

THE LIFE AND
LETTERS OF
CHARLES
BUTLER



THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

South
No. 163

With Miss Butler's Regards

July 17 1863.

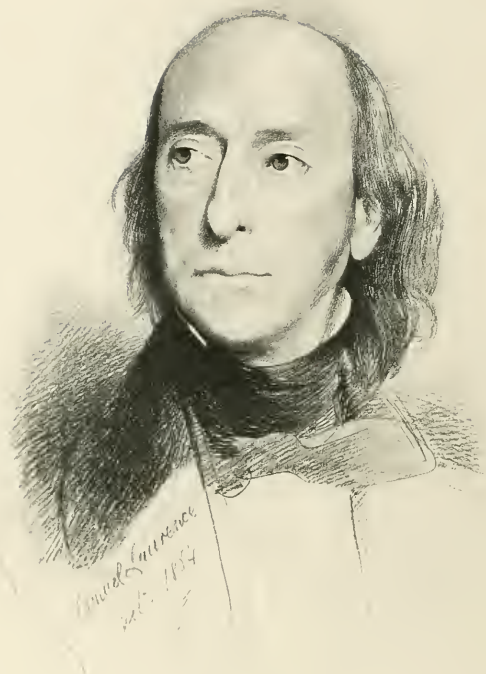


Charles Butler 15 Feby 1895
Born — 15 Feby 1802 -

THE LIFE AND
LETTERS
OF
CHARLES BUTLER



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation



Charles Bretten

THE LIFE AND LETTERS
OF
CHARLES BUTLER
BY

FRANCIS HOVEY STODDARD
PROFESSOR OF THE ENGLISH
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

WITH
PORTRAITS

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
MDCCCIII

COPYRIGHT, 1903

BY CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

295
B3755

PREFACE

THIS book has been written in commemoration of a life, which, it is believed, both by its length and its activities was associated with so much of the development of our country that it may have some value as a contribution to its history.

There has also been the desire to perpetuate in some measure the memory of a life of singular charm to those who came in contact with it, as well as the hope that some useful influence may still exist in its personality for those who read what at best can give only a very imperfect picture of the living subject.

For the surviving friends who cheered the way, as my father was often fond of quoting from a favorite hymn, and for the nephews and nieces, who by their affection for him, and still more per-

550290

PREFACE

haps as a result of his ever flowing affection for them, added much to his enjoyment through many years, it is hoped that these pages may revive pleasant remembrances. Perhaps they may also be welcomed by graduates of Union Theological Seminary and of New York University, in whom he ever felt a warm interest, constantly reciprocated in their expressions of regard for him.

E. O. B.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	v
CHAPTER I.	3
Ancestry—Birth and Early Life—School Days— Study for Professional Life—Influences That Moulded Character.	
CHAPTER II.	54
Plans for Professional Life—Opening Months at Lyons —Removal to Geneva—Interest in Projects for Benefiting the City—Western Trip—Marriage.	
CHAPTER III.	96
Life at Geneva—Profession of Religion—Resignation of Postmastership — The Morgan Trial — Great Work in Connection with the New York Life In- surance and Trust Company on Behalf of the Farm- ers of Western New York.	
CHAPTER IV.	129
Plans for New Enterprises—Visit to the Northwest— Detroit — Chicago — Religious Work — Business Openings—Journey to Ohio—Removal From Geneva to New York.	
CHAPTER V.	163
Life in New York—Financial Stress—Loss of Health —Journey to Europe—Victory Over Repudiation in Michigan—Travel in the South.	

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER VI.	222
The Funding of the Bonded Debt of Indiana.	
CHAPTER VII.	279
Journeys in Europe—Family and Home Life—Services to New York University and to Union Theological Seminary.	
CHAPTER VIII.	317
Later Years—Patriotic Services—Friends at Home and Abroad — Journeys in Europe — Fox Meadow — Closing Scenes of Life.	

THE LIFE AND
LETTERS
OF
CHARLES BUTLER

—

CHAPTER I

THE ANCESTRY—BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE—
SCHOOL DAYS—STUDY FOR PROFESSIONAL
LIFE—INFLUENCES THAT MOULDED
CHARACTER

CHARLES BUTLER was born on February 15, 1802, in the little town of Kinderhook Landing, on the Hudson River. This name has passed away from the map of New York, the town now being known as Stuyvesant. The settlement was never a large one; but was favorably situated for the small-tonnage river commerce of the early days. Its nearest large neighbor on the south was Hudson, ten miles below; on the North Albany, eighteen miles above. In Charles Butler's boyhood it was one of the river outlets of Columbia County, a region of fine farms, valuable forests, useful water power, and charming lakes; and the outlet also of a large part of the Berkshire region of Western Massa-

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

chusetts. Columbia County is known to students of the history of New York State as the home of many of its most noted early Dutch citizens, including among other families the Van Burens, the Wendovers, the Van Alens, the Vanderpoels and the Van Schaicks.

Charles Butler was not of Dutch stock. The history of the family in America runs back to 1724, when its founder, Jonathan Butler, an Irish gentleman, came to this country and settled at Saybrook, Connecticut. Jonathan Butler married Temperance Buckingham, daughter of Rev. Daniel Buckingham, and granddaughter of Thomas Buckingham, one of the founders of Yale College. Ezekiel, the fourth son of Jonathan Butler, married Mabel Jones of Saybrook, who was granddaughter of William Jones, Lieutenant-Governor of New Haven Colony, the son of the Puritan, Parliament leader and regicide, Colonel John Jones,* and who was great-grand-

* Colonel John Jones was one of the Judges in the High Court of Justice created for the trial of Charles I., and with the other judges signed and sealed the deed of execution for the death of the King. In 1650 he was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; he was for many years a member of Cromwell's Parliament, and in 1656 he married for his second wife Catherine, sister of Oliver Cromwell. On the Restoration of Charles II. Colonel Jones was

OF CHARLES BUTLER

daughter of Theophilus Eaton, who founded the colony of New Haven, organized its government, and was its first governor.

beheaded, October 17, 1660, aged 81. William Jones, the eldest son of Colonel John Jones, was born in London, in 1624, and was a Counsellor-at-Law at Westminster from 1647 to 1658. In London he met and married Hannah, the youngest daughter of Theophilus Eaton, and with her came to this country in July, 1660, bringing with him Whalley and Goff, two of the Regicides. His home in New Haven became thereafter a place of refuge for Puritans driven from England. He was chosen magistrate soon after his arrival, and in 1664 was elected Deputy Governor of New Haven Colony. He lived for many years thereafter in the mansion which had been erected by Governor Eaton, a magnificent edifice for those early days, with thirty rooms and twenty-one fireplaces, standing on what is now the north corner of Elm and Orange Streets in New Haven. After the union of New Haven Colony with the Colony of Connecticut in 1665, William Jones was annually elected Magistrate, and for five years, after 1692, was Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Connecticut. A monument to Theophilus Eaton was erected on the green in New Haven, in the rear of the Centre Church, and had on it these inscriptions :

Theophilus Eaton, Esqr., Govr., dec'd Jan'y, 1657, Aetat 67.
Eaton, so fam'd, so wise, so meek, so just,
The Phoenix of our world, here hides his dust,
This name forget, New England never must.

Wm. Jones Esq., D. Govr. dec'd Oct. 17, 1706, Aetat 82.
Hannah Jones, daughter of Governor Eaton, dec'd May 4, 1707,
Aetat 74.

T'attend you, Sir, under these framed stones,
Are come your honored Son and daughter Jones,
On each hand to repose their wearied bones.

This monument was afterwards removed to the southeastern part of the city cemetery, in New Haven.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

Medad Butler, one of the eight children of Ezekiel Butler and Mabel Jones, was born in Branford, Connecticut, in January, 1766, and died in New York in 1847. His father had moved from Saybrook to Branford and there established himself shortly before Medad's birth. In the third quarter of the eighteenth century the town of Branford was relatively of greater importance than now. Its harbor—which was greatly damaged by storms in the winter of 1822-23 and thereafter neglected—was then preferred to that of New Haven. There was traffic by water, in the little coasting sloops of those days, with the ports to the eastward along the sound, with New York, and with the towns then springing up along the Hudson River. Two other sons of Jonathan Butler—John and Charles—came from Saybrook and became prominent citizens when the town was in the period of its prosperity. Charles was, in 1786, the only merchant in Branford; and his descendants long occupied the large and comfortable house on the village green still remembered as the Butler homestead, whose site is now occupied by the Blackstone Memorial Library.

The youth of Medad Butler was passed in the

stirring revolutionary days. His eldest brother Ezekiel served through the war and was honorably discharged at its close. Medad was but ten years old when it broke out, but he was one of the boys of '76 in Branford, who, we are told, educated their pastor into patriotism. The minister of the village church was very much of a loyalist and carefully avoided any expression of encouragement to what he regarded as the rebellious spirit of the people against established authority. The boys of Branford, animated with the patriotic spirit of their fathers, thought they might do something to effect a favorable change in his attitude. So on a Saturday evening they got possession of a cannon, loaded it, placed it on the turf in the rear of the church, and pointed it in range with the pulpit. This was done in the night. In the morning, as the minister was about to enter the church, his attention was called to the position of that cannon, and he was notified that if he failed to pray for the success of the Rebellion, the cannon would be fired and he might take the consequences. It is recorded that he prayed earnestly as suggested, and that ever after there was no question of his loyalty to the cause of the people.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

Patriot though he was, Medad was too young to enlist until 1783, when the English made raids on the Connecticut coast at Stonington, at New London, and at neighboring places ; and a call was made upon all young men, of sufficient age to carry a musket, to turn out in defence of the country. The boy of seventeen responded and remained in the service for more than six months until the war ended. " He often," said his son, " referred to this incident in his life, not only with a feeling of gratitude but also of pride for having had the opportunity of taking any part in that struggle for liberty." When years afterwards he might have availed himself of the provision made by the generous government of a pension to all who had rendered to it any service, however slight, in its hour of extremity, he declined to make application, satisfied with the memory of his youthful effort in his country's cause.

In 1781 Ezekiel Butler died and his widow was left with eight children to care for. Then the eldest son Ezekiel took up the burden. Like most of his race he was at heart a pioneer, and seeking to win a home he went a two days' journey through a wilderness to what was then a

promised land on the banks of the Hudson. He settled in the young city of Hudson and there established the family, whose fortunes he thenceforward directed with unselfish zeal. He soon found a situation for young Medad in Claverack, a town a few miles inland from Hudson, with Mr. John C. Hogeboom, the father of Judge Henry Hogeboom, himself in after years a distinguished citizen, President of the Bank of Hudson, member of the Senate of New York State, and High Sheriff—succeeding in that office his father, Cornelius Hogeboom, who was killed in 1791, by the “High-Renters,” in the performance of his duty. Mr. Hogeboom became interested in the young man, very likely in part because of his attractive personal appearance. Most of the Butlers were fine-looking men, with a bearing combining dignity and graciousness; and Medad was no exception.

“He was,” said a contemporary chronicler, “an extremely pretty lad, fresh complexion, blue eyes, dark hair, genteelly built, and very sensible, though not yet twenty-one years old;” and it is hinted that he rivalled in grace his brother next older whom this chronicler alludes to as “the dis-

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

tinguished Mr. Elias," and who, he claims, was "the very politest man in the whole world." This brother Elias was then in Hudson, but found a home for himself later in Delaware County, where before his death, in 1804, when he was scarcely more than forty years old, he had become High Sheriff, State Assemblyman, and Brigadier-General of the State Militia. Mr. Hogeboom's interest in Medad took a practical turn and he proposed that they should start out together to find some spot where the young man might begin life for himself. So up and down the river the two friends journeyed, visiting Troy and other promising localities, until they ended their quest at Kinderhook Landing, where about 1792 Medad Butler, under the patronage of Mr. Hogeboom, began his business life.

It was the custom of those days for one who had established himself in business, promptly to make for himself a home. The New England spirit is strong in the descendants of her soil and it was natural for her sons to look to her daughters as their life companions. The elder brother of Medad, Ezekiel, had just then gone back to Branford to win as his wife his boyhood's friend,

Miss Lydia Frisbee, in the home of his childhood. This may have stirred the fancy of Medad Butler and turned his thoughts also toward New England. At any rate fortune promptly favored him. One of his first friends when he settled in Kinderhook Landing was Samuel Tylee, son of a Connecticut family, resident then in Hartford. The Tylee family was one of note in those days. Mrs. Tylee, Samuel's mother, was cousin of the eminent theologian, Dr. Nathaniel Emmons. Her two daughters, Clarissa and Hannah, used afterwards to recall entertaining George Washington at tea and being much delighted when the great man said of Clarissa, "What a beautiful girl!" It chanced that the younger sister Hannah Tylee in 1790 made what was, for those days, a somewhat adventurous two days' journey overland from Hartford for a visit to her brother Samuel. She tells us of her arrival at eleven o'clock at night when in the moonlight the silvery waters of the Hudson vividly impressed her girlish imagination. Four years later in 1794, this same Hannah Tylee, grown to be a woman of twenty-two, accompanied by her brother Walter Tylee, set sail from East Haddam on a coasting sloop,

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

for a voyage through the Sound and up the Hudson River on another visit to Samuel Tylee at Kinderhook Landing. The name of this good ship is lost, but it is recorded that its able commander, Captain Roberts, managed to make the voyage from Haddam to Kinderhook in three weeks. It was when Hannah Tylee was on this visit that she was introduced by Captain Van Alen, an old friend of the family, to Medad Butler; and six months later, in December, 1794, they were married by the Dutch minister Dominie Labaugh.

Kinderhook Landing was then no bustling mart of commerce—a “veritable sleepy hollow,” one of the children called it—but Judge Medad Butler became a man of more than local influence. He lived on the highland two hundred feet above the river, in a house commanding a fine view of the stream, the opposite shore and the Catskill mountains to the west. The business he conducted was that of general factor. He founded a store at the lower landing, owned vessels, established a sloop transportation route to New York and controlled in a great measure the exchange business of the region. New Englander as he was and something of a stranger to the Dutch traditions

of the county, he did not at once enter political life ; but the records of the town and of the county are full of recognition of the services he rendered. He became a member of the State Senate ; six separate times was appointed Justice of the Peace by successive governors ; was corporator and supporter of public and private enterprises ; and was for half a century a substantial, patriotic citizen.

Such was the ancestry of Charles Butler. The traditions and hereditary associations of his early home tended to carry him back to a New England habit of mind, a New England religious attitude, a New England independence of thought. But outside of his own home most of his early associations made him subject to another influence. The sturdy Dutch stock which has helped to make New York the Empire State had come to this country for exploration's sake as had the Pilgrims for conscience's sake. Both races were honest, self-reliant, independent. Their influence was potent in the development of Charles Butler's character and fortunes, and to his latest day he united the imagination of the New Englander with the practical shrewd sense of the Dutch

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

settler, joining the clear-sightedness which gives success in this world to the religious fervor which never rests in its efforts to fit men for a higher sphere.

To Medad and Hannah Tylee Butler were born in all twelve children ; but only six of these, three sons and three daughters, survived infancy. Charles Butler, the third child, was the youngest of the three sons. The eldest son was Benjamin Franklin, a distinguished statesman and jurist, one of the Revisers of the Statutes of New York, and Attorney-General of the United States under Jackson and Van Buren. Walter, the second son, a man of unusual charm of character, became a substantial citizen of his native town, its post-master, inspector of its schools, and interested in its commerce. He was managing agent of the Kinderhook and Stuyvesant Steamboat Association under which the steamboat *United States* began in 1834 to make regular trips to New York. He removed to Chicago with his family, a few years before his death in 1851. Of the three daughters, the eldest, Clarissa Tylee, married Dr. Charles B. Coventry. Harriet, the second daughter, married Rev. Henry Bishop Holmes. The

youngest daughter, Cornelia, married Mr. Abram Van Alen.

The life at Kinderhook was a simple one. But simple as it was there are still traditions of Charles Butler's boyhood that are amusingly illustrative of the traits that gave him success in later life. The lad was a born organizer. It was part of his duty of a Saturday to heap up chips and kindling for the week's supply of the family fire. This to most boys would be merely a toil to be put through as speedily as possible. But to this boy it was an opportunity. He organized the proceeding into a function, as later in life he organized the business corporations which were to develop States. And one of the earliest and most characteristic recollections of him which his sister Harriet retained was of seeing him at the head of a troop of boys as captain, walking very erect and carrying a flag, while the others followed tugging along baskets and wheel-barrows full of chips and kindlings. Indeed all the family memories testify to the habit of leadership which the boy manifested in these early days. He whittled the children's dolls, he directed the children's sports, and he planned the actions of his playmates with such

exactness that they looked upon him almost with awe.

The opportunities for primary education in Kinderhook Landing were far better than one might have expected, mainly through the influence of an excellent teacher, Mr. John Freese, a young man from Massachusetts, who came to the town intending to take boat for Long Island, and whom Medad Butler, mindful of the needs of his children, induced to remain. Mr. Freese, who was an accomplished classical scholar, maintained a district school, which Charles attended until he was fourteen. Then his father sent him to an academy just established at Greeneville, New York, in Greene County, across the river from Kinderhook Landing, due west perhaps a dozen miles.

No record of the curriculum of this academy in its opening years has been preserved. It was, however, one of a class of very useful educational institutions, made relatively less important by the specializing tendencies of later days, but which did a great work in New England and New York half a century ago (scarcely appreciated as yet by modern educators). The direct successor of the

Academy may perhaps be said to be the High School. But the Academy, in its best era, was far more than a High School. It was at once a normal school, a conservatory of music and of arts, a college preparatory school, a nursery of classical studies, and an institution for thorough, disciplinary and cultural training. At the head of the Greeneville Academy in 1816 were Doctors Parker and Huntington, men of sound learning. Charles Butler did not technically fit himself for college, having in mind to follow in the footsteps of his brother, Benjamin Franklin, and to enter as promptly as possible upon the practice of the law; but he took the full classical course, as then given by the Academy.

Martin Van Buren had been one of the friends of Medad Butler during his residence at Kinderhook. In 1818, when Charles Butler finished his studies at Greeneville, Mr. Van Buren was engaged in the practice of law at Albany. In that very year Benjamin F. Butler, who had studied law in his office, was admitted to the bar and became his junior partner. Public law schools did not exist then; it was seventeen years later that Benjamin Franklin Butler himself

founded one in the New York University. But even before the establishment of regular schools the system was a reasonably rigid one. The period of clerkship required before admission to the bar was seven years, from which in the case of a student who had attended an Academy or Preparatory School the time spent in classical studies could be deducted. In the case of Charles Butler, therefore, the required period was reduced to something less than six years. He entered the Albany office in 1818, and there began his studies, at first with his brother, afterwards with Martin Van Buren.

He became an inmate of the Van Buren home, and his first experience there was in giving help and comfort to Mrs. Van Buren, then dying of consumption. Night after night he sat by her bedside reading the Bible aloud to her. There was in his nature the tenderness of a woman and the imaginative reverence of a saint. The record of his helpfulness in things small as well as great—in getting a cup of tea for a weary aged couple, total strangers, on a railway car, as well as in founding a Theological Seminary—is as long a story as the story of his life. The strong indivi-

duality of Martin Van Buren the man appealed to his young imagination. Still more did the advocate Van Buren arouse his enthusiasm.

“The case,” he said of one noted trial (*Troup vs. Wood and Sherwood*, 4 John. Ch. 228) “was opened by Mr. Van Buren for the complainants with a speech surpassing everything perhaps ever delivered by him. In fact every one present was charmed, and as for Colonel Troup he could not contain himself, for never was a man so agitated by mere words.” And then he described one of those dramatic scenes with which the great lawyers of the earlier days were wont to compel the convictions of a jury. It was a case of conspiracy to get possession—by means of a judgment long before satisfied but never recorded—of the property of a man who had been convicted of forgery, had been imprisoned for life, and was therefore “civilly dead.” Considering him civilly dead the conspirators had, so claimed his advocate, Van Buren, practiced frauds upon his property. Up to the days of the trial the defendants had not known that this man—the only one acquainted with the facts of the long-past period when the conspirators first laid their schemes—had been

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

pardoned, and thereby restored to "civil life." It was his dramatic reappearance in court which made the climax of Mr. Van Buren's advocacy.

"Mr. Kent," said Charles, in describing the scene, "whilst Judge, had tried and sentenced Platner about twenty years ago, nor did he now, in the capacity of Chancellor, know that Platner was even alive. The impression made by Mr. Van Buren on the Chancellor was such—especially in describing the unfortunate situation of Platner at the time when the defendants were practising the grossest of frauds on his property, and seizing the moment when no danger was apprehended of being detected, as the only person on whom all depended was under a sentence of life imprisonment—that the Chancellor interrupted him and inquired whether Platner was living; and Mr. Van Buren pointed toward the man within arm's reach of His Honor. The Chancellor examined him for a second, very attentively, and then said: 'Well, he is a resurrection man,—and a very worthy one.'" The counsel for the defendant, the renowned jury advocate, Elisha Williams, followed in a three hours' speech; but the case was already won by Mr. Van Buren. All this was stimulat-

ing to the boy of seventeen, as was the association not only with the successful jurist, but with other strong men whom he met in the Albany office.

Another influence, perhaps as powerful as any single moulding force on Charles Butler's character, was that of his elder brother. Benjamin Franklin Butler, in May, 1818, had married Miss Harriet Allen,* of Hudson, and a year later had undertaken an independent law career at Sandy Hill, a village on the Hudson, about fifty miles north of Albany. Here he shortly became an active lawyer, the president of the Washington and Warren Bank, and a power, political and financial, in that sparsely settled region. The correspondence carried on for many years between Franklin and Charles gives evidence of the warmest friendship and most helpful tenderness. Charles was barely seventeen, Benjamin Franklin not yet twenty-four, when it opened; but the maturity of the man and the manliness of the boy make the letters delightful to read. Charles

* She was the daughter of Mr. Howard Allen, of Hudson, and sister of the distinguished Lieutenant William Howard Allen, of the United States Navy, who was killed in 1823 at Matanzas while gallantly leading a boat attack upon a piratical squadron, and to whose memory his native town erected a monument.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

assisted, Franklin counseled, and all in the sincerest fashion. The domestic problems which we consider now to be peculiar to our time were, it appears, equally urgent then. The young wife at Sandy Hill needed a servant. (The current rate of wages, it may be remarked, parenthetically, as illustrative of the change in the value of labor in three-quarters of a century, was one dollar a week). Sandy Hill could not supply the demand. The metropolis at Albany had to be drawn upon for the "general housework maid" desired, and it was the boy Charles who discovered and secured one. It became a matter for serious judgment which of two he should select; he finally sent Pender, a stalwart dusky maiden, up to Sandy Hill with a genial letter. The boy had evidently been reading Nathaniel Lee's tragedy of "The Rival Queens," in which the Bactrian Roxana wins against Statira, and it suggested a comparison of his own experience with that of Alexander in the play.

"Yours, by Pender," said Benjamin Franklin in reply, "was received with much pleasure. I am very glad that you took the course you did with respect to the 'Rival Queens.' The catas-

trophe was not quite so tragical as that which befell the unfortunate Statira, but in other points the allusion would hold good. Your zeal and intrepidity might well be compared with the chivalrous spirit of Alexander, and Pender's majestic form might rival the commanding dignity of Roxana. . . . The political news of the metropolis" (alluding to a recent official act of Governor De Witt Clinton) "was a matter of much surprise to me. I hope you and Mr. Hoyt will keep tolerably cool, as the warm season may soon be expected (write me about the Sunday-school and tell me how it flourishes). I need not say anything to you about the importance of close and vigorous attention to office duty and reading. Do not make too many acquaintances, and be cautious in those you do make. Above all things, never be ashamed of being more virtuous or less gay than the rest of the world. Endeavor to retain as much as possible the scrupulous regard to truth, honesty and virtue which you had when a child, and try to be as ignorant of everything that opposes them as you were then. Let conscience do her office fully and faithfully, and be careful never to resist her dictates, or even to reason with

her supposed absurdities. The moment you begin to think her over-nice, that moment your integrity is in danger. Remember me to Mr. Van Buren and the family."

It was characteristic of the brotherly relations of this period, as indeed it was of the whole lives of both brothers that the practical was never separated from the moral and religious in their words and thoughts. Charles bought the wall-paper and the carpeting for the house at Sandy Hill; and Benjamin Franklin with equal zeal cared for the mental and physical welfare of the boy. He had a coat made for Charles by Mr. Stead at South State and Market Streets, and he paid the bill, which came to fourteen dollars.

With the generosity went excellent advice to the spruce young man at Albany: "I pray you have a little discretion in your pride. Don't wear your new coat all the while when you get one, and perhaps the next will last longer than the one you now have." Some months later Charles, having somewhat exceeded his modest allowance for wardrobe—and it is characteristic of the simple days of our fathers that his indiscretion had been no more than the simultaneous purchase of two pairs of

trousers at a total cost of thirteen dollars and fifty cents,—Benjamin Franklin again paid the bill with cheerfulness, and added :

“ But this circumstance gives me an opportunity of repeating what I have before suggested to you, the absolute necessity of the most rigid economy on your part. I have no doubt you will cheerfully submit, while preparing for future usefulness, to those little inconveniences which to fops and fools are great misfortunes, but to persons of prudence and discretion are rather incentives to exertion and motives to perseverance. A young man who is not born to fortune, ‘having food and raiment’ ought ‘therewith to be content’—because he is rarely in a situation to earn anything, and the world does not expect that he can be enabled to provide for his wants until he has made himself acquainted with some means of procuring a livelihood. Poverty, and the appearance of poverty, are therefore no reproach to the student. But a gaudy ostentation in articles of dress and a fondness for the gaities of fashionable life are as disreputable in the eyes of the world as unbecoming in a young person. Let me exhort you above all things to beware of contracting

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

debts of any kind before you are settled in life. Rather choose to go without many things that might be very necessary, than to procure them upon credit."

All this was good advice for the boy and he took it in good part, though in his reply, in his gentle way, he made some counter claims. "In the present age of foppery and folly," he said, "you must confess that a young man may be led amiss by the glitter of dress and with some vestige of plausible excuse. I have been under the actual necessity," he added humorously, "of having my clothes washed by a washerwoman for the three months that I have been here and will have to continue in having them washed so, money or no money."

In greater matters than the details of personal expenditure the elder brother was also of use to Charles. The spring of 1819 brought a serious question, regarding a change of career. To the enterprising boy the brilliant opportunities of a naval officer offered more attractions than the routine of a lawyer's life. He was eager to enter the navy; through the connections by marriage of Benjamin Franklin the way seemed easy, and his desire was considered carefully.

“ I should,” wrote Benjamin Franklin in April, “ supposing it certain that you can get the warrant, be unable at this time to recommend it. Your parents are the proper persons by whom such a proposition ought to be decided, and I am confident you will submit to their wishes and decision. When I was of your age I also had my head filled with the splendid achievements of our naval heroes, and it seemed an object well worth risking life for, if the glory of a Hull or a Lawrence could be attained. A few years have satisfied me that it was very fortunate for me that my boyish projects were overruled by the better judgment of my father. I do not consider your prospects in the law as so very unpromising. You have talents equal to its labors, and I dare say would succeed in it. To say nothing of the dangers and hardships of a sailor’s life—of the hazards run by those who risk their lives on the ‘ faithless deep ’—of the great sacrifices they must make of social comforts and domestic happiness—how few are there who arrive at an advanced station—of those few how many who are unsuccessful—how few are crowned with honor.”

He also warned him against the dangerous influences of the life on a man-of-war, and concluded

by saying : “ I hope you will not get alarmed for your future destinies, and will be governed entirely by your parents.” The question was not at once settled. Charles was at first eager for the new life, Benjamin Franklin very doubtful of its wisdom.

“ I believe,” Benjamin Franklin wrote, “ your head is filled with ‘ guns and trumpets, blunderbusses, drums and thunder,’ therefore I have no doubt the law must be an ‘ empty science’ to you. I form this opinion from the lofty style of some of your late letters. Pray read Blair’s Lectures morning, noon, and night, and study Murray’s Grammar until you ascertain that such sentences as ‘ I premise to make an answer,’ ‘ the conflux of a moment,’ ‘ inflict a goad upon my feelings,’ are neither sublime, elegant, nor grammatical. Endeavor to keep in mind that there is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous, and that he who writes with the least labor and affectation is generally the most successful in composition. Addison’s Spectator is a good model for any one. Do not be offended with my plainness. I am really mortified that when you understand the use of language and possess genius and talent

you should permit yourself to be drawn away from the simplicity of nature into the flowery but dangerous fields of rhetoric, where one can hardly tread with safety unless long accustomed to its path."

But Benjamin Franklin was ready to aid as well as counsel. He wrote to Martin Van Buren. "Charles has written me about his naval project. I have repeatedly informed him that he must be guided by the opinion and wishes of his father, and provided he obtained his consent for the application I had no objections on my own account. Whether my father approves of it or not I do not exactly know, as I have not heard from him specially on the subject. If he does, I need not say that I will feel myself peculiarly grateful for any assistance you may render him."

It was a momentous decision for Charles Butler when in June he finally gave up the enticing prospect of a naval life, withdrew his application to the Navy Department, and after a little visit at Kinderhook Landing returned to Albany and took up anew, in earnest, preparation for his work as a lawyer. His months of probation being over he was regularly installed as clerk in Mr. Van Buren's office at a salary of a hundred dollars a

year in addition to his board. This position was no sinecure. The first morning, being minded to dispatch work, he rose at half-past four, and at five in came Mr. Van Buren himself ready for the business of the day, which was to turn over the "Insignia" of the Attorney-General's office to his successor, Thomas J. Oakley, afterwards Chief Justice of the Superior Court of the City of New York. He was entirely alone in the office work, which he thought a good thing, for he had business enough, he says, to keep him employed all the time. He had need to be busy, one thinks, to keep up with Martin Van Buren.

"I rise early," he wrote, "and, what is more provoking, Mr. Van Buren some mornings back has risen at half-past four. I rise at five and find him up. This morning he rode five or seven miles before seven o'clock. I can't imagine what possesses him."

The boy, however, took up the work with unflagging energy, and had his physical strength been equal to the demand upon it might have continued in the Albany office through his entire period of study. But he soon found the strain of the work so severe that he contemplated giving

up his legal studies altogether, and in January, 1820, he went to Sandy Hill for a few months of comparative quiet.

During his residence in Albany the young man had gained a valuable experience through his connection as assistant and friend in helping along the movement of the machinery of his brother's banking business at Sandy Hill. It is difficult for anyone now to realize, or even credit, the incomplete condition of large financial enterprises four score years ago. In 1818 the United States had no banking system worthy of the name. Under State laws, differing widely in different parts of the country, banks could be organized, and could gain a certain credit as State institutions, when, in fact, the State in no way guaranteed them. These banks were a necessity to the small communities. Means of transportation were very inadequate; places of deposit were needed; facilities for exchange must be afforded. The profits of rural banking were likely to be small; and the State, without as afterwards proved exacting sufficient guarantees, permitted these banks to issue notes,—bank bills we now name them—to very large amounts. From this permission came endless

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

trouble. Honest and well-meaning as in most cases were the capitalists who established banks, they found themselves confronted with what proved to be insuperable difficulties from the mere vastness of the regions to be served, and the inadequacy of the machinery for serving. The notes issued, when first paid out, were taken largely by people of the vicinity; but the bank to support itself was obliged to send its money for investment to some city at a distance, for no machinery of mortgage loans such as that which Charles Butler afterwards established in western New York, and which has now become the recognized method for local investments, was as yet in operation.

Hence plentiful trouble when the slightest suspicion fell upon the bank, it mattered little whether from idle rumor or from credible information. Brokers went about the neighboring country, bought up the notes at such depreciated value as the frightened farmers would accept, and plumped the whole upon the bank with a demand for instant redemption. And then there was hurrying to and fro. The lumbering stage coach bringing specie from the far-off city of deposit

was too slow and uncertain. Messengers with swift horses would start by night all secretly to hurry forward funds. Sometimes the kegs of specie, usually consigned to some individual not connected with the bank, would arrive in season; sometimes the bank exhausted its local funds, was obliged, though perfectly solvent, to refuse or defer the payment of its own notes, and a run, a suspension, a depreciation in the value of the notes ensued, and perhaps the total failure of the bank became the prospect of the immediate future. The needs of this rapidly developing country had outgrown its financial machinery, and the railroad and the telegraph came none too soon to preserve the credit of its banking systems. The Washington and Warren bank at Sandy Hill had been established by a banker of New York City to meet the needs of that section.

Benjamin Franklin Butler, then twenty-three, with a reputation as an honest man and an able though not then very experienced lawyer, undertook in 1818 to continue its management. The two years which he spent in Sandy Hill were harassing ones for him, but they afforded a fine training in financial methods and business habits

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

for the younger brother who was called upon to act, though unofficially, as agent for the bank in Albany, where there was need of some one to expedite the slow movements of transportation.

A run began in the spring of 1819, and thenceforth the letters are full of the record of his services. As the notes were presented specie was sent up to the bank. It was sent in kegs, and it is interesting to note the confidence in the honesty of everybody concerned which prevailed in those days. Kegs of specie were sent about like tubs of butter.

“Fitz-Greene Halleck, Esq.,”* wrote Benjamin Franklin to Charles, “requests me to inform you that there goes by the boat to-day a box of specie for the Washington and Warren Bank. Will you be good enough to send it by the stage or by the first private conveyance before the stage goes. You need not put it in the bank for safe keeping, but leave it in charge of the barkeeper of the Eagle Tavern, where I think it will be perfectly safe. Have it entered on the way bill and it then will certainly go, and let them the evening before the

*The poet, then employed in a banking house in New York City.

stage starts put it in the stage office or manage it any other way you think proper.”

This box, which arrived safely a few days after, contained five thousand pistarres (a thousand dollars), which speaks well for the honesty of the bar-keeper of the Eagle Tavern. Charles went as a matter of course to the boat to see if any money might by chance be there. In September the bank authorities in New York sent up a cask of specie in the care of a chance passenger whose name they did not ask, but who duly delivered up his charge when the steamer *Chancellor* reached her dock. Once this method of procedure involved parties in serious difficulty, for a box having been given to the care of one Captain Roorback, without instructions as to its consignee, the conscientious captain and the waiting bankers had each infinite difficulty before the matter was settled. Arrived in Albany the kegs were sent to Sandy Hill in charge of any one who happened to be going, and they always arrived in safety. There was a limit, it appears, to this trustfulness, for Benjamin Franklin Butler did hesitate on one occasion to send down three thousand dollars in charge of a stranger who proposed to go on foot to the river

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

and thence to Albany on a raft. But this limit was rarely reached. The honesty of the people is as evident as the difficulty of the conditions.

Benjamin Franklin had entered upon banking hopefully enough, and when told that some criticism had been made upon his undertaking only said :

“ So be it.

‘ They cannot rob me of free nature’s grace ;
They cannot shut the windows of the sky
Through which Aurora shows her brightening face ;
They cannot bar my constant feet to trace
The wood and lawns, by living stream, at eve,
Of fancy, reason, virtue, nought can me bereave.’ ”

But doubts about the soundness of the system gradually came to the brothers. Singularly enough, it was the high-spirited boy Charles who first expressed them. The subterfuges and shifts which the difficulties of the situation necessitated were repugnant to his nature, and youth though he was, he was unwilling to engage in the country banking business as it was then conducted. Before he went to Sandy Hill to study in his brother’s office, he declined an offer from the bank. “ I have already had,” he said in Novem-

ber, "enough of banks and banking to keep at a distance from them, nor will I have anything more to do with them unless from absolute necessity. And as to entering as a clerk in the W. and W. bank, I would not do it for \$300 a year." His brother, though at first inclined to rebuke him for his presumption, came himself only six months later to very much the same conclusion. The Washington and Warren Bank did not fail, but the brothers gave up banking and devoted themselves to the study and practice of law.

As the winter months came on Charles Butler regained his strength, and in the spring of 1821 he undertook a new period of law studies, this time at Kinderhook. "It was," says the old record, "a beautiful village; wide streets; three elegant brick houses with shady courts and yards before them; a number of stores, a show of business; churches, taverns; inhabited by wealthy farmers or professional men, principally Dutch of the more enlightened order. The men generally tall, personable and fair." Here he studied in the office and under the care of James Vanderpoel, a distinguished lawyer, for many years Judge of the Third Judicial District of New York State.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

“I am greatly pleased,” wrote Benjamin Franklin, “with your letter announcing a new era in your life as a student—new, because you have so long been prevented from prosecuting your studies by ill health, and, more especially, because you have adopted some new resolutions in regard to the line of conduct you intend pursuing. As to the caution you should use in the choice of your companions and your public deportment, it is unnecessary for me to say anything. Your course of study is a matter of more interest and importance. I approve of your reading law at this stage of your studies and perhaps it will be as useful to read books of practice as any other. Read Tidd, and Sellon if you can get the latter, and Johnson’s Digest—Title Practice. This is all the practice you need to read at present. Then take up Blackstone again, which you will be able to read with more benefit than ever before. After Blackstone, Chitty on Pleading, which must be read with great care and very slowly. This is as much as you can accomplish by spring. In the meantime let your miscellaneous reading be confined as much as can be to History and Biography, and you will not have much time to de-

vote even to them and none to newspapers. I also beg you very particularly to keep up as much acquaintance as possible with the Latin. Read a little in the morning steadily, and from my own experience I can say you will be able to accomplish considerable in a year. I hope you will endeavor to improve by the various religious privileges you enjoy."

For the advantage of association during the next two years with Judge Vanderpoel and for its formative influence upon his character Charles Butler always felt deeply grateful. Judge Vanderpoel was not only an able lawyer but a citizen of worth and distinction. He made a good lawyer out of the youth, so good that only two years later the Judge confided an important case to his care with the note, "I commit the whole subject to your management, confident that in that I have a sure pledge that the case will be won if mortal can effect it."

The office at Kinderhook had a large country practice. It soon became Judge Vanderpoel's habit to turn over to the young student the trial of most of the cases—which were usually argued before a Justice of the Peace. The customary fee for trying a case was two dollars, and the liti-

gants saw to it that the counsel earned his money, for the stolid Dutch witnesses would not be hurried, and the progress of Justice was moderate enough to discipline the most eager young attorney into patience. A school of tact also was this country practice, and here it was that Charles Butler first studied the art—of which in later years he became so consummate a master—of moulding the minds of many men into harmonious action. Even in these early days he settled more cases than he fought. He would tell of amusing interviews with the Dutch goodwives who came to sign conveyances of lands and titles. The paper would be drawn, and then a time-honored little comedy would begin. The wife refused to sign; the husband urged, but all in vain, until finally the expected present—usually a black silk dress—suggested to the husband by the tactful lawyer at exactly the right moment, gratified the hesitating wife and happily ended the incident.

Kinderhook was then far more a centre of influence than a country town of the same importance would be at the present day. It had been for many years the home of Peter Van Schaick, the eminent

jurist and author, well known not only as an able lawyer but also as one of the best read classical scholars of his day. Mr. Van Schaick kept a private law school of much reputation in those days, and at the time of Charles Butler's residence had among his students William Kent, son of the distinguished chancellor, the author of the "Commentaries" and other noted legal works. Chancellor Kent was the life-long friend of Peter Van Schaick; other noted men were frequent visitors; and the concerns of public life were an habitual matter of discussion by the legal society of the town. Under the care of Judge Vanderpoel the youth gained more than a knowledge of the principles or experience in the practice of law; he developed a habit of citizenship. He began to take an interest in the politics of the State and before he was of age became an active member of the "Buck-tail" or Anti-Clinton section of the Democratic-Republican party.

The quiet life at Kinderhook was sometimes varied by mild diversions. It was customary, for example, to have a great celebration on the Fourth of July. In 1821, a memorable one was held at Kinderhook Landing. Judge Butler and

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

Postmaster Walter Butler were active in arranging for it. Benjamin Franklin Butler came from Albany to deliver the oration, and of course Charles came from Kinderhook, five miles away. The oration was a success, but a greater excitement was to follow. Hardly had the refreshments been served when in came the famous steamship *Richmond* on her way to Albany bringing the news of the death of Napoleon Bonaparte, which had occurred May 23d, nearly six weeks before. Perhaps we can now hardly understand the feeling in those days toward Napoleon, as summing up in himself all the forces which make for evil, and the relief brought by the news of his death. "It is," said Charles Butler to his mother, "the forerunner of the Millennium."

