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“THE MISSING LINK.”

Reprinted from the *National Quarterly Review* for July, 1880.—Copyright.

WHAT LED TO THE WAR

OR THE

SECRET HISTORY OF THE KANSAS-NEBRASKA BILL

BY

**COL. JOHN A. PARKER
OF VIRGINIA.**

WITH AN APPENDIX

CONTAINING

SKETCHES AND REMINISCENCES OF “THE RICHMOND
ENQUIRER” AND “WHIG” AND THEIR EDITORS,

AND AN

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

BY WALDORF H. PHILLIPS OF NEW YORK.

WASHINGTON, D. C.:

GRAY & CLARKSON, PRINTERS AND PUBLISHERS.

1886.



INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

In submitting to the public an essay of the character and importance of Col. Parker's *What Led to the War*, it is proper that a brief sketch of its author should preface it, and that answers should be given to the two questions which naturally suggest themselves, namely: How did Col. Parker become acquainted with secret facts which took place during the Administrations of Presidents Polk, Pierce and Buchanan? and, Why has the publication of these facts been so long withheld?

John A. Parker was born February 20th, 1804, in the historic county of Westmoreland, Virginia, within a few miles of the birthplaces of Washington, Monroe, Richard Henry Lee and the Lee family. His grandfather, "Old Judge Parker," as he was familiarly known, was the friend and associate of those distinguished men, and his father was the youngest of five brothers who served in the Revolutionary War, and who are so often spoken of by Lee in his *Memoirs*. The Parkers have a military record extending throughout several generations, and probably no family in America has furnished more members to the profession of arms.

Col. Parker has been officially connected, at home and abroad, with the Government of the United States for forty years, and has had opportunities of obtaining information vouchsafed but to very few men of his time. Among the many important positions which he has held under different Administrations of different politics, a few may here be mentioned. In 1835 he was sent by General Jackson to Texas on a secret mission connected with the independence of that country. In 1851 he was Librarian of the House of Representatives of the United States. In 1855 he was Secretary of the Judiciary Committee of the House, which then had charge of the investigation of the great frauds consummated by Gardiner and others under the Mexican treaty. In 1856 he was appointed Register of the Land Office of Nebraska, then embracing an area of 336,000 square miles—one-ninth of the whole area of the United States—which position he resigned immediately after Mr. Buchanan changed

his "Kansas policy"—a change which surprised and mortified the President's best friends, and caused Gov. Wise and Col. Parker, to whom—as he writes, in a letter preserved by the latter—he owed his candidature and election, to regret the part they had taken in elevating him to the Presidential chair. In 1860 he was appointed United States Consul at Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands, and given authority to make radical changes, which he did. He asked to be relieved in 1862, but it was only after a third request that his wish was complied with.

After his return to the United States, in 1862, Col. Parker was offered a mission to South America, which he declined. He is at present, and has been since 1859, representing the State of Virginia in a matter of very great importance to her and to other States. His record in all the Departments shows that he has always discharged the duties assigned him to the entire satisfaction of the appointing power as well as to his own lasting credit.

The foregoing sketch is necessarily brief and incomplete, but it is sufficient to commend Col. Parker to the attention and confidence of all who may read his interesting and valuable contribution to the history of the great Civil War.

There can be no doubt that the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska bill led directly to the conflict between North and South; or rather, to speak more correctly—for the conflict had become an inevitable one—there can be no doubt that the passage of this act precipitated the war, fanning into a blaze the embers which had been smouldering so long.

The authorship of this bill has always been attributed to Stephen A. Douglas; its true purpose has never yet been made public. To correct the error and to unvail the mystery, as well as to supply a missing link in the history of the past, is the object of Col. Parker's essay, and here arise the two questions above stated.

First.—The answer to the first question is that it was Col. Parker's good fortune to be closely connected, politically and officially, with some of the principal actors, and with others by the closest ties of personal freindship and family relations. Among the latter was one who exerted more influence in making and unmaking public men in the United States than any other man of the same period, and of the possession of whose entire confidence, to a degree which he did not fully impart to his own son, Col. Parker has abundant evidence.

This was Mr. Ritchie, editor of the *Washington Union*. There was another, who reached the Presidency, whose confidential friend our author was for more than twenty years.

Second.—In reply to the second query, it may be stated that it has only been after persistent urging on the part of his friends and many prominent gentlemen all over the country, and after many years of deliberation, that Col. Parker has been induced to write his article. He believed, until very lately, that the time had not come for a calm consideration and an impartial judgment of the facts. The angry and bitter feeling engendered by the late struggle had not sufficiently died out. It has now, to a great extent, and it is hoped that it may soon be blotted out forever.

Of the gentlemen who composed the Cabinets of Presidents Pierce, Polk and Buchanan, there survive but seven : of Mr. Polk's Cabinet, one ; of Mr. Pierce's and of Mr. Buchanan's, three each. On the subject of the facts now made known, no correspondence has been had with either of these gentlemen ; but so far as the acts of the different Administrations under which they respectively served are given, it is confidently believed that they will verify each one to the extent of their acquaintance with them.

Third.—This was written, viz : in October, 1883. Hon. Jefferson Davis has written to Col. Parker, and confirmed every fact contained in this paper.

Col. Parker desires to say that no confidence is violated in making this publication, and that the information it contains was honorably acquired. He also wishes to distinctly disclaim any intention to assail the motives of the originator of the important measure, who, he believes, was governed by the highest considerations which bind man to his fellow man—the belief that he was honorably serving his country, and fidelity to personal and political friendship—or of any of the distinguished actors of whom he speaks or to whom he alludes. If their acts proved disastrous, they should not be too harshly judged. It is frequently the case that men, intending no injury and with the purest motives, commit great and lamentable errors.

In conclusion, it may be permissible to express the opinion that, terrible as were the sufferings caused by the war ; widespread as were the desolation and destruction which followed in its train, and deep and heart-rending as were the grief and mourning it carried into thousands of loving homes, yet,

as there is no cloud without a silver lining, judged from the result and from a purely national standpoint, it was more of a blessing than a curse. This is contrary to the opinion of so high an authority as Count Von Moltke, who says that even to the victorious, war is a national calamity. Nevertheless, it seems to us that our civil strife was not altogether disastrous in its effects. It caused the rapid development of our country and of our enormous resources; it demonstrated that we do not need a large standing army, that our people love their republican institutions and are ready to shed their life's blood in their defense; it showed to the world that we possessed vast strength and ability, and were infinitely greater and more powerful than it had supposed us to be; and, gaining for us the admiration and respect of civilized mankind, it has, while placing us at once in the front rank of nations, at the same time, let demagogues say what they will, cemented in blood the ties which bind North, East, South, and West, together in one indissoluble Union, of which, with Col. Parker, we can all say fervently, lovingly and with just pride, *Esto perpetua*.

