the face of the earth I would do it with the greatest pleasure and alacrity. But it can not be done and the experience of the whole human race shows it." Vest claimed that a prohibition law tended only to deteriorate the stimulant used. He cited as an illustration of this fact a drink called "Russian brandy" used in Alaska (Vest had been in Alaska) in which, as he said, "there are fifty murders in every pint." In another portion of this same speech, Vest claimed that drug stores kept some "decoctions which would take the hair off the oldest dog" in the town. Vest maintained that a large city could not enforce a prohibition law and that such a law would only drive the traffic, to quote him, into "dens and purlieus."

He favored high license and local option as a method for dealing with the problem. "Unless," said Vest, "a law is based upon the intelligent and enlightened conscience....of a people, the passage of such a law is a trumpet call to battle."

It was sixteen years after Vest had gone from

the Senate that the people of America decided that prohibition should be a reality. Thus, with the passage of the eighteenth amendment, the three movements which had aroused Vest's opposition were all upon the statute books. He had fought a good fight and had kept the faith but not even his sarcasm and eloquence could win a lasting victory. The progressive movement was not to be blocked by mere words.

CHAPTER VII

EXPANSION

Of the many issues that interested Vest in the last part of the nineteenth century, expansion takes a leading place. It was this development that led him to declare the era to be "one of the most critical periods in all the nation's history." Ill health and old age tended to prevent as active a legislative fight as was usual with him, but his intellect was as keen, his sarcasm as fiery and his tongue as eloquent as ever. To him this expansion policy was the "most outrageous, most dangerous, most undemocratic and most unrepugnant thing" of which he had ever heard.

The annexation of the Hawaiian Islands was the first problem of the expansion era which displeased Vest. To better understand the part he played in opposing the annexation, it is necessary to briefly review some of the facts concerning the affair. A growing American population engaged in sugar planting had deepened the United States' interest in the Islands. In 1891, when Harrison was President of the United States and J. L. Stevens was

minister to Hawaii, Queen Liliuokalani came to the Hawaiian throne. Two years later, due to dissatisfaction of her people, the Queen was deposed and a new government established. That the revolution was accomplished through the encouragement of Stevens and the American sailors, is today not disputed. Commissioners from the Island, left at once for Washington to secure annexation. The plan met with favor in Congress and a treaty was signed by Harrison and submitted to the Senate but this body did not act upon it before Harrison's term ended.

Immediately upon his inauguration, President Cleveland withdrew the measure from the Senate, recalled Stevens and sent James K. Blount to investigate. It was in December of 1893, following Blount's report of affairs in Hawaii, that annexation debates in the two branches of Congress waxed warm.

The movement for annexation was lead in the Senate by Hoar of Massachusetts and William P. Frye of Maine. These men criticized Cleveland for appointing Blount without the approval of the Senate. Such an action¹ they declared, was an impeachable offense.

"The Senator from Massachusetts," said Vest in reply, "and the Senator from Maine take occasion to assail everybody who differs with them in regard to the

1. Congressional Record, 53rd Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 194 ff.

Hawaiian question. Now the Senator from Maine, knows that I have the greatest personal regard for him. There is no Senator in this Chamber with whom my relations have been more pleasant but when it comes to a political or partisan question, I would just as little trust that Senator as a hungry wolf when the bleat of a farmer's lamb is heard in his immediate vicinity. With all his generous instincts, it is impossible for that Senator to be anything else but an intense New England Republican. Like his friend, Mr. Stevens, his whole political action is governed by the great truth that 'the earth belongs to the Saints and we are the Saints.'"

Vest then pitched into the heart of the question which he said involved "the honor and welfare" of the land. To do this he first produced facts and evidence to show that the President had followed precedent in the appointment of Blount. He read a list of appointments which had been made by various Presidents and from the list, he claimed over 380 of them had been made by Presidents without the consent of the Senate. These appointees had negotiated treaties and important diplomatic functions, and yet, it had been left for Hoar, Vest pointed out, to find that the Constitution had been violated and to threaten the President with impeachment² for doing as all his predecessors had. The essence of

2. St. Louis Globe Democrat, January 29, 1898.

the whole controversy, Vest explained, was not over the manner of appointment but it was because Cleveland opposed annexation. "If that is a crime," said Vest, "then I am a criminal."

To Vest the important issue of the question was whether the traditional policy of the United States was to be forsaken and a "great expansive, territory-acquiring Government" was to be instituted. The people of the United States, declared Vest, wanted no colonies. "We want," he said, "a compact republic in which every citizen is represented, a compact republic with no islands out in the ocean around which we are to gather an enormous fleet and upon which we are to place expensive fortifications - a pawn to be seized in event of war with a great power of Europe when an attack upon a single Kanaka would involve the honor and dignity of our whole country and require the expenditure of the last dollar and the last drop of blood to defend him."

