

BIOGRAPHY OF GOVERNOR ANDREW H. REEDER.

[For the biography of Governor Reeder the Historical Society is indebted to his sons and daughter. It is understood to have been prepared in part, from data furnished by Hon. Grosvenor P. Lowrey, of New York, who was Governor Reeder's private secretary during a portion of his official service. It was received from Mr. William W. Marsh, under date of March 2, 1881.]

Andrew H. Reeder, first Governor of Kansas Territory, was born at Easton, Pennsylvania, July 12, 1807. He received an academical education at Lawrenceville, New Jersey, studied the profession of the law, and entered upon its practice at Easton, where, after the customary vicissitudes of a young lawyer, he arose to a local eminence unsurpassed in eastern Pennsylvania, by any of his professional associates. This distinction was the more notable as the bar of that part of the State was recognized as exceptionally strong and able.

Mr. Reeder was married in 1831, to Amelia Hutter, of Easton. Of this marriage eight children were born, five of whom, together with their mother, survived the husband and father. Mrs. Reeder died, in Easton, Pennsylvania, August 16, 1878. The surviving children are Mrs. William W. Marsh, of New Jersey, George M., Howard, and General Frank Reeder, of Easton. The domestic life of Governor Reeder was distinguished for its purity, and the devoted attachment of the members of his family to each other.

His political and business life was distinguished for energy, integrity, and high intelligence. In politics Governor Reeder belonged to the Democratic party, and was an active participant in its counsels previous to his appointment to the Governorship of this Territory. He had never been an office-seeker, but believed in the duty of every man to take part in political affairs. His rule of action in this respect was once stated by him in the form of advice to a young friend, thus: "First succeed in your profession. Acquire, if you may by honorable means, such fortune as will enable you at all times to maintain yourself with dignity, irrespective of public emolument. If then an office suitable to your taste and capacity seeks you, accept it, but do not allow any thought of public employment to occupy your attention until that period shall have arrived."

Governor Reeder acted strictly upon this rule in respect to the conspicuous appointment to his first public office. He was not only not an applicant

for the place, but his first thought in respect to it was suggested by a communication from the late Asa Packer, of Pennsylvania, then a member of Congress, who informed him that together with Mr. John W. Forney, he had recommended the President to make the appointment.

Only those readers who remember the excitement following the passage of the famous "Kansas and Nebraska Act" will be able to appreciate the responsibility and consequent dignity attaching to that appointment at that time. All persons who have seen the comparative development of the two Territories will, however, be interested to learn that Governor Reeder's friends considered the appointment to the Governorship of Nebraska was the more important, and were inclined to regret that he should be consigned to the oblivion of a minor post.

The excited political condition of the times, and the grave questions which were about to be tried upon the new arena, gave interest to the appointment in the eyes of Mr. Reeder sufficient to induce him, after a few days' consideration, to accept it; and in the fall of 1854 he took his departure for Fort Leavenworth, which, except Fort Riley, was the only place then generally known or spoken of in Kansas.

The succeeding winter was one of much excitement throughout the country, and especially along the border of Missouri and the newly-created Territories. Governor Reeder had, shortly before his departure for his post, conversed with friends upon the difficulties likely to arise from the lawless action of Massachusetts and other New England emigrants, who were then reported through the press as organizing to settle in large bodies in Kansas and vote down the legal introduction of slavery there. He went to the Territory in full belief that the difficulties, if any, of his administration, would arise out of the disorderly and lawless action of this class of emigrants. He had not up to that time been brought into any close personal association with the men who then represented the interests of slavery at the Federal Capital.

Whatever he may have learned on his arrival in the Territory in respect to the purposes, principles and actions, either of those Eastern people whom he then distrusted, or of those prominent along the western border of Missouri whom his political associations led him to trust, it was soon clear that the latter had learned something concerning him which caused them much dissatisfaction.

An extract from the *Washington Sentinel* of the 24th of June, 1854, will show what the Southern men in power thought themselves justified to expect after the passage of the Territorial acts:

"It is said that the President has tendered, or is about to tender, that office to an individual from a non-slaveholding State, whose opinions upon the Territorial bill are either unsound or unknown. To such rumor we give no credence; we cannot, we do not believe that the President can for a moment think of frustrating by his patronage the design of a bill which he countenanced in all its stages, and to which he gave his ready sanction as a law. Recent developments have shown that Kansas

Territory is in the highest degree suited to slave labor, and that the equal laws of labor . . . must inevitably introduce the institution of slavery there."

