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 unexcelled talent for gathering and presenting the facts and for the 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" from the days he spent in philosophy at Harvard, and joined the firm of Elihu Root. He did not enter public office until he was 38. Theodore Roosevelt made him Attorney General of New York State and 1879, when he was 38 years old, twelve years after he had "reired," undertook the arduous duties of Secretary of War. He was Secretary of War under Taft, as Governor General of the Philippines, Secretary of State under Hoover and, when he was 73 years old, thirteen years after he had "retired," took up the arduous duties of Secretary of State. He was appointed Secretary of War 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 1897, where he made several constitutional reforms, including stronger executive authority and responsibility, which were to be accepted reluctantly by the people; he had undertaken peace-mission to China, Japan and Russia; by dint of hard study he had prepared himself to the best of his ability to be an Army officer, even serving briefly in France in World War I. He felt that, after precessing preparedness for years, he "could not in conscience remain a civilian."

Colonel Stimson was a man of tremendous energy. After the assassination of President McKinley in 1898, he sailed to be Governor General of the Philippines, he regarded this tour of duty as "a last short adventure before old age," but remained there for four years thereafter as Secretary of State, a period of concern with, first, the problem of the Philippines, by international agreement, and then the harrowing question of what to do about Japanese aggression in Manchuria.

When, as a Senator, he took up and criticized the Privy Council, he became Secretary of War in 1913, and the Army had been robed of its power. When he left office the Army had attained a peak strength of 8,500,000, and he had directed expenditure of more than half as much as the whole of the United States which the war had cost the United States.

It would not be easy to overstate the debt of gratitude that the nation owes Henry L. Stimson. His voice of courage and warning helped awaken the nation to the need to be strong. His love and deep desire to enlist the League of Nations, leaned over backward (too far backward as he later recognized), but it was the only the moral sanction of non-recognition of the fruits of aggression to try to svert the second World War. But when war had to be faced, he was the ideal principle involved, he did not shrink. In noting as a "sad thing" that more than half of his memoirs published in 1897 had been a problem of war-making he uttered some wise words which, we may recall today: "It is well to reflect," he said, "how much worse the state of mankind would be if the victorious peoples in each of the two Worlds had not been willing to pay the enormous expenses which were the price of victory."