

THEY CALLED HIM "THE LITTLE MAGICIAN"

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

HE DIED on a summer day 75 years ago and his passing was scarcely noticed by the nation of which he had once been Chief Executive because that nation was then in the throes of a great civil war. Yet it had been his boast that he was "the first real American President," the first one born after the Declaration of Independence and the first whose life span was wholly American.

If his fellow-Americans remembered Martin Van Buren at all it was by some of the names that had been given him in the heat of political controversy, such names as "The Little Magician" and "The Red Fox." They had called him "The Little Magician" because they believed that he was a wizard who could pull an endless number of luscious political plums out of his hat and because he was Andrew Jackson's right-hand man in inaugurating the "spoils system."

"He is still spoken of slightly as a mere sly politician," said a commentator in 1929, "but nothing can prevent him from outbraving while the mere sly politicians have all gone to their deserved silences."

They called him "The Red Fox," thus emphasizing further the insinuation of his slyness, his devious trail in political matters and the unpredictable nature of his next move. They regarded him as a "slippery fellow" and they said no power could make him take a position on any question until he had deliberated over it to the last possible minute.

His Strength of Character. What they failed to give him credit for was sincerity and fixity of purpose, once he made up his mind. When that happened, nothing could shake him from his purpose and he fought for what he believed to be right in utter disregard of the possible effect upon his own fortunes. He did that while he was President and when the panic of 1837 swept over the land he refused to have any truck with popular financial ignorances

for his fellow-countrymen. Yet the fact is that this recognition did not come until 60 years after his death and then it was brought about by the publication of his autobiography—as though Martin Van Buren were speaking from his grave!

In 1921 this autobiography was published as "House Document No. 819, Sixty-sixth congress, Second Session, being the annual report of the American Historical Association for the year 1918." Van Buren had begun it in 1854 and wrote or dictated it until death stopped him in 1862. It remained in the possession of his family until 1905 when one of them presented it to the Library of Congress. A start was made on editing it for publication soon afterwards, then suspended and not taken up again for nearly two decades.

When it was finally published it was hailed by scholars as "one of the greatest autobiographies ever written." It gave an amazing view "behind the scenes" during the time Martin Van Buren was an actor on that stage of American history. Throughout he was "blunt and candid and never afraid to speak his mind, as he was through public life, although in public life he could not be induced to speak his mind until he had fully made it up. That was the characteristic that made people think him a pussypooper, a mistake that has endured to our own times." In it, too, he "discloses his character unconsciously, and it is the character of a brave, true gentleman, mild in manner, immovable in policy, generous in heart and afraid of nothing."

But, despite these revelations, it must be admitted that the scholars and historians were about the only ones who looked upon Martin

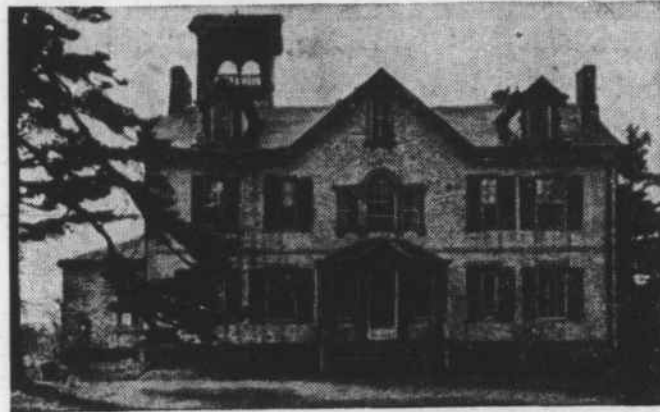
In 1812 he waged a successful campaign, being elected to the state senate.

Into a Larger Arena. He was chiefly responsible for the legislation which made possible the Erie and Champlain canals. His services won him the appointment of attorney-general of the state in 1815 and he served in that capacity for five years. By 1821 he was the acknowledged leader of his party in New York and in that year entered the larger arena of national affairs when he was elected to the United States senate.

