

lican principles, was entitled to be considered the first choice of the citizens of the United States.

The position of Mr. Clay, in this contest for the presidency, was one of great delicacy and difficulty. He was precisely in that critical posture, that, whatever course he might pursue, he would be subject to misrepresentation and censure, and could not but raise up a host of enemies. Originally one of the four candidates for the presidency, he failed, by five electoral votes, in having a sufficient number to be one of the three candidates returned to the House of Representatives, of which he was then Speaker. In this posture of affairs, it was evident that upon the course which should be pursued by Mr. Clay, and his friends in the House, depended the question who should be elected President. As Mr. Crawford, on account of the critical state of his health, was considered out of the question, Mr. Clay was left to choose between Mr. Adams and Gen. Jackson.

In this posture of affairs, Mr. Clay saw, that however patriotic the principles on which he acted, and however pure the motives by which he might be governed in making his selection, he must inevitably expose himself to the severest animadversions from the defeated party. But he did not hesitate, in the discharge of what he believed to be a solemn duty he owed his country, to throw his influence in behalf of the man whom he believed the best fitted to serve that country in the responsible office of the presidency. Long before it

## CHAPTER VIII.

CHARGES OF CORRUPTION AGAINST MR. CLAY AND MR. ADAMS

—MR. ADAMS ENTERS UPON HIS DUTIES AS PRESIDENT—

VISIT OF LA FAYETTE—TOUR THROUGH THE UNITED STATES

—MR. ADAMS DELIVERS HIM A FAREWELL ADDRESS—DEPARTS FROM THE UNITED STATES.

THE election of Mr. Adams to the presidency, was a severe disappointment to the friends of Gen. Jackson. As the latter had received a majority of fifteen electoral votes over Mr. Adams, it was confidently anticipated, nay, virtually demanded, that he should be elected by the House of Representatives. This claim, it was insisted, was in accordance with the will of the people, as expressed in the electoral colleges, and to resist it would be to violate the spirit of the constitution, and to set at nought the fundamental principles of our republican Government. A sufficient reply to these positions is found in the fact, that Gen. Jackson did not receive a *majority* of the electoral votes, and hence a majority of the people could not be considered as desiring his election. The absolute truth, subsequently obtained on this point, was, that Mr. Adams had received more of the primary votes of the people than Gen. Jackson; and thus, according to all repub-



had been foreseen such a contingency would occur, he had expressed his want of confidence in the ability and fitness of Gen. Jackson for the executive chair. But in Mr. Adams he saw a man of the utmost purity and integrity of private character—a scholar of the ripest abilities—a statesman, a diplomatist, a patriot of unquestioned talents and of long experience,—one who had been entrusted with most important public interests by Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison and Monroe, and also had received from these illustrious men every mark of confidence—whose familiarity with the internal condition and foreign relations of the Union was unequalled by any public man! Between men so dissimilar in their qualifications, how could Mr. Clay, with the slightest regard to the welfare of the nation, the claims of patriotism, or the dictates of his conscience, hesitate to choose? He did not hesitate. With an intrepid determination to meet all consequences, he threw his influence in behalf of Mr. Adams, and secured his election.

This decisive step, as had been clearly foreseen, drew upon the head of Mr. Clay the severest censures of the supporters of Gen. Jackson. Motives of the deepest political corruption were attributed to him. They charged him with making a deliberate stipulation or “bargain” with Mr. Adams, to give his influence, on the understanding that he was to receive, in payment, the appointment to the state department. The undoubted object of this charge was to ruin Mr. Clay’s

future prospects, and make capital to the advantage of Gen. Jackson in the next presidential campaign. It implicated Mr. Adams equally with Mr. Clay. If the latter had been so corrupt as to offer his support on the promise of office, the former was quite as guilty in accepting of terms so venal. There never was a more base charge against American statesmen—there never was one more entirely destitute of foundation, or even shadow of proof! It was at no time considered entitled to the slightest particle of belief by those who were at Washington during these transactions and had an opportunity of knowing the true state of things at that time. But there were many, throughout the country, too ready to receive such reports in regard to public men. Both Mr. Adams and Mr. Clay were greatly prejudiced by this alleged collusion—a prejudice which years did not efface.

