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TOWANDA:

Saturday Morning, November 10, 1855.

THOMAS H. BENTON'S SECRET HISTORY OF THE INTRIGUE TO Defeat the Re-nomination OF MARTIN VAN BUREN, FOR the Presidency, in 1844.

[From advance sheets of Benton's Thirty Years' View, in the press of the Messrs. Appleton.]

ANNO 1844. JOHN TYLER, PRESIDENT.

PRESIDENTIAL DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION; BOND ISSUED FOR THE NOMINATION; GEN. JACKSON'S TEXAS LETTER; ITS SECRET HISTORY.

In the winter of 1842-3, nearly two years before the Presidential election, there appeared in a Baltimore newspaper an elaborately composed letter on the annexation of Texas, written by Mr. Gilmer, a member of Congress from Virginia, urging the immediate annexation as necessary to forestall the designs of Great Britain upon the young country. These designs, it was alleged, aimed at a political and military domination on our southwestern border, with a view to abolition and hostile movements against us; and the practical part of the letter was an earnest appeal to the American people to annex the Texas republic immediately as the only means of preventing such calamities. This letter was a clap of thunder in a clear sky. There was nothing in the political horizon to announce or portend it. Great Britain had given no symptom of any disposition to war upon us, or to excite insurrection among our slaves. Texas and Mexico were at war to annex the country was to adopt the war. Far from hastening annexation, an event desirable in itself when it could be honestly done, a premature and ill-considered attempt upon groundless pretenses, could only do and delay it. There was nothing in the position of Mr. Gilmer to make him a prime mover in the annexation scheme; and there was much in his connections with Mr. Calhoun to make him the reflector of that gentleman's opinions. The letter itself was a counterpart of the movement made by Mr. Calhoun in the Senate, in 1845, to bring the Texas question into the Presidential election of that year; its arguments were the amplification of the same ideas then presented by that gentleman; and it was his known habit to operate through others. Mr. Gilmer was a close political friend, and known as a promulgator of his doctrines—having been the first to advocate annexation in Virginia.

Putting all these circumstances together, I believed, the moment I saw it, that I discerned the finger of Mr. Calhoun in that letter, and that an enterprise of some kind was on foot for the next Presidential election—though still so far off. I therefore put an eye on the movement, and by observing the progress of the letter, the papers in which it was republished, his comments, the encomiums which it received, and the public meetings in which it was commended, I became satisfied that there was no mistake in referring its origin to that gentleman; and became convinced that this movement was the resumption of the premature and abortive attempt of 1836. In the course of the summer of 1843 it had been taken up generally in the circle of Mr. Calhoun's friends, and with a zeal and pertinacity which betrayed the spirit of a presidential canvass. Coincident with these symptoms, and indicative of a determined movement on the Texas question, was a pregnant circumstance in the executive branch of the government. Mr. Webster, who had been prevailed upon to remain in Mr. Tyler's cabinet when all his colleagues of 1841 left their places, now resigned his place, also—indeed, as it was well known, by the altered department of the President towards him; and was succeeded first by Mr. Legare, of South Carolina, and, on his early death, by Mr. Upshur, of Virginia.

Mr. Webster was inflexibly opposed to the Texas annexation, and also to the presidential elevation of Mr. Calhoun; the two gentlemen, his successors, were both favorable to annexation, and one (Mr. Upshur) extremely so to Mr. Calhoun; so that here were two steps taken in the suspected direction—an obstacle removed and a facility substituted. This change in the head of the State department, upon whatever motive produced, was indispensable to the success of the Texas movement, and could only have been made for some great cause never yet explained, seeing the service which Mr. Webster did Mr. Tyler in remaining with him when the other ministers withdrew. Another sign appeared in the conduct of the President himself. He was undergoing another change. Long a Democrat, and successful in getting office at that, he had become a Whig, and with still greater success. Democracy had carried him to the Senate; Whiggism elevated him to the Vice-Presidency. He was now settling back, as shown in a previous chapter, towards his original party; but that wing of it which had gone off with Mr. Calhoun in the nullification war—a natural line of retrogression on his part, as he had traveled it in his transit from the Democratic to the Whig camp. The papers in his interest became rampant for Texas, and in the course of the autumn, the Whig became current and steady that negotiations were in progress for annexation, and that success was certain.