Again he demonstrated his independence when, in an era of lavish federal spending for internal

Van Buren's appointment he was defeating himself in his life-long ambition to become President.

As vice president, Calhoun was the logical successor to Jackson when "Old Hickory" retired at the end of his second term. But Jackson, still loyal to his former secretary of state, used his influence as leader of the Democratic party to bring about the nomination of Van Buren, instead of Calhoun, and Van Buren's election in 1837 followed as a matter of course. Enraged at being thus shelved, Calhoun bided his time. He took no part in the campaign of 1840. But it wasn't necessary for him to knife Van Buren, for the panic of 1837 had already



Lindenwald, Van Buren's Home at Kinderhook, N. Y.

improvements, he dared to oppose the practice on the ground that the United States government had no right to build roads and canals within the individual states. Re-elected in 1827, he secured a pension for the officers of the Revolution and got himself in the limelight by denouncing the Bank of the United States. This not only drew down upon him a withering oratorical fire from such outstanding leaders as Henry Clay of Kentucky and Daniel Webster of Massachusetts but started his feud with John C. Calhoun of South Carolina which was to have an important effect on his later career.

After two more years in the senate Van Buren was elected governor of New York and his inaugural message advocated legislation to prevent the use of money in elections—a strange proposal to come from a man who was looked upon as a "sly politician." He served as governor only three months, then resigned to accept an appointment as secretary of state in the cabinet of President Andrew Jackson.

Almost immediately Van Buren had an opportunity to prove his loyalty to his chief. The wives of the other cabinet members, led by Mrs. Calhoun, wife of the vice president, had started a movement to ostracize the wife of Secretary of War Eaton because she had been Peggy O'Neal, the daughter of a Tennessee tavern-keeper. Van Buren became the gallant defender of the glamorous Peggy. This further endeared him to "Old Hickory," who was determined that the wife of his secretary of war should be accepted by the other cabinet wives.

When it looked as though the dispute over Peggy was about to wreck the administration, Van Buren settled it by announcing to Jackson that he intended to resign. If the secretary of state retired, it meant that the other cabinet members would have to follow suit. Then the President could appoint a new and more harmonious group of advisers.

"The Great Magician."

Jackson protested violently, but he soon found that the "little Dutchman from Kinderhook" also had a will of iron and nothing the President could say would swerve him from his course. So he left the cabinet, and the others, with the exception of Postmaster General Barry, whose loyalty to Jackson was unquestioned, had no other choice but to do likewise. This not only solved the difficulty but it was a stinging defeat for Calhoun, whose hatred for Van Buren deepened. It also resulted in a change in one of Van Buren's nicknames. A famous editor, Mordecai P. Noah, in writing on the collapse of the Calhoun conspiracy, said, "Well, indeed, may Mr. Van Buren be called the great magician, for he raised his wand and the whole cabinet vanishes." Thus "The Little Magician" became "The Great Magician."

Soon after Van Buren's resignation he left for England to become ambassador to the court of St. James, whence he was followed by the malevolence of John Calhoun. For the senate refused to confirm his appointment and it was arranged so that there should be a tie vote and Vice President Calhoun, as president of the senate, could cast the deciding vote against him. But in doing this Calhoun, for once, had overreached himself. He did not realize it at the time, perhaps, but it was never true that when he cast the deciding vote against

he killed the President's chances of re-election.

After his defeat in 1840 Van Buren retired to his estate, Lindenwald, in Kinderhook, which he bought from a friend of his youth, Billy Van Ness. From there he wielded an influence in the affairs of the Democratic party which was rapidly returning him to popular favor, and he was aided in this by the political mistakes of John Tyler, who had succeeded to the Presidency when Harrison died.

It seemed certain that Van Buren would win the Democratic nomination in 1844. Then the question of the annexation of Texas came up—brought up purposefully by John C. Calhoun, said Van Buren's friends, because the South Carolinian knew that the New Yorker's attitude on this question would lose him the support of the South.