At the end of 1822 Charles Butler received the appointment of Deputy Clerk of the New York Senate, and on the 5th of January, 1823, took up his residence at Albany, entering the law office of his brother, Benjamin Franklin, who had returned there, had been appointed District Attorney of Albany County, and had re-established his law partnership with Martin Van Buren. There is

a touch of pensiveness in the letters of the young student as he left the quiet country life at Kinderhook for the bustle of the city. "But," he said, "the purest treasure mortal times afford is spotless reputation and it is to obtain that treasure that I shall sacrifice all minor considerations and endeavor to act well my part." His first letter after he arrived sounded again a little note of regretful sadness :

"We had a pleasant and brilliant party at Kinderhook on the evening previous to my final departure. The sound of the violin and the gaiety of the company reminded me forcibly of the evening of the fourth of July spent at Walton. The association caused the regretful wish for the company of some of those friends who conduced and added to the pleasure of that evening.

'But wherefore of pleasures departed complain

That leave such enjoyment behind

Though the sun of their sweetness be sunk in the main,

Their twilight still rests on the mind.'

Yes, long will that twilight rest on the mind—the recollection of those pleasures departed will long be cherished with the fondest care, identified

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

as they are with the recollection of a person who receives the kindest and most enthusiastic wishes of my heart. I shall be much occupied during the winter and shall rejoice when the spring comes, for until then I must submit to be confined to all the minutiae of laws and legislation. My situation in the Senate requires unremitting attention during the day, and study in my office a still more severe application during the evening.

These promises of "unremitting attention" were well fulfilled, yet it is but simple justice to a young man's nature to record here that Charles found time and strength to get a hundred subscribers at five dollars each for a ball in aid of the Greeks, by which a fund of two hundred and sixty dollars was won for the cause of liberty in that far-off land. "The Greek ball," he wrote, "was one of the most splendid exhibitions of the kind ever witnessed in Albany. There were superb decorations—elegant standards of various hues, a Grecian cross with the motto in Greek *ἐν τούτῳ νίκα* (with this conquer), an American Eagle supported by the Genius of Liberty, a Phœnix emerging from the ashes, emblematic of the Grecian cause—there were lights from three massive glass

chandeliers containing sixty spermaceti candles, whose reflection on the cross and mottoes and standards quite dazzled the sight. There were nine musicians, some of whom made music like the harp of Orpheus, which enchanted the ear and delighted the heart. The *tout ensemble* of the room and company seemed like magic and reminded one of the days of chivalry and romance. Thus were we trying to aid in their speedy restoration to the franchises of freemen; it was certainly an interesting manner of rendering them assistance, dancing the Greeks into liberty." It is interesting to learn also of Cooper's new novel, "The Pilot," and its reception; of forty-two calls on New Year's Day, where at each house the young man had to drink a bumper to a certain young lady not yet mentioned in this history; and of the simple customs of the quaint old town whose day of work and pleasure was ended with the watchman's cry "Twelve—twelve o'clock, and all is well."

Once fairly settled in Albany the young man took up his studies with vigor. The position he held was one of importance, for the reason that it threw him in contact with the prominent men of

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

the State who were then sent to the Senate from the eight Senatorial districts. He acquired so much influence that in 1823, when he was not yet twenty-one years old, Judge Vanderpoel solicited his support in obtaining an appointment. As deputy clerk of the Senate he became an official also of the Court of Errors. This Court, under the old Constitution of the State, was the Court of Last Resort, corresponding to the present Court of Appeals. As then constituted, it was composed of the Chancellor of the State, of the three Supreme Court Judges, and of the thirty-two State Senators. Cases of the greatest importance were brought to it, and thus the most distinguished lawyers of the day appeared there.

This was the age of oratory, and famous men spoke daily. From his brother, a model advocate, Charles learned much of the art of dignified and persuasive speech. "I have been listening to his argument," he wrote in January, "more than an hour. It is one of the most splendid displays of forensic and legal eloquence I have ever heard. The gratification which I feel in thus seeing him at the bar of this court listened to with the greatest attention can scarcely be expressed. He is now

on the high road to that eminence to which his talents must ultimately lead him."

Charles learned from him also much of the art of life. Benjamin Franklin was more than an advocate. He could rise above partisanship. When some years later the long struggle against De Witt Clinton had been suddenly ended by his death, it was he, a long-time opponent, who came forward, opposing his own party, to aid the bill for a testimonial to the memory of the statesman.

"Among the most eloquent advocates of the bill," wrote Bela Edgerton, "were Benjamin F. Butler and Nathaniel P. Tallmadge, both democrats, political opponents of De Witt Clinton, and both then young statesmen of brilliant promise. The speech of Mr. Butler was one of the most eloquent efforts of his life and drew tears from the eyes of strong men unused to weep. Breathing the language of devoted affection to his own dead leader, Governor Tompkins, Clinton's opponent, he appealed to his friends to do for the helpless children of the dead Clinton what his great rival would himself have done had he been living. 'Pass the bill,' said Mr. Butler, 'for you

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

know that he would have done it. If you cannot do it for De Witt Clinton, as he now lies in his grave, do it for him as he was from 1798 to 1812—the pride of your party and the hope of your State. Do it for James Clinton, who fought for you at Quebec and at Fort Washington. Do it for George Clinton—my appeal is to party men—do it for George Clinton, the founder of your party, the father of your State.’”

It was a valuable experience, which could not fail to stimulate and educate the young law student, to listen daily to speeches such as this and to hear the arguments of such men as John Wells, David B. Ogden, Abram Van Vechten, Ogden Hoffman, Martin Van Buren, Samuel G. Talcott, Elisha Williams, John Duer, John D. Henry and Thomas Addis Emmet. Once he heard Aaron Burr. “He was,” said Mr. Butler, “a striking figure whom every one would turn to look at as he passed in the street—of small, slight build, dressed in small clothes and black silk stockings, with knee buckles, and walking steadily forward, never seeing anyone apparently, but with eyes, which were wonderfully penetrating, turned on the ground in apparent self-absorption. He was

already an old man, with white hair and weak through very persuasive voice.”

Charles Butler held the office for two sessions and until his admission to the bar as attorney at law. During the final years of his studies two events occurred which profoundly stirred his imagination and probably established a current of thought which gave direction to the purposes of his whole life. The first of these was the placing upon the Hudson of what was for those days a superb steamboat, called the *James Kent*, in honor of the Chancellor of the State.

“On Monday evening,” wrote Mr. Butler, “the new steamboat, *James Kent*, arrived at the wharf, having left New York at five o’clock in the morning. On Tuesday at twelve o’clock the ladies and gentlemen of Albany, at the request of the proprietors in this city, visited her. Upon no former occasion have I seen such an assemblage of beauty and fashion. The intention was to have sailed to Hudson, but the machinery being out of order we did not leave the dock. The scene was truly novel and pleasing—the boat lying at the wharf, its decks literally thronged with a gay company of citizens. The music with which they were

regaled (the band attached to West Point being on board), the good humor of the company, and the cheering of the multitude standing on the dock, who were precluded from boarding, and, above all, the clear and beautiful day, combined to give an effect the most magical of anything that I have ever witnessed. All were evidently delighted with the splendor of the party which had been so suddenly congregated.

The boat is a magnificent specimen of naval architecture and is fitted up in a style to rival the splendor of the palace of any nabob in the country. At one we sat down to an excellent repast, and having done honor to the feast, and poured out one or two libations to the *James Kent*; at about two the company dispersed each to his home, gratified with the events of the day. The march of improvement in the arts and sciences in our country has been astonishingly rapid. Who that witnesses the inventions of modern times but recurs with mixed feelings of pride and exultation to the time when America—independent, rich, happy America—was the habitation of the savage. The invention of steam power may be esteemed as one of the noblest and most useful inventions of the

age, for by it the elements are conquered—time and space are shortened. Fulton's name will descend to posterity encircled with a fame and glory 'more lasting than brass.' ”

The second event was the opening of the Erie canal, in the autumn of 1823; referred to in a letter from Albany, dated September 29 :

“ The principal subject of conversation in Albany at present is the approaching celebration of the transit of the first boat from the Lakes into the waters of the Hudson. Great preparations are making to celebrate the event with that magnificence and splendor compatible with the dignity and prodigality of the great and patriotic State of New York. It will indeed be a jubilee—the union of the Lakes and the Ocean. A century ago a man who ventured to predict the mingling of the waters of Erie and the Hudson would have been derided as a lunatic. Yet the union is accomplished. Rome and Greece in their proudest days could not boast the consummation of a work to equal the grand canal. The water has already been let into this city, but no boat will come down until the day appointed for the celebration, which is next Wednesday, the

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

eighth of October. This will be no ordinary event. This eighth of October, 1823, ought ever hereafter to be a jubilee with the citizens of this Republic. The occurrences of that day ought to be described in tablets of brass and handed down to succeeding generations as mementoes of national greatness—of the astonishing and unparalleled industry, enterprise and genius of the present generation.”

It is, of course, the enthusiasm of a young man that speaks. To the youth just twenty-one, this great waterway, which on its completion almost doubled the accessible regions of the northern states, was a symbol and a prophecy of the coming dominance of the Empire State. Thus, in one summer the quiet boy whom we have seen contentedly studying on the banks of the creek at Kinderhook became the man of action. Henceforward his mind was upon the opportunities for work which life afforded—to a remarkable degree even in these earlier years work for others—and upon plans for his own part in the work. He finished his course of study at Albany; on February 26, 1824, he took his examination, and in April was admitted to practice.

In this record of early life the narrative has seemed to lay much stress upon the influence of men of ability and force; but it would be incomplete without the notice of an influence more continuous than any of the others. Charles Butler's mother was a very handsome woman, with dark eyes which had in them a never-fading charm. She was of New England stock, with the strict integrity, the frugal care-taking unselfish habit, the quiet self-controlled nature—never fully revealing its depth of tenderness—of the wife and mother of the early New England days. The son's love and veneration for her, as the records show, were very beautiful and touching, in the boy of twenty, in the man of fifty, in the still enthusiastic and youthful-hearted man of ninety-six.

In a letter written long after this period is a touching picture of one of their latest interviews. He was then just fifty, she just eighty years of age. He read to her the twelfth chapter of Isaiah, talked with her of her heavenly home, so near, and kissed her hand as she gave to him her parting blessing. This blessing had been with him all his earlier days, and was to help him all his coming years.

CHAPTER II

PLANS FOR PROFESSIONAL LIFE—OPENING
MONTHS AT LYONS—REMOVAL TO GEN-
EVA—INTEREST IN PROJECTS FOR
BENEFITING THE CITY—WEST-
ERN TRIP—MARRIAGE

“IT is the five years after college which are the most decisive in a man’s career. Any event which happens then has its full influence. The years which come before are too fluid. The years which come after are too solid.” These words were spoken by Phillips Brooks in his maturity; his biographer rightly claims that he could not have thus spoken, if he had not been aware of the importance of the opening years in the history of his own life. So the decisions made by Charles Butler in the years immediately succeeding the closing of his studies determined his future course. The spring of 1824 brought him to the first of these decisions;

he must choose the location for the opening of his work. He could enter, as clerk or junior partner, the law office of his brother at Albany ; or he could go into some distant section, sacrificing thereby much of the influence which might at first aid him, but opening for himself a more independent career. Benjamin Franklin Butler, though only twenty-eight, was at that time securely established in his profession. Yet it was patronage rather than opportunity which the connection with him seemed to offer, for the business of his office, being mostly counsel practice in the Courts of Error and Chancery, could not easily be given to the young lawyer.

Charles wrote, in a letter (to his future wife), dated Albany, December 17, 1823 :

“I come now briefly to speak of my future destination. The period when I shall be released from the thralldom of the Senate Clerkship is so near at hand that it is not premature to begin to think at least of a place of residence. If the veil which hides futurity from our vision could be removed and the inscrutable and mysterious government of the world be for a moment comprehended by finite beings, what doubts, uncertainties, cares

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

and perplexities should we poor mortals be relieved from. At this moment when weighing in the balance the advantages and disadvantages, the inducements and objections in favor of or against the several places which have been recommended by my friends, I could wish for the gift of second sight. I have no fears as to obtaining an honest, wholesome subsistence. I believe I shall always be able to provide for the necessities of life, and that so far as respects comforts and gentility I shall never be found wanting. It is said that to be 'poor and content is rich and rich enough,' but this doctrine I could not subscribe to. That man is rich who has health, who has a partner of his life in whom he can confide, and who is possessed of enough to satisfy the comforts and inclinations, without the extravagances of life. The comforts, I trust—and my trust is based on reasonable expectations—always to be enabled to indulge in; the luxuries and extravagances impair the constitution and for that reason ought not to be coveted. Fortune has not showered down her smiles upon the roof of my ancestors, and I do not therefore inherit any of the goods or chattels or lands which belong to others more favored.

But I have health, a portion of industry, and a profession at once honorable and lucrative, which is all I ask. I would not sacrifice the content and independence of my station in society for all the ill-gotten wealth of the miser; nor would I exchange my comparatively poor and humble lot for the luxuries of wealth, if in the exchange I should have to submit to be deprived of a single privilege which I now enjoy. I do not covet the riches of the world—although it is a comfortable thing to be rich; I ask for nothing more than I now have, wherewithal to obtain a livelihood; and I would prefer the domestic and happy life of the country gentleman to all the pomp and splendor of the city nabob. I have, therefore, determined upon going into the country as affording a more extensive field for a young lawyer who has not family influence to support him in the city. A location in the country is preferable, not only because of the cheapness of living, but also by reason of the political as well as professional advantages which may be attained by a proper course of conduct. My friends have advised me which town or county in this State presents the best field to consider.”

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

The advice of these friends was of the highest value. Chief among them were Senators Green, Tallmadge and Whiting, who had been greatly attracted to him during his two terms of service as Deputy Clerk of the State Senate and of the Court of Errors. His first choice was Delaware County, partly for reasons of a personal nature, which will be evident later in this narrative, principally because in his opinion no other county afforded so many inducements to persons wishing to interest themselves in the politics of the State. But he gave this up. "My bark," he said, "is a frail one, and I must not let it drift beyond the limits of my profession." He next considered Onondaga County, which seemed to offer great inducements. Possibly he might have settled there had he not been attracted by the opportunities in the newer portions of what was then the "far West." The opening of the Erie Canal had given an immense impulse to the development of the western part of the State of New York. Essentially a pioneer, he listened with eagerness to Senators Green and Tallmadge when they urged him to come and help them to develop the infant county of Wayne, and to Senator Bowen Whiting

when he urged him to take part at Geneva in the development of Seneca township, in the county of Ontario. The session of the Senate lasted from the first of January to the twentieth of April, and before its close the question was decided in favor of the West.

The best opening seemed to be at Geneva, and it was a flattering prospect for a youth of twenty-two. Mr. Bowen Whiting, afterwards a distinguished judge, at this time District-Attorney of his county, State Senator, and a man of influence in both county and State, was in a partnership which was to expire by limitation in the succeeding autumn. He proposed that Charles Butler should then become his partner; and a provisional agreement was made to this effect. The eager lawyer, however, had no mind to spend a summer in idleness, nor indeed to rest his future on a single hope. The Senators from Wayne County still urged him to make at least a trial there. Mr. John S. Tallmadge, especially, begged him to "come and see our County, the Pride of the World, and Lyons, its most beautiful village." Accordingly he began practice there while awaiting the permanent situation at Geneva.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

Mr. Butler's first letter from Lyons was dated May 1, 1824:

“ I have finally arrived at home, much pleased, I can assure you, to get to a resting-place, after riding four hundred miles over

‘ Ruts and ridges,
And bridges
Made of a few uneasy planks,
In open ranks,’

as some poet has expressed it. The country is much pleasanter than I expected to find it. Lyons is larger and the inhabitants more friendly than I anticipated. I board at the Mansion House, in the most central part of the village, in Water street (they even have streets here), and directly on the bank of the canal. From the table at which I am now writing I have a delightful view of the canal for some distance, and of all the craft on it. It is an excellent substitute for the North River. Packets and boats are constantly passing, the former loaded with passengers, the latter with the produce of the Western world. The boatmen have bugles and horns, and make merry music as they pass along. There are a number of fine country residences in the vicin-

ity, and everything looks as if the wealth and population of the country were rapidly increasing, and as if Lyons was destined to be almost a city.

From what I have seen I feel assured that I have made a discreet and excellent location. I find it difficult to obtain board in a private family—at present I board with Mr. Griffith, a brother-in-law of my friend Mr. Green, an excellent landlord, with an interesting and pleasant family, and furnishing an excellent and neat table. I think of renting an office in Broad street, just around the corner, a few rods west of my boarding house, painted white with green blinds, having two pleasant rooms, one of which I shall convert into a bedroom. When I sleep in the office I shall pay Mr. Griffith at the rate of twelve shillings (\$1.50) per week, for victuals. I could not get the front room in the office for less than twenty-six dollars a year, and I can rent them both for thirty. Since I could not get board and lodging together for less than two dollars a week, I shall now save enough in the year to furnish the bedroom in the office. The arrangement, I think, will be a pleasant one. Those citizens whom I have conversed with are pleased at my coming,

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

and say that I shall do well. The inhabitants had been expecting me for seven or eight days, and I presume are much relieved."

The next letter gave an account of the first Sunday in Lyons :

"I went to the Presbyterian Meeting-house this morning. It is a building erected in olden time—extremely frail and venerable in appearance—probably a few feet larger than the school-house in the Square in Walton—plain benches, running lengthwise, and parallel with each other, form the seats. The pulpit, made of plain oaken timber, is elevated about $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet above the pews. The ladies sit on one side of the pulpit, the gentlemen on the other (this, you know, is rigid Presbyterianism). I could not stand erect, the ceiling was so low, but had to bend my head in a devotional position when the Parson prayed. Parson Pomeroy, the Shepherd of the flock, is an old and venerable-looking man. His head is whitened with the frost of years—his delivery broken, but impressive; and when animated with the subject reminds one of the apostolic age. I was delighted with his preaching. The simplicity of his appearance and the earnest and sincere manner of his

delivery form a striking contrast to the city clergy. Thinks I to myself, this is a true devotion. Here the poor and the rich are literally on an equal footing (the pews are not elevated, but on a level) and here pure and genuine religion is preached. There was something in the worship, the construction of the building, and the appearance of the preacher, so novel that to me the service was quite entertaining. However, the Lyonsites have become proud and are making preparations to build a new and elegant church and mean to 'throw Parson Pomeroy over the pulpit,' as a gentleman informed me to-day. The old church will be razed to the foundation. I shall regret to see it done—and 'what for no ;' are not the old church and the old parson good enough ?"

In 1824, the village of Lyons was considered to be well toward the setting sun, but it was then, as it is now, a pleasant place, and the enthusiasm of the youth fairly glowed as he told of its charms to his friends at home. He would never admit that it was as beautiful as Geneva or as Canandaigua—the latter he declared to be "the most charming place in all creation"—but he maintained that Lyons was the natural rival of Geneva

and that the time would come when the former place would not only successfully compete with the latter in business but, also in wealth and beauty. Lyons also, as he proudly claimed, was very accessible from Albany, only four days distant. One could leave Utica at nine in the evening and be in Lyons at eight the second morning after, so that it was "in fact only one day's travel" from Utica to Lyons. The journeying of those days was of course on the canal; by the "Packet Boat," the traveler leaving Albany at six o'clock on Monday morning would be due to arrive in Lyons on the succeeding Thursday; and would, as Mr. Butler said without the least suspicion of humor, "see a great deal of the country on his way."

In this opening life at Lyons, both the simplicity of the well-bred youth and the characteristic traits of the man of large foresight quickly made themselves evident. He began his law career with little capital besides his natural ability. His personal expenditures were frugal and it would certainly appear that the opening of an establishment at a total cost of nine dollars a month for the combined expenses of office and home was a

modest venture. But the young lawyer had plenty of courage for outlay in professional matters. Postage in those days was a most important item; on a single sheet to Albany it was a shilling and a half, and on a double sheet twice that sum. "But you must," he wrote to a legal correspondent, "forward letters to me with all convenient speed and promptness. The double postage is of no consequence in comparison with the object in view." He would have efficiency in his business no matter what it cost and he would be equipped for it. He borrowed five hundred dollars from his brother at Albany to buy a law library. He used to say later that his "only capital, when he married, was his library and his debt therefor." But it proved to be the best law library in the county at that day, and made his little office a centre for the consultations of the bar.

Mr. Butler was wise when he determined to start for himself rather than to rely upon the influence of his brother or of that group of statesmen, which he calls the "Junto," and which is known to history as the "Albany Regency." His independent legal life had thereby far greater scope. In his new home the first problem was

that of participation in political affairs. The advice of his brother was against it :

“I would advise you to be moderate though decided in the expression of your political sentiments. Nothing gives more weight to one’s opinions than to have them clothed with an air of modesty, especially the opinions of a young man among strangers. You will be obliged to express your views on political subjects and to take some part in them, the less the better. Let eminence in your profession be your constant aim ; every thing else of a temporal character should be in subordination to it. The folly of risking one’s hopes on the ocean of politics is daily more and more apparent. Your first essays will of course be in a Justice’s Court. In regard to business of that kind you know my views. It is useful, though it may be dangerous. You have not yet contracted any of the bad habits of pettifogging and I am not afraid that you will. You will not fail to recollect that this is probably the most favorable time you will ever have for pursuing a course of regular legal studies. You have more leisure now than you will ever have again. Let it be improved to the best advantage.”

The advice in this letter had important results. Mr. Butler was, though perhaps hardly consciously, during these summer months at Lyons, facing decisions in regard to his work second in importance to no others since the day when he gave up the alluring vision of naval glory. His brother offered three specific counsels; to study intensely, to avoid pettifoggery, and to keep out of politics. For the first of these there was little need of emphasis. The bent of the young lawyer's mind was studious, and habits of industry had been fixed by training. At the end of the summer he had completed a task of reading rather surprising in its amount, and less limited in range than one could have expected. He wrote from Lyons, August 30, 1824:

“ I have just finished reading Vattel and have commenced Montesquieu, but think I shall have to lay it aside for some future day. My reading hitherto has been rather desultory, not having adopted (because I had not the means of pursuing) a regular course of study. Phillips's two volumes on the Laws of Evidence, Cowen's Reports, portions of Dunlap, Archbold, Comyn

on Contract, Adams's Ejectment, and Toller, and Blackstone, together with some History, Paley's Philosophy and Theology, Dwight's Theology, Milton's works, Hazlitt's Lectures, Chatham's Letters, and a variety of miscellaneous matter have been read since the first of May. I have made it a point to read a few lines in Virgil each morning. All of Dwight's Theology has not been read, but a considerable portion of it. Having also had occasion to investigate a number of legal questions arising in cases which have been submitted to me, I think the season thus far has been one of real legal, if not of pecuniary profit."

The second subject of advice concerned "Pettifogging." As many young lawyers of that day understood the term, this was a perfectly legitimate branch of what may be called the legal trade, requiring small labor and attractive as a source of income. It meant simply devoting one's attention to the numerous petty cases to which the newness of the country and the rapid development of conflicting interests gave rise. These cases were usually tried before a Justice of the Peace, with witnesses little versed in the subtleties of the law.

A knowledge of the weaknesses of human nature in the matter of giving testimony, and perhaps even in the matter of weighing and judging testimony when given, often made for success more surely than sound legal knowledge or sincere zeal for the principles of equity. A practice of this sort, therefore, led to immediate gain, but rarely to desirable reputation. Yet it was a temptation to many a young lawyer, especially to one who, like Charles Butler, had resolutely left influential friends in order not to be dependent, and who was in a new country with no capital but "some books and a debt."

Hardly was he settled when a client appeared with a "horse case," which was likely, if successfully conducted, to lay the foundation for a lucrative pettifogging business. Mr. Butler went, probably with some elation, to conduct the case; but after he had won it he decided definitely not to take any more of the kind. "I made," he wrote, "the first essay in a Justice's Court about three weeks since in Sodus, about eight miles north of Lyons, and have since received considerable credit for it. Mr. Grift, a member of the Villages, went out expressly to witness the first appearance of the young

lawyer from Albany.' It was a suit for the breach of the warranty of a span of horses, and there were twenty-eight witnesses examined. Of course great interest was excited, as usual upon such occasions. There were two renowned pettifoggers opposed to me."

The winning of his first case was a triumph for the boy of twenty-two. Yet the real triumph was the decision to reserve himself, even though it might be at the cost of patient waiting, for what he termed "real legal rather than pecuniary" profit. The reward of this resolution came more promptly than he could have anticipated. At the session of the Court of Common Pleas, which was held in Lyons in September, he found himself entrusted with the care of two important cases, and on that occasion made a record which attracted the attention of some of the noted men of the day.

The third item of advice in his brother's letter was "to keep out of politics," and it involved a grave decision affecting the entire course of his professional life. Little of the suspicion which in these latter days is apt to be suggested by the term "politician" had then been aroused. A political career in the early years of the century was

an attractive one for a lawyer, and was, as in its best estate it is still, a legitimate goal for ambition, leading to high office and substantial fame, and offering opportunities for usefulness. Mr. Butler was attracted toward politics by natural bent as well as by early associations. He possessed in a high degree a capacity for discerning the principle which lay behind any special application of constitutional law or any political measure about which men differed. To this discernment he added exceptional tact in bringing men to an agreement on the basis of the principles involved. This remarkable union of insight and tact—of power to see the principle involved and suavity to win men to its acceptance—was the equipment which later in life won him his best triumphs. It is also the basis for the making of a statesman, and one is now almost tempted to regret his decision. In making it he must surely have stifled many natural desires. He had been in the midst of the political life at Albany. His own brother Benjamin Franklin was himself giving most of his strength and influence to the service of the State and was fairly launched on that distinguished public career which carried him afterwards to Wash-

ington as the Attorney-General of the United States. Charles Butler was urged towards politics on all sides. The friend of his youth, Edwin Croswell, then just established as State printer and editor of the *Albany Argus*, wrote to him, begging the "tall and handsome Charles" to be the best man at his wedding in September, and with equal zeal urging the "rising young lawyer" to join him and his friends in making the Republican party a power for usefulness in New York State. The history of New York politics has few chapters more important than that which narrates the influence (largely a sound and useful one) exerted upon its affairs by Edwin Croswell, Martin Van Buren, Benjamin Franklin Butler, John A. Dix, Silas Wright, William L. Marcy, Azariah C. Flagg and the others who formed the Albany Regency. It was no light matter to renounce the opportunity for association with such men and the advantages which it offered.

Nevertheless the independent young lawyer decided against politics. Success and not failure in this direction led him to this step just as success and not failure in pettifogging had led him to confine himself to the higher fields of

legal practice. At the outset, almost in spite of himself, he was drawn into politics. His first venture was a successful vindication of the good name of his friend, Senator Green, to whose advice his own settlement in Lyons had been largely due. Political feeling ran high just then in New York State. An "Electoral" bill, giving to the people the choice of electors of President and Vice-President, then chosen by the legislature, was up for action. The Assembly and the Governor were for the bill; the Senate was against it, fearing that Jackson instead of Crawford might be elected if the people made the choice. All this is ancient history now, for another electoral usage has long been established. But strife was plentiful about the matter in 1824. Particularly in Wayne and Ontario counties had popular enmity fastened itself upon Senator Green. The *Lyons Advertiser* refused to publish his speech, and the people of Waterloo burned him in effigy. Mr. Butler was a much younger man than Mr. Green. He was a newcomer in the district, and he had up to this time been extremely cautious about engaging in political discussions. He hesitated to take part. "It does not become me," he wrote, "to

say or do much at this time, but I cannot remain silent and witness the unfairness, not to say the dishonesty, with which they attempt to destroy a man for having discharged with frankness and propriety his duty to his country and his conscience. I know Green. I know him to be honest and intelligent, above suspicion and above reproach." He did not remain silent; and the course he took in its union of calmness and impetuosity is characteristic of the man who always won the convictions of his opponents in after life, before attempting to compel their movements. Young as he was he entered the political field himself, and in a letter to his brother gave the result:

"My friend Green, who is one of the most honest, intelligent and popular men in this western country, has somewhat 'exposed himself to the enemy' by his proper and honest stand in the Senate at the extraordinary session. Although there is not a man in the country who is more zealously in favor of the Electoral bill, he could not consent to a violation of the Constitution. The editor of our paper—the Lyons *Advertiser*—is a violent electoral bill and Adams man, and also under Federal influence. He, too,

was much incensed with Mr. Green for presuming to be in favor of an immediate adjournment, so much so that he would not even publish his speech. I had frequent conversations with him, and by dint of persuasion brought him over to the faith, as you will perceive by the copy of the *Advertiser* which accompanies this. The remarks about Mr. Green, under the editorial head, were written by me and published verbatim as they were written. Great is the astonishment of our villagers, a great majority of whom are Federalists and Clintonians, at the course of the editor of the *Advertiser*. They expected that instead of justifying he would denounce Mr. Green.”

Senator Green was fortunate in his advocate, and the story goes to confirm the feeling in the reader that opportunity combined with natural aptitude in turning the attention of the young lawyer toward politics. But he resisted the temptation, great as it must have been, and after due consideration, he wrote in December to his friends at Albany formally announcing his intention thenceforth to take no active part in political life. Many of his friends had urged him to the contrary course, but most of them seem to

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

have recognized the wisdom of the decision when once made. Mr. Croswell wrote :

“ You say you have renounced politics. It is a reasonable resolution. I take it you mean by this an active share in them ; for it is quite impossible for you or me to lose all feeling about such matters. Even if it were possible, it would not be proper. There are great considerations why we should feel, in a reasonable degree, the responsibilities we are under to the party, the country and ourselves. There are few conditions of life in which we can be absolved from these, or, indeed, in which the ordinary feelings of the mind would allow us to be free if we could.”

It need hardly be said that through his whole life Mr. Butler had a deep sense of these public responsibilities of which Mr. Croswell spoke. His decision as to active political life, however, once made, was never changed. Though his voice, his pen and his means were always at the service of any good public cause ; and though his influence made him a friend to be desired, he never, except as a private citizen, entered the field of politics and never sought its honors.

Arrangements for the removal to Geneva were

completed in the autumn of 1824. On October 25th Mr. Butler wrote :

“ You have probably been apprised of my intention to remove to Geneva and will not therefore be surprised at the caption of my letter. Last week I took up my bed and walked from Lyons to a village abounding, I hope, in more business and wealth than the one I left. Mr. Whiting and I have concluded a connection as partners equally interested in the profits of the practice of law. We partially concluded upon the arrangements in Albany last winter, and it was with a view to its consummation some time during the season that I located at Lyons, not intending to become a permanent citizen of that village. Business and prospects there were more flattering when I left than I had any reason to expect they would be, and if the connection with Mr. Whiting had not been formed, I think that I should have been contented to remain there although inducements to remove to Onondaga and join Mr. Earll were very great. The situation of Geneva is the most beautiful imaginable. It is at the foot of the lake on its west bank. The lake is about two and a quarter miles wide and

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

separates us from Seneca County ; and, what is remarkable and renders the country more interesting, the lake never freezes nor has it been known to be closed with ice in the recollection of the oldest inhabitant ; the water is clear and transparent, the banks not very bold but even and sloping. The main street extends for more than a mile along the bank of the lake. The office which we at present occupy is on the public square and near my boarding house. A new one is building for us on the opposite side of the square, next door to the bank, and when completed will be one of the finest situations in the village. Boarding costs more than at Lyons. At Geneva boarding and lodging cost four dollars, including office expenses. The Genevans are the most enterprising people in the State of New York, and Geneva will soon rival any place in this State for wealth and business. We intend to apply to the legislature for the improvement of the navigation of the outlet, which will not only give an impulse to trade in Geneva, but will be a source of vast revenue and profit to the State. It is also in contemplation to open a canal navigation from the head of Seneca Lake to

Newtown (now Elmira) on the Susquehanna River, a distance of twenty miles only and directly south. Refer to the map and you will at once perceive what a door will be opened for trade and what an important auxiliary it will be to the Erie Canal; steamboats will be built next season to ply on the lake and to tow boats between Geneva and its head."

It is evident from the tone of his letters that the young man, just entering upon law practice in Geneva, had no notion of giving up interest in the welfare of his adopted village, although giving up active participation in the politics of the State. He became a citizen at once in the fullest sense of the term. He drew a bill for the Canal, which was presented in the Legislature by Mr. Whiting that very winter and took active interest in many other projects, afterwards successfully carried out.

At this same session of the Legislature the new firm presented a bill for the endowment of the college at Geneva. "Our affairs," wrote Mr. Bowen Whiting from Albany, January 9, 1825, "stand well, so far as we know. The Governor is fully in favor of our canal and of endowing our college. How the House stands I do not know."

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

The canal bill had its vicissitudes, but passed at this session, and its passage was celebrated at a public dinner in Geneva. The College bill had its vicissitudes also. In the spring of 1826 Mr. Butler visited Albany to labor in its interest, and he thereafter continued the firm friend of the institution then called Geneva College, which later, with new endowments, became Hobart College, and has since abundantly justified its founding.

The law business of the new firm was from the first extensive. Mr. Bowen Whiting had been established in Geneva for eight years and had a good practice. He was now State Senator and in his absence in Albany left all his business in Charles Butler's care. The advent of so young a lawyer in charge of important cases created great interest. One of the first of these cases was at Canandaigua. A private letter tells of the compliment he received for the manner in which he discharged his duty: "It came from the Crier, a venerable-looking giant of six feet eight inches. 'Well now' (his own words), 'it does my heart good to see a child like you speaking to the jury so. Bless my soul! Why, you are a little boy, and one would not think you could speak so.'"

But speak he did and won the case, which was an appeal from the decision of a justice, and thereby gained such renown that the citizens of the town of Williamson held a public jubilee "in commemoration of the triumph of virtue over vice." The records speak of many other cases undertaken even this first winter in defense or prosecution of matters of relatively high importance, carried on by young Butler without any assistance from clerk or counsellor. Yet, in the midst of the session of the Court he found time to organize a reading-room for Geneva:

"Since my return (from the trial of the cases just mentioned) I have been head over ears in business at the office and preparing for the trial of a number of cases next week at the Common Pleas and Sessions in this county and Canandaigua. I have also been engaged in drawing the constitution and by-laws of the 'Geneva Atheneum,' which we organized yesterday. The object of the Association is to procure a number of the best domestic and foreign periodicals and newspapers, such as the *Edinburgh, London and Westminster Quarterly, North American Quarterly, Atlantic Magazine* and others, and to establish

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

a general reading-room for ladies and gentlemen in a new building to be completed by the first of July—a few doors from my office—under the direction of five managers of whom I am one. We sent for the periodicals yesterday.”

In the midst of his busiest season Charles Butler undertook the study of French. He wrote on February 20, 1825: “I returned yesterday from Canandaigua having been there since Monday attending a Court of Common Pleas and Sessions and having officiated as District-Attorney. Thirteen indictments were found. Having no one to assist me I had to be up night and day and two nights did not go to bed at all but was writing constantly. I tried three indictments and succeeded in all of them. The having to attend the sittings of the courts, although a very interesting duty, is most fatiguing; the noise, bustle and throng are tiresome. But the trial of a case involving interesting questions of law is highly entertaining. A court-house during the session of the court is a world in miniature; you see at once men from different sections of the country, of different minds and interests, of different bearings and manners, and of different stations

in life, from the judge on the bench to the vilest criminal in the box. I do not find time to read much besides law, a subject which has interested me for years and which now grows with my growth and strengthens with my strength. But two weeks ago I commenced reading French and I have made pretty good proficiency (can say *Donnez moi du pain et du beurre—Nous mangeons du hachis!*) Business has broken in upon it and in the morning I shall recommence. I take a lesson every morning from nine to half-past ten, and have to get up pretty early to prepare for it. M. Canu, the teacher, is an accomplished French scholar, a lawyer about my age. He was friend to Napoleon and belongs to a respectable family in Paris. He is a friend to Lafayette. He arrived in America in August or September, being compelled by some political persecution to leave his country. He comes to Geneva highly recommended and intends to take a few scholars and spend the summer with us. He is a fine man and under his instruction I shall pursue the study of French as long as he remains."

In 1825 enthusiasm ran high over Lafayette on the occasion of his triumphal progress through

the State of New York, and towns and cities competed eagerly for the opportunity to do him honor. Lafayette had been visiting Niagara and was to make his journey eastward to Albany. Great was the rivalry between Lyons and Geneva as to which should secure a visit. Mr. Bowen Whiting, young Mr. Butler with his French accent just new from Paris, and others won the day for Geneva. Mr. Butler was selected as one of the leading citizens to receive him, and wrote describing the occasion as follows :

“ We have had Lafayette with us and have just recovered from the fatigue of honoring him. I had the happiness to escort him about twenty-five miles and had good opportunity to make acquaintance with him and suite. We had only twenty-four hours’ notice and received him in style inferior only to the display at Philadelphia—so we say of ourselves. Lafayette said it was beautiful and surpassed anything he had seen in this country. The entertainment was at the Franklin House, just finished, at the foot of Seneca street, on the margin of the lake. I was on the committee of reception of which Bowen Whiting, who made the address of welcome, was

chairman. The committee included the leading citizens of the village, Henry Dwight, William S. De Zeng, Major Rees, Joseph Fellows, Nicholas Ayrault, Phineas Prouty, David S. Skaats and others. The citizens of Geneva were cordial and enthusiastic in their reception of the distinguished guest. A triumphal arch, decorated with flowers, was thrown over Main street, at the point where it approached the public square, and under this the carriage containing the general and those in the procession passed. By arrangement he was to breakfast at Geneva about eleven o'clock, on his arrival from Canandaigua, where he had passed the night. A large number of gentlemen, members of the committee and others, went out in carriages and on horseback to meet the escort from Canandaigua, about two miles out. On entering the village the procession halted on the public square, on Main street, opposite the Geneva Hotel, where the guest was formally transferred to our committee, and the address of welcome delivered. From the room in which the breakfast or lunch had been prepared there was a fine view of the lake. General Lafayette remarked at the table that it was to him a pleasant coincidence that he

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

should here be breakfasting on salmon trout taken from Geneva Lake, in America, for which the Lake of Geneva in Switzerland was so celebrated, and where he had often eaten the same. A very large and fine salmon trout, which had been caught near the head of the lake, was sent to the committee for the occasion. It was a clear, beautiful day, and Geneva, always beautiful, appeared at its best. The general expressed his great delight in the beauty of the country through which he had been riding on his journey eastward from Buffalo, and particularly with the situation of the villages Canandaigua and Geneva, on the margin of lakes which give such finished beauty to the landscape."

In 1825 two incidents occurred, in themselves of slight importance, and seeming to have little connection, which gave direction to one of the great achievements of Mr. Butler's life. One of these was the incorporation of the Insurance Company of Geneva with a capital of \$250,000. While in Lyons, Mr. Butler had been appointed agent of the New York Insurance Company, and he was convinced that a local company would be a substantial protection to Geneva and afford a good investment for its capital. He drew the

petition and bill for such a company in December. Mr. Bowen Whiting presented it in the Senate, and the Charter was granted. Whiting and Butler were made Attorneys for the company, and thus became interested in the fortunes of the land-owners and proprietors in all the villages and towns round about. The knowledge thus gained was a useful preparation for the development of that region through the system of mortgage loans inaugurated later by Mr. Butler, and maintained by the great insurance company which he afterwards represented.