Arriving at Washington at the commencement of the session of 1843-4, and descending the steps of the Capitol in a throng of numbers on the evening of the first day's sitting, I was accosted by Mr. Aaron V. Brown, a Representative from Tennessee, with expressions of great gratification at meeting with me so soon; and who immediately showed the cause of his gratification to be the opportunity it afforded him to speak to me on the subject of the Texas annexation. He spoke of it as an impending and probable event—complimented me on my early opposition to the relinquish-

ment of that country, and my subsequent efforts to get it back, and did me the honor, to say that as such original enemy to its loss and early advocate of its recovery, I was a proper person to take a prominent part in now getting it back. All this was very civil, and quite reasonable, and at another time and under other circumstances, would have been entirely agreeable to me; but, pre-occupied as my mind was with the idea of an intrigue for the Presidency, and a hard and scrip speculation which I saw mixing itself up with it, and feeling as if I was to be made an instrument in these schemes, I took fire at his words, and answered abruptly and hotly: *That it was, on the part of some, an intrigue for the Presidency and a plot to divide the Union—the part of others, a Texas scrip and land speculation; and that I was against it.* This answer went into the newspapers, and was much noticed at the time, and immediately set up a high wall between me and the annexation party. I had no thought at the time that Mr. Brown had been moved by anybody to sound me, and presently regretted the warmth with which I had replied to him—especially as no part of what I had said was intended to apply to him. The occurrence gave rise to some sharp words at one another afterwards which, so far as they were sharp on my part, I have since condemned, and do not now repeat.

Some three months afterwards there appeared in the Richmond Enquirer a letter from Gen. Jackson to Mr. Brown, in answer to one from Mr. Brown to the General, covering a copy of Mr. Gilmer's Texas letter, and asking the favor of his (the General's) opinion upon it; which he promptly and decidedly gave, and fully in favor of its object. Here was a revelation and a coincidence that struck me, and put my mind to thinking, and opened up a new vein of exploration, into which I went to work, and worked on until I obtained the "secret history of the famous 'Jackson Texas letter'" (so it came to be called), and which played so large a part in the Texas annexation question, and in the Presidential election of 1844, and which drew so much applause upon the General from many who had so lately and so bitterly condemned him. This history I now propose to give, confining the narrative to the intrigue for the Presidential nomination, leaving the history of the attempted annexation (treaty of 1844) for a separate chapter, or rather chapters, for it was an enterprise of many aspects, according to the taste of different actors, Presidential, disunion, speculation.

The outline of this history—that of the letter—is brief and authentic; and although well covered up at the time, was known to too many to remain covered up long. It was partly made known to me at the time, and fully since. It runs thus:

Mr. Calhoun, in 1841-2, had resumed his design (intermitted in 1840) to stand for the Presidency, and determined to make the annexation—immediate annexation—the controlling issue in the election. The death of President Harrison in 1841, and the retreat of his Whig ministers, and the accession of his friends to power in the person of Mr. Tyler, (then settling back in his old love), and in the person of some of his cabinet, opened up to his view the prospect of a successful enterprise in that direction; and he fully embraced it, and without discouragement from the similar budding hopes of Mr. Tyler himself, which it was known would be without fruit, except what Mr. Calhoun would gather—the ascendant of his genius assuring him the mastery when he should choose to assume it. His real competitors (foreseen to be Mr. Van Buren and Mr. Clay) were sure to be against it—immediate annexation—and they would have a heavy current to encounter, all the South, and West being for the annexation, and a strong interest also, in other parts of the Union. There was a basis to build upon in the honest feelings of the people, and inflammatory arguments to excite them; and if the opinion of General Jackson could be obtained in its favor, the election of the annexation candidate was deemed certain.

