



Henry Adams in the Secession Crisis: Dispatches to the Boston Daily Advertiser, December 1860- March 1861

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During the Secession Winter session of Congress, twenty-two-year-old Henry Adams worked as private secretary to his father, Representative Charles Francis Adams. Henry wrote four accounts of these crucial months in Washington—an essay, letters to his brother, a segment in his famous autobiography, and twenty-one unsigned letters that Adams composed as a novice correspondent for the Boston Daily Advertiser. Henry Adams in the Secession Crisis presents the Advertiser letters for the first time since their original publication between 1860 and 1861.

During the months prior to the Civil War, Adams provided unusual insights into the development of the secession crisis and the attempts of Congress to resolve it peacefully. Since his father and Senator William H. Seward of New York led the efforts of more moderate Republicans to reach a compromise that would at least hold the border slave states in the Union, Adams's letters emphasize and illuminate their efforts and those of their Unionist allies in the upper South. While praising their endeavors—and particularly the statesmanship of Seward—Adams attacked southern secessionists and, in several letters, critically analyzed and condemned the famous Crittenden Compromise as a measure impossible for any Republican to support.

Fully annotated by historian Mark J. Stegmaier, the Advertiser letters illuminate the politics of the secession crisis while showcasing the youthful work of a man who would become one of the most famous American writers of the late nineteenth century.



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