

RALEIGH REGISTER

AND NORTH-CAROLINA GAZETTE.

"Ours are the plans of fair delightful peace, unwarped by party rage, to live like brothers."

THREE DOLLARS Per Annum,
ONE HALF IN ADVANCE.

TUESDAY, JULY 12, 1836.

VOLUME XXXVII.
NUMBER 35.

PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY,
By Joseph Gates & Son.

TERMS.

THREE DOLLARS per annum—one half in advance. Those who do not, either at the time of subscribing or subsequently, give notice of their wish to have the paper discontinued at the expiration of the year, will be presumed as desiring its continuance until countermanded.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

Not exceeding sixteen lines, will be inserted three times for a dollar; and twenty-five cents for each subsequent publication: those of greater length, in proportion. If the number of insertions be not marked on them, they will be continued until ordered out and charged accordingly.

Biography of Hugh L. White.

The periodical return of the Presidential election, has again made it necessary for the free people of these United States to select, from themselves, a person to fill that high and responsible station. By the voice of a large and respectable portion of the citizens of this country, the Hon. HUGH L. WHITE, of Tennessee, has been brought before the public, as a man, in all respects, eminently qualified for the execution of its arduous duties. The name, and the life, and the character of Hugh L. White, have long been familiar to the greater portion of his countrymen. To them, his abilities in the various and difficult duties of a long and active life, have, for years, been well known, and duly and honorably appreciated. But it is presumed, from other portions of this country, and other classes of our citizens, the same familiar knowledge could not be expected. Their remoteness from the principal scenes of his actions, and the domestic habits of life, which may have excluded certain portions of the community, from a close inspection of the actors upon the wide theatre of public life, will afford rational grounds for the presumption, and will, at the same time, furnish ample apology for laying before the people at large, a brief sketch of his public and private life, and of the various & important services which he has rendered his country. The honesty of the motives which have prompted to this undertaking, and a deep and just regard for the lawful demands of the community on such an occasion, would alike deter us from holding up the subject of this memoir in the light of eulogy. They who would attempt to impose upon the public mind, in matters of such momentous concern, or would sacrifice the weighty interest of a mighty Republic, to the prejudices, and blind partiality of partisanship, would not only defeat the design intended, but should call down upon the party which could be guilty of it, the severest censures of an insulted and injured people. In view of these considerations, impelled alone by the great interests of the nation, and a sincere devotion to an undivided country, the friends of Judge White would present him to the public notice as he is—describe his life and character as they are and have been—and recount his services just as they were performed, and leave the result to a candid and intelligent people.

Hugh L. White was born in Fredrick county, North Carolina, in the year 1773. He was the son of respectable and influential parents, of Irish descent. His father, James White, was a soldier in our memorable struggle for independence; afterwards a General of Tennessee Militia, and served with high honor and distinction in the late Creek war. At the close of the Revolution, he removed first to Virginia, and then emigrated to Knox county, Tennessee, when Hugh was thirteen years of age. At the time of which we speak, Tennessee was a wilderness; and into this wild abode, was the family of Mr. White ushered, with no defence but personal prowess, and no means of subsistence but what were seized in the face of danger and death. But the hardships and perils which the early pioneer had to encounter, from the natural obstacles of the unsubdued forest, and its terrific inhabitants, have been too often and glowingly described, and are too well known even to infancy, to need relation here; but in these dangers and perils, the family of Mr. White bore no ordinary share. At the age of nineteen, Hugh volunteered as a private soldier in the Indian campaigns. In these dangerous and doubtful conflicts of border warfare, he spent the years of his early manhood, with others of a kindred spirit, in defending mothers and wives and daughters from the flames and the scalping knife. In these perilous scenes, which put to such a severe test the masculine energies of the pioneer, Hugh L. White was soon distinguished as a brave, vigilant, and untiring soldier. He possessed a constitution peculiarly fitted for such rugged duties—a constitution which has preserved its elasticity and firmness, almost in primitive vigor, beyond the boundary of three-score years. These scenes of his early life are interesting on this occasion, only as they were the rough school of discipline, in which he acquired and strengthened those hardy Roman virtues, which by universal consent, have distinguished his character throughout his whole public career.