With this view the Gilmer letter was composed and published, and sent to him—and was admirably conceived for its purpose. It took the veteran patriot on the side of his strong feelings—love of country and the Union—dis trust of Great Britain—and a southern susceptibility to the dangers of a servile insurrection. It carried him back to the theater of his glory—the Lower Mississippi—and awakened his apprehensions for the safety of the most vulnerable point of our frontier. Justly and truly, but with a refinement of artifice in this case, it presented annexation as a strengthening plaster to the Union, while really intended to sectionalize it, and to effect disunion if annexation failed. This idea of strengthening the Union had, and in itself deserved to have, an invincible charm for the veteran patriot. Besides, the recovery of Texas was in the line of his policy, pursued by him as a favorite object during his administration; and this desire to get back the country, patriotic in itself, was entirely compatible with his acquiescence in its relinquishment as a temporary sacrifice in 1819; an acquiescence induced by the "democratic" reason communicated to him by Mr. Monroe.

The great point in sending the Gilmer letter to him, with its portents of danger from British designs, was to obtain from him an opinion in favor of "immediate" annexation. No other opinion would do any good. A future annexation, no matter how soon after 1843, would carry the question beyond the Presidential election, and would fall in with the known opinions of Mr. Van Buren and Mr. Clay, and most other American statesmen, the common sentiment being for annexation when it could be honestly accomplished. Such annexation would make no issue at all. It would throw Texas out of the question. Immediate was, therefore, the game; and to bring Gen. Jackson to that point was the object. To do so the danger of British occupation was presented as being so imminent as to admit of no delay, and so disastrous in its consequences as to preclude all consideration of present objections. It was a bold conception, and of critical ex-

ception—Jackson was one of the last men in the world to be tampered with—one of the last to be used against a friend or for a foe—the very last to wish to see Mr. Calhoun President—and the very first in favor of Mr. Van Buren. To turn him against his nature and his feelings in all these particulars was a perilous enterprise; but it was attempted—and accomplished.

It has already been shown that the letter of Mr. Gilmer was skillfully composed for its purpose: all the accessories of its publication and transmission to Gen. Jackson were equally skillfully contrived. It was addressed to a friend in Maryland, which was in the opposite direction from the locus of its origin. It was drawn out on the call of a friend; that is the technical way of getting a private letter before the public. It was published in Baltimore—a city where its writer did not live. And thus the accessories of the publication were complete, and left the mind without suspicion that the letter had germinated in a warm southern latitude. It was then ready to start on its mission to Gen. Jackson; but how to get it there, without exciting suspicion, was the question. Certainly Mr. Gilmer would have been the natural agent for the transmission of his own letter; but he stood too close to Mr. Calhoun—was too much his friend and intimate—to make that a safe adventure. A medium was wanted, which would be a conductor of the letter and a non-conductor of suspicion; and it was found in the person of Mr. Aaron V. Brown. But he was the friend of Mr. Van Buren, and it was necessary to approach him through a medium also, and one was found in one of Mr. Gilmer's colleagues—believed to be Mr. Hopkins, of the House, who came from near the Tennessee line; and through him the letter reached Mr. Brown.

And thus, conceived by one, written by another, published by a third, and transmitted through two successive mediums, the missile went upon its destination, and arrived safely in the hands of General Jackson. It had a complete success. He answered it promptly, warmly, decidedly, affirmatively. So fully did it put him up to the point of "immediate" annexation that his impatience outstripped expectation. He counseled haste—considered the present the accepted time—and urged the seizure of the "golden opportunity" which, if lost now, might never return. The answer was dated at the Hermitage, March 12, 1843, and was received at Washington as soon as the mail could fetch it. Of course it came to Mr. Brown, to whom it belonged, and to whom it was addressed; but I did not hear of it in his hands. My first information of it was in the hands of Mr. Gilmer, in the hall of the House, immediately after its arrival—he crossing the hall with the letter in his hand, greatly elated, and showing it to a confidential friend, with many expressions of now confident triumph over Mr. Van Buren. The friend was permitted to read the letter, but with the understanding that nothing was to be said about it at that time.

Mr. Gilmer then explained to his friend the purpose for which this letter had been written and sent to General Jackson, and the use that was intended to be made of his answer, (if favorable to the designs of the author,) which was this: it was to be produced in the nominating convention to overthrow Mr. Van Buren and give Mr. Calhoun the nomination, both of whom were to be interrogated beforehand; and as it was well known what the answer would be—Calhoun for and Van Buren against immediate annexation—and Jackson's answer coinciding with Calhoun's, would turn the scale in his favor, "and blue Van Buren's high."

