

This article is protected by copyright, East Tennessee Historical Society. It is available online for study, scholarship, and research use only.

Suggested Citation:

Kelsay, Isabel Thompson. "The Presidential Campaign of 1828." *The East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 5 (1933): 69-80.

latest altitudes announced by

Smokies without a local name, Guyot assumed the explorer's titles of his own choosing, and to survive. For this reason complete descriptive data, years ago to identify with any of the peaks of the Smokies. Gigable efforts of Myron H. researcher for all facts regarding a map drawn under Sandoz, hidden away in the and Geodetic Survey, gave almost every item in Guyot's

ation of the Smokies ceased. construction days and after more momentous affairs to . It has remained for the beauties and attractions to

THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN OF 1828

BY ISABEL THOMPSON KELSAY

"How the Election of President may result is impossible to tell. The rumor of Barter of office, intrigue and corruption still afloat, which I hope for the honor of our country there is no truth in."¹ It was February 7, 1825, and Andrew Jackson was writing to a friend the news of the capital city. Since the day when the presidential election had been thrown into the House, and that body had been faced with the prospect of choosing among the three highest candidates, Jackson, John Quincy Adams, and William H. Crawford, Washington had been filled with a wild surmise. Henry Clay, though he had run a bad fourth in the race, yet controlled enough votes in the House to make or break either of his more successful competitors. The political pot was boiling furiously as the friends of these gentlemen bestirred themselves. There were rumors that Clay had sold his strength, first to one candidate and then to another. Then from Georgia the news leaked out that Crawford, in spite of his desperate efforts at concealment, was seriously ill, probably a hopeless paralytic. The contest narrowed down to Jackson and Adams, and now rumor declared that Adams and Clay had made a bargain, the former to be President and the latter to have the first office in the Cabinet as the price of his support.

On February 9, 1825, the election was held. Clay voted for Adams. Jackson, so far, appeared "altogether placid and courteous"² and that evening congratulated his successful rival. But a few days later Adams offered Clay the nomination as Secretary of State. Thereupon Jackson flew into a rage. "So you see," he exclaimed, "the Judas of the West has closed the contract and will receive the thirty pieces of silver. . . . Was there ever witnessed such a bare faced corruption in any country before?"³ To the end of his days Jackson firmly believed that he had been cheated out of

¹ Andrew Jackson to William B. Lewis, Feb. 7, 1825, in John Spencer Bassett, (ed.), *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (Washington, 1926-1931), III, 276.

² Charles Francis Adams (ed.), *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, 1874-1877), VI, 502.

³ Jackson to Lewis, Feb. 14, 1825, in *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, III, 276.

the presidency in 1825, and that the will of the people, as expressed by the fact that he had received a plurality of electoral votes, had been deliberately flouted by Adams and Clay. It was intolerable that such an insult to democracy should be perpetrated through his own person. Heretofore not unduly anxious for the presidency, he now turned all his energies to achieving it.

Eight months later Jackson, having been renominated for President, gave up his seat in the Senate and, leaving his affairs in Washington in the capable hands of his party managers, retired to the Hermitage. The next three years he wisely remained at home and played a part of seeming supineness. A voluminous correspondence, however, shows evidence of much quiet activity as he kept in constant touch with the leaders of his newly-forming party both in the capital and in the various states. Through Martin Van Buren in New York, Buchanan in Pennsylvania, Caleb Atwater in Ohio, Blair and Kendall in Kentucky, Edward Livingston in Louisiana, Calhoun and Hayne in South Carolina, as well as many others he kept his finger on the pulse of the nation.

At the same time he developed a streak of diplomacy and refused to commit himself on controversial subjects. No one ever retained a nicer balance on the political fence than did this heretofore impetuous and outspoken old soldier. Quite often we are diverted with the spectacle of Robert Y. Hayne trying to pin him down to definite statements or of John C. Calhoun maneuvering for his own advancement, but Jackson was not to be cajoled by flattery, and he either ignored questions of an incriminating nature or referred to his congressional record—and the latter gave scant information indeed. "My real friends", he declared, "want no information from me on the subject of internal improvements and manufactories, but what my public acts has afforded, and I never gratify my enemies."⁴ Jackson knew only too well the varied composition of his party and the widely contradictory opinions to be found within it. He was aware that his supporters favored him on personal grounds alone and he picked his way accordingly.