Vest believed that the government then in power in the Islands was a de facto government and had, so he said, all the rights of a de jure government. Any assault upon the government, as constituted in 1893, by any country was an act of war Vest declared which could only be brought about by action of Congress. Vest agreed that every nation should protect the property and persons of its citizens who reside in a foreign country for legiti-

mate ends. But he was convinced that the people of Hawaii had not been consulted in regard to the annexation movement. "I have no doubt," he said, "that the presence of United States marines in Honolulu is a sufficient military argument to bring about anything. It was eight years before Texas was considered so firmly established as a republic de facto that the authorities of the United States thought it proper to treat with her as to annexation and General Jackson was denounced all over this country because he did not, upon the testimony then presented to him, declare that Texas was an independent republic and entitled to become a member of the United States. And here, because the Government does not in three days settle the whole question in favor of annexation the President of the United States is to be denounced and threatened with impeachment in the face of the American people!"

Vest was also prepared to give a suggestion for a policy concerning the solution of the Hawaiian problem. He believed that "every shadow of United States authority," as he said, should be withdrawn from the Island, except in so far as it was necessary to protect under international law the property and persons of American citizens legitimately residing there. He would let the Hawaiians settle their own differences. "If the Queen," concluded Vest, "has behind her enough of her

people to put her back upon the throne then the Government of the United States should recognize that as the government de facto and de jure If she has not that power then let her go down before the decree of the great tribunal to which all true Americans bow in this land and for which the people pray through the world."

No progress for Hawaiian annexation was gained during Cleveland's administration but in 1897, with the Republicans in power, the treaty for annexation was arranged and on August 12, 1898 formal possession of the Island was given. Vest submitted to the inevitable because he was in the minority.

Before the Hawaiian question was solved, however, the Cuban problem presented itself. Vest played an even greater part in this controversy than he did in the Hawaiian one. His eloquence and logic won for him a victory in the Senate as he lead the fight for recognition of the Cuban Republic. It was in February, 1896 that the resolution was debated whether the United States ought to recognize the rebel government in Cuba. It was in behalf of this resolution on February 27, 1896 that Vest delivered one of the most eloquent addresses that he ever gave in the Senate.³ Senator George Gray of Delaware who was one of the opponents of the resolution

3. Congressional Record, 54th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 2205 ff.

had this to say of Vest's plea for Cuba. "If the independence of Cuba could be achieved by eloquence, it has been this afternoon by the burning words that have fallen from the lips of the Senator from Missouri. No one could have heard him without sympathizing with the feelings with which his heart was throbbing and without giving favorable response to every aspiration that he has uttered for liberty in Cuba." But regardless of Vest's eloquence, the opposition led by Gray and Senator S. M. White of California contended that recognition of the independence of a people is the recognition of a fact. They felt Cuba had not reached the proper stage in her struggle for self government, to warrant a recognition of independence.⁴

To Vest, this argument was just "leather and prunello" as he called it. "If that be the doctrine of international law, where," asked Vest, "would be the ... people of the United States? If France had acted upon the doctrine announced by the Senator from California and waited until our fathers had achieved their own independence, the result would have been far different and we today would be English subjects instead of free citizens of a free country. ... If the doctrine be correct that all

4. Kansas City Times, August 11, 1904; The Nation, March 5, 1896, Vol. 62, p. 187.

vestige of military power on the part of the mother country ... must be swept away before we can act, then our action is simply brutum fulmen and amounts to nothing. The people themselves have already struck the blow that made them free and we can only accept the results and say that the fiat of the god of battle has been put upon their endeavor to assert the right to govern themselves. If we, as the great Republic of the world mean to stand by those people who are imitating us and endeavoring to make a government for themselves like that of this country we must help them in their hour of need."

Vest denounced Spain's policy of blood, torture and fire. He compared her to a toothless old she wolf with one cub sitting at the door of the "dark cave of despotism, grinning with impotent rage at the procession of splendid Republics that marched on in the progress toward civilization and liberty."

Some of the members of the Senate wondered if the recognition of Cuban independence would not eventually mean the acquisition of that island. Vest readily admitted this to be true. "While I resisted on the Hawaiian question," said Vest, "the project which was brought here to annex Hawaii, to the United States, I did it upon the ground that it would necessitate an immense naval force to keep it an integral portion of the Union. Jefferson states, and I believe it to be true,

that no navy would be necessary to hold Cuba as a state or part of a state with the American confederacy. If that be so, it is simply a question as to fitness of population of that island to become citizens of the United States and take upon themselves the responsibility of citizenship.