This was the plan, and this the state of the game, at the end of February, 1843; but a great deal remained to be done to perfect the scheme. The sentiment of the democratic party was nearly unanimous for Mr. Van Buren, and time was wanted to undermine that sentiment. Public opinion was not yet ripe for immediate annexation, and time was wanted to cultivate that opinion. There was no evidence of any British domination or abolition plot in Texas, and time was wanted to import one from London. All these operations required time—more of it than intervened before the customary period for the meeting of the convention. That period had been the month of December preceding the year of the election, and Baltimore the place for these assemblages since Congress presidential caucuses had been broken down—that near position to Washington being chosen for the convenient attendance of that part of the members of Congress who charged themselves with these elections. If December remained the period for the meeting, there would be no time for the large operations which required to be performed; for, to get the delegates there in time, they must be elected beforehand, during the summer—so that the working season of the intriguers would be reduced to a few months, when upwards of a year was required. To gain that time was the first object, and a squad of members, some in the interest of Mr. Calhoun, some professing friendship to Mr. Van Buren, but secretly hostile to him, sat privately in the Capitol, almost nightly, corresponding with all parts of the country to get the convention postponed. All sorts of patriotic motives were assigned for this desired postponement, as that it would be more convenient for the delegates to attend—nearer to the time of election—more time for public opinion to mature; and most favorable to deliberate decision. But another device was fallen upon to obtain delay, the secret of which was not put into the letters, nor couched to the body of the nightly committee. It had so happened that the opposite party—the Whigs—since the rout of the Congress Presidential caucuses, had also taken the same time and place for their conventions—December and Baltimore—and doubtless for the same reason, that of the more convenient attending of the President-making members of Congress; and this led to an intrigue with the Whigs, the knowledge of which was confined to a very few. It was believed that the democratic convention could be the more readily put off if the Whigs would do the like—and do it first. There was a committee within the commit-

tee—a little nest of head managers—who undertook this collusive arrangement with the Whigs. They proposed it to them, professing to act in the interest of Mr. Calhoun, though in fact against him as well as against Mr. Van Buren. The Whigs readily agreed to this proposal, because, being themselves then unanimous for Mr. Clay, it made no difference at what time he should be nominated; and believing they could more easily defeat Mr. Calhoun than Mr. Van Buren, they preferred him for an antagonist. They therefore agreed to the delay, and both conventions were put off, (and the Whigs first, to enable the democrats to plead it,) from December, 1843, to May, 1844. Time for operating having now been gained, the night squad in the Capitol redoubled their activity to work upon the people. Letter writers and newspapers were secured. Good, easy members were plied with specious reasons—slippery ones were directly approached. "Visitors from the States were beset and indoctrinated. Men were picked out to operate on the selfish and the calculating; and myriads of letters were sent to the states, editors and politicians. All these agents worked to a pattern, the primary object being to undo public sentiment in favor of Mr. Van Buren, and to manufacture one, ostensibly in favor of Mr. Calhoun, but in reality without being for him—being for any one of four, (Mr. Cass, Mr. Buchanan, Colonel Johnson, Mr. Tyler,) in preference to either of them. They were for neither, and the only difference was that Mr. Calhoun believed they were for him: Mr. Van Buren knew they were against him. They professed friendship for him; and that was necessary to enable them to undermine him. The stress of the argument against him was that he could not be elected, and the effort was to make good that assertion. Now or never, was the word with respect to Texas. Some of the signal sympathizers with the speculators in Texas lands and scrip; and to these Mr. Calhoun was no more palatable than Mr. Van Buren. They were both above plunder. Some wanted office, and knew that neither of these gentlemen would give it to them. They had a difficult as well as tortuous part to play. Professing democracy, they colluded with Whigs. Professing friendship to Mr. Van Buren, they co-operated with Mr. Calhoun's friends to defeat him. Co-operating with Mr. Calhoun's friends, they were against his election. They were for any body in preference to either, and especially for men of easy temperaments whose principles were not entrenched behind strong wills. To undo public sentiment in favor of Mr. Van Buren they were to get unpledged and uninterested delegates into convention, and to get those released who had been appointed under instructions, was the consummation of their policy. A convention untrammelled by instructions, independent of the people and open to the machinations of a few politicians, was what was wanted. The efforts to accomplish these purposes were prodigious, and constituted the absorbing night and day work of the members engaged in it. After all, they had but indifferent success—more with politicians and editors than with the people. Mr. Van Buren was almost universally preferred. Delegates were generally instructed to support his nomination. Even in the southern States, in direct question between himself and Mr. Calhoun, he was preferred—as in Alabama and Mississippi. No delegates were released from their instructions by any competent authority, and only a few in any, by clusters of local politicians, convenient to the machinations of the committee in the Capitol—as at Schockoe Hill, Richmond, Virginia, where Mr. Ritchie, editor of the Enquirer, (whose proclivity to be deceived in a crisis was generally equivalent in its effects to positive treachery,) led the way—himself impelled by others.

