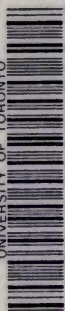
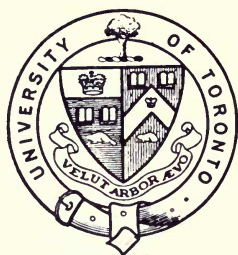


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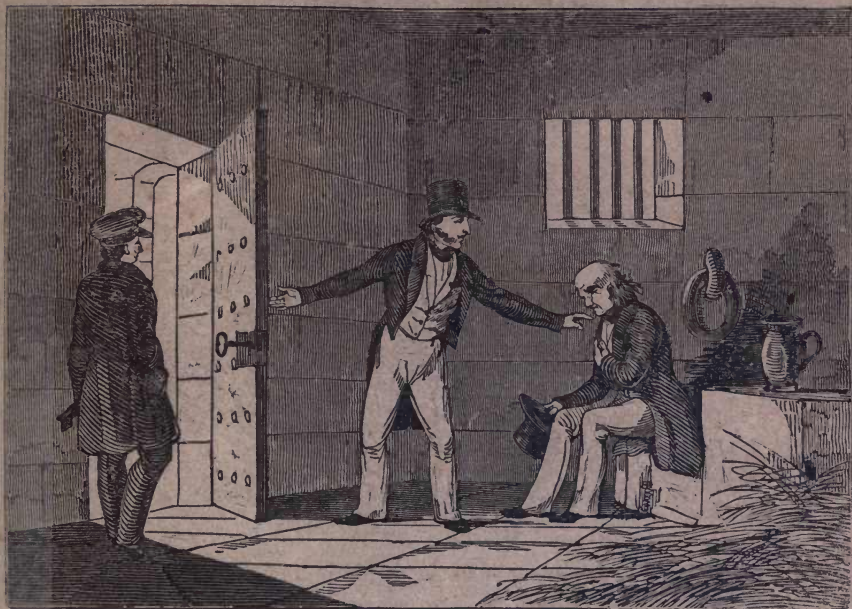






BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH  
OF  
COL. RICHARD M. JOHNSON.

*born in Ky*



COL. JOHNSON LIBERATING AN UNFORTUNATE DEBTOR.

NEW YORK:  
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1843.





JOHN KILPATRICK





COLONEL JOHNSON KILLING TECUMSEH.



A

# BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

COL. RICHARD M. JOHNSON,

OF

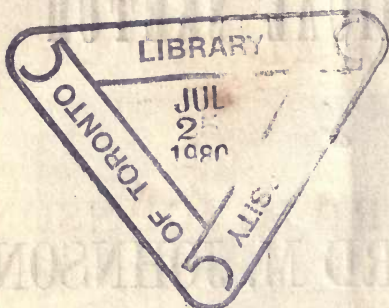
KENTUCKY.

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BY A KENTUCKIAN.  
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NEW YORK:

PUBLISHED BY SAXTON & MILES,  
No. 205 Broadway.

1843.



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# BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

COL. RICHARD M. JOHNSON.

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## CHAPTER I.

MEN are the creatures of instruction. Sentiments infused into the mind at an early period of life, are seldom entirely eradicated. To promote the happiness, and to perpetuate the republican institutions of our country, it is necessary that correct principles be impressed upon the hearts of the rising generation. Like the farina which impregnates the opening blossom, they become the germ of that fruit which will be developed with growing years, and shed their blessings around them in maturity of life. Knowledge, with moral and philosophical precepts, has its influence upon the human mind; but the examples of the great and good exert a controlling power on the sentiments and conduct of those who see and admire them. In presenting a living character, worthy of emulation, we think it would be difficult to point out a greater combination of excellences, than is exhibited in the life of Col. RICHARD MENTOR JOHNSON.

His father, Col. Robert Johnson, was a native of Virginia. Having braved the dangers of the field in early manhood for the defence of American Independence, he moved with his young family to Red Stone, now Brownstown, in Pennsylvania, in 1780, before the Revolutionary war had terminated. Here he resided till the summer of 1781, when he removed to Kentucky, then a county of his native State. In October of that year, Col. Richard M. Johnson, the subject of this sketch, was born. He is, therefore, by nativity, a Virginian and a Kentuckian; and we leave it to natural philosophers



to decide, whether he may not with equal propriety be denominated a Pennsylvanian also. It is certain that he inherits the noble characteristics which eminently distinguish these three States. For a high sense of honor, for chivalrous deeds, for disinterested patriotism, for practical republicanism, each of these States might be proud to acknowledge him; and he is proud to call them all his own. But still prouder is he to be called an American Republican; for there is nothing sectional in his feelings. He regards the different States as members of one body, no one of which can suffer injury without inflicting pain upon the whole, nor one enjoy prosperity without benefiting the whole.

It was on the banks of the Elkhorn river that his father settled; a beautiful and fertile region, but the scene of destructive wars with the aborigines, which continued many years after that of the Revolution had closed. Here Richard spent his childhood; and here he learned in early youth to condemn danger, and to consider his life his country's, and not his own. Often was he taken to the fort for protection, where he assisted his mother and other women to cast bullets for the men while they were firing at the Indians who surrounded them, and were endeavoring to storm their bulwarks.

His father, Robert Johnson, began the world with but a moderate patrimony; but by honest industry he accumulated an ample fortune, and gave to each of his children a sufficiency to settle them all in comfortable circumstances while he yet lived. His mind was vigorous, his demeanor dignified yet affable, and his integrity unsullied. As a consistent member of the Church of Christ, he passed through life without a censure upon his religious character. In him were combined the strictness of Christian morality without austerity, dignity without haughtiness, suavity without lowness, and benevolence without ostentation. He strictly adhered to the tenets of the Baptist church, to which both he and his wife belonged; yet he extended his charity and beneficence to all other denominations, and always evinced his love for piety under whatever name it appeared. It was not extraordinary that such a man gained a commanding influence in society. Brave in war, terrible in the field, tender and kind to a conquered foe, he was elevated to the rank of Colonel, in which he successfully conducted the war against the Indians upon "*The Bloody Ground*," as that place was then called, on account of the many sanguinary conflicts which gave to it general notoriety. Such was the parentage of Col. R. M. John-

son, and such were the early scenes of his life ; and in this region he still lives, a Kentucky farmer. His father was a member of the Convention which framed the Constitution of the State, and of that which afterwards revised it. He often represented his county in the Legislature, but as he had no ambition for office, he always refused any appointment which did not come immediately from the people with whom he was associated ; and their confidence he retained to the latest period of his life.

The country was new. The means of education were very limited. Labor was in great requisition, and till he had entered his sixteenth year, Col. Johnson was brought up a hard-working farmer. In this, as in all other undertakings, he excelled in industry. No youth of his age could rival him in cutting down trees, mauling rails, ploughing the ground, hoeing the corn, or reaping the harvest-field. Farming is still his favorite employment ; and when other duties will admit, he finds his happiest respite from their cares on his farm.

When he had entered his sixteenth year, he resolved upon a professional education ; and his father was willing to gratify his wishes as far as the circumstances of the country would admit. Many obstacles presented themselves ; but young Johnson had the germ of that mind which has since so eminently distinguished him ; a mind which is discouraged by no obstacles, but which always rises as difficulties present themselves, and never tires till all are overcome. He was resolved, and that was a certain precursor of success. He left his home for a grammar school, where, soon finding that the facilities for improvement did not equal the grasp of his mind, he remained but a short time. The Transylvania University had been founded at Lexington, and to this infant seminary he then repaired, where he pursued his studies with that industry which has characterized him in every department of life. On leaving the University, he applied himself with the same assiduity to the study of law ; and before he had reached the age of twenty-one, he was admitted as attorney and counsellor, and entered into the practice of that profession. But his favorite employment, of agriculture, he could not forego. His father gave him a plantation on which he fixed his residence. Here he pursued his professional labors with great intenseness, and the moments of relaxation which nature required, and which others were in the habit of devoting to amusement, he found his greatest pleasure in spending upon his farm in works of



agriculture. His prospect of success in law was very flattering. He was soon established in the highest confidence of the community, and professional business flowed rapidly upon him. The irregularity of locating land claims in the early settlement of Kentucky had given rise to much litigation; and in many instances poor families, helpless widows and orphan children, were ejected from the lands which had come honestly into their possession, by the clashing claims which had existed against those from whom they had been purchased. Many of these cases were laid before him, and he never failed to investigate them, and when satisfied of the justice of the poor man's, or the widow's cause, he always prosecuted it to a final close, without reward. Indeed, it has been truly said of him, that he was never known to refuse the cause of the indigent for lack of a fee.

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## CHAPTER II.

FORTUNATELY for the public, though perhaps unfortunately for himself, he imbibed at this period an insatiable thirst for the study of political economy. His country then was the object of his devotion, and he loved it the more because it was republican. He had grown up in the atmosphere of liberty; and to preserve it unimpaired, he conceived no sacrifice too great.

The nation was then divided into two political parties, each distinguished by the appellation which it assumed—*Federalists* and *Democrats*. The Federalists were charged with measures tending to a consolidation of the powers of the States into the Federal Government, to increase the authority of the Executive branch of the government, and to abridge the rights of the people. The Republicans were charged with advocating measures tending to weaken the General Government, and threatening to issue in disorganization and anarchy. These names were technical in politics; for the Federalists avowed themselves Republicans in the proper sense of the word, and the Republicans avowed themselves Federalists in the primitive meaning of the term. To each of these parties belonged many of the principal luminaries who had shone upon the national theatre during the Revolution. The Republican party had gained the ascendancy, and Thomas Jefferson, one of its leading



champions, was President of the United States. To this party Col. Johnson had been attached in principle from early youth, and with it he has always been identified.

In the twenty-third year of his age, he was elected a member of the Legislature of Kentucky. The Constitution of that State required that a member of that body should have attained the age of twenty-four; but the desire of his fellow-citizens that he should serve them, caused a suppression of all inquiry as to qualification of age. He continued two years a member of the State Legislature. In August, 1806, he was elected to the Congress of the United States. He was not yet twenty-five years old, and the Constitution of the United States provides that no person shall be a member of the House of Representatives till he shall have attained that age. This seeming difficulty was obviated by the fact, that the term for which he was elected did not commence till the fourth of March following; and till that term commenced he was not a member, though elected prospectively to be a member from that period; and when that day arrived, he was full twenty-five years old.

