

BY THOS. W. ATKIN & CO.

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BIOGRAPHY.

A SKETCH OF THE Life and Public Services OF HENRY CLAY.

[CONTINUED.]

We come now to a portion of Mr. Clay's life which, though of quite inferior moment in itself, has acquired great importance to him personally and to his friends, from the misrepresentation to which it has been subjected, and the consequent odium it for a long time brought upon his name. It has been said that the good deeds of a public servant soon pass into forgetfulness, while the slightest error of judgment, or the least caprice of untoward fortune, is cherished to his prejudice, and made to outweigh years of usefulness and well-deserving. Pity 'tis, there is too much reason for the assertion of this general truth; and no portion of any man's history furnishes proof more directly in point than that of Mr. Clay, which now comes under our notice. Posterity will with difficulty believe that an enlightened nation, who know how to estimate the merit of their public servants, should for so long a time have punished by their displeasure what was made a fault only by the wilful and wicked slanders of bitter personal and political enemies.

For the succession to the Presidency in 1825, as early as 1822 Messrs. John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, Andrew Jackson, Wm. H. Crawford, and John C. Calhoun had been named, and in the interim the canvass had been conducted with great and enthusiastic earnestness. By a party *finesse* in the Legislature of Louisiana, Mr. Clay's name was excluded from the number of those returned to the House—no one having been elected by the people. The three candidates returned were Gen. Jackson, having 99 votes, Mr. Adams 84, and Mr. Crawford 41. Mr. Clay being a member of the House, was of course, called upon to declare by his vote his preference among the three. He was beset by the friends of each; and no measure was left untried to influence his decision. He made no public declaration of his preference, though his intimate personal friends were well informed of it at an early day. But his reserve seemed suspicious to suspicious minds; and finding that they could not flatter him into their support, the friends of Gen. Jackson changed their plan, and commenced a systematic attack upon him by a well concerted scheme to operate at once in every part of the country. As part of the plot, a letter was published in Philadelphia, purporting to be from a member of Congress from Pennsylvania, dated at Washington, and declaring that Mr. Clay had agreed to support Mr. Adams, on condition that he should receive the appointment of Secretary of State. He instantly published a card denying it, and calling upon the author of the letter to avow himself. George Kremer, of Pennsylvania, answered the card, and promised to make good his allegations. In the House, Mr. Clay asked a committee of investigation. But at this point Mr. Kremer's conscience was ill at ease. He acknowledged to Mr. Crowningshield, a member from Massachusetts, that John H. Eaton wrote the letter, and that he had no charge whatever to make against Mr. Clay. This last acknowledgment he repeated to several others, as they have certified. He even wrote a note of apology and explanation to Mr. Clay, which was submitted to him as the substance of a statement Mr. Kremer was willing to make to the House. Mr. Clay replied that the matter was in the control of the House, and he could not interfere. Mr. Ingham, from Pennsylvania, Secretary of the Treasury under Gen. Jackson, got possession of this note—pocketed it, and earnestly cautioned Mr. Kremer to make no explanation of the kind. Mr. Kremer, however, told Mr. Cooke of Illinois, that he should offer to Mr. Clay an apology; upon which, Mr. Cooke moved an adjournment, and Mr. Kremer was disciplined and forced to perform his part in the mockery that was played. The next day a committee of seven members, each one a political opponent of Mr. Clay, was appointed, and took the matter into their hands. They soon made their report, to the effect that Mr. Kremer declined to give his testimony, as the case was one over which the House had no control! Thus was the matter dropped. The election went into the House and it so happened that Mr. Clay's vote together with those he would influence, would decide the question. Mr. Crawford was, with him, one of the question, for he was so enfeebled by disease that he could by no possibility discharge the duties of the office. For Gen. Jackson he could not vote,