But on matters of more intimate concern this mantle of diplomacy wore thin. All through the campaign Jackson inwardly seethed, muttered dire threats of retribution, and occasionally broke out into print whenever he felt some particularly opprobrious slander had been directed at him by the "coalition", as he scornfully characterized the Adams-Clay party. Several times his friends were forced

⁴ Jackson to George W. Campbell, Feb. 14, 1828, in *ibid.*, III, 390.

to intervene,⁵ a quiet, pointing the hands of h sake", begged one man can v the main thes himself with u

This, howev It is true that his managers, charge that Ja in the corres Jackson was t merely confor however much a becoming co er the degree nity be openl selves as thou ing popular s

This attitu during the w ably believed fice and was ents' method He refused it would be dotes for a Bible society forth hypoc tioneer."⁶ Y one of the this country islatore he brate the a

⁵ Some of which he had time Jackson Calhoun pat

⁶ Caleb A The Life of

⁷ Jackson ⁸ Jackson 1826, in *ibid*

of the people, as expressed by of electoral votes, had Clay. It was intolerable the perpetrated through his ous for the presidency, g it.

n renominated for Presi- l, leaving his affairs in arty managers, retired to wisely remained at home

A voluminous corre- uch quiet activity as he his newly-forming party s. Through Martin Van lvania, Caleb Atwater in vward Livingston in Lou- na, as well as many oth- nation.

k of diplomacy and re- subjects. No one ever ce than did this hereto-

Quite often we are ayne trying to pin him Calhoun maneuvering for t to be cajoled by flat- incriminating nature or ne latter gave scant in- declared, "want no in- rnal improvements and s afforded, and I never oo well the varied com- adictory opinions to be porters favored him on ay accordingly.

this mantle of diplo- Jackson inwardly seeth- occasionally broke out ly opprobrious slander as he scornfully charac- his friends were forced

in *ibid.*, III, 390.

to intervene,⁵ and we know that they constantly urged him to keep quiet, pointing out that a display of temper would be a weapon in the hands of his enemies. "For Heaven's sake, for your country's sake", begged Caleb Atwater from Ohio, "do remember that but one man can write you down—his name is Andrew Jackson".⁶ In the main these exertions were rewarded, for Jackson comported himself with unusual restraint.

This, however, was as far as the influence of his friends went. It is true that much of the actual course of events was directed by his managers, but that was only a part of the game, and the charge that Jackson was their tool is ridiculous. There is nothing in the correspondence—and it is amazingly large—to show that Jackson was the tool of anybody. In his apparent quiescence he was merely conforming to the conventional standards of behavior, for, however much a candidate may have desired office, the people liked a becoming coyness in public. And the higher the office, the greater the degree of coyness. Presidential nominees could not with dignity be openly active in their own behalf; they must comport themselves as though the candidacy were forced upon them by overwhelming popular sentiment rather than by their own choosing.

This attitude Jackson maintained with only an occasional lapse during the whole of the campaign. He often reiterated (and probably believed) the sentiment that he neither sought nor declined office and was particularly scathing in his denunciation of his opponents' methods as "a travelling cabinet ranging over the continent".⁷ He refused to go to a Kentucky health resort on the grounds that it would be construed as electioneering; he would not furnish anecdotes for a biography; and he even declined to address a local Bible society, fearing that he might be charged "with having come forth hypocritically under the sacred garb of religion thus to electioneer."⁸ Yet strangely enough Jackson willingly lent himself to one of the most spectacular and effective campaign devices which this country has ever seen. At the invitation of the Louisiana legislature he journeyed down the Mississippi to New Orleans to celebrate the anniversary of his famous victory. It was a triumphal

⁵ Some of Jackson's friends in Washington intercepted an insulting letter which he had written to Samuel L. Southard, then in Adams' Cabinet. Another time Jackson was about to become involved with ex-President Monroe when Calhoun patched things up.

