

The dangers of discord and sectionalism among the States were set forth with all the masculine energy of the Jacksonian dialect. The people of the United States were again solemnly warned, as they had been by the Father of his Country, against the baleful influence of demagogues. The horrors of disunion were portrayed in the strongest colors; and people of every rank and section were exhorted to maintain and defend the American Union as they would the last fortress of human liberty. This was the last of those remarkable public papers contributed by Andrew Jackson to the history of his country. Already, in the autumn of the previous year, Martin Van Buren had been elected President. The opposing candidate was General Harrison of Ohio, who received the support of the new Whig party. As to the vice-presidency, no one secured a majority in the electoral college, and the choice devolved on the Senate. By that body Colonel Richard M. Johnson of Kentucky was duly elected.

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CHAPTER LV.

VAN BUREN'S ADMINISTRATION, 1837-1841.

MARTIN VAN BUREN, eighth President of the United States, was born at Kinderhook, New York, on the 5th of December, 1782. After receiving a limited education he became a student of law, and before reaching his majority was recognized as an influential democratic politician. In his thirtieth year he was elected to the Senate of his native State; and six years afterwards, by supplanting De Witt Clinton, became the recognized leader of the Democracy in New York. In 1821, and again in 1827, he was chosen United States Senator; but in the following year he resigned his office to accept the governorship of his native State. He also, in 1831, resigned his place as secretary of State in the first cabinet of President Jackson, and was appointed minister to England. But when, in December of the same year, his nomination was submitted to the Senate the influence of Vice-President Calhoun assisted by the Whig leaders, Clay and Webster, procured the rejection of the appointment. Mr. Van Buren returned from his unfulfilled mission; became the candidate for the vice-presidency, and was elected in the fall of 1832. Four years later he was called by the voice of the powerful party to which he belonged, to succeed General Jackson in the highest office of the nation.

One of the first duties of the new administration was to finish the Seminole War. In the beginning of 1837 the command of the army in Florida was transferred from General Scott to General Jessup. In the following fall Osceola came to the American camp with a flag of truce; but he was suspected of treachery, seized, and sent a prisoner to Fort Moultrie, where he died in 1838. The Seminoles, though disheartened by the loss of their chief, continued the war. In December Colonel Zachary Taylor, with a force of over a thousand men, marched into the Everglades of Florida, determined to fight the savages in their lairs. After unparalleled sufferings he overtook them, on Christmas day, near Lake Okeechobee. A hard battle was fought, and the Indians were defeated, but not until a hundred and thirty-nine of the whites had fallen. For more than a year Taylor continued to hunt the Red men through the swamps. In 1839 the chiefs sent in their submission and signed a treaty; but their removal to the West was made with much reluctance and delay.

In the first year of Van Buren's administration the country was afflicted with a monetary panic of the most serious character. The preceding years had been a time of great prosperity. The national debt was entirely liquidated, and a surplus of nearly forty million dollars had accumulated in the treasury of the United States. By act of Congress this vast sum had been distributed among the several States. Owing to the abundance of money, speculations of all sorts grew rife. The credit system pervaded every department of business. The banks of the country were suddenly multiplied to nearly seven hundred. Vast issues of irredeemable paper money stimulated the speculative spirit and increased the opportunities for fraud.

The bills of these unsound banks were receivable at the land-offices; and settlers and speculators made a rush to secure the public lands while money was plentiful. Seeing that in receiving such an unsound currency in exchange for the national domain the government was likely to be defrauded out of millions, President Jackson had issued an order called THE SPECIE CIRCULAR, by which the land-agents were directed henceforth to receive nothing but coin in payment for the lands. The effects of this circular came upon the nation in the first year of Van Buren's administration. The interests of the government had been secured by Jackson's vigilance; but the business of the country was prostrated by the shock. The banks suspended specie payment. Mercantile houses failed; and disaster swept through every avenue of trade. During the months of March and April, 1837, the failures in New York and New Orleans amounted to about a hundred and fifty million dollars. A committee of business men from the former city besought the President to rescind the specie circular and to call a special session of Congress. The

former request was refused and the latter complied with; but not until the executive was driven by the distresses of the country.

