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POETRY.

From the Raleigh Standard.

“THAT SAME OLD COON.”

MACHINE POETRY.

That same Old Coon is gone, 'tis said,
We ne'er shall see him more;
Duncan has cleft his cunning head,
And slit him down before.
Tory at heart, this Coon was found,
And also Whig in tail;
His head was found extremely sound:
Of brain, there was no trail.
Old Coon! you've spent a wicked life:
Old Coon! you know 'tis true;
You've always kept up party strife
And lied a little too.
Old Coon! you've closed your foul career,
Your hour has come at last;
You've left your friends, the Whiggies
Dear,
And to your home have passed.
For forty years and more, Old Coon,
You've preyed upon this land,
You know you have, you cunning Coon,
The flame of discord fanned.
And now, Old Coon, you are gone at last:
In peace forever rest;
May the Devil hold you very fast,
Burn you his very best!
Oh no! says Gales, he is not dead,
Just but look at him now;
How handsomely he holds his head,
And smooths his noble brow.
Just see him sittin' on his rail,
A grinnin' very fine,
Just see him switch his bushy tail;
And how his eyes do shine.
Oh Cooney! Cooney! do sit still,
And never move a peg;
We'll keep you very well, we will,
To ornament our “Reg.”

ANTI-COON.

POLITICAL.

THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINEES.

JAMES K. POLK.

From the Democratic Review, May, 1838.

Mr. Polk, who is the oldest of ten children, was born in Mecklenburg county, North Carolina, on the second day of November, 1795, and is consequently in the forty-third year of his age. His ancestors, whose original name, Pollock, has, by obvious transition, assumed its present form, emigrated, more than a century ago, from Ireland, a country from which many of our most distinguished men are proud to derive their origin. They established themselves first in Maryland, where some of their descendants still sojourn. The branch of the family from which is sprung the subject of this memoir, removed to the neighborhood of Carlisle, in Pennsylvania, and thence to the western frontier of North Carolina, some time before the commencement of the revolutionary war. Its connection with that eventful struggle is one of rare distinction. On the 20th of May, 1775, consequently more than a twelve-month anterior to the declaration of the fourth of July, the assembled inhabitants of Mecklenburg county publicly absolved themselves from their allegiance to the British crown, and issued a formal manifesto of independence, in terms of manly eloquence, which have become “familiar as household words” to the American people. Col. Thomas Polk, the prime mover in this act of noble daring, and one of the signers of this first declaration of independence, was the great uncle of the present Speaker, who is also connected with the Alexanders, chairman and secretary of the famous meeting, as well as with Dr. Ephraim Brevard, the author of the declaration itself.*

*Tradition ascribes to Thomas Polk the principal agency in bringing about the declaration. He appears to have given the notice for the election of the convention, and, being the colonel of the county, to have superintended the elections in each of the militia districts. He had been for a long time engaged in the service of the province as a surveyor, and as a member of the assembly; and was thus intimately acquainted, not only in Mecklenburg, but in the counties generally. His education had been acquired, not within the classic walls of an English university, but among his own na-

Mr. Jefferson having, sincerely, no doubt, but upon merely negative grounds, questioned the authenticity of this interesting piece of history, the legislature of North Carolina, with a becoming pride of patriotism, caused the evidence establishing its validity to be collected in a complete shape, and deposited in the archives of the State. The people of Mecklenburg were, almost to a man, staunch whigs, in the genuine, revolutionary, acceptance of the term, and have been up to the present day remarkable for their unwavering adherence to democratic principles. As an evidence of the sturdy independence which characterizes them, it is often pleasantly observed that, at the last war, they took up arms six months before, and did not lay them down until twelve months after the government. In the contest for independence, several of Mr. Polk's relatives distinguished themselves, even to the peril of life. To be allied to such a people and lineage, is a fit subject for honorable pride. Liberty does not frown upon the indulgence of a sentiment so natural. She does not reject the heritage of honor, while refusing to add to its social or political distinctions subversive of equal rights. The American people have always manifested an affectionate regard for those who bear the names of the heroes or martyrs of the revolution. They furnish not a proof of the alleged ingratitude of republics.