⁶ Caleb Atwater to Jackson, Sept. 4, 1828, quoted in John Spencer Bassett, *The Life of Andrew Jackson*, (one vol. ed., New York, 1931), 396.

⁷ Jackson to Richard M. Johnson, Sept. 1828, in *Correspondence*, III, 431.

⁸ Jackson to Committee of the Davidson County Bible Society, Sept. 30, 1826, in *ibid.*, 315.

progress all the way. At New Orleans the river was full of steamboats, flags were waving, and crowds were cheering. Friends from all over the country met him, and there were four days of festivities, dinners, and speech-making. Coached by Arthur P. Hayne, Jackson's speeches created favorable comment, being eloquent and mostly of a military tenor. Throughout the country there were other celebrations of a like nature on this eighth of January, and the newspapers were generally enthusiastic, excepting, of course, the Adams papers. Adams himself was not without scornful words for the man who would travel hundreds of miles in the dead of winter "to exhibit himself in pompous pageantry".⁹

In the meantime the Jackson party had been slowly forming in Congress. Composed of many discordant elements and united on but one policy—to oust Adams and Clay—the new party might have died and Jackson's popularity have waned before 1828 had it not been for the exceeding wariness and energy of his managers. One of the most unwearied of these managers was Martin Van Buren of New York, a former Crawford man. Crawford's elimination turned Van Buren to Jackson, upon whose personal popularity he depended for success, trusting that "favorable associations"¹⁰ would remove the rust from the hero's Republican principles. Van Buren worked untiringly both in Congress and in the state of New York. He played an intricate game of politics with the powerful and ambitious De Witt Clinton, who for the better part of the campaign kept both candidates guessing. Early in 1828 Clinton suddenly—and not inopportunistically—died, and most of his followers then lined up for Old Hickory. Another firm Jackson supporter was James Buchanan of Pennsylvania, who accomplished wonders in that state and modestly characterized himself to Jackson as "your efficient friend".¹¹

A third leader in the fight against Adams and Clay was none other than the Vice President himself, John C. Calhoun. Calhoun had his own presidential aspirations and was one of those who had visions of using Jackson as a tool. Whatever claims to statesmanship he may have acquired in later life, at this stage of his career his part was hardly heroic. Hated by the Adams-Clay group and distrusted, though necessarily accepted by the Jackson camp, he

⁹ Adams, *Memoirs*, VII, 479.

¹⁰ The *Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, ed. by John C. Fitzpatrick, in *American Historical Association, Annual Report for 1918* (Washington, 1290), II, 198.

¹¹ James Buchanan to Jackson, Aug. 10, 1827, in John Bassett Moore (ed.), *The Works of James Buchanan* (Philadelphia and London, 1908-1911), I, 269.

wended a dev
after Adams
President tha
would be org
in his diary,
dent, under
tion must be
measures ma
form this pa
his threat, f
the Senate

After a
when the y
Mission. T
gress of th
for the pu
immediately
great gust
warns aga
Panama M
volve us in
Senate in
ate that C
him to or
cal subtlet
order! In
a barren
Congress.

The ne
son party
majority.
and a ne
mittees v
So high
recording
members
all inter
uncomm
son, Joh

¹² Ada

¹³ Jach

¹⁴ Ada

s the river was full of steam-
were cheering. Friends from
ere were four days of fes-
oached by Arthur P. Hayne,
comment, being eloquent and
t the country there were other
eighth of January, and the
c, excepting, of course, the
ot without scornful words for
f miles in the dead of winter
ry".⁹

had been slowly forming in
ant elements and united on
Clay—the new party might
ve waned before 1828 had
and energy of his man-
these managers was Mar-
Crawford man. Crawford's
kson, upon whose personal
ting that "favorable associ-
the hero's Republican prin-
oth in Congress and in the
ricate game of politics with
Clinton, who for the better
tes guessing. Early in 1828
ly—died, and most of his
ry. Another firm Jackson
sylvania, who accomplished
acterized himself to Jackson

