SOME ACCOUNT OF THE PLATES.

BY JESSIE BENTON FRÉMONT.

In 1853 we were living in Paris, where Mr. Frémont was having his first leisure and rest, and his plan was repose and congenial study for a year or more longer, when there came from my father the information that Congress had ordered three lines to be surveyed with a view to select the best for overland travel and ultimately a railway; that it had been intended that he, Mr. Frémont, should lead one, but as Congress had not inserted any name in the bill, the then Secretary of War, Mr. Jefferson Davis, had not named Mr. Frémont to any of the three. Captain Gunnison, who had been given the command of the line of surveys intended for Mr. Frémont, was killed by the Indians in the earlier part of his work.

Of the four journeys of exploration already made by Mr. Frémont, three had been under orders of the Government, and one, that of 1848–49, was at his own cost. Finding himself omitted from this culminating work which was based on his own labors, Mr. Frémont organized and made a fifth journey at his own expense.

The instruments were selected in Paris, and on the way through London to his steamer at Liverpool, he found the just published volume of Cosmos, in which Humboldt, speaking of photography, hopes it will be applied in travel, as securing "the truth in Nature." In New York the daguerre apparatus was bought, and a good artist secured, Mr. Carvalho. And though new conditions and difficulties made many embarrassments, yet almost all the plates were beautifully clear, and realized the wish of Humboldt for "truth in representing nature." These plates were afterward made into photographs by Brady in New York. Their long journeying by mule through storms and snows across the Sierras, then

the searching tropical damp of the sea voyage back across the Isthmus, left them unharmed and surprisingly clear, and, so far as is known, give the first connected series of views by daguerre of an unknown country, in pictures as truthful as they are beautiful.

During the winter of '55–'56 Mr. Frémont worked constantly at Mr. Brady's studio aiding to fix these daguerre pictures in their more permanent form of photographs. Then at our own house I made a studio of the north drawing-room, where a large bayed window gave the proper light. Here for some months Hamilton worked on these views, reproducing many in oil; he was a pupil of Turner and had great joy in the true cloud effects as well as in the stern mountains and castellated rock formations. The engravings on wood were also made under our home supervision; by an artist young then, a namesake and grandson of Frank Key, the author of "The Star-Spangled Banner." From these artists their work was passed to artist-engravers of the best school of their art. Darley also contributed his talent. Some pictures he enlarged into india-ink sketches, and from his hand came the figures in many of the plates. This work progressed through the busy year to us of 1856.

Mr. George Childs, of Philadelphia, was to bring out the journals of the various expeditions as a companion book of American travel to the Arctic journeys of Dr. Kane, then being published by the same house. The year of '56 gave no leisure however for writing; what could be done without too much demand on Mr. Frémont was carried forward, but he alone could write and that was no time for looking back. Private affairs had been so much interfered with and necessarily deranged by the Presidential campaign, that the work proposed to be written and published was unavoidably delayed, and the contract finally cancelled; Mr. Frémont reimbursing Mr. Childs for all the expenditures made in preparation. The time for writing did not seem to come. Private affairs in California, then our war, and again private business until now. During these thirty years the boxes containing the material for this book were so carefully guarded by me, that all understood they must be saved first in case of fire. When we were leaving for Arizona in '78 the boxes containing the steel plates and wood blocks were placed in Morrell's "Fire-Proof" warehouse, which was destroyed by fire in October of '81. We lost much that was stored in that warehouse, choice books, pictures, and other treasured things, but these materials for the book we had had placed for greater security in the safes below the pavement, where the great fire passed over them and left them completely unharmed.

My father's portrait is another of the illustrations which have gone through the ordeal by fire. When his house here was burned in February of '55, the day chanced to be so cold that the water froze in the hose.

There was no adequate water supply, or good appliances for fire here then, and the firemen could only look on, powerless. Both Houses of Congress had adjourned immediately on hearing of the fire, and a vast throng surrounded the doomed house. My father felt their sympathy, but the volumes of suffocating smoke drove back all who tried to enter, when there came a young friend, our neighbor, and son of an old friend and neighbor, Mr. Frank Key (of "The Star-Spangled Banner"), and in spite of warning cries he plunged into the smoke and fire to save for my father the portrait of my mother, which he thought was in her former room.

When he was seen at a front window a great shout of relief rose. Dropping the picture to outstretched arms he climbed to the lintel of the hospitable door no one was ever to pass again and helping hands and roaring shouts greeted him—singed, scorched, but his eyes alight with joy to have saved the home face to my father. It was a mistake, for the portrait was that of my father in his younger day. It was the one only thing saved from all that house so full of accumulated household treasures from both my mother's and my father's lives and belongings. The library, his own, and his father's, with the great folios of English state trials from which he began to read law and history with his mother, was the keenest felt loss. Many precious private papers were burned, and nearly half the manuscript of the second volume of the Thirty Years' View.

My house was near and my father came to me. Neither of us had slept but he made me lie down and we had talked together as only those who love one another can talk after a calamity. This portrait stood on a dressing table, and we spoke of Barton Key's tender thought and brave effort to save for him what he would most value, and the pity of the mistake. "It is well," my father said, "there is less to leave now—this has made death more easy. *You* will have this picture of me."