The opposition urged that recognizing Cuba's struggle for self-government might lead to a war with Spain and felt that it was an executive function. Vest "apprehended," as he said, no war. As to the other objection, Vest asked Gray what prevented Congress from passing a resolution, concurrent or joint, asking the President to recognize the independence of Cuba? Gray could think of nothing that would prevent such an action. Other objections were made but Vest had an answer to them all, invariably contending that it would be a "mere farce" to do anything else than declare before the world that Spain's cause was hopeless. "Are we," pleaded Vest, "a Christian and God-fearing people, to stand silent and dumb while the Spanish general, declares that he intends to pen up the people of Cuba and butcher them into subjection to the Spanish throne? Sir, if we do, God will curse us. ... Liberty lives with the poor and oppressed not with the wealthy and powerful. It throbs in the heart of the caged bird and has gone with martyrs to the stake and kissed their burning lips as the spirit winged

its flight to God. Liberty cannot be extinguished when a people are unanimous in defense of the rights which God has given them"

The following day, the resolution for which Vest had worked, passed by a vote of 64 to 6. The President, however, ignored it, hence its passage was not important. Conditions in Cuba went from bad to worse and for reasons which need not concern us here, Congress in April, 1898 declared war on Spain. As a result of the war, we acquired Porto Rico and the Philippines.

Vest opposed the policy adopted by the United States in regard to the Islands. He thought it in direct violation of the great truth that all governments derived their just powers from the consent of the governed. He declared that it was the commercial interest which brought about the ratification of the Paris Treaty.⁵ He denounced President McKinley's appointment of the three Senators on the Peace Commission. To Vest, this practice could not be defended as it converted, so he said, a senator who was required by the Constitution to act in a quasi-judicial character as to any treaty coming before the Senate into an active supporter of any treaty he may sign. This, Vest declared, deprived the Senator of the impartial

5. Vest, "A Senator of Two Republics," Saturday Evening Post, March 26, 1904, pp. 9-10.

character which he was supposed to follow. In fact, Vest was so impressed over the affair that he offered in the 56th Congress, a joint resolution prohibiting the appointment of any Senator or Justice of the Supreme court to be a commissioner on the part of the United States in any negotiation with a foreign government. As a matter of passing interest, a bill effecting the object of Vest's resolution was passed in the Senate but failed in the House.

When the Paris treaty was submitted to the Senate, Vest and two other Senators were chosen by a party caucus to confer with every Senator not known to be favorable to the treaty and ascertain his position as to its ratification. Vest claimed that when the treaty was under discussion that Bryan, who was working for ratification, asked him (Vest) to vote for it. Vest refused to do so. He believed, however, that Bryan did influence some of the Populist Senators.

Vest tried to convince the Senate that the United States had no power to hold and govern colonies.⁶ He introduced a resolution to that effect. In support of it, he presented facts concerning the question from 1789 to 1899, to prove that the United States could not

6. Congressional Record, 55th Cong., 3d Sess., pp. 93 ff.; Boonville Weekly Advertiser, December 23, 1898.

legally pursue a colonial policy. "I do not," he said, "controvert the power of the Federal Government to acquire and govern territories but I do deny that territories can be acquired to be held as colonies, peopled by millions of subjects not citizens with no hope or prospect of its ever becoming a state of the Union." But the opposition claimed that to acquire territory was an inherited right and that the United States as a nation possessed every sovereign power not reserved in the Constitution.

In February of 1899, when the rebellion in the Philippines was demanding men and money to subdue the Filipinos, Vest said, "I have tried to bring myself to the conclusion that it is my duty to vote for an increase of the army but I do not believe this war ... is for the purpose of enabling their people at any time to determine the form of their own government."⁷ To Vest the Filipinos were to be forced to accept the United States' leadership even if it took, as he said, "100,000 missionaries with guns in their hands to carry out that divine and ecclesiastical intention." He thought the war was criminal, useless and expensive. "Does any intelligent man," Vest asked, "believe for an instant that we can enter into the maelstrom of oriental politics with the nations of the world, armed and vigilant and jealous unless we increase

7. Congressional Record, 55th Cong., 3d Sess., pp. 2443ff.

our navy enormously and also our army?"

As the months passed and the policy of imperialism continued to grow, Vest told the Senate on February 23, 1900 that he did not know what was to be the end of this monstrous doctrine.⁸ "I am," he declared, "no Cassandra shrieking calamity through the streets of Troy, but if the people next November indorse the position of the Republican party then the state of New York should pass an act to take down the Statue of Liberty Tear it down, extinguish the lamp and leave us in gloom and darkness of colonial despotism."

During the remaining sessions of Congress in which Vest served, he entered very little into any senatorial controversy and despite the fact that practically every policy in which he believed was being defeated, his bitter tongue was never entirely silenced. When some one suggested to him that the Philippine question might be reconsidered, he replied, "That sort of talk is nonsense.⁹ We have lost our fight and we might as well make the best of it. Did you ever know an instance where the Anglo-Saxon race ever gave up an inch of territory, that it once got its hands on? No, and you never will! Gentleman, we are expanded in spite of ourselves

8. Congressional Record, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., pp.2122 ff.

9. Independence Examiner, January 17, 1930.

and we shall remain expanded in spite of Hades!"

Possibly Vest was correct, but the chances of a reversing of policy in regard to these islands are better today (1932) than they have been since 1900.