after his animadversions on his conduct in the Seminole war, and with the estimate which he put upon his abilities as a civilian. Gen. Jackson never expected his vote, and one of his most prominent friends had said that if Mr. Clay should vote for the General, it would be an act of duplicity. His vote was given for Mr. Adams, who was thus elected. The office of Secretary of State was offered to Mr. Clay, who was in fact the only man whose name had ever been mentioned in connexion with it; and it was accepted. This gave occasion for the renewal of the cry of *coalition*, which was rendered still more effective and plausible by a statement made by Carter Beverly, of the substance of a private conversation to which he was privy, in which, in effect, he said the bribe had been distinctly offered and accepted. Few of our readers need be reminded that on the 8th of February, 1842, Mr. Beverly, in a letter to Mr. Clay, acknowledged his declaration to have been entirely destitute of truth, and of any foundation whatever. Gen. Jackson himself descended to say publicly, that the friends of Mr. Clay had made overtures to him for the consummation of a similar bargain. Mr. Clay demanded through whom they were made. Gen. Jackson gave the name of James Buchanan, one of his own friends; but that gentleman hesitated not to contradict at once, and decisively, the statement thus sought to be supported by an appeal to him. Mr. Clay made an appeal, in an eloquent pamphlet, to his fellow citizens upon this point, and showed, most conclusively, that the charge against him was founded solely in the base and shameless malignity of his political foes.

For many years this circumstance in the life of Mr. Clay served as the ground of a party clamor which, in the eyes of many, dimmed the fame of a statesman whose whole life had been most usefully devoted to the public service. This prejudice has laid its day; and we hazard little in saying that there is not now a man of candor and honor in the land who will publicly acknowledge that he honestly believes in the truth of this charge.

The administration of Mr. Adams, which commenced in March, 1825, though for years the subject of vituperation and vague abuse, begins to appear, as it will in the view of posterity, the purest, ablest, and most patriotic, since the earliest days of the republic. Economy in the expenditures of the government, toleration of political opinion, and the maintenance of integrity and official purity, characterized it from its beginning to its close. The duties of the Department of State were discharged by Mr. Clay with an ability and an energy which commanded the respect and admiration of the world. His intercourse with foreign ministers, always dignified, frank and liberal, impressed them with the highest esteem for him personally, as well as with the profoundest respect for the government he so ably represented. During his continuance in office a great number of treaties with foreign powers were concluded—more, indeed, it is said, than all previously made since the adoption of the constitution. In all them may be traced the effects of his devotion to the cause of protection to American industry, which, throughout his whole public career, he regarded as the only sure basis for high prosperity and permanent national welfare. The interests of American commerce were also with him the object of special care. He sought especially to establish perfect reciprocity in all the commercial regulations between the United States and foreign nations, and though foiled in the endeavor, so far as Great Britain was concerned, he still manfully vindicated the principle, and secured all its benefits from other nations. By the London treaty of 1815, it was agreed that merchant vessels of the two nations should be received into each other's ports on the ground of entire equality; but they were allowed to import the productions of their own land. Thus a British vessel could bring to the United States only such articles as were of British growth or manufacture, and *vice versa*; but these she could not bring on the same terms as an American vessel. Mr. Clay sought to extend this principle so as to allow the vessels of our country to import into the other goods or produce, without regard to its place of growth or manufacture, on terms perfectly reciprocal; and this was the basis of all the treaties concluded by Mr. Clay between the United States and the South American republics. Great Britain, however, refused to accede to it; and out of this refusal, connected with negotiations concerning the West India trade, grew a mutual prohibition of all British and American vessels trading directly between the United States and the West India ports of Great Britain.