The father of Mr. Polk was a farmer of unassuming pretensions, but enterprising character. Thrown upon his own resources in early life, he became the architect of his own fortunes. He was a warm supporter of Mr. Jefferson, and through life a firm and consistent republican. In the autumn of 1806, he removed to Tennessee, where he was among the first pioneers of the fertile valley of Duck river, then a wilderness, but now the most flourishing and populous portion of the State. The magical growth of a country which was but yesterday redeemed from the sole dominion of nature, is a phenomenon of great moral and political interest, and cannot fail to impress a character of strength and enterprise upon the authors and participators of the wonderful result. How can man languish or halt, when all around him is expanding and advancing with irrepressible energy? In this region, Mr. Polk still resides, so that he may be said, literally, to have grown with its growth, and strengthened with its strength. Of course, in the infancy of its settlement, the opportunities for instruction could not be great. Notwithstanding this disadvantage—and the still more formidable one of a painful affliction, from which, after years of suffering, he was finally relieved by a surgical operation—he acquired the elements of a good English education. Apprehending that his constitution had been too much impaired to permit the confinement of study, his father determined, much, however, against the will of the son, to make him a commercial man; and with this view actually placed him with a merchant. Upon what slender threads hang the destinies of life! A little more, and the uncompromising opponent of the Bank of the United States, the democratic Speaker of the House of Representatives, might have been at this day, in spite of his origin and early tendencies, a whig preacher of panics, uttering *jeremiads* for the fate of that shadowy and intangible thing ye call “credit system.”

“If shape it might be call'd, that shape had none,
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb;
Or substance might be call'd, that shadow seem'd,
For each seem'd either.”

He remained a few weeks in a situation adverse to his wishes and incompatible with his taste. Finally, his earnest appeals succeeded in overcoming the resistance of his father, and in July, 1813, he was placed under the care of the Rev. Dr. Henderson, and subsequently, at the academy of Murfreesborough, Tennessee, then under the direction of Mr. Samuel P. Black, justly celebrated in that region as a classical teacher. In the autumn of 1815, he entered the University of North Carolina, having, in less than two years and a half, thoroughly prepared himself to commence his collegiate course. It will be seen from this hasty sketch, that the history of the Speaker furnishes an interesting example of talent and perseverance triumphing over disheartening difficulties in early life. So frequent are such instances, that it would almost seem that true merit requires the ordeal of adverse circumstan-

ces, to strengthen its temper and distinguish it from unsubstantial pretension. Mr. Polk's career at the University was distinguished. At each semi-annual examination he bore away the first honor, and finally graduated in 1818, with the highest distinction of his class, and with the reputation of being the first scholar in both the mathematics and classics. Of the former science he was passionately fond, though equally distinguished as a linguist. His course at college was marked by the same assiduity and studious application which have since characterized him. His ambition to excel was equalled by his perseverance alone, in proof of which it is said, that he never missed a recitation, nor omitted the punctilious performance of any duty. Habits of close application at college are apt to be despised by those who pride themselves on brilliancy of mind, as if they were incompatible. This is a melancholly mistake. Genius has even been defined the faculty of application. The latter is, at least, something better, and more available. So carefully has Mr. Polk avoided the pedantry of classical display, which is the false taste of our day and country, as almost to hide the acquisitions which distinguished his early career. His preference for the useful and substantial, indicated by his youthful passion for the mathematics, has made him select a style of eloquence which would, perhaps, be deemed too plain by the shallow admirers of flashy declamation. The worst of all styles is the florid and exaggerated! It is that of minds which are, as it were, overlaid by their acquisitions. They break down beneath a burden which they have not strength to bear—

“Deep versed in books, but shallow in themselves.”

The mind should rather be fertilized by culture than encumbered with foreign productions. Pedantry is at once the result and proof of sciolism.

Returning to Tennessee, from the State which is, in two senses, his *alma mater*, with health considerably impaired by excessive application, Mr. Polk, in the beginning of the year 1819, commenced the study of the law in the office of Senator Grundy, and late in 1820 was admitted to the bar. He commenced his professional career in the county of Maury, with great advantages, derived from the connection of his family, with its early settlement. To this hour his warmest friends are the sharers of his father's early privations and difficulties, and the associates of his own youth. But his success was due to his personal qualities, still more than to extrinsic advantages. A republican in habits as well as in principles, depending for the maintenance of his dignity upon the esteem of others, and not upon his own assumption, his manners conciliated the general good will. The confidence of his friends was justified by the result. His thorough academical preparation, his accurate knowledge of the law, his readiness and resources in debate, his unwearied application to business, secured him, at once, full employment, and in less than a year he was already a leading practitioner. Such prompt success in a profession where the early stages are proverbially slow and discouraging, falls to the lot of few.

