

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

MORE AS TO HIS VIEWS ON THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY IN THE SOUTH.

THREE CLASSES OF ABOLITIONISTS

Though Mr. Adams regarded slavery as a great evil he denied the right of Congress to interfere with it in any way in the State--His Controversy With Southern Members--Sustained Jackson in his Policy Toward the Indians.

[CONTINUED FROM LAST SUNDAY.]

WASHINGTON, D. C., July 5.

The South naturally took Mr. Adams to be a rabid Abolitionist, but that was not his position. He regarded slavery as a great evil, and was opposed to its extension into new Territories, as was Mr. Clay and other Southern men. He held that Congress possessed the exclusive right of legislation over that, and all other questions, in the District of Columbia, and the Territories; but he denied the right of Congress to legislate upon slavery in the States, or to interfere with the institution therein, in any way. He declined to support petitions for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, and thereby incurred the bitter opposition of the Abolitionists in his district.

The Abolitionists, and opponents of slavery were of three classes. There were first, the Garrisonians, or followers of William Lloyd Garrison, who held that the Constitution of the United States was thoroughly pro slavery, and, therefore, "a covenant with death, and a league with hell." He and his followers would take no part in public affairs, State or National. They would not vote and of course they could not expect to hold office, nor did they ever to the last, hold any office. Garrison was mobbed in Boston in 1835, and dragged through the streets. His printing office was destroyed, and the police locked him up in jail to prevent the mob from murdering him. Wendell Phillips, then a young lawyer, wealthy and highly educated, was a spectator of these scenes, and from that day took the side of Garrison. Some few years later he wrote a pamphlet on the Constitution, and strongly vindicated the right of secession.

The idea of Garrison and Phillips, that slavery could be overturned by refusing to vote against it, was not unlike that of the man who thought to break the bank by burning its bills; or like that of the Shaming Quakers, who hope to convert the world to Christianity, by abstaining from marriage.

In those early days, at least, Garrison and Phillips held to the doctrine of absolute peace; and they expected to accomplish the abolition of slavery by "moral suasion." One of their disciples, old Miss Abbey Kelley, was thrown down by the mob, and, although not injured, she refused to rise. When asked why she did not get up, she said she would be there "as a testimony against them."

The second order of Abolitionists was represented by Mr. Gerritt Smith, who held the very opposite view to that of the Garrisonians. He maintained that the Constitution of the United States authorized Congress to abolish slavery throughout the country, without regard to State laws. He was a millionaire, and the inheritor of a vast body of land in New York, which he divided up into forty acre tracts, and gave them to a thousand poor families. He was elected to Congress in 1853, but served only one session, after which he resigned. He was on the best terms with the extreme Southern members and entertained them at his house. His views were not likely to take root, from their very peculiar nature, and his influence was not feared, although he was an eloquent speaker.

The third class were those who favored political action on the recognized doctrine that slavery in the States could not be interfered with by the general government--that the institution within the States was exclusively under State control. But that Congress had complete control of the institution, as of all other matters in the District of Columbia and the Territories. A party was organized in 1841, upon this basis, which was called the Liberty Party--afterwards the Free Soilers, and, eventually, it became the nucleus of the Republican party. The latter party crystallized, in 1855, by a union of all the elements of opposition to the repeal of the Missouri compromise by which slavery had been prohibited, in 1820, in all the Territories of the Union lying north of the degree of 36 degrees, 30 minutes, north latitude.

Mr. Adams had always held such views. He retired from the Presidency--or more properly, he was retired by the people, from that office, March 4th, 1829; and having been in the public service from his boyhood, he could not be comfortable out of it. So, in 1831, he stood for Congress, and was elected; and contrived to be elected to every successive Congress, to the day of his death, in February, 1848.

It was not by proposing or urging measures looking to the abolition of slavery, anywhere, that Mr. Adams became involved in long years of controversy with the Southern members; but by his defence of the right of petition as sacred and inviolable, for all sorts of people. He planted himself upon the first amendment to the Constitution, which declares that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

It was a great mistake which the Southern members made when they undertook to prevent the presentation and respectful hearing of petitions; and the consequence was that a thousand such petitions were gotten up, and presented and published, where one would have been thought of. It would seem to be an equal infraction of the Constitution to prohibit the right of petition, as to establish a religion, to prohibit the free exercise thereof or abridge the freedom of speech, or of the Press--all which

provisions are embraced in the same clauses.