In the summer of 1807, the indignation of the whole country was aroused by the attack of a British ship of the line upon an American frigate within our own waters, in time of profound peace between the two nations. The President summoned Congress to assemble in the October following, and at that meeting Col. Johnson first took his seat in the House of Representatives. This was a time when party spirit raged highly through the country, and especially in our public councils. The Federalists were accused of being the apologists of Britain, regardless of the honor and rights of our own country. The Republicans were accused of an effort to plunge the nation rashly into war, regardless of its consequences. One party was charged with being under British, the other under French influence. In this state of things, Johnson took a firm and decided stand with the party to which he belonged; yet he so carefully discriminated between men and the tendency of the measures which they advocated, that he made no personal enemies. Warm in his temperament, strong in his positions, zealous in his discussions, while he never yielded an iota to his opponents, he never failed to conciliate their good will and personal regard.

During his first congressional term, the committee of claims was the most important and the most laborious committee of the House, on account of the many unliquidated claims arising out of the Re-

volutionary war; and of this committee he was appointed chairman. In this capacity he distinguished himself by his unremitted assiduity in searching into the evidences and merits of the different claims, his accuracy and discrimination in coming to results undeniable, and his impartiality in divesting himself of all party feelings when justice was involved in the decision. At this time the claim of the surviving family of Gen. Alexander Hamilton was presented. Gen. Hamilton had served during the Revolutionary war as a volunteer aid in the family of Gen. Washington, with the rank of Lieut.-Colonel. He was known to have stood high in the confidence of Washington, and to have performed services worthy of a higher rank, and, like his great prototype, without compensation. But he had died without considerable fortune, leaving a widow and family of children. Application was now made on their behalf for relief, by giving to the estimable widow that compensation which her husband's services had richly earned, but which he had refused to receive, and which the widow would have declined, had not imperious necessity required her to solicit. But Gen. Hamilton had been a leader in the Federal ranks; and the influence which his mighty talents and high standing in the nation had given him, rendered him one of the most formidable opposers of the Republican party. It was not extraordinary, therefore, that he had been unpopular with the party then in power. But Col. Johnson, uninfluenced by party consideration, made a report in favor of the claim, and sustained it in one of the ablest and most eloquent speeches which he ever delivered. The prejudice of party feeling, however, could not be sufficiently overcome in the House to carry the measure at that time; but he had the pleasure of seeing its success before he retired from Congress, and of contributing, by his vote, to the decision.

A law had been passed which required all claims to be forfeited that had not been presented within a prescribed time, called *the statute of limitation*; and by that statute the committee were required to be governed in reporting upon claims. In their investigation, Col. Johnson found many cases which were equitable beyond all dispute, but which were barred by this law. Some, because the infancy of the legal heirs of deceased claimants had prevented them from being presented at the proper time; others, in which officers of the Revolution had, in the bustle of war, lost, for many years, the documents which furnished evidences of their claims, but afterwards receiving them, had been compelled to defer them till the



limitation of time had expired. Col. Johnson assumed the ground that Congress, in its legislative acts, ought to be governed by the justice of each individual case, and not by a previous act which regarded time, in many instances at the expense of equity. Against such claims he could not consent to report; and, at his own earnest request, he was excused from serving on the committee of claims; after which he was placed on the committee of ways and means, which has generally been considered the most important committee of Congress.

His unwillingness to remain on a committee which made it his duty to report against claims founded in justice, gave rise to a complaint that he was too liberal, and that the measures which he advocated would tend to impoverish the treasury. This has been frequently urged against him by his opponents, for the best of men will have opponents in politics; but the injustice of the complaint will appear obvious from this remarkable fact, that every claim which he then advocated has been subsequently granted by Congress, with this difference, that many of the claimants were, by the delay, left to suffer and die in indigence, and their just dues were afterwards obtained by their heirs, with a much heavier draft upon the treasury in consequence of the interest which accumulated by the delays of justice. The event proves, that his course, had it been pursued, would have been more economical, while it would have been more consonant with equity. But in this, as in many other cases, justice is true economy, while parsimony eventuates in prodigality.

At that time England was engaged in a sanguinary war with the French, in which all Europe was convulsed. To supply her fleet with seamen, almost every American merchantman which fell in with a British cruiser upon the ocean, was boarded, and some of her seamen were impressed into the naval service of England. Remonstrance was in vain. Other depredations were committed upon our commerce which threatened to drive us from the ocean, or render us tributary to Great Britain. Peace, at any sacrifice short of national degradation, was the policy of our country. England knew this, and therefore presumed upon our forbearance. She needed our produce, both for furnishing the raw material for her cotton manufactories, and provision for her subjects. It was believed by the administrators of our government; that justice might be obtained without war, by withholding all our products from British markets; and for

this purpose an embargo was laid on all American shipping, and all foreign shipping was permitted to depart only in ballast. This embargo was laid in December, 1807, and continued till the spring of 1809. Its effects would have been severely felt in Great Britain, and it would probably have produced the desired effect within a short time, had it been strictly observed; but the opposition which it met, especially from the mercantile community, caused so many violations of it, that its effects were but partially felt in England. Col. Johnson was a strong advocate for this measure, and adhered to it to the last. When it was finally determined to abandon it, he called on Mr. Jefferson, the President of the United States, who had always shown a special fondness for Johnson, and had received him into his early confidence, and inquired why he would abandon a measure so well calculated, if persisted in, to save the country from war. Jefferson replied: "Mr. Johnson, when I was of your age, I thought like you in matters of policy; that is, that measures calculated to promote the welfare of the country should be persisted in while a majority would sustain them, however great might be the minority, or however violent their opposition; but the experience of years has convinced me that it is not always wise to do so. In a democratic republic, where the mass of the people of all parties have the same interest at stake, some respect must be had to the feelings and wishes of the minority, especially when that minority is large and clamorous; otherwise, it will be impossible to avoid discord, and discord weakens the bonds of union. This embargo, I doubt not, if still persisted in, would save our country from war, and secure our rights upon the ocean; but the opposition is so great and violent, and still increasing, that it threatens a worse state of things at home than would result from a foreign rupture. Let us still endeavor to preserve peace by other measures; and if war must be our ultimate resort, the nations of the world shall know where the fault lies. I am persuaded, sir, that before you attain my age, your experience will convince you of the correctness of this position; and with due reflection, I hope you will now view the subject in the same light." Johnson thanked him for his remarks; and on pondering the subject, adopted the sentiment, that the minority are not to be entirely disregarded, but that in proportion to their numbers respect should be had for their wishes, and that compromise, in many cases, is preferable to settled discord and enmity.

The next measure resorted to was that of prohibiting the impor-



tation of British goods into our country. The best market for their manufactures was in the United States; and it was hoped that by closing this market, the British government would find it their interest to cultivate amity. This measure was strenuously advocated by Col. Johnson, as the last hope for preserving peace. But it proved abortive, because the law could not be enforced. Mr. Madison, in 1809, had succeeded Mr. Jefferson in the Presidency, and in his confidence Col. Johnson stood high; and for all the measures proposed to carry into effect the non-importation law, as it was called, he took a decisive and active part. But this, like the embargo, met with such extensive and determined opposition, that it could not be carried into effect, and was abandoned.

Every measure for the preservation of peace upon honorable terms was now exhausted, and there appeared no other alternative than national degradation, or war. Between these, Col. Johnson could have no hesitation. He always considered his life as identified with his country's glory. Her independence, her freedom, and her honor, he had determined never to survive. In June, 1812, the manifesto, setting forth the wrongs which the country had long suffered, the amicable measures which had been taken to avert them, and the hopeless prospect of justice from the British government, was laid before Congress for final action. Col. Johnson then came out with all the energies of his mind in favor of the last resort of nations, as the only alternative. He declared, on the floor of Congress, that he was not advocating a cause that would involve others in dangers which he would himself avoid. He called his country his own; and her cause was his individual cause. The voice of the Almighty called them to arms in defence of her independence and her rights; and while he should reiterate that voice in his vote, he stood pledged to obey it in meeting the foe upon the field of battle.

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### CHAPTER III.

In the month of June, 1812, war was proclaimed. He had advocated and voted for the measure, under the pledge that he would participate in its toils and dangers. In the following month, Congress adjourned; and Johnson hastened to his home, where he determined to hold himself in readiness to march to the field whenever

his aid should be needed. On his arrival in Kentucky, he found the cloud already thickening upon the northwestern frontier. The American force under Gen. Hull was rendezvousing at Detroit; on the Canada side of the line a large British force, composed of regulars and Indians, under Gen. Brock, was advancing, and a sanguinary engagement was in prospect. Johnson immediately invited an interview with his constituents; when he stated, that he had no doubt of having obeyed their wishes in advocating and voting for the war, and that they were ready to sustain it; that as he had expressed their sentiments, in common with his own, when he gave that vote, so he should claim the right of mingling his blood in common with theirs, to give efficiency to the measure. He then proposed that a volunteer corps of such as could leave their homes and equip themselves (for the country had no munitions then), should hasten to meet the gathering storm. Immediately three hundred of Kentucky's patriotic sons, among the bravest of the brave, gave themselves to the service; and within a few days, that number, well equipped with horses and rifles, or muskets, all at their own expense, were in rendezvous for the march, with Johnson in their ranks. He claimed no office, no higher honor than that of dying for his country, or contributing, as a private volunteer with others, to his country's triumph. When these three hundred volunteers organized themselves into three companies, they appointed him to be their commander, with the rank of Major, which, as it was their request, he accepted. These soon consolidated themselves with another battalion, similarly raised and organized, and they elected Johnson to the command of the whole, with the rank of Colonel. With this force he was soon on his way, and by rapid marches, hastening to join the army at Detroit, in the expectation of crossing over into Upper Canada, and meeting the enemy on his own soil. But before reaching the general rendezvous, news was received of the disgraceful surrender of Gen. Hull, with all the northwestern army, to the British, without having drawn a sword, or fired a musket in its defence. This mortifying event rendered abortive the great object of their march. As they had not yet joined the army, they were not included in the surrender. They therefore took up their return march; but as the surrender of Gen. Hull had emboldened the Indians to attempt their murderous depredations upon the unprotected inhabitants of the frontier, Col. Johnson and his force marched deliberately along the Indian border,



and saved many families from murder by spreading terror among the savages. This was all that could be accomplished by them during that brief campaign.