The labors of the committee, though intended to be secret, and confined to a small circle, and chiefly carried on in the night, were subject to be discovered; and were so; and the discovery led to some public denunciations. The two senators from Ohio, Messrs. William Allen and Lippan, and ten of the representatives from that State, published a card in the Globe newspaper, denouncing it as a conspiracy to defeat the will of the people. The whole delegation from South Carolina, (Messrs. McDuffie and Kuger, senators, and the seven representatives,) fearing that they might be suspected on account of their friendship for Mr. Calhoun, published a card denying all connection with the committee; an unnecessary precaution, as their characters were above that suspicion. Many other members published cards, denying their participation in these meetings; and some, admitting the participation, denied the intrigue, and truly, as it concerned themselves; for all the disreputable part was kept secret from them—especially the collusion with the Whigs, and all the mysteries of the Gilmer letter. Many of them were sincere friends of Mr. Van Buren, but deceived and cheated themselves while made the instrument of deceiving and cheating others. It was probably one of the most elaborate pieces of political chicanery that has ever been performed in a free country, and well worthy to be studied by all who would wish to extend their knowledge of the manner in which Presidential elections may be managed, and who would wish to see the purity of elections preserved and vindicated.

About this time came an occurrence well calculated to make a pause, if anything could make a pause, in the working of political ambition. The explosion of the great gun on board the Princeton steamer took place, killing, among others, two of Mr. Tyler's cabinet, (Mr. Upshur and Mr. Gilmer,) both deeply engaged in the Texas project—barely failing to kill Mr. Tyler, who was called back in the critical moment, and who had embraced the Texas scheme with more than vicarious zeal; and also barely failing to kill the writer of this view, who was standing at the breach of the gun, closely observing its working as well as that of the Texas game, and who fell among the killed and stunned, fortunately to rise again. Commodore Kenan, Mr. Virgil Maxcy, Mr. Gardner, of New-York, father-in-law (that was to be) of the President, were also killed; a dozen seamen were wounded, and Commodore

Stockton burnt and scorched as he stood at the side of the gun. Such an occurrence, well calculated to impress upon the survivors the truth of the divine lesson: "What shadows we are—what shadows we pursue." But it had no effect upon the pursuit of the Presidential shadow. Instantly Mr. Calhoun was invited to take Mr. Upshur's place in the Department of State, and took it with an alacrity, and with a patronizing declaration which showed his zeal for the Texas movement, and as good as avowed its paternity. He declared he took the place for the Texas negotiation alone, and would quit it as soon as that negotiation should be finished. In brief, the negotiation, instead of pausing in the presence of so awful a catastrophe, seemed to derive new life from it, and to go forward with accelerated impetuosity. Mr. Calhoun put his eager activity into it; politicians became more vehement—newspapers more clamorous; the interested classes, (land and scrip speculators) swarmed at Washington, and Mr. Tyler embraced the scheme with a fervor which induced the suspicion that he had adopted the game for his own, and intended to stand a cast of the Presidential die upon it.

The machinations of the committee, though greatly successful with individuals and with the politicians with whom they could communicate, did not reach the masses, who remained firm to Mr. Van Buren; and it became necessary to fall upon some new means of acting upon them. This led to a different use of the Jackson Texas letter from what had been intended. It was intended to have been kept in the background, a secret in the hands of its possessors, until the meeting of the convention—then suddenly produced, to turn the scale between Mr. Calhoun and Mr. Van Buren, and this design had been adhered to for about the space of a year, and the letter kept close; it was then resorted to as a means of rousing the masses.