Van Buren took his uncompromising stand on the further extension of slavery, the Democratic convention repudiated him in favor of the unknown James K. Polk, and Mr. Calhoun wrote to a friend, "I regard the nomination of Mr. Polk to be the best that could be made under the circumstances. It has done much by freeing the party of the dangerous control of what may be called the New York Dynasty—a more heartless and selfish body of politicians have rarely ever been associated together."

Again Van Buren retired to Lindenwald and, although he was reluctant to enter the lists again, the campaign of 1848 found him in the field once more. This time he was a bolter from the ranks of his party and the leader of a new one dedicated to "Free Soil,



The Youthful Van Buren.

Free Speech, Free Labor and Free Men." Although he polled nearly a third of a million votes he failed to carry a single state. This defeat put an end to his political activity, except as an observer and commentator.

He died on July 24, 1862—in the midst of the civil conflict whose coming he had feared and predicted for years. The news of his passing created little interest. The ears of Americans, both North and South, were strained to catch the latest tidings from the blood-soaked battlefields where this question of slavery was being decided. If they thought about the death of Martin Van Buren at all, it may have seemed to them that they caught the faint echo of a song from the campaign of 1840—"Van, Van, is a used-up man."

This spiteful ballad, roared by the "singing Whigs" 20 years earlier, was true at last.

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Keeping Up With Science

By Science Service—WNU Service.

Ex-Mental Patient Warns Dissipation Leads to Collapse

Shun Bad Temper, Drink and Love-Nests, He Says

By MARJORIE VAN DE WATER Science Service Staff Writer.

New York.—Bad temper, greed, and overweening ambition are blamed for the bringing on of mental disease, by Henry Collins Brown, historian-founder of the Museum of the City of New York, himself a patient for about three years in a state hospital for mental patients and now recovered.

Mr. Brown's own breakdown occurred when, at the age of sixty-five, he was removed from the museum in which were tied up all his hopes and dreams and he was replaced by a younger man. He did not "lose his mind," did not become confused in his thoughts, but he entered a long period of depression during which he ceaselessly paced the floor without rest or even a sense of fatigue.

Love Nests, Liquor Blamed.

"Early in my sojourn I became profoundly impressed with the large number of cases that were what I classed as preventable," Mr. Brown said in summing up these impressions in "A Mind Mislaid," published by Dutton. "That is to say, they were the result of causes that could be avoided. They were the direct and natural consequences of the risks deliberately chosen by the patients themselves. And, of course, when things went wrong, as they invariably did, one or two persons smashed up as a consequence. "Philandering and excessive drinking furnished the largest contingent of these casualties," Mr. Brown declared.

"Love nests rear nothing but 'cuckoos.' That is a piece of 'bug-house' philosophy worth remembering."

Self-Control Not Easy.

"We have all known men who allow themselves to get in a towering rage over some very trivial matter," said Mr. Brown. "Perhaps if that man knew that he might snap one of the numerous delicate tissues of the brain, causing him to spend his old age in an insane asylum, he might very readily learn to control himself.

"Now self-control is not an easy matter. Today I can control myself, but who wants to go through what I did to learn a lesson that can be acquired without all that hideous torment and suffering?"

"I often think a few weeks spent in an insane asylum would be the greatest panacea for bad temper that could be devised."

No Trace of Air Found on the Planet Mercury

Cambridge, Mass.—The planet Mercury has no trace of atmosphere, observations of the recent transit of Mercury (the planet passing across the disk of the sun) made at Harvard's astronomical station at Bloemfontein, South Africa, indicate. There was no luminous arc around the planet, indicating no air.

Best astronomical evidence was that Mercury, like the moon, was completely without air, any that it may have had having escaped into space long, long ago. But the evidence for the lack of Mercury was less detailed than for the moon.

Aside from the lack of sufficient atmosphere, Mercury is too burning hot to support life.