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## CHAPTER IV.

THIS first essay laid the foundation for that brilliant victory of the Thames, which was achieved the following year. The mind of Johnson could never be satisfied with simply learning what others had invented. He believed that mankind had not gained the *ne plus ultra* of any science. If the pillars of Hercules had once been thought the boundary of the world, subsequent enterprise had opened to mankind a fairer portion than had ever entered the calculations of ancient geographers, realms which were destined to become the abodes of human bliss transcending the sublimest dreams of philosophy, or the brightest visions of poetry. So it was possible that in military science, there might be discoveries made which would be useful in defending the liberties and perpetuating the blessings of these favored regions. Mounted riflemen and musketeers were a novel form; and his mind was much employed in discovering the best method of using them with efficiency. He trained them to evolutions of various kinds; and while lingering to protect the frontier settlements in their homeward march, he improved every moment in different experiments, till he became well convinced that they were the most valuable force which could be employed in charging an enemy; that they could penetrate the ranks, and throw into confusion a force far superior, and with but little risk of loss. His plan will be developed in the account of the battle of the Thames.

In the fall of 1812, he resumed his seat in Congress at the opening of the session. During that winter, he was consulted by the president and Gen. Armstrong, Secretary of War, on the best plan for the ensuing campaign; and at their request, he submitted to them in writing his views on that subject. His plan was adopted in all its details with one exception; he proposed a winter campaign, but they decided that the summer was preferable.

That session of Congress closed on the 3d of March, 1813. A few days before its termination, he received from the Secretary of

War, by the direction of the President, authority to raise a regiment of a thousand mounted volunteers of the same description with those which he had commanded, to be commissioned by the Governor of Kentucky (for Johnson would not accept a military commission under the United States, which would have excluded him from Congress) to act with the northwestern army. Gen. William H. Harrison had been appointed commander of this army in place of Gen. Hull; and in *Harrison*, Johnson had entire confidence. To be in early readiness, Johnson left the seat of government a few days before the session closed, and hastened to Kentucky. As soon as he had made known his authority from the Department of War, volunteers rushed in with such readiness, that within a few days, the full complement of a thousand men was enrolled. Johnson claimed no pre-eminence; but they organized into ten companies of a hundred men each, composing two battalions, and elected Col. Richard M. Johnson their Colonel, and his elder brother Col. James Johnson, their Lieutenant-Colonel. This regiment contained many of the most respectable citizens of Kentucky. Men who had commanded companies, battalions and regiments, volunteered and served in the ranks as privates. They were as brothers. There was no austerity required in the officers, no degrading submission on the part of the privates; but they were equals, all impelled by the same patriotic spirit, and each one esteemed it his glory to observe the strictest discipline without compulsion. A bond of fraternity united them as one. Col. Johnson, though their commander, regarded each one as a brother and an equal; he never could relish praise for the deeds which they performed, unless they were sharers with himself in that praise; and to this day nothing could wound his mind more readily than to hear a sentence uttered to the detriment of one of the *Spartan band*, as they were then called.

With this regiment he took up his march for the seat of war. Before they reached head-quarters, intelligence was received that Fort Meigs was in danger of a storm or siege from a heavy force of the enemy advancing rapidly upon it, and that without timely and effective succor, the garrison must be cut off, or made prisoners, and that important post surrendered to the British and Indians. Col. Johnson immediately addressed his regiment to the following effect. "Fort Meigs is threatened with an attack by a force which it cannot resist. We will fly to its relief. The only ground



in its vicinity which will answer for an encampment we shall probably find in the occupancy of a superior number of the enemy; and we shall have no alternative but victory or death. If there be a man among us who is not fully resolved on this alternative, he has liberty to retire from the regiment. The tide of war must now be turned upon the foe; and Kentucky shall no longer mourn the fall of her gallant sons, but in the arms of victory." This short address was answered with repeated cheers from the whole regiment. In one day they marched fifty miles, and encamped that night upon the ground on which they had expected to meet the foe, having reached it before the enemy. This rapid march, and evident determination on victory, admonished the enemy of the danger of meeting the *Spartan band*, and caused him to change his course. Thus the fort and garrison were saved without bloodshed.

The regiment now resumed its march for Detroit. Before they reached that point, Gen. Harrison had crossed over at Portage into Canada with his whole force to pursue the retreating foe. The enemy, whose force amounted to about eight hundred British regulars and about twice that number of Indians, under the command of Gen. Proctor, had taken up their march for the interior of Upper Canada, where their strength would be continually increasing by new succors, both of infantry and savages; and Gen. Harrison with the Republican army was advancing upon them with the intention of bringing them to battle, if possible, while he was yet stronger than they. On the first day of October, Col. Johnson with his regiment crossed over from Detroit into Upper Canada, and in two days overtook Gen. Harrison with his army upon the rear of the enemy.

Col. Johnson's march with his regiment from Fort Meigs to Detroit had been extremely hazardous. The Indian allies of the British were commanded by the celebrated Tecumseh, who bore commission as general under the king. He might at any time have sent over a large body of Indians from Malden to make a night attack upon the mounted regiment, as Johnson's was called, which could scarcely have failed to prove disastrous. To guard against this, Johnson had taken four field-pieces from Fort Meigs, one of which he planted at each angle of the hollow square in which he every night formed his encampment, and so placed as to be able to rake all his lines in case of an attack; and required every

man to be in readiness to act deliberately and with effect whenever an alarm should be given. Tecumseh, who kept himself well advised of Johnson's position, learning the precaution which he used, deemed it most advisable not to venture an attack; and thus the march had been continued till the regiment had reached the main body of the army. Most of the Indian massacres have been occasioned by surprise. It was so at Tippecanoe, at Raisin, and in other places; and Col. Johnson showed his wisdom in not suffering his regiment to be attacked by surprise, perhaps not less than in all his other military conduct. He also took such effectual measures for supplies, both of recruits and everything requisite for efficiency, that his regiment never suffered with hunger, never wanted for munitions, and on the day when he went into the great battle of the Thames, there was not one man deficient of the full complement of the thousand which composed the regiment, nor an individual among them destitute of a horse and every other equipment necessary for the most perfect action in battle.

On the evening of the second of October he overtook the main army. He was then directed to lead the advance upon the enemy, and bring them to battle as soon as practicable. The object of the enemy was evidently to lead our army as far as possible into the wilderness, and then for the Indians to fall by surprise upon their rear, and so cut off their retreat and in ambush to destroy them. It was their policy to avoid a general engagement as long as possible; but that of the Americans to bring it on with all possible dispatch. With this view, Johnson pressed upon the enemy's rear during the whole of the third and fourth, with perpetual skirmishing. Indians would conceal themselves near the path where the flank guards of the regiment must pass, and shoot them as they approached. They would also lie in concealment in the path of the regiment till the advance came within rifle shot, and then fire and flee. As Colonel Johnson always rode in front of the regiment, he was in continual jeopardy for the whole of these two days. On one occasion, crossing a rivulet, he stopped for his horse to drink. The horse raised his head and had taken but one step forward, when a rifle ball passed the very spot from which that step had removed the Colonel and killed the man whose horse by a simultaneous step had placed him in the same position. But a superintending providence preserved the Colonel for the future service of his country. Escapes like this, never for a moment embarrassed him. He always exhibited



the same coolness and composure in the midst of danger and death, that he did in the quiet conversation of his friends.

On the morning of the 5th of October, the mounted regiment pressed so hard upon the enemy, that he was obliged to make a stand. This was upon a beautiful plain on the right margin of the river Thames, studded with a grove of large forest trees without much undergrowth. Col. Johnson was two or three miles in advance of the main army; and the question to be settled was, how the battle should be brought on. To attack the whole force of the enemy, consisting of between two and three thousand regulars and Indians, with a single regiment, seemed hazardous; and to wait for the arrival of the main army would give time to retreat. Gen. Harrison rode up to the van to confer with Col. Johnson upon this point. The Colonel assured him that he could charge the enemy with effect; that the regiment had been well trained to this kind of evolution; that to hold the breach of the musket against the upper part of the right arm with the band crossing the lower part of the left arm and the bayonet pointing along the left side of the horse's head, and the left hand holding the bridle, the whole regiment, raising what was called an Indian yell, would so frighten or animate even the dullest horses that nothing but death could check them; and that they could in this way charge double their numbers without danger of defeat. The mode was entirely novel, and the General pondered it in his mind for a little time; when, becoming satisfied of its practicability, he gave the order, and retired to the main body of the army to hasten their advance.

Johnson was now left to conduct the storm of battle. His first object was to ascertain as nearly as possible the position and numbers of the enemy. At that crisis a vidette from the enemy was taken by Captain M'Afee and brought to the Colonel. To alarm him and to draw from him the truth, the Colonel accused him of being a spy, and told him he should be immediately hung. He denied being a spy, but said he was an American citizen who had fallen into the hands of the British, and that they had compelled him to come out and view the lines. "Then," said Johnson, "you are a traitor as well as a spy," and called for a rope to hang him immediately. The frightened man begged earnestly for his life, alleging his innocence in the most emphatic tones. Johnson told him if he was innocent he should have the opportunity of proving it; that if he could give him an exact account of the position and

force of the enemy, his life should be saved and he should be honored as a patriotic American citizen: but that if he deceived him in one point, he should suffer the death of a traitor and a spy. The prisoner thereupon informed him that Gen. Proctor had eight hundred British regulars drawn up in a double line, with their left upon the river, and their right upon a deep narrow swamp running parallel with the river a little more than a hundred yards from it; that the swamp, which was upon the left of the Americans, extended several miles along where they had been marching, and was considered impassable; but that it terminated at the point where the British army was posted; that beyond the swamp on the right of the regulars, was a force of fifteen hundred Indians under command of Gen. Tecumseh, posted from the swamp across to another impassable swamp on their left running parallel with the first; that the ground was covered with forest, and with an undergrowth which rendered it favorable to the Indian mode of warfare, in ambush.