CHAPTER VIII

CLOSING DAYS

Vest's closing years in the Senate were at the time when the American people were drawn into world affairs as they had never been before. For good or for ill a new age had come. A new type of commercial statesman as represented by Mark Hanna was supplanting the old type as typified by Vest. He was one of the few remaining representatives of the old school--the war time soldier, orator and statesman combined. He first achieved prominence in the days when to drink with one's friends and play poker were accomplishments in which every gentleman was supposed to be efficient. Men did not have to go behind screens and slip in back doors to take a drink on the quiet in his age. Whether the new era was to bring in a real improvement in morals, statesmanship, or oratory, only time could tell, but to Vest the new statesman constituted only a varnished exterior and the new age a dangerous tendency. He spent his few remaining years in combating the new era and in striving to divert its course back to the good old

¹
 days. Ill health prevented vigorous work but now and then, his old fervor and eloquence would burst forth as he denounced imperialism and perversions of capitalism,
²
 or eulogized some departed member.

Friends, as well as one not so friendly, claimed that he would give these sudden speeches to impress Bill Stone with the fact that he had a longer period of waiting ahead for Vest's retirement than was generally expected. That Vest had little admiration for Stone is evident as shown by an incident which occurred a few
³
 years before Vest retired.

He and Amos Cummings, a New York Representative, were the guests of Quay on the annual fishing tour of the Florida coast. One day during the midst of fishing, Vest called Cumming's attention to a buzzard perched upon a snag in the tide water watching a wounded fish which was floundering around.

"Cummings," Vest remarked, "You are unable to

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1. Boonville Weekly Advertiser, December 16, 1898; January 19, 1900; February 1, 1901; August 9, 1901; March 14, 1902; April 18, 1902; The Outlook, February 1, 1902, pp. 249-250.
 2. Boonville Weekly Advertiser, April 13, 1900; Congressional Record, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 3967-8; 57th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 4033; Kansas City Times, August 11, 1904.
 3. Boonville Weekly Advertiser, December 14, 1900.

see in this spectacle what I do. The reason is because you are unfamiliar with Missouri's politics. That wounded fish there is your humble servant G. G. Vest and that ravenous buzzard with those protuberant eyes is Bill Stone. I hope some other buzzard will swoop down and get that fish when it dies."

Although Vest fished with Quay on many an occasion and was one of his warmest friends, nevertheless, Senatorial duty⁴ was stronger than friendship, as shown in April, 1900, when it fell to Vest to decide a rather embarrassing situation concerning his Senator friend. According to the press, it was the most "painful incident" of Vest's career. In 1899, Quay's second term expired, and he failed of re-election because he was under trial on charge of gross misapplication of Pennsylvania state funds. His attorney pleaded the statute of limitations and he was acquitted, yet the legislature declined to re-elect him. Upon the adjournment of that body, there being an unfilled vacancy in the Pennsylvania delegation, the Governor appointed Quay as Senator, and in the following winter Quay's Republican colleagues in the Senate were driven to the embarrassing necessity of deciding whether to seat him or reject him. It was

4. Boonville Weekly Advertiser, March 9, 1900; Kansas City Star, April 24 and 25, 1900; St. Louis Globe-Democrat, April 25, 1900; State Tribune (Jefferson City), August 13, 1904; St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 10, 1904.

Vest's vote that decided the question. The vote stood thirty-two to thirty-two, when Vest's name, which was the last on the roll, was called. With head bowed and in an almost inaudible voice, he voted to reject Quay. Such devotion to duty was highly praised in the newspapers. Senator Julius C. Burrows of Michigan speaking in 1903 of Vest said: "Do you remember his vote in the Quay case? The men were as brothers, Senator Vest made an exhaustive examination of the law and his conclusion was that Quay had no right to the seat. Many would have found it convenient to remain away from the Senate but when the vote was taken, Vest's rigid honesty would not allow such an evasion. It was necessary for him to disappoint his warmest friends...."

It was a peculiarly fitting end of Vest's career in the Senate that although his body was "worn out" to quote his own expression, he had strength to lead the successful battle for the people against a trust which sought to raise the price of one of life's necessities.⁵ This controversy was over the duty on anthracite coal. His success in securing the suspension of the duty showed that the decrepitude of his body had in no way undermined his intellect and energy or his eloquence. Two other factors also aided Vest in his

5. Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 483 ff.; 516-517; 593.

victory.

One was the anthracite coal strike of 1902 which attracted national attention and the other was President Roosevelt's work in connection with the strike. For reasons which need not concern us here, the President decided that the strike must end because the interest of the public in having a supply of coal available was superior to that of either miners or operators. Suffice it to say that the strike ended and mining was resumed. The successful outcome enhanced the prestige of the government and of the President but the misery caused by the strike lingered. The shortage of coal as well as the price of it, were causing distress. The President in his December message suggested that a removal of the coal duty might alleviate the situation. Vest was to remember this intimation as the suffering of the poor increased with cold weather.

