

54-40

OR

FIGHT

BY

EMERSON
HOUGH

54-40 or Fight

By Emerson Hough

Author of
"The Mississippi Bubble," "The Way of the Man,"
Etc.



WITH FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS
By ARTHUR I. KELLER

A. L. BURT COMPANY
Publishers **New York**

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JANUARY

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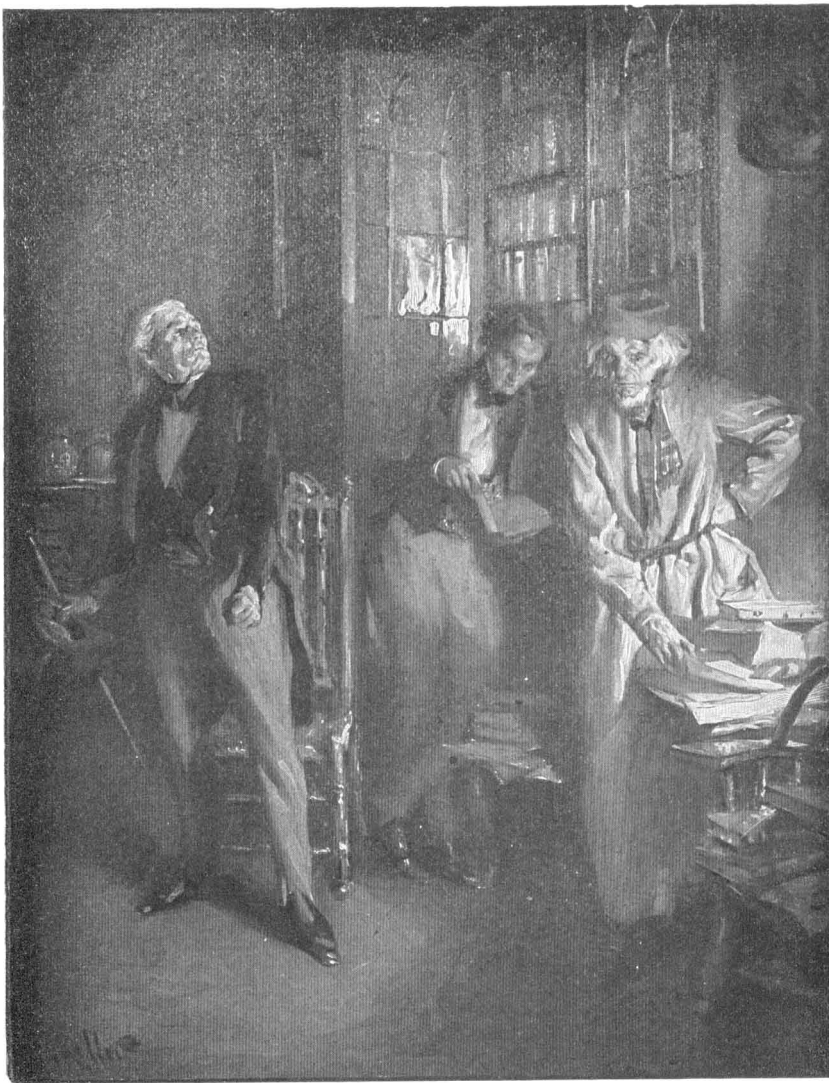
Theodore Roosevelt

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
AND FIRM BELIEVER IN THE RULE OF THE PEOPLE

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
WITH THE LOYALTY AND ADMIRATION
OF THE AUTHOR

54-40 or Fight





"Fifty-four Forty or Fight!" exclaimed Polk. Page 203



"I want—" said she. "I wish—I wish——" Page 287

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FIFTY-FOUR FORTY OR FIGHT

CHAPTER I

THE MAKERS OF MAPS

There is scarcely a single cause in which a woman is not engaged in some way fomenting the suit.—*Juvenal*.

“**T**HEN you offer me no hope, Doctor?”

The gray mane of Doctor Samuel Ward waved like a fighting crest as he made answer: “Not the sort of hope you ask.” A moment later he added: “John, I am ashamed of you.”

The cynical smile of the man I called my chief still remained upon his lips, the same drawn look of suffering still remained upon his gaunt features; but in his blue eye I saw a glint which proved that the answer of his old friend had struck out some unused spark of vitality from the deep, cold flint of his heart.

“I never knew you for a coward, Calhoun,” went on Doctor Ward; “nor any of your family. I give you now the benefit of my personal acquaintance

with this generation of the Calhouns. I ask something more of you than faint-heartedness."

The keen eyes turned upon him again with the old flame of flint which a generation had known—a generation, for the most part, of enemies. On my chief's face I saw appear again the fighting flush, proof of his hard-fibered nature, ever ready to re-join with challenge when challenge came.

"Did not Saul fall upon his own sword?" asked John Calhoun. "Have not devoted leaders from the start of the world till now sometimes rid the scene of the responsible figures in lost fights, the men on whom blame rested for failures?"

"Cowards!" rejoined Doctor Ward. "Cowards, every one of them! Were there not other swords upon which they might have fallen—those of their enemies?"

"It is not my own hand—my own sword, Sam," said Calhoun. "Not that. You know as well as I that I am already marked and doomed, even as I sit at my table to-night. A walk of a wet night here in Washington—a turn along the Heights out there when the winter wind is keen—yes, Sam, I see my grave before me, close enough; but how can I rest easy in that grave? Man, we have not yet dreamed how great a country this may be. We *must* have Texas. We *must* have also Oregon. We must have—"

"Free?" The old doctor shrugged his shoulders and smiled at the arch pro-slavery exponent.