This charge first appeared in a tangible form shortly previous to the election by the House of Representatives, in an anonymous letter in the “Columbian Observer,” at Philadelphia. It was soon ascertained to have been written by Mr. Kremer, a member of the House of Representatives from Pennsylvania. Mr. Clay immediately published a card in the National Intelligencer, denying, in unequivocal terms, the allegation, and pronouncing the author “an infamous calumniator, a dastard, and a liar!”

A few days after this, Mr. Kremer acknowledged himself the author of the letter in the “Columbian



Observer," and professed himself ready to prove the corruptions alleged: whereupon Mr. Clay demanded that the House raise a committee to investigate the case. The committee was appointed; but Mr. Kremer, on grounds of the most frivolous description, refused to appear before the committee, or to furnish a particle of proof of the truth of the grave assertions he had uttered—thus virtually acknowledging their slanderous character.

Mr. Clay being in this manner denied the privilege of vindicating his innocence, and showing the depravity of his accusers, the matter continued in an unsettled state until the next presidential campaign, when it was revived in a more tangible form, and brought to bear adversely to Mr. Adams's administration and reelection. In 1827, Gen. Jackson, in a letter to Mr. Carter Beverly, which soon appeared in public print, made the following statement:—

"Early in January, 1825, a member of Congress of high respectability visited me one morning, and observed that he had a communication he was desirous to make to me; that he was informed there was a great intrigue going on, and that it was right I should be informed of it. \* \* \* \* \* He said he had been informed by the friends of Mr. Clay, that the friends of Mr. Adams had made overtures to them, saying, if Mr. Clay and his friends would unite in aid of Mr. Adams's election, Mr. Clay should be Secretary of State; that the friends of Mr. Adams were urging, as a reason to induce the friends of Mr. Clay to accede to their proposition, that if I were elected President, Mr. Adams would be continued Secretary of State; that the friends of Mr. Clay stated the West did not wish to separate from the West, and if I would say, or permit any of my confidential friends to say, that in case I were elected President

Mr. Adams should not be continued Secretary of State, by a complete union of Mr. Clay and his friends, they would put an end to the presidential contest in one hour. And he was of opinion it was right to fight such intriguers with their own weapons."

On a subsequent statement, Gen. Jackson asserted that the gentleman who called upon him with these propositions was James Buchanan, of Pennsylvania.

This was the Kremer charge made definite in circumstances and application; and if well grounded, was susceptible of plain proof. On the appearance of this statement by Gen. Jackson, Mr. Clay came out with a positive denial. He said:—

"I neither made, nor authorized, nor knew of any proposition whatever, to either of the three candidates who were returned to the House of Representatives, at the last presidential election, or to the friends of either of them, for the purpose of influencing the result of the election, or for any other purpose. And all allegations, intimations, and inuendoes, that my vote on that occasion was offered to be given, or was in fact given, in consideration of any stipulation or understanding, express or implied, direct or indirect, written or verbal,—that I was, or that any other person was not, to be appointed Secretary of State; or that I was, or in any other manner to be, personally benefitted,—are devoid of all truth, and destitute of any foundation whatever."

Here was a direct collision between Gen. Jackson and Mr. Clay. All now rested with Mr. Buchanan. His testimony would either prostrate Mr. Clay, or place him, in regard to this matter, beyond the reach of the foulest tongue of calumny. In due time Mr. Buchanan made his statement, in which he denied, in



unequivocal language, having made any such proposition to Gen. Jackson. In his explanation he says:—