Mr. Adams, was greatly annoyed by the impracticable demands, and the criticisms of the Abolitionists. Speaking of Benjamin Lundy, a famous Abolitionist of the time--this was in 1837--he says: "He and the Abolitionists are constantly urging me to indiscreet movements, which would ruin me, and not strengthen their cause. My own family, on the other hand,--that is, my wife and son and Mary--exercise all the influence they possess, to restrain and divert me from all connection with the Abolitionists, and with their cause. Between these adverse impulses, my mind is agitated almost to distraction. The public mind in my own district and State is convulsed between the slavery and abolition questions, and I walk on the edge of a precipice in every step that I take." Mrs. Adams was a Marylander.

In a conversation with Dr. Channing, who was greatly apprehensive that the slave-holders would dissolve the Union, Mr. Adams quotes him as saying that "he had heard it had been remarked by Mr. Cushing (Caleb) that there was a growing coldness on the part of Southern members towards those of the North; and asked me how the Southern members treated me. I said they all treated me as gentlemen, and most of them with kindness and courtesy; that Mr. Cushing had been desirous of a very intimate personal intercourse with the Southern members, and perhaps had seen some change in their deportment towards him. I had thought it apparent that they generally held in contempt the Northern members who truckled to them, such as John Randolph had nick-named 'dough-faces.'"

One of the curious things in Mr. Adams' history was the fact that he sustained the course of General Jackson in marching into Florida, in 1817, in pursuit of the Indians, while Mr. Calhoun condemned his conduct, and gave the opinion in Cabinet council, that Jackson should be held to answer for it. Jackson, for years, thought that Calhoun had been his friend, in that affair, and Adams his enemy, and in 1824, Jackson and Calhoun ran on the same ticket for the offices of President and Vice President. At length, however, the facts came out, when Jackson became the implacable enemy of Calhoun. Benton in his "thirty years view," has as far as he was able, immortalized this breach of friendship, by publishing a long account of the circumstances, accompanied by the most bitter invective. The account purports to have been written by General Jackson, but was doubtless written out by Benton himself, or by Amos Kendall.

The conduct of General Jackson in Florida was gravely debated in the cabinet. Mr. Monroe was doubtful as to what should be done. The march into the territory of a foreign country, and the seizure of the ports; the trial and execution of the English traders, Arbuthnot and Ambrister, looked very high-handed; and it is very doubtful whether we would have submitted to it, if the boot had been on the other leg. But Jackson placed his conduct on the ground that the hostile Indians were making Spanish territory their place of retreat, after making war upon our country, and that as Spain did not keep the Indians at home, it was the right of this country to pursue and punish them. Arbuthnot and Ambrister, British subjects, were traders with the Florida Indians, and were proven to have been engaged in supplying the Indians with arms and ammunition, and with having incited the Indians to make war upon this country. Mr. Adams defended the course of General Jackson, and the President, Mr. Monroe, acted on his advice. Two years later, Mr. Adams, as Secretary of State, negotiated the purchase of Florida from Spain.

The British Government had great difficulty in digesting the arbitrary course of Jackson, in hanging her subjects. But she did digest it. Mr. Rush, our Minister to the English court at the time, says that the people, and parliament were clamorous for war, and he was told by Lord Castlereagh, the Prime Minister, that if he had raised his little finger, war would have followed. But they remembered New Orleans, no doubt.

It was about this time that Mr. Adams proposed in Cabinet council, that General Jackson be appointed a minister to Mexico. The President thought that the General's rash and hasty temper unfitted him for the diplomatic service. Mr. Adams replied that "although the language of General Jackson was sometimes too impassioned and violent, his conduct had always appeared to me calm and deliberate."

Amelia Island, a small Spanish possession, was captured during this Indian war. It had become a haunt of pirates, who greatly annoyed American commerce, as well as that of other countries. Spain complained of the seizure, and demanded its return. The President, with Messrs. Crawford, Wirt, and Crowninshield, members of the Cabinet, favored its surrender. Mr. Adams and Mr. Calhoun were for holding on to it; and it was agreed to hold on until Spain would send a force to take possession; and thus keep it out of the hands of the pirates. In this connection Mr. Adams gives his estimate of his colleagues: "If I understand the character of my colleagues," he says, "Crawford's point of honor is to differ from me, and to find no weight in any reason assigned by me. Wirt and Crowninshield will always be with the President's opinion. Calhoun thinks for himself, indifferently of all the rest, with sound judgment, quick discrimination and keen observation. He supports his opinions, too, with powerful eloquence."