Mr. Polk continued to devote some years exclusively to the laborious prosecution of his profession, with a progressive augmentation of reputation, and the more solid rewards by which it is accompanied. In 1823, he entered upon the stormy career of politics, being chosen to represent his county in the State legislature, by a heavy majority over the former incumbent, but not without formidable opposition. He was, for two successive years, a member of that body, where his ability in debate, and talent for business, at once gave him reputation. The early personal and political friend of General Jackson, he was one of those who, in the session of 1823-'24, called that distinguished man from his retirement, by electing him to the Senate of the United States; and he looks back with pride to the part he took in an act which was followed by such important consequences. In August, 1825, being then in his thirtieth year, Mr. Polk was chosen to represent his district in Congress, and, in the ensuing December, took his seat in that body, where he has remained ever since. He brought with him into the national councils those fundamental principles to which he has adhered through all the personal mutations of party. From his early youth, he was a republican of the “strictest sect.” He has ever regarded the constitution of the United States as an instrument of specific and limited powers, and that doctrine is at the very foundation of the democratic creed. Of course, he has ever been what is termed a strict constructionist, repudiating, above all things, the latitudinarian interpretations of federalism, which tend to the consolidation of all power in the central government. He has signalized his hostility to these usurping doctrines in all their modes. He has always refused his assent to the appropriation of money, by the federal government, for what he deems the unconstitutional purpose of constructing

works of internal improvement within the States. He took ground early against the constitutionality, as well as expediency, of a national bank; and in August, 1829, consequently several months before the appearance of General Jackson's first message, announced then his opinions in a published letter to his constituents. He has ever been opposed to an oppressive tariff for protection, and was, at all times, the strenuous advocate of a reduction of the revenue to the economical wants of the government. Entertaining these opinions, as we shall have occasion to illustrate, and entering Congress, as he did, at the first session after the election of the younger Adams, he promptly took his stand against the broad and dangerous doctrines developed in the first message of that chief magistrate, and was, during the continuance of his administration, firmly and resolutely, but not factiously, opposed to its leading measures.

When Mr. Polk entered Congress, he was, with one or two exceptions, the junior member of that body. But capacity like his could not long remain unnoticed. In consequence of the palpable disregard of the public will, manifested in the election by the House of Mr. Adams, together with the means by which it was effected, a proposition was brought forward, and much discussed at the time, to amend the constitution in such manner as to give the choice of President and Vice President immediately and irreversibly to the people. In favor of this proposition, Mr. Polk made his first speech in Congress, which at once attracted the attention of the country by the force of its reasoning, the copiousness of its research, and the spirit of honest indignation by which it was animated. It was at once seen that his ambition was to distinguish himself by substantial merit rather than rhetorical display, the rock upon which most young orators split. At the same session, that egregious measure of political Quixotism, the Panama mission, which was proposed in contempt of the sound maxim, to cultivate friendship with all nations, yet engage in entangling alliances with none, gave rise to a very protracted debate in both Houses of Congress. The exploded federal doctrine was, upon this occasion, revived, that, as under the constitution, the President and Senate exclusively are endowed with the treaty-making faculty, and that of originating and appointing to missions; their acts under that power become the supreme law of the land, nor can the House of Representatives deliberate upon, much less, in the exercise of a sound discretion, refuse the appropriations necessary to carry them into effect. Against a doctrine so utterly subversive of the rights and powers of the popular branch of Congress, as well as of the fundamental principles of the democracy, Mr. Polk strenuously protested, embodying his views in a series of resolutions, which reproduced, in a tangible shape, the doctrines on this question of the republican party of '98. The first of these resolutions, which presents the general principle with brevity and force, runs thus: “That it is the constitutional right and duty of the House of Representatives, when called upon for appropriations to defray the expenses of foreign mission, to deliberate on the expediency or inexpediency of such missions, and to determine and act thereon, as in their judgment may seem most conducive to the public good.”

From this time Mr. Polk's history is inseparably interwoven with that of the House. He is prominently connected with every important question; and upon every one, as if by an unerring instinct of republicanism, took the soundest and boldest ground. From his entrance into public life, his adherence to the cardinal principle of the democratic creed has been singularly steadfast. During the whole period of Gen'l. Jackson's administration, as long as he retained a seat on the floor, he was one of its leading supporters, and at times, and on certain questions of paramount importance, its chief reliance. In the hour of trial he was never found wanting, or from his post. In December, 1827, two years after his entrance in the House, Mr. Polk was placed on the important Committee of Foreign Affairs, and some time after was appointed, in addition, chairman of the select committee to which was referred that portion of the President's message calling the attention of Congress to the probable accumulation of a surplus in the treasury, after the anticipated extinguishment of the national debt. As the head of this committee, he made a lucid report, replete with the soundest doctrines, ably enforced, denying the constitutional power of Congress to collect from the people, for distribution, a surplus beyond the wants of the government, and maintaining that the revenue should be reduced to the exigencies of the public service.