The early education of Hugh L. White was not as thorough and extensive as he

could have wished it, and as it would have been, under more favorable circumstances. The refinements of polished scholarship, had hardly been introduced into Tennessee at that early day. But of the more practical, and useful branches of education, such as qualified him for the discharge of the immediate duties of life, he acquired the utmost that the schools of that day afforded. He was instructed in the ancient languages, by the Rev. Samuel Corrick, and Mr. (afterwards Judge) Ruane, gentlemen of no mean proficiency in scholarship. To these attainments he afterwards added a course of Mathematics, under Professor Patterson, of Philadelphia, whither he had gone for that purpose. In 1793, he left Philadelphia, for Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he entered the office of James Hopkins, an eminent lawyer, under whose superintendence he devoted himself with great ardor to the study of the law. Having completed the usual preparatory course, he returned, in 1796 to Knoxville, where he commenced the practice of his profession. Such, in brief, is the early history of Hugh L. White.

It is not the province of the present writer to follow him step by step, through the stages of his early education—to trace through each successive year, the gradual developments of early genius, and to discover in youthful achievements, the germs of coming greatness. This task, though in itself highly useful and interesting, must be left to the affectionate biographer of other times, when the occasion which has called forth this article shall have passed away; and when the wild rivalries of party shall find no interest or pleasure in detracting from well-earned honors, or in withholding the meed of gratitude and admiration from the virtues and worth of those who have gone before. Suffice it to say, (though his after distinguished course renders it almost unnecessary to be said,) that the period of his youth was characterized by habits of laborious study, which being united with powers of intellect, naturally strong and elastic, rendered him conspicuous for his attainments in all circles with which he was associated. If, as Dr. Reid says, unceasing application be genius, few men in our country would stand higher in the intellectual world, than Hugh L. White. Though not subscribing to the sentiment in its fullest extent we agree with it so far as to admit, that intense application is generally a sure test of genius, and that they are seldom disjoined and the achievements of Judge White have furnished another instance to establish the truth of the remark. This bold and fearless grappling with difficulties of whatever nature—this determination, to do in the best manner possible, whatever he undertook, has ever been one of the most distinguishing features of his character.

With such a character he entered, in 1796, upon the practice of his profession, with prospects particularly auspicious for one of his years. Ever punctual in all his engagements, and faithful to all his trusts, he soon acquired a standing for industry, enterprise, high-minded honesty, and mental ability, which early marked him out as a man to whom the public interests might safely be entrusted. This confidence so early acquired, and always conferred without solicitation, was never in a single instance withdrawn—a noble tribute to exalted worth, of which few statesmen can boast. And the present enviable position in which he stands to the people of this great nation, proves that this confidence was never injudiciously bestowed.

For the five succeeding years, Judge White devoted himself unremittingly to the duties of his profession, and rapidly rose to high and honorable distinction at the bar. The science of jurisprudence was his especial study; and with such zeal and ability did he enter into the investigation, that he was selected at the early age of twenty-eight, from a body of able and experienced lawyers, to fill the office of Judge of the Superior Court—at that time the highest judicial tribunal in the State. This seat he held till 1807, when he resigned.

As a lawyer, Judge White was one of the most distinguished in the early history of Tennessee. Nor was the bar of Tennessee, at that time, wanting in men of the first order in legal attainments.—Such men as Jackson, and Whiteside, and Overton, and G. W. Campbell, were then in the prime of their legal celebrity; and with such men was he associated upon the Bench. In legal argumentation, Judge White had but few superiors; yet he was always as fair and honest in debate, as he was cogent. He never turned aside to take advantage of quibbles, and quicks, and senseless technicalities, but built his premises upon the plain and obvious meaning of the law; and with abstract truth as his guide, he seldom failed to carry his point. He viewed every thing like cunning and subtlety, in the pleadings at the bar, with as much detestation as he always has the tricks and manoeuvres and intrigues of party politicians. It is hard to speak in just terms of his legal attainments without the appearance of exaggeration; but there are yet those living who can state, that eulogy has no part in this description. There need be no bet-

