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Louis Trezevant Wigfall: The Disintegration of the Union and Collapse of the Confederacy

Edward S. Cooper

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Louis Trezevant Wigfall was a violent, mercurial man. He participated in multiple duels, wounding one opponent and killing another. In an outburst on the floor of the U.S. Senate, Wigfall called upon a Brutus to assassinate Texas governor Sam Houston. During the bombardment of Fort Sumter in 1861, Wigfall rowed out to the fort and arranged its surrender. While still in the U.S. Senate, Wigfall committed treason by operating a station to recruit soldiers for the Confederacy by supplying arms to seceded states and by forwarding information on Union decisions and movements. Wigfall's oratorical skills convinced Southern ruling classes there was nothing to fear by seceding. He assured them that the North would not fight, that they could not blockade southern ports, that Europe needed Southern cotton, and that England would aid the Confederacy. Wigfall was able to convince Southern states to secede.
In this succinct biography of Wigfall, Edward S. Cooper discusses how this violent and mercurial man contributed to the disintegration of the Union and why he was a primary factor in the collapse of the Confederacy.

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