Adams and Clay was none
John C. Calhoun. Calhoun
was one of those who had
atever claims to statesman-
at this stage of his career
he Adams-Clay group and
by the Jackson camp, he

ed. by John C. Fitzpatrick, in
for 1918 (Washington, 1290),

. in John Bassett Moore (ed.),
nd London, 1908-1911), I, 269.

wended a devious way through the politics of this era. A few days
after Adams was elected one of Calhoun's friends warned the new
President that if Clay was chosen Secretary of State an opposition
would be organized under Jackson. Of this interview Adams wrote
in his diary, "It is to bring in General Jackson as the next Presi-
dent, under the auspices of Calhoun. To this end the Administra-
tion must be rendered unpopular and odious, whatever its acts and
measures may be, and Mr. Calhoun avows himself prepared to per-
form this part".¹² And shortly afterward Calhoun began to fulfill
his threat, for the committees he appointed as presiding officer of
the Senate were decidedly hostile to the administration.

After a few skirmishes the first real battle began in Congress
when the young Jackson party united in opposition to the Panama
Mission. The administration proposed to send delegates to a con-
gress of the South American states which was meeting at Panama
for the purpose of discussing mutual problems. The Jacksonians
immediately raised the cry of unconstitutionality and quoted with
great gusto that part of Washington's Farewell Address which
warns against entangling alliances. Jackson himself described the
Panama Mission as "a hasty unadvised measure, calculated to in-
volve us in difficulties, *perhaps war*".¹³ John Randolph raved in the
Senate in speeches ten hours long, and his words were so intemper-
ate that Calhoun was severely censured in the press for not calling
him to order. Thereupon the Vice President resorted to metaphysi-
cal subtleties and declared he had no power to call a member to
order! In this instance the Administration won a victory, though
a barren one, as neither of the delegates ever reached the Panama
Congress.

The next session of Congress was even more stormy. The Jack-
son party was now so strong that it controlled both houses by actual
majority. The Adams man was ousted as Speaker of the House
and a new Speaker elected who now proceeded to choose the com-
mittees with the same partiality Calhoun had used in the Senate.
So high was the feeling between the two parties that we find Adams
recording in his diary that "there are about six Senators and forty
members of the House whose rancorous spirits have withdrawn from
all intercourse of civility with me".¹⁴ Challenges to duels were not
uncommon, and an actual fistic encounter took place between Adams'
son, John, and a Senate printer in the rotunda of the capitol.

¹² Adams, *Memoirs*, VI, 506-507.

¹³ Jackson to Buchanan, April 8, 1826, in *Correspondence*, III, 300.

¹⁴ Adams, *Memoirs*, VII, 374.

Such was the state of affairs while the tariff bill was being prepared, and it inevitably became a pawn in the game of politics. The Jackson managers faced a particularly thorny dilemma. They had to retain the good graces of the South who hated the very thought of the tariff, and at the same time please such states as New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio who desired the tariff and whose votes were urgently needed. At length they hit upon a brilliant scheme and early in 1828 laid before the House a bill embodying not only high general duties but excessive rates on raw materials as well. This latter provision would satisfy the western and middle states who were the producers of raw materials, but it was a blow at industrial New England who needed cheap raw materials and high protection for manufactured goods. The Jackson men, both of the North and South, would unite in preventing amendments to this bill, but when it came to the final vote the Southerners would vote "Nay." New England, which meant the Adams party, of course, would also have to reject the bill, and thus the Jacksonians would have their double triumph. For the bill would fail; the South would then be content, while the western and middle states would turn their anger against the Adams forces who would be to blame for the failure of the bill, and the Jackson men of those states could still pose as the true friends of the tariff. It was a very clever scheme indeed; the only trouble was—it didn't work. For when the final vote came the New Englanders did not behave as expected. Webster and his adherents accepted the detestable bill, partly from political motives and partly because any tariff looked better to them than none at all. In such a way did the South find itself saddled with the famous Tariff of Abominations.¹⁵ One Southern member indignantly wrote to Jackson, "The truth is that this infamous Administration has pressed this most iniquitous Tariff against the South with I believe the express hope of driving us into Rebellion. . . ."¹⁶ But another member, more frank, admitted that they had all been influenced by political considerations, but declared that it was better that their votes be so influenced than that Adams and Clay succeed.¹⁷

Opposition of so determined a nature had early put the administration on the defensive. Clay, realizing that his own presidential

¹⁵ For a detailed account of the events leading up to the tariff of 1828 see F. W. Taussig, *The Tariff History of the United States* (eighth ed., New York and London, 1931), 76-101.