Mr. Adams was taken to Paris, by his father, when eleven years old, and was put to school there. He was afterwards taken to St. Petersburg, by our Minister there, at fourteen years of age; and when twenty-three or four, was appointed by President Washington, as Minister to Holland. This, however, was after he had spent some years at home, and graduated at Harvard. He was Minister to Russia, and to England, later and was thus a trained and accomplished diplomatist.

They fill twelve octavo volumes. One difficulty you have in finding what you are looking for, with the aid of a copious index, consists in the fact, that you stumble upon so many interesting things, that you are apt to forget what you set out to look for.

January 12, 1823, he says: "I went to Dawson's, and saw Mr. Macon. In making the appointments to the South American Missions, the President wishes to distribute them to citizens of the different parts of the Union. He wishes particularly to take some distinguished notice of North Carolina. It happens that the weight of talent in that State is with the Federalists, so that the politics counteract the geography. Among the persons recommended to the President was John Lewis Taylor, now Chief Justice of the State; and the President had requested me to call upon Mr. Macon and make inquiries concerning him. Last evening I received a note from the President saying it would be proper in these inquiries to ascertain if Mr. Taylor is of the Republican party. I made, therefore, that enquiry among the others. Mr. Macon spoke of Mr. Taylor as of a man of accomplished manners, but said nothing of any more elevated qualifications; and as to his politics, he had understood him to be among the warmest Federalists in the State. But he added that politics had never been so hostile between the parties in North Carolina as in either of its neighboring States of South Carolina or of Virginia, and that Mr. Taylor had been elected to the office of Chief Justice of the State by a Legislature of different politics from his own."

Mr. Adams reported to the President what he had learned from Mr. Macon in regard to Mr. Taylor. The President replied, that "it would not do to nominate him. He added that it had been a great object of his administration to conciliate the people of this Union towards one another, and to mitigate the asperities of party spirit. But in effecting this he was obliged to consider how far he could yield to his own dispositions without losing the confidence of his own party. He would go as far as the public sentiment would support him, but to overstep that boundary would be to defeat his own object."

It would seem from this statement that "the era of good feeling" failed to efface party lines, and to remove party prejudices. DANIEL R. GOODLOE.

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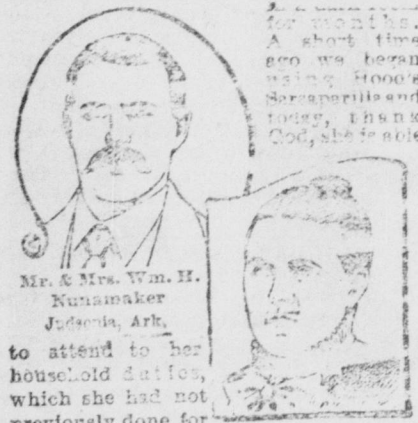
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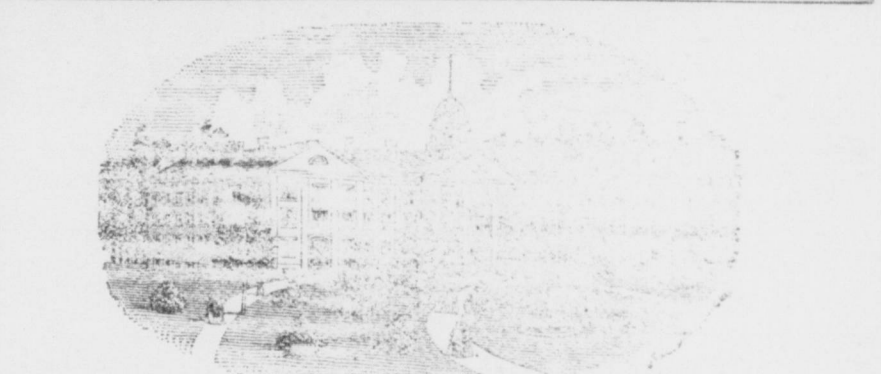
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