

POLITICAL REMINISCENCES.

Two Chapters from the Recollections of a Political Journalist.

How New-York was Represented at Albany Fifty Years Ago.

CHAPTER I.

There is a very valuable but little-known book entitled the *Civil List*. It contains the names of all the State and County officers from the establishment of our Colonial Government. In looking it over, as I do very often, it occurred to me that the present citizens of New-York might be interested in knowing who and what manner of men represented the City in the Legislature fifty years ago.

In 1814, (fifty-two years ago,) our Senators were PETER W. RANDLIFF and NATHAN SANDFORD—the first being afterward Mayor of the City and the latter United States Senator and Chancellor, and both long since deceased.

The Assembly Delegation in 1814 was Federal in politics, and consisted of able men, the only survivor of whom is CHARLES KING, recently President of Columbia College, and now passing the Winter with his family in Rome, his son, Gen. REFUS KING, being American Minister there. Mr. KING was then a young, ardent, dashing member. Among his colleagues were SAMUEL JONES, Jr., long Chief-Justice; JOSIAH OGDEN HOFFMAN, afterward Recorder; RICHARD HATFIELD, Jr., a brilliant young lawyer. Mr. HATFIELD was long remembered socially for his remarkably effective imitations of orators. At dinners he would repeat extracts from Bishop HOBART, Rev. JOHN MASON, THOMAS ADDIS EMMETT, and with such perfect resemblance in voice, emphasis and gesture as to surprise and amuse even those who were thus taken off. JACON LORILLARD, the wealthy tobaccoist, DAVID B. OGDEN, a distinguished lawyer and most estimable man, ELISHA W. KING, a highly respectable lawyer, GABRIEL FURMAN, &c., &c.

In 1815 the Republicans carried the City, electing such men as FRANCIS COOPER, JACON DRAKE, (a wealthy butcher,) OGDEN EDWARDS, (a relative of AARON BURR,) a moderate lawyer, who obtained an unenviable notoriety by *hissing* (I do not remember who) while a member was speaking. This was PETER SHARPE's first year. Mr. SHARPE was a Maiden-lane whip-maker, of the average intelligence of a mechanic, who was reelected six successive years, and closed his legislative career as Speaker. ISAAC PRINSON, a most patriotic, upright man, and useful legislator, was a wealthy iron merchant. He was to be seen every Sunday with his large family at Rev. Dr. MITCHELL'S Universalist Church. PETER STAGG, of the old Third Ward stock, was in the House that year. GEORGE WARNER and JOSEPH SMITH were men remarkable for their great personal popularity. They were elected two or three times to the Legislature from the Democratic ticket, when all the others chosen were Federalists. They were well-known Methodists, and were voted for by that large class of electors, irrespective of party. They were constant exhorters at the Methodist Church in Division-street, Albany.

In 1816 the Federalists again carried the City, electing such men as PETER A. JAY, (son of Gov. JOHN JAY,) who was an enlightened but not brilliant lawyer, mingling but little in debate, but clear and logical. He was a good, rather than a great man. PHILIP BRASHER (best known as "Alderman Phil") was an educated and well-informed man, with no taste for speaking—probably because he had no talent for it. He lost no opportunity to manifest his contempt for buncombe speeches. He was, as Falstaff described himself, a "great fat man," who "walked at one who had gyves between his legs," and "looked like a sow that had wholmed all its litter but one." Though not a large eater he had the reputation of one. He was fastidious in game and wine, but partook of neither immoderately. EDWARD W. LAIGHT was a militia General and popular with the military. SAMUEL WHITTEMORE was, I believe, a real estate man in "the village," as most of the Ninth Ward was then called. Of JOSEPH BAGLEY, AUGUSTUS WYNCOOP and ANDREW MORRIS I remember nothing. Messrs. WARNER (or "Sister WARNER," as some called him,) and SMITH were members of this House. The House of Assembly was organized this year after a protracted and exciting conflict. Indeed, during the half century that I have been familiar with legislation, on one occasion only (in 1824) have I witnessed such a struggle. The House was politically *tied*, each party having 64 members. But the seat of PETER ALLEN, of Ontario, was contested by HENRY FELLOWS. The town canvassers returned four votes for "HEN. FELLOWS," though Mr. FELLOWS brought with him the evidence that the four electors intended to vote for HENRY FELLOWS. The Republicans held that the certificate carried the right to the seat in Mr. ALLEN's favor until a Committee on Elections should report the facts, and that no Committee could be appointed until a Speaker was chosen. The Federalists contended that the facts were undisputed, and that Mr. FELLOWS, having a clear majority, was then entitled to his seat. The speaking talent of the House was all on the Federal side. There were: THOS. J. OAKLEY, Jacob Ruten Van Rensselaer, Wm. A. Duer, James Emmott, Peter A. Jay, John J. Ostrander, James Powers, &c., &c., who over-whelmed JOHN H. BACH, Col. LEAVENWORTH, &c., &c., young members, who spoke for the Republicans. There were strong men in the House like Gen. MOORE, JOSHUA BALLARD, JAMES BURT, Wm. C. BOECK, &c., but they were not speakers. The intellectual strength of the Federalists was telling on the Republicans, until, on the third day, HENRY B. LEE, of Putnam, a young, unknown man rose, and by his clear, close, logical argument, his taking manner and thrilling eloquence, turned the tables. DANIEL CRUGER, Republican, was chosen Speaker, but in February Mr. ALLEN's seat was given to Mr. FELLOWS. Mr. LEE was elected to Congress in 1817, but died before he had the opportunity of distinguishing himself there.