In his official station, Mr. Clay found a new field for the exercise of that ardent spirit of liberty which, while on the floor of Congress, had incited him to such splendid efforts in behalf of Grecian and South American independence. Chiefly through his unremitting exertions, our government had resolved to send a minister to Greece, whose independence she was the first to acknowledge. This point gained, Mr. Clay addressed a letter to Mr. Middleton, our minister at Russia, dated May 10th, 1836, urging the Emperor

Alexander to use his influence toward putting a stop to the war between Spain and her South American colonies, as well as in behalf of the struggling Greeks. So skillfully did he address the weakness of the Emperor, and with such irresistible force of argument and persuasion did he urge the cause of the suffering and the oppressed, that, through the Emperor's interference, Spain acknowledged the independence of her rebellious colonies, and a series of measures were adopted by which, after the death of Alexander, the power of Turkey was shivered to atoms. In 1825, at the invitation of the southern republics, it was determined to send a deputation to a general congress of American nations, for the adoption of more definite rules with regard to their mutual relations. The agents sent by this government were Messrs. John Sergeant and Richard C. Anderson. The letter of instructions from Mr. Clay to these gentlemen, setting forth the principles which were to govern their policy and their intercourse with the other contracting parties, has repeatedly been cited as one of the ablest papers ever penned by any statesman of any age. He forbade the idea that the convention was to possess any legislative power, distinctly stating that nothing upon which they might agree should have any binding force upon the United States until it should have been ratified by Congress. He instructed them carefully to abstain from all discussions concerning the war between Spain and the southern republics; to seek to abolish war against private property and non-combatants upon the ocean, thus rendering the private possessions of any enemy at sea subject to the same humane regulations as those upon the land; and to press upon the southern republics the propriety of establishing the most perfect and free toleration of religious opinion. Mr. Clay thus continued to discharge the laborious duties of his high office during the administration of Mr. Adams. At its close in 1829, he returned to his home, where he was received with marks of the most ardent esteem and admiration, and was immediately importuned to allow his name to be run as a candidate for public office. He declined, however, a seat in the Kentucky Legislature, and in the House of Representatives at Washington, both of which were pressed upon his acceptance. He retired to private life, occasionally meeting his friends at complimentary festivals, where he always took occasion to thank them for the confidence they had reposed in him—to vindicate himself from the charges of unscrupulous political enemies, and to unfold the principles by which his whole public career had been governed.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Melancholy.

There is a melancholy, no doubt, by which the intellect is expanded, while the heart is made better; a temperate sadness, a sober earnestness, which, by bringing us to the contemplation of an ideal world, softens and refines those feelings which habitual intercourse with society is apt to harden. This is that melancholy which is the true source of poetical inspiration; because while it refines our feelings, and enlarges the sphere of our conceptions, it leaves us as active as ever in the exercise of our social duties, and thus preserves that mental equilibrium, that balance of the intellect, the feelings and the fancy, which is the characteristic of the highest order of genius. Very different are its effects, when carried to excess. Excessive melancholy, like excessive levity, is a selfish feeling. It renders us solitary, suspicious, and querulous; and dreads our sympathy for others, while it increases our sympathy for ourselves. Those social energies which should connect us with our fellow men grow indolent and dormant; the active duties of life are forgotten in the passive; gradually we lose our relish for the common and natural feeling, the simple mirth and tears that make up the mass of human life, and learn to substitute glaring and distorted portraits, which are the reflection of our own morbid peculiarities, for those simpler forms of truth and beauty which all hearts acknowledge at once and admire.

The editor of "The Oasis," asks the following question: "Did you ever know a young man to hold a skein of yarn for his favorite to wind, without getting it strangely tangled?" "We never did," says an exchange, "but one, and he turned out to be an old bachelor."

A COMPLIMENT.—"I really cannot sing, believe me, sir," was the reply of a young lady to an empty top. "I am rather inclined to believe, madam (rejoined he with a smirk), that you are fishing for compliments." "No, sir," (exclaimed the lady), "I never fish in such shallow streams."

REWARDS OF MERIT.—"Sam," said one little urchin to another—"Sam, does your schoolmaster ever give you any rewards of merit?"

"I s'pose he does," was the rejoinder; "he gives me a lickin' every day, and says I merits two!"