“I called upon General Jackson solely as his friend, upon my individual responsibility, and not as the agent of Mr. Clay, or any other person. I never have been the political friend of Mr. Clay, since he became a candidate for the office of President. Until I saw General Jackson’s letter to Mr. Beverly, of the 6th ult., and at the same time was informed, by a letter from the editor of the United States Telegraph, that I was the person to whom he alluded, the conception never once entered my head, that he believed me to be the agent of Mr. Clay, or of his friends, or that I had intended to propose to him terms of any kind from them, or that he could have supposed me to be capable of expressing the opinion that ‘it was right to fight such intriguers with their own weapons.’ Such a supposition, had I entertained it, would have rendered me exceedingly unhappy, as there is no man on earth whose good opinion I more valued than that of General Jackson. \* \* \* \* \* I owe it to my character to make another observation. Had I ever known, or even suspected, that General Jackson believed I had been sent to him by Mr. Clay or his friends, I should immediately have corrected his erroneous impression, and thus prevented the necessity for this most unpleasant explanation. \* \* \* \* \* I had no authority from Mr. Clay, or his friends, to propose any terms to General Jackson in relation to their votes, nor did I ever make any such proposition.”

This statement fully and triumphantly exonerated Mr. Clay, Mr. Adams, and their friends, from the charge of “bargain” and “corruption,” which had been so boldly made and widely disseminated. The only witness ever brought upon the stand to support such an allegation, asserted, in a manner the most positive and decisive, the entire innocence of the parties implicated.

That Mr. Clay, in throwing his influence in behalf

of Mr. Adams, was but following out a resolution formed long before he had any opportunity of communication with Mr. Adams or his friends, on the subject, is proved by the following extract of a letter from a gentleman in Lexington, Ky., to the editors of the National Intelligencer, dated March 21, 1825:—

“At different times, before Mr. Clay left this place for Washington, last fall, I had conversations with him on the subject of the choice of a President by the House of Representatives. In all of them, he expressed himself as having long before decided in favor of Mr. Adams, in case the contest should lie between that gentleman and General Jackson. My last interview with him was, I think, the day before his departure, when he was still more explicit, as it was then certain that the election would be transferred to that tribunal, and highly probable that *he* would not be among the number returned. In the course of this conversation, I took occasion to express my sentiments with respect to the delicate and difficult circumstances under which he would be placed. He remarked that I could not more fully apprehend them than he did himself; but that nothing should deter him from the duty of giving his vote; and that no state of things could arise that would justify him in preferring General Jackson to Mr. Adams, or induce him to support the former. So decisive, indeed, were his declarations on this subject, that had he voted otherwise than he did, I should have been compelled to regard him as deserving that species of censure which has been cast upon him for constantly adhering to an early and deliberate resolution.”

It was thought, by some of Mr. Clay’s friends, that he erred in judgment in accepting the office of Secretary of State, as it would tend to strengthen his enemies in their efforts to fix upon him the charge of corruption. Among those entertaining this opinion was Mr. Crawford, himself one of the three presiden-



tial candidates returned to the House of Representatives. In a letter to Mr. Clay he says :—

“I hope you know me too well to suppose that I have countenanced the charge of corruption which has been reiterated against you. The truth is, I approved of your vote when it was given, and should have voted as you did between Jackson and Adams. But candor compels me to say, that I disapproved of your accepting an office under him.”

In replying to this letter Mr. Clay remarked :—

“I do, my dear sir, know you too well to suppose that you ever countenanced the charge of corruption against me. No man of sense and candor—at least none that know me—ever could or did countenance it. Your frank admission that you would have voted as I did, between Mr. Adams and Gen. Jackson, accords with the estimate I have ever made of your intelligence, your independence, and your patriotism. Nor am I at all surprised, or dissatisfied, with the expression of your opinion, that I erred in accepting the place which I now hold. \* \* \* \* \* The truth is, as I have often said, my condition was one full of embarrassments, whatever way I might act. My own judgment was rather opposed to my acceptance of the department of state. But my friends—and let me add, two of your best friends, Mr. McLane of Delaware and Mr. Forsyth—urged me strongly not to decline it. It was represented by my friends, that I should get no credit for the forbearance, but that, on the contrary, it would be said that my forbearance was evidence of my having made a bargain, though unwilling to execute it. \* \* \* \* \* These and other similar arguments were pressed upon me; and after a week’s deliberation, I yielded to their force. It is quite possible that I may have erred \* \* \* \* \* I shall, at least, have no cause of self-reproach.”

