

## HENRY L. STIMSON

Henry L. Stimson was one of our finest and ablest public servants. He served under six Presidents. Theodore Roosevelt, Taft, Coolidge, Hoover, Franklin D. Roosevelt and President Truman; all had the benefit of his loyalty, his courage, his patriotism, his wise counsel, his unusual talent for gathering and organizing facts, his remarkable administrative ability. He was a pillar of strength and integrity in time of crisis.

Born in New York City, he came of religious, thrifty and long-lived people. He felt that he learned his "faith in mankind" at Yale; he studied law at Harvard, and joined the firm of Elihu Root. He did not enter public office until he was 38. Theodore Roosevelt made him United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York. He served as Secretary of War under Taft, as Governor General of the Philippines, as Secretary of State under Hoover and, when he was 73 years old, thirteen years after he had "retired," undertook the arduous duties of Secretary of War under Roosevelt in June, 1940. He served until World War II was over, resigning on Sept. 21, 1945.

He had, besides these major posts, acted as a delegate to the New York State Constitutional Convention of 1915, where he worked for fundamental reforms, including stronger executive authority and responsibility, which were to be accepted belatedly by the people; he had undertaken peace-making missions to Chile, Peru and Nicaragua; by dint of hard study he had prepared himself at the age of 49 to be an Army officer, even serving briefly in France in World War I. He felt that, after preaching preparedness for years and war for months, he "could not in conscience remain a civilian."

Colonel Stimson was a man of tremendous energy. When, at 60, in 1928, he sailed to be Governor General of the Philippines, he regarded this tour of duty as "a last short adventure before old age." He was to spend nearly four years thereafter as Secretary of State, a period of concern with, first, the problem of naval limitation by international agreement, and then the harassing question of what to do about Japanese aggression in Manchuria.

When, as a lifelong Republican and a critic of the Roosevelt New Deal, he became Secretary of War in 1940 our Army had fewer than 200,000 men. When he left office the Army had attained a peak strength of 8,500,000, and he had directed expenditure of more than half of the \$300,000,000,000 which the war had cost the United States.

It would not be easy to overstate the debt of gratitude that our nation owes Henry L. Stimson. His voice of courage and warning helped awaken the nation to the need to be strong. He loved peace, deplored our failure to join the League of Nations, leaned over backward (too far backward as he later recognized) to use at first only the moral sanction of non-recognition of the fruits of aggression to try to avert the Second World War. But when war had to be faced, with a moral principle involved, he did not shrink.

In noting as "a sad thing" that more than half of his memoirs published in 1947 had been devoted to the problem of war-making he uttered some wisdom we may recall today: "It is well to reflect," he wrote in his afterword, "how much worse the state of mankind would be if the victorious peoples in each of the two World Wars had not been willing to undergo the sacrifices which were the price of victory."