ter evidence, that Judge White possessed every qualification of the able, profound and enlightened jurist, than that he was afterwards appointed (or would have been appointed, on condition of his accepting,) a seat upon the Supreme Bench of the United States, which distinguished post of honor he declined. When he was elevated from the bar to the bench, he brought to the discharge of its difficult functions, all the qualities already enumerated, and superadded to the essential attributes of judicial authority, great mildness and suavity of manners—yet was he always firm and dignified, and uncompromising, when duty demanded. It is superfluous to say, that to maintain such an office with popularity and respect, both from the people and the bar, is the surest test of no ordinary merit. Spurious talents or superficial learning cannot be played off, undetected, upon the bench. The strict integrity of Judge White was proverbial; and no partialities of friendship or affection, no frowns of dissatisfaction, ever gave coloring to his decisions. His opinions were generally remarkable for perspicuity and strength, and many of them able specimens of judicial acumen and research.—His long services in his judicial capacity, acquired for him the greatest respect and esteem from the gentlemen of the profession, and conferred lasting honor on the bar of Tennessee. Such ample opportunities were presented during twelve years' experience on the bench, and especially, when afterwards practised upon and enlarged in the course of his political experience, must have rendered Judge White, thoroughly acquainted with the spirit and character of the laws of his country.

An interesting anecdote is told of this period of his life, quite characteristic of his republican simplicity. A student of law came a considerable distance to be examined by him, in order to obtain license. The young man had heard much of his ability and learning as a jurist, and expected to be much embarrassed in his presence; but he mustered courage, visited his residence, and on being informed that the Judge was on his farm, went out and intercepted a man ploughing, and asked for Judge White. "I am the man," was the reply. "I wish to get licence to practice law, and have come to be examined. Well, sir, if you will be good enough to go down into the shade, I will attend to it with a great deal of pleasure." He secured his plough horse, got over into the cool shade, and took the young man through a most learned and rigid examination—found that he was well qualified, and after inviting him to his home, and showing him every mark of hospitality and politeness, gave him a licence.

In the year 1807, he resigned his Judgeship, and retired, in a great measure to his farm. Agricultural pursuits had always been a favorite occupation, even in the midst of laborious studies; and he would be frequently found in the intervals of his engagements, ploughing in his fields. There appears always to have been a congeniality between great & good minds in the pursuits of agriculture. We pretend not to divine the philosophy of it, or to determine, as has often been contended, why it is that patriotism exists, in so much more elevated and fervent devotion, in the retirement of the farm, than in the busy throng of crowded cities.—Whether the fact be so or not, certain it is that the noblest instances of sterling patriotism and high-souled principle that have ever figured in the drama of human actions, have been found among those most devoted to agricultural pursuits.—Hypocrisy and intrigue, which are the elements of contracted minds, have sought to do in the retirement of the farm; but far removed from the long catalogue of human frailties and vices, with which they are so painfully conversant in public life, the good and the great are gratified with the view of the brighter side of humanity, and have there to deal with characters and actions more congenial with the simplicity and greatness of their own natures. Like Jefferson, and Washington, and Madison, and Jackson, Judge White could be induced to leave his farm only when duty, which was the supreme law of his nature, demanded; and when that was performed, he left the rivalries and commotion of public life, without a regret, to those whose business it was to foster them.