The second incident which turned Mr. Butler's mind definitely towards the possibilities of development helped to deepen the impression of the first. Mr. Edwin Crosswell of the Albany *Argus* organized in May a "jaunt" to the western region. Mr. Butler became one of the party, which consisted of five gentlemen, traveling with two saddle horses and a four-seated wagon. They explored the country as far as Buffalo, thence to Niagara Falls and the battle grounds of Erie, Chippewa, and Bridgewater, and crossing the Niagara River in a skiff about thirty rods below the Falls, they journeyed on the Canadian side to the Lake.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

“Fort George,” wrote Mr. Butler, “is at the mouth of the Niagara on the British side; Fort Niagara is on our side directly opposite to the former; there are troops stationed at both. We saw the British drilling and they looked brave as death. The officers appeared well, but neither their fort nor their men appear as well as Uncle Sam’s on the opposite side. The village of Newark is delightfully situated, having been rebuilt since the war, but it is dull and tiresome. We returned to Queenstown, and crossed over to our country at Lewiston. I could not but remark the contrast between the two shores. On the Canada side the country is truly beautiful, but the inhabitants are indolent; farm houses in decay, fences generally poor, the people poor. There are no signs of prosperity or business, and everything appears still and silent as the grave. The moment you cross you are sensible of a change in everything. The Americans are industrious and enterprising. The country smiles with prosperity; mechanic arts, agriculture, commerce and manufactures are thriving. This contrast is generally remarked by all who travel to Fort George. The reason is obvious; the Canadians are oppressed

with taxes and impositions and depend on government for support. The Americans are independent of government. The inhabitants of our happy country are protected in their rights and liberties by the government, but they have no lien upon it for their maintenance. They must exercise the faculties which they possess for that purpose. It is a fine evening. We have had a pleasant game of whist."

Charles Butler left the party at Lockport. "I returned," he wrote, "by way of Burning Springs, about seventeen miles south-west of Geneva. It is a most singular phenomenon. The gas is carried through ordinary pine pump logs from the spring to the house, about twenty rods, and is communicated to the stove and lighted. It burns constantly and is a substitute for fuel. It is also a substitute for candles, being carried through the barrel of a gun. The gas escapes through the priming hole in the barrel and is lighted up. The old lady was boiling her tea-kettle for breakfast. It contained four quarts of water and boiled in fourteen minutes. We had a most delightful excursion—fine roads, fine company, and a fine country."

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

The year 1825 has been dwelt upon rather at length since it was one of great moment for its achievements and its promise. Most important of all were its later months. On the 10th of October Mr. Butler was married to Miss Eliza A. Ogden, of Walton, Delaware County, New York. This marriage was the fulfillment of a long-cherished desire. The story of the friendship, of the awakening love, of the increasing intimacy, of the tender affection, is told in a long series of letters, glowing with a constancy of love and sympathy which made even the reticence characteristic of the day eloquent of devotion and fidelity. It was a fortunate union, which for more than fifty years grew increasingly more complete. Eliza Ogden was the eldest of six children. Her brothers, William B. and Mahlon D. Ogden, became citizens of Chicago, and from its earliest days identified themselves with its growth. Two of the younger sisters also settled in that city. Caroline, afterwards Mrs. Ezra B. McCagg, first married William E. Jones, who became a partner in the real estate firm of Ogden, Sheldon and Company, established in Chicago in 1836. The youngest sister, Frances, married Edwin H. Sheldon, who

also became a partner in the firm. Only one sister, Emily, who married Judge N. K. Wheeler, remained in Delaware County, where she lived for many years. She afterward settled near the delightful home "Boscobel," at High Bridge (New York City), in which Mr. William B. Ogden spent the last ten years of his life.

Abraham Ogden had moved from Morristown, New Jersey, to Delaware County, attracted by the water power and fine forests of that region. He built a mill and established a prosperous lumber business at Walton on the Delaware River, floating the logs down the river every Spring after the freshets, sometimes going on the raft himself to Philadelphia, where he found his market. In her girlhood Eliza had twice made this journey of three or four hundred miles with her father, and recalled visits in the Quaker City, where she walked in the street with silk stockings and white kid slippers. Mr. Ogden also raised sheep and manufactured woolen cloth. The Government offered bounties to encourage home manufactures after the War of 1812, and Mr. Ogden won both the State and County bounty for his woolen cloth. The prize was a handsome silver tea-set, still in

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

the family, made at Albany, with a well-wrought sheep standing on the lid of the tea-pot and sugar bowl.

Eliza Ogden had been no stranger to Judge Butler's household, for her aunt, Hannah Weed, had married William, Medad's youngest brother; and the friendship formed at school with Emily, their daughter, had made her as a cousin to all the Butlers of Charles's generation. Indeed, Benjamin Franklin Butler, in the letter which he wrote to Charles congratulating him on his marriage, claimed to have almost lost his heart to Eliza, when she as a little girl of thirteen stayed at his father's house a day or two on her way to boarding school. "I once saw her," he said, "when on her way to Litchfield some nine or ten years ago. She was then a little girl, but she proved nearly as dangerous to me as she has since done to you, for I well recollect that I was half inclined to fall in love with her myself." Of course, Benjamin Franklin, who must have been a staid lawyer of the mature age of twenty-one, could not seriously consider little girls of thirteen, but this conquest was but one of the evidences of the attraction which through all her life Mrs.

Butler had for those who knew her. Eliza had the advantage of early and good training. In the summer of 1816, the same year in which Charles went to Greenville Academy, she was sent with her cousin Emily to the boarding school of Miss Pierce in Litchfield, Conn. The journal which she kept during the two years of her stay gives evidence of a remarkably well-balanced mind. In this school sound instruction was given in all English branches. Especially good seems to have been the training in history, for which the taste then formed gave solace to many later years. One notes with interest how thorough was the course as compared with similar work in these days. Steady regular drill in Grammar, Blair's rhetoric, Geography, History ("Universal, Sacred and Profane") for the week days, regular religious instruction for the evenings and Sundays—this was the mental diet for the girl of thirteen in the Connecticut School. The journal gives critical observations upon the preaching of Dr. Lyman Beecher, then about forty years old and at the zenith of his early fame. Dr. Beecher and the Rev. Mr. Brace*

*Mr. Brace was the father of Mr. Charles Loring Brace for many years engaged in charitable work in the City of New York.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

were counsellors to the girls at school, and their influence greatly aided in fixing the steadfast Christian character on Mrs. Butler's later life. She was, however, of strong native resolution, and owed a debt only for impulse and suggestion to this early training. We find her after her return to Walton reading Addison's "Spectator," Paley's "Evidences," Volney's "Ruins," and Erasmus Darwin's "Temple of Nature"; and the list of her reading through the next few years might almost serve as a record of the useful literature of the day. It was Napoleon's hour in the first quarter of the century, and history illumined by his career became the ardent study of youth. It is not all a gain to young girls of our day that the easy magazine and the never absent novel have supplanted the sterner methods of an earlier period.

And yet one cannot think that it was chiefly qualities of the mind which made this union so perfect through all the years. "Love is the pilot, love the only guide," said Charles in one of his letters, "and I have a presentiment already that the little urchin will lead me off on some fine October morning, when the heavens are blue and

O F C H A R L E S B U T L E R

the sun shines clear and bright, even if you do not give me a written consent to come." To his dying day he had a heart of thankfulness that this love had filled his life.

CHAPTER III

LIFE AT GENEVA—PROFESSION OF RELIGION—
RESIGNATION OF POSTMASTERSHIP—THE
MORGAN TRIAL—GREAT WORK IN
CONNECTION WITH THE NEW YORK
LIFE INSURANCE AND TRUST
COMPANY ON BEHALF OF
THE FARMERS OF WEST-
ERN NEW YORK

IT was a simple establishment that the young people set up. The village of Geneva then contained about two thousand inhabitants, with three hundred houses and twenty-six shops of all kinds, great and small. It had two hotels, excellent for those days—the Mansion House at the village centre and the Franklin House, just opened, by the lake. There were besides several small inns of the old-fashioned type, more like family boarding houses than hotels, with a few large comfortable rooms, and with proprietors of the type of the host of the Tabard

Inn when Chaucer's pilgrims were "esed atte beste" on the road to Canterbury. It was in one of these family homes, somewhat ambitiously known as the "Eagle Tavern," that the household was first established.

William B. Ogden, who appears in the letters as a delightful friend and companion of his sister, drove the wedding party, Charles, Eliza and Charles's sister, Clarissa, in his own wagon the long journey from Walton to Geneva. He gave advice in the fitting up of the new home, and bought in New York forty yards of carpet, at a dollar a yard, of "good bright colors with a figure or pattern very neat and small." Benjamin Franklin Butler gave assistance in getting the chairs. "We have furnished our parlor," wrote Mrs. Charles Butler to her brother, "in a plain but comfortable manner. The carpet which you bought me is first laid down and looks very neat. Then we have a very neat cherry table on which to set candles (there being no mantel piece in the room, but a Franklin fireplace like yours at Walton), and a dozen handsome curled maple chairs which you know I liked so well at Albany and sent for there. We have a very handsome

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

looking-glass at twenty dollars, and under that stands my work-stand, these being the two richest pieces of furniture in the room. Charles has a picture of Lafayette on one side of the room which with a neat pair of brass andirons must conclude the description. Our chairs cost fifteen shillings each and with one shilling for putting them up in mats they cost us sixteen shillings (\$2.00) each, which I think was very cheap. I think you will give us some credit for being economical." Four years later Mr. Butler built a house on the shore of the Lake, and took much pleasure in laying out a garden in terraces sloping down to the water's edge.

Charles Butler came of a family which had preserved the earnest seriousness of its Puritan ancestors. The stern and rock-bound coast on which they settled was in harmony with their own nature. The reticence of the soul in those days was a barrier not easily passed. There was a rigid distinction between the world and the church, and the habit of communion with others on deep themes was gained only after intense strain and effort. Thus periods of exceptional emotional life, "revivals of religion," became the habit of

church work. During this first year at Geneva one of these waves of emotion swept over the western country. Charles Butler was touched by it and he threw himself actively thereafter into all the religious life of the community. He became the corresponding secretary of the American Sunday School Union and organizer of Sunday School work throughout the county of Ontario. In connection with other citizens he re-organized the County Bible Society, auxiliary to the American Bible Society, became its secretary, and made addresses in its behalf throughout the county. Out of his slender means he contributed twenty-five dollars a year toward the support of a minister in the new church at Kinderhook Landing. One may say that this was not a large amount, and that these labors were not constantly engrossing, yet for a young lawyer to contribute thus of time and means implies a devotion and a firmness of principle that go far to explain the greater service of his later life.

He was ready to sacrifice as well as to labor. In 1830 he was appointed postmaster at Geneva without solicitation on his own part; the salary was a great assistance; the routine work could be mostly

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

done by clerks; and the duties, in those days of few mails and infrequent and expensive correspondence, were not arduous. But after long deliberation and some weeks of experience Mr. Butler resigned the office, and wrote a letter to the authorities at Washington which is given here because it is a revelation of character as well as a record of sacrifice:

“GENEVA, N. Y., 26th of May, 1831.

To the Honorable WILLIAM TAYLOR BARRY,
Postmaster-General:

“DEAR SIR—In communicating to you my resignation of the post office of this place, I feel it my duty from the uniform confidence and courtesy which you have extended to me, the high regard which I entertain for your character, and a proper consideration of the immediate causes which influenced me, to explain briefly the reasons.

“Soon after entering upon my duties I found that there was no Sabbath in the post office. The best assistant I ever had, and subsequently two other young men of high character, resigned on this account, and it was difficult to secure competent and conscientious service. I endeavored to persuade myself that there was necessity in this

arrangement ; that the Sunday mails could not be discontinued and the office closed on that day without prejudice to the public interest ; that the law of the land regulated the business, and that I was acting under the responsibility of an oath to perform the duties of the office according to law. But more reflection brought me to the conclusion that if there was any propriety in suspending the business of the other departments of government on that day, the principle applied with greater force to the Post Office department than to any other, for its business was not only more extensive but employed a greater number of agents ; and it seemed to me that, so far from this presenting a justification in favor of the measure, it furnished the strongest reasons in favor of a more rigid suspension of all transactions on this day.

“It is a striking commentary upon the business arguments in favor of Sunday mails, that although the mail which arrives on that day may bring me a letter containing information upon which I may desire speedily to make a contract, yet the common law of the land expressly declares the invalidity of contracts made on Sunday. Knowing that the business could not be varied except by the inter-

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

position of the Congress of the United States, I have resolved to relinquish the office, and I hereby resign the same, to take effect at the expiration of the present quarter on the 30th June next.

“ I sincerely hope, my dear sir, that during your administration and under the auspices of our beloved President, the business of the Post Office Department may be established upon a footing more congenial with the moral spirit which characterizes our free and happy institutions. I have frankly expressed my views. In so doing I may perhaps have failed in satisfying you of their propriety and I may have presumed too much upon your indulgence. But for this I shall make no apology, as I have been prompted by considerations of duty to be frank with you, that you may not by reason of silence on my part attribute my resignation to any other than the true cause. Pray accept, my dear sir, the assurance of my regard and esteem forever.”

When this decision was made Mrs. Butler was at Walton, on a visit to her family. Her husband wrote to her :

“ Some events have transpired at Geneva ; namely, a house-cleaning, in the way of domestic

news, and an office-resigning. I have resigned the post office, and I am right glad; indeed, no act of my life ever afforded me one-half the gratification and peace of mind that this has, and I feel gratitude to the great and good Author and Giver of every perfect gift that He has not only guided and directed me, but that He has so tempered my mind to it. My dear wife, I have clearer evidence of the goodness of God in this transaction than in any other of my life."

The professional life at Geneva was full of achievement from its beginning. Charles Butler was a fine advocate—"tall, grave, dignified," say the descriptions—and won confidence so rapidly that his legal activities soon became part of the history of the section. He desired to take no share in politics save as a citizen interested in the welfare of the State. But his pen was at the service of his convictions, and the contributions which he made to the *Palladium* at Geneva, and to the *Argus* at Albany, soon made him well known to all the active citizens of the region. His influence became a potent one, and his approval or disapproval an important factor as respected both measures and men.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

Shortly after his settlement a remarkable incident of his legal career gave him more than local fame. In the autumn of 1826 and the spring of 1827 he became a public prosecutor in the famous "Morgan case." It is difficult now, after the lapse of three-quarters of a century, to realize the tremendous interest excited by this case, and to understand the prominence which any one officially connected with the conduct of it thereby attained. William Morgan was a member of the Order of Free Masons, who, in 1826, for reasons not clear, determined, in connection with a printer friend, named Miller, to publish to the world the secrets of the Masonic Order. His purpose was discovered, and, naturally, caused intense excitement among masons. The little printing office at Batavia became a centre of interest for all the country about, and all legitimate means were exerted to suppress the revelations.

Then in the autumn of 1826 came a sensation. On the 15th of September Morgan was arrested at Batavia on a trivial charge of debt, hurried to Canandaigua, tried, convicted, and committed to jail in default of the small sum needed to satisfy the judgment. Late in the evening of the same

day several men in a carriage stopped at the jail, satisfied the judgment, took Morgan and drove away. He was never again seen alive by his friends. The carriage was afterwards traced, moving westward, drawn by relays of horses, as far as the Niagara river. At the mouth of the river stood the old Fort Niagara, then unoccupied by troops, and in charge of a single custodian who with his family lived in the barracks. In the magazine of this fort Morgan was confined for a day or two. Then he vanished from the face of the earth, and to this day the mystery of his taking off has never been solved. Fifty-six years after the event Mr. Thurlow Weed published an account of a confession of one who said he helped to murder Morgan; but the hands of him who should have signed the confession were cold in death before the signature could be written. Looking back now after these many years, it seems probable that the original intention of his kidnappers was to remove Morgan to the safe custody of certain Masons in Canada, where no writ could reach him; and that this intention was not carried out on account of the unwillingness of the Canadian Masons to receive so dangerous a guest.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

Hence the halt at Niagara and the mystery of the disappearance. But even if one considered that the murder—granting that there was a murder—was not a part of the design, the horror remained. The shock of it startled the world, and the mystery deepened as the months went by.

The men who had aided in the kidnapping were men of good standing in the community, personally known to Bowen Whiting and Charles Butler. They were brought to trial, and it was the duty of the District-Attorney to undertake their prosecution. This District-Attorney was Mr. Bowen Whiting. He was himself a Mason, and while fully desirous of seeing justice done, he naturally felt that some suspicion of his zeal in prosecuting his fellow-masons might easily be aroused. In his stead Charles Butler, who as his partner acted as deputy district-attorney, had sole charge of the case. Under his direction four of the men who brought Morgan from Batavia to Canandaigua were indicted in November, 1826, for kidnapping. At the January circuit of 1827 they were arraigned. They pleaded guilty and were punished by imprisonment.

The successful prosecution of these cases made

Mr. Butler the best known man at the bar in the western portion of New York State. For the matter rapidly became a subject of far more than local interest. It had the attraction of a mystery ; it involved men of prominence ; and it seemed to suggest a question of principle. These men were not ordinary ruffians and had no thought of personal advantage. They believed themselves to be acting in the interest of good morals. They were defending, as they believed, the institution of Free Masonry, and the reasons which they gave for their conduct roused a storm of controversy they could little have foreseen. When they pleaded guilty to the kidnapping, three of them signed an exculpatory and mitigatory affidavit in which they avowed that their only object was to suppress the publication of the book. In the language of the affidavit: "The said William Morgan was engaged in the publication of a book on Free Masonry, in which he revealed secrets which he had solemnly sworn never to reveal ; and the said deponents, being desirous to prevent such publication, aided in the removal of Morgan for that purpose." To the people this seemed a high-handed outrage and defiance of law avowed

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

under oath, committed by Masons for Masonic purposes; and the institution of Free Masonry became involved in the public condemnation of this act. Such a burst of indignation and feeling was excited in western New York among men of all parties that the matter quickly became one of high political concern. The farmers met in primary meetings in every town throughout the seventh and eighth election districts of the State and resolved deliberately never to vote for any member of the Masonic Order for any elective office. For the people believed that the kidnapers acted with high authority and rested on some power which would protect and defend them. The foundations of the party institutions of the day were threatened by this new issue, and the eyes of statesmen throughout the Union awaited with anxious dread the impending revolution in Western New York.

It will not be possible here to give a full account of this struggle; though the tale of the collision of political forces on this issue in Vermont, in Massachusetts and in Pennsylvania, as well as in New York, of its importance in the presidential contest of 1828, of its influence on the fortunes

of John Quincy Adams and of Andrew Jackson, might well detain us. It was, take it all in all, one of the most important political incidents of the period, and to be prominent in it meant a prominence rarely gained in those days of no railroads, no telegraphs, of slow communication, and tardy publicity. Charles Butler became known to public men as well as to the lawyers of his State, and gained their confidence by the sagacity of his course. He was not himself a Mason; nor, on the other hand, did he ally himself with the Anti-Masonic movement. He performed his legal duty in the prosecution with promptness and success; his influence was wholly on the side of a candid, calm consideration of the principles involved rather than of a hasty yielding to the impulses of excitement. To one now reading the story he seems almost the only local leader, closely connected with the exciting action, who remained throughout unmoved by passion. The leaders of the parties took him into their confidence. It was planned that Martin Van Buren, then United States Senator from New York, should be nominated to the Governorship, with a view to his ultimate election as President of the United States,

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

and that a prominent Western New York man, Mr. Throop, should be made Lieutenant-Governor so that Van Buren could safely resign in case of nomination to the Presidency. In the interest of these plans, which ultimately were in the main carried out, Mr. Butler went in 1828 as delegate to the Convention at Herkimer.

To a young lawyer prominence is the gateway to success. Genius, says an ancient writer, consists in seizing opportunity when it comes. Charles Butler seized this opportunity and reaped its best fruits. Enticing as seemed the invitation to forget his former resolution and take up politics, he resisted the temptation, though for a little time, as already mentioned, he accepted the postmastership of Geneva and became the confidant and adviser of the political leaders of his section. Flattering as it must have been to Charles Butler, when Judge Duer of the Supreme Court resigned his position that he might become President of Columbia College, to have Mr. Vanderpoel, his former instructor, request his influence toward the succession; and flattering as it must have been to have half the politicians of the region at his door when matters of policy were to be decided,

he never seemed in the least moved from his judicial calm. But very tangible results of his prominence soon came to him in the line of his own profession in a department which he thereafter made peculiarly his own. Men of influence in the financial as well as in the political and legal world began to hear his name as that of an honorable and efficient man; and his career then began as legal representative of institutions having great interests in charge.

His first responsibility of this kind brought him face to face with a moral problem. The Charter of the Bank of Geneva had expired. The former incorporators wished to have it renewed, and asked Mr. Butler to go to Albany and labor in the interests of the bill. In reply he wrote:

“ If the other banks send agents of pure morals and high character whose well-earned reputations forbid at once the idea that they could be guilty of improper conduct to effect their objects, then an agent might safely unite his influence to theirs in effecting what all sensible men must acknowledge the best interests of the State demand—the renewal of the Charters of our sound banking institutions. If, for instance, the Ontario Bank

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

should send Mr. Greig, and other banks should employ agents equally high-minded and honorable, one certainly could not suffer in reputation by being associated with them." And not until he got assurances of the character of the men representing other institutions from the banks and from all concerned, would he accept the commission. When once decided he undertook the work with energy. The Charter bill was passed, and a sound and enduring reputation in financial circles was a part of his reward.

For aid and sympathy in these early years of work Mr. Butler was greatly indebted to his wife. It is difficult to do justice to this wholesome, helpful, loving influence. "Let us," she wrote, "be just to ourselves and to others. We shall be much happier and better if we are. I had rather live on bread and water than to feel indebted to any human being and be unable to pay that which is justly due. And you know that your wife desires nothing so much as your happiness and peace of mind and honorable reputation." Happiness and peace she brought into the years. "Defer," she wrote when once her husband seemed despondent, "all sighs and tears until we

meet, when we will sigh, and cry, and laugh, for joy." Mrs. Butler was a warm friend and charming hostess, winning for herself and for her husband's home the enthusiastic commendation of every visitor.

She was also the most cheerful of comrades, whether present or absent. In the summer of 1829, being somewhat out of health, she was exiled to Guilford, Conn., then a "watering place" of some repute. It was not a very gay spot for summer diversion, being mostly "crabs, clams, scallops, oysters and sand," but Mrs. Butler's letters from the town illumine the whole region with her cheerfulness.

On one occasion, when Mr. Butler was away, she wrote from Geneva :

" I stayed with Mrs. Whiting on Friday night. I was there all the afternoon, and it being stormy I concluded to stay, as I had nothing in particular to call me home—no husband—no children—no servants—no house—no cares—what a blessing it is to have nothing to care for ! One might think that my lot was perfect happiness ; ' free as air ' to go and come when I list, do what I please. But the goddess of Liberty never resides in a val-

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

ley ; she delights in the mountains ; and ever since my acquaintance with that mischievous urchin Cupid she has never favored me much with her society. The little fellow has fastened such bewitching and enduring cords about my heart, so interwoven himself into my affection and wish, that although I sometimes long for a little more of Liberty's sweets, yet I cannot relinquish my attachment for that powerful, mysterious and delightful little deity. You will conclude that I am growing romantic. Truly my habitation seems to be the resort of the gods and goddesses. In the morning Aurora, bright daughter of the dawn, awakes me with her rosy light. I generally have fair Hebe to accompany me on my morning walk. Ceres presides at our meals, and Somnus attends me to my couch. My next letter you may expect to be an epic poem. The subject, I think, will be a good one ; to commence with our acquaintance, courtship and marriage (which will afford numerous delightful episodes) ; to proceed to our separation ; and to conclude, after toils, disappointments and adverse fortunes, with our reunion ! ”

In the spring of 1830 opportunity came for the

great work that Charles Butler accomplished in developing the farming interests of the region in which he lived. Western New York, now the garden of the State, was then a comparatively new country. It originally consisted of extensive forests, as far as Lake Erie on the west and Lake Ontario on the north. The first settlers, generally from New England and the eastern and older portion of the State of New York, had a laborious and exhausting life in clearing the land and subduing it for cultivation. The fee of a very large part of this territory was held by land companies who had purchased from the original proprietors. These companies were the Pulteney Estate (English), the Hornby Estate (Scotch), and the Holland Land Company (Dutch). The lands of the first-named company lay chiefly in Wayne, Ontario, Steuben, Monroe, Livingston and Cattaraugus counties, stretching from Lake Ontario on the north to the Pennsylvania line on the south, covering the most beautiful and fertile region of that portion of the State. Its agency was at Geneva, with Mr. Joseph Fellows as general agent. Interspersed with the Pulteney property were the lands of the less extensive Hornby

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

estate, with an agency at Canandaigua, in charge of Mr. John Gray. The lands of the Holland Land Company lay chiefly west in Orleans, Genesee, Chautauqua, Erie and Niagara counties, and at this time its agency was at Batavia, Mr. David Evans being general agent. The land office system was indulgent towards purchasers, and had need to be, for the first settlers of the country came seeking to better their condition, generally without any capital, or with a very small sum which had been saved for the purpose of covering the expense of travel and transportation. The settlements began in the latter part of the eighteenth century, and had multiplied in the first third of the nineteenth, by which time the timber had been well cleared off and the farm lands were in good and productive condition. But the houses of the farmers were yet very largely built of logs, and there was great need of capital.

The Land Companies had been honorably conducted and, as already stated, had been liberal in their dealings with the farmers. But this very liberality had gradually brought the farmer into a state of dependence amounting almost to vassalage, extremely prejudicial to the growth of free

and independent life. He usually had no title to his land. He had contracted to purchase it on instalment payments and was to receive a deed only on payment of the last instalment. His debt bore interest, and if left unpaid this interest was converted into capital and thus compounded. As the means of the settler during the first years upon his new land were likely to be exhausted for the support of himself and his family, and for the improvements which were indispensable for the protection of health and life, at the end of the year he was generally behind on his contract to pay the instalment, and at the mercy of the land office. The office readily extended the time for payment, converting the interest into capital. The farmer was not in a situation to question this condition which gave him immediate relief, hardly realizing until too late that he had increased his burden. He rarely found it possible to complete his instalments. In Genesee County in 1829 not a single farmer held a title to his land. He had gradually become a tenant at will ; he could not sell and give a deed for the property in which all his means had been invested ; and the instability of his financial position weakened his influence as a citizen.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

It was as a far-seeing observer that Charles Butler began to consider the problems involved in this condition. It seemed to him that the remedy was for some capitalists with ample means to advance money to these farmers on long time and reasonable interest, in amounts sufficient to enable them to pay off the remaining instalments to the land companies, to obtain their deeds, and with no immediate obligation upon them beyond the annual interest, to be able to devote some surplus each year to the improvement of their estates. In the general improvement of the country from year to year, not only by the labor of the farmer but by immigration and by increased facilities of communication, these lands had become and were becoming of more and more value, so that in settled portions of the country good farming lands with reasonable improvements were worth from twenty to forty dollars an acre. Charles Butler saw here an opportunity for investment which would give a reasonable return to the capitalist and would be of inestimable service to the communities of this western region.

To most of us to-day this plan would seem to be a self-evident business proposition needing no

missionary effort. Conditions seventy-five years ago, however, were not the same as now. The vast extent of the country, the slow means of transportation, the difficulty of gaining trustworthy local reports, the unsettled currency, the imperfect banking system, the continuous financial needs of developing regions, the lack of concentration of resources and of convenient means of distribution—all these made pioneer work necessary in financial matters.

In March, 1830, the New York Life Insurance and Trust Company was incorporated. It was the first company of its character in this State, and its charter gave it great power. It had the right of effecting insurance on lives, of receiving monies in trust from guardians and from estates, and of being a depository for monies held by the Court of Chancery ; and hence the Legislature embodied in the charter special provisions to make the deposits of trust funds with the company secure beyond a doubt. The company was required, owing to the extraordinary powers vested in it, to loan its capital, which was a million dollars, under the security of bond and mortgage, only on real estate, restricted to one-

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

half of the valuation, and subject to the supervision of the Court of Chancery. Just after the organization of this company Mr. Butler went to New York and made a personal application to the board of directors on behalf of the farming interests of Western New York. He carried letters of introduction from influential friends to the president, William Bard, and to directors of the company, among whom at that time were John Jacob Astor, Isaac Bronson, Robert Lenox, Stephen Whitney, Samuel Ward, Nathaniel Prime, Thomas Ludlow and other capitalists of New York City. After repeated conferences they consented to make loans upon lands and farms in the region which he recommended, and the great enterprise was inaugurated.

When it was announced to the public that money might be obtained on the security of farms from the trust company, on application through Mr. Butler, great interest was excited through all the Western counties, and applicants thronged to avail themselves of the opportunity. It was a new business, bringing him into direct contact with the landed and farming interests of the country, and he had necessarily to organize a system

of safe and convenient procedure. There was a wide field for selection in the choice of security. As these loans were to be made in preference to farmers, the first question to the applicant was, naturally, for what purpose was the loan desired. Generally, it was to pay up a balance due upon his contract to the Land Office, and to obtain a deed; or for the purpose of paying off an existing mortgage upon his land, given for the purchase money; or it might be to enable him to make a purchase of land and pay for it in cash, when by so doing he could make an advantageous bargain. The applicants of the first two classes, and particularly of the first class, were most favored by him, for as a general rule the amount required to pay off the balance due to the land company and take a deed was small in comparison with the value of the land, and by making the loan in that case there was a double benefit secured. It converted the farmer from the relation of a tenant at will into a freeholder.

To effect this an arrangement was made with the several land companies, by which, when it was ascertained that the applicant was to receive the loan, the Land Office would transmit a deed of the

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

land, with the understanding that the needful security, a bond and mortgage to the Trust Company, would be executed by the party when the securities had been duly recorded and the negotiation with the trust company for the money completed. The company would transmit the draft for the money, out of which the amount due to the Land Office would be paid. This arrangement was a great convenience in the transaction of business, nor did any difficulty ever result from it between the agent and the land offices. A very large amount was loaned to borrowers of the first class in Genesee County, where the lands were held under contract with the Holland Land Company. In one town in this county, Alabama, so many applications were made for loans of this character that the farmers organized an association for the purpose of obtaining them, and appointed a justice of the peace, named Wheeler, to act for the applicants. He came all the way to Geneva with their papers, and so many loans were made in this town that it was called "Butler's Trust Town."

The good effected by this work of Charles Butler's was incalculable. For he acted not merely

as trustee for a company interested in investing its funds safely, nor merely as agent for a farmer desirous of easing his financial burdens, though he never forgot the interest of either party. He was also a wise and far-seeing citizen of the State, and his concern for the development of the Western section was unceasing. Somewhat more than a million dollars was loaned by him for this Trust Company and for other capitalists, and hundreds of thriving farming communities bore, and bear to-day, testimony to the excellence of the work.

Nor did he neglect other interests, either material or spiritual. With all the energy at his command he aided in a project for a railroad from Schenectady to Buffalo in the fall of 1831. He united in the call for a convention in its behalf and labored for its charter with unselfish zeal. He found time to take charge of the interests of the Temperance Society in the towns of Naples, Hopewell, Calhoun, Seneca and Phelps, and made a subscription to send a colonist to Liberia.

When he went to New York on his business for the Trust Company, it was not of loans and mortgages that he wrote. It was partly of the lighter things of life, of finding lodgings "in an

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

excellent house, Miss Boyd's, 66 Broadway," and of going out to dine with Mr. Arthur Bronson, Mr. Betts, Mr. Bard, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Devereaux, or Dr. Ludlow, and of the proceedings at the dinners, where, in February, they sat down by candle light to the dinner table at half-past five, and whence they left for home at exactly nine o'clock. But it was mainly of the serious things of life which lay nearest his heart that he wrote; and the letters rarely close without some expression such as that given below, of interest in spiritual things:

"I attended Dr. Spring's church yesterday and heard two most excellent discourses, and in the evening attended St. Thomas's, where I heard a favorite, Mr. Hawkes, with whom I was much delighted. He preached a missionary sermon. I have attended the Sunday-schools every Sunday of my absence and addressed the teachers at Utica, Poughkeepsie, and yesterday in Dr. Spring's, so that I hope that I may be in some small degree in the path of duty, and rendering humble service to my Master's cause. I feel a deep interest in every measure of Christian enterprise, and I only hope to be more diligent and faithful, and to work

while it is day, and while I enjoy the rich blessings of health and life.”

It was in the early part of its beneficent service to the farmers that the Trust Company for which he acted had an opportunity rarely given to a financial institution. It might have been the means of printing a Bible and of becoming sponsor for a new religion. One morning in 1830 as Mr. Butler entered the office, usually found full of farmers seeking loans, he met a respectable citizen, one Martin Harris of Palmyra, who brought him letters of commendation from a person of repute in his town and desired a loan of thirteen hundred dollars. Since the building up of the communities was very much at heart with him, it was Mr. Butler's custom never to advise a loan unless the applicant could give proof of good habits, character and capacity, and also a worthy purpose for which the money was desired. So a catechism began and went on to complete satisfaction until the last question was propounded. With much hesitation the farmer admitted that he wanted the money to pay for publishing a book. Now farmers in New York had not up to that time been much given to the habit of mortgaging

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

their farms in order to publish books, and Mr. Butler's curiosity was excited. It was not diminished when Mr. Harris seriously said that the book he wished to publish was a Bible.

It was that Bible which was written on golden plates by Jacob the brother of Nephi, Enos the son of Jacob, Jarom the son of Enos, Omni the son of Jarom, Mormon the son of Omni, and Maroni the son of Mormon. In the year 384 A. D., said Mr. Harris, after the great battle on the hill Cumorah, in what is now Western New York, Maroni, one of the few survivors, became a wanderer; and in A. D. 420 he sealed up the golden plates on which the records of God's promises were written and hid them in the hill. There they had lain until a little while before, when Divine inspiration had come to one Joseph Smith, a young man living in Palmyra, directing him to go to a certain hill in the town of Manchester—this same ancient hill of Cumorah—just south of Palmyra, and there to dig in the earth until he came to these plates, the books of the Bible of Mormon, the son of Omni. Joseph Smith had gone, said Mr. Harris, and there he found the golden plates, thin tablets about eight inches long

by seven wide, bound together by three rings, engraved on each side in hieroglyphics in a dialect of ancient Egyptian, not then known upon the earth. With these plates the angel of the Lord had helped Joseph Smith to find also the Urim and the Thummim, the two transparent stones in silver bows, through which Smith, the inspired prophet, could read and interpret the writings. This was the book that Martin Harris wished to publish, the famous Mormon Bible, documentary basis of a religion noted in later days, and still of importance in at least one western State.

The earnest convert, although much discouraged by Mr. Butler's refusal to make the loan or to commend the project to the consideration of the New York Life Insurance and Trust Company, departed asserting that nevertheless the Bible would be printed, that he would receive a copy, and that when he had read it he would become a convert. Only a few days later Mr. Butler met a tall, alert-looking young man on the street who gave him a letter from James Watson Webb of the *New York Courier and Inquirer*, introducing James Gordon Bennett, sent thus promptly as a reporter into these distant western wilds for infor-

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

mation concerning this Mormon Bible. Mr. Bennett was then the assistant editor of the *Courier* and four years later became the enterprising founder of the *New York Herald*. It may be added that two of the assertions of Martin Harris were made good, for the book was published and Charles Butler received a copy.

CHAPTER IV

PLANS FOR NEW ENTERPRISES—VISIT TO THE
NORTHWEST—DETROIT—CHICAGO—RE-
LIGIOUS WORK—BUSINESS OPENINGS
—JOURNEY TO OHIO—RE-
MOVAL FROM GENEVA
TO NEW YORK

A GREAT record had been made in western New York in the nine years since Charles Butler, on his first visit to Buffalo in 1824, had found “the stumps of the forest still standing in its finest streets.” In those few years the country had changed from a wilderness dotted with log cabins to a land full of cities and towns knit together by the facilities of civilization. Farmers had become independent citizens. Routes of travel had been firmly established. Canal and stage-coach lines had become prosperous, and there were rumors of railroads soon to come. Banks had opened, manufactures had

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

started, stable local currency systems—precursors of the great national system which as yet had not been created—had come into being. All this had taken place under the observation of Charles Butler since he opened his modest office at Geneva.

In a large part of this growth he had himself been prime mover. To him was due in great measure the stability of real-estate ownership, the stability of local financial institutions, and the establishment of helpful relations between these far-away farming sections and the great financial centre of New York City. So completely had he identified himself with the growth and prosperity of the region that, in 1833, when he was scarcely more than thirty, it was almost as a veteran that he looked upon the growing life about him. He felt the instincts of a pioneer ready to push out still farther, to carry into new fields the forces of civilization.

In January, 1833, while visiting Mr. Arthur Bronson in New York, the two friends made a plan to explore the western country as far as Fort Dearborn, and study its possibilities. Mr. Robert A. Kinzie, whose name has since become part of the topography of Chicago, came soon after

to New York for his yearly purchase of goods for the Indians. Mr. Kinzie maintained that a large town would yet be built on the site of the little village near Fort Dearborn, which is now the city of Chicago. This seemed rather an extravagant proposition, but one worth considering, and in the following June Mr. Butler started, in company with Mr. Arthur Bronson, for a journey to the western wilds.

In 1833 Detroit was really an out-post of civilization, to which the little steamer *Superior* ran on Lake Erie from Buffalo, making the distance in a little more than two days. It was an old French settlement just emerging into the status of an American town. It had a social charm from the old French residents, whose courtesies made the visit a delightful one. Hospitality and kindness were shown on every hand. One of his friends even offered to Mr. Butler his pet saddle horse for the long journey to Fort Dearborn. Three distinct social conditions were in evidence: the cultivated French residents, the frontier military force, and the drunken, half-civilized, wholly impossible Indian natives. Black Hawk, the Indian Chief, came with them on the steamer, and

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

talked with them sadly of the future of his people. Of interest also was the quick-coming growth which seemed in sight. Before the march of civilization the Indians must go, and even the French. The travelers noted "several handsome old French houses standing in the centre of the town and in the way of improvement."

Beyond Detroit, to the northward and the westward, stretched a wilderness. Northward, as far as Fort Gratiot at the foot of Lake Huron, travel by water could be carried on somewhat uncertainly. Our travelers made this journey in a dilapidated steamboat, which broke down; and returned in a still more dilapidated schooner, making the whole trip of eighty miles each way in a little less than a week. Westward, there was no regular means of communication, and they took saddle horses to Fort Dearborn. The journey of three hundred miles from Detroit to Fort Dearborn was considered rather an adventurous one for travelers who were neither Indian traders nor pioneers accustomed to hardships. The route was by the old Indian trail, which crossed the southern portion of the territory of Michigan southwesterly from Detroit through the village of Ypsilanti to White

Pigeon Prairie; thence through South Bend and La Porte Prairie to Michigan City; thence sixty miles along the shore of the lake to Fort Dearborn. The journey was to occupy fully ten days, and elaborate preparations were made. Arthur Bronson and Charles Butler rode Indian saddle ponies, and a young man named Gohlson Kercheval, who had been connected with the Indian agency at Fort Dearborn, went with them as guide, cook, companion, and commissary agent, in charge of a two-pony wagon which contained the supplies and provisions. The trail wound across the prairies through noble groves of forest trees and by the margins of beautiful lakes.

“If you have never seen a prairie,” wrote Mr. Butler, “it is utterly impossible for me to convey to you any idea of the peculiar and interesting aspect which it presents. The White Pigeon Prairie is an expanse of about fifteen thousand acres skirted or encircled with a dense and noble forest of timber, which is to it like the frame of a picture. In looking off upon a landscape like this one feels the sentiment of the Psalmist when he exclaims: “The works of the Lord are very great, and sought of all them that have pleasure therein.”

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

In the midst of this prairie the travelers found the little village of White Pigeon with a population of nearly two hundred and fifty persons, where three years before was only a solitary desert. Here they spent Sunday and found a flourishing little Sunday School. In traveling to White Pigeon they passed a great many small lakes, from one to five miles in length, surrounded by the native and luxuriant forest, which were delightful and cheering to the weary travelers. The banks were generally sloping to the water, which was pure and clear as crystal and abounding with fine fish. In imagination they selected many a site for a country seat on the margin of a lake. There were fifty lakes in St. Joseph County alone, covering from one to sixty acres of land, some of them having no visible outlet or inlet.

The country west of White Pigeon, between it and the head of Lake Michigan, was interesting and not much settled. It was a series of oak openings, prairies, and dense forests. Beardsley's prairie, through which they passed, excited more admiration than any which they had yet seen ; it formed a complete circle enclosed with a forest of oaks. "The surface of this prairie," wrote Mr.