It is proper to say that Col. Parker is not even acquainted with Mr. Phillips, nor does he know certainly how he obtained the information he has given in his introductory; the statements are true, but too complimentary.

WALDORF H. PHILLIPS.

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Secret History of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill.

(The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska bill, and the execution of the law by Presidents Pierce and Buchanan, led directly to secession and its consequences. The Kansas-Nebraska bill was the most important which ever passed the Congress of the United States. Yet the American people to this day do not know, and cannot have known, who was its author, or what were the immediate objects to be accomplished by its passage. Stephen A. Douglas was, and still is, believed by the country to have been its author. It is a fact that he, as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Territories, reported it to the Senate, and was its able and active supporter and advocate. But Mr. Douglas was not its author.)

That the people of to-day may know the importance of that bill, it is necessary that a brief sketch be given of the slavery question. The writer desires to say—and it is due to the reader—that he was in 1854 in a position to know many facts and incidents connected with this bill which were not accessible to the public, or even to the press of the country. He believes only one other person, perhaps two, to be now living, familiar with the origin and secret history of the Kansas-Nebraska bill. He may also add that he is familiar with, and has taken part in, the slavery agitation since 1819 and 1820, and that he was a slave-holder until the late war. As early as 1835 he was convinced that slavery was one of the greatest evils we had to contend with, and the greatest barrier to national prosperity. These views were obtained by observations made in extensive travels through the Southern and Western States. He, however, disapproved of the slavery agitation as conducted by Garrison and his co-workers. He believed that their course delayed the emancipation of the slaves, so much desired by some of the most distinguished men—slave owners—in Virginia, in 1831 and 1832, who were then endeavoring to devise some scheme for gradual emancipation.

At an early period in the history of our country it was foreseen that the question of slavery would be one of the most serious with which we would have to contend. This feeling was manifested in the convention which framed the Constitution. The South at that time did not desire the extension of slavery, and it is well known that she opposed the extension of the time at which the slave trade should cease. Virginia, then the largest slave State in the Union, in 1784, conveyed to the United States her immense domain, the Northwest Territory, now composing five or six of the largest and most powerful and wealthy States in the Union. In the ordinance of cession she stipulated that slavery should never exist in that territory. This cession, with the circumstances under which it was made, has no parallel in the history of the world. It gave to the United States an empire from which, as Mr. Webster declared, the United States derived two hundred millions of dollars. She dedicated it forever to freedom, a noble deed on which her citizens may look back with pride ; and if at any time Virginia, in the eyes of her sister States, has made mistakes or committed errors, she has, by virtue of her glorious past, a right to ask that they be blotted from memory, and that she be considered the peer of any State. She was the author of free-soilism in the United States. At the time she made this cession of territory and consecrated it forever to freedom, nearly all the States held slaves. When France ceded Louisiana to the United States it was expected that one State would soon be admitted into the Union with slavery ; but it was then known that, in the future, out of that immense territory other States would be formed where slavery would not exist. In 1819 Missouri asked to be admitted into the Union with slavery. She was a part of the Louisiana purchase. It was upon this petition of Missouri that parties arrayed themselves against each other on the slavery question. Up to that time there had been no disposition shown to interfere with slavery in the States where it then existed. On the one hand, the North took the ground that slavery should not be extended over any portion of the territory belonging to the United States. On the other hand, the South held that the territory was the joint property of all the States, and that the people of all the States had equal rights and privileges in their occupancy ; that property was entitled to protection, and that slaves were recognized by the Constitution as property, and as such could be rightfully and

legally carried into any territory. The North, regarding slavery as an evil, contended that it was its duty to prevent its extension, believing it would be held responsible before the civilized world if it did not avail itself of every means to arrest the increase. These issues were plain and distinct, and upon them a most angry and exciting discussion in Congress, through the press, and among the people, ensued for nearly two years. No one then living can forget the excitement which existed throughout the whole country. Mr. Jefferson said in one of his letters that it was "like a fire bell in the night." The Union seemed to hang on a slender thread; a dark pall appeared to cover the country. Patriots trembled for its safety, and men calculated the value of the Union. But fortunately there was in the councils of the nation a patriot statesman, wise and fearless. He represented a slave-holding State. He came forward with the olive branch and offered the famous Missouri Compromise, under which Missouri was admitted as a State. By this compromise slavery was permitted south of $36^{\circ} 30'$ north latitude, but forever excluded north of that line. The solution of the difficulty was accepted by all political parties; reluctantly accepted by the South, yet acquiesced in and acted upon by all. The country canonized the Compromise and all people held it sacred until 1854. The name of the author of that Compromise scarcely needs to be mentioned. It will ever be cherished by the American people. Henry Clay needs no monument to tell who he was, or the part he bore in that eventful period.

Peace was restored, a new lease of life and prosperity was given to the Union, and for years this state of quiet continued. Yet, in the discussions which had preceded the Compromise, the seed of dissolution was sown which ripened for the harvest of secession in 1860 and 1861. Frequently after the adoption of the Missouri Compromise, the slavery question was introduced into Congress and brought before the country by petitions for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, in the annexation of Texas and the admission of new States. These never failed to cause angry and bitter feeling and had a tendency to weaken the ties which bound the States together. A very small party only exhibited any disposition to interfere with slavery in the States where it existed. But a great and rapidly increasing party had been formed in the non-slaveholding States

for the avowed purpose of preventing its extension. Very many of the northern leading democrats adopted the principles of this new party. Among the most distinguished of these were ex-President Van Buren, the Hon. Salmon P. Chase, and the Hon. D. S. Dickinson, of New York. Mr. Dickinson, on the 1st of March, 1847, while opposing the Wilmot Proviso as an amendment to the loan for prosecuting the Mexican war, said, in the Senate: "I will vote for a separate bill to exclude slavery from all the territory we now have, or may hereafter acquire, instructed or not instructed." He had been instructed by the Legislature of New York to vote for the Wilmot Proviso. The sweeping declaration on the part of Mr. Dickinson indicated public opinion in the free States, and especially in view of the fact that we expected to acquire California, a large portion of which lay south of the line of $36^{\circ} 30'$; and, further, that a very large portion of the people of the United States were looking for a speedy acquisition of Cuba.

In 1848 the Free-Soil Convention met at Buffalo, New-York, and nominated Mr. Van Buren for President, with Charles F. Adams for Vice-President. The convention was composed chiefly of Democrats, and took strong position against the extension of slavery. In 1852 the Democratic Convention convened in Baltimore, and it is a matter of history that the Virginia delegates offered the Presidency to Mr. Dickinson, who only five years before had made his free-soil declaration in the Senate. It would thus appear that at that time Virginia did not consider the principle of free-soil odious. It cannot be doubted that, had Mr. Dickinson consented to accept the nomination, the other Southern States without exception would have followed the lead of Virginia. In that event he would have been elected, as was Mr. Pierce, and the United States would have had for President a free-soil man, made President by the South. But had Mr. Dickinson been elected, it is reasonable to believe that a different condition of national affairs would have existed from that we witnessed a few years later.