Powdered Bone Used as Remedy for Pyorrhea

New York.—Boiled powdered bone was suggested as a remedy in pyorrhea and diseased jaw bones at a faculty clinic at Columbia university school of dental and oral surgery here.

Powdered bone was successful in treating pyorrhea and jaw bone damage in dogs, Dr. Frank E. Beube reported.

The bone used was obtained from the long bones of sheep and cows. This boiled powdered bone was packed into the holes surgically produced in the jaw bone to resemble the holes produced by disease or injury. Within a few weeks new bone, natural cement layer, and other dental tissues had grown in to replace those lost. In the case of pyorrhea, a "quite loose" tooth was firm in its socket after the powdered bone treatment had healed the diseased condition.

Enforce Simple Rules of Road to Cut Traffic Toll

Drivers in Mishaps Must Appear for Hearings

By ROBERT D. POTTER Science Service Writer.

Washington.—As the League of Nations has long since found out, you can set up all sorts of rules and regulations but their success depends on the kind of enforcement which goes along with them. Something of the same kind of situation exists in regard to the intricate and varied traffic laws and regulations which are invisibly but firmly wound around every driver of a motor vehicle on the roads of America today.

The current and encouraging trend among thinking traffic experts today is toward simplification rather than an augmentation of the traffic rules. Four simple, basic "rules of the road" are suggested by Dr. H. C. Dickinson, chief of the heat and power division of the national bureau of standards in Washington and chairman of the important highway research board of the National Research Council.

Condensed in summary these rules are:

1. Stick to your own lane of traffic with but two thoughts in mind. Watch the car ahead and warn the car behind when you do anything which changes your movement in your own traffic lane.

Wait for Other's Signal.

2. Realize that you have no right to cross or turn into another traffic lane. You do so at your own risk and must not do so without proper signal.

3. Change from your own traffic lane only after having given a specific signal or by a clear indication by the motion of your car. BUT, do not complete the movement until you have received a signal from the other driver that he will yield his right of way.

4. At no time exceed such speeds that your car cannot be stopped in its own traffic lane before interfering with other traffic in this lane, or with traffic which may reasonably be expected to enter your lane even without a right to do so.

Dr. Dickinson, however, is not merely content to set up such simple basic rules. He knows that on the proper enforcement rests their effectiveness.

Get Both Parties in Court.

Any traffic accident, says Dr. Dickinson, means that one of the four basic rules has been violated. It is probable that both parties have been guilty in this respect and the fact of the accident itself should be prima-facie evidence of such violation. A consideration of each accident in this fashion would put it up to the fellow who had not violated the rules of safety to show that he had not.

Consequently, states Dr. Dickinson, both parties should be required to appear at a hearing on the accident in question. If one of the parties is innocent he should be able to prove it in court.

In order to get both parties to an accident into court, it should be obligatory, contends Dr. Dickinson, that both parties report any collision in which there is personal injury or damage to cars other than to fenders or bumpers. Failure of either party in the accident to report it, should be considered as "leaving the scene of the accident." A system of small rewards might be installed to encourage anyone to report traffic accidents.

Oldest Land Plant Is Discovered in Sweden

Cambridge, Mass.—The world's oldest land plant, estimated to be about 500,000,000 years old or almost twice as old as previously discovered specimens, has been detected from its fossil remains by a Harvard scientist.

The primitive shoot, found in black oil shale from Sweden, is believed to have lived during the Cambrian era, a fact that substantially doubles the known age of higher plant forms on earth.

Warn Children Against Playing With "Dry Ice"

Chicago.—Don't let children get hold of "dry ice," warn Drs. Max L. Som and A. Harry Neffson of New York city.

One of the popular neighborhood diversions is to beg or buy some carbon dioxide snow and to put a small piece of it in the mouth. Then the child will blow off "steam."

These two physicians report the case of a seven-year-old boy who swallowed a piece of "dry ice," in the Journal of the American Medical Association. The boy is all right today, but it took a great deal of medical treatment and surgery before the damage was repaired.