Jackson's name was potential with the people, and it was deemed indispensable to bring it to bear upon them. The publication of the letter was resolved upon, and the Globe newspaper selected for the purpose, and Mr. Aaron V. Brown to have it done. All this was judicious and regular. The Globe had been the organ of General Jackson, and therefore the most proper paper to bring his sentiments before the public. It was the advocate of Mr. Van Buren's election, and therefore would prevent the suspicion of sinister design upon his letter. Mr. Brown was the legal owner of the letter, and a professed friend of Mr. Van Buren, and, therefore, the proper person to carry it for publication.

He did so; but the editor, Mr. Blair, seeing no good that it could do to Mr. Van Buren, but, on the contrary, harm, and being sincerely his friend, declined to publish it; and, after examination, delivered it back to Mr. Brown. Shortly thereafter, to wit, on the 22d of March, 1844, it appeared in the Richmond Enquirer, post-dated, that is to say, the date of 1843 changed into 1844—whether by design or accident is not known; but the post date gave the letter a fresher appearance, and a more vigorous application to the Texas question. The fact that this letter had got back to Mr. Brown, after having been given up to Mr. Gilmer, proved that the letter travelled in a circle well kept secret, and went from hand to hand among the initiated as needed for use.

The time had now come for the interrogation of the candidates, and it was done with all the tact which the delicate function required. The choice of the interrogator was the first point. He must be a friend, ostensible if not real, to the party interrogated. If real, he must himself be deceived, and made to believe that he was performing a kindly service; if not, he must still have the appearance. And for Mr. Van Buren's benefit a suitable performer was found in the person of Mr. Hammett, a representative in Congress from Mississippi, whose letter was a model for the occasion, and, in fact, has been well followed since. It abounded in professions of friendship to Mr. Van Buren—approached him for his own good—sought his opinion from the best of motives; and urged a categorical reply, for or against, immediate annexation. The sagacious Mr. Van Buren was no dupe of this contrivance, but took counsel from what was due to himself; and answered with candor, decorum and dignity. He was against immediate annexation, because it was war with Mexico, but for it when it could be done peaceably and honorably; and he was able to present a very fair record, having been in a way of getting back the country, (in a way to avoid difficulties with Mexico,) when Secretary of State, under President Jackson. His letter was sent to a small circle of friends at Washington before it was delivered to its address; but to be delivered immediately; which was done, and soon went into the papers. Mr. Calhoun had superseded the necessity of interrogation in his letter of acceptance of the State Department; he was a hat annexationist, although there was an ugly record to be exhibited against him. In his almost thirty years of public life he had never touched Texas, except for his own purposes. In 1819, as one of Mr. Monroe's cabinet, he had concurred in giving it away, in order to conciliate the anti-slavery interest in the north-east by curtailing slave territory in the south-west. In 1836, he moved her immature annexation, in order to bring the question into the Presidential election of that year, to the prejudice of Mr. Van Buren; and urged instant action, because delay was dangerous. Having joined Mr. Van Buren after his election, and expecting to become his successor, he dropped the annexation for which he had been so impatient, and let the election of 1840 pass by without bringing it into the canvass; and now revived it for the overthrow of Mr. Van Buren and for the excitement of a sectional controversy, by placing the annexation on strong sectional grounds. And now, at the approach of the election in 1844, after years of silence, he becomes the head advocate of annexation; and with all this, forbidding record against him, by help of General Jackson's letter, and the general sentiment in favor of British abolition and hostile designs, he was able to

appear as a champion of Texas annexation, hauling the old and consistent friends of the measure with the new form which had been given to the question. Mr. Clay was of this class. Of all the public men he was able to present the best and fairest Texas record. He was opposed to the loss of the province in 1819, and offered resolutions in the House of Representatives, supported by an ardent speech, in which he condemned the treaty which gave it away. As Secretary of State, under Mr. Adams, he had advised the recovery of the province, and opened negotiations to that effect; and wrote the instructions under which Mr. Poinsett, the United States minister, made the attempt. As a western man, he was the natural champion of a great western interest—pre-eminently western, while also national. He was interrogated according to the programme, and answered with firmness, that, although an ancient and steadfast friend to the recovery of the country, he was opposed to immediate annexation, as adopting the war with Mexico, and making that war by treaty, when the war-making power belonged to Congress. There were several other democratic candidates, the whole of whom were interrogated, and answered promptly in favor of immediate annexation—some of them improving their letters, as advised, before publication. Mr. Tyler, also, now appeared above the horizon as a Presidential candidate, and needed no interrogatories to bring out his declaration for immediate annexation, although he had voted against Mr. Clay's resolution condemning the sacrifice of the province. In a word, the Texas hobby was multitudinously mounted and violently ridden, and most violently by those who had been most indifferent to it before. Mr. Clay and Mr. Calhoun were the only candidates that answered like statesmen, and they were both distasteful.