When Congress convened in the following September, several measures of relief were brought forward. A bill authorizing the issue of treasury notes, not to exceed ten millions of dollars, was passed as a temporary expedient. More important by far was the measure proposed by the President and brought before Congress under the name of THE INDEPENDENT TREASURY BILL. By the provisions of this remarkable project the public funds of the nation were to be kept on deposit in a treasury to be established for that special purpose. It was argued by Mr. Van Buren and his friends that the surplus money of the country would drift into the independent treasury and lodge there; and that by this means the speculative mania would be effectually checked; for extensive speculations could not be carried on without an abundant currency. It was in the nature of the President's plan to separate the business of the United States from the general business of the country.

The independent treasury bill was passed by the Senate, but defeated in the House of Representatives. But in the following regular session of Congress the bill was again brought forward and adopted. In the mean time, the business of the country had in a measure revived. During the year 1838 most of the banks resumed specie payments. Commercial affairs assumed their wonted aspect; but trade was less vigorous than before. Enterprises of all kinds languished, and the people were greatly disheartened. Discontent prevailed; and the administration was blamed with everything.

In the latter part of 1837 there was an insurrection in Canada. A portion of the people, dissatisfied with the British government, broke out in revolt and attempted to establish their independence. The insurgents found much sympathy and encouragement in the United States, especially in New York. From that State a party of seven hundred men, taking arms, seized and fortified Navy Island, in the Niagara River. The loyalists of Canada attempted to capture the place, and failed. They succeeded, however, in firing the *Caroline*, the supply-ship of the adventurers, cut her moorings, and sent the burning vessel over Niagara Falls. These events created considerable excitement, and the peaceful relations of the United States and Great Britain were endangered. But the President issued a proclamation of neutrality, forbidding interference with the affairs of Canada; and General Wool was sent to the Niagara frontier with a sufficient force to quell the disturbance and punish the disturbers. The New York insurgents on Navy Island were obliged to surrender, and order was soon restored.

Hardly had the excitement attendant upon the Canadian troubles subsided, before the question was raised as to Van Buren's successor in the presidency. The canvass began early and in a very bitter spirit. The measures of the administration had been of such a nature as to call forth the fiercest political controversy. The Whigs, animated with the hope of victory, met in national convention on the 4th of December, 1839, and again nominated General Harrison as their leader in the coming contest. On the Democratic side Mr. Van Buren had no competitor; but the unanimity of his party could hardly compensate for his misfortunes and blunders. The canvass was the most exciting in the political history of the country. The President was blamed with every thing. The financial distress was laid at his door. Extravagance, bribery, corruption—every thing bad was charged upon him. Men of business advertised to pay six dollars a barrel for flour if Harrison should be elected; three dollars a barrel if Van Buren should be successful. The Whig orators tossed about the luckless administration through all the figures and forms of speech; and the President himself was shot at with every sort of dart that partisan wit and malice could invent. The enthusiasm in the ranks of the opposition rose higher and higher; and the result was the defeat of the Democrats in every State except Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Missouri, New Hampshire, Virginia, and South Carolina. The electoral votes of these States—numbering sixty—were given to Van Buren; and the remainder, amounting to two hundred and thirty-four, were cast for General Harrison. After controlling the destinies of the government for nearly forty years, the Democratic party was temporarily routed. For Vice-President, John Tyler of Virginia was chosen.

In the last year of Van Buren's administration was completed the sixth census of the United States. The tables were, as usual, replete with the evidences of growth and progress. The national revenues for the year 1840 amounted to nearly twenty millions of dollars. During the last ten years the center of population had moved westward along the thirty-ninth parallel of latitude from the South Fork of the Potomac to Clarksburg, West Virginia—a distance of fifty-five miles. The area of the United States now actually inhabited, amounted to eight hundred and seven thousand square miles, being an increase in ten years of twenty-seven and six-tenths per cent. The frontier line, circumscribing the population, passed through Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and the western borders of Missouri, Arkansas, and Louisiana—a distance of three thousand three hundred miles. The population had reached the aggregate of seventeen million souls, being an

increase since 1830 of more than six millions. It was found from the tables that eleven-twelfths of the people lived outside of the larger cities and towns, showing the strong preponderance of the agricultural over the manufacturing and commercial interest. One of the most interesting lessons of the census was found in the fact that the wonderful growth of the United States was in *extent and area*, and not in *accumulation*—in the *spread* of civilization rather than in *intensity*. For, since 1830, the average population of the country had not increased by so much as *one person to the square mile!*