About this time Judge White was appointed District Attorney for the United States, which station he soon resigned. In 1807, he was elected a Senator to the State Legislature. While a member of this body, he performed many important services to Tennessee, and was the author of our system of land law—for which Tennesseans who recollect the frauds and controversies of the old system, will ever be grateful. The speech in which he advocated the measure, was one of the first which he made as a politician, and was said to have been one of unusual power and cogency. In 1809, the Judiciary of Tennessee was reorganized, and a Supreme Court instituted. In this highest appellate tribunal, he was appointed to preside although not a candidate, and was absent from the seat of Government two hundred miles, when the Legislature conferred the appointment. He

held this office for six years, during which time he was associated with such men as John Overton and G. W. Campbell, and from his faithfulness and ability, acquired the utmost respect and popularity from the people, by whose delegated authority he had been appointed. Previous to his resignation in 1815, he was elected President of the State Bank. Under his auspices, the institution flourished in a high degree, and acquired much character for the prudence and ability of its administration, and the stability of its operations. It obtained a standing in the west equally honorable to the State and beneficial to its financial concerns. He continued twelve years at the head of this institution—including the period of the late war—a period which will be long remembered in the political history of the United States for fiscal distrust, confusion and difficulty, and which, but for the energies of one man, would have rendered bankrupt the credit of the whole nation.

But while engaged in the double duties of Judge and President of the Bank, he did not forget his country. During the darkest period of the Creek campaign, when General Jackson was surrounded with difficulties such as would have crushed any other man, his brave men contending not only with savages, but with famine and want, and sustaining life on roots and acorns, Hugh L. White left the bench, and with a single companion, the Hon. Luke Lea, started for the wilderness hired an Indian guide, and after several days and nights of perilous adventure, found the General's encampment. He told the old veteran, that having heard of his difficulties, he had left his business, and come to share his toils and dangers. It was determined, after some consultation, that the Judge should return, through the wilderness, to Tennessee, and exert his influence in raising volunteers, and procuring provisions for the distressed and famishing army. While absent, on this expedition he missed several terms of his court, and by the laws of Tennessee, the Judges were paid only in proportion to duty performed. The Legislature, in consideration of the great services he had rendered General Jackson, passed an order, that there should be no deduction of his salary. But with characteristic magnanimity, he declined the offer, and would receive no more than that for which he rendered actual service. He said that his country was in distress, that the aid he rendered, was without the hope of reward, and that he would receive none.

In 1817, Hugh L. White was again elected Senator, by a majority approaching unanimity, and served with accustomed distinction, the period for which he had been elected.

But the abilities of Hugh L. White were too distinguished, and too well appreciated by his countrymen, to be confined within the limits of a single State.—He was appointed, in 1820, by President Monroe, one of the Commissioners under the Spanish Treaty, in conjunction with Littleton W. Tazewell and Gov. King.—Previous to this time, his intention had been confined, chiefly, to the laws affecting individual rights, and private property. The rights and laws of nations had little connexion with the administration of justice, in an interior State. But as the sphere of his operations was widened, he was found to possess mental resources corresponding to the increased demand. With such great success did he apply himself to the details of Commercial, Maritime, and International Law, that he won the esteem and confidence of his able colleagues—men who had been experienced, and profoundly versed in the science of Public Law. He held this appointment until 1824, at which time the Commission expired. In the same year he was again, unanimously, appointed a Judge of the Court of Appeals, but he declined the appointment. In 1825, General Jackson resigned his seat in the U. States Senate, and Hugh L. White was unanimously elected to fill out the term. In 1827, he was again unanimously elected to serve the next six years. And yet again, amidst the hottest party rancor, the Legislature bestowed their undivided suffrage upon him, for another term of six years, in 1835.

We have now to review the life of Hugh L. White, in the most important and interesting scenes, of the many, in which he has taken part. Hitherto, we have viewed him chiefly as a jurist and a local politician. But his life and acts become now identified with national history and national interests. And from the character which he has acquired in this political capacity, from the ability and faithfulness with which he has discharged the functions of the high stations which he has occupied, must he stand or fall to the people of the nation. Ten years ago, Hugh L. White brought into our national councils, great weight of character. Has he sustained it? At that time he had the unlimited confidence of every party in the Government. Has he forfeited it? During this era of great achievements in our political history—memorable for the revolutionizing of our national policy—for the demolishing of long established institutions, and the building of new—for bold and untried adventures in the theory and