The session of 1830 will always be distinguished by the death blow which was then given to the unconstitutional system of internal improvements by the general government. We have ever regarded the

Maysville road veto as second in importance to none of the acts of General Jackson's energetic administration. It lopped off one of the worst branches of the miscalled American system. Mr. Polk had assailed the bill before its passage with almost solitary energy; and one of his speeches, in which he discusses the general policy of the “American system” in its triple aspect of high prices for the public lands—to check agricultural emigration to the West, and foster the creation of a manufacturing population—of high duties or taxes for protection, and excessive revenue—and of internal improvements, to spend this revenue in corrupting the country with its own money,—should be perused by every one who wishes to arrive at sound views upon a question which has so much agitated the public mind. When the bill was returned by the President unsigned, a storm arose in the House, in the midst of which the veto was attacked by a torrent of passionate declamation, mixed with no small share of personal abuse. To a member from Ohio, whose observations partook of the latter character, Mr. Polk replied in an energetic improvisation, vindicating the patriotic resolution of the Chief Magistrate. The friends of State rights in the House rallied manfully upon the veto. The result was that the bill was rejected, and countless “log-rolling” projects for the expenditure of many millions of the public treasure, which awaited the decision, perished in embryo.”

In December, 1832, he was transferred to the Committee of Ways and Means, with which his connexion has been so distinguished. At that session the directors of the Bank of the United States were summoned to Washington, and examined upon oath, before the committee just named. A division of opinion resulted in the presentation of two reports. That of the majority, which admitted that the bank had exceeded its lawful powers by interfering with the plan of government to pay off the 3 per cent. stock was tame, and unaccompanied by pertinent facts or elucidating details. Mr. Polk, in behalf of the minority, made a detailed report, communicating all the material circumstances, and presenting conclusions utterly adverse to the institution which had been the subject of inquiry. This arrayed against him the whole bank power, which he was made to feel in a quarter where he had every thing at stake; for, upon his return to his district, he found the most formidable opposition mustered against him for his course upon this question. The friends of the United States Bank held a meeting at Nashville to denounce his report. The most unscrupulous misrepresentations were resorted to, in order to prove that he had destroyed the credit of the West, by proclaiming that his countrymen were unworthy of mercantile confidence. The result, however, was, that after a violent contest, Mr. Polk was re-elected by a majority of more than three thousand. Fortunately for the stability of our institutions, the panics which “frighten cities from their propriety” do not sweep with the same desolating force over the scattered dwellings of the country.

In September, 1833, the President, indignant at the open defiance of law by the Bank of the United States, and the unblushing corruption which it practised, determined upon the bold and salutary measure of the removal of the deposits, which was effected in the following month. This act produced much excitement throughout the country, and it was foreseen that a great and doubtful conflict was about to ensue. At such a crisis it became important to have at the head of the Committee of Ways and Means, a man of courage to meet, and firmness to sustain, the formidable shock. Such a man was found in Mr. Polk, and he proved himself equal to the occasion. Congress met, and the conflict proved even fiercer than had been anticipated. The cause of the bank was supported in the House by such men as Mr. McDuffie, Adams, and Binney, not to mention a host of other names. It is instructive to look back in calmer times, to the reign of terror, known as the panic session. The bank, with the whole commerce of the country at its feet, alternately torturing and easing its miserable pensioners as they increased or relaxed their cries of financial agony; public meetings held in every city with scarcely the intermission of a day, denouncing the President as a tyrant and the enemy of his country; deputations flocking from the towns to extort from him a reluctant submission; Whig orators traversing the country, and stimulating the passions of excited multitudes, without respect even to the sanctity of the Sabbath; inflammatory memorials poured into Congress from every quarter; the Senate almost decreeing itself into a state of permanent insurrection, and proclaiming that a revolution had already begun; all the business of legislation in both wings of the Capitol postponed to that of agitation and panic; an extrajudicial and branding sentence pronounced upon the Chief Magistrate of the nation, in violation of usage and of the constitution;—these

*On the Buffalo and New Orleans Road bill