¹⁶ Maj. James Hamilton, Jr., to Jackson, May 25, 1828, in *Correspondence*, III, 404.

¹⁷ John Branch to Jackson, May 23, 1828, in *ibid.*, 403.

prospects were
nail, grimly
ly half-heart
result if Ad
as his oppo
from the sta
his pride an
was. From
as the years
a certainty—
be elected, I

This fatal
campaign ev
the latter h
no other wa
long trainin
sometimes
the struggle
when dealing
Indians Cla
would be fo
not care w
influence t
long betwe
al of his f
ture gain.
plained tha
clared sente
ing to ven
possessed a
suppose th
paign was
lief that th
spondency
whereas a

Yet this
using the
holders un
rated such
ers were a

¹⁸ Adams

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2

the tariff bill was being pre-
sented in the game of politics,
a particularly thorny dilemma. They
the South who hated the very
time please such states as
who desired the tariff and
length they hit upon a brilli-
ent the House a bill embody-
cessive rates on raw materials
satisfy the western and middle
materials, but it was a blow
ed cheap raw materials and
s. The Jackson men, both
a preventing amendments to
vote the Southerners would
meant the Adams party, of
all, and thus the Jacksonians
or the bill would fail; the
e western and middle states
ms forces who would be to
the Jackson men of those
ds of the tariff. It was a
ouble was—it didn't work.
Englanders did not behave
ts accepted the detestable
rtly because any tariff look-
such a way did the South
riff of Abominations.¹⁵ One
Jackson, "The truth is that
d this most iniquitous Tar-
express hope of driving us
nber, more frank, admitted
tical considerations, but de-
be so influenced than that

had early put the admini-
g that his own presidential
g up to the tariff of 1828 see
States (eighth ed., New York
y 25, 1828, in *Correspondence*,
n *ibid.*, 403.

prospects were tied up with the coming election, fought, tooth and
nail, grimly every inch of the way; but Adams' efforts were strange-
ly half-hearted. One may indeed wonder what might have been the
result if Adams had fought as hard as Clay, or even half as hard
as his opponents declared he did. He was, however, despondent
from the start. The manner of his election was not satisfactory to
his pride and he felt that he was more unpopular than he actually
was. From the very first he spoke of preparing for retirement, and
as the years wore on that retirement seemed to him more and more
a certainty—though a most distasteful one. General Jackson would
be elected, he knew, "without an interposition of Providence".¹⁸

This fatalistic state of mind must have affected his conduct in the
campaign even more than his much-heralded Puritan principles, for
the latter had not prevented his serving well in Europe. There is
no other way to reconcile Adams' experience at foreign courts and
long training in diplomacy with his unconciliatory attitude and
sometimes utter disregard of tact. His belief in the uselessness of
the struggle seems to have permeated his every action. For example,
when dealing with the controversy between Georgia and the Creek
Indians Clay urged discretion, pointing out that otherwise Georgia
would be forced to vote for Jackson, but Adams replied that he did
not care whom Georgia supported. Nor would he do anything to
influence the course of Clinton in New York who dallied for so
long between the two candidates. He also discouraged the most loy-
al of his followers, for they could hope for neither present nor fu-
ture gain. To the editor of one of the Adams papers who com-
plained that the administration did not support its friends, he de-
clared sententiously, "I have observed the tendency of our electioneer-
ing to venality, and shall not encourage it".¹⁹ To be sure, Adams
possessed a strict Puritan conscience, but it is not unreasonable to
suppose that his refusal to contribute money for the Kentucky cam-
paign was motivated not so much by that conscience as by the be-
lief that the money would do no good anyway. Certainly his de-
spondency tended to emphasize his natural austerity of character,
whereas a happier frame of mind would have softened it.

