

# LUCIUS QUINTUS CINCINNATUS LAMAR AND HIS APOPLEXY

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## Abstract

*Judge Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar (1825-1893) became one of JF Kennedy's favourite political heroes. Lamar suffered from his first stroke in the age of 36. Searching his writings and historical material reveal that Lamar suffered also from depression, rheumatic heart disease and renal problems. Differential diagnosis of his disabilities is given together with descriptions of his ailments.*

## Key words: neurology, rehabilitation medicine, history of medicine

*"Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff As dreams are made on, and our little life Is rounded with a sleep. Sir, I am vexed. Bear with my weakness; my old brain is troubled. Be not disturbed with my infirmity. If you be pleased, retire into my cell And there repose. A turn or two I'll walk To still my beating mind..."*

*[W. Shakespeare, The Tempest , Act 4, Scene 1]*

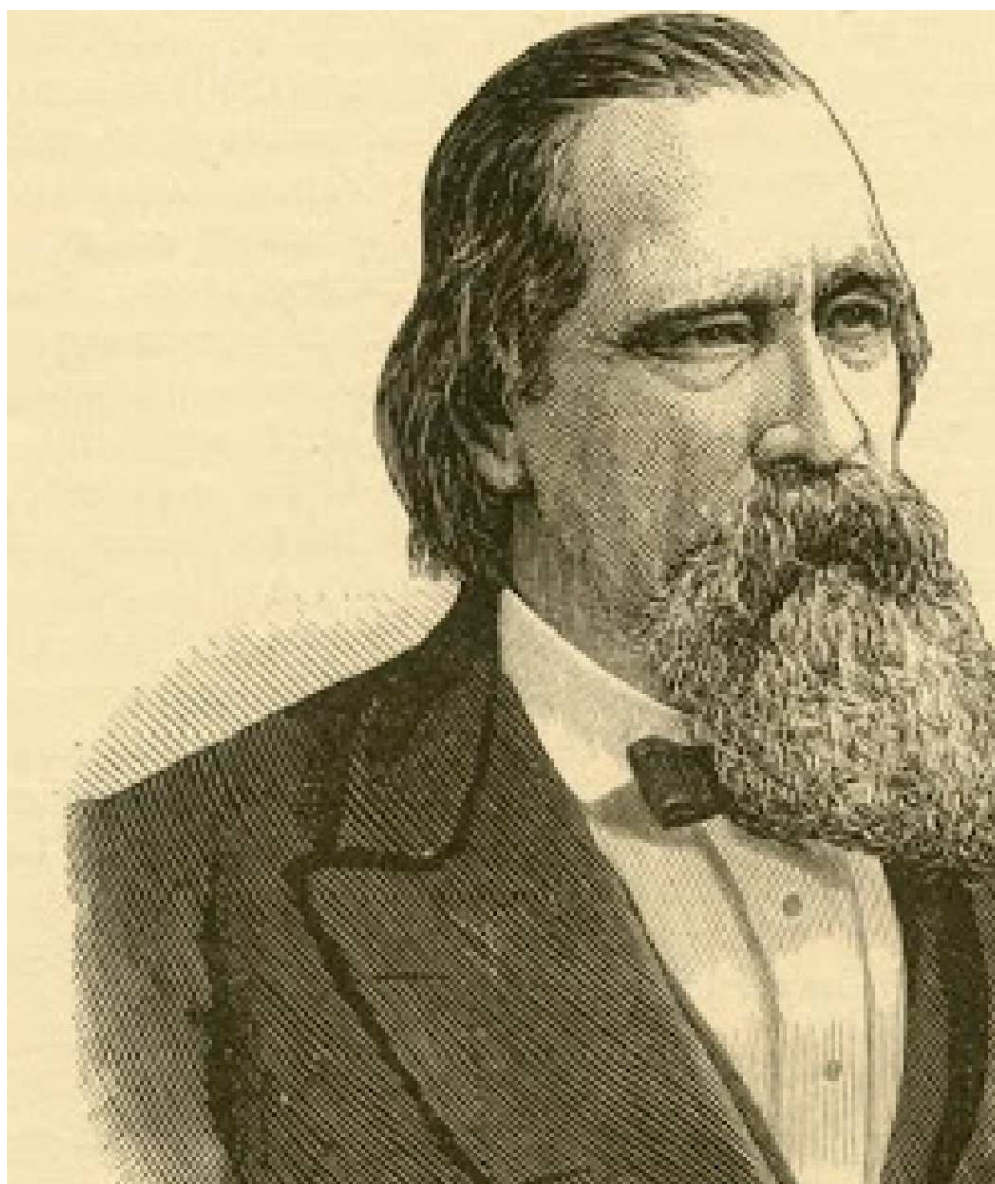
## Introduction

One hundred and twenty five years ago, Judge Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar (1825-1893) died. He was one of J F Kennedy's favourite political heroes [1]. Kennedy wrote this book during his long hospitalization after spinal operation at Chelsea Naval Hospital, Massachusetts. Along his life, Kennedy had suffered from scarlet fever, back pain and Addison's disease. Lamar was a democrat from Georgia, diplomat, lawyer, judge and Lt. Colonel of the Confederation during the Civil War. Encyclopaedia Britannica [2] did not elaborate on his resignation from the military service in October 1861. Thirteen members of his

family served in the Southern army. Seven were killed. Kennedy explained why L. Lamar retired from the military service: he suffered an apoplexy at the age of 36. A stroke in the young was and still is a rare phenomenon [3]. Lamar's father suffered from depression and committed suicide when L. Lamar was nine years old. It is possible that Lamar had suffered some mental or neurological affliction since childhood. "During the Civil War, Lamar served as a lieutenant colonel of the Nineteenth Mississippi Regiment, but had to withdraw from combat because of bought of apoplexy, which had plagued him from childhood" [4]. The death of so many of his family members most probably added to his own depression [5].

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**HON. LUCIUS Q.C. LAMAR**  
**UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM MISSISSIPPI**

**Clinical descriptions**

“On the evening of July 1, 1861, Lamar was in his tent about to retire, when he felt a sudden rush to his head followed by dizziness, disorientation and massive headache violent vertigo seized him and threw him to the ground unconscious, when he awoke, he was paralyzed in one side and when he tried to speak, his words were slurred and unintelligible apoplexy similar to 1859 in Paris seeking treatment to his ‘cerebral disease’ [6].