I felt the undertone; but never knew until his life was ended that even then he was observing and recording for the guidance of his physician, symptoms which from the first he thought foretold cancer. So wonderful was his calm endurance that Dr. Hall and Dr. May each thought it might be another cause and that an operation might restore his health. For a time it did give relief. Then the disease re-asserted itself. With the certainty now, with the fierce pain eating away his life, my father rewrote the burned manuscript and completed his work. He had exacted silence from his physicians because "my daughters are all young mothers, and must not be subject to the prolonged distress of knowing my condition hopeless."

The last likeness, taken by Brady for me in New York in '57, shows the same energy, will, and directness, but all softened by time and the influence

of a mind constantly enlarging and therefore constantly freeing itself from personal views. And the constant exercise of kindness and protection, so marked in my father's nature and habits, have left a stamp of benignity which proves the tender inner nature lying deeper and stronger than that more commonly known which made his public record of defiant and aggressive leadership, and gives the complete man who was so loved by his friends and family.

The portrait of Mr. Jefferson is from an excellent copy of the original by Stuart, belonging to Mrs. John W. Burke, of Alexandria, Virginia; the great-granddaughter of Jefferson, and daughter of Mr. Nicholas Trist, the intimate friend of Jackson. Through another of Jefferson's immediate descendants, Miss Sarah Randolph, who wrote the beautiful "Domestic Life of Jefferson," I am indebted for knowledge of this portrait and the introduction to Mrs. Burke who has so kindly let me use it.

The head of Napoleon is from a collection of authentic Bonaparte souvenirs, a part of which was bequeathed to me by the Count de la Garde, a French gentleman who had made his collection in Paris from the days of the first Consulate. He was already a man of advanced age when we first knew him there in '52. His father was a member of the last Cabinet of Louis the 16th, and, as a boy of ten, he had seen the opening of the great revolution. In 1804 Bonaparte restored to him the remainder of their family estates, and gratitude was added to the sincere admiration he felt for the master-mind that had brought France to order from anarchy. There was also a previous link of intermarriage which connected his family with that of the Beauharnais, and brought friendly intimacy between Prince Eugène, Queen Hortense, and himself. From among his rich collection he made up for me an Album of Souvenirs of this historical family, with many autograph letters and various portraits at different epochs of Napoleon, Josephine, Hortense, and her brother Eugène and others. The portrait here given is of Napoleon as First Consul, date 1804.

The Count de la Garde died in 1861, and it shows how little the most cultivated continental foreigners comprehended our people, when even this charmingly intelligent man provided in his will "that, should the unhappy conditions of the country and disorders arising from revolution make it impossible to trace the Frémont family within a year," then my Album was to go to the Emperor (Napoleon III.), to whom he left all the rest of his Bonaparte collection.

Of course I received at once at my home in New York the letter of the Executor, and there should have been no delay in the bequest being sent to me there after my answer reached Paris.

In place of the Album however came a letter from the Executor, saying the Emperor wished to keep unbroken all souvenirs of his mother, and would

like to have also what the Count de la Garde had intended for me. That naturally they were of less interest to me, and that in any matter of personal interest to myself *"auprès de votre gouvernement"* the Emperor would lend his aid.

Although I repeated my request for the Album it did not come. The silence made me uneasy. I thought of the simple business American plan of asking at Wells and Fargo's Express if they could not get it on my order as a parcel; explaining the matter and showing them the correspondence. They agreed with me that a quick, silent move which was a business transaction could not be interfered with. And in that way my Album was at once secured, and brought to me. But the year of delay which was to make it lapse to the Emperor was nearly complete.

Other portraits, belonging with events, and given us for this use, will be further spoken of in the book.

Thomas H. Benton

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

SENATOR BENTON,

IN CONNECTION WITH WESTERN EXPANSION.

By JESSIE BENTON FRÉMONT.

When, in the opening of the war of 1812, my Father, under General Jackson, marched from Nashville to defend the lower Mississippi, he made two discoveries which gave new form to his own life and largely moulded the fate of our Western country to its ocean boundary.

The first, on which depended the other, was, that it lay within the power of his own will to regain health and live; the other, that until then his mind had been one-sided, and that there was a West as well as an East to our country. This march revealed to him the immense possibilities and future power of the then recent "Louisiana purchase;" and his mind gained the needed balance against the exclusively English and seaboard influences to which he had been born and in which he had been trained.

Quick to see and to foresee, and equally steadfast in living up to his convictions, his decision was made then; to leave inherited lands, family friends, and an already brilliant position in the law, and devote himself to the new West. To its imperial river—the Father of Floods—he became captive, and to it and the lands it drained he gave life-long, faithful, and accumulating service and homage. My father was so proudly and thoroughly American that his departure from all the influences that had created and until then governed his thoughts shows the power of innate force against inherited and educated influence.

Born of English parentage on the English seaboard; brought up in English and intensely colonial-royalist surroundings; trained by a scholarly