Yet this was the man, who of all persons, was accused of mis-
using the federal patronage. Jackson firmly believed that the office-
holders under the government were being intimidated and loudly be-
rated such a system! As a matter of fact, most of the office-hold-
ers were at that time appointees of McLean or of Crawford—both

¹⁸ Adams, *Memoirs*, VII, 502.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 262.

unfriendly; Adams did not replace them, and thus he himself furnished his enemies with many of their local managers. McLean of the post-office department carried on a long and veiled hostility, and Clay constantly urged that he be removed, but Adams refused at first because of McLean's efficiency and later for political reasons. Whatever else he may have done, Adams did not inaugurate the spoils system. He saw clearly the evils that would result from removing office-holders because of their political preferences and sought earnestly to avoid them.

It was Clay who carried on the actual campaign. Adams did not go among the people except on his journeys to and from his Massachusetts home. It was Clay who attended the dinners, made the speeches, wrote the pamphlets, and went traveling in doubtful sections of the country. He fought vigorously and at first hopefully, but he, too, finally succumbed to the prevailing pessimism. His health and spirits were both failing, and toward the end he even talked of resigning from the Cabinet. This, however, Adams was loath to permit, privately attributing it to Clay's desire to save himself from the sinking ship.²⁰

No account of the campaign of 1828 is complete without some mention of one especially deplorable feature—the circulation of slander and calumny to influence the voters. The country was flooded with handbills, and the newspapers were full of such stories that to believe them was to believe that both candidates were abandoned criminals! Jackson, whose colorful career invited numerous such attacks, once exclaimed in exasperation that "every virtuous and patriotic act of my life is charged upon me as a crime".²¹ He was called a murderer, a traitor, an adulterer, a thief, a liar. He was ignorant, cruel, bloodthirsty, tyrannical—even insane! He was accused of everything from Burr's conspiracy to trafficking in negro slaves. All the regrettable squabbles of his early life were brought up; the trouble with Sevier and Benton and the duel with Dickinson found wide publicity. His connection with Masonry was exploited.²² The unfortunate circumstances of his marriage were flung far and wide as he was accused of running away with another man's wife. His Seminole Campaign received severe criticism. One of the stories to assume greatest notoriety was that of the execution of six militiamen at Fort Jackson early in 1815. John Binns, editor

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 525.

²¹ Jackson to Brig.-Gen. Richard K. Call, Aug. 16, 1828, in *Correspondence*, III, 427.

²² The Morgan affair had thrown this order into disrepute.

of an Adams pa
Handbill which
handbill, embellis
of the execution

And so on in

There was j
Jackson squirm
the militiamen,
His invasion o
misunderstandi
had been conne
norance of the
ced from a fo
much sentiment
tongues started
fully shielded
over and the
to come across
was prostrated
was dead of
truth. There
stories at leas
one of Jack
May, 1827.²³
wife, but the
strong as it
mittees of co
repel these a
tion, and he

²³ The Coff

²⁴ Mrs. Ra
415-416.

²⁵ Jackson t
John H. Eaton

them, and thus he himself furnished their local managers. McLean, on a long and veiled hostility, be removed, but Adams refused efficiency and later for political reasons, Adams did not inaugurate the evils that would result from their political preferences and

the actual campaign. Adams did on his journeys to and from his who attended the dinners, made and went traveling in doubtful vigorously and at first hopefully, prevailing pessimism. His health toward the end he even talked of however, Adams was loath to day's desire to save himself from

1828 is complete without some feature—the circulation of slanders. The country was flooded were full of such stories that both candidates were abandoned career invited numerous such that "every virtuous and upon me as a crime".²¹ He was alterer, a thief, a liar. He was cal—even insane! He was ac- spiracy to trafficking in negro s of his early life were brought aton and the duel with Dickin- section with Masonry was ex- nces of his marriage were flung nning away with another man's ived severe criticism. One of y was that of the execution of in 1815. John Binns, editor

l, Aug. 16, 1828, in *Correspondence*, order into disrepute.

of an Adams paper in Philadelphia, printed the so-called Coffin Handbill which played an important part in the campaign. This handbill, embellished with heavy black coffins, told the whole story of the execution in lugubrious verse.²³

O! Did you hear that plaintive cry
Borne on the southern breeze?
Saw you John Harris earnest pray
For mercy, on his knees?