practice of Government—a period portentously pregnant with doubtful and strange doctrines, which will distinguish this era of our political history for ages to come—during all this mighty conflict of principles, Hugh L. White has been constantly upon the ground. He bore his part in them all, as friend or foe. He has fearlessly carried the standard into the thickest ranks, or checked the sallies of dangerous rashness by the voice of wisdom and the weight of years. And now, at the close of the drama, when the conflict is over, and the elements of strife are composed into harmony, and the horizon is brightening up, he stands up before the people, whom he has helped to pilot out of the breakers, and asks to be tried by his actions. Upon the measures there advocated, by the opinions there avowed, & by the honesty and ability there displayed, let him be tried by a candid and enlightened people—and upon the result, let him stand or fall. Justice and candor demand no more than this. Let this be done, and justice and candor will be satisfied. This period is too fresh in the memory of all, and the measures too notorious to be detailed in this place. But during this comparatively short period of his public career, more weighty subjects have been discussed—more doubtful points of national policy settled—more difficulties removed from the free administration of Government—more political heresies broached and exterminated, than in any other period of American history of the same length. The whole theory of Government has been subjected to an inquisition, which spared neither the ancient, nor the venerable, nor the strong, nor the weak. In the scales of justice or honesty, they have all been weighed, and have found the level, or the supposed level, of their merits. Its maritime and commercial policy has been revolutionized. Its banking establishments upturned. The powers of the General Government in Internal Improvements and Executive Patronage, have been scrutinized and settled. The origin and nature of the Federal Compact have been discussed with earnestness and ability; and its value has been calculated, and its fundamental principles bandied about with the familiarity of toys. These momentous questions have all been settled, and the people have fixed upon the result the seal of their sanction. The man who can pass such an ordeal unscathed—having borne an active and energetic part in them all, to say the least of it, does not lack experience in public affairs which would fit him for any office in the Government. With what character Judge White has passed through these scenes, is known to every man in the nation. His political doctrines are of the great republican school. During Mr. Adams's Administration, when the Panama mission was agitated, in which was brought into discussion the powers of the General Government—Hugh L. White opposed the measure with unusual ability. As to the Tariff, he has always shown a firm but rational opposition to it, both by his vote & upon the floor. In 1826, he avowed himself an enemy to extensive Executive Patronage, and the measures naturally growing out of it. Internal Improvement by the General Government has never met his sanction. When the subject of Executive Patronage was again brought before the House, under the change of Administration, Hugh L. White advocated the same principles, though for his consistency he has been accused of deserting the present Administration. The man who possesses principles which are too stubborn to bend for office or emolument, for smiles or frowns, cannot be justly accused of "desertion." If there has been a change any where, it is in the desertion of present Republicans from the principles which they held ten years ago.

But Hugh L. White is to be viewed in a still more conspicuous light. In 1832, John C. Calhoun resigned the Vice Presidency of the United States, and the Senate was left without a presiding officer. It was on the eve of that memorable session, when the debate upon the Tariff had well nigh severed the Union. The first talent of the nation was then congregated, and every man had arrayed himself on one side or the other. The prize at issue was the Constitution. And the leaders of the respective divisions came armed with the desperate resolution to carry their measures, though disunion on one side, and civil war on the other, were the consequence. Proud in the strength of conscious greatness, irritated by supposed aggressions of tyranny, and discordant to a degree that almost banished deliberation, they foresaw that troublous times were not far distant. It was seen that no ordinary mind could be able to curb the outbreakings of passion, and maintain its equipoise through so doubtful a contest. In full view of all these difficulties, Hugh L. White was elected President of the Senate—and how he sustained the exalted expectations of that body and the nation, is now a matter of history. The firmness, impartiality, decision and dignity with which he presided over the stormy debate, proved that no false estimate had been placed upon his character. But mildness and honesty alone would not have commanded respect in so discordant and hostile a body. Virtues may sway the affec-

tions, but mind alone can command mind. It was great moral and intellectual strength based upon the most commanding civic courage, the loftiest attribute of mind, that awed the combatants into respect, and challenged their homage.