The administration of Van Buren has generally been reckoned as unsuccessful and inglorious. But he and his times were unfortunate rather than bad. He was the victim of all the evils which followed hard upon the relaxation of the Jacksonian methods of government. He had neither the will nor the disposition to rule as his predecessor had done; nor were the people and their representatives any longer in the humor to suffer that sort of government. The period was unheroic: it was the ebb-tide between the belligerent excitements of 1832 and the war with Mexico. The financial panic added opprobrium to the popular estimate of imbecility in the government. "The administration of Van Buren," said a bitter satirist, "is like a parenthesis: it may be read in a low tone of voice or altogether omitted *without injuring the sense!*" But the satire lacked one essential quality—truth.

## CHAPTER LVI.

### ADMINISTRATIONS OF HARRISON AND TYLER, 1841-1845.

THE new President was a Virginian by birth, and the adopted son of Robert Morris, the financier of the Revolution. He was a graduate of Hampden-Sidney College, and afterward a student of medicine. Attracted by the military life, he entered the army of St. Clair; was rapidly promoted; became lieutenant-governor and then governor of Indiana Territory, which office he filled with great ability. His military career in the North-west has already been narrated. He was inaugurated President on the 4th of March, 1841, and began his duties by issuing a call for a special session of Congress to consider "sundry important matters connected with the finances of the country." An able cabinet was organized, at the head of which was Dan-

iel Webster as secretary of state. Everything promised well for the new Whig administration; but before Congress could convene, the venerable President, bending under the weight of sixty-eight years, fell sick, and died just one month after his inauguration. It was the first time that such a calamity had befallen the American people. Profound and universal grief was manifested at the sad event. On the 6th of April Mr. Tyler took the oath of office, and became President of the United States.

He was a statesman of considerable distinction; a native of Virginia; a graduate of William and Mary College. At an early age he left the profession of law to enter public life; was chosen a member of Congress; and in 1825 was elected governor of Virginia. From that position he was sent to the Senate of the United States; and now at the age of fifty-one was called to the presidency. He had been put upon the ticket with General Harrison through motives of expediency; for although a Whig in political principles, he was *known to be hostile to the United States Bank*. And this hostility was soon to be manifested in a remarkable manner.

The special session of Congress continued from May till September. One of the first measures proposed and carried was the repeal of the independent treasury bill. A general bankrupt law was then brought forward and passed, by which a great number of insolvent business men were relieved from the disabilities of debt. The next measure—a favorite scheme of the Whigs—was the rechartering of the bank of the United States. The old charter had expired in 1836; but the bank had continued in operation under the authority of the State of Pennsylvania. Now a bill to recharter was brought forward and passed. The President interposed his veto. Again the bill was presented, in a modified form, and received the assent of both Houses, only to be rejected by the executive. By this action a final rupture was produced between the President and the party which had elected him. The indignant Whigs, baffled by a want of a two-thirds majority in Congress, turned upon him with storms of invective. All the members of the cabinet except Mr. Webster resigned; and he retained his place only because of a pending difficulty with Great Britain.

The difficulty was in the nature of a dispute about the north-eastern boundary of the United States. The territorial limit of the country in that direction, not having been clearly defined by the treaty of 1783, had been one of the points under discussion by the commissioners at Ghent in 1814. But like other matters presented for adjudication before that polite and easily satisfied congress, the boundary