A Tennessee editor pertinently remarks that "a liberal use of the rod is the only way to make boys smart."

Mr. Van Buren on Annexation.

[CONCLUDED.]

That these views were not altogether satisfactory to General Hunt, nor probably to his government, has been seen. But I think I may safely say that seldom, if ever, has the decision, by this government, of a question of equal magnitude, been more decidedly or more unanimously approved by the people of the United States. The correspondence was, very soon after it took place, communicated to Congress, and although the public mind was at the time in a state of the highest excitement, and the administration daily assailed through every avenue by which it was deemed approachable, I am yet to see the first sentence of complaint upon that point, in any quarter of the Union. Even a resolution offered in the Senate, declaring annexation, "whenever it could be effected consistently with the public faith and treaty stipulations of the United States, desirable," was ordered to be laid upon the table; and a similar disposition was made in the House of the papers upon the subject, which had been referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations, and that committee discharged from further consideration of the matter, upon its own application. Nor were the friendly relations then existing between that republic and the United States—to its honor be it said—in any perceptible degree impaired by this decision.

Standing in this position before the country, it becomes my duty to consider whether either the nature of the question, or the circumstances of the case, have so far changed as to justify me in now advising a policy from which I then, in the most solemn form, dissented.

I giving to you, and through you to the public, the result of a very careful and dispassionate examination of this grave question, I should neither do justice to yourself, to the patriotic State which you, in conjunction with others, are to represent in the convention, to the people of the United States, nor to my own position, if I failed to accompany it with a brief exposition of the grounds upon which I have proceeded. It is in that way only that justice can be done to my intentions; and that is all I desire. The annexation of the territory, and the consequent assumption by us of a responsibility to protect and defend its inhabitants, would, in respect to the consideration to which I am about to refer, stand upon the same footing with that of its admission as a State. The recognition of Texas as an independent State, was a measure which received, in various and appropriate forms, the sanction of every department of the government, whose co-operation was necessary to validity, and had my hearty concurrence. From this act of our government, just and proper in all respects as it was, an inference has, however, been drawn, and brought to bear upon the present question, not only very far beyond its true bearing, but by which its true character is entirely reversed. Many persons who enter upon the consideration of the subject with the purest intentions, and are incapable of knowingly giving a false interpretation to anything connected with it, take it for granted that the United States, in recognising the independence of Texas, declared to the world, not only that she was independent in fact, but also that she was such of right. Acting upon this erroneous construction, they very naturally conclude, that, having gone thus far, having examined into and passed not only upon the existence of her independence, but also upon her right to its enjoyment, it is now (and more especially after the lapse of several years) too late to hesitate upon the question of annexation on the ground of any existing controversy upon those points. The fallacy of this reasoning will be apparent when it is considered that the usage of nations to acknowledge the government, *de facto*, of every country, was established for the express purpose of avoiding all inquiry into, or the expression of any opinion upon, the question of right between the contending parties. They acknowledge no other power in any country than that, which is in fact supreme. They cannot inquire beyond that point without interfering with the internal concerns of other nations—a practice which all disclaim, and a disclaimer which it has been our invariable usage not only to make, but to enforce with scrupulous fidelity. To recognise the independence of the government *de facto*, is also a matter of state necessity; for without it, neither commercial nor diplomatic intercourse between any such power and the nations of the world could be carried on with success, and the social interests of mankind require that these should not be arrested by quarrels between contending parties, in regard to their respective right to the supreme power. In respect to all beyond this, the laws and usages of nations require the observance of a strict neutrality between the contending parties, as long as the war lasts. It is due, also, from every government to its own citizens, to declare when a revolted colony shall be regarded as an independent nation. Because "it belongs to the government alone to make the declaration;" and because, "until it is made, or the parent state relinquishes her claims, courts of justice must consider