Butler, "is undulating, and therefore, to our eyes, more beautiful. If it were owned by a private gentleman, and he had exercised his taste in laying out the grounds and roads, in view of combining the greatest attractions, he could not have made a more beautiful park than this." On the banks of the St. Joseph's river, about twenty-five miles from its mouth, was the little village of Niles, then containing forty or fifty log houses. At this point the river was navigable for boats of considerable size, and it was throughout, they thought, one of the finest streams of water they had ever seen. Its shores were generally low, but not marshy, and the country through which it flowed enjoyed the reputation of being the best in the territory. On the opposite side of the river was then a reservation belonging to the Potawatamies; they passed through Indian villages built altogether of bark.

"Terre Coupe prairie and Rolling prairie," wrote Mr. Butler, "are very handsome tracts interspersed with little 'islands' of forests. This may strike you as a singular and inappropriate term as applied to a forest, but the traveler uses it naturally, for it expresses the appearance which the fact presents. These islands seem to have been planted

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

and cultivated with the greatest care. Some of them are two or three miles in circumference, surrounded with extensive prairie on all sides, some only half a mile or less, and appear as if rising above the surface of an ocean. The settler always locates his house on the margin of the wood, and many a humble log house is to be found within the shade of a princely forest on a site which would excite the envy of those who covet a country residence, of a beauty which the hand of art cannot possibly equal. Nature has done that here which the wealthy have spent their lives and fortunes in their efforts to accomplish."

The most interesting tract, however, which the travelers saw, was La Porte Prairie in Indiana.

"It was many miles in length and breadth," wrote Mr. Butler, "surrounded by dense woods. It gained its name because at one point the bordering forests converged from each side toward the centre, leaving an opening just wide enough for a passage, which, viewed from the east or west at a distance, appeared like a doorway cut through for the road. As one passed through this 'door' either way, the country expanded into a most magnificent prairie. Two miles east of the opening

was the little village, fitly named La Porte." Three months before the travelers passed there was not a single house on the ground where there were now more than twenty-five log buildings, including two stores.

They arrived at Michigan City late in the evening. There were but two buildings on this site, in one of which, the "City Hotel," kept by General Orr, our travelers lodged. It was a small log house, with a single room, which answered the purpose of sitting-room, eating-room and sleeping-room. In this twelve persons lodged, in beds and on the floor, including, of course, the host and his wife. There they met Major Elston, of Crawfordsville, who had become the purchaser of the section of land on which Michigan City was laid out. He had just then completed a survey and map of the town which he exhibited to them, and offered to sell lots. It was a great novelty, this map of Michigan City, and in the morning, when daylight came, the novelty was still more striking, for a more desolate tract of sand and barren land could scarcely be imagined. There was hardly a tree or a shrub to distinguish it, much less any house. Major Elston had become interested in

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

it because it was the only place on Lake Michigan, within the limits of the State of Indiana, where it might be possible at some future time to establish a commercial port in connection with the navigation of the lake. This distant vision of possibilities attracted his attention at this early day, and the survey and the map were the first steps towards its realization.

From this point to Chicago, about sixty miles, the trail followed the shore of the lake nearly the whole distance. There was but one stopping place on the way, and that was the house of a Frenchman named Bayeux, who had married an Indian woman. Here and there were Indian villages. At Calumet River, which was crossed on a float, there was an encampment of Potawatamie Indians, whose hammocks swung from the trees on the westerly side of the river. Aside from these natives not one resident was to be found in the whole distance.

“I approached Chicago,” wrote Mr. Butler, “in the afternoon of a beautiful day, the second of August, the sun setting in a cloudless sky. On my left lay the prairie, bounded only by the distant horizon like a vast expanse of ocean, on my

right in summer's stillness lay Lake Michigan. I have never seen anything more beautiful or captivating in nature. There was an entire absence of animal life, nothing visible in the way of human habitation, nothing to indicate the presence of man; and yet it was a scene full of life, for there, spread out before me in every direction, as far as the eye could reach, were the germs of life in earth, air and water. In these closing hours of day—so calm, so clear, so bright—I came to the realization of the objective point of my journey.”

But what was the Chicago to which, in this year 1833, the travelers had come with so much labor? A small settlement of a few hundred people, all told, most of whom had come within the last year or two. The houses, about twenty in number, were of the cheapest and most primitive character. A string of them, which formed the village, had been erected without much regard to lines, on the south side of the Chicago River. Just above the junction on the west side of the south branch our travelers found lodgings in a tavern (afterwards known as the “Green Tree”) which had been improvised for the entertainment of immigrants by James Kinzie. The building was not lathed and

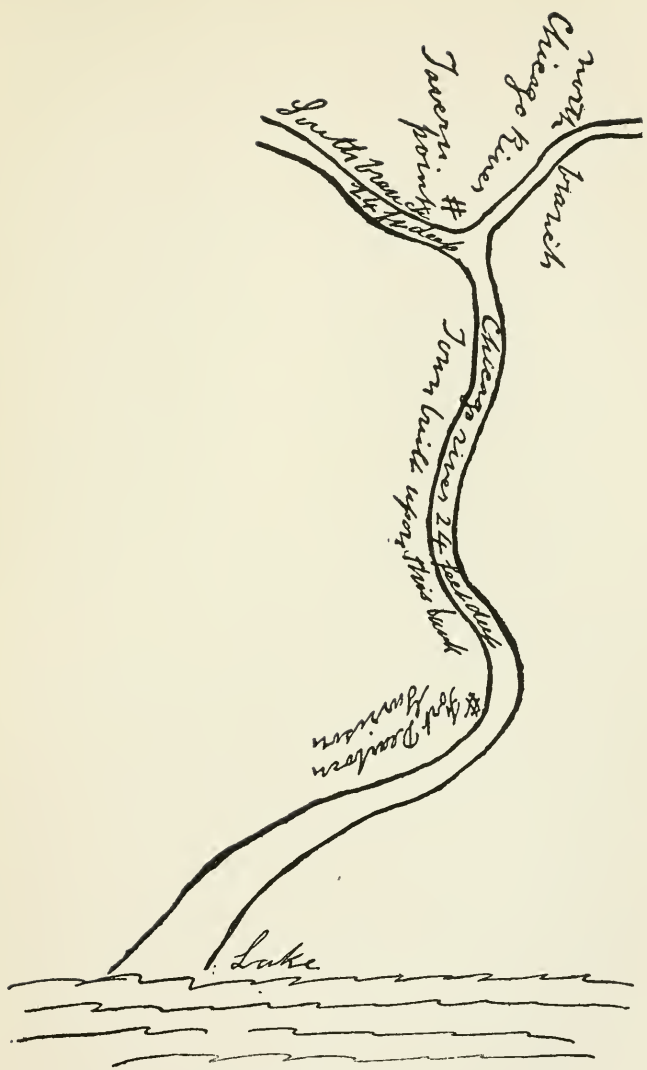
THE LIFE AND LETTERS

plastered ; the partitions were made by blankets only, and free communication existed between all the rooms. Its eastern windows looked over the little village, past Fort Dearborn to Lake Michigan. To the west stretched three hundred miles of unbroken prairie. On the north beyond the Chicago River there was then but one building, known as the "Block House," though there had been a house near it occupied by Mr. Kinzie, the Indian Agent, until its destruction by fire. The government, under the charge of Major Bender, had just entered upon some improvements at the mouth of the river for military purposes.

This was all the "Chicago" our travelers found ; yet Charles Butler wrote :

"Chicago is a beautiful place ; the north and the south branches of the Chicago River unite in the centre of the town, and form a beautiful river flowing into the great and noble lake, as shown in the rough sketch which I enclose.

The house at which I stay is on the point, and I look down upon the river which winds through the village to the lake. Vessels of the largest size can come up to the point in front of the tavern. The banks of the river are low, but dry. We



CHICAGO IN 1833

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

cross from the tavern to the village in a dug-out canoe. The lake is one of the largest, larger than Erie or Ontario, and the water very clear. The lake on the one hand, and the boundless prairie on the other, seem to leave Chicago in the centre of a great ocean. If I were a young man (Mr. Butler was then thirty-one), and unmarried, I should settle at Chicago. It presents one of the finest fields in America for industry and enterprise, and though at present a journey to this point is attended with great privations, fatigue, exposure, and difficulty, in a few years we shall think no more of going to Chicago than we now think of going to Buffalo. There will be a line of steam-boats, stages, and railroads the entire distance from Albany to the Fort at St. Louis on the Mississippi, Chicago being an important and commanding point on this great thoroughfare."

Charles Butler had come just at the birth of the community. On Saturday, the tenth of August, a week after his arrival, Chicago became a town by vote of citizens and choice of officers. It is recorded that twenty-seven votes were given for, and one against, a town organization, almost all the voting citizens being present. On the morning

after his arrival he started out with letters of introduction to find the Rev. Jeremiah Porter, just then come to Fort Dearborn as chaplain of the government troops under Major Wilcox. The first man he accosted proved to be the one he sought.

Mr. Porter told him that he was on his way to bury a child, the little daughter of Mr. Benjamin Jones, and begged his assistance; for the needs of the living, in pioneer days, made even kind offices to the dead most difficult. In the little house of mourning the small coffin of plain boards was on a table in the middle of the only room, save two bedrooms, in the house. Mr. Porter read a passage out of the Bible and prayed. The funeral service was then over. It had been interrupted by the noise of the hammer of a workman who was putting up a shanty for some newcomers. There were no friends to serve as bearers, and Mr. Porter called in from the shanty the carpenter in his shirt sleeves to assist in carrying the little burden. Then the three men, Mr. Porter, Mr. Butler, and the carpenter, took up the coffin; followed by the sorrowing parents, they walked to the river, crossed in the dug-out to the

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

west side of the north branch and thence to a spot where a few burials had been made, and there they laid the child.

Shortly after, Mr. Butler began with Mr. Porter to lay plans for the religious life of the new town. The two friends used to meet to converse and pray together in an unfinished loft in the second frame store built in the town, kindly loaned by a young merchant who had come from New York the year before, Mr. F. F. W. Peck, afterwards one of Chicago's wealthy citizens. This little building, which long stood on the corner of La Salle and South Water streets, was the centre of religious effort. In the loft, which served Mr. Porter as home and study, a little Sunday-school was held, the sheets used for partitions being drawn up, and loose planks being laid on boxes for seats, making it, as Mr. Porter said, "very convenient." Here Mr. Butler labored during his stay, and on his return he sent to this school, in connection with Mr. Bronson, a library of two hundred volumes of bound books, besides a full set of class, reading, question, hymn and record books.

He encouraged Mr. Porter, also, in estab-

lishing the First Presbyterian Church, which had been organized six weeks before, with twenty-six members, and laid plans for the establishment here of a Bible, Tract, and Sunday-school Depository, that a "moral influence should be diffused in the beginning to give character to the society soon to grow up." It may be of interest to note here, that less than six months later, the First Presbyterian Church, the fruit of these anxious hopes, was dedicated in this town where at the time of Mr. Butler's visit the occasional little evening service was held in a log house with seats of loose slabs, the smooth side turned up, and the candles for lighting held in the hands of the worshippers while the minister preached. "I well recollect," he wrote later, "that the candles being of poor tallow, shed a very dim light. Still, we had a good time of it, and all enjoyed the service."

To the mind of Charles Butler the future of Chicago as a commercial centre was clear. In the little village of twenty houses, and the swamp-lands bordering the river, he saw the "germ of a city destined, from its peculiar position near the head of the lake, and its remarkable harbor formed by the river, to become the largest inland commercial

emporium in the United States." His views were regarded at the time as visionary and absurd. "Your character is naturally sanguine," wrote his trusted friend and partner, Mr. Bowen Whiting, "and I fancy now that the 'Michigan fever' has fairly inflamed your brain; and were it not that Mr. Bronson partakes of your opinions, I should think you had written to me under the influence of a most flattering dream. I am a good deal in the condition of Rip Van Winkle after reading your letter, and am compelled to acknowledge that the world has gone a good way past me."

It was, however, no flattering dream, but the genius of prophetic foresight. It was evident to Charles Butler that the productions of the vast country lying west and northwest of Chicago would necessarily be tributary to it on their way to the Eastern market—the great Atlantic Seaboard. His predictions concerning the means of communication which would soon be established were even more remarkable than his judgments concerning the future of the city. The United States had then very few railways, and New York State had none except the one in process of construction between Albany and Utica. Steamboats from New

York to Albany, stages to Buffalo, and mud-wagons to the west were the means of conveyance. Yet before he had returned from his first brief visit he wrote confidently to the Albany *Argus* :

“ Chicago is on the great western thoroughfare of the valley of the Mississippi, and in a few years we shall have a regular chain of steamboat, railroad, and stage communication from the city of New York to St. Louis and New Orleans, on this route. The natural route is a railroad from Albany to Buffalo, steamboats from thence to Detroit, a railroad across the territory from Detroit to the mouth of the St. Joseph River (about two hundred miles), a steamboat from thence across the lake to Chicago, only forty-five miles, and a railroad from Chicago to the Illinois River, one hundred and ten miles, where it will meet steamboats of the largest size from New Orleans and St. Louis. When this route is established, you may travel from Albany to St. Louis in *nine days*, and it will combine such advantages of certainty and safety, comfort and expedition, to say nothing of the great attraction of the country and places through which it will pass, that in my opinion it will be the great thoroughfare between the Atlantic States and the valley of

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

the Mississippi. If this be so, the interests of St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, Buffalo and New York are identical, and should be so considered. I regard the speedy establishment of this route as one of the most important improvements of the day, and as constituting one of the strongest links in that chain of internal improvements, which will bind this Union indissolubly together. It will bring all the Southwestern States in close contact with the Northern, Middle, and Atlantic States. The Union is to be preserved, in my opinion, with the blessing of Providence, by a free intercourse between the people of the far South and of the West, and the far East, and by the diffusion down the great valley of the Mississippi, and over all the Southwestern States, of the principles and feelings which are common to the people of the Northern and Middle States."

The large-mindedness of Charles Butler is as evident in this prediction as is his sagacity. The Mississippi river was at that time regarded as the natural boundary of the West, and the United States, in its utmost possibilities, as the region south of the lakes and east of the Mississippi. To weld all this into unity, and to make of its inhabitants

one homogeneous people was an object much at heart with him. The possibility of successful competition between steamboats and railroads was not foreseen until 1840; and the nine days' journey from Albany to St. Louis, based on water-communication mainly, seemed amazing. But the great thoroughfare has done its work, and these scattered communities have been united in interests.

The practical benefits which this growth might bring with it, were clear to Mr. Butler and Mr. Bronson. They at once undertook to invest in lands on the site of the possible city. The process was slow, for titles were very uncertain, but Mr. Bronson finally succeeded in purchasing about a hundred and eighty-two acres on the north side of the river—the half of Kinzie's Addition, the whole of Wolcott's Addition, and Block No. 1 in the town of Chicago—for the sum of twenty thousand dollars. In this first purchase Mr. Butler, for lack, at the moment, of available capital, took no interest; but in May, 1835, being able to arrange with some of his friends to share the financial burden, he purchased the same property from Mr. Bronson for the sum of one hundred thousand dollars. Charles Butler persuaded his broth-

er-in-law—Mr. William B. Ogden—to go to Chicago to take charge of the property.

The spring had been unusually wet, and on Mr. Ogden's arrival his first impressions were not at all favorable. The property lay on the north side of the river, an unbroken field covered with a coarse growth of oak and underbrush, marshy and muddy from the recent heavy rains. Nothing could be more unattractive in appearance, and he could not see it as possessing any advantages to justify the extraordinary price for which it had been bought. But Mr. Ogden had gone there for a purpose, and to execute an important trust. A great deal of work had to be done to prepare this wilderness for the coming auction. It had to be laid out and opened up by streets and avenues into blocks and lots, the boundaries of which must be carefully defined, maps and plans made, surveys perfected and landmarks established. To this Mr. Ogden addressed himself with energy, and brought to it his extraordinary ability in the handling of all material interests, so that by the time the auction sale approached, he was ready to exhibit it in business form. A government sale of lands had brought together a large collection of people from all parts

of the country, particularly from the east and the southeast. The sales amounted to more than a hundred thousand dollars, and included only about one-third of the property; but this result, although it did not as yet fully establish his faith, went far to convince him of the future of the town which was to become the scene of his after life, and in the development and growth of which he was to become an active and important factor.

The account of Mr. Butler's first western trip and of its results has been given somewhat at length partly because of its general interest and partly because it illustrates so well his character, and the great services he rendered. He foresaw intuitively upon what lines, material and moral, the development of the country must proceed. Though Detroit and Niles and Michigan City and other places were urged upon his notice, he thus early believed that Chicago would pass beyond them all. And not less notable was his tenacity; for the early enthusiasm of his associates flagged; they grew timid, and left to him the burden which brought its reward in after years. To the horror of his associates he disinterestedly published the news of the western possibilities before

his own purchases were completed, thus inviting competitors, as they feared, to his own detriment.

Two of the services which he rendered to the infant city were of great value. The first was the quick and eager interest which he took, in connection with Mr. Bronson, in projects for public improvement. The most important of those discussed at the time of his first visit was the construction of a canal to connect Lake Michigan at Chicago with the Illinois river at Ottawa or Peru, a distance of about eighty or one hundred miles. A grant had been made by Congress to the territory of Illinois, at an early day, of each alternate section of land in aid of the construction of such a canal. New Orleans being regarded at this time as the principal market of the valley of the Mississippi, this would secure to Chicago a western outlet. Mr. Bronson and Mr. Butler entered enthusiastically into this project, advising, however, the construction of a railroad instead of a canal. A memorial urging the incorporation of a company for building a railroad or canal was carefully prepared by Mr. Butler and sent through a committee to the Legislature, Mr. Bronson and Mr. Butler submitting proposals for financing the

whole enterprise if such a company should be incorporated.

The application was not successful the first winter, and it was found necessary to give up the plan for a railroad; but at the session of 1834-35 a bill was passed authorizing a loan for a canal as a State work. It was soon after begun and though retarded by embarrassments which overtook the State and for a time prostrated its credit, was finally completed and remains to this day a monument not only to the enterprise of the State, but also to its integrity in paying its just debts. It is hardly too much to say that the result would have been much longer retarded, if not finally checked, had it not been for Mr. Butler's interest. For Illinois having undertaken this great system of internal improvement, and finding itself later unable to meet its obligations, the question what could be done to retrieve its credit became one of vital importance not only to its citizens, but to all who had any interests in the State. Mr. Bronson and Mr. Butler gave much study to this subject and finally arranged that Illinois should ask its bondholders, who were chiefly in Europe, to make a further

advance of money sufficient for the completion of the canal, for the payment of which the canal, its lands, and revenues should be pledged, backed by the faith and credit of the State. Upon this basis the arrangement was finally made. Only a person living at that time and fully understanding the situation could rightly appreciate the value of the aid given by these two men at this critical period.

Another service, indirect but of great importance, Charles Butler rendered to the city in sending there Mr. William B. Ogden, his brother-in-law. Mr. Ogden was a man of remarkable ability and of broad and comprehensive views. He became the first Mayor of Chicago at its incorporation as a city in 1837, and from that time until his death in 1877 was one of its leading citizens, largely interested in the growth and welfare of the place. He was constantly engaged in public works; he made miles upon miles of streets, along which he planted shade trees; he zealously advocated public parks; he was a leading contractor on the Illinois and Michigan Canal and ever one of its ablest advocates. He was a pioneer in constructing railways, giving to them services to a great extent gratuitous and unselfish. There is to-

day scarcely a railroad leading to or from Chicago, east, west, north, or, south, with which he did not have important association and to which he did not render efficient service, so that his acts are written in lines of steel all over the west.

The visit to Chicago proved a turning-point in Charles Butler's career. He returned, after a few weeks' stay, to his Geneva home; but he never returned to his Geneva life. His outlook had widened with new experiences and his mind was quick to grasp new opportunities. His influence was at once sought and obtained for great enterprises, such as the "New York and Erie Railroad" and the "Utica and Schenectady Railroad." To both he rendered effective service; the latter he was largely instrumental in organizing. He was again urged to enter into politics and was offered a nomination as State Senator; but he declined this, as two years before he had declined to enter the field of diplomacy, when offered an appointment as Secretary of Legation to England.

His special field of usefulness in life, as the organizer of great undertakings, and the trusted counsellor of men of action, was becoming clear. His advice was sought by statesmen on the great

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

financial issues then under discussion. The charter of the Bank of the United States was to expire by limitation in 1836 and the question of a recharter was the one memorable contest of Andrew Jackson's administration. Charles Butler, as one acquainted with the needs of the people, and with fundamental principles of banking policy, was called upon by Silas Wright, then Senator from New York, to give testimony. He opposed the recharter of the bank, feeling that its power was too great to be safe.

In place of this bank of the United States he urged the establishment of an "institution to be located in the District of Columbia, to be known as The Office of Exchange and Currency," whose function should be to give stability to the monetary system of the country. The experience of years seems now to indicate that this proposal had in it sterling wisdom, and that such an institution, if then created, might have hastened by a quarter of a century the establishment upon a firm footing of a national currency. The question has long since become a memory, and need not here be discussed. What is notable, for the purposes of this memoir, is the remarkable

foresight evinced by his contribution to the discussion.

He foretold, as early as February, 1834, the financial pressure of 1837 to 1840 with an exactness which could not have been greater had his words been written after the event. "That a very severe pressure," he wrote, "hitherto unparalleled in my knowledge of the country, is beginning to be felt in every part of the country there can be no doubt. That this pressure will be so severe as to affect every man in these twenty-four United States, however remote his dwelling may be—even beyond the Rocky Mountains—who has anything at stake in the way of business or property, is certain, and he who doubts does not understand the signs of the times." That such an optimist as Charles Butler should make this prediction shows not only sagacity but courage equally characteristic of the man; for he well knew that an admission of impending stringency did not advance his cause as an opponent of the bank. But his frankness commended, if it did not further, his advocacy. It established his reputation still more securely among financiers and statesmen as a prudent and experienced counsellor.

Not long after his return from Chicago he undertook a second journey of exploration. The commercial and financial needs of the State of Ohio were then pressing, and he made them the subject of careful study in the interest of New York bankers who were anxious to develop these western resources so far as was consistent with safety. The journey to Cincinnati was not, in 1833, adventurous as had been the northwestern trip, yet there were in it elements of hardship foreign enough to our thoughts to-day. The trip from Geneva to Cincinnati, by way of Buffalo, Erie, Cleveland, Columbus, Portsmouth and the Ohio river, perhaps five hundred miles by the route then taken—now a trip of a single day at a cost of about ten dollars—then required eleven days and nights of laborious travelling by stage and private conveyance over frightful roads at a cost of nearly forty dollars for stage fare alone. The entire journey occupied two months, and extended eastward from Cincinnati, through Wheeling, Hagerstown, Frederick, as far as Baltimore, Washington and eastern Virginia and thence northward through New York and Albany. It had certain incidental features of interest to a keen observer. Mr. Butler noted

the opportunities of the country and the characteristics of the people.

“I have left,” he wrote, “the State of Ohio with deep impressions of its present and future greatness. The capacity of its soil, the character of its population, its wonderful increase, its commercial and agricultural resources, all indicate that at some future day it must become a star of the first magnitude in the galaxy of the States. Cincinnati is laid out very much like Philadelphia. Its location is on a tableland about one hundred feet above the level of the water, surrounded on all sides by high hills, which form a very beautiful landscape. Good cheer, hospitality and social disposition characterize the people, and you meet and enjoy them at every step; there is a frankness of character, an openness, an ingenuousness, which is calculated to excite admiration and secure confidence. The national road from east to west is a great and noble highway; the canals are sources of revenue and wealth; the private turnpikes are unparalleled for excellence; the projected railroad will add to the unbounded prosperity of the State. Colleges, high schools, academies and common schools are spring-

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

ing up in every section and diffusing their rich blessings among the people."

Among the minor incidents of interest on this long trip was the meteoric shower of November thirteenth, 1833, viewed from Brownsville, Pennsylvania. "Wednesday morning we were called up a little before four o'clock. My attention was called to the appearance of the heavens. There was a clear and cloudless and brilliant sky. Stars were shooting, tens of thousands of them, in rapid procession, crossing each other's tracks. The eastern half of the heavens seemed to be in motion. This continued until daylight. The drivers told me it had commenced about two o'clock. Some of the meteors were so large and emitted so much light as to reflect directly upon the horses and upon the road and make everything light." "A shower of fire," he added later, "seemed to fall like snowflakes on the horses and on all around us."

The immediate fruits of this journey were the promotion of several enterprises of business importance such as the "Cincinnati, Columbus and Worcester Turnpike Company," the "Columbus Insurance Company," and chief of all the "Ohio

Life Insurance and Trust Company," of which he was the originator, and which was incorporated by the Ohio legislature in the spring of 1834. Its secondary results were to strengthen in his mind the determination to leave Geneva and settle in New York City. The removal was not made without regret, for with all his pioneering energy he loved a quiet home and old associations. On his way back to Geneva, he had stopped at Stuyvesant, and a longing came to him then to return to that early home. "It never looked so pleasant to me as now," he wrote. "It has improved so much and the country is really so beautiful; I am not certain that there is anything in the West equal to it. Associations and feelings of former days, of happiness unalloyed, and enjoyment unmodified by worldly schemes, tend to throw about the place beauty and interest.

‘ Oh ! give me back my early days,
 The fresh springs and the bright,
 That made the course of childhood’s ways
 A journey of delight.’ ”

In October, 1834, he placed his family, his furniture, his household goods and chattels on a canal

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

boat specially chartered for the journey through the canal and down the Hudson. The only railroad then in operation in the State of New York was the Inclined Plane Railway, as it was called, from Schenectady to Albany, which had just been opened. The travelers left the boat to try it, and "a most dangerous bit of railway it was, too," said Mr. Butler afterwards. Then at Albany back they went to the canal boat and so down the Hudson to the new home in New York City.

CHAPTER V

LIFE IN NEW YORK—FINANCIAL STRESS—
LOSS OF HEALTH—JOURNEY TO EUROPE
—VICTORY OVER REPUDIATION IN
MICHIGAN—TRAVEL IN THE
SOUTH

A BUSINESS location in New York was easily chosen in Wall Street, then, as now, the centre of the financial interests of the city. The selection of a house was more difficult, for settling comfortably in New York was not a simple matter, even in what seem to us now the "primitive days" of the thirties. It was then a city of two hundred and fifty thousand people, with its wholesale business interests clustered below the present City Hall Park, its uptown retail shopping centre on Canal Street, and its fashionable residence quarters stretching indecisively westward, eastward, and northward, in a manner most disconcerting to one desirous of predicting the fu-

ture. Mr. Arthur Bronson lived at 97 East Broadway, between Market and Pike Streets, in a "select locality, far from the theatre of business." The Brick Presbyterian Church, now at Thirty-seventh Street and Fifth Avenue, was then on the site of the present Times Building at Nassau Street and Park Row.

Many considerations tended towards the choice of a downtown residence. A house on Greenwich Street, near the foot of Rector, a locality not much in favor now for gentlemen's residences, was for a time considered. Pioneer instincts prevailed, however, and a life on the frontier, nearly as far north as Washington Square, was decided upon. Expenses as compared with Geneva seemed enormous. Board and rooms in good location could not be obtained for a family for less than thirty dollars a week, a ruinous outlay for a Geneva income. Houses rented at about six hundred dollars a year when new and in good situations. In such a house, on Bleecker Street, opposite Depau Row, the family life began in New York. It was saddened at the outset by the loss of the second son—Arthur Bronson Butler—born just after the arrival in this city.

The law business in New York was, from the first, successful. As counsel for several financial institutions, as representative in the making and protecting of investments for many men of prominence, and as an agent of chartered banks and companies to the westward, even as far as the Mississippi, Charles Butler rapidly became established. He valued this worldly prosperity largely as it gave him means for serving those in need. Even in his first busy months in New York, he was the zealous advocate of the cause of the insane poor, urging that they should be cared for by the State instead of by the Counties, drawing a bill for the erection of a State Insane Hospital, and making efforts for its passage through the State Legislature. He became a founder and a devoted member of the Mercer Street Presbyterian Church, and soon identified himself with many local and other interests. To New York University he gave a life scholarship, and to Union Theological Seminary, whose interests he afterwards served so faithfully, he pledged an endowment. To colleges in South Carolina, in Ohio, in Illinois, he made generous contributions. To Princeton Theological Seminary, then somewhat pressed for funds, he gave

assistance. To help the struggling missionaries in the West, to further the extension of the American Tract Society, to raise a fund for the printing of books for the blind, was for him as natural as to aid his own church and the objects close about him.

The first few years of his residence in New York had no marked vicissitudes. His office and his house both escaped the great fire of 1835. Business responsibilities crowded upon him. He became president of the great investment and realty corporation known as the American Land Company, counsel for the Trust and Banking Company of North America, and for banks in Arkansas, in Michigan and in Ohio. The future seemed to open before him, serene in its promise of a well filled, placid life, secure in labors and rewards.

Into this clear sky of prosperity in 1837 came clouds of disaster. The financial crisis which he had foretold years before proved a terrible strain to all the interests he was protecting. Every bank in New York suspended specie payments; every financial agreement was unsettled; notes of men of undoubted standing went to protest every day. The existing banking systems were for a time

completely overthrown; the whole machinery of exchange broke down. Mr. Butler's private means were impaired, but what distressed him most was the prospect of sacrifices for the interests he represented, in which his friends had become involved. "I am surrounded," he wrote, "with troubles and perplexities and cares. I see no way to relieve my friends from the responsibilities they have incurred for me. But in humble dependence on the Divine blessing and will I shall endeavor to do my duty fearlessly and thoroughly, and to bear up under the crosses and losses, the trials and perplexities, incident to my life here, without murmuring or complaining."

In 1838 came other trials. Little Charles, the youngest son, died. Mrs. Butler fell ill. As a crowning stroke his own health, never up to this time very vigorous, utterly failed. His lungs were affected and a sea voyage was prescribed. There was great difficulty in leaving. "What will be the consequence of my absence," he wrote, "to property and financial affairs cannot be predicted. It does not seem possible to anticipate any other result than absolute bankruptcy. The utmost efforts have hitherto only so far succeeded

as to keep along the principal debts until the time set to return." Yet the journey had to be undertaken, and with heavy hearts the husband and wife, with their first born and only remaining child, little Ogden, and with William Allen, the eldest son of Benjamin Franklin Butler, then a boy of thirteen, set sail on the seventh of July, 1838. They planned, though doubtfully, to return almost at once, but were absent nearly a year and came back to find little left of their modest possessions, although efforts had been made to avert such disaster by Mr. Butler's brother, by his partner, Mr. Campbell Bushnell, and by his friend William E. Jones, who afterwards married Mrs. Butler's sister Caroline.

Traveling in Europe in 1838 had pleasures and annoyances unknown to us of this generation. It was leisurely. The voyage over, on the Liverpool packet ship *Pennsylvania*, took twenty-one days, and the return on the *Burgundy*, also a sailing vessel, twenty-two. On land the travel was by rail in some parts of England—eleven hours from Liverpool to London—and by post on the Continent. Modern travelers have lost something in the passing of the post chaise. It was

not economical—twenty-five cents a mile, besides the cost of the hired or purchased chaise, being the ordinary rate—and it was not speedy—one post, five miles, in forty minutes being the legal speed—but it gave to the traveler a pleasing sense of command over the enterprise of journeying and of proprietorship in the scenery. To the sick man this slow movement gave strength. The eager interest of little Ogden, then six years old, helped the recovery. One of the child's letters to his grandfather at Stuyvesant has in it such a note of vitality as to be worth recording here :

“I am in the great city of London,” he wrote, “just come back from Belgium & Paris. One evening we went out & we saw the circus & we paid five francs & we went in. There was a clown all dressed up & he kept turning somersets all the while over & over & over till he got to the end, the clown ran away & in came a little girl, dressed very nicely, & she stood upon a horse, & she performed things that I did not see how she could do it. We went into the garden of the Tuileries, they have a palace in them, there were two gardens right before the palace & they had flowers & fountains & trees & statues & I often walked

there, there was a high iron fence all around with spear heads which were gilded & made it look splendid. We went into the king's palace & saw pictures & one of them was old Dr. Benjamin Franklin introduced to the French King & his family, we saw a thousand soldiers there & they used to parade every day near the palace & we lived close by. The King of France ain't so handsome as the Queen of England but the houses are handsomer. We saw a high monument made of brass painted green & up on top of it was Napoleon, he fought a great many battles & always conquered, but at last he was conquered himself at Waterloo. We went to this battle-field, it was in Belgium, there was a high mound there, & a Belgic lion on top of it & a great many soldiers were buried under it, we walked over the field and picked up several gun bullets. I have seen many things here that I never saw in America, kings and queens and castles and abbeys. I liked the Tower of London, I saw the ax that cut off Anne Boleyn's head who was a queen. We have very foggy weather here & today I went to the window & said 'see the moon, see the moon,' but it was the sun round like the

moon because the air was so thick. I went out to take a walk today & I went down to the place where King Charles was beheaded at Whitehall. I amuse myself by playing ball with my cousin Willy & playing king & queen. I have read in the history of England about the kings & queens & in the history of France about the kings & queens of France & in the history of Scotland about their kings & queens. I like to read history very much & read about what has happened. When I get home, grandpa, I mean to tell you all about the things I have seen in every city & country & island that I have been in. I will come & see you as soon as I get home if I don't get shipwrecked. But if I get shipwrecked, then I don't know what,—you must excuse me."

When in Paris it seemed advisable to consult Samuel Hahnemann, the great German physician, founder of Homeopathy, then at the zenith of his fame. Hahnemann was eighty-three, a fine-looking man, of distinguished presence. He received his patient with great formality, inquiring with the utmost minuteness into all symptoms, and instructing his handsome French wife, who acted as his secretary, to record the answers with extreme

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

care. He then assured his patient that he would consider the case, and the consultation ended with a formal leave-taking, the patient having first, in accordance with instructions, deposited a gold piece on the mantel. The next visit, and the next, and the next, were like the first. The expected prescription and treatment never came; but there were always the careful inquiring into symptoms the minute recording of the answers, and the gold piece on the mantel. At last Mr. Butler said that he should like to have the physician's final advice and prescription, as the time had come when he must return to New York. Hahnemann remonstrated that this would be at the risk of his life; and when demands of business were urged, he rose in wrath and closed the record book violently, saying: "If you care more for your business than for your health, more for your money than for your life, I will have nothing to do with you." What the treatment might have been, had the consultations continued long enough to get it, was never known.

Fortunately, however, the seemingly imperative call to return home was not at once obeyed. The journey included a little of England, a brief stay in

Holland and Belgium, some weeks in Paris, a leisurely trip in France, two months in the minor Italian cities, and three months in Rome. It gave opportunities for seeing the monuments of the past and the great cities of the Continent. Yet it was characteristic of Charles Butler's mind that Europe, with all its treasures, interested him chiefly as a place in which great men and great women had lived, or were living. As little Ogden liked to read about kings and queens, so his father cared for men and women of force—kings and queens in the worlds of religion, of affairs, of politics. The letters speak of seeing Lord Brougham, Viscount Melbourne and the Duke of Wellington; of spending an evening with Mr. Grote, the historian, and of there meeting Mr. Hume, a member of Parliament. In Geneva he was interested in meeting Merle d'Aubigné, and among others, in Rome, Cardinal Mezzofanti, the famous linguist, who addressed him in a language that he did not understand. Somewhat taken aback, Mr. Butler said that he did not speak Italian, whereupon the cardinal replied: "Ah! I addressed you in Cherokee, but I can speak English if you prefer."

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

Republican and protestant as was Charles Butler, the pomp and state of royalty in England and of the Roman Church in Italy aroused his interest, though not his sympathy. The gracious young Queen Victoria had then just ascended the throne. "Yesterday," wrote Mr. Butler, "we witnessed the Prorogation of Parliament by the Queen in person, and to us simple republicans it was a splendid pageant. The Queen is very popular, as indeed she may well be, with the people, being a young and handsome girl of fine spirits and liberal principles. We have seen her many times under favorable circumstances, the last time being on Sunday at her chapel, to which we were admitted by special license. It seems strange to us, all this pomp and circumstance and finery, and we think that our plain republican and economical institutions are more to be desired. I hope the day will never come when we shall have a splendid government machinery composed of gold-laced livery and of empty pageantry such as we have witnessed here."

In Italy, Pope Gregory XVI. then occupied the papal throne. The elaborate ceremonial of this office, like that of the throne in England, had

for Charles Butler the interest of a study. He witnessed the placing of St. Peter's chair: "The Pope was brought in on the shoulders of six attendants. He was seated, splendidly dressed, in a magnificent chair, highly gilded. He was carried to a chair placed for him near the head of the church, beyond the high altar. While thus borne along, I observed that he sat in a listless manner, with his eyes closed, and his head inclining to the right shoulder, and as he passed he was constantly making the sign of the cross in the air. He was attended by a splendid retinue of cardinals, bishops, high officers, temporal and spiritual, and priests, by a bodyguard composed of the nobility of Rome, and also by a Swiss guard. The dress of the cardinals and high officers and of their attendants, the rich uniform of the guard of nobles, the peculiar costume of the Swiss guards, the gorgeousness and pomp and circumstance of the ceremony which succeeded, the fine music, the strange mixture of religious and military parade and show, altogether presented one of the most impressive, curious and splendid spectacles I ever witnessed. I could not divest my mind of the idea that the ceremony was one of worldly splendor, and that

it had no affinity to the solemnities and rites of religion, and that the object was more to honor the Pope than to make known the glorious gospel of the Son of God."

He witnessed also the Blessing of the Candles in St. Peter's: "The Pope was engaged in blessing the candles, by taking a candle in his hand, and giving it to one of the priests. The number blessed was very great, probably a thousand. There was an immense concourse of people, and the magnificence of the ceremony greatly exceeded that of the placing of the chair. The Pope and cardinals and all the officers and attendants were dressed more richly, and the attendance was greater. After the Pope had finished the blessing of the candles, a procession was formed, the Pope was carried in his chair as on the former occasion by fourteen persons dressed in red silk gowns, preceded by the cardinals and the high officers of state, and followed, also, by a numerous and splendid retinue of bishops, officers, and priests, each of whom carried a large wax candle which was lighted. The procession passed around the high altar, when the Pope resumed his seat, and the candles were extinguished. The celebration of

mass then followed in which the Pope performed part."

On Ash Wednesday came a great ceremony in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican: "First the Pope took off his cap and his head was sprinkled with ashes by one of the cardinals; then in order they approached, presented their heads to be sprinkled, and he upon them all in turn performed this act of humility." A letter of later date described a Consistory: "To-day we went to the Vatican to witness the ceremony of the Pope's conferring the cardinal's hat upon two new cardinals. The ceremony took place in one of the galleries of the Vatican near the Sistine Chapel. There was a crowd of people. Shortly after our arrival, the Pope entered from the opposite end, dressed in rich crimson robes with his pontifical hat, and took his chair upon the platform. The cardinals and attendants, as usual, were in rich robes. Presently the two cardinals-elect entered, advanced to the Pope, kneeled down, kissed his feet and retired. Shortly after they advanced separately, and kneeled down before the Pope when he placed the hat upon the new cardinal's head, accompanying the action with remarks which we

could not hear. The hat was then removed, and the cardinal rose, kissed the Pope, and retired. He then passed along to the cardinals, and saluted each one with a kiss. After this the choir commenced singing the *Te Deum*, and a procession was formed into the Sistine Chapel. Here the *Te Deum* was sung with great power, and then the two new cardinals took a place at the door, and the old cardinals on passing out kissed them. This was a very interesting part of the ceremony, and it was pleasing to see."

Just before Easter came the ceremony of the washing and the feeding of the pilgrims: "We went about seven o'clock and found a large collection of pilgrims in the Chapel. Some priests seated at a table were receiving and examining their credentials and giving them certificates as they passed. The pilgrims who had just arrived after being duly received were taken into the bathing room, where they were seated on a bench placed against the wall around the room, and a cup of water was provided for each one. Then commenced the operation of washing their feet. There were thirty of the pilgrims, of different ages and countries, all of them very miserable, dirty-

looking fellows. Among the persons who performed the task of cleansing them were cardinals, priests, princes, and gentlemen of the first respectability. Lord Clifford, an English nobleman, was particularly active in the duty, and so was Dr. Wiseman, an eminent and learned Catholic priest and head of the English College. The washing was thoroughly done, after which the pilgrims were taken into the supper room, where they were joined by some two hundred who had been previously received, and were supplied with an abundant supper. They were waited on by the nobility and gentry, who seemed to be particular in their attentions to their guests. After supper they were put to bed by their servants. The same offices were rendered by ladies of the highest respectability to female pilgrims in another apartment."

