

John Van Buren, as most readers of the *Atlas* are aware, is the second son of the ex-President, Martin Van Buren. The good old county of Columbia claims him for her child, and some of his best and stoudest Dutch blood is in his veins. He took his degree with marked honors, at Yale College; soon afterwards he hung up his hat, as a student of law, in the office of Benj. F. Butler, (the present U. S. District Attorney,) at Albany. Under him and Judge Vanderpool, of this city, he completed his studies.

He was just admitted to the bar, when his father was sent Minister to London; he accompanied the legation. He took the opportunity to see most of the European countries; when his father's nomination having been rejected by the Senate, he returned with him, in 1832, to the United States.

From the date of his return with his father, Mr. Van Buren went back to his desk and his law books, and for several years pursued the practice of his profession with assiduity and success.

During this interval he visited England, in 1838, on professional business. His position, not more than his personal accomplishments, gave him at once the *entrée* into the most exclusive circles in the world. The young republican was the lion of a whole London winter. The proud men and women of proud aristocracy were disarmed in spite of themselves, by a manner and breeding as perfect as their own; and the future "barnburner" had the distinguished honor of dancing at one of the state balls of the season, with her gracious majesty herself, Victoria the First. His success at court was regarded as a phenomenon, and furnished more additions to the city gossip of the papers in London and this country than an event of state importance.

Before his return, he spent considerable time in Ireland. The generous hospitalities of a warm-hearted people were lavished on the son of a democratic President of the United States, and in more than one city he was constrained to decline the honor of a public entertainment.

Considerations of obvious propriety connected with his father's public relations to the democratic party, and subsequently an irreparable domestic affliction, [the death of his wife,] kept him in comparative retirement until about 1845. In that year the long growing feud between the two sections of this State, the "hunkers" and "barnburners," or conservatives and radicals, which had been smothered for a season, by the absorbing struggle of 1844, broke out with violence. The election of Attorney General, for three years, was made *cheval de bataille* between the two divisions. Mr. Rufus W. Peckham, of Albany, were the candidates of the "hunkers," and Mr. Van Buren, of the "barnburners." After a hot struggle, Mr. Van Buren was nominated in the caucus by a majority of one; and subsequently appointed by the legislature.

From that hour he was before the people. On him the "barnburners" achieved their first victory in the party. Yet it was not till afterwards that he displayed those qualities which have made him their unquestioned champion and leader in the State.

His career as Attorney General was distinguished by a skill and ability in his profession, for which few, even of his friends, were prepared, and which at once gave him a high position at the bar of New York. Some of his prosecutions of the anti-renters and of the negro Freeman at Auburn, were master pieces of legal science and power.

His rencontre with Ambrose L. Jordon, Esq., afterwards his successor in office, during the great anti-rent trials, at Hudson, is fresh in the memory of every reader. The insult offered by Mr. Jordon was flagrant, and his chastisement was prompt and summary. It was one of those cases when the popular sympathy was all on one side. Mr. Jordon's manner was too well known to the bar and the public, to cause much dissatisfaction that in one instance at least, they had met a salutary reproof.

Soon afterwards occurred the famous New Scotland affair. Who was right and who was wrong in that memorable collision between the "barnburners" and "hunkers," the young democracy and the ancient regency of Albany, it is not ours to decide. It was an important convention to both parties, and it must be carried—it was carried—by the "barnburners."

His latest speech at Hudson, before the Columbia County Convention, if less pungent than those at Syracuse, Albany and Herkimer, was considered by many as his best effort. As an exposition of the great and difficult question of the Wilmot Proviso, it is the most able, nor is it wanting in pungency. Here and there his native edge would bite through. For instance, a passage which is said to have produced the greatest impression, and which is not in the published report of his speech. Speaking of the prevailing tendency of the young men of the day to be "barnburners," and its effect on the relative position of the two sections, within a few years he said:

"Wherever I go, I see a new race of men between twenty-one and thirty, pressing forward into political life in the republican party. I find, that almost without exception, they espouse with warmth and vigor the doctrines of the Free Soil party. They are the offspring of par-

tisan operation. He is a man after Dr. Johnson's own heart, though "a good hater;" and there is reason to believe that, though he did not countenance, as he did not witness, the rough usage-and-tumble treatment of such political and personal enemies, as Crosswell, Corning and the leading anti-renters, he did not hear of it with any overwhelming affliction of spirit.

It needs, they say, a great occasion to develop a great man; such an occasion is near at hand for Mr. Van Buren. While Silas Wright lived, his commanding personal strength of character gave the barnburners a hopeless advantage over their opponents. His sudden death, while it disheartened the former, encouraged the latter to make a last desperate struggle for their lost ascendancy in the State.

A convention was to be held at Syracuse, in September, 1847, to nominate State officers under the new constitution. The old hunkers strained every nerve to carry it. The barnburners did not awake to their danger until too late.

The doings of that convention produced results too extraordinary in the State, to be soon forgotten by our readers.