The next great slavery agitation which occurred in Congress was in the session of 1849 and 1850, during the discussion of the the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, between this country and Mexico. By this treaty the United States had acquired from Mexico an immense territory, a large portion of which was south of $36^{\circ} 30'$. No territorial government had been es-

tablished and no enabling act had been passed. California had framed a constitution, elected United States Senators, and asked admission into the Union as a State. She had included within her state limits a great part of the territory south of the Missouri Compromise line of $36^{\circ} 30'$. The discussions growing out of the admission of California exceeded in bitterness any which the country had witnessed since the time of the adoption of the Missouri Compromise. When and how the feeling engendered by this discussion would have terminated it is difficult to predict, had not Mr. Clay, now near the close of life, again come forward with a second compromise. He feared that he would fail of success unless he could secure the active coöperation of an old political adversary, a man who, for fifty years, had filled a larger space in the public eye than any other person in the United States. This was Mr. Ritchie, the editor of the *Washington Union*, the organ of the Administration and of the Democratic party. Mr. Clay sent his friend, Mr. Simonton, now connected with the associated press, to Mr. Ritchie to learn if it would be agreeable for him, Mr. Clay, to call on him. Mr. Ritchie, replied that, under the circumstances, it was proper that he should make the first call, and he did so, accompanied by Judge Bayley, of Virginia. Thus these two men, each great in the sphere in which he was called to act, were brought together after a long estrangement, and smoked the calumet of peace. It was their joint labor that then saved the country from the fearful disaster which threatened it from the violent agitation of the slavery question. Each loved the Union, and each desired its perpetuity. Each was opposed to nullification and secession. Soon after securing the pacification of the country, Mr. Clay passed to the spirit land, and in a brief space after, Mr. Ritchie received his last summons. God in his wisdom took them to Himself before the great disruption both so much feared and labored to avert had cursed the country they so loved.

The compromise measure of 1850 gave another lease of life and prosperity to the nation; but it was destined to be of short duration. In 1852 Mr. Pierce was triumphantly elected. He was supported by all sections, receiving a majority in all the States excepting four, and was installed as President with every indication that a brighter day was dawning. The slave question was apparently settled, and peace and prosperity everywhere prevailed. No serious attempt had

been made for thirty years to repeal the Missouri Compromise. The North considered it a sacred compact and the South was satisfied with it. No disposition was shown to disturb it. But this was the calm before the mighty storm which swept over the land, and in its progress carried everywhere devastation and woe. From its effects millions of men, women and children have mourned, and still do mourn, in every part of our country. Fraternal blood flowed like the mountain torrent, the dead covered the fields like sheaves at harvest time, and the wounds of those who survived are yet but half healed. The wail of distress was everywhere heard, widows and orphans were in almost every house, and every home was draped in mourning. In the South, grief and want went hand in hand, and demoralization followed in the wake of all. Now, and in the years to come, the primary cause of all this may be asked. It is the purpose of this article to answer that question.

(The people of Missouri had commenced the cultivation of hemp, a crop yielding large profits, but which it was believed could not be successfully produced except by slave labor. That portion of Nebraska which is now Kansas was regarded as peculiarly adapted to the cultivation of the crop. A considerable number of the people of Missouri had long desired to occupy that section—to open it to slave labor and to the cultivation of hemp. It was known by the representatives of Missouri that for this reason the repeal of the Missouri Compromise would be popular with the people of that State.)

Thomas H. Benton had served thirty years in the Senate, but had then been superseded. He had lost caste with a portion of the Democratic party, after having been for many years its trusted and fearless leader. He never was popular with either of the extreme wings of the party, and was especially objectionable to the friends of Mr. Calhoun. He was too national to be popular with the nullifiers and secessionists of the South or abolitionists of the North. He had been the strongest supporter of Mr. Van Buren's administration, and many believed that he sympathized with that gentleman in 1848. After being defeated for the Senate he was elected to the House of Representatives, but he looked forward to a re-election to the Senate when the term of his late colleague, the Hon. D. R. Atchinson, should expire. He had been further alienated from the Democratic party by his opposition

to Mr. Polk's administration during the Mexican war, and the bitter warfare which he waged against Secretary Marcy, Mr. Ritchie, and other prominent men of the party. Mr. Polk had made an effort to conciliate him, and, against the protests of three members of his Cabinet, he appointed him Generalissimo of the armies in Mexico, to which office he was confirmed by the Senate. He was clothed with diplomatic powers. In one hand he was to hold the sword and in the other the olive branch. But just at the time he was to leave on his mission, a misunderstanding arose and he was not sent. Mr. Atchinson had been President of the Senate, was a native of Kentucky, and was very popular, especially in the South and with the friends of Mr. Calhoun. Mr. Benton and he had become bitter personal and political enemies. His term in the Senate was about to expire and Mr. Benton was his most formidable competitor. The result of the contest was considered doubtful, and it was deemed by Mr. Atchinson's friends important to strengthen him in Missouri, and to weaken Mr. Benton.

How to do this was considered in "secret session." It is thought that only three, besides Mr. Atchinson, knew in the early stages the programme marked out. Subsequently others were made acquainted with it. The originators of the plan fixed upon were Mr. Atchinson and three other able and distinguished Southern Senators, men of great influence in the whole country, and especially influential in the South. Only one of these four men is now living, and it is due to him and to those now at rest to say that if they could have foreseen the consequences which would result from the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, we believe no one of them would ever have been instrumental in causing it. Mr. Pierce had carried for his election all the States of the Union, save Massachusetts, Vermont, Kentucky, and Tennessee, and it was believed that the measure to repeal the Missouri Compromise could be carried and cause but little sensation in the country. This was a grave error. The primary object, therefore, which induced the initiation of the measure to repeal the Missouri Compromise was to secure the re-election of Mr. Atchinson to the Senate. The means to be employed was the repeal of the Compromise, in order that the people of Missouri might carry their slaves to Kansas and there raise hemp.

The author of the Kansas-Nebraska bill was not Mr. Douglas, but Mr. Atchinson.

