

GEORGE D. PRENTICE.

THE GENTLE POET EDITOR WHO ENCOURAGED MEN OF GENIUS.

A Stormy Journalistic Career the Result of His Caustic Pen—A Few Pungent Paragraphs—An Almost Fatal Quarrel. The Civil War.

After leaving college Prentice studied law, but, not meeting with immediate success, he drifted into journalism. He was the first editor of the once celebrated New England Review, and it was on that periodical that he won his spurs.

Soon after this Mr. Prentice was sent to Kentucky by a number of prominent Whigs to gather material for a life of Henry Clay, then about to be nominated for the presidency. While in Louisville on this mission he was offered the editorship of a new daily paper, then being established in opposition to the Jackson Democracy. He accepted the position and was for the remainder of his life closely identified with the political and literary life of the south. He resigned the editorship of The Review, recommending as his successor John G. Whittier, then an unknown poet, who had sent some of his first poems to The Review.

Upon assuming the editorial control of The Journal, Prentice at once placed it among the most influential papers of the day, and made the political and literary departments alike shine with the light of his talented pen. It became the acknowledged organ of the Whig party in the south and west, and to the last supporter of Henry Clay for president. Prentice and "Harry of the West" became fast friends, and Clay was the inspirer of some of the most brilliant editorials which appeared in The Journal. But it is not intended here to review the political course of The Journal under the editorship of Prentice, though the life of the man and the paper are so closely identified that it is almost impossible to separate them. In its editorials it was sharp and pointed, sometimes being almost cruel in its thrusts, but more often they were sweetened with good humor.

Here are a few: "Have I changed?" exclaims Governor P. We don't know; that depends on whether you were ever an honest man.

The editor of the — speaks of his "lying curled up in bed these cold mornings." This verifies what we said of him some time ago: "He lies like a dog."

The Globe says: "Mr. Clay is a sharp politician." No doubt of it; but the editor of The Globe is a sharper.

Messrs Bell & Topp, of The Gazette, say that "Prentices are made to serve masters." Well, Bells were made to be hung and Toppes to be whipped.

Mr. Prentice made many enemies by the course of his paper, and had not a few personal difficulties, nearly all of which he came out of with grace and honor to himself. This was not an easy matter when it is known that he was a bitter opponent of the duello, which was at that time so popular in the south. His position is defined in a letter to one of his challengers: "I am no believer in the dueling code. I would not call a man to the field unless he had done me such a deadly wrong that I desired to kill him, and I would not obey his call to the field unless I had done him so mortal an injury as to entitle him, in my opinion, to demand an opportunity of taking my life."

One of his quarrels came near being fatal to the poet, however. An editor named Trotter became incensed at some of The Journal's personal allusions, fired at Prentice on the street and wounded him in the breast. Though severely wounded, the poet grappled with his would-be murderer, and, after a fierce struggle, succeeded in throwing him to the ground. A knife was given him by one of his friends, and the crowd which had gathered, seeing the blood which was flowing from the wound in Prentice's breast, shouted: "Kill him! Kill him!" But the gentle poet released the subdued Trotter with the chivalrous remark: "I cannot kill a disarmed and helpless man."

A volume of the epigrammatical paragraphs which gave Prentice so much trouble were collected during his lifetime under the title of "Prenticeana," and though many of them have lost their point by the lapse of time, one reading them can hardly wonder that the author got into frequent trouble with the hot blooded men at whom they were aimed.

Though The Journal was to a great extent a political paper, its literary department was to many its greatest charm. The gifted editor gave his special attention to it, and in the midst of a great political crisis he would find time to contribute to it himself and to read and criticize personally the numerous poetical effusions which were submitted to him. Many a well known American author has somewhere among his papers a letter from the kindly poet editor encouraging him with advice. He praised without stint if it was deserved, but he was quick to see when the poetic gift was lacking, and he would then be the first to tell the aspirant of his lack. His name is associated with the first attempts of many of the most successful and gifted writers of the day. Among the contributors to The Journal, when they were yet unknown in the world of letters, were John G. Whittier, John Howard Payne, James Freeman Clark, Mrs. Sigourney, Alice and Phoebe Cary, William Dean Howells, William Wallace Harney and Foreythe Willson. The latter was one of the most remarkable of The Journal's contributors, and was the favorite protégé of Prentice. He resembled Poe in the eccentricity and weird imagery of his composition, and he had that subtle and delicate genius which the poet editor liked so much to encourage and had in so great a degree himself.

Several years before the civil war Mr. Prentice made some reputation as a lecturer, both in northern and southern cities. He took a gloomy outlook, and predicted that unless some statesman arose equal to the occasion there would be no resort left but war if Lincoln was elected. He lamented the death of Henry Clay at this crisis, and in referring to it said: "Ulysses has gone upon his wanderings and there is none left in all Ithaca to bend his bow."

He supported Bell and Everett, and when they were defeated he had no alternative but to support the successful candidate. Great influence was brought to bear on him by the southern leaders to get him to support secession, but he remained steadfast. He thought it his duty, and, to his great soul, that was enough. It was the greatest trouble of his life, and no doubt it hastened his death.—Detroit Free Press.

Didn't Hurt It Much. At Governor Ross' inaugural ball at Austin a legislator from eastern Texas was very much bewildered, as he had never attended any similar scene of festivity. In his confusion he sat down on the hat of a senator. "Look here, sir, I don't like this," said the senator. "Don't like what?" "You are sitting on my silk hat."

"Well, darn my cats, if I ain't sorry, here, but I don't think I hurt it much; I have only been sitting here for a few minutes." The hat looked as if the entire legislature sitting as a committee of the whole, had sat on it for a week.—Texas Sittings.

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