The year 1817 brought fresh elements to the Assembly. The Republican ticket, which was chosen, was headed by HENRY ECKFORD, ship-builder. He was a man like Wm. H. WEBB, of great enterprise and public spirit. This year brought CLARKSON CROLIUS into the House. He was a very wordy man, who seemed to think that, coming from the great metropolis, he was necessarily great himself. In speaking he had a ludicrous way of pursing and protruding his lips. He was, however, an inflexibly honest, straight-forward man. CORNELIUS HEENY, an Irishman and a gentleman, was then a member, and one who possessed all the genial qualities of his native Isle. JOHN T. IRVING, a lawyer, and brother of the late WASHINGTON IRVING, was a finished gentleman, of solid rather than showy talents. JOHN L. LAWRENCE, though highly respectable, did not make his mark. Of SAMUEL B. ROMAINE and PETER SHARPE I have already spoken. They, with Messrs. GEO. WARNER and JOSEPH SMITH, ASA MANN, a lumber merchant, I believe, made up the delegation. Mr. HEENY died twenty or more years since, leaving a large estate, probably

pally to Catholic charities. The bulk of it was acquired in this wise. He loaned \$1,000 to a mechanic, who, finding himself unable to pay the money, conveyed certain real estate to his creditor, which, though then scarcely worth the money borrowed, ultimately proved of great value, making Mr. HEENY a rich man.

Mr. HEENY was a man of rare humor. His wit was remembered and talked of at Albany long years after his retirement. I remember one of his pleasant hits. He was enjoying his whisky-punch, (a national taste,) with some of his friends, when his colleague, Mr. CROLIUS, came in. "I was just saying, Crolh," said Mr. HEENY, "that our constituents were fools to send such members as we are to legislate for them." "I do not agree with you, Sir. I certainly understand the business of my constituents," replied Mr. CROLIUS. "No more of that nonsense, CROLI. You a legislator! Why, man, you do not understand your own business." This piqued Mr. C., who said, "Sir, I am master of my business, and have made a competency out of it." Now, says Mr. H. "I will prove that you don't know your business, and that if you have made money it was because you were born to good luck. You are a pottibaker. Tell me, now, which side of a jug you would place the handle?" "Why," said Mr. CROLIUS, "that is an absurd question. It is immaterial which side it is placed." "There, now," exclaimed Mr. HEENY, triumphantly, "didn't I tell you, CROLI, you were a humbug. You would put the handle of a jug on the *inside*, would ye?"

In 1818 the City was ably represented. The delegation was headed by CADWALLADER D. COLDEN, a gentleman of good talents, fine person and courtly manners. ROBERT B. HUNTER was a dapper gentleman who was for many subsequent years Consul to Hull, I believe, in England. HENRY MEIGS was an aspiring but not successful politician. ISAAC PIERSON and SAMUEL TOOKER, both wealthy merchants, were excellent members. JOHN MORSE was a man of small stature and quiet habits, possessing many elements of legislative usefulness. He was industrious, clear-headed and honest. Messrs. HEENY, CROLIUS and SHARPE were here again, and in this Assembly a young gentleman, whose subsequent life has fulfilled all the promises of his youth, appeared in the Legislative Hall—MICHAEL ULSHOEFFER. He was an unfrequent but effective speaker—always firm and always courteous. Few men have discharged Legislative duties more usefully to his constituents or more creditably to themselves. Mr. ULSHOEFFER survives, respected and honored as he deserves to be. He is the only survivor of that Delegation. In looking over the list I discover one or two more of the 123 members now living. The Hon. AARON HACKLEY, then a member from Herkimer, now resides in this City; and I believe that DAVID C. JUDSON, of St. Lawrence, is living. The Assembly of 1818 was full of distinguished men. Albany sent WILLIAM A. DUER and STEPHEN VAN RENSSELAER—WILLIAM B. ROCHESTER from Steuben, ERASTUS ROOT, from Delaware, THOMAS J. OAKLEY from Dutchess. An incident occurred during the session which effectually squelched a young and rising member from Seneca County. Lieut.-Gov. TAYLOR invited Mr. THOMPSON to dinner. Mr. THOMPSON declined the invitation, requesting the Lieutenant-Governor to give the value of the dinner, which he declined, "to the poor." Gov. TAYLOR sent Mr. THOMPSON fifty cents, requesting him to become his own almoner. Unfortunately for Mr. THOMPSON, everybody knew that Gov. TAYLOR needed no such prompting, for while, like the "fine old English gentleman" who feasted the rich, "he never forgot the poor." That letter brought Assemblyman THOMPSON "to grief."