The time was approaching for the convention to meet, and, consequently for the conclusion of the treaty of annexation, which was to be a touchstone in it. It was signed the 12th of April, and was to have been sent to the Senate immediately, but was delayed by a circumstance which created alarm—made a balk—and required a new turn to be taken. Mr. Van Buren had not yet answered the interrogatories put to him through Mr. Hammett, or rather his answer had not yet been published. Uneasiness began to be felt, lest, like so many others, he should fall into the current, and answer in a way that would enable him to swim with it. To relieve this uncertainty Mr. Blair was applied to by Mr. Robert J. Walker to write to him, and get his answer. This was a very proper channel to apply through. Mr. Blair, as the fast friend of Mr. Van Buren, had the privilege of soliciting him. Mr. Calhoun, as the political adversary of Mr. Van Buren, could not ask Mr. Blair to do it. Mr. Walker stood in a relation to be ready for the work all round; as a professing friend of Mr. Van Buren, though co-operating with Mr. Calhoun and all the rest against him, he could speak with Mr. Blair on a point which seemed to be for Mr. Van Buren's benefit. As co-operating with Mr. Calhoun, he could help him against an adversary, though intending to give him the go-by in the end. As being in all the Texas mysteries, he was a natural person to ferret out information on every side. He it was, then, to whose part it fell to get the desired answer from Mr. Van Buren, and through the instrumentality of Mr. Blair. Mr. Blair wrote as solicited, not seeing any trap in it; but had received no answer to the time that the treaty was to go to the Senate. Ardent for Texas, and believing in the danger of delay, he wrote and published in the Globe a glowing article in favor of immediate annexation. That article was a poser, and a dumb-founder. It threw the treaty all aback. Considering Mr. Blair's friendship for Mr. Van Buren and their confidential relations, it was concluded that this article could not have been published without his consent—that it spoke his sentiments—and was in fact his answer to the letter which had been sent to him. Here was an ugly balk. It seemed as if the long intrigue had miscarried—as if the plot was going to work out the contrary way, and elevate the man it was intended to put down. In this unexpected conjuncture a new turn became indispensable—and was promptly taken.

Mention has been made in the foregoing of this chapter of the necessity which was felt to obtain something from London to bolster up the accusation of that formidable abolition plot which Great Britain was hatching in Texas, and on the alleged existence of which the whole argument for immediate annexation rested. The desired testimony had been got, and orally given to the public, as being derived from a "private letter from a citizen of Maryland, then in London." The name of this Maryland citizen was not given, but his respectability and reliability were fully vouched; and the testimony passed for true. It was to the point in charging upon the British government, with names and circumstances, all that had been alleged; and adding that her abolition machinations were then in full progress. This went back to London, immediately transmitted there by the British Minister at Washington, Sir Richard Pakenham; and being known to be false, and felt to be scandalous, drew from the British Secretary of State (Lord Aberdeen) an indignant, prompt and peremptory contradiction. This contradiction was given in a despatch, dated December 26th, 1843. It was communicated by Sir Richard Pakenham to Mr. Upshur, the United States Secretary of State, on the 26th day of February, 1844—a few days before the lamentable death of that gentleman by the bursting of the Princeton gun. This despatch, having no object but to contradict an unfounded imputation, required no answer—and received none. It lay in the Department of State unacknowledged until after the treaty had been signed, and until the day of the appearance of that redoubtable article in the Globe which had been supposed to be Mr. Van Buren's answer to the problem of immediate annexation. Then it was taken up, and, on the 18th April, was elaborately answered by Mr. Calhoun in a despatch to the British minister—not to argue

[SEE FOURTH PAGE.]