Early in the session of 1854, Mr. Douglas, chairman of the Committee on Territories, introduced a bill to establish a territorial government in Nebraska, then embracing the present States of Kansas, Nebraska, and parts of Colorado, and the Territories of Wyoming and Dakota. No mention was made in it of Kansas. The bill, as originally introduced, differed but little from kindred bills which had been passed by Congress. Soon after the introduction of the bill Mr. Dixon, a Whig Senator from Kentucky, and a personal friend of Mr. Atchinson, gave notice in the Senate that when this bill came up he would offer an amendment to repeal the Missouri Compromise. This was the first notice that such action was contemplated. The whole country was taken by surprise. There were then two Democratic papers published in Washington: the *Union*, edited by O. P. Nicholson, the organ of Mr. Pierce's administration, and the *Sentinel*, edited by the gifted B. Tucker. Each of these papers, when Mr. Dixon gave this notice, denounced it as a Whig movement, intended to be a firebrand, and having for its object the breaking down of the Democratic party. The files of these papers will show the facts as here given. It is certain that neither of these editors was at the time in the secret.

Not long after the notice given by Mr. Dixon, Mr. Douglas moved in the Senate to have the Nebraska bill recommit- ted, which was done. Again, a little later he reported the Kansas-Nebraska bill for establishing two territorial govern- ments. But before this was done he was made to believe it would be a very popular movement in the South and contribute largely to his nomination for the Presidency in 1856. It is doubtful whether he ever knew the real object to be at- tained by the repeal. The President was also consulted and was impressed with the idea that if he made it an adminis- tration measure it would give him additional strength in the South, and greatly help him to a renomination in 1856. The President laid the subject before his Cabinet, then com- posed of Secretaries Marcy, Guthrie, Jefferson Davis, Camp- bell, Cushing, Dobbin and McClelland, and all consented that it should be made an administration measure. Mr. Marcy, who consented reluctantly, was not very cordial in its support.

Undoubtedly, President Pierce and Mr. Douglas both

overestimated their influence in the North. They could not have foreseen that the whole country would become so excited as to jeopardize the Union. The debates which ensued in both Houses of Congress were long and very bitter. The entire slavery question was reopened. A caucus of Southern Democrats, composed of fifty or sixty members of both Houses, had been held, and after a good deal of opposition it was decided to support the bill. The South, therefore, with few exceptions, supported it, being aided by a portion, and a portion only, of Northern and Western Democrats. A very considerable number of the latter, and all the Northern Whigs, were found to be opposed to it. Very few of the Northern or Western Democrats in either House who voted for the bill were re-elected, and only two of all its supporters are now in Congress. These are H. B. Wright, of Pennsylvania, and A. H. Stephens, of Georgia. The Democratic party in the North received a blow from which it never recovered.

As indicating the sectional feeling aroused, we recall the fact that, during the discussion, a serious difficulty arose between the late John C. Breckinridge, of Kentucky, and F. B. Cutting, of New York, growing out of words spoken in debate. For nearly a week a duel was pending. A challenge had been sent and accepted. An intense excitement prevailed, not in Washington only, but throughout the country, and much sectional feeling was manifested in relation to it. Happily, wise and prudent men interfered and a meeting was prevented.

The bill finally passed, and the President appointed the various officers who were to govern the two Territories, and it may as well be mentioned here that the writer was one of them. In making these appointments, President Pierce was greatly embarrassed. The South, and especially Missouri, desired that he should appoint Southern men only to the offices in Kansas, where it was believed that slavery might go, and Northern men in Nebraska, where slavery never could go. At first the President was disposed to pursue that policy, but he afterward changed his views and appointed to each Territory about an equal number from each section. He selected for Governor of Kansas a Northern, and for Governor of Nebraska a Southern man. This course was not pleasing to the people of Missouri, and at an early period a very bitter state of feeling existed. This was occasioned

partly by the lack of prudence displayed by the Governor, and partly by the determination of the people of the border counties to make Kansas a slave State.

Emigrant aid societies were soon formed in the North, and a struggle commenced to counteract the pro-slavery movement. It was not difficult to see that in the end the anti-slavery party would succeed. In the early stages, Missouri had the advantage. She had but little aid from any Southern State. Only one regular organization for colonizing Kansas existed in the South. That was in South Carolina, and was headed by Mr. Buford. For three years the country was kept in a state of excitement. In Kansas every man went fully armed. Frequent murders took place and house-burning was practised by both parties. At one time several thousand men, fully armed and under military command, confronted each other, and a regular battle was daily expected. No one not present could form any idea of the extent to which anarchy prevailed. Four different Governors had been appointed, all Northern men, Democrats, and each had been quickly deposed. The United States troops had been employed, and yet no peace or quiet could be had. At last it was thought that by calling a convention, framing a constitution, and asking to be admitted as a State into the Union—although the population did not justify it—the vexed question might be settled. The attempt was made. The pro-slavery party obtained a majority of the convention and framed what was known as the Lecompton Constitution. It was pro-slavery. Had that constitution been properly submitted to the people, it was contended that it would have been rejected. Indeed, there is little doubt that it would have been. Unfortunately, the convention adopted it without giving the people who were to live under it an opportunity to say whether or not it was acceptable to them. This was a fatal error, and, as might have been foreseen, increased and intensified the excitement.

Such was the status of the Kansas question when Mr. Buchanan was inaugurated March 4, 1857. Mr. Buchanan received the nomination over Mr. Pierce and Mr. Douglas. He owed his nomination and election to the fact that he was out of the country at the time the Kansas-Nebraska bill was passed, and that he had taken no part in it. At Cincinnati, in 1856, it was the settled purpose of the convention not to trust to the election of any candidate who had been active in the

support of this bill. Hence the defeat of Mr. Pierce and Mr. Douglas, and the nomination of Mr. Buchanan. In the election, Mr. Buchanan was able to carry only five Northern States, while four years previous Mr. Pierce had carried all but two. This proved an extraordinary and unprecedented change in public opinion, and must be attributed to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. When Mr. Buchanan came to the Presidency, all attention was turned to him, and from his long experience, his prudence, moderation and wisdom much was expected.

Governors Reeder, Shannon and Geary, who had been appointed by President Pierce, had each failed to give peace and quiet to Kansas. No security to life or property existed in the Territory. Mr. Buchanan immediately appointed as Governor R. J. Walker, a man of national reputation, who had with marked ability filled many high and important positions. With Mr. Walker was associated another gentleman well known to the country, an ex-Member of Congress from Tennessee, Mr. F. P. Stanton. These gentlemen did not desire to accept the positions assigned them, and consented only after the strongest appeals to their patriotism had been made by Mr. Buchanan and others. Having been clothed with plenary powers, they proceeded on their mission of peace. It was distinctly understood that they were to use all proper influences to have the Lecompton Constitution submitted to the people. While they were actively engaged in this effort, and with every prospect of being successful, they received notice that the President had changed his Kansas policy, and that he desired the constitution to be sustained as it came from the hands of the framers. This change of policy on the part of Mr. Buchanan was one of the most extraordinary, unfortunate, and, so far as the public knows, most unaccountable ever made by any public man. While he was supported in this policy by a portion of the South, it alienated from him thousands and tens of thousands of friends who had, up to that time, warmly sustained him. He never recovered from that act.