Finally, at Easter, a great celebration of Mass by the Pope in St. Peter's, the veneration of the relics by the Pope and cardinals, and the benediction in front of the Church closed this series of impressive ceremonies. There were other things in lighter vein in Rome, such as the Soirée at the Duchessa Torlonia's. "We went at about half-

past nine and reached the house by ten. The rooms were crowded, and I should think there were at least a thousand persons there. In the large Salon an opera was performed ; in another room there was dancing ; in another room card parties. The cardinals and priests were among the principal actors at the card tables. At one table playing with three gentlemen was the Princess of Denmark, a large, stout lady. The young Prince of Russia,* a youth of twenty years or thereabouts, son of the Emperor Nicholas, was there. The company was fashionable, sprinkled with stars and ribbons and coronets."

Such were some of the scenes which were of interest to the traveller, as an observer of this older civilization. As a whole, the phenomena of power and majesty most impressed his mind and aroused his criticism. All these phenomena were summed up for him in St. Peter's, that marvellous edifice whose grandeur never failed to impress his imagination, whose dominance never failed to suggest a questioning apprehension of the spiritual power which it symbolized.

George Washington Greene was at this time

* Afterwards the Emperor Alexander II.

American Consul at Rome. He was a grandson of Gen. Nathaniel Greene of Revolutionary fame, and was an accomplished historical and classical scholar. His guidance added great interest to sight-seeing and to the study of the antiquities. The friendship formed with him was continued during the remaining years of Professor Greene's life and extended to the members of his family. Other scholarly Americans were visitors at Rome during this winter of 1838-39, and Mr. Butler always retained a lively recollection of a visit to the Forum with a group of Bostonians. Among them was Dr. Charles Lowell, the father of James Russell Lowell, who, standing on that historic spot, declaimed one of Cicero's orations against Cataline.

For one member of the party the lengthening of the stay beyond the time originally set resulted in an unlooked for experience. In the autumn it was decided to send William Allen Butler home after his little vacation. He was placed under the care of John Van Buren, son of President Martin Van Buren, his father's former partner at Albany. They embarked at Liverpool, on the steamer of the same name, and came near to real-

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

izing the "don't know what" of little Ogden's shipwreck. The steamer battled with persistent and violent head-winds for ten days, until its supply of coal ran short. Then the captain turned the *Liverpool* about and ran for a harbor of safety, which he found at Cork. The danger over, this change of plan was of advantage to the youth, since it gave him the opportunity to travel with Mr. Van Buren in Ireland, and to spend some time with him in London. Finally he rejoined his uncle Charles in Paris and went with him to Italy, remaining with him until he returned to New York.

The journey ended in the summer of 1839. Charles Butler came back with improved health, though few of his friends would then have predicted for him sixty years more of vigorous and active life. He immediately took in hand the readjustment of his own affairs and, with the help of his partner and friends, slowly re-established the various interests which had been imperilled during the financial storm.

In 1843 he was called upon to undertake that great work in defense of State credit for which his name should be held in lasting honor. This public service was a contest waged in Michigan

and Indiana against the great peril of repudiation which then threatened. It is too much to say that to Charles Butler alone were due the establishment of State responsibility for bond issues and the creation of that sentiment which makes the maintenance of State credit a matter of honor to every right-minded citizen. Yet it is but justice to record that he was their early, zealous and successful public advocate; that it was his wise counsel that led sovereign States to pledge themselves in defense of financial honor; and that the fight he waged in the years between 1843 and 1853 won a victory for State honesty. To us now resting in the certainty of an established financial method, and of a firm and universal banking system, it seems strange that such a fight should ever have been necessary. In settled security one easily forgets the struggles of pioneer years. It was not a contest against intentional dishonesty merely that Mr. Butler waged. His work was creative as well as corrective. He labored to urge legislatures not only to fulfill existing financial laws, or recognized obligations, but also to originate such a body of financial law as would of itself compel assent and obedience.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

In 1840 the problems of State indebtedness were complicated by two conditions. The first of these was the lack of any general system of banking which could give opportunity for secure deposit of funds and for convenient exchange. The United States Bank had been abolished and nothing in its place had been devised. There were few recognized and stable financial institutions anywhere in the country. Wild cat banks in the remoter cities and towns—forced to be “wildcat” banks because domesticated institutions, to follow out the figure, had no recognized position by a well-ordered financial hearth-stone—issued “money,” good only in the county, sometimes only in the town of its issuance. Even in the larger cities of the newer States business institutions were unstable. In the absence of a general system each State established a method of its own and gave privileges far beyond the bounds of prudence. Great disasters, such as the failure of the Planters’ Bank in Mississippi, were a natural consequence, and universal distrust followed. When therefore the newer States needed money, there was no machinery for supplying it from the more settled regions. Hence sprang up all sorts

of private devices for deposit and transference of funds, based upon no uniform plan, wasteful and insecure in operation. As a result, in the process of borrowing, the western States paid enormous commissions. They could ill afford to lose these large sums of money and were but slightly inclined to repayment when they recalled the hardship of the borrowing conditions.

The second difficulty to be overcome was the lack of a settled principle of State responsibility for debts. The whole matter of State indebtedness was then a new problem. Prior to 1820 State debts were hardly known in this country. In 1830 only six States *—New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina and Ohio—had any indebtedness represented by stocks and bonds, and these States had issued certificates representing only thirteen millions of dollars. In 1840 nineteen States and Territories † out of twenty-six had contracted debts which amounted to nearly two hundred millions of dollars. This

* *Debts and Stocks of the several States.* Compiled by A. C. Flagg, Esq., Comptroller of the State of New York, in *American Almanac*, 1840, p. 103.

† *State Debts*, C. F. Adams, in *North American Review*, 1840, p. 316.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

enormous burden—for the entire population of the United States in 1840 was but seventeen millions—necessitated the creation of a sound sentiment as to State responsibility and in some States the establishment also of a body of financial laws adapted to these new conditions. A sovereign State could not be sued like an individual ; and it was a slow process, first, to educate its citizens to a sense of the responsibility devolving upon them in consequence of this exemption, and, second, to lead them to embody this sense of responsibility in legislative enactments. To bring the legislatures of the newer States to understand this obligation, an apostle was needed to preach a gospel of financial honor.

Such an apostle was Charles Butler. Certain Western States were in a difficult situation. Eager to build up their cities and towns, and stimulated by the distribution among them, under President Jackson, of the surplus moneys of the United States, * they had undertaken vast systems of in-

* The law authorizing this apportionment was passed June 23, 1834, and the actual distribution was completed January 1, 1837. The amount divided among the States was \$37,468,859.97.—*American Almanac*, 1838, p. 133.

ternal improvements. In many cases these had cost more than had been anticipated and more than new States could then afford. The half-completed improvements, though full of promise, brought very little income, and the interest on the bonds was a terrible burden. The people felt, too, that they had just cause of grievance. Their bonds had been sold at a discount ; they had been cheated, as they thought, in getting the money ; they were ready to let the bondholders take the improvements from which the State had received so little benefit, and to quit themselves of the responsibility. This we now call Repudiation ; * the word, as well as the fact, is left to us as a legacy from those years of trial. Yet among the legislators at that time few were intentionally dishonest. They were inexperienced in financial matters of magnitude, rather than defrauders. In most of the States, when once a plan for the es-

* “ The word Repudiation, in the sense in which it is now commonly used, was first adopted in the State of Mississippi. It occurred for the first time, we believe, in the message of the Governor of that State, in January, 1841, in which he adverts to the plan of repudiating the sale of certain of the State bonds, on account of fraud and illegality.” *Debts of the States*, by Benjamin R. Curtis (afterward Judge of the Supreme Court), in *North American Review*, January, 1844, p. 130.

tablissement of State credit had been perfected, honor triumphed.

For this mission Charles Butler had the advantage of special fitness and of special training. His mind was naturally constructive. He was always ready to consider new conditions and to frame new plans. He trusted men, and he labored, therefore, not so much to persuade them to a course of action as to explain fully the occasions for action. To this habit of mind he added candor, sincerity and suavity. Quite as important as his special fitness was his special equipment. From the time, twenty years before, when, as clerk in the Albany law office, he had acted as messenger for the little bank at Sandy Hill and sent the kegs of specie to and fro in haste to stop the "runs," through the years at Geneva, where he had been connected with the largest financial interests of that section, to his later days of greater responsibility, he had been a student of financial questions. It was a fortunate day when the logic of selection picked him out for this special service.

Michigan, the youngest of the States which had been created, had become disabled by the organ-

ization of too expensive a system of internal improvements in the construction of railways. The plan was to construct three parallel lines across the peninsula. These were called "the Northern," from the foot of Lake Huron to the mouth of the Grand River on Lake Michigan; "the Central," from Detroit to St. Joseph, and "the Southern," from Munroe, at the head of Lake Erie, to New Buffalo on Lake Michigan. For the construction of the Central and the Southern, the State had issued bonds to the amount of five million dollars. A million and a half dollars' worth of these bonds had been sold to bankers and capitalists at par, and for this portion the State had received its money. The remainder, two-thirds of the whole issue, had been sold to the Morris Canal and Banking Company of New Jersey on credit, payable in instalments, as the money should be required by the State to meet the expenses of the railway construction. A few instalments had been paid, and a portion of the Central and Southern lines had been completed, when the Morris Canal and Banking Company failed. It had sold its bonds to the United States Bank, which, to sustain its then waning credit,

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

had given them over to bankers of Europe and had obtained large advances upon them as security. Then the United States Bank failed also. The State of Michigan was left with a debt of five million dollars in bonds, with interest, due to innocent holders, for which bonds it had received very little money, and through which it had obtained only half completed works producing no revenue. The State was poor, and it defaulted on the interest of its bonds. It seemed to the people of Michigan a condition of excessive hardship. They were willing to turn over to the bondholders the improvements for which the bonds had been issued, but they had not yet come to feel the full obligations of the commonwealth. On the other hand, until these late years of financial trial, no State had failed to meet its obligations; and as Michigan was not the only one thus embarrassed, it seemed to those concerned that the time had come for a determined effort to re-establish State responsibility.

Thus it came about that in January, 1843, Charles Butler went to Detroit to represent the interests of the bondholders to the Legislature at Michigan. It had been a severe season and tra-

velling to Michigan in winter was no holiday pastime.

“I have no heart for this journey,” he wrote to his wife, just after starting, “though I have entered upon it. I do not think even the advantage to my brother will compensate for it. It may even make things worse and protract settlements. But I shall go.” In great part this decision was due to his anxiety to relieve his brother who had come to his assistance in the years of stress, and was liable for endorsements to what was, for those days, a troublesome amount. The Farmers’ Loan & Trust Company by whom these endorsements might be forced, also held Michigan bonds, and urged Charles Butler to go as mediator. For himself he made no bargain for compensation, but went to the legislature as a free man, seeking only justice.

“I ask myself,” he wrote, “what is to be gained by all this journeying through the snow and the perils of winter, this loss of the comforts, privileges and blessings of home, this separation for so long a time from wife and dear children, when at best we have so short a time to live together. Let us make it a point to pray for each

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

other daily, as we ought, and especially on Sunday evening to pray for each other and our children. And I would like to have you go on with the New Testament with me in course, reading a chapter every evening before going to bed, commencing this Sunday evening, January 8th, with the fourth chapter of Acts. Thus we can keep up communion with each other. Ogden and Emily are never out of my mind. Kiss Ogden for me, and be sure to kiss dear little Emily a good sweet kiss right on her right cheek for me. Good-night, dear wife and children. May Holy Angels guard your bed."

It will be a shock to some New Yorkers to be told that in 1843 the proper way to go from New York to Albany and the West, in the winter, was by way of Boston. One could go up the North River in summer, but the Hudson River Railroad had not yet been carried through. One could, indeed, go by boat to Bridgeport on Long Island Sound—fifty-five miles in six hours; thence by the new Housatonic Railroad to West Stockbridge—ninety miles in seven hours; thence to Albany. Charles Butler first tried this route, but breakdowns and detentions stranded him at Bridgeport.

So he spent the Sunday quietly there and then came back to New York and started again, taking the boat meekly for Boston, about twenty-four hours' journey, and thence going to Albany by rail. Beyond Albany it was rail to Rochester; then to Niagara by stage; then across the river on the ice, and so on by stage and cart through Canada to Detroit. Writing to little Ogden he told the story in light-hearted fashion :

“ On the way to Detroit I rode nearly two hundred miles in an open wagon night and day ; and the last night we were out our wagon broke down about two o'clock in the morning, and we had to walk a long way through a dreary country to a miserable log-house tavern of one room. There we had to wait till daylight and then take a dirt cart to go into Detroit. The driver put on two horses tandem before the cart and took me and another passenger with our luggage which just filled it up, and we started on. The road was very rough and had during the night frozen hard and the horses were very restless, not liking to draw such a strange kind of vehicle ; so we ‘ rode in random,’ as the driver said, fast as the horses could go, and the cart jumped about like a parched

pea ; and I expected every moment to be tipped out ; and I thought I should die from the shaking and the laughing ; and my fellow-traveller, poor man, a Mr. Doughty, was almost killed by it ; and the people stared and laughed when they saw us driving along in such style and at such a rate. But we got through safely and for that I am thankful, though I cannot help but feel home-sick."

These were perils for a man not in robust health : but they were soon forgotten in the interest of the business for which he had come. He had a creative work in finance as well as a persuasive work in morals to accomplish. He came to Michigan prepared to urge the consideration of a problem which he was willing to believe was one that, as Mr. Schoolcraft said to him, "they had rather failed to solve than wished to evade." The State had legally issued these five millions of bonds for which it had received less than three millions of dollars, and to represent which it had now only unfinished railway lines producing no income. The entire valuation of the State of Michigan in 1843 was \$27,696,940.00, so that this debt, if paid in full, would require nearly one-fifth of the whole wealth of the State. The

yearly taxation for State, county and township purposes was \$427,310.00, to which the interest on these bonds, if paid in full, would add \$300,000.00, making in all an intolerable burden.

At this time the new State of Michigan was in a wild condition, most of it covered with dense forests requiring excessive labor to subdue it for productive use. The early settlers here, as in other new regions, came into it without capital, depending upon health and strength to make homes for themselves. From their scanty means they had to make all local improvements, and they had very little money to spare for the general purposes of the commonwealth. They had never expected to assume this State burden, for the railroads, it had been supposed, would pay at once the interest, and, in time, the principal of the bonds. "Now they were confronted," to quote again the words of Mr. Schoolcraft, "rather with the labor of Ixion than Sisyphus. It is the labor of a fixed and not of a changing position." It is not strange that the easy remedy of Repudiation seemed to them, as it had seemed to the people of Mississippi, the only way of escape.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

Mr. Butler wrote daily to his wife, keeping her minutely informed of the progress of his business. The letters present the man and the struggle most graphically.

Detroit, January 28, 1843.

“Yesterday and to-day have been very, very busy days. It is a regular campaign. The authorities from the Governor down have received me with the greatest cordiality. I arrived here in the very nick of time, neither too early nor too late, and they all say it will do good. I will not be too sanguine, for there are many difficulties in the way, which no one can understand or appreciate who is not on the spot. On Monday morning I am to meet committees of the Legislature. This morning I had a long, uninterrupted conference with the Governor and went over the whole ground. Yesterday I conferred with no less than twenty persons on the subject. Talking is my special business, and of that I shall have a great deal to do.”

Detroit, Saturday evening, 4th February, 1843.

“I shall send you next week my message to the Governor and the two houses of Legislature,

and you will then see how I stand and what ground I have taken. It has excited a great deal of interest, and I bid fair to be quite a lion, or rather a stripling, bearding the lion in his den. It is queer business all round, for a Legislature here is a queer body, and they have queer notions of matters and things. I entertain strong hopes of success, but cannot possibly predict what the result will be. I find many old friends among the members of the Legislature. I have really laid myself out to bring about something, and they give me credit for urging sound doctrine and insisting on reasonable terms. Still, the idea of any one coming here and insisting on Michigan fulfilling her obligations is *monstrous* in the estimation of some ; it involves the honor and dignity of a sovereign State ! My communication was read in the Senate with profound attention, and an extra number of copies ordered to be printed unanimously. In the afternoon, however, they reconsidered, and, by a majority of one, decided not to print. The main argument was that they did not want it to go to the people without an antidote. The legislature is a very impulsive body, and no reliance can be placed on a large

majority. I shall have to see every man, and to omit one may lose the bill. Mr. Taylor and Mr. Farnsworth, my coadjutors, keep entirely in the background and are not known at all in the premises. I, coming all the way from New York, through the mud, *on purpose*, can say and do things which no one here would dare to say and do without being charged with treason. It is now precisely twelve o'clock at night, and I will lay aside all business cares for the coming Sabbath."

Friday evening, February 24th.

"I have but a moment to say that God seems to be prospering me in my business here. The Senate by a vote of 14 to 1 have passed a bill which I had prepared *in the very form in which I had prepared it*; and it will pass the House next week, as I hope, by a unanimous vote. It is wonderful. Patience, hearty good will, and hard work, night and day, have brought it about." . . .
 "My prospects" (he wrote a few days later) "are not so bright as they were on Friday. I then thought the trouble was over, but in the House it has just begun, I fear. Demagogues and repudiators there are who resist every honest measure,

but the hearts of all men are in the hand of God and He turns them which way He will like rivers of water.”

Monday evening, February 27th.

“ It is now eleven o'clock and I have had another hard day's work. The prospect now is that I shall carry my business through triumphantly and settle a great question, to the honor and prosperity of a great State, and secure a great object to the bondholders. And I am confident that I say but the simple truth, and what is apparent, that it would not have been settled if I had not come ; and that no one else could probably have effected it in the same way. I have as much as I can do to follow it up, being obliged to go and see every man and talk it over with him plainly and fully. You could have seen me this evening in a room with half a dozen members seated around a table, laying down sound principles of democracy in relation to the *payment of the public debt* and the maintenance of the public credit ; telling them that whereas a good citizen should be ready always to lay down his life in defence of his country against an invading foe, so he should always be

ready to give up his property to preserve and defend the honor of his country and pay its debts.”

Detroit, March 7, 1843.

“In the morning of Monday it was ascertained that the enemies of the bill had been so active during Sunday that they had a fixed majority. I and my friends went to work, and in the afternoon, when the bill came up, there was a very animated debate pro and con. I had not conceived of such violent opposition, and at times it seemed as if the bill would certainly be lost. We carried one question only by a vote of 25 to 24. We finally carried the bill by a vote of 28 to 20. To-day it is in the hands of the Governor for his signature, and is safe. But I have scarcely ever in my life passed through a more exciting scene. The question was, in fact, repudiation or no repudiation; and the debates were very exciting. General Cass turned out in the evening to hear. The opponents of the bill appealed to passion rather than to reason, and in the course of the evening the yeas and nays were taken seven times. Thus has ended my mission here, after six weeks of

toil and anxiety, and in the result I recognize the hand and blessing of God.”

Great was Mr. Butler's joy in the triumph of his cause. All danger seemed over on that Monday night when the bill passed the Senate; but on Wednesday a new and unforeseen peril threatened the measure. The history of the new crisis and its outcome is given in a letter written from Toledo on March 11th :

“The bill was sent to the Governor for his approval on Tuesday at noon. I then felt that the crisis had passed, and that the bill was safe. It never entered my mind that the Governor could, or would, veto it. It was a question of policy to be settled by the Legislature, and it did not involve any constitutional principles. On Wednesday morning the Governor had not returned the bill, and a good deal of solicitude began to be expressed. This was increased by the declaration of Bush and others that Governor Barry would veto the bill. Still its friends did not yield to any serious fear. In the afternoon I was in my room, about half-past two, and had just finished a letter to my brother Franklin, giving an account of the

results of my mission, rather a crowing letter, too (I shall never crow again till I get out of the woods!) when Mr. Wells, the commissioner, a friend of the Governor, and known to be intimate with him, came in with a good deal of anxiety depicted in his face, and said that he called to see me about the bill, and that something must be done right away. I expressed my astonishment and inquired whether the Governor had any hesitation on the subject. He replied that he was not authorized to say that the Governor would not sign the bill with the tax clause in, but unless that clause was stricken out he thought the bill would be in danger. He then urged me to consent to this alteration. If the tax clause was not stricken out it would ruin the Governor and the party, and I ought not to place them in such a position. I replied that this was the only feature of the bill worth saving, that the Governor must take the responsibility, and that I had rather have the bill vetoed than signed without the tax clause. Mr. Wells left me, saying that if I changed my mind I must let him know within half an hour, as the time was passing.

“After he had gone I could not but muse on the

uncertainty of all human affairs. Here was I, after having secured, as I supposed, beyond any question, the passage of a bill which would reflect honor on the people and do justice to the creditors of the State, rejoicing in the victory and reposing on my laurels, when lo! a veto! I was almost driven in desperation to take ground with Clay against the *veto power* altogether. A little reflection, however, brought me to my senses and to my knees. I had forgotten God in this business, and taken to myself the praise which belonged to Him and to Him alone. Surely, every man is vanity, as the psalmist says. Such a rebuke, such a *break down*, I had never before realized. But, my dear wife, when I arose from that prayer I felt such calmness, such contentment, such submission and resignation to the will of God as to be willing, I had almost said desiring, that He would cause the Governor to veto the bill and thus humble my pride, self-confidence and conceit into the very dust.

“I thought, however, that duty to my employers and duty to an upright cause and a sincere desire to promote what I certainly conceived to be for the true interests, moral, political and financial,

of Michigan, required of me to use all honest means to prevent so great a disaster and injury to these interests as such an event would produce. I never estimated the moral force of the veto power, for good or evil, as I did then, and as I shall ever hereafter, when any great question is involved. I knew that Governor Barry was an honest, just and prudent man, and that he would act cautiously ; but I saw in the fact that his most confidential friend and adviser regarded a veto inevitable, unless I consented to strike out the tax clause, the strongest evidence that such was the meaning, if not the conclusion, of his mind. But I went out to see what I could do."

So prompt and effective was his work in stirring up the friends of the bill that :

" In the course of the afternoon and evening the Governor had a series of calls from his personal and political friends, who remonstrated with him most plainly against so suicidal an act, and I had reports from Houghton, Purdy, Hall, Wakefield and others, of the results of their various interviews. As time was pressing, this being the afternoon of the last day of the session, the gentlemen had no time for compliments. It was

plain talk all round, and I was amused at the report which an eye-witness gave of Judge Bell's mission. When the Judge entered, the Cabinet were in session deliberating on the bill, and he addressed himself directly to the Governor, 'talking to him like a father.' As the Governor is probably ten years older than the Judge, it struck me with humor.

"After tea the Cabinet again met to deliberate further, and I went to the Capitol again to see how things stood. I found very great excitement pervading both Houses and an increasing confidence that the bill would be vetoed; and it was said that, even if vetoed, it would be passed through the House by a constitutional majority of two-thirds. Perhaps the wish was father to the thought. It was evident, however, that the current was setting with overwhelming force against the veto. The enemies of the bill had made extraordinary efforts to bring influence to bear upon the Governor through his trusted friend, Mr. Eldridge, the Secretary of State. They said that his signing it would be a deathblow to his administration and to the ascendancy of the Democratic party in the State, and he had, no doubt, been

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

brought to believe this. The counteracting influences, however, in support of an honest and just cause, were too powerful to be resisted, and at nine o'clock in the evening the Governor signed the bill. This result was brought to me confidentially in the Senate chamber, where I was patiently awaiting the veto message, the moment it occurred. It was soon circulated among the members and the congregation of bystanders who were lookers-on in Vienna. Well was it for Governor Barry and for the honor and credit of the State of Michigan that unwise counsels did not prevail with him; that God so overruled things that he was kept from falling into a snare and inflicting an irreparable injury upon his own character and upon the character and good name of the State. And thus ended this chapter and this day of the 8th of March, 1843, at 10 o'clock P. M., when I left the Capitol."

The fight was won. To the struggling people of Michigan the taxation in prospect seemed an overwhelming burden. But, under the provisions of this law, the State regained financial stability. The issues of bonds, funded wisely by Charles Butler's bill on the basis of the values actually

received, were honorably cared for. The Central Railroad was sold to a company for two millions of dollars, the Southern to another company for half a million, and the finances of the State have never since been in question. Of far greater value, however, to the Commonwealth and to the country was the victory gained for public honor and honesty.

An extract from a confidential letter by the Auditor-General of Michigan, Hon. C. J. Hammond, to Mr. George Griswold, of New York, shows Mr. Butler's part in the struggle from an outsider's standpoint:

"I avail myself of the opportunity presented by the return of Charles Butler, Esq., to say what simple justice to him requires you should know. You will be advised by him of the result of his mission more perfectly than the limits of a letter will permit me to do. Of his agency in producing this result I cannot say too much. He has accomplished all that man could do and more than almost any other gentleman you might have selected. You are aware that when the present executive took the gubernatorial chair repudiation was ready to burst forth, and if they had been led in

that direction a large majority of the people of this State would have followed. In his first message the Governor gave tone to the then forming public sentiment, which led to the legislation of 1842. In his last annual communication to the Legislature he advanced a step and public opinion sustained him. But many even of our most valuable citizens had not dreamed of *taxation*, and the Executive did not think public opinion would warrant a present enactment embodying that principle. Although it was fast approximating to that high and honest stand, still it seemed a task beyond the power of any man to lead a majority of the representatives of the people to that point, at this time. Mr. Butler, by his address, amenity of manners and powerful arguments, has succeeded, and has procured an enactment based on high moral and political principles; one that reflects great credit on him and, I think I may justly say, great credit on the State. Discretion will require that the agency of Mr. Butler in producing this result should not be trumpeted. Our people are jealous of foreign and out-door influence, and the people should have all the credit that can be bestowed upon them consistently."

Hardly had this enterprise been concluded when another had to be undertaken. For the protection of the financial interests and of the investments made by the American Land Company, of which he was president, and whose fortunes were identified with those of almost every Western State, Charles Butler had to visit Mississippi and Louisiana. He went directly from Detroit, as soon as his work in Michigan had been completed. His errand to the South, though dealing with financial matters of importance at the moment, did not involve great questions of state policy as had the visit to Michigan, and it need not here concern us. But his notes of traveling experiences, and his views of affairs in the South are of interest to us now that sixty years have passed.

Travelling in the West and Southwest was a serious matter in the Forties, when the fastest mail, night and day, required ten days from New Orleans to New York. It was made especially arduous for Charles Butler by his steadfast refusal to travel on Sunday. To the average stage driver and route agent the subordination of business requirements to this religious sentiment never seemed quite reasonable, and a readjustment was

effected each succeeding Saturday with infinite difficulty. Difficult or easy, however, it was always brought about, and the records of the Sundays—sometimes spent in a town where a preacher of some note was heard, more often in a little log-cabin church on the prairies, where Mr. Butler would himself assist at the Sunday School services,—are full of interest. A characteristic letter of about this period, though not written on this journey, gives so graphic a picture of one of these days of rest that it is inserted here :

“ The Sabbath is nearly gone, and though distant a thousand miles, in a strange land and among strangers, yet have I been with you in spirit. I have had a home feeling, and you and our dear children have been not only the subject of my repeated prayers, but the subject of my almost constant thoughts. I left Terre Haute yesterday in a private conveyance for Crawfordsville, expecting to get through to spend Sunday there with my friends in the college, and calculating a good deal on the interest and pleasure of such an arrangement. But the distance was greater and the roads worse than I had anticipated ; and by sunset I was yet twenty-eight miles from the

destined point. Night shut in upon us, and we could scarcely grope our way through the woods, and finally got into a deep ditch, and were brought up all in a heap. Whilst my companion held the horses, I labored at the wagon and finally succeeded in getting it out of the hole. Then we started again, but at eleven we halted at a house by the wayside, and succeeded in obtaining comfortable lodgings for man and beast. The bed was never more welcome, nor was sleep ever sweeter or more refreshing.

“To-day I attended the only meeting in the neighborhood, which was held at a small log school house, beautifully situated in a grove on the banks of a running brook. It was interesting to see the gathering of the people, on horseback, on foot, and in wagons—the plain and honest country people, men, women and children,—women on horseback with their infants in their arms—and now and then a man with his wife behind him—an immense concourse of good-looking, intelligent country people. The school house could only accommodate the women, their children, and half a dozen men—all the rest were seated on benches made of rails, out doors under the shade

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

of the trees around the house. The minister took his stand in the doorway, so that those inside and outside could hear. It was a beautiful day, the sun shining sweetly, the woods literally alive with the birds, and the noise of the swift stream mingling with their music and the hearty singing of the people together, made an occasion of unequalled interest. It was all nature and the God of nature; the noble forest trees in their richest attire, the green grass, the sweet shade, the large collection of Sunday dressed rustic people, the primitive house of worship, the still more primitive and solemn mode of conducting the service, the perfect stillness which reigned, save the sounds of the water and the birds, and of praise and prayer and preaching—all seemed to be in unison with the day.

“What affected me deeply was the feeling of gratitude that seemed to exist for such great and distinguished mercies and blessings as they enjoyed. The preacher in prayer dwelt upon God’s goodness and mercy and blessings conferred upon them, as compared with the condition of thousands and tens of thousands on the face of the earth, and he took for his subject the 4th Chap-

ter of Hebrews, "The rest which remains for the people of God." He explained the subject in a plain but most impressive and truly orthodox way, and I could but feel that it was the simple preaching of the Gospel—it was angels' food.

"It seems that it was Communion Sunday and the Sacrament was administered, but how unlike such occasions in our church. These poor people have no Communion service, and from the nature of the case the mode of doing it must adapt itself to their condition. The male members were required to take front seats out doors, the female members the front seats in the house, and then the elements were distributed, and the whole was conducted with decorum and amid the most profound and respectful attention on the part of the spectators. I must confess that I have never partaken of the Sacrament under more interesting circumstances, and it seemed to me as if it might have been thus administered in the days of the apostles.

"After the Communion there was a baptism by immersion in the brook. The whole congregation repaired to the banks of the stream, and there, after prayer and singing one or two beautiful hymns, the rite was performed. The loveliness

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

of the day, the beauty of the surrounding scenery, and the sweet accompaniments of the feathered songsters, rendered this an interesting ceremony. I am staying at a simple country tavern—very plain, but neat—and the landlord and wife both good, quiet people; the stillest place you ever saw.”

The route from Michigan to the South was by stage, wagon, and cart, via Toledo, Sandusky, and Columbus, to Cincinnati; thence by steamboat on the Ohio and Mississippi to Memphis and to New Orleans. To us now stage travel has a romantic interest dear to the hearts of those who love the stories of the olden time. Little enough romance was there in its actual conditions. It was uncertain, expensive—ten cents a mile—and distressingly uncomfortable.

“I left Sandusky,” wrote Charles Butler, “on the morning of the fourth, in the ‘stage,’ a small buggy wagon loaded down with mail bags, drawn by two horses, for the first seventeen miles to Tiffen, which we accomplished in precisely seven and a half hours; then shifted to a ‘spanker,’ drawn by four horses, for the ride to Marion. This last vehicle was a large covered wagon, as un-

comfortable a thing to ride in as could well be devised, save the cover. Then we rode in a 'hack' to Delaware; then in a lumber wagon thirty miles to Worthington, where I arrived at half-past ten last night, and where I was glad to stop from sheer exhaustion. I had ridden from Sandusky to Worthington thirty-nine hours without stopping, nearly the whole distance in wagons at the rate of two to two and a half miles an hour, the seats having no backs and the roads as bad as roads could be. I stayed over at Worthington last night and got a good night's rest, and to-day came in to Columbus on horseback."

Steamboat travel, of course, was much better. "I have been very fortunate in the boat," he wrote; "she is a first-class boat from Cincinnati, and the captain is part owner and has a first-rate list of officers and men. He appears to be very careful and devoted to his business. Yesterday afternoon he put a man ashore on the banks of the river who was suspected of having stolen from some of the passengers. It seemed hard to leave a man on these lonely banks to take his chance of finding a place of refuge, but from the decision of the captain in such cases there is no appeal.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

Our captain is a gentleman in every sense of the word, and I like him very much. We have a large number of passengers, every berth full, and they certainly are a most respectable class. I have been surprised at their appearance and deportment, so different from what one might have expected on these waters. The barber, a loquacious Frenchman, says that he never saw such a load of passengers, 'such grave people—bar do no business—so different last time—then great many loved to play, drink, gamble—now all peace, quiet.' I could almost fancy myself on the Boston boat were it not that the people around me, who are from Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, Mississippi and Louisiana, talk of Western plans and things altogether. Among them are many religious persons and they seem to give tone to the society of our steamer. Having been now four days on board we are getting pretty well acquainted, and there are some whom I shall always think of with pleasure. Thus the traveller is always falling in with, and falling out with, his fellow pilgrims as he journeys on through this wilderness of a world."

He was impressed by the majesty of the river

which was in full flood, "bearing us swiftly with it on its journey to the sea." He wrote: "We have just been wooding, and I have had a fine walk in the woods of Louisiana, and heard the birds sing, and enjoyed the fine breeze and pure air. The cotton tree is covered with moss which hangs from its wide-spread branches and has a beautiful appearance, like drapery. The banks are more cultivated as we descend the river. We see fine plantations on each side, picturesque in appearance, the negro houses whitewashed and so grouped as to give the impression of a village.

"We passed General Jackson's plantation yesterday afternoon. We are now in the sugar country, and the plantations front on the river and run back two or three miles perfectly level. The cane is probably a foot high and the hands are at work hoeing it. We have just passed one plantation of Mr. Wade Hampton, on which there are three thousand negroes employed. It is one of the largest in the country, lies on both sides of the river and presents a most beautiful appearance. The negro houses are arranged in a tasteful way. I counted forty in one field, twenty in a row, each house standing by itself and having a

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

handsome yard around it in front and rear, the houses all built on the same plan, painted white and each house of good size. The mansion house stands on the bank of the river a short distance back and like all the houses of this country of the better class is built with a veranda all around it and with shade trees all about it. The hands at work in the fields looked like an army of men and I am told the crop of this plantation comes to a hundred thousand dollars a year."

Aside from its one blot of slavery, the southern country made a great impression upon Charles Butler's mind for its beauty and for the hospitality and open-heartedness of its people. His journey led him by wagon from Memphis, Tennessee, to Holly Springs, Mississippi.

"We stopped at Germantown fifteen miles out," he wrote, "and had feed for our horses and food for ourselves—Indian bread, Indian cakes, delicious ham and eggs, and fresh milk. The houses along the road are chiefly log houses; that is, two large log or block houses—logs hewn or smooth—standing entirely detached, leaving an open space of fifteen feet in width between them; and then a roof covering both, thus leaving

in the centre an open hall or covered way. The one house is a sitting or sleeping room, usually two beds and decently furnished, the other a family or working room with beds in it also. Then, as an appurtenant, and at a little distance from this main or family mansion, is a large common kitchen and eating room for the family and for the blacks. Then at a still greater distance are sundry small and common-looking log houses for the negroes.

“At one place where we stopped yesterday—that of a substantial and wealthy farmer—it was just twelve o’clock and the lord of the house was passing from the main house to the log dining house, perhaps forty feet distant, where was congregated a large number of black spirits and white, big and little. I observed half a dozen little black children, male and female, who were almost literally naked; and even the large negroes were miserably clad. As they came up, ragged and tattered, the little ones ran out and greeted them, ‘Daddy, Daddy,’ with as much fondness as our children would greet us. They are very hospitable; the moment we stopped a negro woman came out with a large potato custard pie. They all live very well here; hominy corn-bread in

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

every form, potato custard—made of sweet potatoes with milk, sugar, eggs, butter and nutmegs—hot muffins, rice, boiled and baked, potatoes cooked in every form, apples, hot biscuits, bacon and eggs are standing dishes. But, oh, what a stain this slavery! And yet the slaves as a general thing are well treated here and public sentiment frowns on any master who would abuse them; still they are neglected by many, shamefully, and it cannot be otherwise, human nature being what it is.

“The country about Holly Springs is romantically and surpassingly beautiful. It is rolling, with beautifully formed hills and valleys as sweet as Arcadia. The town covers about as much ground as the city of New York. Every house has its little plantation beside it. They have good schools, good churches. But this slavery mars the beauty of the whole scene; it is a dreadful evil, and I am more puzzled to see how it is to be removed than I ever was before. It is a mystery the solution of which God has reserved to Himself; He will make it plain in some way, and He will remove the evil, I think, in due time.”

This reads something like a prophecy in the light of subsequent events.

“ I have just seen a sight,” he wrote later from this same Holly Springs, “ that wrung my very heart and made me wretchedly unhappy. It was a sale of negroes, big and little, husbands and wives, men, women and children, all in the market at auction. Oh, it was enough to make you weep to see it. I could stand it but a few moments. Oh, my soul, enter thou not into their secrets. Why is this so? Is there no arm to stop it and prevent husband and wife, parents and children from being torn from family life, and sold to different masters? It is shocking to humanity.”

It is pleasant to recall that during the lifetime of the writer of this letter the stain of slavery was removed, and that the South came to its nobler heritage.

The Southern trip ended with a pleasant journey through Ohio and Pennsylvania, and the busy New York professional life was resumed.

CHAPTER VI

THE FUNDING OF THE BONDED DEBT OF INDIANA

THE success which had crowned Mr. Butler's work in Michigan attracted wide attention. Other States oppressed with debt, and other financial institutions holding State bonds as investments turned to this successful advocate for assistance. As a general principle it had been held that "since the State, being a sovereignty, cannot be sued nor forced to pay her debts to the holders of State bonds, it is, for that very reason, bound to act as a sovereignty. Its honor must be sustained at all sacrifices, and its plighted faith remain inviolate." This statement, here quoted from Governor Whitcomb, of Indiana, had no opponents when announced as a theory; but it seemed of slight value as a refuge to legislatures who faced the condition of a bank-

rupt State. A mediator, skilled and sagacious in financial matters, was as much needed as a moralist, and in the winter of 1845-6, Charles Butler went to Indiana on behalf of the bondholders of the State, for the adjustment of its debt.

The situation was difficult. The statesmen of Indiana, like those of Michigan, with the optimism of pioneers, had undertaken a vast system of internal improvements quite beyond the capacity of the State to maintain or even to complete. Chief among these public works was the Wabash and Erie Canal, intended to connect the waters of the Gulf with those of the Lakes and the Atlantic. Water communication, seventy years ago, was, it will be remembered, the main reliance of commerce. The Erie Canal had proved a boon to New York, and a like future was predicted for this Indiana enterprise. It was to run—and was finally completed—from Toledo on Lake Erie, southward ninety miles through Ohio, and three hundred and seventy-nine miles through Indiana, to Evansville, on the Ohio River. Its length in Indiana was about the same as that of the Erie Canal in New York, and its hopes seemed as bright.

But money for this enterprise had to be borrowed

upon bonds, in foreign markets, the United States having then little spare capital. Unluckily, the negotiations had, as in Michigan, been made through the ill-fated Morris Canal and Banking Company, whose failure had involved the State in heavy loss. Meantime other difficulties arose. The canal was not completed; the State was compelled to default in its interest on the bonds, and offered no hope of their payment.