The intellectual character of Hugh L. White would bear a fair comparison with the first talent in the Senate. As an orator, in the popular acceptance of the term, he is not as distinguished as many members in the House of Congress. He possesses little of that rich profusion of imagination, which throws such a charm over the oratory of a Clay, or a Pinckney, or a Wirt. But if oratory means the carrying of the point, and the demolishing adverse positions, he has few superiors. As a reasoner and debater, he has shown strength and cogency of argument, more than one occasion, which would rank him as one of the ablest logicians on the floor of Congress. His speech upon the Indian question, which was made too, under circumstances in which few men would have chosen to appear in their seats, was considered one of the most powerful efforts ever made in that body, and of the same character were his speeches upon the Panama Mission. In the discussion of the latter, Hugh L. White was particularly distinguished—and the combatants of that debate were no striplings in mind and attainments. The profoundest talent in the nation, and the deepest constitutional learning, were brought to bear upon it; but the speech of Hugh L. White was pronounced to be the ablest exposition of the powers of Government made during the whole discussion. The character of his reasoning partakes of the dominant quality of his mind. He never descends from the lofty position of honor and self-respect, to avail himself of the cunning tricks of controversy, or of adroit subterfuges—or to avoid conclusive arguments by a stroke of wit, or conceal beneath a flood of idle declamation the falsehood or weakness of his premises. He attacks no subject in the *flank*; but marches up, bold and fearless, to the *front*, and marks out his positions with such precision, and lays his premises so deep and sure, that he seldom fails to reduce the enemy. This is the order of mind that seems peculiarly adapted to the discharge of difficult and heavy duties. Of our seven Presidents, but one was an orator; and he was the most unpopular that ever sat in the Chair. In the bold characteristics of his mind, Judge White approaches nearer Washington, Monroe and Madison. Every subject, which he touched seemed moulded into the greatness of his own mind—and of him it might be safely said, as it was of another great man, that he never undertook to prove, what he did not establish; yet Madison possessed but few of the charms and graces of oratory.

As a statesman, Hugh L. White has sustained a character for talents equally honorable to his station and his country, till he was sixty-two years of age. No man ever doubted them. He had grown old in honors; and envy or jealousy had not breathed a word of dissatisfaction—he had held some of the highest and most responsible offices within the gift of the people, and he discharged them as they never were better, before or since. But in his sixty-third year, it was discovered that the public had been deceived—that this great debater and profound statesman had no mind. Alas, political consistency! And what increases the wonder of the discovery, is that those that had ever been ready to acknowledge his talents and extol his worth, are the first to mark the detection! Whether the deficiency of talents be as great in the venerable statesman, as the want of honesty to the political inquisitor, we leave to the people to decide.

His consistency as a politician has long been proverbial. A change of administrations creates no change in his doctrines, throws no new flashes of light upon a question, and brings to view no unseen excellencies which before were not known to exist. The waxing and waning of power bring no uneasiness or terrors to him—and the periodical ebbing and flowing of opinions, leave his principles as firm and unshaken as the ocean rock, while the empty spray serves but to cleanse them of their dross. In the administration of Mr. Adams, he opposed the extension of Executive patronage upon principle. In 1835, these principles had not changed, and he opposed it again. Those who thrive and fatten by fawning and sycophancy, and float on the tide of party through every administration, call this adhesion to principle, "desertion of the ranks." Hugh L. White belongs to no ranks, and never did, but the ranks of the Constitution.—And when many of those who may have happened to agree in opinion with him, are found sliding into error, he asks only to be permitted to retain his original ground. But let not the subject be too closely sifted, lest it be found that his accusers have deserted principle—and they may find that the charge of inconsistency is more easily imposed upon others, than it is shaken off when truth has fastened it upon themselves.

To the calm and philosophic observer of the tide of human affairs, who is unacquainted with the moral code, and the phancy of conscience, of the humble fra-