In 1819 most of the delegation of 1818 was re-elected. JOHN T. IRVING, SAMUEL B. ROMAINE and RICHARD HATFIELD reappeared. JOHN J. MORGAN, a man of good practical ability, was a member. Gen. DIX is son-in-law to Mr. MORGAN. ALEXANDER HAMILTON, son of the eminent statesman, was a member of this House. JOHN A. KING (every inch a King, and long may he live in health and happiness) was a member from Queens.

To the Assembly of 1820 the same members were re-elected, and nothing as I remember, worthy of remark, occurred in the delegation. SAMUEL YOUNG, a member of that Assembly, became a distinguished man in after years, as did Judge CHARLES H. RUGGLES, JAMES MCKOWN, JONAS EARL, HENRY SEYMOUR, WILLIAM NELSON, &c., &c. What was intended as a passing pleasantry proved a serious annoyance to the Clerk of the House, (AARON CLARK,) all his subsequent life. There was a sort of three-cornered canvass for Speaker. Gen. ROOT, Mr. ROMAINE, and JOHN C. SPENCER being the candidates. Mr. CLARK, who had been Clerk for four years previous, was an anxious candidate for reelection. Between the three rivals for Speaker the Clerk was in a fix. The day before the Legislature convened, what professed to be "intercepted letters" appeared in an Albany paper. They were addressed to the three candidates for Speaker, proffering support to each, and giving each a dig. Mr. CLARK's style was so cleverly imitated that the letters created considerable amusement. But the end of the laugh did not "trammel up" the consequences of the joke. Mr. CLARK removed to this City and opened a lottery office, then a great business not unlawfully followed. Then as now, nothing paid so well as dashing, spirited advertising. Mr. CLARK saw this, and filled the newspapers, inviting attention to "Clark's Wheel of Fortune," "Clark's Lucky Star," "Clark's Golden Numbers," &c., &c. His rival lottery-ticket venders exhumed his alleged Albany letters, professing devoted zeal for three candidates for Speaker. This both annoyed and damaged him. But worse than this, in the "course of human events" Mr. CLARK became a candidate for Mayor of this City; and now the letters were brought out by the Tammany Hall Press. By this time they had become, in the public mind, veritable letters. And then, the joke having been carried too far, the culprit who wrote them relieved Mr. CLARK from injustice and persecution by publicly confessing himself the author.

The Assembly of 1821 was honored by the election of one of New-York's "favorite sons," GULIAN C. VERPLANCK, a really great and good man. Mr. VERPLANCK, "a scholar and a gentleman," was eminent as a statesman and jurist, and distinguished himself in the latter greatly by his opinion in the court for the correction of errors. Though unknown to Mr. VERPLANCK then, I made his acquaintance years later, when he was in the Senate, and have sat ever since with intense edification at the feet of this literary Gamaliel, deriving instruction and strength from his thorough knowledge of books and men.

Judge ULSHOEFFER was a colleague of Mr. VERPLANCK's, as were Messrs. HEENY, CROLIUS, SHARPE, ROMAINE, &c., JOHN SWARTWOUT, brother of "Sam" and "Bob," as the General and Collector were familiarly called. Mr. SWARTWOUT was a large, showy man, who wore powder and limped. Mr. McDONALD, the barber, furnished the hair powder, but the limp came from powder that lodged a ball in his knee from the pistol of Gov. CLINTON, with whom Mr. SWARTWOUT "exchanged shots." WM. A. DAVIS and REUBEN MUXSON were members. I believe Mr. DAVIS was a stationer, and brother of MATHEW L. DAVIS. There were Legislative "giants" in those days, and in this Assembly, viz.: ELISHA WILLIAMS, ERASTUS ROOT, JOHN C. SPENCER, MYRON HOLLY, &c.

