

CHAPTER XIV.—1844-1847.

OFF TO THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AND CAPITOL—
BEFORE THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—MEET AND HEAR JOHN QUINCY ADAMS—JAMES BUCHANAN—ANDREW JOHNSON—STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS—WILLIAM L. DAYTON—JOHN P. HALE—RUFUS CHOATE—
R. H. BAYARD—ROBERT J. WALKER—OTHER FAMOUS MEN IN THE AUDIENCE.

IN January, 1844, a party of us went to Washington, in order to awaken public attention in favor of the blind. We were asked to appear before the Senate and House of Representatives gathered in joint session: and here, in a poetical address which I was invited to give them, I had one of the most distinguished audiences of my life.

You may well imagine that it was with some trepidation that a young woman still in her twenties, appeared before Congress: I have been told that I was the first and last poet ever invited to speak, or to recite his or her own productions before the great National Assem-

Quincy Adams and James Buchanan.

bly. But I nerved myself to the task, and did as well as I could; and had the pleasure of receiving an enthusiastic encore.

Greatest of all who were present on that day, was John Quincy Adams. He was seventy-six years old, and had nearly all his life occupied some prominent office in the service of our country. He had been President of United States eighteen years before; and was now in his old age winning new laurels as a most worthy Representative in the Lower House of Congress.

During our stay in Washington I had the pleasure of hearing his speech on the subject of the Smithsonian Institute, and had the pleasure of a friendly greeting from him, and a clasp of his hand.

There was also a man in the audience whose father had emigrated from Ireland seventy-one years before, and whose mother was the daughter of a Pennsylvania farmer. This man had worked his way up, through various offices, until he was now United States Senator; and sixteen years afterwards he was elected President. His name was James Buchanan.

There was one comparatively young man, thirty-nine years of age: who had already commenced a unique career. As a tailor's apprentice, unable to read or write, he

Fanny Crosby's Life-Story.

had sat upon his bench, sewing up seams, while listening to books read aloud by a gentleman who used to come into the shop and read, in order to improve the minds of the workmen: and among the selections, some public speeches were reproduced, which had fired the young man's natural talent. He became ambitious, learned to read, and, marrying before he was of age, was taught to write, by his wife. He had been elected alderman of the little Tennessee town in which he settled, then mayor, then was sent to the legislature, and finally to Congress.

This tailor's apprentice-boy, Andrew Johnson, was yet to be a United States senator, a governor of his state, a vice-president, and finally by the death of the great Lincoln, President of United States. After a stormy administration, he was to retire to his home in Tennessee, to be sent to Washington once more as United States senator, and to die before he had fully entered upon his new political career.

There was also Hannibal Hamlin, who, only thirteen years afterwards, was to be elected Vice-President on the same ticket that gave the Presidency to Lincoln; and who, after that term expired, lived many years in public life.

Stephen A. Douglas was also present. He was then thirty-one years old, being only

United States Senators Galore.

forty-eight when he died, just after his defeat by Abraham Lincoln, in his canvass for the Presidency. His career was already a most promising one, and "The Little Giant", as he was called, was even then making his mark.

William L. Dayton, of New Jersey, was there: he was to run in 1856 for the Vice-Presidency, and be defeated, as was the head of the Republican ticket, John C. Fremont.

John P. Hale, of New Hampshire, who in 1852 ran for the Presidency on the Free Soil ticket, was also present on this occasion, being then a member of the Lower House of Congress.

Rufus Choate, the celebrated lawyer, was also there, serving out the unexpired term of Daniel Webster, who was called to the President's cabinet. Mr. Choate, it is said, did not feel at home in Congress, and was at his best when pleading at the bar.

Others who had at that time gained some prominence, and who afterwards achieved national and in some cases international renown, were R. H. Bayard, a Senator from Delaware; Robert J. Walker, from Mississippi; John J. Crittenden, of Kentucky, and Thomas H. Benton ("Old Bullion"), of Missouri.

There were in the House-portion of my audience, besides those already mentioned, Rob-

Fanny Crosby's Life-Story.

ert C. Winthrop, of Massachusetts; Hamilton Fish and Preston King, of New York; Henry A. Wise, of Virginia; Howell Cobb, of Georgia; John Slidell, of Louisiana; Robert Dale Owen, of Indiana, and "Long John" Wentworth, of Illinois.

Little did I think that there also sat before me, a man who was one day to be President of a Southern Confederacy, and one of the principal figures in a titanic war between the North and South. This was Jefferson Davis, only three months older than Johnson, and destined to live four years longer than he—dying in 1879.

There also sat before me, and did me the honor of listening, Alexander Stephens—thirty-five years old, who was destined to be Vice-President of the Confederacy, of which Jefferson Davis was President.

There were also in the audience that day, Joshua R. Giddings, a prominent Pennsylvania statesman; R. M. T. Hunter, of Virginia; William L. Yancey, of Alabama; Robert Toombs, of Georgia; and others who have since become more or less famous.

Added to these, were many others, perhaps equal to their more fortunate brothers who achieved celebrity, but who were debarred from it, maybe by circumstances beyond their

Obscure, but Brilliant Men.

control, or that of any one except Him who holds the failure and success of humanity within His all-powerful hand.

In April, 1847, we went to Washington again, and I once more had the privilege of appearing before Congress. Among the auditors on that occasion, were most of those above-mentioned, and in addition were several others who have since achieved additional fame.

While I could not see these brilliant men, I could feel their kindness, their appreciation, and their sympathy; I was introduced to many of them, and have followed with interest their course through life.

I naturally many times think about them, although now most if not all of them are dead and gone, and wonder how they could have been so kind as to listen to a young woman in her twenties, and to treat her with so much consideration. They were all intensely ambitious, although, mostly, obscure; and in the midst of their strenuous public life, they showed, by this considerate treatment of their blind visitors, that "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

While in Washington we visited a great many historical places, and felt the thrill of the great deeds that had been performed there. If

Fanny Crosby's Life-Story.

we could not see with the eye those objects of interest, we could with the imagination: which, like other faculties, grows stronger the more it is used.

CHAPTER XV.—1844-1897.

COLLECT POEMS AND PUBLISH A BOOK—"THE BLIND GIRL AND OTHER POEMS"—MY "DECLINING HEALTH"—DELIVERING A POEM BEFORE THE NEW JERSEY LEGISLATURE—ANOTHER VOLUME, "MONTEREY AND OTHER POEMS"—MY "DECLINING YEARS" FIFTY-TWO YEARS AGO—STILL ANOTHER BOOK, "A WREATH OF COLUMBIA'S FLOWERS"—PROSE STORIES—"BELLS AT EVENING."

IN 1844, I was induced to collect a number of my poems, for the purpose of publishing them in a volume.

The idea seemed to me at first presumptuous!—the thought of being styled an "author" was almost too much for my nerves. But after awhile, the matter was arranged—partly in spite of me, and partly in accordance with my gradually growing desires: and the book was finally published, by the firm of Wiley & Putnam, who then occupied offices at 161 Broadway.

The name of this book, which contained 160