In his message to the Legislature Governor Whitcomb was almost hopeless. "The mighty impulse," he said, "which seemed to have been given to her prosperity by the legislation of 1836, exhausted itself within a few years. So that by the winter of 1841, under the influence of the reaction which followed, the credit of the State was destroyed, and its finances were thrown into the utmost disorder—in the history of the State the day of adversity seemed truly to be set over against the day of her prosperity—since then the public debt has rested like a nightmare on the bosom of the State, crushing the energies, and destroying the hopes of the people. It has been for years a disturbing theme, and a fruitful source of bickering and strife. The withering effects of it upon the



Charles Butler

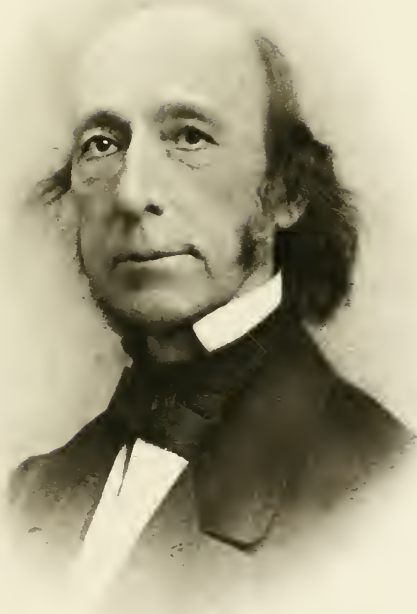
From a photograph taken by Brady about 1860

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

upon hands, in foreign markets, the United States having then little spare capital. Unluckily, the negotiations had, as in Michigan, been made through the ill-fated Morris Canal and Banking Company, whose failure had involved the State in heavy loss. Meanwhile relief difficulties arose. The canal was not completed, the State was compelled to default in its interest on the bonds, and offered no hope of their payment.

In his message to the Legislature Governor Wilson was a most hopeful. — The mighty impetus, he said, "which seemed to have been given to her prosperity by the legislation of 1836, exhausted itself within a few years. So that by the winter of 1841, under the influence of the reaction which followed, the credit of the State was destroyed, and its finances were thrown into the utmost disorder. — In the history of this State the day of adversity commenced when she set out against the day of her prosperity. — The public debt has rested like a nightmare on the bosom of the State, crushing the energies, and lowering the hopes of the people. It has been the cause of a disturbing element, and

Charles Butler
From a photograph taken by Brady about 1850



moral, social, and pecuniary condition of the people have been visible to reflecting minds as the sun at noon-day, and could not fail to excite the deepest solicitude. The anxious inquiry with all honest and patriotic citizens has been, How can we ever remove this difficulty and satisfy equally the honor of the State, and the just demands of our creditors? And whilst their patriotism prompts the inquiry, their hopes are unable to suggest the answer."

He went on, though not confidently, to plead for some settlement of the question. "For," he said, "it cannot be doubted that the additional value which will be given to property, by the settlement of the State Debt question and the prosecution of the Canal, will add greatly to the wealth and population of the State within the ensuing ten years. Immigrants will no longer be deterred from coming into the State by its doubtful and unsettled condition in regard to the public debt. Land is certainly worth more per acre in any of the new States whose credit is untarnished, and who are determined to meet their obligations when they have the ability at all hazards, than in a defaulting State; and evidence of the truth of

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

this remark is to be found in the notorious fact that immigrants shun the defaulting States.”

Mr. Butler's letters to his wife depict the situation clearly and not too hopefully.

INDIANAPOLIS, November 29, 1845.

“I have been incessantly engaged, night and day, and hardly find time to eat or sleep. The prospects are altogether discouraging, and almost everybody says that *nothing* can be done. Politicians, on both sides, are afraid to move. It is really amazing to see what a paralysis hangs upon this people. Everything is merged in the most trifling local politics. The Governor is a prominent candidate for the United States Senate, and dare not open his mouth as he should, lest it might affect his election to that office. His friends are in the same predicament; and so with all the other candidates and their respective friends. My mission is a hard one, and *no mistake*. Still, it is not fair to judge altogether from present indications. I must take a week or more to find out how the land lies. It is hardly possible but there will be found some good men, and some men who will take right ground. I must try my hand and

see what I can do. Perhaps the very discouragements which meet me at the outset may be useful, and prepare the way for ultimate success. It is certain that if the question is not now settled it never will be ; the people will go into repudiation. I have had two interviews with the Governor, one at my room and the other at his own house, and they have been quite satisfactory. He is one of the most cautious and timid men in the world ; at the same time he is, I think, entirely honest and would be glad to have right done. He told me what he should say in his message, and if he adheres to this intention it will be *all I could desire.*”

December 7, 1845.

“The Sabbath has come to me as a thing to be coveted. My spiritual nature was famishing and wearied, and needed food and rest. I find that I am engaged in a great undertaking, involved in the most complicated and, perhaps, insuperable difficulties. I am fully persuaded that it is only by addressing myself to the conscience of the people, stirring that up, and bringing that to bear that I stand the slightest chance of success ; and this cannot be done in a day. A revolution, a

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

reformation, is required to be wrought. The whole population has got to be, in a sense, made over again before justice can or will be done to the holders of the pledged faith of the State. Who is sufficient for these things? I am sure I am not.

“The difficulty in the way is radical; it lies at the very heart of the people. Such is the sentiment produced by the efforts of heartless, unprincipled politicians that it has become a question whether it would be honest and right to pay the debt! No man dare take the responsibility in the Legislature of advocating payment. The Governor, even though he went very far for him, yet dare not use the word *pay* or *tax*. I consider his message a great triumph and as preparing the way for my mission; yet he has thrown the whole responsibility on me. I am preparing my letter, but it requires great labor and reflection. I have to weigh every word and get it exactly right, or else I shall stir up such a hornets' nest about my ears that I shall be glad ‘to cut and run’ out of the Hoosier State as fast as possible.

“I mean to make an issue between the bondholders and the State in a way that the people

shall understand it, and lay the foundation, I hope, for future success if I fail now. I find myself backed up by a few good and strong men of both parties, and a great change has certainly been wrought since I came. The little leaven may leaven the whole lump. I have reason, certainly, to be encouraged with the indications around me, and the revolution I speak of is certainly within the power of Him who holds all hearts in His hand. It is a great question, intimately connected with religion and morals, and that connection is what I rely on. Last night I did not get to bed till one o'clock. I am run down with engagements and scarcely get out of my room all day."

December 10th, 7 P.M.

"I have only this moment finished my letter to the Legislature. To-morrow, or day after, I expect to read it *in person* at the bar of the House of Representatives. I do not know how it will be received. It will kill or cure. The letter is very much complimented by the few to whom I have submitted it, among whom are the best men I can find here; they think it will save the debt and the people. The fact is, the State is on

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

the verge of repudiation, but they have not known it.”

December 11, 8 P. M.

“I delivered my letter this forenoon to the Governor, who transmitted it by special message to the two Houses this afternoon. I was there, and the Speaker, by the unanimous consent of the House, invited me to read it in person, which I did. The lobby was pretty full, and they all listened with profound attention. When I finished—it took just an hour—they immediately ordered a thousand copies to be printed for the use of the House, which shows their estimate, as one hundred is the usual number. It seems to have met with universal approbation. The Rev. Dr. White, President of Wabash College, met me as I came out, took me by the hand, said that he had heard the whole of it, and that it was a most able and statesmanlike document. He seemed perfectly delighted. The Governor was present, and though he had, of course, read it through before sending it in, yet sat throughout and listened with the deepest attention. He and the Speaker expressed great satisfaction, and said that the

temper and spirit of it were most unexceptionable, and compliments are pouring in on every side. Indeed, I am myself surprised at the manner in which it has been received and the effect produced.

“ My bark is now fairly launched, and though I have scarcely a hope of its weathering the adverse blasts which I hear and see driving all around me, yet I feel persuaded that I have done enough *to save the question in Indiana* at another session. I will send you the document itself to-morrow and you will read and judge for yourself. All the compliments which I have embodied in this letter are meant for you, my better half, and I hope they will not make you vain. My head is not quite turned, but it aches terribly from excitement, and labor, and fatigue.”

The letter * here referred to is too long and too technical to find a place in this memoir, but a few extracts will show the temper of the weapon with which Charles Butler fought his good fight in Indiana :

* Letter of Charles Butler, Esq., to the Legislature of Indiana in relation to the public debt. Indianapolis : Morrison & Spann, December, 1846.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

“ I cannot close without availing myself of the occasion to present a few of the considerations which belong to this great subject, involving, as it surely does, the honor of the State and the prosperity, interests and welfare of its eight hundred thousand population, and which, it would seem, should prompt the Legislature to take immediate steps, to the extent of her ability, for the relief of her foreign bondholders. It will be remembered that they have held their bonds for a long period, without receiving any payment from the State, and the effect of such delay is to render their property comparatively valueless in their hands. In many instances parties have held on without submitting to the enormous sacrifice which a sale would involve, hoping for speedy relief from the State; and in such cases, if they can only be re-assured by the payment of a small portion of the accruing interest, and by certain provision for the future, it would save them from ruinous sacrifices and enable them to preserve their property.

“ Next to the payment in full of all arrears, is the *fixing* the time when it will be paid; in other words, *certainty* is the thing desired—it is the uncertainty in which the whole subject is involved,

and the consequent inability of needy holders to make any certain calculations, that adds to their unhappiness, as in the case between man and man. An examination would show that the bonds of Indiana, like those of Pennsylvania and New York, are to be found extensively in the hands of trustees, guardians, retired and aged persons, widows, and others whose object was investment, and whose reliance for support is on income. Such, with scarcely an exception, is the class I represent.

“The State cannot be constrained to make payment, in any manner, at the will of the holders of her bonds, however pressing their necessities may be; they are left to depend entirely for the fulfilment of obligations, upon her own sense of honor and justice. In the exercise of her sovereignty, she is the sole judge of her own ability, and it might be deemed presumption in anyone, even a creditor, to question her integrity and disinterestedness in deciding on the question, however it might disappoint his expectations, and however variant it might be from his own estimate.

“The highest evidence which can be given of the reliance of those whom I represent, on the honor and faith of the State, is to be found in the fact

already mentioned, that they have continued to hold the bonds from the period of their purchase, prior to the default of the State, down to the present time. It is true, they have been encouraged, from time to time, by the solemn assurances of the people of Indiana, speaking through their Executive and Representatives, of their intention to do justice to them as soon as they should have the ability; and especially by the emphatic language of the joint resolution, adopted by the Legislature of 1844-45, which is: 'that we regard the slightest breach of plighted faith, public or private, as an evidence of the want of that moral principle upon which all obligations depend; that when any State in this Union shall refuse to recognize her great seal, as the sufficient evidence of her obligation, she will have forfeited her station in the sisterhood of States, and will be no longer worthy of their confidence and respect;' and while they ought not to doubt that such is the sentiment of the people of Indiana, still they are painfully conscious that time is running against them, that interest is accumulating, and that with the increase of debt the difficulties in the way of payment will also naturally increase; and they are impressed with

the serious conviction that the neglect, or refusal on the part of the State, to provide for the payment of its just debts, for an unreasonable length of time, does involve all the practical consequences of repudiation to the holders of its obligations and to the people themselves, and will be so regarded by the world at large.

“The danger of this *tacit* or *passive* repudiation is increased with the delay ; for the longer it is suffered to remain, the further removed it is from the time when the obligation was incurred, and when the sense of it was fresh ; and when we consider the changing character of the population of all the new States, it is not surprising that the sense of obligation should grow weaker and weaker with the lapse of time. Nor is it surprising, in this view of the subject, that the most lively apprehension should be indulged by persons situated like those I represent, nor that they should be importunate with your Excellency and the Legislature, to save them from such a possible fate.

“In the communication which I have the honor to make, if I have expressed myself too strongly on any point, or if I have seemed to fail in any particular in the respect which is due from me,

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

either to your Excellency or the Legislature, or the people of Indiana, I beg once for all most earnestly to disclaim any such intention, and that you will attribute it to my anxiety to represent faithfully the rights and expectations of those who have sent me on this mission, and who cannot be presumed from the relation they sustain to the State, to entertain any other than feelings of the utmost respect for its public authorities, and a sincere desire to see its credit established on the most enduring basis, and its prosperity thereby secured.”

To his son Mr. Butler wrote the next day :

INDIANAPOLIS, December 12, 1845.

Friday evening, 7 o'clock.

“I am very busy. My letter to the Governor will be printed to-morrow. I was amused at a remark of one of the plain country members, who said to Mr. Wright that there ‘was first a little sugar, then a little soap, then sugar, and then soap, and it was sugar and soap all the way through.’ Another said that I had ‘molassoed’ it well. You will think from this it was a strange document, but the critics were real Hoosiers and ‘no mistake,’ as they say here. At any rate, they

liked it well—for maple sugar and soap and maple molasses, you will understand, are three of the greatest staples in this country. They don't make much use of the soap, but they do of the sugar and molasses, so I infer from it that they were pleased. Take good care of dear mother and Emmy and Anna. I will see if I can find anything curious for you in this country. I go out this evening to the Governor's party. I go as a matter of business, to meet with the people and form acquaintances."

In later letters he wrote to his wife :

December 17, 1845.

" My letter has been referred to a Joint Committee of Twenty-four, to confer with me on the whole subject, and this committee are now in session and adopting their preparatory organization. In so large a committee there are, of course, friends and foes, and the latter, I fear, are the strongest, not in numbers, but in power. It is an easy thing to make mischief and they are now trying, as I understand, to embarrass the question by objecting to my authority to act at all, which is quite ludicrous, after receiving my communication and

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

ordering 1,000 copies to be printed. This is the beginning of trouble of which I shall have enough, before I get through. But I mean, if my life is spared, to represent the bondholders faithfully to the end. The people have now got the matter presented to them in a form it never was before, and they cannot prevent the effect of it. I expect to-morrow to go before the Sanhedrim in person, and the discussions are to be oral. That is, I am to be permitted to make my propositions and accompany them with oral explanations, which give me a chance to say all I want to say, and to lay all the reasons before them. It will probably be public also; and the matter is so novel and of such deep public interest that everybody is looking to the proceedings of the committee with great curiosity and interest."

December 18, 1845.

"Your letter of the 11th inst. was received last evening, just as I came in from my first meeting with the committee. The question of authority is yet unsettled. They had a very violent debate and fight over it. I declined entering into any conference with them till they had settled that

question, laying before them such credentials as I could, and then I withdrew. The committee decided by a strong vote in favor of my power and adjourned to meet to-morrow evening, when I am to appear and enter on the discussion. This morning the repudiators raised the same question in the Senate and an angry debate was the result. They finally adopted a resolution, by consent of the friends of public credit, calling on the Governor for information. The Governor was present during the discussion and will send in the message to-morrow. This will, I presume, settle their point ; but then they will raise others, as fast as possible, in the hope, by reason of the shortness of the session, to bluff off all action."

December 21, 1845.

"I had the first conference with the committee on Friday evening, and addressed them two hours in connection with the proposition which I submitted. I succeeded in making a decided impression ; they listened with the deepest interest. The result was better than I anticipated. It is a formidable business, I assure you, to address a body of twenty-four men on so great and grave a

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

subject, and with the eyes of the whole State fixed on us. Our meetings are private. I am allowed a reporter and clerk, and shall have every word reported. We meet again to-morrow evening. I expect to occupy about three evenings this week, and about three hours each evening, in order to go over *all* the points and submit all my views."

INDIANAPOLIS, December 22d.

Monday evening.

"I closed a second conference with the Joint Committee this evening, having addressed them just two and a half hours. The impression was evidently very favorable. The meeting was held in the Senate chamber and was altogether interesting. The truth is, the subject is a very great one with the people of Indiana, and this proceeding has given to it great prominence. All eyes are now directed to the result of the conference pending between the State and its public creditors, the latter represented by me. The momentous question of the public debt is to be settled, and the foundations laid for the future prosperity and greatness of the State. The theme is a noble one and the occasion extraordinary. Every even-

ing thus far I have made converts in the committee to my views, so that the friends of public credit say they now consider the House safe, and the only difficulty is in the Senate. I do not know how this is, and can hardly credit it. In the committee we have a number of out-and-out repudiators, violent and unreasonable men, and yet they have listened to me with much respect and attention. One only has abandoned the committee, and does not pretend to come. The other twenty-three are there to a man, and a minute."

Tuesday afternoon.

"We meet again this evening, when I proceed with the argument. To-morrow evening I appropriate especially to the consideration of the bonds which it is proposed to repudiate, amounting to some \$3,000,000 or \$4,000,000. This brings up the whole subject of repudiation, and is the most important point involved in the discussion. It is profoundly interesting, and I feel oppressed with the weight and burden of it. On the result depends the question whether the State will or will not repudiate. The committee will decide

that question, probably. If they decide against me, I shall then protest and ask to be heard at the bar of the House ; and if the House decide against me, I shall withdraw the proposals and shake the dust from my feet and go home.

“The enemy will rally again. My committee meet again this evening. The Governor helped me this afternoon by a message to the Senate in reply to a resolution. He and Mr. Bright go in for me strong, head and shoulders, and now I have a strong team, indoors and out. My room is run down with people constantly, and to-day I have done nothing but see company and make one call on two ladies. One of them is the wife of a leading Senator, whom I have not seen yet, but who is dead against me. His wife I got all right, in an hour’s talk devoted exclusively to the subject, and she goes in strong for my plan. I made the call this morning, and this P.M. the Senator gave a vote in my favor. So you see what a good wife can do in an important affair. This morning he voted against me. You must know that in the Senate they have had me on the coals for about a week hot enough. The Legislature will adjourn by the 15th of January.”

Christmas Eve, After 10 o'clock.

“I have at this moment returned from the fourth and last conference of the Joint Committee. I spoke with entire freedom for a period of three and a half hours, and the committee listened with deep attention and interest during the whole time. The theme was repudiation. That is the question, raised distinctly in regard to from three to four millions of dollars of the State bonds. I never satisfied myself better in speaking than I did this evening, and I was gratified to find my remarks seemed to be received with decided favor. The meetings are held in the Senate chamber, and this evening the committee allowed a number of gentlemen to come in to listen to the discussion. The mode of procedure is for the chairman to take the president's chair in the Senate and call the committee to order; the minutes of the last meeting are then read over, the names of the Joint Committee called, and, if all appear, then the chairman announces to me the organization of the committee and their readiness to have me proceed with my remarks. The committee occupy seats directly in front of me and my address is to them. Last evening I spoke about an hour and a quarter.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

“Thus far every evening I have made one or more converts to our side, and this evening I was informed by the chairman of the House Committee that there was but one man on his committee now wrong, and that one was Mr. Carr who has been an out-and-out repudiator. Mr. Carr, however, remarked, when I got through this evening, that he could not have believed that he ever would sit so long and hear a speech, every word of which rasped his feelings. Still he did it, and evidently was greatly interested. I can hardly credit it that such a change has taken place in the House Committee. A week ago it seemed incredible, nor do I now believe it. My friends were completely down at the heel and thought the Speaker had given them the worst committee he could possibly have made up. I think it will turn out a good committee yet. There are seven farmers on it and five lawyers and doctors. The Senate is now the hardest body; they have a set of low blackguards in it who have, ever since I came here, made a dead set at me, and are constantly raising questions. They want to prevent all action, some from one cause and some from another. They wish to stifle the movement, but

it will go on by force of its own intrinsic, mighty moral power, and I yet have hope. It is indeed a missionary enterprise.”

December 25, 1845, quarter past 11 P. M.

“This has been no holiday to me; the Joint Committee met this morning at nine, and again this afternoon at three, and we have been hard at work all day, diplomatically passing notes. What the result will be I do not know. Governor Whitcomb and Mr. Lane, the chairman, spent some time with me this morning. I have yet another proposition to be submitted in the morning, which I hope will be accepted. It is a desperate business all around. Nobody can tell anything about it, or form any correct opinion, who is not familiar with the whole ground. I do not know that anything satisfactory can be done; and if it goes on, the danger is that it will be worse than it now is. My speech last evening did good and made friends, and stirred up enemies, and the two parties are arranging themselves actively for a real cat fight. They get so angry at each other that I have to keep advising them to keep cool. Yesterday P. M. they had a most angry debate

in the Senate, and I came in for a full share, one Senator calling me a Wall Street broker, etc. . . .”

Friday evening, 10 o'clock.

“ I could not find time to finish my letter and send it off by the mail this evening, which I regret, as I fear you will not get it by New Year's day. I am so driven night and day that I hardly know how the time runs. This has been a day of great excitement. In the first place, the Joint Committee adjourned over to this evening at six, to receive a final proposition from me—an ultimatum. At the same time a desperate movement was made in the Senate to *revoke* the powers of the committee. The repudiators, it was feared, would carry the point this afternoon, and my friends were speaking against time, so as to prevent its coming to a vote to-day. Just then, about 3 P. M., while the war was going on hot in the Senate chamber and I was busy in my room at the hotel preparing my ultimatum, an alarm of fire was given on the floor on which my room is—third story.

“ The fire was extinguished, but it made a terrible muss and confusion all the afternoon. It

saved my friends, however, in the Senate, and this evening I proceeded to meet the committee in the Senate chamber, and to deliver my ultimatum in person. You can have no conception of the interest felt on the subject ; the friends of the canal and the friends of public credit all hanging in the deepest suspense upon the issue. The committee had rejected my proposition yesterday, and now they were apprehensive that nothing would or could be done, and a feeling of despondency and restless gloom was creeping over them. I found a large number of spectators present, to my surprise, expecting to have a secret session with them, and entertaining doubts as to the propriety of submitting my proposition to any except the committee in private—for its rejection might be injurious, equally to the public credit and the public creditors. I hesitated about going on, for the step I was about to take involved a great personal responsibility. The result I had come to had not been without inward groans and conflicts, but it was the only chance, and the time had come for a bold step that would settle it one way or the other—for weal or for woe. I concluded to take no exception to the presence of others, and pro-

ceeded in introducing my proposition with remarks which occupied half an hour, and then read and explained it. The effect was electrical; and if I can judge, it really routed the last hold of the enemy. One man, a Senator who has been exceedingly bitter and personal in his opposition—so much so that my friends have christened him with the nick-name of ‘Tallow Face’—said that he could not go against that.

“The friends of the canal and public credit on the committee had not one of them anticipated the proposition I submitted, and it took them by surprise. It met their most sanguine expectations—indeed, they had not dreamed that I would make one so liberal and fair—and they were overwhelmed, whilst the enemy scattered in every direction. They may rally, however, again, for it is impossible that it should pass in any shape without a great fight. But I think I have placed its friends on the vantage ground.”

Saturday evening, 27th December.

“I add a few words at the close of the day and week. I can scarcely realize that we are so near the end of the year, and that this will not reach

you till the year 1846. I am so driven and hurried with important matters that I cannot think. To-day the friends of the canal and the public credit have been in a perfect glee—as though the question were now settled, Indiana redeemed and the canal finished. They already talk of illuminations, bonfires and cannon, but I tell them to keep cool, the battle is yet to be fought.”

December 28, 1845.

“I have been under such high pressure, both mental and physical, the last week, that I felt the need of the Sabbath very much. I have just been interrupted by a member, coming to talk about the great business. I fear this day has been devoted to it altogether by the members of the Legislature. It excites such a deep and thrilling interest they can't talk or think of anything else. And the time is so short that they say they must keep at it on Sunday. I was amused last Sunday when a Senator came to see and talk with me, and I declined talking with him about it, and he remarked that *he* thought ‘that it was like lifting the ox out of the gutter,’ and that it was a work of necessity and mercy; and so, in truth, it is. I

have thought and felt so myself, and this rough Hoosier is right.

“Governor Whitcomb came in this morning and spent an hour with me on the subject, regarding it in its moral aspect. He goes in, heart and soul, for me, and so does Mr. Bright. They are in fine spirits, and it really looks as if Providence designed that it should be settled. Still, I can hardly realize it, and I do know that there must be a terrible fight over it, for the opposition is very violent and active. ‘The lot is cast into the lap, and the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.’ It is with Him, and He only knows how and when it is to end.”

January 1, 1846, Thursday, 10 A. M.

“The day here is anything but a holiday. The Legislature sits, the Joint Committee sits, as on any other day. It was the intention to introduce the report of the committee and the bill accompanying it into the House to-day as an auspicious coincidence—the beginning of the New Year and of a New Era in the history of the State. God has wonderfully blessed me and prospered my labors. Still, I do not count on

entire success. The time is too short for so great a work. A wonderful change is coming over the people and public sentiment is rolling in from every quarter in favor of the settlement on the plan last proposed by me, and the demagogues are getting dreadfully frightened. My letter, I find, meets the feelings of the people. They like it, and it is interesting to read the comments of country papers on it. Mr. Chapman, the Senator who has been so violent and vindictive against me and the object, has been instructed by an overwhelming meeting of the Democrats in his town and county to support the bill, and they have rebuked him terribly for his course.

“P. S.—I now close my letter and go to the bill to finish it. The bill and report will come in to-morrow, 2d of January, and then comes the tug of war. The time, I fear, is too short to carry it.”

January 4, 1846.

“I returned an hour since from the evening meeting, and then took a walk for exercise. On my return to my room, Governor Whitcomb came in and has this moment left, so that I shall

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

write you very briefly to-night. Mr. Beecher* preached an admirable sermon, bearing on the great question pending before the Legislature, to a full house containing a large number of members. I was up till twelve last night at work on the bill. It was reported yesterday to both branches of the Legislature by the unanimous consent of the committee. Still, I regard its final success as involved in doubt. The Legislature has passed a resolution to adjourn two weeks from to-morrow, and there does not seem to me to be time enough to get so great a measure through the Legislature. And yet there may be. It is now the absorbing topic with all parties."

January 9, 1846, Friday evening, 11:30.

"I am almost fagged out with the excitement and labor of the week, and cannot realize that it is Friday evening. I console myself with the reflection that in a few days more my work will be at an end, as the Legislature will have closed its labors. A week from Monday next they adjourn. My bill has been in the hands of a select committee for amendment, and I have just

* Henry Ward Beecher, then pastor of Presbyterian Church at Indianapolis.

closed my labors with them and agreed to the amendments. I cannot give you any idea of my labors here. They are greater than anything I ever before undertook and more various. I have to talk with and see the members, have to take care of the printers, superintend the press—for I am printing a book on my own hook—attend on committees, keep in with the Whigs and Democrats, counsel and advise both parties and all parties, and be all things to all men. Above all, I have to keep my temper, which is the hardest work of all. My friends give me a great deal of trouble about the bill, some of them ; they quarrel about the details and kick out of the traces. I have had at least a dozen serious flare-ups, among its friends, on one point or another ; then I had to go to each one and reason with him, or get them all together and make a speech to them. Sometimes one thing, and sometimes another. Yesterday the Democrats held their convention, and to-day the Whigs.

“ Well, I have had to manage with the leaders of both to get them to go right on the State debt, and last night I gave up almost in despair at the result of the Democratic convention. They nomi-

nated Whitcomb again unanimously and by acclamation, but quarreled about the resolutions and address on the State debt. However, it passed off finally pretty well, and this morning I waked up feeling that, on the whole, it had done good. To-day the Whigs held their convention and nominated, and took decided ground on the State debt, by way of gaining on the Democrats, and to-night Whigs and Democrats feel pretty strong on the subject, and things look better. Both parties are pledged to the proposition, and my hope is that now the Legislature will act. Still, the time is short and they are afraid, and I think the only form in which it can be carried will be to agree that the act itself shall be submitted to the people at the next election, to vote on law or no law."

Saturday evening, January 10th.

" My bill is set down for Monday certain, when the discussion comes on. My friends are in the highest state of anxiety and excitement, and can hardly keep their senses. I have just closed a conference of two hours, with the Democratic nominee for Lieutenant-Governor, and had a similar

conference with Governor Whitcomb to-day, of more than two hours, adjusting proceedings. Now I have to go and look after my Whig friends, and see how they stand. I never was quite in such a fix as I am here. The country papers, with one or two exceptions, speak out manfully, and I am encouraged by good men of both parties."

Saturday, 10 January, 12 o'clock.

"It is now exactly 12 o'clock, and Governor Whitcomb has this moment left me. He called a private caucus of the Democratic Senators this evening, for the purpose of getting them to agree to go as one man, for the Bill, and took very decided, indeed very earnest and pressing ground, and told them that he was committed for it, that it was a great and honest measure, and one which the Democrats should go for as a party. That he was willing to go to the stump on it, and to peril his political fortunes on the issue, and wanted his friends to take bold and decided ground, and go shoulder to shoulder. That it was a question of simple honesty, and they could not, as honest men, resist it; they must go for it. It had a very happy effect, and some of the most stubborn were

melted down, and came in at once and agreed to go for it. They finally agreed to have another meeting on Monday evening, and my hope is that nearly all, if not all, the Democratic senators will support it. The candidate for Lieutenant-Governor is equally anxious, and will attend the meeting on Monday evening and take the same ground. If this movement succeeds, it will insure the passage of the Bill next week. I have been all the evening engaged with the Committee again on amendments, and have now settled all so that on Monday the battle will come off."

Sunday evening, January 11th.

"It is now precisely 12 again, and I have this moment parted from Governor Whitcomb, and Mr. Bright, with whom I have been engaged the last hour. As in Revolutionary times there are no Sabbaths, so it seems to be here in 'debt paying' times. Governor Whitcomb and Mr. Bright work night and day, day in and day out; the Governor said he could not sleep at all, and as the question may be decided to-morrow and must be next day at the furthest, and the difficulties are so great, that it demands the uttermost exertion from

the friends of public credit to carry it, the Governor called a caucus this evening of all the *opposing* Democratic members of the House to confer with them, and see if he couldn't get them to agree to support it, and he and Mr. Bright discussed it all the evening. The meeting had a good effect, but they are very stubborn and the result is uncertain. They say it is proper Sunday work, that it is lifting the ox out of the gutter. To-morrow—I might say to-day, for it is now twenty minutes after 12—the question will be taken, probably to decide it. I cannot but admire Governor Whitcomb's decision and effort—he has taken the only true ground. He is resolved that it shall go, if any effort or influence of his can insure it, and he is a host when he takes hold."

Monday Evening, 7 P. M.

"I threw down my pen this morning to go and see the Governor. The day has been a busy one. The bill was put off till to-morrow *10 o'clock*, and referred back to the Committee, and is now in my hands for amendments. It will certainly come on to-morrow; its fate is doubtful. This evening the Governor has called all his Democratic

friends together to a caucus to confer with them again, and its fate will be sealed one way or the other. He and Mr. Bright have just left me to go to the meeting. The Governor seemed completely worn out and complained of indisposition, and I sent out for a bottle of champagne for him, and gave him a glass, which he said tasted good, and revived him. I told him to take the bottle along to the Capitol, which he did. You will laugh at this, I am sure. I couldn't help laughing myself. I shall in this campaign lay up a fund of laughter to serve me for a lifetime. It is the queerest and still the *greatest* business I ever had on hand. It is a regular *set-to*, and calls into exercise the most skillful tactics and diplomacy. I think that the Governor, Mr. Bright and myself make a strong team; still we may not be able to carry it. We can only count on, as yet, forty-five certain in the House; we must have fifty. It is close counting, and of course the result is uncertain. Governor Whitcomb has taken the most manly and decided course throughout, and more than sustained his pledges to me, and so has Mr. Bright. I have no time to add more."

Monday night, 12th January, 1846.

“It is now half-past twelve, and Mr. Bright has just come in from the Democratic caucus and reports that they have, by a very large vote, decided on passing the bill, with a proviso to submit it to the people to decide at the August election whether it shall be a law or not, the people to vote directly for it. This course of the Democrats will ruin the party and put the bill in jeopardy, and devolves on me a terrible responsibility. The question with me is, am I at liberty to incur so great a risk as the loss of the entire public debt by this course? Ought I not to withdraw my proposal, and thus let the bill fall to the ground? Suppose the people should vote against it; that would forever destroy the hopes of the bondholders; and as the members of the Legislature distrust the people, ought I not to distrust them? The great objection that strikes my mind is that it is impossible for the people in so short a time to make themselves acquainted with the details of the bill, and they will quarrel about the details.”

Tuesday, 13th, 2 P. M.

“The battle commenced this morning at ten,

and is now on. Have had six or seven speeches, pro and con. The discussion is on the amendment to submit it to the vote of the people at the August election. I cannot predict the fate of the amendment; I hope it will not prevail. If it does I may feel constrained to withdraw my proposition altogether. I dare not risk the loss of the whole."

7 P. M.

"The battle is closed for the day; the House has just adjourned. The vote on the amendment was taken and rejected, *49 to 41*. This weakening insures the passage of the bill through the House to-morrow. The debate to-day was very exciting, and some good speeches were made on both sides. Some very fine ones on our side, and some very bad ones on the other side. The minority are very much excited, and a violent effort will be made yet to defeat it on its final vote to-morrow. The time is very short and we may lose it. I had made up my mind to withdraw the proposition if they had added the amendment. I dared not take the responsibility of the risk involved in the submission, though it might be small. I

have no time to add more, I am too pressed to think."

January 14, 1846, 7:15 P. M.

"After a most desperate battle all day we closed this evening with a complete victory, 56 to 30. The question taken last evening was reconsidered to-day by a very large vote, and the bill was in great danger, under a furious debate, until 6 P.M., when the vote was taken as above. At 3 P.M. I had to make a further concession, which was thrown in at the very crisis of its fate, and created a terrible commotion. To-morrow we shall have another fight, and a final one, and then we have to go through the Senate. The Governor and Mr. Bright and several others have come in and my room is thronged. My friends are in fine spirits, but I do not yet count on success. The vote of last evening was revolutionized so suddenly this morning as to preclude certainty. I have no time to write."

January 15th.

"The bill passed through the house to-day by a vote of 61 to 33, nearly 2 to 1, after another

furious onslaught on me. The bill will be killed in the Senate, in spite of every effort, by the *unreasonable* and absurd notions of some Senators and the shameful conduct of others.”

Friday, 7 P. M.

16th of January, 1846.

“ At the close of one of the most exciting and trying days of my life, I am happy to say that the bill was ordered to a third reading in the Senate this evening by a vote of 31 to 18. The debate was most violent and exciting, and the conflict a long time doubtful. I had to yield to some amendments again, which are to some extent objectionable, but not fatal. The great question is settled. The bill is now, I think, beyond danger. It will be concurred in by the House to-morrow and signed by the Governor on Monday, the last day of the session. The Governor, by the way, was taken very sick this morning in my room, and was obliged to go to bed, and has been unable to leave it since. He has been removed this evening into an adjoining room, where he lies very ill with a pleuritic attack. I verily believe that his labors and anxie-

ties for this measure have made him sick. I am almost sick myself with a severe cold which has come within the last thirty-six hours, and just during the most trying crisis of my business.”

The opponents of the bill resorted to many political tricks to prevent its passage. On one occasion when a majority in its favor seemed probable, the opposition tried to prevent a vote by persuading Senators to absent themselves so as to prevent a quorum. One Senator sent his family off homeward in a carriage, protesting that he meant to stay and do his duty by voting, and the next moment slid off himself on horse-back, by a back road, after them. Three or four Senators tried to escape in open wagons, in a pouring rain, and were ignominiously haled back by the Sergeant-at-Arms. One grave and elderly Senator was caught hiding on the back stairs of the Capitol. At another time, the bill was saved by a quorum secured at the last moment by a Senator, who wished to vote against it, and, therefore, insisted upon being carried on his sick-bed to the Capitol; so that, as Hotspur would have said, “Out of this nettle, danger, was plucked this flower, safety.”

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

On January 17th Mr. Butler wrote :

INDIANAPOLIS, 17th of January, 1846.

“ My labors have been crowned with complete success. The public credit of Indiana is restored and her bondholders provided for. The progress of the measure, from its inception, has been wonderful and sure, but every step has been contested inch by inch, and every possible measure has been taken to defeat it. The last and most desperate took place on Thursday night, when eleven Senators entered into a solemn pledge in writing with each other, that if the question on the passage of the bill was forced on them, they would leave their seats in the Senate and break up a quorum, and so defeat the bill. This pledge was signed by eleven, taking in leading men in the Senate, chiefly Whigs. A friend of the bill, an honorable Whig Senator, happened to go into the room where the caucus had been held at a very late hour, and just as it had broken up. Taking his seat by the table, his eye, unwittingly, rested on the paper which had been signed and incautiously left on the table. He seemed not to notice it, but read it over carefully, with the names, and

when he retired from the room immediately committed to paper the substance of the pledge, with the names of the Senators. While he sat near the table, and after he had thus become possessed of the facts, Mr. Holloway (the Senator in whose room it took place) noticed the paper lying there, and slyly put out his hand and turned it over, Mr. Coffin not seeming to notice it. The detection of this conspiracy gave our friends a decided advantage; they kept it strictly to themselves and when the discussion came on, yesterday, they watched the movements of the conspirators closely. The latter interposed every possible obstacle and amendment, and by and bye one of the leading Senators got up, and in the course of his speech alluded to the combination, which produced a great sensation. He was called upon to give names, the principal parties being the most vociferous. The Senator on the floor said the information had been given to him confidentially by a Senator who was within sound of his voice, and with *his* consent he would give the names. Mr. Coffin immediately arose and promptly cried out, '*I am the boy.*'

“Of course this electrified the Senate and audi-

ence, and he then told the story most inimitably and let the cat out of the bag. Such a scene of confusion and excitement followed as was both amusing and distressing. The object of the exposition was to save those Senators who were really honest, and knew nothing of the desperate intentions of the party, from being drawn into them, and this effect it had, and saved the bill. Every amendment was voted down, and the bill passed by a vote of 31 to 18, and to-day a larger vote, 32 to 15, and one friend out. Another exciting passage occurred on Thursday afternoon. Mr. Buel, a leading Senator in opposition, offered an amendment, requiring *one-half of all* the bonds to be surrendered and cancelled before the act should take effect. This amendment I was unwilling to assent to, as it came from the extreme left, that is, from the ultra-opponents of the bill, and the object was, of course, to defeat it. This amendment was offered to the Senate bill, which they had under discussion when the House bill was reported. This last bill was then agreed to be taken up yesterday morning, and when it came up Mr. Buel offered what was stated and supposed to be the *same* amendment (it was not read) to the House

bill. The discussion on it was very warm, and I had, at the instance of Mr. Bright, told Mr. Lane that he might agree to the proposition of Mr. Buel, especially as it appeared that it would satisfy nearly half the Senate, and disarm opposition. Mr. Lane had just arisen to speak, as I had whispered it to him, and he announced it. It was received with a shout of applause and stamping and clapping of hands, by the whole Senate, as a compromise.

“The reading of Buel’s amendment was then called for and behold, on hearing it, I found that it required not half, but that *every single bond* should be surrendered before the act should take effect. It was so artfully drawn that a superficial reading of it left the impression that only one-half was required. This led to another scene of excitement, and when Coffin exposed the caucus intrigue the history of this amendment was unravelled. The enemies of the bill had all rallied, on Buel’s amendment, Thursday afternoon, and everyone of them said: ‘If you will only adopt that, we will go for the bill,’ and when I finally assented on Friday forenoon, it was to catch all and take them at their word. They found, it

seemed, that the amendment offered on Thursday afternoon did not go far enough to defeat the bill, and the amendment offered yesterday was shaped accordingly. It was handed to the clerk and not read, with a remark that it was the same as had been previously offered. The explanation helped us, and put the parties to shame.

“The Senators who were in the secret, when Mr. Lane agreed to adopt the substitute, were elated and shouted because they thought they had trapped us, while the other part of the Senate were elated because they received it as a *compromise* that would secure harmony in the passage of the bill. The error was corrected by a Senator, offering the very amendment which had been first proposed, and to which I supposed I had agreed, and then these men (the leaders) all turned around and hotly opposed it. It rendered them so ridiculous that they lost their strength, and though they fought desperately to the last they were completely foiled. There are a great many incidents connected with the progress of the bill equally exciting at times, but it is impossible to give any idea of them on paper. I rejoice that it is over. Since I commenced writing a friend has come in to inform me

that the amendments have been concurred in by the House with only two dissenting votes. Everybody is now friendly to the bill. On Monday the Governor (who, by the way, is very unwell and in bed yet) will put his signature to it, and that will be the last act in the business, and my mission will be closed."

INDIANAPOLIS, 19th of January, 1846.

"I am happy to say to you that the bill to redeem the credit of Indiana and finish her great canal has this day received the signature of the Governor. He signed it in bed in my presence, saying that it was one of the most gratifying acts of his life. He is yet very sick and confined to his bed, not being able to be removed to his own house. The necessary tax bill, and all other needful bills to give effect to the measure, have also passed. Thus my mission is accomplished, and God has smiled on me and on all my endeavors. It has been the more remarkable because, as you will see from my letters, I never counted a day ahead on anything certain. Every day found and left me uncertain as to the probable issue. I am sure now that the bill is passed, though it

seems like a dream. The friends of public credit are overjoyed. They are now taking leave of me. I assure you that I have become so attached to some of these people who have stood by me through thick and thin that I feel sorry to part with them. I feel as if with them I have gone through a protracted scene of trial and conflict.”