Mr. Reeder was in full sympathy with Senator Douglas, the author and champion of the bill, and of the doctrine of so-called "Squatter Sovereignty," which the bill was intended to protect. It is probable that at that time he had, with the great majority of the American people, regarded himself as precluded by the constitution from raising questions as to the abstract right or wrong of negro slavery where it existed.

He was welcomed with eclat by the politicians of Missouri on his passage through that State, and was doubtless prepared even to see slavery legally introduced into Kansas, if that should indeed be the fair result of applying the equal laws of labor; but he was not willing to see the voice of an actual majority of actual settlers overcome either by force or chicane on either side.

His opinion upon the economical questions relating to slavery made him favorable to the incorporation of Kansas as a free State. The violence and lawlessness which almost immediately developed themselves in favor of the introduction of slavery, caused him to think more deeply than before upon the moral aspects of that question; and it may be said that the pro-slavery zeal of western Missouri was the chief instrument for converting a Democratic Governor of Pennsylvania training and Southern sympathies into a warm and devoted friend of the slave, and opponent of all ends which required the support of such violent and unlawful means. This conversion was complete when, at the first election for members of a Territorial Legislature, the people of western Missouri openly organized and formed themselves into military parties and to the number of several thousands marched across the border, deposited their votes as citizens of Kansas and returned to their homes in Missouri on the same day. In many places the actual residents who had emigrated from the Northern States with their families, were driven from the polls and their lives threatened should they attempt to cast their votes.

Governor Reeder was then at Shawnee Mission, on the border of Missouri. This was, by his residence, made the temporary seat of government. He was virtually alone, and the policy of the men of Missouri with whom he came in contact was, by boasting, threats, and the display of reckless violence, to intimidate where they could not persuade. They demanded certificates of election for their candidates according to the returns of inspectors, appointed chiefly from the number of those who had invaded the Territory for the purpose of voting. Governor Reeder refused to grant certificates until ample time should have been given for the receipt of such protests as might need to be made. The people of the remotest precinct in the Territory had time to forward, and did forward, a protest against the granting of certificates to a candidate elected by illegal votes. Several other such protests were received; and Governor Reeder, upon full consideration of the facts, called new elections in several districts.

It is easier now, since the events of the civil war, to realize the wild frenzy to which such a community as western Missouri then was would be driven by an example of calm courage and a deliberate proceeding like this. The family and friends of Governor Reeder, indeed the whole country, became justly alarmed for his personal safety. At about this time various persons, notably the editor of the Parkville *Luminary*, were made the objects of violence, either in person or in property. This excitement was greatly intensified when Governor Reeder, believing it best that the Legislature should convene at a point as far remote from the local influences of Missouri as possible, exercised his power of appointing the place of meeting by calling it at the town of Pawnee, near Fort Riley, where the public buildings could be availed of.

The charge was made against him that he was interested in lands near Fort Riley; that he had denied attention to the pressing affairs of the Territory during the winter of 1854 and 1855; and that he had improperly participated in the purchase of lands from the half-breed Indians. These charges, little by little, were spread throughout the party press, and a strong demand was made upon the President for his removal.

The ideas which prevailed at the time concerning the rights of the people of Missouri in the Territory of Kansas, and the great outrage implied by any resistance of their will, will be seen from the following copy of a handbill, headed "People's Proclamation," and circulated under date of April 9, 1855:

"Whereas, Governor Reeder has shown himself incompetent and unfit for the duties of his position; and whereas, the appointment of a man to the Governorship of the Territory without consulting the choice of those to be governed, is an arbitrary exercise of power, the citizens of Kansas have therefore resolved to hold an election at Fort Leavenworth on the 28th, to elect a person to succeed Governor Reeder, whose removal will be solicited."