Lamar was described as a tall man, bearded, long-haired and large featured. Did he consult Charcot? I could not find any evidence for this possibility. Amazingly, J-M Charcot’s and Lamar’s life span were the same. Charcot apparently suffered from cardiac disease: his overweight, excessive smoking and sedentary life, led to his premature death. “But still, Mr. Lamar carried a burdened spirit, burdened under a sense of his unworthiness, and seeking such a cloudless comfort of soul as he had witnessed in his saintly mother and other devout Christians. Writing to his best-loved friend. Gen.

Walthall, from Memphis, in 1873, after having suffered from a severe stroke of paralysis, he thus pours out his anxious fears: 'I am a very sick man; suffer more than anybody thinks. I do not honestly expect to live twelve months. I believe that I shall go off like Yancey and Alex. Pegues before anybody suspects that much is the matter; and after all my studying about religion and striving to avail myself of its promises, I am not ready to go. I don't know what I would give for old Judge Longstreet's faith and courage. I can't say: "There is not a cloud." It is all clouds and darkness to me. I see less of God's providence, and more of evil and the supremacy of evil in this world, than I ever did in my life.' His spirits seemed to sympathize with his broken body, and for the moment allowed his faith to pass into partial eclipse" [7]. On chapter 31 we also find: "Notwithstanding Mr. Lamar's great physical strength and the ruggedness of his general health, for the last thirty-one years of his life he was more or less seriously troubled with organic weaknesses. He was never free from this embarrassment after his attack of vertigo, in Virginia, shortly subsequent to the battle of Williamsburg. In the course of this biography mention has been made in several places of this affliction, but only in the most severe instances. The less dangerous cases have been ignored, but they were frequent; and his work was all done under the consciousness that at almost any time the sudden rupture of a blood vessel in the brain might bring practically instantaneous death. However, the gravity of those attacks diminished as Mr. Lamar grew older. That of 1880 was the last of the graver sort. Still, he had a slight illness of this nature even after he was in the Cabinet, which he kept a secret; for he intensely disliked sensational reports in the papers about his health. In 1873 he wrote to Gen. Walthall that he was troubled with a renal disorder; and it is doubtful if he was ever afterwards entirely free from trouble of that nature, although there were long periods when he considered himself well, and felt so. In spite of those maladies, so great were his strength and vitality that he retained