Soon after this change of policy, Governor Walker was recalled, and anarchy again held high carnival in Kansas. Four governors had now failed, and a bold, an able and a prudent man was required to act the part of Moses; one, too, who was a man of unflinching courage. Fortunately such a man was found in the Hon. James W. Denver, an ex-Member

of Congress from California, a distinguished and gallant veteran of the Mexican war—a noble man and a statesman, now a resident of Washington, loved and respected by all who know him. Mr. Buchanan appointed him Governor. To him the country owed the pacification of Kansas, and the crisis for the time was satisfactorily passed.

Soon after the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, another and a still more dangerous doctrine, growing out of the repeal, came up, convulsed the country, and resulted in secession. This was whether Congress or the people of a Territory, possessed the right to admit or prohibit slavery in any territory of the United States. The Republicans contended that Congress alone held that power, while Mr. Douglas and his friends asserted that it belonged solely to the Territorial Legislature. In other words, Mr. Douglas and his friends claimed that the creatures of Congress could do what Congress itself could not do. The South contended that neither Congress nor the Territorial Legislature possessed the right, but the people alone, in forming a constitution and organizing a State, possessed it. On these issues the Presidential canvass in 1860 was conducted. The result was that the Republicans carried every Northern and Western State. All that followed is too painfully impressed on the mind and memory of the people now living to require repetition here.

This sketch has been written at the request of friends and to supply a missing link in the history of the past. It has been written in no sectional spirit, neither to wound the feelings of any now living nor to disturb the ashes of the dead. The writer has outlived all bitterness and unkind feeling toward any party or person on earth.

From these facts, as herein given, the following conclusions are warranted :

(*First*.—That the repeal of the Missouri Compromise was not called for by the South at the time it was repealed, the bill being offered by a Northern man who was its ostensible author.

Second.—That the primary object of the repeal was to politically strengthen one man and to weaken another.

Third.—That the South contended for a principal which, had it been established, would have been of no political benefit to it or to the cause of slavery: 1. Because slavery could never have been established north of $36^{\circ} 30'$: 2. Because there was open to slavery south of $36^{\circ} 30'$, in Texas, Louisi-

ana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Florida and Alabama, unoccupied lands sufficient to employ all the slaves in the United States, and their increase for at least one hundred years to come.)

To establish the Union and to preserve it to this time has cost in lives and treasure an amount which cannot be estimated. To continue to preserve it will require wisdom, justice, prudence, patriotism, and, above all, a kind and catholic spirit. Let these virtues be cultivated, let the errors of the past be forgiven and, as far as possible, forgotten. Let us have such a Union as its founders intended it should be. Then all of us in all sections can say of it, *Esto perpetua!*

JOHN A. PARKER,
Of Tappahannock, Essex Co., Va.

APPENDIX.

CONTAINING SKETCHES OF THE OLD RICHMOND *Enquirer* AND RICHMOND *Whig*, AND THEIR EDITORS AND FOUNDERS—SOME OF THESE SKETCHES HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED AND REPUBLISHED IN THE VIRGINIA PAPERS—THEY ARE HERE PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

Brief Sketches and Reminiscences of the Old Richmond Enquirer and Constitutional Whig, and their Gifted and Accomplished Founders, from Personal Recollections.

Editor Norfolk Landmark:

In giving certain unpretending sketches to the public, I ask permission to do so through the *Landmark*.

1st. Because it is a "live" paper and one of the very few I now read with any pleasure.

2d. Because it has done, and is doing, more than any other paper I know of to build up our only seaport in Virginia, and in the success of which every Virginian is directly interested. It is, in fact, the *Journal of Commerce* of Virginia, and should be in the hands of every Virginian. In saying this, I do not

wish to be considered as disparaging other papers. The *Landmark* is justly entitled to be considered the *avant courier* in commercial matters in Virginia.

[Our correspondent gives a third reason, but it is too kind and complimentary to be admitted; but, though excluded from these columns, it cannot be erased from the memory of the person referred to by our old friend Essex.]

Mr. Editor, standing as I do, a link between the past and present generations I have thought these sketches may interest some of your readers. With one of the distinguished persons of whom I shall speak, I had very close personal relations (and some family connections) for many long years, and up to the day of his death; and I have reasons to *know* I had his entire confidence, which I have ever greatly prized. Before closing these sketches I may, in its proper place, give an incident of *one of his last acts*, and a few days before his death, in which the writer was interested, but the people of the United States much more. It will show how far-seeing and prophetic he was.

With the other personage I had no intimate personal relations, but I possessed his friendship, and shall try to do justice to his memory. He had many noble traits, with a kind and generous heart. In a private and social circle "he was like the gale of Spring;" but in political warfare, "like the mountain storm." He used the battle-axe of Richard"—his venerable competitor, "the Keen Cimenter of Saliden.

As is it not my purpose to bore you or the public, and without knowing whether you can find space to publish, I shall, for the present, defer a sketch of *The Old Enquirer*.

ESSEX.

OUR correspondent Essex has another paper in to-day's *Landmark*, in which he speaks of Mr. Ritchie, the famous editor. When these off-hand sketches are completed, they will be found full of curious bits of secret history, and as they run their course in our columns they begin to attract a good deal of attention.

[For the Landmark.]

Brief Sketches and Reminiscences of the old Enquirer and Constitutional Whig, and their Accomplished Founders, from Personal Recollections and Reliable Information.

BY ESSEX.

No. II.

In giving these brief sketches to your readers they must not expect anything but facts, clothed in plain and common sense language; nothing else is attempted.

They are written in the house in which that true patriot, Thomas Ritchie, was born, now occupied by the writer, who has waited in the hope that some other and better pen would have been employed, and full justice would have been done to all parties.

The first number of the *Enquirer* was issued on the 9th day of May, 1804. It was a most interesting period of our history. The United States Government had been in existence only about thirteen years—Mr. Jefferson was in his first term. The old Federal party had fought its last battles, in its attempt to re-elect John Adams, and then to place Mr. Burr in the Presidential chair, although he had not received one single vote for that office. The downfall of the Federal party soon took place, and as a national party it ceased to exist. It is true it joined the nucleus of all other parties in opposition to the great Democratic State Rights party, viz:

1. The Anti-War party.
2. The "Tirtum Quid" party.
3. The National Republican party, formed soon after Mr. John Quincy Adams was elected by the House.
4. The Anti-Jackson party.
5. The great Whig party, so named by James Watson Webb, of the New York *Enquirer*.

All of the above parties were short lived except the great Whig party, which had many recruits from the Democratic ranks; and in 1840, and again in 1848, succeeded in electing its candidates for the Presidency. After its signal defeat in 1852 it became greatly demoralized by being joined by the fanatics, Puritans, Free-Soilers and Abolitionists. And it, too, after the election in 1856, became disintegrated.