About this time Governor Reeder visited Washington. A strong Southern party, headed by Mr. Jefferson Davis, then Secretary of War, was urging his removal. That removal was demanded upon the ostensible grounds above suggested, of speculation in lands, and an attempt to promote his private interests by assembling the Legislature at a place inconvenient to its members. The then Commissioner of Indian Affairs was made the special mouthpiece of that party, and a correspondence, which resulted quite satisfactorily to the friends of Governor Reeder, ensued between him and the Commissioner. After two weeks in Washington, during which Governor Reeder's friends, under the form of defending him against these specific charges, were really called upon to defend him against the inexpressed but more important charge that he was not found to be a facile instrument in the hands of those local politicians of Missouri who assumed to act as representatives of the Pro-Slavery party of the South, he was assured by the President of his personal confidence, and that he was desired to return to the Territory and continue the performance of the duties of his office.

The view then taken by Southern men of the actions of all such as did not explicitly coincide in their plans for the introduction of slavery, is shown in a letter to the *New York Herald* of May 20, 1855, under the title of "The Scheme of the Administration to make Kansas a Free State":

"The particulars of an astounding game at political hazard are shortly to be made known to the American people, numbering as leaders in the performance no less personages than the President of the United States and Senator Douglas, of Illinois. This exposure will demonstrate to the South how far with safety to the future it may be well to trust Northern politicians in their professions of support to their institutions. . . . The particulars attending the conspiracy to force upon Kansas a free-soil government comes to me," &c., &c.

In the *Daily Pennsylvanian*, a Democratic organ of great influence at that time, appeared an article about the 20th of May, from which the following is an extract: "We give below an extract from a letter to a gentleman of this city, from one who has battled long and well for the rights of the South, and who will still aid it in all that justly belongs to it. But it is very evident that his feelings have been soured at the conduct of the Missourians:

"WASHINGTON CITY, May 30, 1855.

"Governor Reeder has a proud yet most critical position. The murderers in Missouri pursue him alone, because he will not yield to their demand for slavery by illegal votes in Kansas. Had he done so there would not be the skeleton of a Democratic party left in the free States. He might have purchased ease and place by letting the slave-owners of Missouri take charge of Kansas; he might have been Governor or Senator; but he thought of Pennsylvania and the North, and of his own honor, and he acted as an honest and patriotic Democrat. He goes back, and will sell his life dearly if any effort is made to do him personal injury. The fact is, the South asked too much of us. I am sick of their arrogance, sick of their violence, and resolved that, however ready I am to stand by their rights, I will not sustain their wrongs. Slavery is not God-descended; it is not a divinity; it is a load to carry, and we must not have it made heavier by arrogant exaction."

These excerpts will give some idea of the seething political feeling of the time, and will cast light upon that beginning of discontent among prominent Democrats in the North, which finally ended in the breaking-off of the greater portion of that party in solid mass from its Southern associations, when Mr. Davis and his friends, moving logically forward from the position which they had taken in respect to Kansas, announced the secession of the South and the opening of the War of the Rebellion.

Governor Reeder prepared to return to Kansas. On the day before his departure he received from William L. Marcy, Secretary of State, a letter desiring him to make explanations to the President of certain charges against his official conduct, being the same which have been already mentioned. Governor Reeder replied, informing the Secretary that he was on the eve of departure to the Territory, where the Legislature would convene on the 2d of July, and from that place he would address his reply. The press generally expressed the opinion that the President was at last driven to yield to the demand for Governor Reeder's removal, but that as it was

impossible to assign the real ground, an ostensible ground, one less likely to offend public opinion, had been chosen.

On his trip up the Missouri river by the boat *Polar Star*, which arrived at Kansas City about the 20th of June, Governor Reeder was on several occasions made the subject of offensive and insulting approaches by the people at the landings, and by some of his fellow-passengers. It was evident that the excitement of the Missourians had been greatly increased during his absence by their failure to procure his removal.

Arriving at Kansas City, he departed immediately for Pawnee, where the Legislature assembled on the 2d of July, and almost immediately adjourned to Shawnee Methodist Mission, about three miles from Westport, Missouri.

The Governor had, by message, communicated to the Legislature his objections to the proposed adjournment, on the ground that, under the terms of the Territorial act, it was not in the power of the Legislature to sit elsewhere than at the place named by him, and his doubt whether the Territory would derive any fruits from such legislation as might be passed at another place. This warning was disregarded, and the Governor felt called upon to veto all acts passed by that Legislature, upon grounds which were clearly and forcibly set forth in the message vetoing "An act to prevent the sale of intoxicating liquors, and games of chance, within one mile of the Shawnee Manual Labor School, in the Territory of Kansas," dated July 21, 1855. Immediately following this veto, Governor Reeder was notified from Washington of his removal, and John L. Dawson, of Pennsylvania, was appointed in his place.