The bill as finally passed funded the interest, accrued and to accrue, into new bonds to be issued six years later; divided all the bonds into two equal parts; and provided that the interest on one half of these should be paid from taxation and on the other half from revenues of the Wabash and Erie Canal, which the bondholders* agreed to complete and to assist in managing through trustees to be appointed by themselves and by the State. This was not the proposition originally made by

* The canal was completed under this agreement at an additional cost of over two millions of dollars, eight hundred thousand dollars of which was subscribed by the bondholders and paid in cash, and the remainder of which was paid from the proceeds of sales of canal lands. It is an interesting proof of the integrity and ability of the management by the Trustees of this great work that the original estimate in 1845, for completion of two hundred miles not then constructed was \$2,010,000; the actual cost was \$2,083,538.

Charles Butler, and was accepted by him only after abundant assurances of good faith in carrying out its provisions. It was not remarkably favorable to the bondholders, whose interest payments by it were to be reduced and long deferred, and whose principal was secured only by expected prosperity ; and its provisions led to the imposition of a most unwelcome and onerous responsibility on Charles Butler, who afterwards became chairman of the trustees of the canal, and who labored, in season and out of season, for thirty years, raising the money from the bondholders for the completion of the canal, conserving its revenues, protecting its interests, facing in the later years of the task a hopeless struggle with never failing courage. Yet at the time it seemed a fair arrangement, considering the poverty of the State. Its most attractive feature was that it virtually made the State a partner with the bondholders in the maintenance of the canal. For by the terms of the act the State did not part with its title but reserved a residuary interest in the canal, and the right, after twenty years, to pay the debt secured by the canal property, and to resume the absolute right of possession.

Indiana was already bound, by its acceptance from the United States of the public lands granted by Act of Congress, March 2, 1827, for the construction of this canal, to maintain it forever as a public highway, and to assist the Trustees in every way in so maintaining it. These considerations influenced Mr. Butler in accepting the proposals, especially as the act affirmed the responsibility of the State, and thus built up one more bulwark against that wave of repudiation which then seemed resistless. Its enemies, honest and dishonest, fought it by every means known to the legislator's art. Mr. Butler labored unceasingly night and day, exhorting, persuading, entreating. He won praise even from the enemy, so that the leading paper of the opposition, though bitterly opposing the bill, said of him: "The bondholders have cause to congratulate themselves on the goodness of their agent. He has conducted the negotiation with admirable skill and temper."

The credit of the State for the time was saved. One of her sons, just after this vote, said of this action, in words that were then wholly true, though the State in later years failed to live up to their promise: "The career of the State was arrested

by misfortunes which could not have been anticipated; and the losses, as too frequently happens in similar cases, were in proportion to the magnitude of her vast designs. There was, however, yet left for her patient resignation under adversity, and the broad path of honour; most nobly has she manifested the former, and pursued the latter. Disappointed, deceived, defrauded, and for a time prostrated by the heavy debt she had incurred, yet she has asked no sympathy, no compromise unless concluded in honour; and now, at the first moment of her ability, adjusts the payment of her debt, secures a place above reproach, and gives to her sons a moral lesson far more profitable to them than the fullest realization of her blighted hopes."

Indiana failed, later, to carry out in full the terms of this settlement. Yet, despite this, it is doubtful if a greater service could at that moment have been rendered to a sovereign State. It was not only that to the then little State of Indiana, with its eight hundred thousand people, all told, had come financial relief. Of far more importance was the moral stimulus given to the whole western country. Credit was restored. Private busi-

ness honor, which, as Charles Butler well said, "languishes inevitably when public honor weakens," was established. Emigrants poured into the western States. Means for improvement, public and private, were provided, and an era of prosperity began for the whole region which to this day has never had a serious check.

When the work of establishing the credit of Michigan had been completed in 1843, Auditor General Hammond, in recording the result and in predicting the benefits which were to come from it, uttered a word of warning: "If the battle is not still to be fought, the victory achieved is still to be defended." In Michigan the victory was defended through the subsequent years. The bonds of the State were paid and no creditor called its faith in question. It now seems altogether probable that, in like manner, the final issue of this transaction in Indiana would have been as prosperous as its inception was creditable had the State in its subsequent action lived fully up to the spirit of its promises. It had agreed, as we have seen, to do all in its power to help the canal, which would, it was then expected, when the bonds had been paid by the revenues and the sale of the public lands, revert

unburdened to the State, to be an asset as valuable as the Erie Canal was then, or is now, to the State of New York. But Indiana, influenced by a desire for quick development, committed an economic mistake, and then suffered itself to be led into a moral delinquency.

In New York State the Erie Canal had become well established and prosperous before the railroads came into being, and it has since been of inestimable value to the community. It has even helped the railroads by building up local centres of distribution along its route. Such might have been the result in Indiana, for the Wabash and Erie Canal, traversing the entire State, would unquestionably have given markets to vast regions of territory, and would, it now seems clear, have been an assistance to well located railroads as well as a useful check in preventing wild schemes of railroad speculation. But the State neglected the canal and unduly fostered other competing transportation routes. The bondholders faithfully performed their part. As rapidly as possible they raised, and honestly spent, the two million dollars required to complete the canal. But they had a competitor instead of a partner in the State. Railroads parallel

to the canal were chartered almost before the water began to flow through its half completed sections. In the years between 1846 and 1856 hundreds of miles of railways, shrewdly designed to seize the business which the canal was then creating, were projected and promptly chartered. Most of these railroads ultimately proved a benefit. Had they been chartered with wise discrimination they might have increased the value of the State's investments. In so far, however, as they injured the canal, they were certainly harmful to the best interests of the State. The trustees of the canal, who were all farseeing men, devoted to the highest interests of the community as well as faithful to their duties as guardians of the property, put forth their utmost efforts to sustain their great enterprise, but it was strangled in its infancy by the network of railways.

Finding that the canal might never be remunerative, Indiana, instead of assuming its moral obligations to reimburse the bondholders, dishonored its own promises, and abandoned its own residuary interests in the canal. Against this desertion by the State Mr. Butler and his fellow trustees made a struggle which continued for more than

twenty years. A sovereign State could not be sued, and its responsibility could only indirectly be established by the courts. The interests of the canal could, however, be legally defended, and were so defended in certain famous actions, notably that of "*Gapen v. Trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal*," the issue of which, though technically a defeat for the defenders of the canal interests, has proved of legal and economic service. With a constancy which approached heroism the trustees labored in every way to save the State from impairing the credit it had gained in its early action, and in this course they were upheld by many citizens of Indiana. But politicians waged war against them, and succeeded in getting law after law, from 1852 onward, passed, declaring the determination of the State not to pay the debt. Finally, in 1873, by an amendment to its constitution, Indiana prohibited itself from ever fulfilling its moral—and as many thought its legal—obligations, by resolving that no law or resolution should ever be passed by the General Assembly of the State that should recognize any liability for these bonds.

This later faithlessness of the State, however,

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

serves rather to emphasize than to discredit the courage, perseverance and integrity with which Charles Butler and the other trustees of the Wabash and Erie Canal served the higher interests of the commonwealth for nearly a generation. The danger of State Repudiation, which in 1845 seemed most imminent, passed as a national hazard. With a few local exceptions, due to special circumstances, State responsibility became firmly established. To this result the services detailed in this chapter contributed in great measure, and for them not alone Indiana and Michigan, but Illinois and many other States of the Union as well, owe a lasting debt of gratitude to Charles Butler.

CHAPTER VII

JOURNEYS IN EUROPE—FAMILY AND HOME LIFE—SERVICES TO NEW YORK UNIVER- SITY AND TO UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE work done in Michigan and Indiana led to journeys for conference with foreign bondholders, almost half of whom, in each case, were English capitalists whose representatives, the Barings, Rothschilds and others, were prominent in the financial world.

The voyage in 1846 was by steamer, twenty-four days from New York to Liverpool. "What a blank life on shipboard seems," wrote Charles Butler, "and what a blank it really is. We have a limited number of cabin passengers, quiet, orderly people, and glide smoothly over the sea. Now and then a school of porpoises comes bounding along to enliven the scene a little. As to my daily habits, they are regular enough—rise

at any time between four and six, wrap my dressing-gown around me, rush on deck aft where the men are at work, throw off my coverings, and enjoy four buckets of pure salt water well put on by some hardy old salt. This done I retreat to my stateroom in a fine glow, rub down thoroughly, and if it be early turn in again and get a nap. We breakfast at nine, and I arrange to take time before breakfast to read a couple of chapters in the Bible in course, one in Psalms and one in Isaiah, read a few pages in the Memoirs of Rev. P. Griffin, and get a little exercise on deck before the breakfast hour. After breakfast we lounge about on deck with books, and talk, until twelve, when the lunch is served. That done we have another space to fill up, occupied in doing nothing, or looking at the calm and gentle sea, and breathing the sweet and healthy air, till half-past two, the regular dinner, which takes up a good hour and a half. Towards five or six o'clock a fine breeze springs up usually, and this infuses something like life into the company again and an effort is made to do something. Then follows the sunset and with it the bell rings for tea.

“After tea we dispose ourselves on deck, look-

ing at the stars and 'wishing,' until ten or eleven, and then one after another turns in until at last the deck is quite deserted. Another Sunday has come and is nearly past, and we are only one-third the distance across the great Atlantic. Mr. Balch gave us an excellent sermon from Matthew 7th, 13th, 'Enter ye in at the straight gate.' It was the first time I ever attended religious services on board a ship. They were held on the main deck. Seats were prepared for the cabin and steerage passengers; the steps were brought out, covered with flag bunting and formed quite a neat and appropriate pulpit. A choir was found among the steerage passengers, and responses among the cabin passengers, so that the entire service was gone through with to an interested congregation. What a place of worship—the blue and boundless ocean beneath and around us, the blue and boundless sky above us—fit temple in which to worship Him who made them and who made us.

“There are upwards of a hundred steerage passengers and many poor and friendless creatures among them. My sympathies have been very much enlisted for a poor sick child about two years old, belonging to an Irish woman on board.

As she seemed to be entirely destitute and neglected, I visited her child, found the poor thing very feeble, gave it something to help it, and for a day or two it seemed to be doing better. Yesterday morning I was carrying it some prunes, and was met by the mate, who said the child was dead. As it lay in its mother's arms it seemed quite dead. I had it removed, procured a warm mustard bath and placed the child in it. It revived, and has seemed to improve since; but it is still very feeble, and my apprehension is that it cannot live through the voyage.

“It is really distressing to see the miserable provision made for these steerage passengers. There are many decent and respectable persons among them, but a large share of them are obliged to live and sleep on deck, and this woman with her sick child must sit or lie about on planks and barrels. We shall have a distressingly long voyage out from present appearances, and I already dread the return voyage.”

The kind attentions and hearty hospitality received in England were much enjoyed. The first Sunday on land was spent with J. Horsley Palmer, Esq., at Fulham, near London. “I have stolen

away from the company," wrote Mr. Butler, "to devote a few moments to you. We were brought out yesterday afternoon by Mr. Palmer, and find ourselves enjoying delightful hospitality in the most elegant and at the same time homelike manner. I went to church to-day with the family morning and evening, and was gratified to hear the Bishop of London preach a good sermon in the morning and read the service in the afternoon, while the curate preached the sermon. According to the English custom, a number of the neighbors dropped in after the service, and there was quite a collection in the grounds.

"The house is beautifully situated on the banks of the Thames, and a magnificent lawn extends in front to the river. The Thames is thronged with steamboats and other craft, plying up and down so quietly as to occasion no disturbance. It is a panoramic view. The lawn is embellished with the most splendid trees, among which I recognized the horse-chestnut, the sycamore, the oak, locust, elm, willow and poplars, of huge size; also lime trees, forming an extensive arbor, and every possible variety of shrubbery and flowers. There are two green-houses or conservatories, in

one of which there is an exquisite collection of plants and flowers, in the other grapes and fruits. In the garden nectarines and peaches, trained on the wall and loaded down with luscious fruit of large size ; pears trained in the same way, and the English mulberry, a very large and rich fruit. Two extensive kitchen gardens contain the various kinds of vegetables and garden fruits. The tide was out, and this gave me an opportunity to get a walk on the beach. The house fronts on the river, and the lawn, on the riverside, is defended by a stone pier, to the top of which the tide rises. The paths through the grounds are laid out beautifully ; but what is most striking is the velvet-green grass lawn which only an English gardener does make in perfection. We have fruit in abundance from the garden, and on Saturday we had for dinner a haunch of venison from Richmond Park, which the Bishop of London sent over for the occasion—his lordship being a neighbor, and being entitled, by virtue of his office, to venison from the royal park. It seems the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is next to the royal family in dignity, is brother-in-law of Mr. Palmer, and resides near him, but is now absent.

“We dined to-night at seven and the dinner, like that of yesterday, was superb. After dinner we withdrew to the drawing-room, where the coffee was served, and after that tea on the table poured out by Mrs. Palmer. At half-past nine we were called into the dining-room, where the house servants, twelve in number, six men and six women, were assembled, and Mr. Palmer read a prayer, all kneeling, and then we went to our rooms. This is my first Sunday on land since I left the United States and I feel as if I were almost a heathen. There is no Sunday at sea, especially when the wind blows, and though this place is as quiet and sweet as can be, yet even here the habits are so different from what I have been accustomed to that it does not seem like a Sunday in our country. If ever I feel more homesick on one day than another it is on Sunday, for the associations of home are so strong on this day as to engross my feelings and make me yearn to see you and our dear children.”

On this journey, Mr. Butler was especially impressed by the efficiency of the business methods, the frankness and comfort of the home life, and the beauty of the cultivated English landscape.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

On the Monday after the little "week end" visit, the letters carry us back again to London, and to solemn meetings of Directors. These proceedings appear a little slow and formal, as compared with American methods of the present day, but half a century ago America still had something to learn in financial matters from England, and the studies made at this time bore abundant fruit in later organizing work at home. After a month or two in England, Mr. Butler came back to America in a leisurely steamship.

Another journey to Europe was made in 1853 when Mr. and Mrs. Butler and their children were accompanied by Mr. William B. Ogden of Chicago. A letter from London thus describes a banquet in Guild Hall :

"We went to the Lord Mayor's dinner last evening, which was a most gorgeous banquet, and to us green Americans a great novelty. The places assigned to us were at the top of the table and directly opposite to the Lord Mayor and his lady and the cabinet ministers, so that we were within a few feet of the speakers. We met the Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Aberdeen, the Earl of Clarendon, Lord John Russell, Lord Palmers-

ton, Sir James Graham, the Marquis of Salisbury, Mr. Buchanan, the Lord Chief Justice of England, the Lord Mayor, and the ex-Lord Mayor. All were seated according to rank, William Ogden, as ex-Mayor of Chicago, being placed among the distinguished guests, next below the foreign ministers. All the guests appeared in uniform, making a splendid spectacle in the finely lighted Guild Hall."

While on the continent they had the exciting experience of being waylaid by a party of banditti on one of the desolate mountain passes near Viterbo. An ambuscade had been formed into which the foremost carriage unsuspectingly entered and was quickly set upon and plundered. Just behind came the carriage of our travelers which could not possibly have escaped had there not appeared in the most melodramatic fashion two rescuers on horse-back, both Italians, and one a priest, who galloped off for help, and succeeded in arousing from some quarter the military guard which hastened up and put the banditti to flight.

Mr. Butler was not able to prolong his own stay beyond the first summer, but the advantages for the children induced Mrs. Butler to remain in

Europe with the family for over a year, studying the languages, and giving to the three children some acquaintance with the art and the historic life of Paris. Mr. Butler hoped that he would be able to return to them during the second summer, but his multiplying business cares prevented.

At the end of this journey came one of those incidents which never fail, however philosophical may be one's turn of mind, to suggest a seriousness in the daily happenings of life. It was "a narrow providential miss of the uttermost calamity," as Carlyle phrased it. The party had taken passage on the Arctic, but at the last moment were led through Mrs. Butler's apprehensions of September storms, to give up their staterooms and wait for the next steamer. They did not know from what a fate they had been saved until they reached the Banks of Newfoundland, and the Baltic, on which they had sailed, was spoken by a United States cruiser sent to search for any remains of the Arctic or its passengers, only a few of whom had reached land to tell the story of its loss.

At New York there was another wonderful escape. Charles Butler was waiting at the dock

to welcome his family. The steamer reached port on a dark evening in October. The wharves were but dimly lighted, and protected on the side of the water only by a string-piece of timber. They were crowded with carriages and carts; to avoid one of these as it backed against her, little Anna, who was behind her parents, quite unconscious of her nearness to the water, gave a spring which carried her over the string-piece. She fell into the water, perhaps sixteen feet below as the tide was near its ebb and flowing out rapidly. She gave one scream, "Father!" and simultaneously, as it seemed to the others who did not at first understand the call or the situation, her father, with his accustomed swiftness of comprehension and action, sprang after the child.

In speaking of the incident afterward he said that it seemed to him that the impetus of the leap and the weight of heavy winter clothing were such that the downward plunge would never come to an end and that he was conscious that the tide would make it almost impossible for him to overtake the child whom he saw sinking for the second time before he could reach her. But he was an expert swimmer and caught her in time to throw

her head out of the water and on his shoulder. Clasp- ing her around the waist with his right arm he charged her not to choke him by clinging too tightly to his neck, and so he swam back with his burden against the tide (which had carried him out some twenty or thirty feet) to the smooth side of the dock. Here three fingers found a lodgment in a knot hole. By this he sustained himself until a rope was lowered from above. The child was first drawn up. Then the rope was lowered again, placed around his waist, and finally, steadied from below by men who had secured a small raft, he, too, was raised in safety to the wharf. A happy and thankful family group gathered in the Fourteenth Street home that October night after this second deliverance from the perils of the sea.

As the biographer read the records of these days it so chanced that two letters, somewhat separated in date, came to his notice at the same moment. The first told of dinner parties in London. "I would be glad, if I could," Mr. Butler wrote, "to give you a description of two dinner parties I have attended, one at Mr. Holford's, and the other at Mr. Baring's. For magnificence

and costliness they exceeded anything I had conceived of. Mr. Holford lives in Regents Park. I suppose his dining-table had on it a hundred thousand dollars' worth of plate, and everything was in proportion. The wash basin, passed around after the meats, was of silver and gold. Dear me, thought I, how would an honest republican dinner in Eleventh Street strike these men? Twelve servants, all in a row, in regimentals with powdered hair and short clothes. But it is all nonsense and more than nonsense."

The other letter gave this incident.

"I ought to have mentioned that I spent last evening with Miss Lynch at Carlyle's by special invitation through Miss Delia Bacon. We found Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle very interesting and pleasant. I was very much delighted with both of them." The contrast was interesting—twelve powdered flunkies in a row and Thomas Carlyle in his dingy sitting-room at Chelsea. What Mr. Butler treasured as one of the choicest garnerings of his journey abroad was a long-enduring friendship with the grim old Sage of Chelsea, for whom he made some small investments in New York which prospered continuously under his careful guidance.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

Fifteen years later, Carlyle wrote, soon after the death of his wife: "I was a stranger, and I felt that you took me up as a friend;—and, sure enough, you have throughout acted conspicuously in that character; caring for my interests with a constant loyalty, sagacity and punctuality as if they had been your own; manifesting at all times the qualities of a perfect man of business, and of an altogether singularly generous, faithful and courteous benefactor;—in short, *making good* nobly in all points, the *reading* we took of you here that evening long years ago,—when, alas, it was still 'we,' not as now one only, who could recognize good men and love them!"

Although Mr. Butler's life was one of such activity, he had a love of home which came to him from his ancestry, from his family traditions, from his habits. During the administrations of Presidents Jackson and Van Buren, when Benjamin Franklin Butler was Attorney-General of the United States, Charles Butler was much at the capital as a friend and as the trusted adviser on important financial questions of both Presidents. He witnessed inaugural ceremonies, balls and splendid functions, and in some took part as

an honored guest. But these get brief comment. It is the domestic, rarely the official, life of the nation's great men that we find recorded. That which was really of interest to him was such a scene as this of the farewell of Andrew Jackson, when in 1837 he went home from Washington after his eight years' tenure of the Presidential office :

“ The old President left yesterday, and I was present at his last parting adieus to the members of his cabinet and their respective families and to a few of his intimate friends. It was truly affecting to witness it. The old general, care-worn, feeble, venerable, yet cheerful, kind and fatherly; every word he uttered was so appropriate and so suited to each one he addressed. When Mr. Mahlon Dickerson, the Secretary of the Navy, who is, you know, an old bachelor, took him by the hand, and the General bestowed on him his parting blessing, the Secretary was so affected that his eyes filled with tears, and he could scarcely speak; but the General in his happy way added that he hoped soon to have the pleasure of hearing that he was ‘ happily married ’ which changed the current of feeling and saved the worthy Secre-

tary, I have no doubt, from giving way to the impulse of his heart."

Again, when writing to his son in 1844 of scenes and experiences in Washington he gave this charming picture of an evening with President John Tyler :

" I have just returned from a visit to the President of the United States, and I thought it would interest you to receive some account of him and of my visit. There are certain evenings appropriated to receiving by the President and family, and this was one, and so I thought I would go and pay my respects to the chief magistrate. A friend accompanied me. We were introduced into the drawing-room where there were quite a number of visitors, ladies and gentlemen. We were received by the President very kindly and were introduced by him to his son, and by the latter to the ladies of the family—the President's two daughters, Mrs. Semple and Mrs. Waller, both young married ladies, and both good-looking. In a few minutes all the other company left, and I and my friend were left alone with the family circle. The President took a seat by my side, and requested all the parties to draw up their chairs nearer the fire,

which he said would be more sociable, and then he called on his daughter, Mrs. Semple, 'As we were alone,' he said, to play a little on the piano. The young lady very cheerfully seated herself at the piano and then asked her father what she should play. 'Oh, give us *Rome*,' was the reply. She played it and sang the words. It was a beautiful piece of music and (according to my taste) admirably sung. The President seemed very much interested and when she finished, he remarked to me that he was very fond of music—that it was soothing to his feelings, and that he was particularly fond of hearing *that* piece, as it was so melancholy. She then played and sang another piece, the name of which escaped me—then he said he would let her off with a third, and she must sing, 'I would be a boy again.'

"She sang this sweet song and her father seemed to be in ecstasies, and when she finished he remarked to me that the sentiment of it was very pleasant to him—that he liked to go back in memory to the days of his boyhood, the happiest period of his life—that he was much attached to his native State, and delighted to ramble in the fields—the churchyards—and in solitary parts, where

he could indulge his musings and his tastes. I told him that I was glad to find that he was so much of a boy, that I had something of the same feeling myself and liked to cherish it. 'Yes,' he replied, 'it ought to be cherished. The feelings and scenes and hopes of our youth are a source of great happiness.'

"I confess I was much interested in his conversation on this point, for it showed the *heart* of the man, and it excited quite an attachment to him in my own heart. Then we passed to graver subjects, and he spoke of the cares and labors and perplexities of his station—how wearing, exhausting and troublesome!—and how happy he should be to be relieved from them! (By the way, the people will relieve him from them *as soon as they possibly can!*) Ah, thought I, what is it to be President of the United States? Who would desire it if it brings with it such troubles and makes one so miserable? After having a good chat with him I took my seat by the side of his daughter, and found her equally sociable and agreeable. The President is remarkably easy and pleasant in his manners, very polite and kind, without the least affectation or constraint, and in

conversation very frank. My prejudices were quite removed, and I felt a good deal of sympathy for him. On the whole, my visit to the White House was agreeable and instructive, and I must say that the reception and conduct of the President and his family were such as met exactly my idea of a plain republican President."

It was also to his son that many pleasant details of his Western journeys were written: as of the "Prairie Schooners, as they call them, going into the city loaded with wheat or fruit, come from a great distance, some of them more than two hundred miles, and long on the road. They call them Prairie Schooners because, with their swelling canvas tops, they look like schooners coming over the prairie. Generally they have six or eight yoke of oxen to draw the wagon. It is a sight to see fifteen or twenty of these great baggage wagons coming along together; they look more like a caravan of the East than anything I have ever seen. We stopped one of them and bought some peaches to eat along the road."

He would write of the prairies carpeted with flowers of all colors, across which they could ride for days without a road to guide them, meeting

no person and seeing no inhabited dwelling; or of "Big Thunder, a famous Winnebago Chief, who lived and died here a few years ago (this was in 1842, on the prairies west of Chicago), an inveterate enemy of the white men, who kept plundering his countrymen and taking their lands from them. He was an Indian of great size and a noble-looking fellow. Just before he died he directed that after he was dead they should place him in a sitting posture on the top of a beautiful mound in a prairie overlooking a grove, with his blanket around him and his war club in his hands, and surround him with a paling, so that with his face to the east he could keep the watch. For, he said, there would be a great battle fought on that field between the Indians and the white men. The Indians would come up out of the woods and the white men over the prairie, and he promised that he would keep a lookout. If the white men should win he would be forever silent; but if the Indians, then he would give a shout. They buried him just as he said, and there Big Thunder sits, with the paling built about him, with his blanket wrapped around him and his war club in his hands, looking out upon the wood. Your

Uncle William saw him twice, the last time only two years ago."

Again he wrote of the farm at "Fox River" which he wished to buy for his son. Years later, indeed, the farm grew into a reality, though in the mysterious Providence of God it became rather a tribute to the loved memory of his son than a possession to be enjoyed with him.

In the midst of distractions and cares the father's heart always went back to his home. "I shall make it a special object," he wrote to Mrs. Butler amid the toil of a western journey, "to take care of all the widows and fatherless whom I may meet on my journey, and do all I can to promote their comfort and happiness, remembering always that I have a wife and children whom I love, whom I may never see again; and remembering that she and they may be left widowed and fatherless, and believing in the superintending care and providence of our Heavenly Father that He will raise up for them those who will take interest in them in the day of their need."

Of the earlier homes, that at Geneva made the deepest impression on Charles Butler's affections. "When I revisit these scenes," runs a letter writ-

ten to Mrs. Butler from Geneva long after the settling in New York, "where you and I commenced our joint pilgrimage, where so much has been suffered and enjoyed, the houses, the people, the trees, the shrubbery and the flowers around me seem like familiar friends; reminding me of the past; bringing to view the good and the evil of our existence, the light and shade, the joy and sorrow. I never saw Geneva look so beautiful; and *our* house and garden—how could I ever have consented to give up a spot so lovely, where so much might have been enjoyed with a contented heart;—but I will check myself against a breach of the commandment, and hope God will forgive me if I have coveted my neighbor's house and garden. I feel as if I had a right and interest in it. I claim proprietorship in the trees, the shrubbery, the flowers and the garden itself in all its parts. I say to the trumpet creepers, to the noble honey locust, the lofty ailanthus, and the branching willows, 'You are mine, for I planted you there'; and as I walk through and retrace the work of my hands I can hold converse with the things around me as if they were creatures with life and reason. I see in each a *child* which I once idolized."

With such longing for the old associations and for the sights and sounds and fragrances of nature, city homes could never fully satisfy Charles Butler. The earliest one in Bleecker Street had been sold in the distressing year of illness. The next one in Eleventh Street gave place, after some years, to that hospitable house in Fourteenth Street, still remembered by many who were interested in the civic, philanthropic, religious or educational movements which had their inception within its walls. Later still came the removal to Park Avenue, where the remaining years of his useful life were spent. But city homes were after all to Charles Butler, mainly places from which influences might radiate, and his heart always clung to its early love for the trees and the birds and the flowers.

With this passion, his son Ogden was in fullest sympathy. The young man—a youth of high promise, who had graduated with honors at New York University, and who bade fair to carry on the family name, and the family tradition of useful service—did not come to full strength in his first years of manhood. For his sake in 1853 his father purchased the estate, then known as Evergreen Farm, at Scarsdale, which later, with the improvements inaugurated by

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

Ogden, and carried out by himself and by his father, developed into the charming country seat to which the old colonial name of "Fox Meadow" was restored. But the joy of possession was followed quickly by an overwhelming sorrow. Ogden's health had never been robust, and in the winter of 1855-6 it failed rapidly. The spring days brought longings for the country home, to which in May he was removed. He was able to take a few drives through the farm, to look at the vineries and greenhouses which he had begun to build, and to feel the fresh air of the coming summer. Then, on the 6th of June, 1856, with the promise of the fullness of this life unfolding before him, he passed into the next, his last words, of resignation and even of cheer, helping to sustain those around him.

"Alas," wrote Thomas Carlyle, on learning of his friend's great loss, "I can too well understand what a blank of utter sorrow and desolation that sad loss must have left in your household, and in the heart of everybody there. Your one son, and such a son, cut off in the flower of his days, so many high hopes, for himself and for others, suddenly abolished forever! It is hard

for flesh and blood:—and yet it must be borne; there is no relief from that; and all Wisdom, out of all ages, bids us say, ‘ Good is the will of the Lord,’—though that is so hard to do. You do well not to slacken in your labor; to keep doing, so long as the day is, the duty of the day. I know no other remedy so sure of ultimately helping in all sorrows whatsoever. Let us work while it is called to-day. In a very little while we too shall follow into the silent Kingdom the loved ones that have already gone; and one divine Eternity will hold us all again,—and as God may have appointed for them and for us. Surely He will have appointed *Well!* ” This was the one consolation most suited to Mr. Butler’s habit of mind. He took up his work with earnestness, and so, at last, the wound was healed through service.

The records of many institutions in New York City bear witness to his long-continued and active interest. He was one of the founders, in 1835, of the New York Half-Orphan Asylum. He succeeded James Boorman, who was the first President of the Board of Trustees, and continued in that office until his death. To New York University he gave also more than sixty years of con-

tinuous service. On January 6, 1830, a representative conference of citizens was held at the rooms of the Historical Society at which a document was presented, entitled, "Considerations upon the Expediency and the Means of Establishing a University in the City of New York." At this first meeting the presiding officer was Hon. Morgan Lewis, a distinguished citizen in war, in law, and in politics, once a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, and afterwards Governor of the State. The first Council of the University was organized in October, 1830, and Albert Gallatin became its president. The charter was obtained in April, 1831.

The institution was founded in a liberal spirit. The earliest documents show a comprehension of the whole subject of University needs, and a grasp of the problems to be solved in higher education, which would be noteworthy even now after the experience gained in three-quarters of a century. It was intended to include at least four faculties—a faculty of letters, of science and arts, of medicine, and of law;—and it was planned to provide for university education on a broader scheme than was at that time in practice, or even in organized theory

in this country. Even the schools of pedagogy, which we are accustomed to think the conception of recent years, were anticipated in a professorship of "The Philosophy of Education and the Instruction of Teachers."

In October, 1832, instruction was begun in hired rooms in Clinton Hall; five years later a building was completed on Washington Square, which long sheltered the institution. One by one the proposed faculties were organized. The Schools of Arts and Sciences were the first to be in complete operation, with such men as Tayler Lewis, John W. Draper, and Samuel F. B. Morse among the professors appointed in these earlier years. In July, 1833, Benjamin Franklin Butler presented a "Plan for the Organization of a Law School in the University of New York," which he had prepared, with the aid of John C. Spencer, David Graham, and William Kent, at the request of the authorities of the University. This able paper has served as a basis of law school work to such an extent as to justify the statement that its authors were virtually the founders of the law schools of the United States; for there was then, it may be recalled, no University law school in

this country, though lectures had been given by Chancellor Kent as Professor of Law at Columbia. The school was tentatively opened in 1838, with addresses by its founder, who was to be senior professor, and by William Kent and David Graham, the associate professors. The official duties of Mr. Benjamin F. Butler and the financial weakness of the University prevented its continuance at that time; twenty years later it was permanently opened, still modeled closely on the original lines.

Many men have aided the University in its life of three-quarters of a century, yet it remains as a monument to the devoted labors of a few. Among these Charles Butler was one whose long term of service, whose courage in seasons of depression, and whose counsel in times of perplexity, have made his name most honorable in the history of the institution. From the first day of his entrance into the Council in 1836, to the day of his death, he gave to the University unwavering support. It will not be possible here to recount his constant, complex and modestly rendered services. They were of especial value in at least three critical periods. The first of these was in 1839, when

he had just returned from Europe. The University, like all other enterprises not secured by ample endowments, had passed through a season of financial stress in the panic years of 1837 and 1838. The result was a condition that looked at the time very like bankruptcy. Charles Butler, with a few others, came to the rescue, and though not able himself at that time to contribute largely from his own means, succeeded in raising a hundred thousand dollars, an amount which seems small in these days of millions, but which was then sufficient to extinguish the floating debt, and to give the new Chancellor, Dr. Frelinghuysen, a basis for his work.

The second critical period was in 1849 and 1850. Through the previous decade the University had steadily grown in influence and in educational stability, but its financial strength had increased so slowly that many of its friends wavered in their faith. Charles Butler was then in active professional life with seemingly every moment mortgaged to the important business interests to which he was adviser, but at great sacrifice he took, in 1848, the temporary Presidency of the Council. He was aided by such men as George

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

Griswold, John C. Green, afterward President of the Council, and the noble band who then formed the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. The task was arduous, but happily was in the end successful.

It would hardly seem probable that the history of so stable an institution as New York University should afford yet another opportunity for recording the courage and fidelity of a single member of its governing board. Yet such a condition came in 1881. The panic of 1873 overthrew the well-laid plans for a large increase of the endowment; the establishment of a system of free tuition in the undergraduate department, undertaken from a motive of the highest philanthropy, proved unwise both from an educational and from a business standpoint; the failure of a great railroad corporation seriously impaired the vested funds of the University; and counsels of despair began to prevail in the governing board. Before the more courageous friends of the Undergraduate College realized the situation a tentative resolution was voted to suspend the School of Arts and Sciences and to throw its endowment over to the other schools. Although then seventy-nine, Charles Butler resisted the proposal with all the energy

of youth. Aided in the Council by William A. Wheelock, William Allen Butler, and others, and in the Faculty by Henry Draper and the other professors, he successfully combatted this resolution. A period of prosperity soon followed which justified the predictions of his earlier days. He remained President of the Council from 1886 to the end of his life, and rejoiced in the successful transference of certain Schools of the University to the magnificent site at University Heights, where the "Charles Butler Hall" stands as a memorial to his long and useful labors.

Union Theological Seminary, to which Charles Butler gave sixty-two years of active assistance, was founded in 1835. A board of directors was constituted consisting of ten clergymen and fourteen laymen, of whom Mr. Butler was one. The first meeting of this board of directors was held in January, 1836, and the Seminary was opened for instruction in December of the same year, with thirteen students, who met at the homes of the President and of the professors, in Leonard Street, Eldridge Street, Nassau Street, and other localities long since abandoned as residence quarters. A building was planned and a site for it selected

between University Place and Greene Street. "This locality," said Dr. Hatfield,* "was well up-town, quite on the outskirts of the city. Population had been speeding from what was then familiarly known as Greenwich Village, along the Hudson River, northward; and, in like manner, along Third Avenue, on the eastern side of the city. A few improvements had been made along the Bloomingdale Road from its junction with the Bowery Road, at Seventeenth Street, to the House of Refuge, which stood at the starting point of the old Boston Road, on the westerly side of the present Madison Square, extending to the present Broadway, and covering the site of the Worth Monument. Union Place, now Union Square, had just been opened, at the forks of Broadway and the Bowery, but was still unimproved. Eighth Street, and a few of the parallel streets above, opened but a few years before, were beginning to exhibit some evidences of substantial improvement. With these exceptions, vacant lots, unpaved streets, primitive roads and lanes, open fields, and country seats, many of them highly cultivated and of considerable extent, cov-

* Early Annals of Union Theological Seminary.

ered the island to the north, as far as the ancient Dutch village of Harlem.

“The General Theological Seminary of the Protestant Episcopal Church, some ten years before had been erected far out of the city; and near it, on Twentieth Street, an Episcopal chapel (St. Peter’s) of small capacity, had been erected in 1832. Old St. Mark’s occupied its present site on Tenth Street, near Second Avenue. Two or three mission stations, in advance of the population, were struggling for a foothold in the outlying districts. Excepting these, not a church edifice of any description was to be found on the island, below the villages of Bloomingdale and Harlem, above Tenth Street. A new Presbyterian church had just been erected in Mercer Street, near Eighth Street, which for many subsequent years was the ‘Up-town Church’ of the denomination. The stately structure erected for the University of the City of New York, on the block below the new purchase, had just been occupied in part, but was not fully completed. Wooster Street had just been extended to Fourteenth Street, and the part above the University widened and called Jackson Avenue,—a name shortly after exchanged for

University Place. The location was deemed quite eligible, near enough to the business portion of the city, and sufficiently remote for a quiet literary retreat."

The new Seminary had numerous trials in its early days. "The period* from 1837 to 1850," said Charles Butler long afterwards, "was one of extraordinary financial difficulty and vicissitudes, —unparalleled, indeed, in the history of the country. The existence of the Seminary during all these years was a struggle with poverty, and the difficulties inseparable from poverty. The silver lining to the cloud which hovered over us, dark and threatening, especially from 1837 to 1842, was visible only to the eye of faith; and while faith with some was weak and often wearied, yet with others in the Board at this time it was not only hopeful, but brilliant even in the darkest hour. I can recall in memory, but cannot describe, the feeling which pervaded and was reflected in the countenances of members when called together to consider what could be done to meet impending exigencies. These meetings were generally attended by the Professors as well, and were always

* Quoted from the MS. reminiscences of Charles Butler.

opened and closed with prayer. There was a close bond of union between the Faculty and the members of the Board. The tender sympathy which comes ever from sharing one another's burdens marked their deliberations, and was evidenced in all that was said and done. Prayer and supplication for Divine support and guidance were not wanting. Nor were they fruitless."

It was in this dark period that the direction of affairs in the Seminary Board was committed to the two men under whose charge it remained for nearly sixty years. In 1840 Mr. Richard Towneley Haines became President of the Board of Directors, and Mr. Charles Butler Vice-President. At Mr. Haines's death in 1870, Mr. Butler was made President, and continued in this office until his own death in 1897. Union Seminary has had many men in its Faculty whom the Christian world delights to honor, such as Edward Robinson, Henry B. Smith, Roswell D. Hitchcock, Philip Schaff, and William Adams; but with these it also holds in grateful remembrance the two men who stood so long at the head of its Board of Directors. The proper support of the Seminary was especially a problem with Charles Butler. With

this object in view he called a meeting at his house in February, 1852. A committee was appointed of which he was made chairman. A statement was issued, and this was followed by an appeal which secured financial stability until 1870 and 1872, when the munificent gifts of Mr. James Brown, Governor Morgan and others provided for a liberal endowment and a new building.

In 1890 Charles Butler gave a large sum of money to New York University "as a tribute to the memory of my beloved son A. Ogden Butler, who graduated from it in the class of 1853 and who died in June of the year 1856, and also as a tribute to the memory of my beloved brother Benjamin F. Butler, who was the founder of the Law School in the University and its first professor, who died in November, 1858, in the city of Paris."

At the same time he made a similar gift to endow a Professorship of Biblical Theology in Union Seminary, naming it in memory of the eminent Dr. Edward Robinson, who had been professor in the seminary and a valued friend for many years. It so happened that the first appointment to this Chair stirred up a notable contention between the advocates and the opponents



Charles Butler

From a photograph taken in 1882

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

his object in view he called a meeting at his house in February, 1850. A committee was appointed of which he was made chairman. A statement was issued, and this was followed by an appeal which secured financial stability until 1870 and 1871, when the munificence of Mr. James Brown, George Morgan and others provided for a liberal endowment and a new building.

In 1850 Charles Butler gave a large sum of money to New York University "as a tribute in the memory of my beloved son A. Ogden Butler, who graduated from it in the class of 1833 and who died in June of the year 1850, and also as a tribute to the memory of my beloved brother Benjamin F. Butler, who was the founder of the Law School in the University and its first professor, who died in November, 1858, in the city of Paris."