A month after the President's message, on a bitterly cold January day, Vest, who had been carried from his carriage to his Senate seat, urged the Republican Senators to remove the duty from anthracite coal as a measure of at least partial relief to the distress incident to the strike. Growing apparently stronger as he advocated his proposal, his old time fire and effectiveness returned, he arraigned the opposition for its indifference to the suffering of the poor throughout the

country. Time and again when interrupted by Republican leaders, he replied with the exactness of retort for which he was noted. According to D. G. Phillips,⁶ "the Senate was in an animated, almost hysterical, session. The leaderless, planless and helpless Democratic minority lounged listless and feeble at the desks--all except one man. The Republican majority was terrorized. Why? Among the minority, facing the unnerved lions, stood, or rather was propped a mere mite. His body so small and shrunken that his head was scarce a foot and a half above the level of his desk. His black clothes hung in bags. His body seemed to be able to stand only because it was wedged between his chair and desk.

"A splendid brow adorned with scant, white hair; a skin of waxen pallor, eyes deep hidden in dark sockets and beneath lids that seemed to have risen for the last time; a snow white mustache shading a mouth that seemed set in the rigor of death. A few feet behind the propped figure sat an attendant ready to catch the body if necessary. Such was the astounding spectacle which the galleries watched with amazement" as Vest fought his last important Senatorial fight.

He had spent a month in arming himself for this

6. D. G. Phillips, "A Senator of the Old Republic," Saturday Evening Post, April 11, 1903, p. 12.

moment.⁷ He declared that the Republican leaders faced an impossible dilemma.⁸ They were compelled, said Vest, to remove the duty, if not, they would repudiate the recommendation of the President given in his December message.⁹

Senator Aldrich decided that it would be fatal for the interests to permit the door to be opened so much as a crack for tariff revision. Senators Hoar and Lodge replied that the Senate had not the Constitutional right to originate such a measure.¹⁰ Vest soon demolished the plea of technicality and renewed the demand for a suspension of the coal duty. Other Senators strove to answer but in vain. Apparently, Aldrich and his co-workers had not counted on such a demand from the minority. They had thought Vest too ill to make any fight. Instead he had shown them if they did not meet the demand of a suspended duty on coal that they would imperil the whole protective system. Eventually, the Republican

7. D. G. Phillips, "A Senator of the Old Republic", Saturday Evening Post, April 11, 1903, p. 12; St. Louis Globe-Democrat, January 7, 1903.

8. Kansas City Star, March 8, 1903.

9. James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1907, Washington Printing House, 1908, Vol. X, p. 532.

10. Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 483 ff., 593 ff.; Phillips, A Senator of the Old Republic, p. 12.

Senators chose the wiser course. They decided to sacrifice the one interest for the salvation of the many and the duty on hard coal was suspended.

Vest's victory was favorably commented upon¹¹ as his coal speech was read throughout the country. He had closed his Senatorial career as he began it with a service worthy of praise by his fellowmen. And, if¹² we can believe Senator C. W. Fairbanks of Indiana, Vest took with him into his retirement, "the cordial personal esteem of every member of the Senate, Republican and Democrat alike."

After leaving the Senate, Vest spent his time in his adopted state, either at the St. Louis home of his daughter or at his own beloved Sweet Springs cottage.¹³ Although his health was gone, he retained full use of

11. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, January 6-15, 1903; Boonville Weekly Advertiser, January 9, 1903; The Outlook, January 24, 1903, pp. 183-184; Kansas City Star, February 28, 1903; March 8, 1903; Kansas City Times, August 11, 1904; St. Louis Republic, August 10, 1904.

12. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 9, 1904.

13. Ibid., August 9, 1904. Just before Vest's term expired, he made permanent the position held by "Jimmy" Edwards as doorkeeper of the Senate. In 1917, Edwards was finishing his fortieth year as doorkeeper. He had served in Sterling Price's army and he and Vest were friends. He had often helped Vest to his Senate seat when poor health prevented Vest from walking; Kansas City Star, February 11, 1917.

his mind until the last few days preceding his death. He spent some of his time in writing articles for The Saturday Evening Post. His family claimed that this recreation of writing was all that saved his closing days from being a protracted agony. Judge Phillips gives this picture of Vest at work on his magazine articles.¹⁴

"Blind, beyond the capacity to read, his emaciated body unable to support him even in a chair, his physical forces gone, he lay in his bed, unaided by an amanuensis or recourse to memoranda, and thought out his subject. When his mind became aglow with the matter, he asked for a stenographer, the son of an old, cherished friend of his early life and in a voice so feeble that the stenographer had to sit close to the bed, he dictated with exactness as to dates, historical facts and apposite quotations. When this was done scarcely a word or phrase needed correction or revision."