the ancient state of things as remaining unaltered, and the sovereign power of the parent State over that colony as still subsisting." But nothing can be farther from giving to the act of recognition its true character, than to suppose that it has the slightest bearing upon the rights of the parties; it being, as I have already said, resorted to for the express purpose of avoiding any such construction. Such is not only the law and usage of nations, but such also have been the reiterated avowals of our own government. I do not remember that the recognition of Texas independence gave rise to any correspondence between Mexico and our government; and if it did, I have not the means of stating its character. But the principles upon which all such acts are based were fully set forth by this government upon the occasion of the recognition of the independence of the Spanish American States. In the message of President Monroe to the House of Representatives, suggesting the propriety of that recognition, it was expressly declared that, in proposing this measure, it was "not contemplated to change thereby, in the slightest manner, our friendly relations with either of the parties; but to observe in all respects, as heretofore, should the war be continued, the most perfect neutrality between them." The Committee on Foreign Affairs, in their elaborate report upon the subject, say: "our recognition must necessarily be co-existent only with the fact on which it is founded, and cannot survive it. While the nations of South America are actually independent, it is simply to speak the truth to acknowledge them to be so. Should Spain, contrary to her avowed principle and acknowledged interest, renew the war for the conquest of South America, we shall, indeed, regret it; but we shall observe, as we have done between the independent parties, an honest and impartial neutrality." The Secretary of State in defence of the act of recognition, said to the Spanish minister:—"This recognition is neither intended to invalidate any right of Spain, nor to affect the employment of any means which she may yet be disposed or enabled to use, with the view of re-uniting those provinces to the rest of her dominions." That these avowals were in strict conformity to the true principles of the law of nations, there can be no doubt. They were, at all events, those which this government has solemnly announced as its rule of action in regard to contests between rival parties for the supreme power in foreign States. That the admission of Texas as a member of this confederacy, whilst the contest for the maintenance of the independence still remained was still pending, and a consequent assumption of the responsibility of protecting her against invasion, would have been a plain departure from the laws and usages of nations, and a violation of the principles to which we had avowed our adherence in the face of the world, was too clear to be doubted. Thus believing, I had, on the occasion to which I have referred, in the faithful discharge of the trust which the people had reposed in me, but one course to pursue, and that was promptly, but respectfully adopted.

I return now to the question, Has the condition of the contest between Texas and Mexico, for the sovereignty of the former, so far changed as to render these principles now inapplicable? What is the attitude which these two states at this moment occupy towards each other? Are they at war, or are they not? We cannot evade this question if we would. To enumerate all the circumstances bearing upon it, in a communication like this, would be impracticable, nor is it necessary. In respect to the parties themselves, there would seem to be no misunderstanding upon the subject. Mexico has been incessant in her avowals, as well to our government as to others, of the continuance of the war, and of her determination to prosecute it. How does Texas regard her position in respect to the war with Mexico? Three years subsequent to our recognition of her independence, we find her entering into a stipulation with a foreign power to accept of her mediation to bring about a cessation of hostilities between her and Mexico, engaging to assume a million sterling of the debt due from Mexico to the subjects of that power; if she, through her influence, obtained from Mexico an unlimited truce in respect to the war then raging between her and Texas within one month, and a treaty of peace in six. As late as last June, we see a proclamation of the President of Texas, declaring a suspension of hostilities between the two powers during the pendency of negotiations to be entered upon between them, issued on the supposition that a similar proclamation would be issued by Mexico; and actual hostilities are now only suspended by an armistice to be continued for a specified and short period, for the sake of negotiation. Nor are our own views upon the point less explicit. In the published letter of the late Secretary of State, to the Mexican Minister at Washington, written in December last, he says:—"Nearly eight years have elapsed since Texas declared her independence. During all that time Mexico has asserted her right of jurisdiction and dominion over that country, and has endeavored to enforce it by arms." In the President's mes-