his activity until quite late in life; and it is said of him that after he was in the Cabinet, irritated one day by a newspaper statement about his failing strength, and in order to disprove the statement to a friend, he stood under his chandelier [sic], and, leaping up straight, kicked it, being then about sixty years of age and weighing two hundred pounds. 'I am very weak, and find my breath very short after even the most moderate exercise; am subject to a constant dull headache and pains in the back of my neck and through my shoulders. Two doctors say, upon consultation, that one of the valves of my heart has ceased to act (I don't believe that); and another says that I have muscular rheumatism and a general nervous prostration. My own opinion is that I am under the lingering effects of a very obstinate and severe case of la grippe, from which I shall slowly recover. I do not feel that there is any cause to think that there is anything seriously and permanently the matter with me.' In April the collapse came. While seated upon the bench he was seized with a fit of coughing, and hemorrhages followed which were frequent and profuse and alarming for many hours. For a number of days he was confined to his bed, regarded as dangerously ill, and under active and vigilant treatment. It was during this illness that he wrote the letter to Mr. Cleveland given in the previous chapter. 'Hemorrhages, which were at the time painless and, as I then thought, harmless, left my breast sore and weak, so much so that I have to guard against any exertion, either bodily or mental. I look to the approaching October with dread, lest it find me unable to buckle on the harness for the resumption of judicial labors. My case was pronounced some time ago, by one doctor, as Bright's disease of the kidneys; but Dr. Pepper, of Philadelphia, in his diagnosis of the case, states that, while my kidneys are affected to a certain extent, it is not a case of diabetes or Bright's disease. He thinks that it is a disorder of the arterial system.' Later Mr. Lamar seemed to be improving and gathering strength. He conversed freely with Dr. Flewelling while returning home on the car, and said that his exercise made him feel like eating a good dinner. ...And soon it was evident that he was sinking. Mr. Virgin boarded a street car and went at once for Dr.

Parker, returning with the physician at about 8:40. 'He was found to be speechless and unconscious, and to the physician evidently beyond the reach of help. His head hung almost limp in the hands of one of the attendants, who was relieved by Mr. Virgin.' In this position his life passed out without a struggle, and so quietly and peacefully that those about him did not know the exact moment at which the soul took its flight." Discussion and differential diagnosis We do not know what Lamar's childhood affliction was. Beyond a kind of depression, he probably had his first "stroke" as a child. A cerebral arterial aneurysm? Psychogenic affliction? Later on, he had experienced a few more cerebral strokes, and he always slowly recovered. In the last chapter of his life, he most likely suffered from a cardiac problem and perhaps renal disease as well. Bright's disease was mentioned. Bright's disease was first described in 1827 by the English physician Richard Bright: inflammation, hemorrhages, apoplexy, convulsions, blindness and coma. He reported that he felt weakness, breathlessness, headaches, back pains, cardiac valve- and rheumatic problems, and some mental or neurological affliction. Lamar's actual renal disease is unknown. Concerning the recurrent strokes he suffered from: were they due to some kind of vasculitis (autoimmune, inflammatory)? Rheumatic cardiac valvular insufficiency? There is a possibility of a conversion reaction [8-9]. It is evident that in spite of his disability and ailments, his academic, professional and political accomplishments are astonishing. There are a few famous disabled people in history, who even before the days of modern rehabilitation medicine reached fame through their talents and dedication [10]. I doubt if it is possible to speculate soundly about the crossing point between biography, disease history and the connection of the apoplexies with antecedent episodes of depression in the case of Lamar. In fact, the diagnosis of neurasthenia was quickly taken up in Europe, especially in Germany. In the process, it gradually lost its class specificity; the neurasthenic ceased to be an aspiring Yankee and be-

