

*Important Aspect
Of Our History
Studied in Depth*

What Was the Role Of Abolitionism In Fomenting War?

EMOTION AT HIGH TIDE:
ABOLITION AS A CONTRO-
VERSIAL FACTOR, 1830-1845 by
Henry H. Simms. *Priv. Pub.*, 1960.
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PROF. HENRY H. SIMMS was born in Virginia and has been a member of the History Department at the Ohio State University since 1929. He received his B.A. at William and Mary, his M.A. at the University of Virginia and his Ph.D. at Columbia. He is the author of a number of books on American history.

REVIEWED by Robert M. Draper of Columbus, Judge of the Court of Common Pleas and an ardent student of the Civil War.

THE AUTHOR is a professor of history at the Ohio State University and has written also *A Decade of Sectional Controversy, 1851-1861*. Through his research, study and teaching on this particular phase of American History, he is well qualified to write on this subject; to show its impact upon the people of that period and the part it played as a cause of the Civil War.

He has divided this book not so much into chapters as into sections, each of which deals with a particular phase and time. He starts with the year 1830, which was a time of reform and revival, and abolitionism was the natural out-growth of the moral fervor of the period and the extirpating of sin which to some minds was slavery.

Through the pages of this book we meet the abolitionist leaders: Theodore Weld, Arthur Tappan, James G. Birney, William Lloyd Garrison, Benjamin Lundy, Gerrit Smith and many others who occupy an anomalous position, in that the people of the North and South considered them to be both fanatics and dedicated men. The abolitionists' original purpose was threefold: 1) to show that the Bible proved that slavery was wrong; 2) through petition to get rid of slavery in the District of Columbia and the slave trade among the states and 3) to enlist the people of the North to their cause.

A Crusade

In other words, it was their determination to make a crusade against the slave holder as the principal sinner. They did not have smooth sailing in the North, as many in the North believed that they had no legal right to disturb the institution of slavery and further, many northern merchants were opposed to the abolition societies, for they consid-

ered them a danger to commerce, progress and to the continuation of America as a nation.

Finding the older generation hard to convert, they started on the younger generation and abolition societies sprang up in the colleges.

In the 1820s there were more anti-slavery societies in the South than there were in the North; but after the fight over Missouri, Nat Turner's Insurrection, and the growth in abolition societies, the South became crystalized in its opposition to anti-slavery groups and their circulation of tracts through the South. Southerners devoted themselves to the justification of slavery and sought to establish, through Biblical recognition, slavery as a way of life. Eventually, the attempt to circulate tracts and the presentation of petitions to congress brought the post office into the controversy and involved Congress. The issue was settled, so far as the post office was concerned, by postmasters refusing to deliver inflammatory literature. In Congress, Rule 21 was adopted suppressing petitions which were submitted to Congress for the purpose of abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia and abolishing the slave trade among the states.

Gets Into Politics

This battle over abolitionism and slavery eventually entered politics. In 1836 men standing for public office were to be weighed as to their attitudes toward this movement, Van Buren being the first of the presidential candidates to be faced with such choice. He was able, through his manager's equivocation, to receive the confidence of both North and South, and was elected.

The abolition movement was not entirely harmonious within itself, as the leaders did not always agree as to what their ultimate purpose should be. Garrison went so far as to consider that the Kingdom of Christ should take the place of human governments and advocated the doctrine of "No government". This brooked Birney's opposition. The churches also were brought into the controversy. In the beginning, all of the denominations felt that the abolitionists were going too far, and to allow them to pursue their path would result in the dissolution of the Union and bring on civil war. But by 1844 the northern Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians recognized the necessity of taking a stand against slavery. This, in turn, brought the great schism between the northern and southern branches of these churches which remained until recent years.

Dr. Simms has performed a tremendous service to American History by condensing within the covers of his book the voluminous information covering this phase of American development. He demonstrates that the antagonisms engendered by this dedicated group of abolitionists succeeded in stirring up the people into a hyper-emotional state that could not be settled without the blood lath of the Civil War.

William Dean Howells

THE FIRST TWO TITLES in the "Rediscovery of America Series" to be launched early in 1961 by Indiana University Press will be new editions of two novels by William Dean Howells, Ohio's greatest writer: *Sons of Royal Langbrith* and *The Leatherstocking*. Four more of Howells' novels will be published later.