In all, there were seventeen articles and all save one, concerned the leading Senators of the Confederacy and the Federal Senate in Vest's time as well as political questions of the period.¹⁵ Vest was as eloquent

14. Sedalia Daily Capital, August 10, 1904.

15. G. G. Vest, "A Senator of Two Republics," Saturday Evening Post (Volumes 176, 177, August 8, 1903--September 10, 1904), pp. 6-7; 8-9; 6-7; 2-3; 3-4; 3-4; 10-11; 4-5; 10-11; 10-11; 8-9; 9-10; 9; 13-14; (Note 15 continued on p. 132.)

in his writings as he was in his speeches. His was, indeed, a versatile mind!

About four days before his death, Vest was unable to speak and at times was unconscious. At five o'clock in the morning of August 9, 1904, he passed away¹⁶ at his Sweet Springs cottage. Messages of condolences came from all parts of the United States and extra help was added to the telegraph force to care for the increased work. At four thirty the following afternoon, a service was held at the Vest home. There were no flowers, by request. The Reverend John C. Shackelford, an intimate friend of Vest, conducted the funeral. After the service, the body was taken on a private car to St. Louis. It reached the Union Station on the morning of August 11 and was met by over eight hundred people among

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15. (Continued from p. 131.) 15; 15-16; 13-14. The one article that is not a political one treats of "Old Put", a family horse of Vest's father. In this article Vest reveals much of his boyhood days.
 16. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 9-10, 1904; State Tribune (Jefferson City), August 10, 1904; Kansas City Star, August 9, 1904; New York Evening Sun, August 9, 1904; St. Louis Republic, August 10, 1904; Sedalia Daily Capital, August 10, 1904; Kansas City Journal, August 10, 1904; New York Times, August 10, 1904; Kansas City Times, August 11, 1904; Weekly Brunswicker, August 12, 1904; Sweet Springs Herald, August 18, 1904; Independence Examiner, January 17, 1930.

whom were the Board of Directors of the World's Fair, a committee of citizens appointed by Governor Dockery and a squad of police. The casket was opened at the station and after friends had paid their respects to the dead, the body was taken to the Bellefontaine Cemetery. Simplicity and briefness marked the service at the grave as the "Senator of Two Republics" and the friend to the houn' hog was laid to rest.

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CHAPTER IX

RETROSPECT

The story of Vest is an interesting one, but the same sort of thing could be said of many another American statesman. The thing that makes Vest's story different is his individualism--his ability and personality, rather than his achievements as a constructive leader. If the only requirement for a statesman was that he be versed in governmental affairs, Vest could take his place with the best of the lesser group. But the final test of a statesman is his influence upon the government's policy. As he was in the minority, twenty-two out of the twenty-four years in the Senate, he would had to have been a genius to have influenced the government's policy, and Vest was no genius. It is difficult for a minority to be constructive, the best it can do, usually is to take advantage of situations as they arise and destroy the poorest of the majority plans. Vest was adept at this as shown by his victory for free coal. He was not, however, a great constructive statesman. His greatest personal achievement was his work in regard to Yellow-

stone National Park, Indian Administration and the Oklahoma Territory. Although a leader of his party on the tariff and on financial and monetary problems, he was unsuccessful in securing freer trade or free silver. Despite his opposition to the Progressive movement, it eventually became a part of the government's policy and while his effort in opposing imperialism was masterful, it was not lasting. Nevertheless, as Senator A. J. Beveridge of Indiana said in 1903, "It is a true saying that no man is indispensable, but there are some whose ability is so distinguished, whose integrity and instincts are so true, whose course is so firm that to replace them when they drop out of life requires time and careful patriotic¹ selection. Such a man is Senator Vest of Missouri."

Other Republicans were of similar opinion agreeing that if the Democratic statesman must exist, Vest should be taken as the model. The Washington press correspondents praised Vest as being "the easiest man in the Senate to follow." He knew what he wanted to say and said it. One reporter characterized him as "a great student, poet, orator and sage; great as a statesman,² delightful as a man."

1. St. Louis Post Dispatch, August 9, 1904.

2. Ibid., August 10, 1904; Kansas City Journal, August 10, 1904; Kansas City Times, August 10, 1904.

Thus far in this study, little has been said of Vest as a man or of his personal life and habits. According to his friends, Vest in private life was a most colorful and charming character. His friendship knew no caste or party line. Among his most devoted friends were his political opponents. He was "at home," says one of his friends, "with the prince and the pauper." Wherever he was, whether in the Senate's cloakroom discussing architecture with Justin S. Morrill, or Shakespeare and International Law with Cushman K. Davis; or on the Gulf fishing with Quay; or around the camp fire with Arthur; or touring "Republican" Alaska with Don Cameron; or conversing about the silver situation with James O. Broadhead in the Swiss Alps; or in the old Southern Hotel in St. Louis with Richard Coke talking about cattle; or on the veranda of his Sweet Springs' home talking to some farmer about Missouri mules or displaying his skill as a billiards or poker player in some rendezvous, Vest was fascinating. Phillips, says that Vest was the most entertaining conversationalist he ever knew.³

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3. Bonville Weekly Advertiser, May 29, 1885; July 29, 1887, May 9, 1890; April 27, 1900; March 9, 1903; Missouri Republican, August 1-31, 1883; Sedalia Daily Capital, August 10, 1904; St. Louis Globe Democrat, September 8, 1887; November 21-December 1, 1888; July 4-September 1, 1895; St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 9, 1904; St. Louis Republic, August 9-10, 1904; Sweet Springs Herald, August 18, 1904; Kansas City Times, August 11, 1904; G. G. Vest, "A Senator of Two Republics," Saturday Evening Post, March 26, 1904, pp. 9-10; May 14, 1904, p. 9.