"Then, since you mention it, yes!" retorted Calhoun fretfully. "But I shall not go into the old argument of those who say that black is white, that South is North. It is only for my own race that I plan a wider America. But then—" Calhoun raised a long, thin hand. "Why," he went on slowly, "I have just told you that I have failed. And yet you, my old friend, whom I ought to trust, condemn me to live on!"

Doctor Samuel Ward took snuff again, but all the answer he made was to waggle his gray mane and stare hard at the face of the other.

"Yes," said he, at length, "I condemn you to fight on, John;" and he smiled grimly.

"Why, look at you, man!" he broke out fiercely, after a moment. "The type and picture of combat! Good bone, fine bone and hard; a hard head and bony; little eye, set deep; strong, wiry muscles, not too big—fighting muscles, not dough; clean limbs; strong fingers; good arms, legs, neck; wide chest—"

"Then you give me hope?" Calhoun flashed a smile at him.

"No, sir! If you do your duty, there is no hope for you to live. If you do not do your duty, there is no hope for you to die, John Calhoun, for more than two years to come—perhaps five years—six. Keep

up this work—as you must, my friend—and you die as surely as though I shot you through as you sit there. Now, is this any comfort to you?”

A gray pallor overspread my master's face. That truth is welcome to no man, morbid or sane, sound or ill; but brave men meet it as this one did.

“Time to do much!” he murmured to himself. “Time to mend many broken vessels, in those two years. One more fight—yes, let us have it!”

But Calhoun the man was lost once more in Calhoun the visionary, the fanatic statesman. He summed up, as though to himself, something of the situation which then existed at Washington.

“Yes, the coast is clearer, now that Webster is out of the cabinet, but Mr. Upshur's death last month brings in new complications. Had he remained our secretary of state, much might have been done. It was only last October he proposed to Texas a treaty of annexation.”

“Yes, and found Texas none so eager,” frowned Doctor Ward.

“No; and why not? You and I know well enough. Sir Richard Pakenham, the English plenipotentiary here, could tell if he liked. *England* is busy with Texas. Texas owes large funds to *England*. *England* wants Texas as a colony. There is fire under this smoky talk of Texas dividing into two govern-

ments, one, at least, under England's gentle and unselfish care!

"And now, look you," Calhoun continued, rising, and pacing up and down, "look what is the evidence. Van Zandt, *chargé d'affaires* in Washington for the Republic of Texas, wrote Secretary Upshur only a month before Upshur's death, and told him to go carefully or he would drive Mexico to resume the war, *and so cost Texas the friendship of England!* Excellent Mr. Van Zandt! I at least know what the friendship of England means. So, he asks us if we will protect Texas with troops and ships in case she *does* sign that agreement of annexation. Cunning Mr. Van Zandt! He knows what that answer must be to-day, with England ready to fight us for Texas and Oregon both, and we wholly unready for war. Cunning Mr. Van Zandt, covert friend of England! And lucky Mr. Upshur, who was killed, and so never had to make that answer!"

"But, John, another will have to make it, the one way or the other," said his friend.

"Yes!" The long hand smote on the table.

"President Tyler has offered you Mr. Upshur's portfolio as secretary of state?"

"Yes!" The long hand smote again.

Doctor Ward made no comment beyond a long whistle, as he recrossed his legs. His eyes were

fixed on Calhoun's frowning face. "There will be events!" said he at length, grinning.

"I have not yet accepted," said Calhoun. "If I do, it will be to bring Texas and Oregon into this Union, one slave, the other free, but both vast and of a mighty future for us. That done, I resign at once."

"Will you accept?"

Calhoun's answer was first to pick up a paper from his desk. "See, here is the despatch Mr. Pakenham brought from Lord Aberdeen of the British ministry to Mr. Upshur just two days before his death. Judge whether Aberdeen wants liberty—or territory! In effect he reasserts England's right to interfere in our affairs. We fought one war to disprove that. England has said enough on this continent. And England has meddled enough."

Calhoun and Ward looked at each other, sober in their realization of the grave problems which then beset American statesmanship and American thought. The old doctor was first to break the silence. "Then do you accept? Will you serve again, John?"

"Listen to me. If I do accept, I shall take Mr. Upshur's and Mr. Nelson's place only on one condition—yes, if I do, here is what I shall say to England regarding Texas. I shall show her what a Monroe Doctrine is; shall show her that while Texas

is small and weak, Texas *and* this republic are not. This is what I have drafted as a possible reply. I shall tell Mr. Pakenham that his chief's avowal of intentions has made it our *imperious duty*, in self-defense, to hasten the annexation of Texas, cost what it may, mean what it may! John Calhoun does not shilly-shally.

"*That* will be my answer," repeated my chief at last. Again they looked gravely, each into the other's eye, each knowing what all this might mean.

"Yes, I shall have Texas, as I shall have Oregon, settled before I lay down my arms, Sam Ward. No, I am *not* yet ready to die!" Calhoun's old fire now flamed in all his mien.

"The situation is extremely difficult," said his friend slowly. "It must be done; but how? We are as a nation not ready for war. You as a statesman are not adequate to the politics of all this. Where is your political party, John? You have none. You have outrun all parties. It will be your ruin, that you have been honest!"

Calhoun turned on him swiftly. "You know as well as I that mere politics will not serve. It will take some extraordinary measure—you know men—and, perhaps, *women*."

"Yes," said Doctor Ward, "and a precious silly lot they are; the two running after each other and forgetting each other; using and wasting each other;