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL Lesson

By REV. HAROLD L. LUNDQUIST, Dean of the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. © Western Newspaper Union.

Lesson for July 25

LESSON TEXT—Exodus 12:21-28. GOLDEN TEXT—The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself.—Deuteronomy 7:8. PRIMARY TOPIC—Ready for the Journey.

JUNIOR TOPIC—Ready to Start Home. INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—How God Prepares a People. YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—Equipped for a New Era.

"Let my people go"—such was the word of the Lord to Pharaoh through Moses and Aaron. "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go"—thus hardened Pharaoh his heart. The issue was so drawn for one of the great struggles of history. On one side was a bold and mighty monarch with all the resources of the empire of Egypt, and on the other an unorganized multitude of slaves. No, wait, on the other side was "Almighty God! The outcome was never in doubt and through the unspeakable horror of the plagues we come to consider the last of the ten, the death of the first-born, with which is joined the establishment of the Passover.

The Passover is of sufficient importance to justify careful study simply as the perpetual feast of Jews, but to the Christian it is also a most blessed and instructive type of Christ who is, according to Paul, "our passover" (I Cor. 5:7). Let no one who studies or teaches this lesson fail to point to "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

I. A Lamb Slain (v. 21).

The sacrifice appears, a gentle, submissive lamb, a male without blemish, which is separated for the giving of its life that the first-born in Israel might be saved.

Notice that God's instructions were explicit, and were to be obeyed if there was to be redemption. There are those in our day who would substitute any and every other method of salvation for God's revealed plan. They talk about character development, the redemption of the social order, peace and politics, and forget the Lamb of God.

II. A Blood Salvation (vv. 22, 23).

The act of faith in marking the lintel and the doorposts with the blood, brought salvation to the families of Israel. Had they waited until they could reason out the philosophy of their promised redemption, or had they shrunk from the blood as their covering, their first-born would have been slain. It was when the destroying angel saw the blood that he passed over them.

Many there are in our time who speak disparagingly of the blood of Jesus Christ, but it is still the only way of redemption. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission."

It lifts an age that is so base and sophisticated as ours to attempt to cover its dislike for God's way of redemption by suddenly becoming too cultured and sensitive to hear of the blood of the Lamb of God shed on Calvary's tree for our cleansing from sin.

III. A Perpetual Memorial (vv. 24-28).

God wants his people to remember. We, like Israel, are to remember the bondage from which we were delivered. Down through the ages the Jews have kept the Passover. Our Hebrew neighbors do it today. Let us honor them for their obedience to God's command and at the same time seek to point them to the One who is the true Passover, Jesus Christ.

IV. Christ Our Passover (I Cor. 5:7).

Let us add to the assigned lesson text this New Testament passage which speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ as "our passover . . . sacrificed for us."

The bondage in Egypt was terrible in its afflictions and sorrows, but far more serious is the bondage in which men find themselves under sin and the rule of Satan. Surely there is need of divine redemption, and there is none to bring it to us but the Lamb of God. He was the One who without spot or blemish (I Pet. 1:19) was able to offer himself in our behalf that in him we might find "redemption through his blood" (Eph. 1:7, Col. 1:14).

"Is the blood upon the house of my life? Is the blood upon the doorpost of my dwelling place? Have I put up against the divine judgment some hand of self-protection? Verily, it will be swallowed up in the great visitation. In that time nothing will stand but the blood which God himself has chosen as a token and a memorial. 'The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanse us from all sin'" (Joseph Parker).