It may be proper to say that the old Federal party numbered in its ranks some as high-toned and patriotic men as this country ever produced. Their proclivities and feelings, however, were English. They believed the Federal Government should be made stronger, and should be clothed with more power. Some few of these venerable men are still living, and are daily witnessing the powers which this creature of the States is exercising over its creators; and they are daily passing the highest compliment they can pay to that grand old States Rights Democratic party, which has ever resisted the exercise of doubtful powers; and on the success of such resistance alone can exist a free government—the rights of the people and the existence of the Government itself.

I hope this seeming digression (and others which must be made in order to do even partial justice to these sketches) will be excused.

As it is not my purpose to crowd, at one time, too much on your valuable columns, or weary your readers who may do me the honor of reading what I shall write, I shall defer until my next number an account of the early history of the *Enquirer* and its intimate connection with, and support by, some of the greatest statesmen and purest patriots and men which this or any other country has ever produced.

“ESSEX.”

We print elsewhere an interesting sketch of the origin of the *Enquirer* and some of its famous contributors, from the pen of our valued correspondent “Essex.” This has all the charm of familiar conversation, and we have no doubt our readers will look forward to the next sketch with interest and curiosity.

[For the Landmark.]

Brief Sketches and Reminiscences of the old Enquirer and Constitutional Whig, and their Founders, from Personal Recollections and Reliable Information.

BY ESSEX.

No. III.

THE ENQUIRER.

When the *Enquirer* was first issued on the 9th May, 1804, there were very few papers (comparatively) published in the United States, and scarcely one in what was known "as the country." At its helm was one of the best writers of the day, and take him all and all, the best editor this country has produced. His great energy, prudence, sagacity; his finished education; his thorough acquaintance with the history of the country, and his close intimacy and connection with all the leading men of the country, all combined to fit him to conduct the leading paper, not of Virginia alone, but of the United States.

From its early existence, up to 1860, it was regarded as the organ of the Democratic party in Virginia, and from 1804 to 1825 it was the organ of the administrations of Jefferson, Madison and Monroe. Its editor was known to possess the entire confidence of all of these great men, and in all of the many trials and troubles of that eventful period in our history the *Enquirer* was relied on for support and for defense. No wonder, then, that it should have gained an influence and fame which no other paper in this country has ever possessed. It was found in every respectable reading-room in the United States. It was a telegraphic paper for others, and every Democratic paper in the United States copied largely from it. The aspirants for the very highest offices in the State and in the United States courted its support or dreaded its opposition. Few, very few, men in the State ever reached high positions without its aid, and very rarely did one against its opposition.

In making an extensive tour in the South and West, many years ago, when a very important question was before the country, hundreds of inquiries were made of the writer to

know "what course the Richmond *Enquirer* would pursue," whether it would oppose or sustain the measure. On that occasion it was my good fortune to travel with that truly great man,

HENRY CLAY.

Our journey of 1,200 miles was made on the splendid steamer "Sultana," from Louisville to New Orleans. On politics Mr. Clay conversed very freely and with great candor. He spoke of the party, of his defeats and the causes thereof. One of the principal ones he attributed to the long and continued opposition of the *Enquirer*. He seemed deeply to regret it on many accounts, and yet there was no asperity or bitterness in anything he said, and I am confident he did not feel any, for, when a reconciliation took place between himself and Mr. Ritchie in 1850-'51 (the incidents connected with which may hereafter be given), it was clear that all personal, unkind feelings had ceased to exist, and they met as old friends, with mutual respect and kindness, each doing full justice to the motives of the other. I know of no more pleasing sight than to see two such men, so long alienated, brought together and smoking the "calumet of peace." It was the misfortune of Mr. Clay to be run for the Presidency at such times as he could not be elected, as in 1824, 1832, and 1844, and not to be run when he could, as in 1840 and 1848. On the last occasion he was defeated for the nomination by one who owed his elevation to him. It was a cruel piece of bad faith and ingratitude, which Mr. Clay keenly felt to the last hour of his existence.

OTHER CAUSES FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE ENQUIRER.

No paper ever has had such correspondents in point of numbers and character. The names of only a few I shall give, viz: Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Spencer, Roane, John Taylor of Caroline, Giles, Tazewell, the Burborns, the Tylers, old Judge Parker, the "Patriarchs," the Brockenbroughs, Judge Richard E. Parker, and hundreds of others. They were statesmen—not mere politicians—they were patriots in every sense of the word. They were able and accomplished writers—they were men of pure private character—they were all Virginia gentlemen; and, in my opinion, no higher compliment can be paid to any living man, than to say he was a Virginia gentleman of olden times. Of one of these gentlemen, the last named, an ex-President of the United States,

who had in 1837 offered him a seat in his Cabinet, pays him, in a letter written to your correspondent, the following compliment in speaking of him: "As a wise statesman, an able jurist and chaste writer." (President Van Buren's letter to me. Respt'y, Judge R. E. Parker.)

Such was the teachers of the people through the *Enquirer*. Nearly every issue of that paper contained an article from the pen of one of those great and good men. They all, with the exception of Giles, wrote under borrowed signatures. Giles signed his own proper name. They communed with each other through the same channel. Discussions often took place, but were always conducted in a calm, dignified and statesmanlike manner. No personalities were indulged in; truth was elicited, and the people educated and enlightened. Oh! if we could, in this "age of progress," have such men in the councils of the country! Unlike some of the papers of the present day, the editor of the *Enquirer* encouraged and invited communications on public questions. Pay for publishing communications was never thought of. The names of all the correspondents were held sacred. No one in the office was ever permitted to make known anything which occurred in it. On one occasion one of the secrets of the office, in some way, had been divulged. The editor immediately called all of the employés in his office and polled each one; nothing of the kind afterward occurred. The editorials was always prepared with great care—always dignified, argumentative, persuasive and instructive. This department the editor entrusted to no one. Nothing coarse or unchaste was ever permitted to appear in the columns of the paper.

HATRED OF THE OLD FEDERALISTS.

These fine old gentlemen could not tolerate the *Enquirer*; they looked upon it as their worst enemy; as an enemy which was constantly on the alert to prevent that party from ever getting into power. They said that "Thos. Jefferson, the Richmond *Enquirer*, the Devil, and John Holmes" were joint parties, and their purpose was to keep the people from being "taxed severely, and taxes rigidly collected, so as to make them meek and humble." Many of these gentlemen would never permit the *Enquirer* to be carried in their houses.