And so on in complete and gory detail to the sixteenth stanza.
All six militia men were shot;
And O! it seems to me
A dreadful deed—a bloody act
Of needless cruelty.

There was just enough truth in most of these stories to make Jackson squirm. He had, indeed, confirmed the death sentence of the militiamen, but that sentence was justified by the circumstances. His invasion of Florida was unauthorized or, at best, the result of misunderstandings and poor communication with Washington. He had been connected with Burr, though innocently. And through ignorance of the law he had married his wife before she was divorced from a former husband. This latter episode has come in for much sentimentalizing on the part of certain historians. When the tongues started wagging about Rachel, Jackson is said to have carefully shielded her from this knowledge. After the campaign was over and they were preparing to go to Washington, she chanced to come across a particularly scurrilous article in a newspaper and was prostrated. From that moment she sickened and in three weeks was dead of grief and shame. This is a good story, but it lacks truth. There is positive proof that Mrs. Jackson knew of these stories at least five months before her death.²⁴ We may infer from one of Jackson's letters that she also had heard these stories in May, 1827.²⁵ Jackson was especially enraged at any attack on his wife, but the advice of his friends and a streak of caution—as strong as it was belated—kept him from too rash a course. Committees of correspondence had been formed all over the country to repel these accusations and otherwise further his prospects of election, and he was kept busy furnishing them with information.

²³ The Coffin Handbill is reprinted in Jackson, *Correspondence*, III, 455-464.

²⁴ Mrs. Rachel Jackson to Mrs. Elizabeth Watson, July 18, 1828, in *ibid.*, 415-416.

²⁵ Jackson to Brig.-Gen. Richard K. Call, May 3, 1827, in *ibid.*, 355. See also John H. Eaton to Mrs. Jackson, Dec. 7, 1828, in *ibid.*, 449.

Sworn testimony was collected and published revealing the truth about the marriage as well as certain other episodes in his life.

Adams was also the victim of much abuse and slander, although his life offered no such fertile field for the play of imagination. "I write few private letters", he declared, "and those under irksome restraints. I can never be sure of writing a line that will not some day be published by friend or foe. Nor can I write a sentence susceptible of an odious misconstruction but it will be seized upon and bandied about like a watch-word for hatred and derision."²⁶ These attacks centered mainly about the charges of "bargain and corruption" and misuse of patronage. The latter assertion has no basis in fact. Of the former we have little proof. There probably was an understanding between Adams and Clay,²⁷ and, if so, it was not unconstitutional nor even unethical. The constitution expressly provided that in case of no candidate receiving a majority the House should vote upon the three highest, and this in no way obligated the House to choose that candidate with a plurality of electoral votes. If the will of the people was defeated, the constitution permitted it. Nor was it so strange that Clay should have supported Adams regardless of any bargain. Crawford's health put him out of the race, and the softly-stepping Clay had always been hostile to the rash impetuous Jackson. Then, too, Jackson's political principles were extremely vague, while Adams stood foursquare for Clay's own American system. People thought that the appointment of Clay as Secretary of State sealed the corrupt bargain, but, bargain or not, Clay was the most natural selection Adams could have made for the office, and several years later when faced with the prospect of Clay's resignation he knew not where to look for a successor.²⁸

Adams was also accused of the misuse of public funds. Early in 1828 a member of the House introduced the so-called retrenchment resolutions. These resolutions proposed a reduction in governmental expenditures and were the signal for a furious political onslaught. Not only was the administration charged with wasteful extravagance, but Adams' old accounts dating back to his years in the foreign service were reopened for discussion and pronounced fraudulent—and this in spite of the fact that Adams, like most American diplomats, had found his career a heavy strain on his private purse.

²⁶ Adams, *Memoirs*, VII, 241-242.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, VI, 465. Adams' account of his interview with Clay is tantalizing in its omissions. He was not unaware of the probability that this diary would sometimes be published.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, VII, 216-217, 518.