Thus relieved from whatever embarrassments may have existed in his official position, Governor Reeder threw himself ardently into public affairs, becoming an element of great strength in counsel and in action to the sorely beset Free-State party of the Territory. He attended the first convention of that party at Big Springs, and was the author of the resolutions passed by that convention, which rallied Free-State men and concentrated them for the contest which was to follow.

This convention took action aimed to rid the people of the Territory from the effects of the Missouri invasion, through which a usurping Legislature had been foisted upon Kansas, enacting a code of laws intended to exclude and drive out Free-State settlers. The acts of that Legislature, including those providing for elections, were repudiated by the convention. Steps were taken towards the framing of a Constitution, and application to Congress for admission under it into the Union as a State. Governor Reeder was nominated by the convention as a Delegate to Congress. At an election provided for by the convention, he was elected by 2,849 votes, as against 2,721 votes which were cast for John W. Whitfield at an election provided for by the Pro-Slavery usurping Legislature—the larger part of these votes being cast by Missourians who had come over for the sole object of voting, and who were in no sense citizens of Kansas.

At the assembling of Congress Governor Reeder proceeded to Washington and claimed his seat, upon the ground that he had been elected by a majority of the legal votes cast in the Territory. In the spring of 1856, a committee was appointed by the House of Representatives, consisting of William A. Howard of Michigan, John Sherman of Ohio, and Mordecai Oliver of Missouri, to investigate the allegations made by Governor Reeder in support of his petition to be seated. The committee began the taking of testimony at Tecumseh, on the 5th of May, 1856.

During the spring, considerable bodies of men, varying from one to three hundred, had come into the Territory, unaccompanied by their families and without the possession of such property as usually indicated an honest purpose to settle and remain. They were from South Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, and other Southern States, and were fully armed, and acted under military organization. One, which chiefly attracted attention, was known as "Buford's Company." They were encamped about Lecompton, and at various points within a few miles of Lawrence, and were believed to be guilty of various acts of outrage and murder which then occurred.

The United States Court, presided over by Judge Lecompte, of Maryland, whose affiliations were understood to be most cordially with the Pro-Slavery party, was convened at Lecompton. At the same time a grand jury was summoned; and coincidentally with the Congressional examination and the assembly of these armed men, the grand jury proceeded to examine into charges of high treason against Andrew H. Reeder, Charles Robinson, James H. Lane and others. A subpoena was issued to Governor Reeder, and served, in the presence of the Congressional Committee, requiring his attendance before the grand jury. It was suspected by his friends to be the purpose of the Pro-Slavery men, not only to withdraw him from the Congressional investigation, and thus stifle discovery, but if possible to bring him within some real or pretended infraction of the laws of the usurping Legislature, for which he could be taken into custody and retained in the Territory.

Failing to obtain his attendance as a witness, the grand jury, without taking any testimony whatever relating to Governor Reeder, voted by a large majority to find an indictment against him and Charles Robinson for treason. This was in obedience to the charge by Judge Lecompte, who is described by Governor Reeder as "a man of frivolous mind, little ability, less integrity, great perversity and indolence, and limited knowledge of the law, who, having neither property, practice, nor reputation at home," had been appointed Chief Justice of this unfortunate Territory. The plan, which was openly discussed in the jury room, was to arrest Governor Reeder under whatever charge, with other prominent Free-State men in the Territory, and, keeping them in confinement for a few months, to break down the party in detail.

After the indictment, another subpoena was issued and served upon Governor Reeder, requiring him to appear at Lecompton to be examined as a

witness before the grand jury which had just indicted him. This subpoena the Governor was advised to disregard; and on Thursday, the 8th of May, he returned to Lawrence with a majority of the committee. An attempt was there made to attach him for contempt of the subpoena, but he refused arrest. By this time all possibility of Governor Reeder's remaining with safety to participate in the investigation was, in the opinion of his friends, at an end. The object of intelligent Pro-Slavery managers was achieved; but the anger of their more ignorant followers had become so stirred that great fears were entertained lest he should be made the object of mob violence. Respectable Pro-Slavery men, together with all his friends, assured him that his life would not be safe should he remain openly in the Territory. He was by the aid of friends conveyed to Kansas City, where he was concealed for nearly two weeks, seeing every day the posse comitatus marching through the streets executing or trying to execute writs in the State of Missouri for the arrest of fugitives from Kansas, who were charged along with him in a new general indictment for high treason. Charles Robinson, of Lawrence, and others, endeavoring to make their way from the Territory, were arrested at Lexington and other places in Missouri and returned to the Territory, where they were kept in duress for several months.