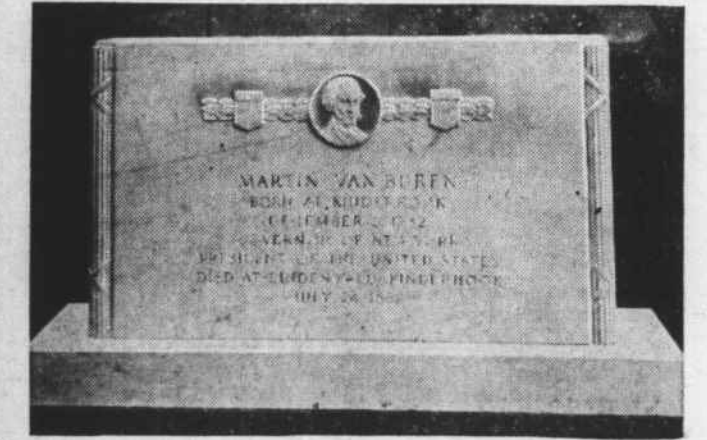
Labor and Patience

Truth is to be costly to you—of labor and patience; and you are never to sell it, but to guard and to give.—Ruskin.

Judging Another's Sorrow

One can never be the judge of another's grief. That which is a sorrow to one, to another is joy.

Follow Our Convictions Never swerve in your conduct from your honest convictions.—Horace Bushnell.



Memorial to Van Buren at Kinderhook, N. Y.

and follies. That panic and his firm stand on fiscal policies resulted in his defeat by Harrison in 1840.

In 1844 Van Buren deliberately sacrificed the Democratic nomination by obstinately flaunting his unpopular views on the slavery question. In that year, it will be recalled, the pro-slavery forces wanted to annex Texas in order to add another slave state to the Union, and possibly more than one, if, as was proposed, Texas were divided up into several states. The popular thing to do was to favor the annexation, or, at least, straddle the issue. If Van Buren, the dominant figure in his party, had done either, he could have had the Democratic nomination. Instead, he denounced the new move to extend pro-slavery power and lost the nomination to James K. Polk of Tennessee, the first "dark horse" candidate in our political history.

Again in 1848 Van Buren might have won the nomination if he had "gone along" with the pro-slavery wing of the party. Instead, he bolted the party and ran independently for President as the head of a new party, the Free Soilers, and, of course, lost out. Six years later this party was absorbed into a new one, called the Republican party, whose nomination of Abraham Lincoln precipitated the Civil war. So there is something curiously ironical in the fact that Martin Van Buren, the right-hand man of that "patron saint" of the Democratic party and himself one of the leading exponents of Democratic principles, should have been one of the founders of Republicanism!

Long-Delayed Recognition.

Perhaps it is expecting too much to have his contemporaries or even the next two or three generations of Americans appreciate the true worth of this man. But it does seem strange that the historians and the scholars should have been so long in recognizing his importance and evaluating it

Van Buren in a new light. To the public in general he was still a shadowy figure, a name in the school histories. In 1932 when a monument was erected in front of the Van Buren high school in Kinderhook, N. Y., to commemorate the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of his birth, newspapers headlined the event as a belated tribute to a "forgotten President."

A Tavern-Keeper's Son.

Van Buren was born in Kinderhook on December 5, 1782, the son of a tavern-keeper. Reared in an environment of near poverty and hard work, the future of the boy was a constant source of worry to his mother, Maria Hoes Van Buren. She was proud of his achievements in school and she scraped and saved to make it possible for him to attend Kinderhook academy.

When Martin was fourteen years old he was "articled" to Judge Francis Silvester for training in his law office. This was a stroke of luck, for Judge Silvester was related to some of the most important people in the state.

At the age of fifteen young Van Buren made his debut as a lawyer in an improvised courtroom in a tavern at Valatie. It was an unimportant case and Judge Silvester allowed his clerk to "sum up" for him. The boy was so small that he had to be lifted to a chair to address the jury but so eloquent was his plea that he won the case—and also a "fee" of 50 cents!

In 1800, when he was eighteen he "stumped" Columbia county and the neighboring sections of the state for Thomas Jefferson and the new Republican (Democratic) party. For his efforts he was made a delegate to the Republican congressional caucus at Troy.

The next year he was named surrogate of Columbia county, thus starting on his career in office holding, and moved with his young bride, Hannah Hoes, the childhood sweetheart whom he had married in 1807, to Hudson