It was a memorable era in the history of the democratic party, it was not less so in the career of Mr. Van Buren. It was a convention of distinguished strength and talent. The master spirits of both parties were among its members—Barker, Cambreling, King, Grover, Rathbun and Field on one side; and on the other, Brady, Seymour, Stryker, and Peckham.

The very flower of the democracy was there. To be an equal among such men was an honor. But in the heat and press of the struggle, John Van Buren, like the Grecian King at Troy, stood a head and shoulders above them all. He was rejected as a delegate by the convention. That was not much to him. He was too great a

quarry for the hunkers to let him slip, once they had him in their toils. That convention brought him out, for the first time, in his native power of intellect and force of will, and made him at once the foremost man of his party in the State. His speech in his own case, was irresistible in its argument—in its invective tremendous. That day he smote the Philistines, "hip and thigh," with exceeding slaughter.—The editor of the *Argus* was flayed alive. For months he had been the object of his constant attacks, without the opportunity to reply. Now, it was his turn, and the vengeance he took "full measure and running over." Since that speech Mr. Crosswell's bitterness against him has evidently taken a deeper tinge.

It was a complete and signal triumph for Mr. Van Buren, and as unexpected as it was signal. A few men had known him as a strenuous and uncompromising radical, the object, recently, of the constant and bitter attacks of Mr. Crosswell, whose intuitive sagacity had discerned in him a foeman worthy of his steel. Most men remembered him simply as the son of a President—a young man rather ornamental than useful, the "Prince John," in short, of the London gossip; smart, good looking, and well bred, with rather a narrow escape of being a dandy. Not six men in the state were prepared for the powers he manifested at the convention. Like the Irish rebellion, he broke out forty thousand strong when no body expected it.

Thenceforth his course has been sufficiently direct and decided. He seems to have felt that for him, the Rubicon had been passed. He came at once into the contest, with a heartiness and vigor which, while it attached his party to him more firmly than ever, and established him in the leadership, in the same degree embittered his opponents. A gentleman from New Hampshire, happening in Albany, Oct. 23, 1847, interested very much in the Wilmot Proviso, and in the organization of a Northern party on that platform, from the city of Albany, addressed a letter to a friend in Boston, asking him if he would ascertain whether JNO. QUINCY ADAMS would UNITE with Mr. Wilmot, MARTIN VAN BUREN, Preston King, and Mr. Cambreling, to organize such a party. It should be added that it did not appear that he was authorized to use the names of these gentlemen, but made the inquiry on his own responsibility. The letter making that application was received on Sunday morning. It closes by saying, "I should be pleased to hear by the return mail what decision Mr. Adams may form, as it may be decisive in governing the future action, upon the other hand, of the Wilmot Proviso Democrats."

I have in my hands a copy of the letter written by that gentleman, Dr. Bowditch, on Sunday evening, Oct. 31st, describing the interview he had with John Quincy Adams on that day. I read to you the precise words written at that time, and speeded by the mail that night, in order to inform that gentleman, then in Albany, of the position of Mr. Adams.

"Learning from Mr. C. F. Adams, that his father was to start for Washington to-morrow, I went to Quincy this P. M. I found the old gentleman quite feeble, and inclined to feel that his course was nearly run. He complained of great debility, that had been, of late, augmenting daily. He spoke with much interest of the movement, and approves of it, but says he cannot put

and the cause of the radical party. If I were a conservative, as I am not—so doing, he would pledge himself to labor for the cause more than he can possibly do. In fact, I have rarely seen him so debilitated. He has doubt whether he shall ever reach Washington, and intimates that this will be his last session, and therefore he cannot do as we wish. I felt it to be indecent to urge upon the old man, worn out in the service of his country, any action that was not entirely in accordance with his feelings. Still I gain courage from the interview. *He approves of our cause, and bids us God speed.* Perhaps others, when he arrives at Washington, may persuade him to do what I could not."

Mark these words of encouragement—"He approves of our cause, and bids us God speed." It does not appear that he declined to be associated with Martin Van Buren, or thought that he could not take a place on the same platform.

I know, fellow-citizens, where John Quincy Adams must have been if he had lived. Drawing his earliest breath with the first opposition to British tyranny; passing into childhood with the Declaration of Independence; taking his place in manhood with the Federal Constitution; the great contemporary of our history, he must have been with all the advocates of freedom.

Fellow-citizens, I am tempted to say, seeing the spirit which animates your faces, that the work is almost done to-day; that the victory is already achieved; but I will not say that, for I wish

to stimulate you to renewed, and constant exertions in the cause. In your own especial neighborhoods, do what you can to unite all our friends. As was said of that great Frenchman, Carnot, "Organize, victory."

The sentiment of opposition to the Slave Power, to the extension of Slavery, and to its longer continuance under the Constitution wherever the Federal Government is responsible for it, though recognized by individuals, and adopted also by a small and inflexible party, has now for the first time become the leading principle of a broad, formidable, and national organization. It is indeed, as Mr. Webster has lately said, no new idea; it is as old as the Declaration of Independence. But it is an idea now for the first time recognized by a great political party; for if the old parties had been true to it, there would have been no occasion for our organization. It is said our idea is sectional. How is that? Because the Slave-holders live at the South? As well might we say that the Tariff is sectional because the manufacturers live at the North.