In his personal taste, Vest liked simplicity. He enjoyed the common people and common things of life. Dr. J. W. McClure, Vest's family physician and friend for over forty years, wrote, among other things in his tribute to Vest in 1904: "... He loved Missouri because Missourians loved him and were ever responsive to his laudable ambitions. He was a greater man than Benton, because from the exalted position he won in the affairs of his country, he never forgot or looked down with contempt upon those beneath him. He loved natural nature unadorned, the most, as he despised the deceitful veneerings of the artful. He loved dogs because of their honest and faithful friendship. He loved little children for the innocence of their prattling tongues. He loved the old wayside wells for their unceasing flow of kindness. He loved the fields and forests for their generous gifts and gratitudes. ..."⁴ Perhaps, Vest's liking for the unpretentious things of life was most apparent in the houses in which he lived. When he first came to Washington he lived in a small cottage next to the engine house on Capitol Hill. This place belonged to the property on which the Senate's stables were located. Vest shared this home with the Sergeant-at-arms of the Senate. He took his meals at the Senate restaurant or ate downtown at Chamber-

4. Sweet Springs Herald, August 18, 1904.

lain's. It is said that Missourians who came to Washington looked with amazement upon the home of their Senator. When Mrs. Vest came, the temporary bachelor quarters were abandoned and either rooms or a house was rented. Soon after his second re-election to the Senate, Vest bought a home on P street near Twelfth Avenue in the northern part of Washington. When not residing in Washington, Kansas City, Missouri was given as his home. As a matter of fact, he lived here only a short time. Just why he called this his home is not clear. Vest's favorite home was his modest cottage in Sweet Springs, Missouri. Here, he usually spent a part of each summer. Vest said he first saw the place in 1853 while deer hunting, and in 1882 he built the cottage about fifty yards from a spring whose peculiar tasting water he liked. This mineral water, Vest claimed, did him more good than any other water he ever tried.⁵

As to Vest's domestic life, little is known. Phillips is the only one who has left us his recollection of it. He says that it was "singularly felicitous" and that Vests were devoted to each other for over half a century. Besides his wife and children, there was another

5. St. Louis Globe Democrat, March 17, 1888; State Tribune (Jefferson City), October 9, 1903; Kansas City Times, August 11, 1904; St. Louis Republic, August 9-10, 1904; Sweet Springs Herald, June 3, 1904-November 18, 1904.

member of the Vest household to whom Vest was attached and that was his negro valet. This negro had given two sons to serving Vest and upon their deaths had taken upon himself the same duty--a service that had been faithfully rendered.⁶

Vest was never known as a religious man. He is reported as saying that religion was one thing about which he never cared to talk. He believed that there was but one course to follow--"An earnest devotion to duty and a fearless death. No life," said Vest, "is perfect, but each has its aggregate of good or evil; and, aside from empty panegyric, this, at last must be the question as each of us drifts out upon the shoreless ocean, was his life for good or evil, were its duties performed?"⁷

For a man, who in 1865 had not a penny to his name, to have accumulated a personal estate of \$75,000 in addition to real estate holdings by 1904, was not such a poor record. Vest once boasted that he "had earned his money like a gentleman and spent it like a thoroughbred." He had made some investments in Kansas City and Washington realty which had turned out well. Apparently, the Republicans could not criticize his personal financial

6. Sedalia Daily Capital, August 10, 1904; St. Louis Republic, August 9-10, 1904.

7. Peoples' Tribune (Jefferson City), August 31, 1881; Cole County Democrat, August 12, 1904; Congressional Record, 46th Cong., 2d Sess., pp. 1078-1079.

policy, even if they did his public one.⁸

Vest would possibly agree that his greatest enemy was John Barleycorn. No one realized more fully than he, the price he had paid for this habit. The story is told that Vest, because of illness, had been absent from the Senate for a time. Senator Hoar of Massachusetts, four years his senior, met him in the lobby and chided him good naturedly for not attending strictly to business when vital measures were being debated, "You're a fine young man to absent yourself at such a time and leave us old fellows, Cockrell and me and the rest, to handle these matters."

"You'll never be as old as I," said Vest, "if you live fifty years longer."

"Bless you, I was born in 1826 and was preparing for college when you came into the world," said Hoar.