The enemy could not have been more favorably posted; and Col. Johnson at once apprehended their design. If he should advance upon the regulars and they should retreat, the Indians would fall upon his rear and cut him off from the main army; or if he should charge the Indians and they retreat, the regulars would fall upon his rear, while the swamp would prove a barrier to the advance of the main body of the army upon them. He saw the importance therefore of making the attack both upon the regulars and Indians simultaneously. After some search, a place was found where horses could cross the swamp. He immediately divided his regiment into the two battalions of five hundred men each. One of these he assigned to the command of his brother James Johnson, the Lieut.-Col. of the regiment, to charge the British regulars; the other he led himself across the swamp to attack the Indians, which he knew would be the more dangerous enterprise.

That both attacks might be simultaneous, he directed his brother not to commence the charge till he should hear the sound of his bugle from beyond the swamp, which would indicate the commencement of the attack upon the Indians. The Lieut.-Col. led his battalion within about twenty rods of the regulars. He then ordered Maj. Leggett to dismount one hundred men, and lead them five deep, and at distances of about twenty feet from one file to another, till they should come within about forty yards of the enemy; and then



remain till they should hear the sound of the bugle from beyond the swamp, which was to be the signal for each of the hundred men to take deliberate aim and fire. The object of this was to draw the enemy's fire, that the charge might be the less dangerous. This succeeded admirably. After waiting in this position for some time, the trees preventing the enemy from seeing how small the force was which stood ready to charge him, the sound of the bugle was heard. The firing immediately commenced from Leggett's dismounted men, and with great effect. The men were good marksmen, and at almost every shot they heard the enemy fall. The British returned the fire in platoons, but with no effect. As the firing commenced, the Indian yell was raised by the whole battalion, which seemed to carry consternation to the hearts of the British, while it rendered the horses almost ungovernable; and as soon as the fire was drawn from the enemy, the whole battalion charged full speed upon his lines with an impetuosity perfectly irresistible and uncontrollable. The horses excited by the yell and urged on by the spur, were as regardless of a bayonet as of a briar. They broke through the ranks of the regulars with as little repulse as though they had been children unarmed. Having passed the lines, they reined their steeds as soon as possible, and began a destructive fire upon the rear of the enemy; but the General, with a few other mounted officers, and a small company of dragoons, made their escape by the fleetness of their horses; the others all surrendered prisoners of war; and what is very remarkable, all this was effected without the loss of a single man on the side of the Americans, and only one man wounded. This was, according to its magnitude, one of the most perfect victories ever achieved in modern times. Eight hundred well disciplined British regulars under an experienced general, killed, wounded, and taken prisoners by five hundred volunteer militiamen without the loss of an individual life! The order of this battle was projected by Col. Johnson, and the victory was achieved in carrying out his plan under the guidance of his no less meritorious brother, Col. James Johnson.

The part of which Col. Richard M. Johnson assumed the execution personally, was more hazardous. He led five hundred men against fifteen hundred Indians, upon ground which the Indians had themselves chosen, and in their own mode of warfare, and with the great Tecumseh at their head. He calculated upon a sanguinary engagement, and was prepared to meet death or victory; and to

keep up the ardor of his men, he led the van in every stage of the action. The Indians were concealed from view by lying in the bushes and behind trees. As the Colonel advanced upon them, he selected twenty men with whom he moved on a few rods in front of the main body, and kept himself a little in advance of them. The object of this was to bring on the battle by drawing the Indians from their ambush without exposing the whole battalion to their first fire. Among these was Col. Whitley, who had commanded a regiment in former Indian wars, but who now, at the advanced age of more than seventy years, had volunteered as a private. Finding themselves as they advanced in the midst of the Indians, Col. Johnson remarked to Col. Whitley, that the battle would begin in less than two minutes. The prospect of another Indian fight kindled in Col. Whitley all the ardor of youth. He had killed one Indian that morning by shooting across the river; and now as they approached the great body of them, he delivered an animated harangue to the other nineteen who composed this forlorn hope, which he concluded with this phrase, "Let our watchword this day be victory or death." As he pronounced the word *death*, the first fire from the Indians broke upon them, and while the word yet faltered upon his tongue he fell lifeless upon the field. Of the twenty, only one remained upon his horse. All the others were shot down, or their horses killed under them. Col. Johnson, however, remained. He immediately ordered his men, who were some twenty rods in the rear, to dismount and advance to the combat. The bugle sounded, and in a moment the whole were in close quarters with the savages, all laboring in the work of destruction. Fifteen hundred Indians and five hundred white men were promiscuously thrown together in a mass of confusion, each party exerting the utmost industry to exterminate the other. An Indian and a white man would stand one at each side of the same tree, striving which could load his piece soonest to kill the other. Two would be standing so near to each other in the same strife, that the one who was first charged would have to step back to get room to point his gun at the other; and the one who succeeded was often stained with the blood of his victim. The Colonel alone continued on horseback; and he was so badly wounded from the first fire that he would have been unable to move or to continue on his feet had he dismounted. While this work of destruction was going on, he continued a few yards in advance of all his men, still moving onward and encouraging his men



to follow. Two nephews, sons of his brother James, who were but boys, were with him in this bloody field. One of them, a youth of but fourteen years, seeing the Colonel some distance in advance and still advancing, with Indians all around him, cried out to his companions, "Come on, or they will get uncle Dick."

In this scene of slaughter, the eye of the Colonel was arrested by a stately chief, who was evidently the principal commander of the Indians. He was their rallying point; and where he stood they were impregnable. He had not attempted to cover himself from danger by a tree, as Indians generally do. His countenance was open and without the least appearance of concern for his person; and his presence inspired a confidence among those who were near him, as if he were invulnerable, and spread protection all around him. This was the great Tecumseh. Col. Johnson did not know him; but observing his intrepidity, and the influence which his example had upon others, and at the same time considering the great advantage which the Indians had in point of numbers, he thought it necessary to dispatch this man who was himself a host, to ensure victory. The Colonel was already so weakened from the loss of blood, having received four wounds, that he was scarcely able to keep upon his horse, and his horse so wounded that he could not move faster than a slow walk; yet he resolved in this predicament upon an individual attack. The trunk of a large fallen tree was lying immediately before the Indian, which prevented the Colonel from approaching him in a right line. He therefore rode round the head of the tree, which was at his right, that he might meet the Indian openly and fairly. Col. Johnson, armed with pistol and sword, and almost faint with loss of blood, was now advancing to meet Tecumseh, the pride of the savage world, in his full strength, armed with rifle and tomahawk, in single combat; and on the result of that meeting, in all probability, depended the victory or destruction of his force. As he rode round the head of the tree, and was turning towards the Indian, the Colonel's horse tripped and fell upon his knees. A sudden pull upon the reins, however, assisted the horse to rise again. The noise of this fall gave the Indian the first notice of his approach. He instantly levelled his rifle at the Colonel and gave him another wound, the severest he had received. The ball entered the upper joint of the forefinger of his left hand, and came out at his wrist, near its joints. He did not fall, but continued the same advance towards his combatant. The Indian set his rifle



against the trunk of the fallen tree, and drew his tomahawk to receive his adversary. The Colonel had a pistol in his right hand which he had reserved for effect in case of an exigency like this. He fixed his eyes upon those of the Indian, who was richly clad in the costume of his race, and his face painted with alternate lines, or stripes of black and red, so curved on each side as to render his eyes the focal points, which had great effect in increasing the natural ferocity of his countenance. The combatants were alike indifferent to danger. The Colonel was the assailant, and the savage was unmoved by his approach, each intent on the life of his adversary, regardless of his own. The Indian smiled as he raised his tomahawk, as if confident of his victim. At the same moment the Colonel raised his pistol, and before the Indian had time to strike, discharged its contents into his breast. With a single groan, he fell lifeless upon the ground. Thus perished Tecumseh, the greatest Indian warrior ever known, the most formidable enemy that the white man ever encountered in the savage wilds of America. His name was a charm to his race. His presence infused confidence, and banished from the savage bosom all apprehension of danger. Nor was he less celebrated for wisdom and honor. He possessed every native characteristic of a great man. He was as an oracle in counsel. His integrity and veracity were unsullied. He was mild and generous to a conquered foe, and never commanded nor countenanced the indiscriminate massacres so often practised by his countrymen. Under similar auspices, he might have been a Cesar in ancient Rome, or a Napoleon in modern Europe. But he was our enemy, our avowed, uncompromising enemy; and while he lived, our whole northwestern frontier was in perpetual danger. When he fell, several Indians were within their muskets' length of the Colonel, either of whom might have destroyed him; but they stood aghast to see the white man who dared to meet their thunderbolt of war, expecting to see him perish; but when they saw Tecumseh fall, with him their spirit died. They raised a hideous yell and fled in wild confusion and despair, without an effort to avenge his death, or to maintain the field on which he perished. This was upon the right wing of the battalion; and there the battle was now ended. On the left wing, where the fate of Tecumseh was not known, it continued till a reinforcement arrived from the main army, when the retreat of the Indians became general. The loss of the battalion was about sixty killed and wounded. Eighty

of the Indians were left dead upon the field, and probably twice that number wounded and slain in their flight.

When the Colonel saw the Indian fall, and the consternation which it produced, he said to those of his men who were nearest him, "The victory is ours, make the best of it," and he sank into a state of unconsciousness. In his clothes, his horse, and his body, *twenty-five balls had entered, five of which had given him severe wounds.* Weakened by his wounds and faint with the loss of blood, he would have fallen to the ground, had not some of his men run to his assistance. His horse died in a few minutes after he was taken from his back, and he was laid upon a blanket in a state of insensibility, from which it was doubted whether he would ever revive. A kind providence, however, preserved his valuable life, and he still lives, a blessing to his country, and an ornament to the constellation in which he shines.