SAMUEL B. ROMAINE was Speaker of the Assembly in 1822, PETER SHARPE, Speaker of the previous House, having been, I believe, elected to Congress. JUNIUS M. HATCH, a young lawyer, and JEROMAS JOHNSON, were new members. Messrs. VERPLANCK and ULSHOEFFER were again members.

With the Legislature of 1823 the Amended

Constitution took effect. Its two sessions were important and exciting. The City of New-York, under the new order of things, sent new men to the Assembly. SAMUEL S. GARDINER, who had been Secretary of the Constitutional Convention, came to the Assembly. He was a gentleman of fair ability and refined manners. He was a younger brother of DAVID GARDINER, a Senator from Long Island, whose daughter married "Capt. TYLER." GIDEON LEE, a wealthy man from the Swamp, who was subsequently Mayor, was then in the Assembly. Mr. LEE removed to Geneva, where he died many years ago. JESSE HOYT, subsequently Collector, whose genial nature has not been soured either by time or adversity, made his *début* in this Assembly. JOHN RATHBONE, Jr., WILLIAM A. THOMPSON, (who survives,) and THOMAS HYATT, were members of the old *régime*. Messrs. VERPLANCK, BRASHER & MORSE, remained. This Assembly was distinguished for its practical good sense. It had some brilliant and many sound members. PETER R. LIVINGSTON was Speaker. Among the best practical legislators were JESSE BUEL, of Albany, VICTORY BIRDEYE, of Onondaga, JAMES MULLET, of Chautauqua, AZABIAH C. FLAGG, (subsequently State and City Comptroller,) now like Belissarius, passing the evening of a well spent life, blind, but in full possession of all his other faculties—calm under his great deprivation, even cheerful. For his affliction there is compensation; for he can turn his thoughts back upon long years of usefulness. Mr. FLAGG, when elected to the Assembly, was editor of the *Republican*, at Plattsburgh. He now resides in London Terrace, Twenty-third-street. EBEN F. NORTON, of Erie, an unknown but clever lawyer, was a humorist. Early in the session, the Speaker, (PETER R. LIVINGSTON,) whose remarkably effective voice and manner commanded great attention, desiring to impress the House with a sense of the dignity of the Constitutional Convention, thus commenced speaking: "Mr. Chairman: I had the honor to preside over the solemn deliberations of the Convention which amended our State Constitution. Sir, that Convention was an august body." Mr. NORTON rose and said: "Will the honorable Speaker allow me to correct him? The Constitutional Convention over which the venerable Speaker presided so ably met in *September* instead of *August*." The House was convulsed with laughter, and Mr. LIVINGSTON got no further with his speech. At the moment Mr. LIVINGSTON attributed Mr. NORTON's remark to ignorance, instead of vaggery.

The year 1824 produced another change in the New-York delegation. Messrs. CROLIUS, GARDINER, PIERSON, MORSE and HYATT were re-elected. Gen. JAMES BENEDICT, a Maiden-lane saddler, and an excellent man, came in. JACOB DRAKE, another worthy man, was a member. CHARLES TOWNS, an auctioneer, and an accomplished gentleman, with DAVID SEAMAN and HENRY WHEATON, completed the delegation. This was a memorable Legislature, in which the great struggle for President between ADAMS and CRAWFORD occurred. Presidential Electors were then chosen by the Legislature. Three sessions were held, all exciting and stormy. Indeed its history should be written. On the question of restoring directly to the people the choice of Electors Messrs. WHEATON, CROLIUS, PIERSON, MORSE, TOWNS, SEAMAN, DRAKE and BENEDICT, broke away from Tammany Hall and Mr. VAN BUREN, and went with the ADAMS men. Gen. TALLMADGE, of Dutchess, was the ADAMS leader. Mr. FLAGG led the VAN BUREN party. When the election was over, and Mr. ADAMS successful, the writer of this was deputed to Washington, to obtain from Mr. ADAMS a recognition of the party to which he was indebted, after a desperate struggle, for the State. Gen. TALLMADGE desired either the English or the French mission. But Mr. ADAMS had determined to send RUFUS KING to England, and could not give another full mission to this State. I wrote to Gen. TALLMADGE, asking if he would accept a second-class mission, which was indignantly declined. Mr. WHEATON was then appointed, without his knowledge, to Sweden, and thus commenced a diplomatic career which reflected so much honor upon Mr. WHEATON himself and upon his country.

The Assembly of 1824 was full of talent. The great questions which agitated it and the people, brought out and tested men. SAMUEL J. WILKINS, of Orange, then a young man of much promise, died last month. In looking over the list I find but few survivors. JOHN F. HUBBARD, a printer, of Chenango County; ORAN FOLLETT, printer, of Genesee County; A. C. FLAGG, printer, of Clinton; C. P. BELLINGER, of Herkimer, are, I believe, the only survivors.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)