question had been postponed rather than settled. It was then agreed, however, to refer the establishment of the entire line between the United States and Canada to the decision of three commissioners to be jointly constituted by the two governments. The first of these bodies accomplished its work successfully by awarding to the United States the islands in the Bay of Passamaquoddy. The third commission also performed its duty by establishing the true boundary line from the intersection of the forty-fifth parallel of latitude with the River St. Lawrence to the western point of Lake Huron. To the second commission was assigned the more difficult task of settling the boundary from the Atlantic to the St. Lawrence; and this work they failed to accomplish. For nearly twenty-five years the limit of the United States on the northeast remained in controversy; and at times the difficulty became so serious as to endanger the peace of the two nations. Finally the whole matter at issue was referred to Lord Ashburton, acting on the part of Great Britain, and Mr. Webster, the American Secretary of State. After an able discussion of all the points in dispute, the boundary was definitely established as follows: From the mouth of the River St. Croix ascending that stream to its western fountain; from that fountain due north to the St. John's; thence with that river to its source on the watershed between the Atlantic and the St. Lawrence; thence in a southwesterly direction along the crest of the highlands to the northwestern source of the Connecticut; and down that stream to and along the forty-fifth parallel to the St. Lawrence. The work of the commissioners extended also to the establishment of the boundary from the western point of Lake Huron through Lake Superior to the northwestern extremity of the Lake of Woods, thence—confirming the treaty of October, 1818,—southward to the forty-ninth parallel of latitude, and thence with that parallel to the Rocky Mountains. This important settlement, known as THE WEBSTER-ASHBURTON TREATY, was completed on the 9th of August, 1842, and was ratified by the Senate on the 20th of the same month.

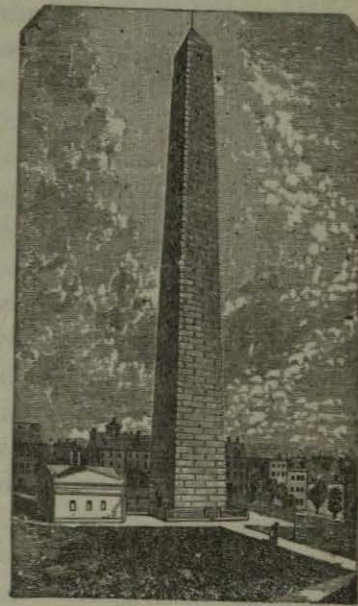
In the next year the country was vexed with a domestic trouble. For nearly two centuries the government of Rhode Island had been administered under a charter granted by Charles II. By the terms of that ancient instrument the right of suffrage was restricted to those who held a certain amount of property. There were other clauses repugnant to the spirit of republicanism; and a proposition was made to change the constitution of the State. On that issue the people of Rhode Island were nearly unanimous; but in respect to the *manner* of abrogating the old charter there was a serious division. One fac-

tion, called the "law and order party," proceeding in accordance with the former constitution, chose Samuel W. King as governor. The other faction, called the "suffrage party," acting in an irregular way, elected Thomas W. Dorr. In May of 1842 both parties met and organized their rival governments.

The "law and order party" now undertook to suppress the faction of Dorr. The latter resisted and made an attempt to capture the State arsenal. But the militia, under the direction of King's officers, drove the assailants away. A month later the adherents of Dorr again appeared in arms, but were dispersed by the troops of the United States. Dorr fled from Rhode Island; returned soon afterward, was caught, tried for treason, convicted, and sentenced to imprisonment for life. He was then offered pardon on condition of taking an oath of allegiance. This he stubbornly refused to do; and in June of 1845 obtained his liberty without conditions.

The year 1842 was noted for the completion of THE BUNKER HILL MONUMENT. No enterprise of a similar character had, in the whole history of the country, called forth so much patriotic enthusiasm.

The foundation of the noble structure was laid on the 17th of June, 1825, the corner-stone being put into its place by the venerable La Fayette. Daniel Webster, then young in years and fame, delivered the oration of the day, while two hundred Revolutionary veterans—forty of them survivors of the battle fought on that hill-crest just fifty years before—gathered with the throng to hear him. But the work of erection went on slowly. More than a hundred and fifty thousand dollars were expended, and seventeen years elapsed before the grand shaft—commemorative of the heroes living and dead—was finished. At last the



BUNKER HILL MONUMENT.

work was done, and the mighty column of Quincy granite, thirty-one feet square at the base and two hundred and twenty-one feet in height, stood out sublimely against the clouds and sky. It was deemed fitting, however, to postpone the dedication until the next anniversary of the battle; and preparations were made accordingly. On the 17th

of June, 1843, an immense multitude of people—including most of the Revolutionary soldiers who had not yet fallen—gathered from all parts of the Republic to witness the imposing ceremony. Mr. Webster, now full of years and honors, was chosen to deliver the address of dedication—a duty which he performed in a manner so touching and eloquent as to add new luster to his fame as an orator. The celebration was concluded with a public dinner given in Faneuil Hall, the cradle of American liberty.