THE BUSINESS DEPARTMENT

was not conducted with an eye to making money; indeed its editor seemed to care but little about money, except to supply his necessary wants. He lived in great comfort, gave all his children fine educations and entertained very handsomely; beyond this he seemed to have no care as regards financial matters. He sometimes had business partners, but was not always fortunate in selecting them. Had that department been properly conducted and the amounts charged collected, a large fortune would have been saved. It is said when the editor retired from the office in 1845, some \$75,000 were due to it. When the debtors chose to pay they could do so; when they failed they were never pressed, and the names of some of the subscribers were found on the books who had not paid one dollar for twenty-five or thirty years.

I could add much to this sketch, but forbear, as I shall in my next number have much to say of its former editor.

Brief Sketches and Reminiscences of the old Richmond Enquirer and Constitutional Whig, from Personal Recollections and Reliable Information.

BY ESSEX.—NO. IV.

[For the Norfolk Landmark.]

THOMAS RITCHIE.

It is a matter of surprise that no biography of this remarkable man has ever been written. From 1804 to 1854, a period of fifty years, there was no man in the United States better known by reputation. There was not a statesman or prominent politician in any State in the Union who was not acquainted with the status of the *Enquirer* and its editor. There was not a States Right Democrat in the land that did not acknowledge his great value to the party and the country. There was not one who did not highly estimate his support. There was not a Federalist in the whole country that did not dread him and feel politically hostile to him, although he included many of their number among his personal friends. There was not a school boy of ten years of age in the State of Virginia who had not heard of Thomas Ritchie.

Mr. Ritchie lived in the most eventful period of our history, and took an active part in all the great questions of the day. A faithful history of his life would give the best history of the Embargo, the war of 1812, the Hartford Convention, the First and Second Banks of the United States, the Question of Internal Improvements by the United States, the Missouri Compromise, the Abolition Question, Free Soil Question (which was the "Half-way House"), the Nullification Question, the Secession Question of 1832-'33, the Annexation of Texas, the Mexican War, the Compromise Question of 1850-'51, the Buffalo Convention of 1848, the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, and many other important but minor questions. At this point I will so far digress as to say that the name of the real author, and the true history of the "Kansas-Nebraska Bill" has never been published. It is partially written, and may yet appear. Few of the original actors are now living. A very distinguished Virginian could, if he chose, give all of the details connected with that bill, the most important in its consequences of any which was ever passed by the Congress of the United States.

In these sketches no biography of Mr. Ritchie is intended or will be attempted—a far better pen than the one which is tracing these lines would be required to do even partial justice to the subject. Only a few incidents connected with his life will be given.

Mr. Ritchie was born in the county of Essex, and in the village of Tappahannock, in 1781, (before the Constitution of the United States was written or adopted). His ancestors and connections—the Roanes, Brockenbroughs, Fountleroyes, &c.—were among the highest and most distinguished in the State, and belonged to that class known as F. F. V.'s—a class often spoken of with a slur; but in point of high tone and honorable bearing, they were not surpassed and not often equaled. Mr. Crittenden, who wished to be funny, asked Col. McMullin: "Colonel, what became of the second families of Virginia?" To which the Colonel promptly replied: "The second families of Virginia moved to Kentucky."

At the age of 23 years Mr. Ritchie commenced his editorial life with the *Enquirer*, and for nearly twenty years had scarcely a competitor in the State. It is true during that time other very respectable papers were published in Richmond and other parts of the State, but not one, until 1823. *The Constitutional Whig* made its appearance, and became a

very formidable paper. Of it and its gifted editor I shall hereafter speak.

I have in my last number given a sketch of the *Enquirer*, so ably and successfully conducted by Mr. Ritchie from 1804 to 1845, when he moved to Washington and established *The Union*. During a part of this time Mr. Ritchie was part owner and editor of another paper, *The Compiler*, a daily paper with a large circulation in the city, but very little in the country. It was a news and business paper, and never had any political status.

At an early period of his life Mr. Ritchie was happily married to Miss Isabella Foushee, one of the five beautiful and accomplished daughters of the much respected and much loved Dr. Foushee, known to every person in Richmond as "The good old Doctor."

Much of Mr. Ritchie's success as an editor may be traced to his pleasant and happy domestic relations, without which few can succeed, and with which no one need despair in any enterprise which may be entered on.

It is rare, indeed, that one so young as Mr. Ritchie was when he commenced his editorial life, should have at once become, not only the confidant, but the counsellor, of Presidents, Governors, Secretaries and Representatives in Congress. Mr. Ritchie had the full confidence of all the Democratic Presidents (with, perhaps, one exception for a short time), and the respect of the others, and yet this did not have a tendency to make him vain, or intoxicate him with self-importance.

Mr. Ritchie loved the Union, but much more did he love his dear old mother State, and the rights of the States, which constituted and brought it into existence. He believed the only way to preserve the one was a strict observance of the other. He believed the one without the other could not be maintained, and was not worth mentioning. The Constitution he regarded as the sheet anchor, and every departure from the letter and spirit he regarded with fear and pain. Thousands and thousands of times did he sound the tocsin, and issue his warning to the "latitudinarians" of the danger and consequences of disregarding its limitations. He saw in the distance the end to which it would lead. He knew that one violation, if not resisted at the threshold, would lead to another. But great as his fears were, he could not have anticipated that in so short a time this "model Republic" of

ours would have been converted into a "military despotism"—and such a despotism! That the "creature" should wholly ignore its creators and absorb all their rights, of which there is scarcely a vestige left.

Mr. Editor, the States Right Democrats are charged with being responsible for secession and its awful consequences. This I here emphatically deny; and I fix that responsibility on its true authors. Who are they? I answer, they were the apologists and defenders of every infraction of the Constitution—every exercise of powers not granted. Never would the United States Government have dared to have gone to such lengths as it did if we in the South had been united in resisting all violations of the Constitution—no, never. But the perpetrators of these wrongs had allies in our midst, and step by step they proceeded in their mad career until the people were literally driven into secession in the hope that some of their rights could be saved. No! Let the responsibility rest where it properly belongs.

I am admonished that for the present I have written as much as you will like to publish, or your readers to read.

In my next I shall speak of Mr. Ritchie's removal to Washington, his inside connection with Mr. Polk's administration, his connection with the Kansas-Nebraska bill, and Mr. Pierce's administration, and possibly Mr. Pierce's visit to him on his death-bed, and what took place then and there so far as the public was interested.

No. V.

The removal of Mr. Ritchie to Washington in 1845 was not a fortunate one.

HOW CAUSED.