It is said that we have but one idea. I deny that; but admitting that it is so, are we not with our one idea better than a party with no ideas at all? And what is our one idea? It is the idea which combined our fathers on the heights of Bunker Hill. It is the idea which carried Washington through the trials of a seven years' war; which inspired Lafayette; which touched with coals of fire, the lips of Adams, Otis, and Patrick Henry. Ours is an idea which is, at least, noble and elevating; it is an idea which draws in its train, justice, humanity, and all the charities of life, and all that makes earth a home of improvement and happiness.

His personal appearance is striking. He is tall and slender, with a stoop not ungraceful in one of his height, and a gait, which like his sarcasm, is as unstudied and spontaneous as possible. The head, however, is the man. In any company, uncovered, it would strike the most careless observer. It is perfect in its way, and a type of its class. The features small and finely formed—the quick, well cut nostrils, the clear keen eye—the firm upper lip—it is, altogether, a face and head full of rare beauty and expression.

#### Speech of Charles Sumner in the Massachusetts State Convention.

[Photographic Report by Dr. Stone.]

And now, Mr. President, one word if you will pardon me. (Go on.) My friend who has preceded me has brought two names in what may seem to you, at first view, a novel conjunction; John Quincy Adams and Martin Van Buren. I propose to show to you still further evidence of that conjunction. I hold in my hand papers which have never before been presented to the public, but which will furnish some evidence of the position which John Quincy Adams would have occupied at this moment, had his life been spared to the cause of freedom. I had no purpose of introducing them on this occasion, but the remarks to which I have just listened, seemed to prepare the way for them, and you shall have them.

A gentleman from New Hampshire, happening in Albany, Oct. 23, 1847, interested very much in the Wilmot Proviso, and in the organization of a Northern party on that platform, from the city of Albany, addressed a letter to a friend in Boston, asking him if he would ascertain whether JNO. QUINCY ADAMS would UNITE with Mr. Wilmot, MARTIN VAN BUREN, Preston King, and Mr. Cambreling, to organize such a party.

He did not hesitate to avow that he would not vote "the Syracuse ticket"—with invective that overwhelmed, and sarcasm that cut to the bone, he assailed the candidates on the ticket, the men that made it, and all who supported it. He aroused the whole State. Every blow told. For weeks he employed the entire hunker press in this State in parrying or returning his attacks; he made himself felt even at Washington. He rose to a position of importance, not only in the State, but in the Union.

His latest speech at Hudson, before the Columbia County Convention, if less pungent than those at Syracuse, Albany and Herkimer, was considered by many as his best effort. As an exposition of the great and difficult question of the Wilmot Proviso, it is the most able, nor is it wanting in pungency. Here and there his native edge would bite through. For instance, a passage which is said to have produced the greatest impression, and which is not in the published report of his speech. Speaking of the prevailing tendency of the young men of the day to be "barnburners," and its effect on the relative position of the two sections, within a few years he said:

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It is in illustrations like this, plain, direct and keen, which go home to every man's breast, that one power of his eloquence lies. His hits are "most palpable" to every body—especially to the unlucky objects of them.

Mr. Van Buren is now about thirty-five years of age—in the bloom of his manhood and intellect. Since Wm. H. Crawford was hurried to an early grave, no man at the same age has enjoyed such a position before the country. Of course he has enemies—many and bitter. That is a part of his character. But he has troops of friends, devoted, enthusiastic, and efficient. Among the young men of this State his popularity is unbounded. They are proud of his courage, his talents, and his unswerving loyalty to his friends. In this last quality he is a genuine chip of the old block. Singulare unlike his father in many of his prominent characteristics, he resembles him in his fidelity to his friends. That he carries to the utmost. He never shrinks from them, though to stand by them is certain ruin. His friendship has, in that respect, the devotion of the deeper feeling of which the poet says:

"Through the furnace unshaking thy steps I'll pursue;

"And shield thee, and save thee, or perish there too.

The elements of popularity in his character are not merely of a public nature. In common with all who have ever distinguished themselves as popular leaders, he has the happy faculty of attracting equally all classes of men in public or private. His conversation is most brilliant in the social circle; the wine does not sparkle brighter, and his is the joke that is sure to set the table in a roar.

His style of speaking is strongly marked. Endowed by nature or education with coolness and possession that are imperturbable, and at times, perfectly superb, he has the habit of saying his most bitter things without apparent effort, and as if unconsciously. With the smoothest voice and the blandest air, he drops sarcasms and invectives that rattle forever. This is one quality that makes him unequalled in a debate.

His personal appearance is striking. He is tall and slender, with a stoop not ungraceful in one of his height, and a gait, which like his sarcasm, is as unstudied and spontaneous as possible. The head, however, is the man. In any company, uncovered, it would strike the most careless observer. It is perfect in its way, and a type of its class. The features small and finely formed—the quick, well cut nostrils, the clear keen eye—the firm upper lip—it is, altogether, a face and head full of rare beauty and expression.

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