No sooner had the battle ended, than it was discovered that the savage whom the Colonel had killed was the celebrated Tecumseh; and before the Colonel had revived, the tidings ran through all the army, that he had killed Tecumseh. For a long time this was undisputed; but chivalrous deeds, as they excite admiration in the public mind, never fail to excite envy and jealousy in the minds of those who covet the fame but cannot emulate the achievements. So, in the course of time, it became a subject of dispute whether Tecumseh was the man whom Colonel Johnson slew. Facts, however, are sufficiently known to settle the question beyond all reasonable doubt. It is known that Tecumseh was killed in that battle; and that the person whom Colonel Johnson killed was a chief warrior. It is known that but one other principal chief (a brother-in-law of Tecumseh) was killed in this battle, and that he was killed in another part of the field, quite distant from the place where Colonel Johnson fought. Several persons who were in the battle and even eye-witnesses of the transaction, have averred that Tecumseh was found dead upon the very spot where Colonel Johnson killed this chief; and that a medal was taken from his body which was known to have been presented to Tecumseh by the British Government. These circumstances, without one circumstance calculated to raise a doubt, would seem quite sufficient. But that no doubt might remain, the writer of this made inquiry of Anthony Shane, what he knew of the death of Tecumseh. This Anthony Shane was a celebrated Indian warrior, partially civilized, a man of high character





for honor and integrity, and the uniform friend of the United States. He was at the Thames at the time of the battle, but took no part in it. He had been intimately acquainted with Tecumseh from early childhood, and knew him well to the last. In answer to the inquiry he stated: that immediately after the battle was ended, he went to the spot where several persons had seen Colonel Johnson in personal combat kill an Indian commander, and there he saw the body of his old friend Tecumseh lie dead upon the ground. He was affected by the sight, and examined the wounds which had killed him; when he observed that he must have been killed by a person on horseback, for a ball and three buckshot had been shot into his breast, and that they raked downward, the ball having come out at the lower part of his back. He was inquired of by those present, whether he was certain it was Tecumseh. Shane told them he was certain, for he had known Tecumseh from childhood; and that if they would examine his thigh they would find a remarkable scar occasioned by Tecumseh having had his thigh broken by a fall upon the ice when he was but a youth; and on examination they discovered the scar as he had described. Shane knew Tecumseh, and his body was found where Colonel Johnson had killed an Indian commander. He was killed by a person on horseback, and Colonel Johnson was the only person in that part of the field who had fought on horseback. He was shot with a ball and three buckshot; and the pistol with which Colonel Johnson shot the Indian was charged with a ball and three buckshot. The fact, therefore, is established beyond doubt, that Colonel Johnson, in the storm of battle, when weakened and bleeding with wounds, advanced upon Tecumseh, and in single combat laid him dead at his feet. The enmity of Tecumseh to the Americans was like that of Hannibal to the Romans; and his prowess was not less mighty; but this chivalrous act of Johnson, while it turned the tide of battle upon the savages, delivered the whole northwestern frontier from the dread of this terrific foe, and put an end to the Indian warfare on all that border.

A more splendid victory was not achieved during the war: and we may search the records of history in vain for a more valorous act than that of Colonel Johnson, which was the principal means of turning the scale in favor of the American arms. Much has been said concerning the merits of General Harrison in this battle. Some of his political opponents have denied him the honors of the



victory ; and some of his friends have detracted from the fame of Johnson lest it should diminish that of Harrison. Let justice be done to both, and their respective honors will not clash. It did not belong to Harrison, as the commander of the army, to head this charge. If he had done so, he would have been justly charged with rashness. He conferred with Johnson upon its practicability, which Washington, or any other discreet commander, would have done. He weighed the subject in his own mind, and was satisfied of its practicability before he sanctioned the attempt. *He gave the order upon his own conviction, and was willing to bear the responsibility of the issue.* What more ought a commander to have done ? He retired to the main body of the army to urge them forward with all practicable celerity. That was his proper place. If defeat had followed, he knew that the disgrace would have fallen upon him. *Harrison then is entitled to the fame which resulted to him from that victory, and Johnson always awarded it to him. He esteemed Harrison as a brave and skilful general.* As his commander and companion in arms he *venerated and loved him.* It was perhaps unfortunate that when General Harrison made his first report, he did not know that Colonel Johnson had found a passage through the swamp and charged the Indians with one battalion of his regiment, while the other battalion charged the regulars. That pass was discovered after Harrison had given the order and retired ; and he had taken for granted that the charge had been made by the whole regiment upon the regulars ; Colonel Johnson being then so disabled by his wounds that he could not confer with him on the subject of the report. That, however, was afterwards satisfactorily explained, and in *mutual friendship they lived till the hand of death separated them.* The conception of the plan and its execution, were Johnson's. He was the rival of no man ; and his venerable commander was the last man whom he would have wished to rival. He never coveted military fame. Arms were not his profession. He never fought for glory. He had no ambition but to serve his country ; and when he perilled his life in her cause and waded through fields of blood in her defence, he thought of no reward but that of his country's independence and glory. He was indeed proud of the laurel which adorned the brow of Harrison, because Harrison belonged to his country. He was willing to nourish that laurel with his own blood ; and he was the last man living who would have plucked from it a single leaf. When shortly after

a friend of Colonel Johnson would have proposed in Congress to present him with a sword, as a token of public honor for his achievement, he refused his assent, protesting that he would never accept a token of approbation for the deeds of that day while it was withheld from the general under whose order he had acted. *When afterwards a golden medal was voted to Harrison, then Johnson no longer declined the honor.*

The war on the northern frontier was now ended ; and the army, after a few days' respite, took up its march for the American lines. Colonel Johnson, whose wounds for some time rendered his recovery doubtful, was unable to continue with his regiment. He was brought to Detroit by water, where, during nine days' confinement, his sufferings were excruciating, and his life was almost despaired of. His hand and wrist, which had received the ball of Tecumseh's rifle, were swelled to an enormous size, and the surgeons proposed amputation as the only probable means of saving him. This he refused ; believing that the same providence which had protected him from death in the field would yet restore him ; or, if he must die, he would die with all his limbs. His resolution was fortunate, for though his hand is crippled, he still retains it with his arm. After recovering sufficient strength to bear but gentle action, a bed was prepared for him in a carriage, in which he commenced his journey homeward. He suffered more during this journey than in all his other pains ; but with a characteristic fortitude almost peculiar to himself, he bore the pangs without a complaint. His father, who had been informed of his dangerous and painful condition, set out from his home to see him. In Ohio, he met him on the road lying upon his litter in the carriage which was conveying him. When he saw his father come to him, and heard him speak with mingled emotions of pleasure and grief, in which were mingled all the feelings of the father with those of the devoted patriot, the Colonel, for the first time since he had received his mother's parting blessing and embrace, burst into tears. He had gone through the battle-field amidst carnage and destruction ; he had suffered more than ten ordinary deaths, and all without a tear ; but in meeting his aged father, the reciprocal affections of filiation and paternity for the moment overcame every other sensation, and the father and son bathed each other in tears as they embraced. He reached home early in November, where everything that affection and skill



could administer, was done to promote his recovery, which was very gradual.

The ladies of his neighborhood, whose husbands and brothers and sons had participated with him in the dangers and glories of the campaign, resolved to honor him with a token of their approbation by presenting him a splendid sword. Most of these ladies were distinguished for Christian piety; as indeed were a large proportion of the men who composed the mounted regiment. More than half of them were members of Christian churches; and while on their march, every night when they rested they held prayer-meetings and other religious exercises in the camp. Major Sugget, who led the charge against the British regulars, was a clergyman, who officiated also as a chaplain; and Colonel James Johnson, who commanded the battalion, was a communicant in his church. They had volunteered in their country's service from patriotic motives; they were conscientious in their devotion to the common cause of their country; and had resolved, that in the duties of the field they would not be unmindful of their sacramental vows to their God. Now that their campaign was ended, the ladies determined on this mark of approbation to the colonel of the regiment, in a way which would recognize the providence of God in the victory. They procured the sword, and invited Colonel Johnson to meet them in the church. When his mutilated body appeared, with scarcely strength to support itself, his eyes still flashing with heroic fire mingled with gentleness and benevolence, a solemnity pervaded the whole assembly, which testified that admiration and sympathy filled every mind. After an expression of gratitude to that God in whose temple they were assembled, and invoking his blessing for the future, Mrs. Long, a matron more than eighty years old, a member and an ornament of the church within whose walls they were assembled, and *whose son had been slain by the side of Colonel Johnson in the battle*, with an expression which called to recollection her own sacrifice, yet with resignation to the will of God, and with a manifest sensation, which drew tears of sympathy from every eye, while she testified her gratitude to the Colonel, presented him with the sword. The Colonel, as he received it, was so affected that he could scarcely reply.

Congress had commenced its session. The war was still raging in the north, in the south, upon the ocean, and upon our whole maritime frontier. Money and soldiers were both wanted, and everything depended upon the action of Congress. To contribute his



part in that body, he was anxious to reach Washington. His constituents were without a representative while he was absent, and the exigencies of the country required that every section should be faithfully represented. He therefore, about the last of January, 1814, before he had been able to walk out of his own door without assistance, and with none but a faithful servant to accompany him, set out on a journey of six hundred miles to the seat of government. In the early part of February he arrived and took his seat in Congress. His patriotism and valor were acknowledged by all; and he was received with cordial salutations by all parties, and honored and approbated by all.

The councils of the country were divided; the treasury was exhausted; our military operations in other quarters had been disastrous; and though our infant navy had covered itself with immortal honors, yet our army was threatened with disgrace. The victory of the Thames, in which Colonel Johnson had acted so conspicuous a part, produced a salutary influence upon the public mind, and his appearance again in Congress, all shattered with wounds, yet buoyant in spirit, was calculated to stimulate the public mind with new vigor, and to increase the weight of his counsel. He viewed the lowering cloud with calmness, and never indulged a desponding thought, however angrily it frowned. He took an active part in all the measures calculated to give energy to the war during the brief remainder of that session.