In 1829, after Mr. Adams had retired from the Presidential chair, in reply to a letter from a committee of gentlemen in New Jersey, who had addressed him, he

spoke of Mr. Clay as follows: “Upon him the foulest slanders have been showered. Long known and appreciated, as successively a member of both Houses of your national Legislature, as the unrivalled Speaker, and at the same time most efficient leader of debates in one of them; as an able and successful negotiator of your interests, in war and peace, with foreign powers, and as a powerful candidate for the highest of your trusts, the department of state itself was a station which by its bestowal could confer neither profit nor honor upon him, but upon which he has shed unfading honor, by the manner in which he has discharged its duties. Prejudice and passion have charged him with obtaining that office by bargain and corruption. Before you, my fellow-citizens, in the presence of our country and heaven, I pronounce that charge totally unfounded. This tribute of justice is due from me to him, and I seize with pleasure the opportunity afforded me by your letter, of discharging the obligation. As to my motives for tendering to him the department of state when I did, let that man who questions them come forward; let him look around among statesmen and legislators, of this nation, and of that day; let him then select and name the man whom, by his pre-eminent talents, by his splendid services, by his ardent patriotism, by his all-embracing public spirit, by his fervid eloquence in behalf of the rights and liberties of mankind, and by his long experience in the affairs of the Union, foreign and domestic, a President of the United States,



intent only upon the welfare and honor of his country, ought to have preferred to HENRY CLAY. Let him name the man, and then judge you, my fellow-citizens, of my motives."

When Mr. Adams was on a tour in the western States, in the fall of 1843, in addressing the chairman of the committee of his reception, at Maysville, Kentucky, he said: "I thank you, sir, for the opportunity you have given me of speaking of the great statesman who was associated with me in the administration of the General Government, at my earnest solicitation; who belongs not to Kentucky alone, but to the whole Union; and who is not only an honor to this State, and this nation, but to mankind. The charges to which you refer, after my term of service had expired, and it was proper for me to speak, I denied before the whole country. And I here reiterate and re-affirm that denial; and as I expect shortly to appear before my God, to answer for the conduct of my whole life, should these charges have found their way to the throne of eternal justice, I WILL in the presence of OMNIPOTENCE pronounce them FALSE."

Before the world Mr. Clay and Mr. Adams stand acquitted of the calumny which their enemies endeavored, with an industry worthy a better cause, to heap upon them. The history of their country will do them ample justice. Their names shall stand upon its pages, illuminated by a well-earned fame for patriotism and faithful devotion to public interests,

when those of their accusers will be lost in a merited oblivion.

Mr. Adams, having entered upon his duties as President of the United States, prosecuted them with all that diligence and industrious application which was one of the leading characteristics of his life. Unawed by the opposition and the misrepresentations of his political enemies, and uncorrupted by the power and influence at his control, he pursued the even tenor of his way, having a single object in view, the promotion of the welfare of the people over whom he had been called to preside.

In the meantime, the heart of the nation was being stirred by old and valued reminiscences. LA FAYETTE, —a hero of the revolution—the companion of Washington—whose blood had enriched American soil in defence of American freedom—had expressed a wish to re-visit once more, before departing life, the scenes of his early struggles and well-earned glories. This intimation was first given in the following letter to Col. Willet, an old friend and fellow-soldier of La Fayette, who was then still living in New-York.

*Paris, July 15, 1822.*

"MY DEAR SIR :—I avail myself of a good opportunity to remind you of your old friend and fellow-soldier, in whose heart no time nor distance can abate the patriotic remembrance and personal affections of our revolutionary times. We remain but too few survivors of that glorious epoch, in which the fate of two hemispheres