In the latter part of Tyler's administration the State of New York was the scene of a serious social disturbance. Until the year 1840 the descendants of Van Rensselaer, one of the old Dutch patroons of New Netherland, had held a claim on certain lands in the counties of Rensselaer, Columbia and Delaware. In liquidation of this claim they had continued to receive from the farmers certain trifling rents. At last the farmers grew tired of the payment, and rebelled. From 1840 until 1844 the question was frequently discussed in the New York legislature; but no satisfactory settlement was reached. In the latter year the anti-rent party became so bold as to coat with tar and feathers those of their fellow-tenants who made the payments. Officers were sent to apprehend the rioters; and them they killed. Time and again the authorities of the State were invoked to quell the disturbers; and the question in dispute has never been permanently settled.

Of a different sort was the difficulty with the Mormons, who now began to play a part in the history of the country. Under the leadership of their prophet, Joseph Smith, they made their first important settlement in Jackson county, Missouri. Here their numbers increased to fully fifteen hundred; and they began to say that the great West was to be their inheritance. Not liking their neighbors or their practices, the people of Missouri determined to be rid of them. As soon as opportunity offered, the militia was called out, and the Mormons were obliged to leave the State. In the spring of 1839 they crossed the Mississippi into Illinois, and on a high bluff overlooking the river laid out a city which they called Nauvoo, meaning *the Beautiful*. Here they built a splendid temple. Other Mormons from different parts of the Union and from Europe came to join the community, until the number was swelled to ten thousand. Again popular suspicion was aroused against them. Under the administration of Smith, laws were enacted contrary to the statute of Illinois. The people charged the Mormons with the commission of certain thefts and murders; and it was believed that the courts in the neighborhood of Nauvoo would be powerless to convict the criminals.

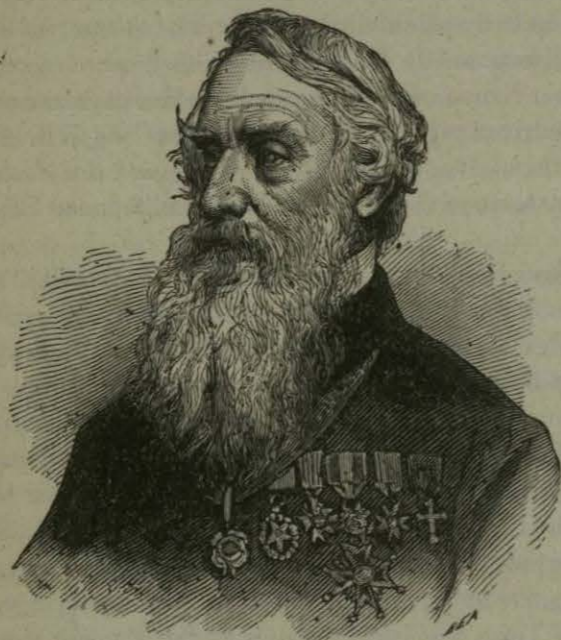
In the midst of much excitement Smith and his brother were arrested, taken to Carthage, and lodged in jail. On the 27th of June, 1844, a mob gathered, broke open the jail doors and killed the prisoners. During the rest of the summer there were many scenes of violence. In 1845 the charter of Nauvoo was annulled by the legislature of Illinois. Most of the Mormons gave up in despair and resolved to exile themselves beyond the limits of civilization. In 1846 they began their march to the far West. In September Nauvoo was cannonaded for three days, and the remnant of inhabitants driven to join their companions at Council Bluffs. Thence they dragged themselves wearily westward; crossed the Rocky Mountains; reached the basin of the Great Salt Lake, and founded Utah Territory.

Meanwhile, a great agitation had arisen in the country in regard to the republic of Texas. From 1821 to 1836 this vast territory lying between Louisiana and Mexico, had been a province of the latter country. For a long time it had been the policy of Spain and Mexico to keep Texas uninhabited, in order that the vigorous race of Americans might not encroach on the Mexican borders. At last, however, a large land-grant was made to Moses Austin of Connecticut, on condition that he would settle three hundred American families within the limits of his domain. Afterward the grant was confirmed to his son Stephen, with the privilege of establishing five hundred additional families of immigrants. Thus the foundation of Texas was laid by people of the English race.