"If you were born in 1726, you wouldn't, be as old as I," replied Vest. "You and Cockrell will see years but will never see age. You haven't lived as live-⁹ly as I have and I am wishing sometimes that I hadn't."

Of all of Vest's traits, his ability as an

8. The Peoples' Tribune, January 25, 1882; July 25, 1883; Boonville Weekly Advertiser, December 10, 1886; St. Louis Republic, August 10 and 19, 1904; Sweet Springs Herald, October 21-22, 1904; Weekly Democrat-News (Marshall, Mo.), October 22, 1904.

9. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 10, 1904.

orator was the distinguishing one. Gifted with the power of swift and straight thinking and with an unusually retentive memory, Vest, whenever the art of speaking was involved, was the master of any situation. He knew how to present either reason or sentiment to move men. His resourcefulness and keen appreciation of the ludicrous were manifested on many an occasion. He was perfectly fearless and honest even unto shaming his own part if necessary. His information was sound and masterly. Quick to see the vulnerable points of attack in his opponent's arguments, he was never at a loss for a reply. His speeches were rarely long and there were no repetitions or dry details. Although the world knows Vest, if at all, as the author of the dog classic, yet The Congressional Record contains many of his speeches equally as worthy of praise. The Easterners, while they praised Vest as a "formidable debator and an effective speaker," claimed he had neither the physical bearing or the resonant voice of a finished orator. The Middle Westerners either failed to see these defects, if indeed they were defects, or ignored them, as they claimed Vest was a great debator. Perhaps, of all the tributes, given to Vest at the time of his death concerning his talent as a speaker, the one by Phillips is the most comprehensive, if not probably, the most judicious one. Vest and Phillips had attended the same Alma Mater, had married cousins, had lived as

neighbors before the Civil War, went different paths during the war, worked as law partners after the war and were friends for over fifty years. In view of these facts, Phillips' tribute, although not given in its entirety, is used here as a fitting close to this sketch of a man who served Missouri twenty-four years as a
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 Senator.

"His temperament was sanguine; his heart was
¹¹
 tender and generous. His mind was 'a perfect field of cloth of gold' filled with all beautiful imagery and garnished with the richest treasures of literature and history. He read every book accessible pertaining to the science of government and political economy. He garnered the most rare and valuable treasures of the classics of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon literature and philosophy. He was conversant with the writings of all leading publicists and authors on international law. He was as familiar with the debates of the convention that framed the federal constitution and the essays in The Federalist as he was with current politics. He was conversant with all the leading decisions of the supreme court expounding the the fundamental principles of the constitution. He was

10. George F. Hoar, Autobiography of Seventy Years, 2vols. New York, 1903, Vol. II, p. 227; Boonville Weekly Advertiser, August 26, 1904.

11. Sedalia Daily Capital, August 10, 1904.

familiar with the biography of English and American statesmen. He had read and mastered all of the best in fiction and poetry. Beyond the old masters he cared not to go.

"To say that he had read all these is to assert that he retained, digested and assimilated whatever was of worth in them. His memory was marvelous. It was not a faculty assiduously cultivated, at the expense of invention and originality. It was a soil, prodigal of nature, which never failed of rich fruitage. It required no severe labor for him, on occasion to extract from this vast storehouse whatever was needed for application and use. It lay imbedded in no confused mass, but in perfect order, at his ready command, like the weapons of the thoroughly equipped warrior.

"I doubt if the age in which he lived has presented a readier or more effective debator at the bar, on the hustings or in the forum. In emergency the fires of his genius seemed to light up all the channels of his mind and heart, so that he could lay his hand upon every weapon stored in the armory of his memory for either offense or defense. And he used them as the master of the fence, or as Isocrates, the vexing foil. ...

"His style was ornate but without floridity. He eschewed all extravaganza, hyperbole and empty, rounded periods. He had no model as a speaker. Elegance of diction, aptness of language, the breathing thought

and burning words were his forts.

"In wit, he was the equal of Sheridan; in repartee as dangerous as Curran and in pungent, biting, invective he had few superiors. Like his character, his speech was direct. There was no circumvention in his character, no repetition or monotony in his speeches. He would quit when done and no plaudits of his audience could tempt him to go further. He had no studied art or affectation or mannerism. In his prime, he had an indefinable charm in his voice that mesmerized his listeners.

"He was an intense partisan. Doubtless in his political career he experimented with doubtful expedients for the sake of party success but neither crowns nor offices could tempt him to a policy which his judgment and convictions deeply impressed him as false in conception and dangerous to the country

"While there was vitriol at times, in his tongue, his heart was kindly and tender to the bottom. Often under excitement of debate and the hurrah of the hustings, after he had unmercifully flayed some adversary, I have heard him express deep regret and he would embrace any opportunity to indicate it. Age softened the asperities of his temper and mellowed his affections.

"

"The state he loved so much and served so long will never see his like again."

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