After countless perils Governor Reeder reached the State of Illinois on the 27th of May. His arrival in the free State occasioned the wildest excitement and enthusiasm. As he journeyed toward the East, at every principal town he was detained, and great crowds of people assembled to see him, to welcome him, and to promise him protection from any attempt to retake him and return him to the Territory.

To a man reared in an orderly community, where personal violence was to be thought of only as the most unlikely of all dangers, this was a trying experience. The courage and the skill with which Governor Reeder had first withstood, and then escaped from the mobs of his enemies, caused him to be the hero of the hour in the North.

In the year 1856 the Republican party for the first time nominated a candidate for the Presidency, and Governor Reeder heartily entered the campaign in favor of John C. Fremont. At the close of that campaign he returned to the practice of his profession at Easton, and continued it with greatly increased success. In 1860 he was a prominent candidate before the Republican convention for the Vice-Presidency, being nominated by the Pennsylvania delegation. At the breaking out of the War of the Rebellion, he and General Nathaniel Lyon, afterwards killed in Missouri, were appointed Brigadier Generals, being among the first appointments to that rank made by Abraham Lincoln.

Governor Reeder was possessed of high natural qualities for a soldier—courage, endurance, power of discipline and combination—but he was without such experience as in his opinion was necessary to justify any conscientious man to assume important military command. He declined

the appointment, expressing publicly his opinion that no man had a right to learn a new trade or profession at his time of life, at the possible expense of the lives of other men. He promptly offered his services to the Government, however, in any other capacity in which they could be useful, and afterwards was employed in various important services, not strictly military, during the war.

His death occurred, after a short illness, at Easton, on the 5th of July, A. D. 1864. His memory should be revered by every citizen of Kansas as that of an honest and fearless magistrate, who gave to every duty his best intelligence and effort, and who in trying times was willing to risk life, if need be, rather than to submit to or permit the perpetration of wrong to the infant Territory over which he had charge.

GOVERNOR REEDER'S ESCAPE FROM KANSAS.

COPY FROM DIARY OF GOVERNOR A. H. REEDER; WRITTEN BY HIM DURING THE PERIOD WHEN HE WAS ESCAPING FROM KANSAS IN DISGUISE, IN MAY, 1856.*

MONDAY, May 5.—Left Lawrence with Congressional Committee for Tecumseh. Commenced examination of witnesses there in the afternoon; R. Rees assisting Whitfield.

TUESDAY, May 6.—Examined witnesses. Took tea with Judge Elmore. Returned at 9 o'clock P. M. through the woods alone. Began to think this was rather imprudent. Mrs. Elmore lives in a cabin of one room; was compelled to nurse her negroes and do the house work last fall; she says she never cooked a meal before. She bears the change well, and is a most excellent woman.

WEDNESDAY, May 7.—Examined witnesses until 4 P. M. Learned from the best authority (a grand juror and others) that the plan we had so often heard of was about being carried out, to paralyze the Free-State party; that the grand jury now in session at Lecompton had been charged by the court, as had the last grand jury at Delaware, that not only all the officers of the State Government, but all the judges of election, were indictable. A number of indictments had been found at Delaware, but for some reason had not been pressed, and the grand jury being many of them drunk, several had been lost in the street. A similar attempt, we knew, had been made at Osawkee, when John Hutchinson had been called as a witness, and

*The extract from Governor Reeder's diary was received by the Society from General Frank Reeder, with the following letter:

"EASTON, Nov. 4, 1885.—F. G. Adams, Esq., Topeka, Kansas—DEAR SIR: I send you by this mail a copy of the diary kept by my father in 1856, while escaping from Kansas. It is in one or two places incomplete, the original having become so blurred as to be indecipherable. I have added a copy of the will made while concealed in the hotel at Kansas City, the original of which was found in a compartment of the diary. Very truly yours,
FRANK REEDER."