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In August, 1814, the enemy made a sudden incursion into the country; and before a sufficient force could be collected to repel them, they reached the capital, burned the public offices, and by forced marches effected their retreat. In the following month Congress met. The occasion was seized upon by the opposition party, with others who had never been satisfied with the location of the seat of government, to bring forward a proposition for its removal. Against this proposition Colonel Johnson took a decided stand. He contended that the eligibility of the seat of government was not involved in the question; that the true question was, whether we should permit the enemy to drive us from the location which had been selected by the founders of the government, and give to them in the face of the world a triumph to which they were not entitled, and did not even claim. Under such circumstances, the honor of the country dictated the course to be pursued, and no political considerations of prudence could justify a measure involving national

degradation. Fortunately, the effort was defeated. Colonel Johnson then proposed the appointment of a committee to investigate the causes of the capture of Washington. He was made chairman of that committee; and with indefatigable labor he collected all the facts having any relation to the subject, and embodied them in a report, which he laid before Congress. This document is valuable principally for the facts which it contains, and will be a useful guide to the future historian. (a)

With the affair at Washington, the success of the enemy terminated. The spirit of the country was now roused, and its energies elicited; and Colonel Johnson used all his influence for such measures as would be best calculated to bring the war to a successful termination. Though we had ministers at Ghent in Flanders, engaged in negotiations for peace, yet the issue was doubtful; and he always acted upon the principle of preparation for the most energetic prosecution of the war till peace should actually be proclaimed. With this view, he brought forward a proposition in Congress for the employment of volunteer militia to an indefinite amount. He had so far got the better of his wounds as to consider himself able to take the field again; and it was his intention, on the passage of the act, to return to Kentucky and open a rendezvous for volunteers, in the confidence that a sufficient number would rush to the standard to overrun Canada, and dismember the British empire of that part of its domain which was most troublesome and most dangerous to our own country.

While this measure was pending, in February, 1815, peace was proclaimed. The successful issue of the negotiation at Ghent was unexpected; but to no one could it have been more welcome than to Colonel Johnson; for he never sought nor coveted military fame. He is too much of a philanthropist to be indifferent to the opinions of his fellow men, for we all desire the good-will of those whom we esteem; but he never sought distinction beyond that of serving the republic in any way by which he could contribute to its stability and glory. The laurel which twines his brow is not exotic. It is not nourished with the blood of innocence and the tears of misfortune. It is watered with no tears but those of gratitude; and it is warmed with the smiles of widows and orphans.



## CHAPTER V.

THE war was commenced with a full treasury, but without an army. It was ended with a well disciplined and effective army, but with an exhausted treasury. The session of Congress was near its close when peace was concluded ; but during that short period it was necessary to fix the military peace establishment. The policy of disbanding the army was doubted by some ; and on the amount of force to be retained, great diversity of opinion existed. Colonel Johnson took the ground of retaining no greater force in service than what was necessary to keep in order the permanent fortifications of the country and to guard the Indian frontier. The policy which he recommended, was that the current expenses of the government should be reduced to the lowest possible amount, and that the public resources should be applied, as far as practicable, to the remuneration of those who had made patriotic sacrifices in the war—to the relief of the widows and orphans of those who had perished in battle—and to the liquidation of the national debt, which the expenses of the war had swelled to upwards of two hundred millions of dollars. Believing that six thousand men would be sufficient to answer all the necessary purposes of a military peace establishment, he voted to reduce the army to that number, which was the smallest number proposed by any one. The Senate decided on retaining fifteen thousand ; and between the two houses they came to a compromise of ten thousand.

It is unfortunate for some men that their sagacity is too active, and they too quickly point out and advocate the true policy of a nation. It was so with Colonel Johnson at that juncture. To encourage patriotic sacrifices in future emergencies by an equitable remuneration for the past, he regarded no less the dictate of wisdom than of justice ; but for this he was called profuse. To restore public credit by replenishing the treasury, he considered the true policy of the nation. To effect both these objects, he was in favor of a reduction of the military force, and to an increase of duties on such articles of importation as could be manufactured in this country. His propositions at that time but very partially prevailed ; but subsequently, experience having demonstrated their utility, the whole policy which he then re-



commended has been pursued with general approbation. Had it been done when he first proposed it, all the end would have been accomplished without the necessity of resorting to those ultra measures which afterwards threatened an intestine rupture in the South. (a)

Peace was again beaming upon the land, and smiling plenty crowning every board where families long separated had again met in gladness; but the cry of the widow and orphan was heard to mar their cheerfulness, for the war had cut off many a provident father and affectionate husband. In Colonel Johnson they found a friend. He had braved the dangers of the field with the husbands and fathers of the mourners. With them he had dealt out destruction to the enemies of the country, and mingled his blood with theirs. He now became their advocate before the nation; and while with his mutilated body he pleaded their cause in the legislative hall, many a tear bursting from the eyes of the sternest patriots, testified that republicans could feel and repay the debt of gratitude. Widows and orphans were enrolled on the pension list and their wants supplied from the public coffers. It was all that the nation could do to wipe away their tears, and in this Colonel Johnson was their leading advocate. This having been accomplished, his sympathies were attracted by the suffering condition of many of the survivors of the revolutionary army. He saw them suffering under the iron grasp of penury, having spent the best years of their lives in securing the independence of their country; and while the country was reaping the fruits of their labor, he regarded it as an act of justice on the part of the country to provide for their comfort as they were advancing in the destiny of life. He strenuously and successfully advocated their cause. In an impassioned speech delivered by him on that occasion, he drew tears from many eyes; and as he concluded, a representative was heard to say, "That speech will cost the nation a million of dollars." But it was the cause of justice which he pleaded; and many aged veterans and their families, many widows and orphans of both wars, will bless Colonel Johnson, for it was principally through his exertions that provision was made for their support.

Untiring industry is a permanent feature in the character of Colonel Johnson. He never defers what can be done at present. Dull delays in deliberative bodies were always irksome to him; and these had become so common to Congress, that more than half the public

business was left unfinished at the close of each session. To remedy this evil, he proposed that in lieu of the *per diem* compensation each member should receive a certain amount for each annual session. This would make it their interest to dispatch business promptly; and their credit would require them to finish the public business at each session before adjournment. He did not propose the definite sum. On that point he was indifferent. His sole object was the dispatch of public business. His proposition was agreed to; and the House fixed upon the sum of fifteen hundred dollars as the annual compensation of members of both Houses of Congress. The bill passed into a law, which obtained the appellation of *the compensation law*. It was in December, 1815, that this law passed, and its effect was marvellous. That session Congress finished all the business before them and adjourned with a blank docket, and it is the only instance of the kind which has ever occurred since the formation of the present government. But the law was unpopular. Among aspiring politicians an artificial excitement was raised, which induced many of the good citizens to apprehend danger that Congress were disposed to enrich themselves from the public treasury; and with the people that law had but few advocates. This was the first and only unpopular act of Colonel Johnson's public life; and whatever may have been the ulterior tendency of the measure, his motive was highly praiseworthy, and the effect for the time the law continued most salutary. He was the originator of the measure, and in no part of the Union was it more unpopular than in his own district. He had intended to retire from public life at the close of that congressional term; but the clamor raised against him on that occasion determined him to submit himself to the judgment of the people. He had long served them with entire satisfaction, and a train of circumstances had produced mutual attachments beyond what was common between a representative and his constituents. To leave their service at that time, would indicate a broken confidence and an interrupted friendship. He therefore offered himself again as their representative. His opposing candidate was eloquent and popular, and had been his intimate friend. He went through his district, met his opponent, addressed the people and vindicated his conduct. On one of these occasions, in the midst of those who disapproved the law, yet many of whom had been his companions in danger, and were reluctant to abandon him, in addressing them he exclaimed: "Admitting this measure to be as



injurious as some represent it to be; if you owned a rifle which had never missed fire—if with it you had shot a hundred deer, and twenty of your country's enemies—but on one unfortunate occasion it should miss fire; would you throw it away? or would you pick the flint and try it again?" "Stop there," interrupted a veteran warrior, who had been with him on the battlefield; "stop there.—Do you admit it to be a snap?" "A snap," answered the Colonel. "Then," replied he, amid the shouts of the assembly, "then we will pick the flint and try the old rifle again." Here the Colonel ceased, and the company in a body moved up to the poll and gave him their votes. At another time, while addressing the people, as he raised his hand to make a gesture, its mutilated appearance from the wound by Tecumseh's rifle attracted attention; and the cry spontaneously ran through the multitude, "That hand was broken in our defence. We will still nourish it, and still confide in him who wears it." The shout closed the address, and they gave him their votes. He was re-elected by a majority of nearly a thousand votes. At the next session of Congress he brought forward the resolution for repealing the law, on the sole ground that it was disapproved of by the people, and that the people had the right to govern. The law was repealed. Full confidence was restored. Between himself and his opposing candidate their former friendship was renewed, and continues unabated to the present day.

His re-election to Congress was a providential interposition for the political salvation of Gen. Andrew Jackson. After the immortal honors which he had achieved for his country, in the victory of New Orleans, in which the veterans of Wellington, who had achieved a similar victory over Napoleon, and made him who had been the terror of Europe a prisoner in Elba, had been defeated by an inferior force under Jackson, with a loss of five hundred of the British to one American, it is not extraordinary that some should have envied the General, and been willing to pluck the laurels from his brow. After the close of the war with Great Britain, he was stationed upon the Florida border to protect that frontier from the ravages of the Seminole Indians, who had committed many murders and robberies upon the defenceless inhabitants. Gen. Jackson had completely subdued the Indians, but in doing so he had found it necessary to cross the Florida line. He had also executed two British emissaries who were proven to have been the instigators of the Indians. His conduct was made the subject of Congressional



investigation, and referred to the military Committee. Of that committee Col. Johnson was chairman. After examining the documents, the committee determined to report against Gen. Jackson, and to censure him for arbitrary and lawless conduct. Col. Johnson did not concur, but refused to draw up or present their report. While another member was doing this, Col. Johnson prepared a counter report, giving a luminous view of the whole subject, and exhibiting facts to show that Gen. Jackson was not worthy of censure. This counter report, which is among the ablest documents in the national archives, was presented by Col. Johnson as a substitute for that of the committee. <sup>(C)</sup> An animated discussion followed, in which Mr. Clay lead the debate in opposition to Gen. Jackson, and Col. Johnson in his support. The counter report prevailed. Gen. Jackson was sustained by the House, and his laurels preserved from the withering touch of public censure. It was by the laborious research of Col. Johnson that the subject was so exhibited to the House and to the nation, that the name of Jackson was rescued from threatening obloquy, and still held up to the world in its true character.