Then there
bought (v
difficult t
the extrav

But pro
Hill, edit
while in
to seduce
political
Minister

The en
in, it wa
178 elect
Potomac
of New
this was
is it fair
represent
of the
he woul
federal
aspect o
parently
ed it at

The
democr
scene.
militar
qualiti
made
comm
especi
hand,
lights
Jackso
the c
It too
can s
"barg
send

published revealing the truth
other episodes in his life.

abuse and slander, although
or the play of imagination.
ured, "and those under irk-
of writing a line that will
or foe. Nor can I write a
struction but it will be seized
rd for hatred and derision."²⁶

ne charges of "bargain and
The latter assertion has no
little proof. There probably
nd Clay,²⁷ and, if so, it was

The constitution expressly
eiving a majority the House
d this in no way obligated
a plurality of electoral votes.

the constitution permitted
ould have supported Adams
health put him out of the
always been hostile to the
ackson's political principles
ood foursquare for Clay's
that the appointment of

rrupt bargain, but, bargain
ection Adams could have
later when faced with the
not where to look for a

e of public funds. Early in
the so-called retrenchment
reduction in governmental
furious political onslaught.
d with wasteful extrava-
back to his years in the
ion and pronounced fradu-
adams, like most American
strain on his private purse.

erview with Clay is tantalizing
obability that this diary would

Then there is the classic story of the billiard table which Adams bought (with his own money) for the President's house. It is difficult to tell whether the Jacksonians were more horrified at the extravagance or the immorality of such a purchase!

But probably the most absurd story of all was published by Isaac Hill, editor of a newspaper in New Hampshire. It related that while in Russia Adams "attempted to make use of a beautiful girl to seduce the passions of the Emperor Alexander and sway him to political purposes".²⁹ This drew a complaint from the Russian Minister in Washington, but no redress could be obtained.

The end was not unexpected. Slowly though the returns trickled in, it was soon evident that Jackson had won. In all he received 178 electoral votes to Adams' 83; he got every vote south of the Potomac and west of the Alleghenies plus all of Pennsylvania, part of New York and Maryland, and even one vote in Maine!³⁰ While this was not quite the popular landslide it seemed to be, neither is it fair to charge that Jackson was elected entirely by the overrepresentation of the South in the electoral college, for the number of the southern electors could have been considerably reduced, and he would still have won. Moreover, so careful a scrutiny of the federal ratio and its operation would to some extent change the aspect of almost any other election. At any rate, Jackson did apparently achieve an overwhelming victory; certainly no one questioned it at the time.

The election of 1828 was one of those periodic phenomena of democracy which have from time to time enlivened the American scene. Jackson was a popular hero, his appeal rested on his great military renown as well as to a certain extent on those very qualities which his opponents decried, but which nevertheless made him appear human and understandable to the masses. The common man thrilled to his deeds of military prowess and was not especially alarmed if he fought cocks or raced horses. On the other hand, Adams, whose battles had been unspectacular and whose delights were in Tacitus and Juvenal, elicited no such warm response. Jackson's cause became most effective when transmitted through the camp-meeting oratory of the backwoods and country districts. It took a certain amount of education to understand Clay's American system, but any man could respond to Jackson's battle-cry of "bargain and corruption" and feel that it was up to him to help send those rascals packing. The victory of Jackson meant to the

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 415.

³⁰ Bassett, *Life of Jackson*, 404-405.

people who elected him a veritable snatching of the nation from the jaws of destruction and the beginning of a golden age for mankind.³¹ On March 4, 1829, when Jackson was sworn in as President of the United States, Daniel Webster wonderingly described the event thus, "To-day we have had the inauguration. A monstrous crowd of people is in the city. I never saw anything like it before. Persons have come five hundred miles to see General Jackson, and they really seem to think that the country is rescued from some dreadful danger".³²

³¹ One of the best interpretations of Jacksonian democracy may be found in Frederic L. Paxson, *History of the American Frontier* (Boston, New York, etc., 1924), 250-257.

³² Daniel Webster to Mrs. E. Webster, Mar. 4, 1829, in Fletcher Webster (ed), *The Private Correspondence of Daniel Webster* (Boston, 1857), I, 473.