At the same time he made a similar gift to endow a Professorship of Biblical Theology in Union Seminary, naming it in memory of the eminent Dr. Edward Robinson, who had been professor in the seminary and a personal friend for many years. It so happened that the first appointment to this chair was Charles Butler.
From a photograph taken in 1882



of the "higher criticism" whose echoes are hardly yet silent. It was characteristic of the broad-minded man who founded the professorship that although then nearly ninety, and come to years when conservatism in most men has become a fixed habit in life, he yet led the van on the liberal side of the contest.

What he was through all its years to this institution may be told in the words of Dr, Prentiss, spoken in 1886 at the semi-centennial of Union Theological Seminary: "Gladly too would I speak of some of the living benefactors to whom we owe so much; not to please them, for they have a better reward, but to give vent to the grateful emotions that fill our hearts. Of one of them, indeed, it would be a wrong not to speak; and my words, I know, will find a cordial response in all your breasts. I think God has spared him to more than fourscore years, to the end that in his person we might see with our eyes to-day what sort of men planned and reared this temple of sacred learning. In your name, in the name of the Faculty, in the name of the Board of Directors, I congratulate the venerable President of the Board on being

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

permitted to keep with us this semi-centennial anniversary. God bless him!"

In recognition of the long years of faithful service given to it, the New York University in 1887 conferred the degree of LL.D. on Mr. Butler.

He had previously received the same degree from Wabash College in recognition of the distinguished services rendered by him to the State of Indiana.

CHAPTER VIII

LATER YEARS—PATRIOTIC SERVICES—FRIENDS
AT HOME AND ABROAD—JOURNEYS IN
EUROPE—FOX MEADOW—CLOSING
SCENES OF LIFE

IN many lives the sixtieth birthday marks the beginning of gentle decline; in that of Charles Butler it marked the opening of a full third of his career,—a period crowned with honors, adorned with friendships, and filled with useful services. As he reached threescore the war of the rebellion had come to its most serious stage, and had created problems which were a matter of much concern to far-sighted men. He was intensely loyal, and devoted much time during the years 1863 and 1864 to efforts for sustaining the government, in so doing co-operating with other prominent men of New York,—some of whom are still living.

New York City, though in the main loyal, con-

tained many citizens whose business interests and political principles led them to sympathize with the Southern cause. In February, 1863, these Southern sympathizers were in the habit of holding meetings in support of their cause at Delmonico's, then at the northeast corner of Fifth Avenue and 14th Street. Many were sincere in their convictions, but to patriots loyal to the Union it was clear that their efforts meant disaster to the best interests of the nation. To oppose them and to strengthen the Union sentiment, on the 14th of February, 1863, Charles Butler called a meeting of citizens at his house, No. 13 East 14th Street, a few doors only from the gatherings of the enemy, to consider the situation, and to form an organization in support of the government. The house was filled to overflowing, including halls and stairways, with representative men of all occupations and professions. Charles King, then President of Columbia College, was chairman of the meeting. There was animated discussion as to what could be done to support the government against the rebellion. One feeling prevailed, to which utterance was given in enthusiastic speeches—a realizing sense that unity of action must be

secured, and that all good citizens must come forward in the nation's defence. To this end a club was formed to publish loyal tracts and papers for circulation in the city and in the army. This was the "Loyal Publication Society," of which Professor Lieber, the eminent scholar and physicist, became President, and which did valiant service in the succeeding years.

This meeting also tended to strengthen a movement for a Loyal or Union League in the city, which it was proposed to form then and there. Seth Hunt made a thrilling speech in support of this proposition. But it was learned that a meeting with this object in view had just been called by certain patriotic gentlemen, and it was at once resolved to give hearty support to the Association which they were preparing to organize under the name of "The Union League," afterwards changed to "The Union League Club." The services of this Club in the war days are a part of the honorable history of New York City, and a source of just pride to many still living who were then its members. Charles Butler was one of the earlier members, and was prominent in its councils. He was chairman of a committee of twenty-one "for

the better accomplishment of the objects of the Association in bringing its moral influence to bear directly and practically in aid of the efforts of the National Government for the suppression of the rebellion, and in the discountenancing of all disloyalty to the Government in this State and in this City.”

Two events of the year 1864 he used to recall in after years with peculiar interest. One was the organization by the Club of the 26th Regiment of United States colored troops, to which the club presented a banner when it took its departure for the seat of war. This was commemorated, twenty-two years later, when sixty-six surviving members of the days of 1864 gave a dinner in honor of that event. Another pleasant reminiscence of this year was the visit of Goldwin Smith, and a breakfast at which Mr. Butler presided, given to him by the Union League Club. Goldwin Smith was most warmly welcomed in the United States as one of the few staunch supporters in England of the principles of the Union.

Mr. Butler was an active member of the New York Board of the American Union Commission, which afterwards formed an organic union with

the American Freedman's Aid Commission, and did good service in caring for the suffering union refugees of the south. He had the intense loyalty which his life of steadfastness had made a part of his whole character; but he had also much sympathy for those at the South, to whom the horrors of war had brought misery, and for those of the newly enfranchised blacks whose immediate condition had been made worse rather than better by the new opportunity opening to them, so that this work was peculiarly congenial to him.

Almost a quarter of a century of business life was left to him after the excitements of the war time had passed away, a period crowded in its earlier years, and filled to its end, with important responsibilities. He was for fifteen years President of what was then an important western railroad, was a member of the Boards of several other railroads, and was counsel for corporations in Indiana, Mississippi and Illinois. Railways as instruments in settling the country always interested him as did all other lines of development in the west, to which in earlier years he had given so much thought.

Mr. Butler's broadly sympathetic nature led

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

him to make many friends on his long journey through the world. His rough expeditions to the West (repeated several times annually during many years), as well as his visits to the South, were cheered by the companionships which he was ever ready to enjoy even in business connections. His work with others during the stirring period of the Civil War cemented many of his most valued friendships. When obliged by advancing years to give up business avocations, he threw himself with added earnestness into educational and philanthropic work, where the common interest of caring for the welfare of University and Seminary students, or for the poor children of New York, or of Westchester Country, aroused warm feelings of personal sympathy on his part for his associates which were as warmly responded to by them. His life in New York was full of quiet social enjoyment and his journeys to Europe added to his list of friends. Among his letters are many from these friends separated by an ocean—some of which throw additional light on persons or events of more or less general interest.

In 1854 Mr. Butler had received from Mr. Carlyle a letter introducing an English artist,

Mr. Samuel Lawrence, who visited him during the months of Mrs. Butler's absence in Europe. The artist's enjoyment of this hospitality is expressed in a letter written by him at the time to Mrs. Butler: "I have made several drawings in that front room on the second story which Mr. Butler has been so good as to let me have; but I hope you will not find that it has been converted into a dirty painter's studio, such as you may have seen during your travels. The possession of this room has been a source of great pleasure, giving me the companionship of one of the most amiable men I have ever met with, doubly valuable to me in this foreign country, though it is odd to call that foreign which has in it so much of my own England. Yet the aspect of the streets in New York is rather French than English, mainly owing to the trees, I think, which the June sun has just now brought suddenly into full leaf. This climate I find, so far, more variable even than our English one; but the one you are now in (Italy) is the pattern one for splendor."

Another acquaintance formed through Mr. Carlyle's introduction was with Hon. E. Lyulph Stanley, who first visited this country in 1864. His lib-

eral principles and his generous sympathy with the United States during the Civil War established a bond of friendship between the two men in spite of the difference of age. His letters were always welcome for their comments on events of public interest as well as for their items of domestic news.

A correspondence with James Anthony Froude contains this prediction, which has interest in the light of recent national events: "I am more and more confident that the future of the Anglo-Saxon race is with you and not with us." Of Mr. Carlyle in December, 1878, he wrote: "Carlyle is wonderfully well. I drove with him this afternoon with sharp frost and the carriage-windows open. He is 83 years old"; and again a few months later: "Carlyle is well. I drive two days a week with him. He cannot write and walks with difficulty, but otherwise I see no change in him. He thinks continually of death and, I suppose, wishes for it, but his intellect is as much alive as ever. Bret Harte is in England on a lecturing tour. He comes next week to stay with me. I am sorry to see such fine faculties frittered away on platforms, and the delicate edge taken off them. Goethe says that a man has no sooner shown the power

of doing anything considerable than the world is in a conspiracy to prevent him from doing it. Bret Harte suffers from the world, and not from worldliness, of which few men have so little."

Mr. Froude wrote often of his literary work, as in 1876: "I am on the point of bringing out a book on Cæsar, which Scribners will republish. An author is the worst judge of his own work, or I should say I had never done anything so good before. I suppose the critics will undeceive me." At another time he sent words of friendly sympathy: "When a family has been so happy and united as yours the departure of successive members of it only endears more entirely to each other those that remain. Life which in its public aspect is so meaningless and poor, is full behind the scenes of tenderness and sweetness and purpose. The worthlessness of the political results of it seems to say that it is a school of personal character, and that we must wait to know its real meaning until our education days are over."

The historian has been severely criticized for the use made of the papers entrusted to his charge by his friend. But his purity of purpose is shown by a letter dated February 28, 1883:

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

“I am going on with my strange task of editing Carlyle’s memoirs. His wife’s letters will be published in a few weeks. I do not know whether there will be an American edition or not. The subject is so entirely personal and domestic that your people may care nothing about it. But they contain a perfect picture of Carlyle—lights and shadows both.”

As will be still remembered, shortly after Mr. Matthew Arnold’s return from America, a fraudulent newspaper communication represented him as an unamiable critic of this country. His real feelings are expressed in a letter which he wrote at once: “My dear Mr. Butler, if you could have heard us all talking over in these last few weeks America and our friends there you would know what are the recollections which we do really entertain of you and how impossible it is, I do not merely say that I should print a vicious and insolent criticism of America, but even that such a criticism should come into my head. You and dear Miss Butler stand first among those who cause us to feel gratefully and affectionately towards America ; but really we met with so much kindness there that the kindness is now all that

we remember. We have come back to the harsh east winds of our spring; and though the thermometer is about 45° all day and never falls much below freezing at night we are colder than we ever were in America. Still I should like you to see our flowers, grass and birds. A thrush in a bay tree on our lawn has actually hatched and brought out her brood.”*

Quite the most characteristic letters are those from Thomas Carlyle. A letter of Mr. Butler's had once missed its delivery and Carlyle explains in this delightful manner: “Two letters now with such precaution and a third enclosed (which should have been the *first* and *only*), all to get me persuaded to take a little money out of your hand. There is no doubt the mistake occurred at this door; the letter first sent contains our postman's visible signature with the word ‘refused;’ there is where the one hitch was; everybody else has done his best with perfection and success. One might almost cry and laugh both over such a thing. The truth is, this long while back—young fools

*Mr. Arnold's relations with Mr. Butler are alluded to in “Letters of Matthew Arnold,” by George W. E. Russell. New York: Macmillan & Co. Vol. II., pp. 263, 290.

being in the habit of bothering me about *autographs* and other nonsenses, provoking when you have to throw a shilling into the fire along with them—there has been a standing order that no foreign letter is to be accepted unless the handwriting be known. That is the whole mystery. I no doubt saw that letter. It would be transiently shown me ; but I had not the least recognized it ; and so (probably in very great haste, and sunk among my own paper clippings) had negatorily shaken my head, and sent the *beneficence* home again, in a most astonishing manner as if it had been a *maleficence* ! Nothing more tragical happened lately. Forgive me, dear sir, and laugh with me in spite of the trouble you have had.”

Carlyle was at this time hard at work on his *Life of Frederick the Great*, and responded to Mr. Butler’s sympathetic interest in the task with cheerful grumbling : “ I am in these months particularly held down, and indeed more laden than you can conceive with that intolerable load of Prussian rubbish (which has many times seemed as if it would choke the life out of me before I got done with it): let this be my excuse for all

shortcomings ; if I do live to get honestly out of this sad whirling abyss of Brandenburg dust and ashes, I promise to be an idle and better boy for the remaining days appointed me." It is interesting to note in this correspondence, which continued until Carlyle passed threescore and ten, how the ruggedness of the Scotchman appealed to Mr. Butler, as, on the other hand, the dignity and tenderness of Charles Butler appealed to Thomas Carlyle.

In the summer of 1866 the health of the youngest daughter made a voyage to Europe desirable, and it was decided that all the family should go except Mr. Butler. They sailed on a Saturday in June. With characteristic devotion and tenderness he wrote to Mrs. Butler the next day : " You left only yesterday, and yet it seems a great while since that event happened, and I begin to address you in a foreign land. At this moment you are afar off ' on the sea,' where Dr. Prentiss *

* Dr. George Lewis Prentiss was for many years the pastor of the Church of the Covenant, corner of 35th Street and Park Avenue, New York City. He was succeeded in the pastorate by Dr. Marvin R. Vincent, who subsequently became a professor in the Union Theological Seminary. The Church of the Covenant was afterwards consolidated with the Brick Presbyterian Church, corner of 37th Street and Fifth Avenue.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

remembered you and each of your party, in his prayer this morning; some of you going for health, and some for duty to the church.* In looking around in the church I could not distinguish any member of the family or any branch of it. Every place seemed to be vacant and everybody gone. I alone remained, but the sermon was a most comforting one. It was one of Dr. Prentiss's exquisite discourses, treating of the mercy of God in all His dealings with the generations of men, and to every individual member of the human family; how immeasurably His mercy and His goodness to us exceeded His severity and His chastenings, and what occasions of gratitude we had in every moment of our earthly existence, if we would but count them up. After service I walked down to the house to look into its deserted halls where there are no longer the familiar and sweet voices, and always welcome, of beloved wife or child to greet me. All is quiet and voiceless.

“After spending a little time yesterday afternoon at the house, I went down to the office, but there seemed to be a strangeness even there. I spoke

* Dr. Henry B. Smith and his wife were with Mrs. Butler. Dr. Smith went as delegate to the Evangelical Alliance.

to no one at the service this morning. I did not feel equal to it. I felt like writing to you and giving you this little diary of the first day and night after your departure, knowing that to you and to our dear girls it will possess some interest, as it will be doubtless the first intelligence you will have from home after your arrival in Paris. I send you Bryant's last beautiful poem, just published (*The Death of Slavery*); and so with love to all, and commending you all to God's preserving care and goodness, I am your affectionate husband."

The house in 14th Street was rented, and Mr. Butler went to stay, during the absence of the family, at the hospitable home of his old-time friends, Professor and Mrs. Botta. "I am writing," he said in a letter to his daughter, "in my own room, which is very pleasant always, and perfectly quiet. I have the Healy portrait of your grandmother hung up over the mantel to face the bed. The crayon portrait of Ogden by Lawrence hangs on the wall near the head of my bed; on my right and under it the group photograph nicely framed; the easy chair under that. Then I have my library table on which I write, with my papers on it, as

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

you were accustomed to see it in the library in 14th Street. Other things, too, surround me, all reminders of home and of you all, and when sitting or standing in my room these dear, familiar, and loving faces are ever before me—only outward expressions, however, of the same within me photographed on my heart.”

In a New Year's letter to his wife he wrote : “ Already one-third of the winter is gone, and here we are at the last of December, the light of the old year just flickering in its socket, and the new year just ready to break in upon us. These short and wintry days and these holidays affect me strangely. I seem lost to myself, because I miss my household gods, and Christmas and New Year's seem all strange to me. I do not think that I shall make many calls on New Year's. I feel as if I had neither right nor cause to make any, and yet it may be right, and there may be cause. If your next letters assure me that you are all well and everything comfortable, and our dear child improving, I shall surely not feel cynical, but shall feel happy and thankful and shall go about and see our friends and wish them, too, a Happy New Year.

To-night I am writing in my room and all is quiet and pleasant around me. Professor and Mrs. Botta have gone to hear Ristori in "Deborah." Ristori wanted them to come and see her in that character, and sent them tickets for her private box, as she has frequently done before. To-morrow evening, which was the only evening she could give them, they give her a reception, which is to be very general, so that I shall then see again this great muse of tragedy. She seems to be a very uncommon character and is highly esteemed. Mrs. Astor gave her a reception, which is the only one she has accepted besides Mrs. Botta's. Ristori was dressed very plainly but very richly—no jewelry about her, and her face is one expressive of great intellectual talent and seriousness. She bears a very fine private character. I have seen her since, very informally, with her children, and shall meet her at breakfast before she leaves the country. She is the most natural and unaffected person you ever met with, and extraordinary success and flattery seem to have made no impression. She speaks of her remarkable gifts as having been given to her by Providence. She has a wonderful simplicity and

naturalness of character. Botta took her one day to the Girls' School in 13th Street, where she was greatly delighted. One of the little girls sang, and Ristori was so affected that she caught her up and kissed her and recited some beautiful things to the children. She was so interested in the school that she visited it a second time and brought the Marquis and her friends."

The stay in Europe was longer than had been designed, as the family sought health successively at Paris, at Divonne, and in Italy. Upon their arrival in Rome the father wrote to his daughter rejoicing in their pleasure: "I am glad that at last you were permitted to leave for a more genial climate to enjoy objects and scenery of the deepest interest. Your ideals will to some extent be realized. History will be illuminated to your mind by the familiar things around you as you walk among those grand old ruins of ancient Rome, the Rome of the Cæsars; and as your eye rests on the crumbling columns standing in the Forum your imagination will repeople the spot with grave forms of the senators who occupied it and sat with stolid indifference while the Barbarians were thundering away at the gates of the city. You must

go to the top of the capitol and get the view, one of the grandest in the world ; from that spot you look down upon ancient Rome which lies before you and out upon the Apennines on the north and east, upon Albano and Frascati on the south, upon the Tiber and the Mediterranean on the west. From no other spot in the world can the eye take in so much of historic ground. You should read Macaulay's Lays of Ancient Rome while there on the spot. I hope mother will take you to No. 7, Via San Vitale, where we lived a winter twenty-eight years ago most comfortably and cheaply. Dinner for four at 9 Pauli daily. Charming rooms, large and pleasant, with sunny eastern exposure on the southerly slope of the Quirinal, with the Rospigliosi palace in the rear, where we often went to look at Guido's masterpiece, the Aurora, in the ceiling. Your enjoyment in Rome will be mine, for I shall be with you in spirit."

"I understand perfectly," he wrote later, "the difference between Florence and Rome. The grandeur, antiquities and the ruins of the latter are oppressive to a thoughtful mind ; time is too short to admit of prosecuting an examination into them, for it is an endless chain running back centuries

into the dead past; and the Papal government partaking of the same effete character gives no relief, but rather adds to the fatigue. To get away from it to Florence where something of progress is evident and where there is so much to admire in art is a most refreshing change."

One of Mr. Butler's occupations during the absence of his family was the care of his country place. "Fox Meadow" occupies a delightful interval in Scarsdale, Westchester County, New York. The original "Evergreen Farm" had been enlarged from time to time by the purchase of adjoining homesteads. In one of these his nephew, Benjamin Franklin Butler, Jr., with his family lived for many years. Other nephews and nieces and friends occupied the other houses at times. "Round Oak," the residence of his nephew, William Allen Butler, overlooking the Hudson at Yonkers, was within an easy afternoon's drive. This family environment added greatly to the enjoyment of life at "Fox Meadow." The garden and green-houses gave pleasure to friends both summer and winter.

Mr. Butler wrote in 1867: "The camelias promise an abundant crop, though as yet we have had

only about a dozen blossoms. I brought down a handsome bouquet of flowers with some clusters of grapes which I took to Mr. Wetmore and Mr. Peabody last evening. They were delighted with them. I had arranged with the florist to take some of the flowers regularly, and he had been up to see the conservatory, but I cannot make up my mind to carry out the arrangement. You know my love for the flowers. and the pleasure it gives me to have them around me and to give them away, and the pleasure it gives to those who receive them. Now that you are away they seem to be about all I have left in the winter of my discontent to cheer and to enliven both by association and by sense."

"The wind is howling," he wrote one day in May, "but nature is most lovely. The lilacs directly opposite the window were never so beautiful, and have a fragrance quite overpowering. The patches of shrubbery along the carriage road are variegated with bloom, and the grass and the evergreen trees are as green as plenty of rain can make them. The apple trees are loaded and white with blossoms, and the birds are plenty and singing sweetly. I hear the lowing of cows just com-

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

ing up from the pasture, and shrill cries of the peacock, the cackling of hens, and the crowing of cocks, and a robin that seems to delight in the song that he is singing just by the window. I take in a glimpse of Burgess's house, and the 'Wayside Cottage,' and the garden and farm cottages, and all the familiar scenes and sounds. And yet," he added, with a touch of pensive sadness which pervades these letters to the absent ones, "the human voices and human flowers are not here, and the heart cannot be satisfied with nature, however lovely and beautiful it may be. It still longs for companionship."

One Sunday in June he wrote: "Just as I sat down I caught a glimpse of Benjamin's carriage returning from St. James the Less followed by Mr. Tinker's.* The garden terrace stretched out before me never appeared more beautiful; the grass, cut close, is very thick and velvety, and of the deepest and richest green; the walks in beau-

* Mr. James Tinker, formerly of Manchester, England, was the American representative of the firm of C. M. Lampson & Co., of London, England, and for many years held Mr. George Peabody's power of attorney in the United States, and assisted in his philanthropic work. He retired from business in 1873, and has since resided in Hampshire, England.

tiful order ; the border lined with roses and verbenas ; the large vases filled with scarlet geraniums and coleus leaves ; and all nature calm, quiet, and fragrant. The trees and shrubbery have grown so densely that the barn and stable and Fox Meadow cottage are nearly hidden from view, and you see only bits of them sufficient to indicate where they stand. And now the gardener and all his family (counting seven) have come in from St. James the Less and passed up the transept * to the cottage, all looking nice and orderly. I hear nothing but the music of birds, the hum of insects, and the rustling of leaves. I see Farmer Jones coming deliberately along the terrace, to see about going to the chapel this afternoon, I presume. Now he is just going away, the subject of our conference being arrangements for going down to the chapel at a quarter after three for the Sunday-school Festival, which I decide shall take place on Saturday next, the twenty-ninth, mother's birthday, which comes next to yours, so that I regard the festival as commemorative of both. I shall request Benjamin to represent me on the occasion in the distribution of strawberries and ice-cream, books and

* An arched vinery connecting greenhouses on both sides.

bonbons, and in the address to the children. The books and bonbons are to be given out in the garden at the summer house as last year; the strawberries and cream up at the Fox Meadow cottage as last year, or under the maples in front of Benjamin's, as may be deemed best. Great expectations among the children already, and they are diligently preparing for the occasion. Now it is quarter to six, and I have returned to the summer house. Benjamin and Ellen and the children, including Rutgers Crosby and Mrs. Tinker, and a friend of Benjamin's, are on the terrace beside the transept watching one of the sweetest of sunsets. After dinner I went down to the chapel in time to speak to the Sunday-school, and invite them to the festival."

Again he wrote on a day in June :

"Ellen (Mrs. Benjamin Franklin Butler, Jr.) sent up a note urging me to come to dine with them, and I gladly accepted. They are delighted with their 'Wayside Cottage,' as they call it, and everything goes on pleasantly with them. Ellen desired me to send her special love to you and the girls. Incidents of Fox Meadow life, though unimportant in themselves, may possess some interest to you

who are so far off and whose thoughts are turned this way more or less every day, if not every hour. I took a short walk with Mr. Jones to look at the wheat and rye fields which are truly beautiful and give promise of a heavy crop. On leaving him I went down into the garden to be there at the sunset, which was clear and brilliant and soft as you have often seen it here. Seated in one of the large chairs on the terrace, I looked at the swallows playing on the water and thought how strange it was that I was there all alone to enjoy a scene so lovely. I looked around and expected to hear the sweet and familiar voices of loved ones whose presence makes home and whose absence makes a void which is felt. The birds were thinning off, and going, I suppose, to their beds, though I heard a few yet singing their vespers. I thought of you at Acqua and questioned myself what you were doing just now, and my heart panted to see you all. Now all have gone out of the garden and I am alone, and how quiet it is and how lovely—Acqua cannot be more lovely.”

Charles Butler loved nature in its quieter manifestations much as did Wordsworth, and vitalized it with human associations. It meant much to

him that his children also shared this love. "The lovely souvenir that came in your letter," he wrote one Sunday afternoon in February, 1867, in response to a letter from Divonne, "lies before me and I have kissed it. The color is perfect, a bright yellow, and the leaf is a beautiful green.

" Long as there's a sun that sets,
Primroses will have their glory ;
Long as there are violets,
They will have a place in story."

Thus Wordsworth speaks of this sweet flower. I can hardly believe that you could have found this gem out of doors, at the foot of the Jura mountains, in the month of February. I am sure it could not have lived in our climate. I am glad that you have found, in little Louis, a companion in your occasional walks, and it must make him happy to have you notice him. He needs society and sympathy as we all do, and none of us can do without it. Providence has so ordered it. This mutual dependence which every human soul feels and is ever yearning after is ever admonishing and teaching us that our own happiness is found in the endeavor to promote the happiness of others.

“ The sun has hid his rays
 These many days ;
 Will dreary hours never leave the earth ?
 Oh doubting heart !
 The stormy clouds on high
 Veil the same sunny sky
 That soon (for Spring is nigh)
 Shall wake the Summer into golden mirth.”

So sings Adelaide Ann Proctor, and I am reminded of it on reading the account in your letters of the many sunless and rainy days that hung over you at Divonne. I was glad to hear, by the way, the very latest report in your letter of the 7th of February, that on Thursday morning, a fortnight ago last Thursday, there was a little patch of blue sky showing itself, proving that the sun was shining and giving a silver lining to the clouds. I hope you have since had many sunny days to enliven and cheer you. The following sonnet, by Jones Very, I think, is very beautiful, particularly the last six lines :

NATURE

“ The bubbling brook doth leap when I come by,
 Because my feet find measure with its call,
 The birds know when the friend they love is nigh,
 For I am known to them both great and small ;

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

The flowers that on the lovely hillside grow
Expect me there when Spring their bloom has
given ;
And many a tree and bush my wanderings know,
And e'en the clouds and silent stars of heaven ;
For he who with his Maker walks aright,
Shall be their lord, as Adam was before ;
His ear shall catch each sound with new delight,
Each object wear the dress which then it wore ;
And he, as when erect in soul he stood,
Hear from his Father's lips that all is good.'

“I think you will carry away with you from Divonne many pleasant recollections. The mountain scenery that you have had before you there is probably unrivalled, and you have gazed so long and so often on Mount Blanc and his fellow mountains, that they will ever form a pleasant picture in your memory. To have seen them so much during the winter is, I think, a great privilege ; and how familiar you will have become with the geography of that country. Nyon, Coppet, Ferney and Geneva will be as familiar to you as Scarsdale and the region round about. I cannot give you any useful hints about your journey south to Italy. I hope that you will go by Marseilles and Nice and the Cornice, posting, which

I advised you to do from Nice to Genoa, unless you can secure a coupé in the diligence, and stop over to suit your convenience and comfort. I hope you will go directly to Rome, and find there good apartments and your cousins, Julia and Emily and Will Wheeler. This will make it very pleasant for you all, and it will be quite an epoch to be in Rome together. How happy I should be to be there with you! And now, dear daughter, good night. I am to get up early in the morning to prepare for our Washington trip. With love to dear mother and Anna and yourself, each a portion, I am, your affectionate father."

The family returned safely in 1867 and the home life was resumed. Mr. and Mrs. Butler celebrated their golden wedding on October 10, 1875, at "Fox Meadow." The day was clear and bright and beautiful. The rooms were decorated with flowers and autumn leaves. Mr. William Allen Butler read a poem which he had written for the occasion.* Auld Lang Syne was sung by the guests who had assembled to offer their congratu-

* See "Nothing to Wear and Other Poems." By William Allen Butler. A New Edition. Harper and Brothers. 1899. (A Golden Wedding, p. 141.)

lations, among whom were four who had been present at the marriage in Walton—Mrs. Butler's two brothers and her sisters, Mrs. Wheeler and Mrs. McCagg. It was also on this occasion that Mr. William Cullen Byrant made his last visit to "Fox Meadow." For many years it had been the poet's habit to make all-day excursions to the place with Mr. Butler in the spring to gather the early flowers, of which he was so fond.

In 1877 Anna, the youngest daughter, passed away. Her health had long been delicate, and it was her hoped for restoration that had been the motive for the residence in Europe ten years before. In the year following her loss the home was again saddened by the death of Mrs. Butler.

In 1881 Mr. Butler made a visit to Europe with his nephew, William Allen Butler, who as a boy had travelled with him forty-three years before on his first visit to the Old World. Of the special object of this last trip Mr. Butler wrote: "Before leaving Geneva, I went to visit Divonne—at the foot of the Jura Mountains, about ten miles from Geneva—where Eliza and the girls spent some seven months for Anna's health in 1866-7. Their letters from that place

had made it very familiar to me. I have always had the greatest desire to visit it, and how I hoped and longed that the way might be opened to do this while they were yet living—but this was not to be. I had pretty much given up the expectation that I could ever do it. The proposal last spring to visit Europe seemed an impossibility. In thinking of it, however, this feeling in regard to Divonne was revived and was the chief motive in securing the assent of my mind to the adventure. How thankful I now feel to a gracious Providence that spared to me health and strength and reason to accomplish this with so much of comfort, and with Emily as my companion. To visit Geneva, Monnetier, Divonne, names familiar to me as household words; to look upon the mountains, the valleys, the lakes, the rivers and the wonderful scenery which on every side gratified their eyes and their imaginations; to stand where they stood, to see the things which they saw and which reconciled them to their enforced absence from home—it was an epoch in my life unspeakably impressive. Nature has voices which touch the inmost spirit of the human heart. It seemed as if memory and association had invested

the mountains and the landscape around me with a living power. Need I say, dear sister, that to the brim my heart was full with the memory of what had been and never more will be. The loved ones were not there to welcome me, but in my mental vision I could see them going in and coming out of the houses they occupied here, and gazing with ever fresh interest on this scene of grandeur and beauty which was to them an earnest of the grander and more beautiful country to which they have since gone, where they now rejoice in a happiness unspeakable and full of glory."

After Mr. Butler's seventy-fifth birthday he wrote: "As I grow older and business cares press heavily on me I feel the weakness that comes from want of help, and though trying to curtail and limit engagements and business the very effort seems at times fruitless. I shall not enter into any new thing and shall labor to bring to a close old things."

"Yet shall the righteous hold on his way," said Job, "and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger;" and so was it in Mr. Butler's later years. It was a privilege which many of the college students will long remember, to hear his

parting words, as with form erect and eyes undimmed, he was wont as President of the Council of New York University to greet the successive classes on the Commencement stage. It was his custom, continued until he was ninety-three years of age, to give a reception every spring to the graduating class of Union Theological Seminary. No one who heard them could ever forget the simple earnestness of the words which he spoke on these occasions to those young men going out to be Christian ministers.

Charles Butler's life, like that of all those who live to an unusually great age, was saddened year by year as one and another of his family and friends passed away; but his house was not left to him utterly desolate, for one daughter remained with him, and he retained even in old age the faculty of making new friends. His interest was unflagging in the younger men and women coming on to take up the world's work where the older generation laid it down. At his table one met not only well-known men, but younger ones with their reputations still in the making. He was glad to have such men about him and he attracted them to himself by his unusual personality.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

“He was always a finished gentleman,” said one of his friends, “not in mere polish of manner, but in the shining of a genuine kindness through his peaceful dignity; and his fine courtesy was noticeable even in his intercourse with children. Yet with all his suavity and peace and real heartiness, he was positive in conviction, definite in opinion, tenacious of purpose, and a determined antagonist when his convictions were assailed. As the years whitened his hair, his face gained even more of dignity. His manner, full as always of thoughtful courtesy, while retaining the touch of formality which had added to its distinction, took on a softening touch of graciousness. He was fond of observing formal occasions and remembering his friends at anniversary seasons in their lives. He was accustomed to give a reception on his own birthday until the candles on the birthday cake could scarcely be counted by the children who were always honored and interested guests at “Uncle Charles’ party.” It was the habit of a friend of many years’ standing to write greetings in verse—little “Valentines” she called them—since St. Valentine’s Day and Mr. Butler’s birthday came so closely together.

O F C H A R L E S B U T L E R

For the seventy-fifth birthday she wrote this graceful poem :

“ Oh Time, deal gently with my friend
Who gently deals with all,
And on his loved and honored head
Let blessings only fall.

In love to God and love to man
His days pass here below,
And so to reach the Home above
He has not far to go.

But distant be that happy day
That calls him from our view—
Heaven has so many souls like his
And earth, alas! so few.”

Fourteen years later this same lady wrote on the occasion of the eighty-ninth birthday :

“ Life is not measured by the flow of years,
But by high thoughts and noble deeds, whereby
The soul makes its own record and uprears
A monument whereon its age appears—
Not told in years, but deeds that glorify ;—
If by this law we count and measure thine,
How far they would outnumber eighty-nine !

For the ninetieth birthday his nephew, William Allen Butler, wrote this sonnet :

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

C. B. February fifteenth, 1892. Æt. XC.

“ What lavish wealth of years ! fourscore and ten ;
Yet not, for selfish ends, a treasured hoard ;
God’s gift of lengthened life, in love outpoured,
And used, in service meet, for fellow men ;
The patriarch’s crown, well won, well worn, to-day
Wreathes an unwrinkled brow ; the undimmed eye
Still keeps the radiance of the years gone by,
And the heart’s youth, unconscious of decay.
Nine decades safely closed, the tenth displays
Its opening scroll, and lo ! the illumined page,
Athwart the sombre record of old age,
With Love and Hope and Joy is all ablaze :
As though an angel stooped from heaven to write—
‘ At eventide there shall be morning light ! ’ ”

Never did he seem more genial in his hospitality nor happier in having his friends and relatives about him than on these occasions.

To a wonderful degree Mr. Butler retained in old age the mental vigor of his youth. It was his life-long habit to copy upon a scrap of paper any line, or sentence, or verse, that struck him as worthy of remembrance, and to place it on his table where he could commit it to memory while dressing. This custom he kept up until after he had reached the age of ninety. A visitor who met him for the first time in 1893, gives this descrip-



James Buchanan - 1857 - 1861
- 1861 - 1862 -

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

Q. D. February fifteenth, 1802. Æt. XC.

What lavish wealth of years! fourscore and ten;
Yet not, for selfish ends, a treasured hoard;
God's gift of lengthened life, in love outpoured,
And used, in service sweet, for fellow men;
The patriarch's curls, well woo'd, well worn, to-day
Wreathes an unwrinkled brow, the undimmed eye
Still keeps the radiance of the yearj gone by,
And the heart's youth, unconscious of decay.
None awakes safely closed, the truth displays
Its opening scroll, and let the illumined page,
Athwart the sombre record of old age,
With Love and Hope and Joy be all adorned;
As though an angel stooped from heaven to write—
‘At eventide there shall be morning light!’”

Never did he seem more genial in his hospital-
ity nor happier in having his friends and relatives
about him than on these occasions

To a wonderful degree Mr. Butler retained in
old age the mental vigor of his youth. It was his
life-long habit to copy upon a scrap of paper
any line, or sentence, or verse, that struck him as
worthy of remembrance, and to place it on his
table where he could commit it to memory while
dressing. This custom he kept up until after he
had reached the age of ninety. A visitor who met
him for the first time in 1853, gives this descrip-



Charles Bretten 15 Feby 1895
Boon — 15 Feby 1862 -

tion: "In the soft light of the middle room I got my first glimpse of Charles Butler. Six feet, if an inch,—no less. Straight as an arrow, and with no halt or impediment to his step. A face that would strike the casual beholder as a wonderful compound of the characteristics of Washington and Gladstone, yet with not the fullness of either one—a face full of gentleness, dignity, and fascinating mobility. Partially bald, only; hair gray and falling straight as an Indian's, and clipped evenly at the ends. The nose full, Roman, and wonderfully indicative of character and virility. The eyes, well separated, dark brown, beaming with kindliness, and clear and bright as in a man of forty years. Mouth clear-cut, decisive in its lines. With a plain walking stick, which apparently was not used for support, Mr. Butler advanced into the reception room and saluted his caller. It was like meeting a man of middle age, overflowing with the natural graces heightened by the highest culture and good feeling."

In this year Mr. Butler sat with his fellow members at the thirtieth anniversary of the Union League Club, making the first speech of the even-

ing. He began lightly: "You'd scarce expect one of my age to speak in public on the stage"; but went on in language full of the deepest emotion to review the history and achievements of the Union League Club. In this year also, bearing easily his ninety-one years, he visited the Exposition in Chicago, where he had the satisfaction of meeting the son of the Reverend Mr. Porter, whose labors in Chicago, sixty years before, he had shared. He had the pleasure, also, strangely enough, on this visit, of meeting a sister of the little child at whose funeral in the pioneer days, sixty years before, these two men had performed the last simple rites.

Through the next two or three years Charles Butler's activities continued unabated. Then, gradually, almost imperceptibly, his physical force began to decline. In December, 1896, while attending an early morning reading by Ian MacLaren* at Union Theological Seminary, he took a severe cold, from the effects of which he never

* Rev. John Watson, D.D., of the Sefton Park Congregational Church, Liverpool, England, of which his niece, Mrs. Alfred Booth, of Liverpool, daughter of Benjamin Franklin Butler, was an attendant, and by whom Dr. Watson had been accredited to him.

recovered, though his mental force and his generous enthusiasm in all good works continued unchanged. The last letter in his own hand was written to the treasurer of the church in his native town of Stuyvesant enclosing a check toward the fund for restoring the church building and for assisting the congregation, interest in which he had never ceased to feel since the day three quarters of a century before, when he had sent to it his first contribution. On the 13th of December, 1897, his life gently passed away. He was buried at Woodlawn Cemetery in the family plot by the side of his wife and the children who had preceded him.

“I cannot feel regret for him,” wrote his friend, E. Lyulph Stanley, “because so beautiful and so prolonged a life has ended peacefully. Among the many more worthy tributes to his memory which you will receive I can only add what Mr. Carlyle said in giving me the letter of introduction: ‘The truest gentleman I ever knew.’”

He had gone on to the perfect peace of God, having well done his work on earth. “He had been,” said one, “for longer than two average lifetimes an exemplary Christian, a loyal citizen, a

THE LIFE AND LETTERS

kindly neighbor, an honest man; and in every relationship, public and private, had borne the white flower of a blameless life." He had served his State, he had served his fellow men. "To-night," said Dr. Charles Cuthbert Hall, President of Union Theological Seminary, "I am as one standing where two ways meet—a way leading backward into the past of this Christian Seminary; a way leading onward into its future. By the feet of a noble company has that way of the past been trodden; of men who having clear vision, steadfast faith and godly courage wrought manfully, not for themselves alone, but for their successors also. And of all who trod that way of the past none was of clearer vision, none of godlier courage, none of faith more steadfast than he whose long and honorable life has ended."

The life here recorded has told its own story and needs no words to point its moral. At the simple funeral services held in the Brick Presbyterian Church in New York an address was delivered by his friend the Rev. Dr. Marvin R. Vincent. His closing words may fitly end this record:

"This is not an occasion for mourning.

OF CHARLES BUTLER

What more could his best friends ask for him. He has rounded out to the full the tale of human years. He has made the world the richer and better by his life. He has deserved his honors and has received them. He has come to the end, and has been gathered to his fathers and to the dear departed of his own household, in the communion of the Catholic Church, in the confidence of a certain faith, in the comfort of a reasonable, religious and holy hope, and at peace with God. This morning we turn again to our old, daily tasks, and the ferment and roar of the great city fill the air as they did yesterday and will to-morrow, but the task and the turmoil are alike over for him, and his rest will be broken no more forever; and as I think of that great and perfect peace into which the long stream of his life has emerged, there come to my mind the words of one of those rich old liturgies: 'In the tabernacles of shade and rest, in the harbor of life where griefs, infirmities, groans and miseries fly, and where the weary and tempest-tost rest together: in the life that knoweth not old age, the good things that pass not away, the delights that have no end.' "

THE END

Read 10/7/11
See 1038



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

1990
16 JAN 19 1990

Form L9—15m-10,'48 (B1039)441

THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

University of California, Los Angeles



L 005 834 308 8

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 663 556 9

CT
275
B97S8