During this Congress, the services of Col. Johnson were publicly acknowledged by a joint resolution, which originated in the Senate and passed both Houses without opposition, directing the President of the United States, on behalf of the nation, to present him with a sword. This would have been done at an earlier day, but he would not consent that his friends should move the subject till justice had been done to Gen. Harrison, his commander, by a similar expression. That had now been done, and Col. Johnson no longer refused. A splendid sword was procured, and in an assembly of statesmen and heroes at the President's mansion, presented to Col. Johnson by the President, with an expression of the gratitude of the nation for his generous and unrivalled services in the field. <sup>(B)</sup>

Wearied with the constant toils of public life, and longing for that retirement to which his predilection always inclined him, he declined a re-election, and in March, 1819, retired to private life on his farm in Kentucky. Here it was his intention to spend the remainder of his days—and here he would still have remained, happy in his country's prosperity, honored and admired by the world, could he have consulted his own inclination, in opposition to the wishes of his fellow-citizens. But his immediate neighbors prevailed on him to serve his county in the State Legislature, which





COL. JOHNSON LIBERATING AN UNFORTUNATE DEBTOR.



it was supposed would not greatly interrupt his retirement. He had but just taken his seat in that body, when a vacancy occurred in the United States Senate by the resignation of one of the Senators from that State, and as he was the idol of Kentucky, he could not withstand their solicitations for him to return to public life, but suffered himself to be elected for the four remaining years of that term. This was in December, 1819. He immediately repaired to Washington; and before the close of that month, took his seat in the Senate of the United States.

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## CHAPTER VI.

In the Senate, he was always governed by the same principles which had marked his career in the House of Representatives. The Federal Judiciary is an independent branch of the Government, and it cannot with safety, like the others, be made dependent on the people. To make it dependent on either of the other branches of Government would be still more dangerous. The Federal courts had nullified some of the State laws by declaring them unconstitutional, which Col. Johnson thought an encroachment upon the sovereignty of the States, by a body amenable to no earthly power for the extent of its prerogative. To remedy this evil, he proposed so to amend the Constitution of the United States, as that when the Federal Judiciary shall declare a State law to be unconstitutional, there shall be an appeal to the Senate, where the sovereignty of each State is equally represented. <sup>(a)</sup> This proposition he ably defended; but an unwillingness to touch the judiciary prevented its success. (a) imp

His next effort for the improvement of the condition of the people, was directed to the subject of imprisonment for debt. In reverting to primitive principles, he inquired why prisons were erected. Man is fond of liberty, and it is nature's gift. Nothing but the safety of society can justify the imprisonment of a human being. When the tiger or the lion is exhibited to man, a cage is necessary for safety. A thief, or a murderer, having forfeited his birthright, may be justly deprived of liberty, and the safety of society may require him to be confined. But the inability of a man to pay his debts does not render his freedom dangerous, nor forfeit his right to

liberty. Reflections like these determined his mind against imprisonment for debt. He investigated the subject from its origin, and found the whole system hostile to civil liberty, and an engine of cruelty in the hand of the wealthy against his poor unfortunate neighbor. He admired the philanthropy of Howard in laboring to extenuate the miseries of the unfortunate, but, said he, if their miseries deserve compassion, why are they inflicted? Shall the laws of a free country place an unfortunate poor man so entirely at the disposal of his wealthier neighbor, that he may inflict miseries which the philanthropy of a Howard can only soften, but not remove? The law is oppressive. It is unrighteous, unworthy of a Republican nation. With him, to be convinced that a system is wrong, is a certain pledge of his efforts to do it away. So on the subject of imprisonment for debt; he was convinced of its wrong, and he exerted all his energies to abolish the system. The proposition was new, and when first introduced, it found but few advocates. He was, however, not discouraged, for he was certain that he was right, and therefore determined to persevere. It was not the province of Congress to interfere with the system except under the laws of the Federal Government; but he believed that if Congress would set the example, the States would be led to investigate the subject; and if investigated by a free people, it must certainly fall. He renewed the attempt every session, and on every occasion delivered a speech on the subject, showing the iniquity of the system with such force, that the advocates for its abolition were continually increasing. The subject began to be inquired into by the people. His own State, Kentucky, abolished the system. Several other States followed the example. The prison bounds at the seat of Government were enlarged to the extent of the county, covering a territory of sixty square miles; and there is no reason to doubt, that, within a few years, every vestige of it will be done away in the Union. Col. Johnson was the first person who ever proposed, in the United States Government, to abolish the system. His Report, on behalf of a committee, to the House of Representatives, in January, 1832, has given more light upon the subject than had ever before been embodied in a single document, and is worthy of a conspicuous place in every library. The whole system, like a bastille whose foundation is broken up, is rapidly falling to atoms; and when it shall have vanished away, the eye of philanthropy, while scanning the page once stained with the disgraceful record, will render to Johnson the tribute of a grate



ful tear, while the tongue will bless his name for having unlocked the prison-door, and wiped away this last relic of barbarism from our happy country. (a) Not the

He remained in the Senate ten years; for before the first term of four years for which he had first been elected had expired, he was unanimously re-elected for the ensuing term of six years. In the Presidential election of 1824, he was in favor of Mr. Clay, who then stood high in the Democratic ranks of statesmen. When the election between Mr. Adams, Mr. Crawford, and General Jackson, devolved upon the House of Representatives, he was in favor of General Jackson, who had the highest number of electoral votes, though being a Senator, he had no vote to give. Mr. Adams was elected, and with the concurrence of Mr. Clay, from which time, Mr. Clay and Col. Johnson have belonged to opposite parties in the political divisions of the country. (b) Cred to John

When Gen. Jackson came into the Presidency in 1829, Colonel Johnson closed his Senatorial career; but at the earnest solicitation of his friends, he was immediately elected to the House of Representatives, where he continued till his election to the Vice-Presidency of the United States.

One of his last acts in the Senate has raised to his fame a monument more enduring than a statue of marble. From every part of the country petitions were sent to Congress, praying for a law prohibiting the transportation of the mails on Sundays. These petitions were referred to a committee, of which Col. Johnson was chairman. On behalf of the committee, he drew up that luminous report, commonly called "*The Sunday Mail Report*," which was presented to the Senate in January, 1829. This is unquestionably the best document ever written on the subject of religious liberty, as it best defines the rights of conscience, and where the just power of human legislation ends. The world has been so long and so generally subject to legislative control in matters of religion, that the right has scarcely been questioned where the truth of the religion which it imposes is admitted. Most persons who oppose legislative interference, oppose it on the ground of disbelief in the religion which it recognizes; and most persons who believe in the religion which the State recognizes, admit the right of that recognition. But the report which Col. Johnson prepared, takes a more correct view of the subject. It admits any system of religion to be true, or untrue, without any power on the part of the legislature to



inquire; and it requires the legislature to protect every person in the faith and obedience of any religion, whether true or false; but it denies the right of the legislature to provide for the furtherance of any religion. It confines the legislative power to the regulation of civil institutions, without the right of intermeddling with religious institutions of any kind, whether true or untrue. (a)

This report was received by bursts of applause in every part of the Union. It was published in every newspaper. It was elegantly printed on satin, and set in frames for parlor ornaments; and since the Declaration of Independence, it is doubtful whether a public document was ever issued which received equal approbation and applause.

The following year, Col. Johnson was in the House of Representatives, and was made chairman of the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads. Many petitions were still forwarded to Congress, praying for the prohibition of mail transportation on the Sabbath, which were referred to that committee; and it fell to the lot of Col. Johnson, as its chairman, to prepare their report. He therefore drew up another report, which was presented to the House in March, 1830, of similar import. This is called "*Col. Johnson's second Sunday Mail Report.*" It establishes the same principles which are contained in the first, though it varies in detail just enough to make of it a different report, still interesting and enlarging the views of the reader, while discussing and confirming the same immutable truth, that man is amenable to none but his Creator for his religion, and that legislative bodies are designed to represent the political views of their constituents, in which the minority must submit to the majority, and not their religious views, in which no submission is required; but the consciences of a minority, however small, are as sacred as those of the majority.

Under the system which had been formerly adopted for the sales of public lands on credit, the purchasers, amounting to probably more than half a million of persons, including their families, had become indebted several millions of dollars to the United States, which the low prices of produce and the scarcity of money disabled them from paying; and in case of failure, the lands were forfeited to the United States, and the purchasers lost what they had paid and the improvements they had made. This would produce immense injury to all those States in which the lands lay, and probably an insurrection against the laws which would dispossess them

of their settled homes. At that critical moment, Col. Johnson devised an expedient which saved both the country and the purchasers from loss. He proposed a law authorizing them to retain so much of the lands as their payments already made would cover, including their improvements, and to relinquish the remainder. This would save them from the forfeiture of their homes, and give them the whole amount of land which they had paid for; and at the same time, their improvements on the lands which they retained would raise the value of the adjacent parts relinquished, so that the United States would rather gain than lose by granting this relief. The law passed, and carried with it joy to thousands who were trembling in suspense. (a)

It was not uncommon for industrious, enterprising farmers, but without capital, to go into the wilderness and settle themselves on public lands not yet brought into the market; and by hard labor to subdue the forest and establish themselves in comfortable homes, intending to become the purchasers of those lands when they should be offered for sale, by which time they would have saved a sufficiency to meet the payments. But all public lands are first offered at public auction, and the improvements would tempt others to bid a higher price for the lands than they would otherwise be worth, and so deprive the settlers of the benefit of their improvements. To remedy this evil it was proposed that a pre-emption right should be extended to all settlers, that is, that they should have the right to purchase the lands they had improved at the minimum price of public lands. Col. Johnson strongly advocated this measure, and it became a law, which secured comfortable independence to hundreds of families who would otherwise have been cast penniless upon the world, without a house or a home. (a) (u) (su) (Re)

These two laws have saved hundreds of thousands of American citizens from ruin; and not the most immoral and imbecile portion of the community, but the enterprising and industrious; the hardy, strong-minded, frugal citizens, whose souls were formed for independence, and whose minds rose above the menial, grovelling condition of servility. While these citizens are thus secured in the just rewards of their own laborious enterprise, the wilderness is made subservient to the sustenance of man, and the frontier is protected by a brave, a hardy, and a patriotic class, who have identified their earthly being with their country and its institutions.