Owing to the oppressive policy adopted by Mexico, the Texans, in the year 1835, raised the standard of rebellion. Many adventurers and some heroes from the United States flocked to their aid. In the first battle, fought at Gonzales, a thousand Mexicans were defeated by a Texan force numbering five hundred. On the 6th of March, 1836, a Texan fort, called the Alamo, was surrounded by a Mexican army of eight thousand, commanded by President Santa Anna. The feeble garrison was overpowered and massacred under circumstances of great atrocity. The daring David Crocket, an ex-congressman of Tennessee, and a famous hunter, was one of the victims of the butchery. In the next month was fought the decisive battle of San Jacinto, which gave to Texas her freedom. The independence of the new State was acknowledged by the United States, Great Britain and France.

As soon as the people of Texas had thrown off the Mexican yoke they asked to be admitted into the Union. At first the proposition was declined by President Van Buren, who feared a war with Mexico. In the last year of Tyler's administration the question of annexation was again agitated. The population of Texas had increased to more than two hundred thousand souls. The territory embraced an

area of two hundred and thirty-seven thousand square miles—a domain more than five times as large as the State of Pennsylvania. It was like annexing an empire. The proposition to admit Texas into the Union was the great question on which the people divided in



PROFESSOR MORSE.

the presidential election of 1844. The annexation was favored by the Democrats and opposed by the Whigs. The parties were equally matched in strength; and the contest surpassed in excitement anything which had been known in American politics. James K. Polk of Tennessee was put forward as the Democratic candidate, while the Whigs chose their favorite leader, Henry Clay. The former was elected, and the hope of the latter to reach the presidency was forever eclipsed. For Vice-President, George M. Dallas of Pennsylvania was chosen.

The convention by which Mr. Polk was nominated was held at Baltimore. On the 29th of May, 1844, the news of the nomination was sent to Washington by THE MAGNETIC TELEGRAPH. It was the first despatch ever so transmitted; and the event marks an era in the history of civilization. The inventor of the telegraph, which has proved so great a blessing to mankind, was Professor Samuel F. B. Morse of Massachusetts. The magnetic principle on which the invention depends had been known since 1774; but Professor Morse was the first to apply that principle for the benefit of men. He began his experiments in 1832: and five years afterward succeeded in obtaining a patent on his invention. Then followed another long delay; and it was not until the last day of the session in 1843 that he procured from Congress an appropriation of thirty thousand dollars. With that appropriation was constructed between Baltimore and Wash-

ington the first telegraphic line in the world. Perhaps no other invention has exercised a more beneficent influence on the welfare and happiness of the human race.

When Congress convened in December of 1844, the proposition to admit Texas into the Union was formally brought forward. During the winter the question was frequently debated; and on the 1st of March—only three days before Tyler's retirement from the presidency—the bill of annexation was adopted. The President immediately gave his assent; and the LONE STAR took its place in the constellation of the States. On the day before the inauguration of Mr. Polk bills for the admission of Florida and Iowa were also signed; but the latter State—the twenty-ninth member of the American Union—was not formally admitted until the following year.

## CHAPTER LVII.

## POLK'S ADMINISTRATION, AND THE MEXICAN WAR, 1845-1849.

PRESIDENT POLK was a native of North Carolina. In boyhood he removed with his father to Tennessee; entered the legislature of the State; and was then elected to Congress, where he served as member or speaker for fourteen years. In 1839 he was chosen governor of Tennessee, and from that position was called, at the early age of forty-nine, to the presidential chair. At the head of the new cabinet was placed James Buchanan of Pennsylvania. It was an office requiring high abilities; for the threatening question with Mexico came at once to a crisis. As soon as the resolution to annex Texas was adopted by Congress, Almonte, the Mexican minister at Washington, demanded his passports and left the country.

On the 4th of July, 1845, the Texan legislature ratified the act of annexation; and the union was completed. Knowing the warlike determination of Mexico, the authorities of Texas sent an immediate and urgent request to the President to despatch an army for their protection. Accordingly, General Zachary Taylor was ordered to march from Camp Jessup, in Western Louisiana, and occupy Texas. The real question at issue between that State and Mexico was concerning boundaries. The foundation of the difficulty had been laid as early as