sage to Congress, it is stated:—"That the war which has existed for so long a time between Mexico and Texas, has, since the battle of San Jacinto, consisted for the most part of predatory incursions, which, while they have been attended with much of suffering to individuals, and kept the borders of the two countries in a state of constant alarm, have failed to approach to any definite result." And after commenting with much truth upon the insufficiency of the armaments which Mexico has fitted out for the subjugation of Texas—on the length of time which has elapsed since the latter declared her independence—on the perseverance, notwithstanding, in plans of reconquest by Mexico—on her refusal to acknowledge the independence of Texas, and on the evils of border warfare, the message adds:—"The United States have an immediate interest in seeing an end put to the state of hostilities between Mexico and Texas;" following up the remark with a forcible remonstrance against the continuance of the war, and a very just and impressive statement of the reasons why it should cease. This remonstrance is, in my opinion, entirely just and perfectly proper. The government of the United States should be at all times ready to interpose its good offices to bring about a speedy, and, as far as practicable, a satisfactory adjustment of this long pending controversy. Its whole influence should be exerted, constantly, zealously, and in good faith, to advance so desirable an object; and in the process of time it can, without doubt, be accomplished. But what, my dear sir, is the true and undisguised character of the remedy for these evils, which would be applied by the "immediate annexation of Texas to the United States?" Is it more or less than saying to Mexico, we feel ourselves aggrieved by the continuance of this war between you and Texas; we have an interest in seeing it terminated; we will accomplish that object by taking the disputed territory to ourselves, we will make Texas a part of the United States, so that those plans of reconquest, which we know you are maturing, to be successful, must be made so against the power that we can bring into the contest; if the war is to be continued, as we understand to be your design, the United States are henceforth to be regarded as one of the belligerents.

We must look at this matter as it really stands. We shall act under the eye of an intelligent, observing world; and the affair cannot be made to wear a different aspect from what it deserves, if even we had the disposition (which we have not) to throw over it disguises of any kind. We should consider whether there is any way in which the peace of this country can be preserved, should an immediate annexation take place, save one—and that is, according to present appearances, the improbable event that Mexico will be deterred from the farther prosecution of the war by the apprehension of our power. How does that matter stand? She has caused us to be informed, both at Mexico and here, in a manner the most formal and solemn, that she will feel herself constrained, by every consideration that can influence the conduct of a nation, to regard the fact of annexation as an act of war on the part of the United States, and that she will, notwithstanding, prosecute her attempts to regain Texas, regardless of consequences. Exceptions are, however, taken by the President, and I think very justly taken, to the manner in which this determination has been announced. The Mexican government should certainly have applied in a becoming spirit to ours for explanation of its intention. If it found this government under the impression that Mexico, although it might not be willing to acknowledge its independence, had abandoned all serious hope of reconquering Texas, Mexico should have assured us of our error, and remonstrated against any action on our part based on that erroneous assumption, declared firmly, if it pleased, but in that courteous and respectful manner which is alone suited to the intercourse between nations who profess to be friends, its determination to oppose us. Instead of taking a course, the propriety of which was so obvious, she first assumes, upon grounds which were neither proper nor safe for her to act upon, that this government had designs upon Texas; then denounces the annexation as a great national crime, and forthwith proclaims instant war as the penalty of our persisting in such an attempt; and all this in language bearing certainly, (albeit subsequently disavowed,) every appearance of menace.

But this is a besetting and very ancient foible of the mother country, as well as of her descendants, in their diplomatic intercourse. Every one conversant with the subject of Spanish relations, knows that, at least from the time of Don Louis d'Onis to the present day, this government has been frequently—not to say continually—subjected to this species of diplomatic dogmatism. Partly in consequence of the genius of their language, partly from their peculiar temperament, much from habit, but more from a radical defect of judgment, they continue the use of language in their state papers, which better tempered, if not wiser, diplomatists have almost everywhere laid aside as worse than useless. But at no time has our government suffered its re-