When Mr. Polk was elected President in 1848 he found Blair & Rives conducting the *Globe* as the organ of the Democratic party. It was established under General Jackson's administration, and was very ably conducted by F. P. Blair, Esq., and to a very great extent was supposed to be under the influence of Colonel Benton, and it was thought to be anxious to make him President of the United States. In the canvass of 1844 it did not cordially support the annexation of Texas, which was the main issue in that canvass,

and which led to the election of Mr. Polk and defeat of Mr. Clay. These and, perhaps, other causes, caused Mr. Polk to determine on a change, and in coming to that conclusion he incurred the displeasure of General Jackson, as Mr. Blair was a great favorite of the General's. Soon after Mr. Polk's election, he wrote to Mr. Ritchie a very pressing letter, and invited him take charge of his organ; Mr. Ritchie promptly declined; Mr. Polk insisted; Mr. Ritchie continued firmly to decline. At last Mr. Polk invited the influence of Mr. Ritchie's personal and political friends, and, among others, was ex-Senator Wm. H. Roane and General T. H. Bayly. These gentlemen had great difficulty in getting Mr. Ritchie even to visit Mr. Polk. He at last consented to do so, and had a personal interview in the presence of the gentleman alluded to, and one other, and here a strange spectacle presented itself.

Mr. Polk was "put on the stand," and fully interrogated as to what course his administration should pursue on all the leading questions of the country, all of which was answered to the entire satisfaction of Mr. Ritchie. At last, Mr. Polk was asked if he intended to suffer his name to be used for a second term. He replied, emphatically, he would not, under any circumstances; and here it may be said, he was the only man who has ever occupied the Presidency who in good faith carried out his pledge on that subject. Hence the success and purity of his administration. Every point made by Mr. Ritchie, and every objection made by him, having been so satisfactorily settled, he was duly installed as editor of the *Union*, the *Globe* having been purchased and its name changed during Mr. Polk's administration. On every question Mr. Polk and Mr. Ritchie were in perfect accord. The kindest and most confidential relations existed between the two for four years.

In severing his connection with the *Enquirer* and Virginia politicians, his old and well-tryed personal and political friends—"Virginia gentlemen"—it was the most painful act of his life, and deeply regretted to the hour of his death.

In entering on his new theater of duty, he found in Washington he had to deal with men wholly different from those he had parted with in Virginia. These he could place confidence in the good faith of. But, in Washington, he soon found a different set of men; politicians by trade, and most of them false, faithless, selfish and wholly unreliable, pro-

fessing what they did not mean, and meaning what they did not say.

In Mr. Polk's cabinet there were three aspirants for the Presidency, and each one hoped for and expected Mr. Polk and Mr. Ritchie to give him their support. They were *all* disappointed; all became much soured. The consequence was that not a single one afforded Mr. Ritchie any support, and made his position a very unpleasant one.

Mr. Ritchie was a very sensitive and unselfish man. When he edited the *Enquirer* and *Union* he was never known to recommend for office a single relative, however near and dear to him, and he frequently refused under different *State* and *Federal* administrations the highest offices in their gift, *Governor, United States Senator and Foreign Minister*. From the days of Jefferson to those of Mr. Polk, it is believed no other man can say as much, and certainly not one of the present day.

As soon as General Pierce reached Washington, in 1853, he sent for Mr. Ritchie (who was then in private life) for the purpose of getting the benefit of his prudent and wise experience.

He continued to visit him at his house until within a few days of his death, in July, 1854, in Washington.

The name is extinct, except one daughter.

No. VI.

The Richmond Whig, and its Editor and Founder, John Hamden Pleasants.

In the year 1823 the *Whig* was established in Richmond. Many other political papers had been started in Richmond to compete with the great "Napoleon" of the press, but each effort to do so proved signal failures. But when the *Whig* came to the front with its able and accomplished editor at its prow, it was soon found Mr. Ritchie had a "foeman worthy of his steel," and that it would require of him ability, tact and great prudence to maintain the ascendancy so long held by him. No State in the Union could properly claim at that day two such able editors and finished gentlemen; no two men could be more unlike than they were.

Mr. Ritchie never prepared or published an editorial without bestowing on it thought and deliberation, and with it added tact, judgment and prudence.

Pleasants, on the other hand, never stopped to deliberate, and took no stock in policy or prudence. He was bold, daring and aggressive. He was one of the finest paragraphists I have ever known—racy and sprightly. He would be often seen walking the streets in Richmond, suddenly drop into any store, and there dash off one of his most brilliant editorials, send it to the *Whig* office, and seem to forget what he had done. He used the “Broad sword of Richard,” his competitor the keen “Cimeter of Salidan.” “In war he was like the mountain storm, in peace the gale of spring.”

Mr. Pleasants never resorted to personalities in his political warfare. When he made attacks they were open and manly; his blows were felt; he was ever ready to acknowledge and make amends of any injustice committed. He had many noble and generous traits of character; a striking one I will here mention: William S. Archer, then United States Senator of Virginia, took offense at an editorial in the *Enquirer*, and made a personal attack on its editor, Thomas Ritchie, in the street in Richmond. As soon as William F. Ritchie heard of it, without seeing his father, he sought out Archer and slapped his jaws, thereby throwing the “onus” on him. Archer immediately sent him a challenge, which was promptly accepted. The parties, as was usual, started for “Bladensburg.” Ritchie was nearly blind, and even with glasses could scarcely distinguish objects. The moment Pleasants heard of it he lost no time. He had great influence with Archer, who was a very self-willed and impetuous man, but a perfect gentleman. He at once protested against any further proceedings on the ground:

1st. That Ritchie had only performed an act of duty, and which public opinion required at his hands.

2d. That, all things considered, that if Ritchie fell at his hands it would be regarded in all civilized countries as murder.

The challenge was promptly withdrawn.

Of the tragic end of Pleasants it is not my purpose to speak further than to say that all classes in Virginia deeply regretted it, and not one more so than him who caused it and his immediate relatives and friends, and especially his venerable father. The gentleman himself never recovered from

the shock, and died a very unhappy man. Mr. Pleasants said, on his death-bed: "He was a brave and noble boy, and he did not blame him for the act." I have reason to think that Pleasants went on the field and his pistols were loaded with "blank" cartridges, unknown, of course, to his friends and his adversaries. The cause of the meeting was brought about by a *third* party. He, too, has gone. "I will not disturb the ashes of the dead and wound the feelings of the living." It is hoped that they are all in the "happy hunting grounds," and far removed from the troubles of earth.

Mr. Pleasants was the son of that amiable and finished gentleman, ex-Governor of Virginia, James Pleasants, of Goochland. At the time of his death he was 49 years old. He was twice married, the last time to Miss Mary Lewis Massie, who died young and before Mr. Pleasants. By this marriage he had two children, who survived him, and are now living. The one, James Pleasants, is now a successful lawyer in Richmond, and very much respected by the whole community. The other is the present widow of D. H. Gordon, Esq., now a resident of Baltimore. She was greatly admired when a young lady in Richmond, and regarded as one of the most accomplished of her day.

These sketches have been traced by one opposed politically to Mr. Pleasants, but who never lost sight of his many fine traits of character.

Colonel Parker is in no way interested pecuniarily in the publication of these sketches.

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