General Jackson's administration of the Presidency was a stormy



season in our political hemisphere. He was the most popular president we ever had with his own party, not even excepting Washington; and the most unpopular with his opponents. Between him and them there was no compromise. In the estimation of his adherents, he could scarcely do wrong; in the estimation of his opponents, he could scarcely do right. The country was in a state of profound peace with all the world, having but one interest, with which all were identified; yet discord was the perpetual order of the day. If one in the ranks of the adherents of the President dissented from any measure which had his sanction, no conciliating course was pursued towards him, but all was severity; and it seldom happened that any of his opposers expressed approbation for any of his acts. The consequence was, that many prominent characters who had been attached to his party became entirely alienated from it, and many others felt a disaffection which prudence forbade them to avow. This rose to its highest point at the time of the removal of the public deposits from the bank of the United States in the fall of 1833. The measure was reprobated in unmeasured terms by the opposition, as arbitrary and rash. Congress had, on the eve of their adjournment, by a very large majority, expressed their confidence in the safety of the funds in that institution; and as Congress were to assemble again in two months after the time of their removal, it was contended that if he had properly respected the public will, he would have deferred the measure till the people, through their immediate representatives, could decide the question; but that he had required the Secretary of the Treasury to make the removal before the meeting of Congress, because he had no power to do it while Congress were in session without their consent, which consent he could not expect to gain; but that if removed during the recess, the President had power to prevent their restoration by his veto, unless two thirds of both houses should require it to be done. Under these circumstances many of the friends of the administration disapproved of the measure, and showed evident marks of dissatisfaction, which they could scarcely forbear expressing.

At that time, a scheme was devised to defeat the administration in its hopes of the succession, by bringing out a candidate from the party in power, in whose favor all the disaffected of the party would unite, and the opposition party would give him their support, and so secure his election. Col. Johnson was the most popular man among the people; and if he could be brought into their views,

they would make him the candidate; and in that event they entertained no doubt of success. Overtures were made to him; and indirectly, his prospects were presented, and arguments and persuasions used, which a more ambitious mind could not have withstood. It was understood that he doubted the propriety of removing the deposits at the time and under the circumstances of their removal; and it was only required of him to declare his decided opposition to that measure, and permit his name to be used by the disaffected of the party, and the opposition would unite with them in sustaining him against Mr. Van Buren for the successor of Gen. Jackson to the Presidency. But Johnson's patriotism was always stronger than his ambition. He could not be moved. The charms of office were not sufficient to draw him from the ground on which he had ever stood. No earthly consideration could induce him to accept the highest and most honorable office in the world by the insincere suffrage of those whom he had so long opposed, and in opposition to a majority of those with whom he had so long and so harmoniously acted. His conduct on this occasion needs no comment. The position which Mr. Van Buren had occupied with Gen. Jackson rendered him the most prominent candidate for the Presidency. As such he was successfully supported; and at the same time Col. Johnson was elected Vice-president. The candidates had been selected by a convention of delegates from the different states, who were pledged to acquiesce in the decision. But Virginia, having presented one of her own citizens as a candidate for the Vice-presidency, who was not preferred by the convention, did not hold herself bound by the pledge, and gave her electoral vote against Col. Johnson. This left him but just one half of the electoral votes, which required the vote of the Senate to confirm his election. By a large majority it was confirmed by the Senate; and from the 3d of March, 1837, he was transferred from the House of Representatives, where he had commenced his public national career, to the Vice-presidency of the United States.

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## CHAPTER VII.

THE Vice-Presidency is an office prospective of a contingency which has never happened but once since the existence of our government. It is a wise provision of our constitution against a va-

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cancy which may happen in the Presidency. It is therefore an office involving no political responsibility, having no political power, and imposing no duty except that of presiding over the Senate. It was not expected that Colonel Johnson, in this situation, would enter upon any new enterprise, or perform any acts having a bearing upon public affairs, for his office gave him no such power, except in the contingency which would place him at the head of the nation. That contingency did not happen. He discharged the duties of presiding officer of the Senate with ability, impartiality and fidelity, to the satisfaction of all parties, in the flattering testimony of which all parties concurred at the close of his service there.

In the election of 1840, the opposite party prevailed; and from the 4th of March, 1841, he has been, what he long desired to become, but what he had not before been for thirty years, a private citizen.

In his long career of public life, his character has stood the test of parties in all the revolutions, and comes forth without a blot. He is still in all the vigor of intellect which he ever enjoyed, with the advantages of experience well improved, and a prospect of so continuing for many years. There was never a period of his life in which he was so well qualified to serve his country as at present; and no citizen has ever given stronger pledges of fidelity in every trust which was ever committed to him. But in private life, and among his neighbors where he is most intimately known, he is most highly appreciated. He is a believer in the truth of the Christian religion; but is attached to no sect. He is the friend of all, the enemy of none. He is exemplary in his habits. He plays at no games; uses no intoxicating beverages; seldom visits parties of mere pleasure, and never participates in dissipation. His soul is the seat of benevolence. He knows no distinction between the rich and the poor, between the highest and the lowest orders of society. His house is the resort of the most distinguished philosophers and statesmen, the most reverend of the clergy, the learned counsellors, the industrious yeoman, the useful mechanic, and the humble laborer; and they all alike receive the same cordial welcome, and enjoy the hospitalities of the same board. He knows of no differences among men but what virtue and vice establish. His manners are perfectly republican. When his mind is unbent from its severe labors, he is gentle and sometimes playful in his conversa-

tion, but he never descends to levity. His natural temperament is warm, but well disciplined. He has seldom been known, even in his most unguarded moments, to speak a word which could wound the most sensitive mind; and when he has accidentally done so, he was never quiet in his own mind till he had made an ample apology. He is distinguished by wisdom more than cunning; by judgment more than imagination; and his talents have more solidity than splendor. He is like a well-built ship gliding safely over the billows, which will never upset for want of ballast, nor ever run upon rocks and shoals for want of a skilful helmsman.

He has not an enemy on earth, except on political considerations. The Indians, to whom his name was a terror in war, regard him in peace as their best friend. When a treaty was entered into with the Choctaws, in which provision was made for the annual disbursement of a considerable sum of money for the education of their youth, they signified to the agent a desire to send their youth among the whites to be instructed, provided they should be placed under the guardianship of Colonel Johnson. They knew his character, and were willing to confide the flower of their youth to his care, without fear of imposition or neglect. This was done without his knowledge; and the first advice which he received of the fact, was that a company of Choctaw Indian boys were on the way to Kentucky, bearing the solicitations of their parents and chiefs of the nation to Colonel Johnson, that he would cause the school to be established at his own home, and act as their guardian. This was urged also by the agent of the government, as a course calculated to conciliate and benefit the Indians. The Colonel complied with their wishes, and established on his own plantation a seminary for the instruction of Indian youth of both sexes, called the Choctaw Academy. Other tribes hearing of it, sent their youth also to the same seminary. It has been many years in existence, and still continues a resort for Indian youth from many different tribes, where they are instructed in English literature and science, the arts of civilized life, and the principles of the Christian religion. This academy has been the means of salvation to hundreds of the aborigines from savage barbarism to civilized life, and from Indian paganism to Christian devotion. Though Colonel Johnson is not its nominal conductor, and has no legal control over it, yet it is on his land, he exercises a controlling influence over it, and all the Indians, both the youths at the school and the chiefs in the nations, look to him as



their guardian and patron; and it is the confidence which they repose in him that sustains and gives it celebrity.

If he is without personal enemies, it is because he merits universal esteem. His warmest and most uncompromising political opposers all acknowledge that he is honest and sincere in all his professions, and that he was never capable, not even in all intrigues of political partisan warfare, of telling a falsehood, or of deserting a friend. From his earliest political career he has been associated with Mr. Clay, from the same state, and for many years the representative of the adjoining district. For the last eighteen years they have both been conspicuous in opposite ranks. It has for that length of time been the interest of the one to defeat the other. But under no circumstances could he ever be induced to utter a sentence to the detriment of Mr. Clay as a citizen, a gentleman, a man of honor, of talents, and of integrity. All his opposition to him is political. As a man, he esteems him, as an old friend, he loves him, and in his honor, he strongly confides. If Mr. Clay were the subject of this sketch, justice would require the *same tribute of respect to his magnanimity and fidelity*; but it is the character of Johnson that is the subject of remark, a character which philanthropy will ever bless, and which will shed lustre upon the page of his country's history when the present turmoils of ambition and party zeal shall be covered in oblivion.

Whether he shall pass the evening of life in his present retirement, will depend on the voice of his country. In any event, he will find resources for enjoyment in his own mind; and the contemplation of the scenes through which he has passed, and the part which he has acted, cannot fail to render the closing scenes delightful. He has alleviated the misery and augmented the happiness of thousands, in a greater degree probably than any other man now living. In the legislative hall and in the field, he has done more to define, to confirm, and to defend, the true principles of our republican institutions, both from domestic innovation and from foreign violence, than, perhaps, any other person now on the stage of being. He is beloved by his friends, revered by his country, honored by the world. If the consciousness of having discharged with fidelity and success, every responsibility committed to his trust, can give pleasure to the mind of a patriot and philanthropist; if the increasing glory and prosperity of the country to whose service his life has been devoted, can furnish a recompense to the generous bosom, Col. Johnson must receive in his retirement an ample reward.





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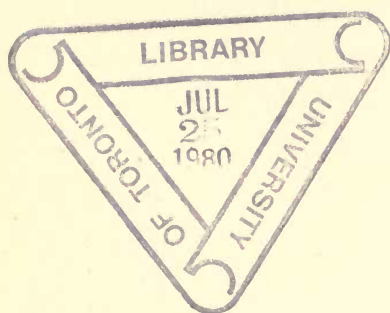








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A Biographical sketch of  
Col. Richard M. Johnson  
of Kentucky