came, in countries where doctors worked for the state and had working-class clientele, an artisan or booking-clerk. The stock treatment for neurasthenia was the "cure" devised by the great Philadelphia neurologist, Silas Weir Mitchell, which involved isolation, "entire rest" and "excessive feeding" with a milk diet [11]. Silas Weir Mitchell (1829–1914) was a physician, poet and writer, best known for his description of "causalgia" (complex regional pain syndrome), erythromelalgia, phantom pain and he possibly was the first to describe tendon reflexes in 1859. His erudition helped cement his friendship not only with Oliver Wendell Holmes, but with Walt Whitman, William James, and William Osler as well [12]. "Further evidence for the existence of conversion disorders in the Civil War comes from the records of the military hospital set up at Turner's Lane in Philadelphia by William A. Hammond, Surgeon-General of the Union Army, for the study and treatment of wounds and other injuries of the nervous system. There, Silas Weir Mitchell and his colleagues, George D. Morehouse and William W. Keen, described seven cases of "reflex paralysis" which were almost certainly conversion reactions. In these patients a missile wound of an extremity which had not damaged a major nerve resulted in a transient paralysis of all four limbs or an enduring weakness and sensory loss in several extremities. In one instance, a man who had been shot through the right thigh developed a loss of sensation over the entire right half of his body" [13]. Physicians that are mentioned in this article: Dr. Jean-Martin Charcot, 1825–1893, was a famous French neurologist. His works on hypnosis and hysteria made him famous around the world. More than 15 medical eponyms are named after him. He is regarded as one of the founding fathers of neuro-psychiatry. There are many eponyms named after many of his pupils. Dr. Edward Archelaus Flewelling, 1869-1910, a prominent surgeon, at one time Surgeon of the 5th Georgia Infantry Regiment and later Medical Director of the Confederate Army of Tennessee, was a cousin of Mrs Lamar. Lamar's second wife was Henrietta J. Holt, widow of General William S. Holt of Macon. His first wife was Virginia Longstreet, daughter of

Judge A B Longstreet [14-15]. Dr. William Pepper Jr., 1843 –1898, was a leader in medical education and a longtime Provost of the University of Pennsylvania. In 1891 he founded the Free Library of Philadelphia. He was professor of clinical medicine at Penn. PS “Lara Parker (b. 1938) is an American television, stage, and film actress known for her role as Angelique on the cult ABC-TV serial Dark Shadows which aired from 1966 to 1971. She was born Mary Lamar Rickey in Knoxville, Tennessee, and grew up in Memphis. Descendant of a prominent Southern family, she was a great-great-granddaughter of Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar II and a third-great-granddaughter of Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, an uncle of Confederate General James Longstreet. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Rhodes College and a Master of Arts degree from the University of Iowa.”

### Resumo

*La juĝisto Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar (1825-1893) iĝis unu el la plej favoraj politikaj herooj de J F Kennedy. Lamar estis trafita de sia unua apopleksio kiam li aĝis 36 jarojn. Traserĉante liajn tekstojn kaj historian materialon oni trovas, ke Lamar ankaŭ suferis de depresio, reŭmata kormalsano kaj renaj problemoj. Diferenciga diagnozo de liaj handikapoj estas diskutita kune kun priskriboj de liaj suferadoj.*

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