

A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE OF 1852.

(JOHN P. HALE.)

BY HIS ASSOCIATE ON THE FREE-SOIL TICKET.



HE leaders of the Free-soil revolt of 1848 were eminently practical and clear-sighted men. Their sole reliance was upon constitutional methods and absolute devotion to the Union. While they wisely disclaimed any right to intermeddle with slavery as the creature of local law, their position was equally impregnable in asserting the right and duty of Congress to forbid its introduction into our national Territories. This principle had been settled by the action of the Government from the beginning, and upon it the whole controversy between the free and the slave States was focalized. When it was finally decided against the slaveholders, they entered upon the work of secession, and upon no other issue could the people of the Northern States have been so effectively rallied in the war for the Union, while the Union itself would in all probability have perished if a more sweeping and aggressive antislavery policy had been demanded in the beginning of the struggle.

Among the statesmen and reformers of his time, history will accord to John P. Hale a high rank. He was graduated with honors at Bowdoin College, and after a course of thorough preparation was admitted to the bar, and entered upon a successful practice. To the present generation, which knows him only as a famous antislavery leader, and as the Free-soil candidate in 1852, it may appear surprising that he began his political career as a Democrat, and that at the age of twenty-eight he was appointed district attorney for New Hampshire by President Jackson. Jacksonian Democracy was certainly not a very fructifying soil for the growth of abolitionism, nor was New Hampshire. Of all the States of the North, she was the most crouchingly subservient to the demands of slavery. She had not, however, then reached the bad eminence which she afterward attained, and in 1843 Mr. Hale was chosen as the representative of his district in Congress. He was a real Democrat. In his mind the word stood for a principle, and not for a mere party cog-

nomen. He believed religiously in the people, and his devotion to their interests was a passion which never cooled. When he took his seat in the House of Representatives, Adams and Giddings were in the thick of their fight for the right of petition and the freedom of debate, and they had already sounded the cry of danger respecting the annexation of Texas. Charles G. Atherton, a representative from Mr. Hale's own State, had fathered the "gag" resolution, which became known as the twenty-first rule of the House. Mr. Hale, with his fertile brain and clear moral vision, must have taken note of the trend of public affairs, and duly considered the question of duty. He avowed his hostility to the "gag" rule, and to the scheme of Texas annexation, and his votes were so recorded. His position on the Texas question gave no offense to his Democratic constituents, for in the beginning New Hampshire, in common with all the Northern States, was opposed to the measure. Accordingly, in anticipation of the expiration of his term, he was renominated for Congress. But in 1844 the Democrats in the Northern States changed front. Van Buren was thrown overboard because of his opposition to annexation. The legislature of New Hampshire having passed resolutions instructing her senators and representatives to vote for it, Mr. Hale addressed a public letter to his constituents opposing it on antislavery grounds. This kindled the wrath of the Democratic leaders of his State, and a convention of the party, called together for the purpose in February, 1845, rescinded his nomination and struck his name from the ticket. He continued in the field as an independent candidate, but was defeated. His friends now rallied around him, and asked him to take the field and canvass the State as their leader. This was asking him to face political death, for to all human appearances Democratic ascendancy in New Hampshire was impreguably established. But he yielded to the importunities of his friends, and became the knight-errant of a holy cause. His whole heart was given to the work, and he addressed the

people in every nook and corner of the State where an audience, large or small, would listen to him. His figure was commanding, and his features were marked by manly beauty. His face beamed with benignity and goodwill. His voice was full, clear, and musical. He had readiness, self-possession, tact, quickness of perception, and a keen sense of the ludicrous. His speeches abounded in wit, humor, and repartee, but he never indulged in personalities. Self-righteousness and malignity were utterly hateful to him, and his utterances were characterized by a simplicity and naturalness which won the hearts of old and young. His sincerity and moral earnestness found expression in impassioned appeals to the hearts and consciences of his hearers, who became the delighted captives of his power. In referring to him, Theodore Parker spoke of «the masterly eloquence which broke out from his great human heart, and rolled like the Mississippi in its width, its depth, its beauty, and its continuous and unconquerable strength.» But the grand secret of his power as an orator was singleness of purpose. In this memorable campaign Mr. Hale illustrated the saying, «If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.» He carried the people of New Hampshire triumphantly with him, and his canvass was known then, and has been ever since remembered, as the «Hale storm» of 1845. Its result was the overthrow and humiliation of the pro-slavery Democracy of the State, and the election of Mr. Hale to the United States Senate two years afterward.

When Hale took his seat in the Senate, he was the only member of that body who defied the discipline of both the old parties, and dared assert his absolute political independence. He stood alone until 1849, when he was joined by Chase and Seward, who were reinforced in 1851 by Sumner. There was something dramatic in his solitary appearance in the Senate as an avowed antislavery man. That body then contained more able and eminent men than it had had for more than a generation, and it was completely under the domination of the slave interest. That interest dictated the policy of the Government at home and abroad, as it had done from its beginning, and made and unmade politicians. Hale knew that his single-handed warfare against it would invite ridicule, sneers, insults, and threats. He knew that he must face the scorn and contempt of the South and the chilling neglect of the North. But he bravely stood in the breach. He took no counsel of his fears, and would not be

bullied into silence. When he was denied a place on senatorial committees on the pretext that he «did not belong to a healthy political organization,» he ridiculed the proceeding, and made it tell in his favor. One of the finest exhibitions of his courage was given soon after he took his seat in the Senate, when he cast the only vote against a resolution thanking Generals Scott and Taylor for their victories in Mexico. This vote was sure to be misunderstood and misrepresented, and all parties regarded it as suicidal; but it was sufficient for him to know that no other honest and consistent course was possible for those who had condemned the Mexican war in all its stages. He would not belie his convictions to avoid any personal consequences of his act; and when he pleaded the high authority of Chatham, Burke, and Fox, who refused to vote thanks to the commanders of the British army for their services in America in our revolutionary struggle,—a strictly analogous case,—no senator successfully answered him.

Mr. Hale's humanity was equal to his courage. While a member of the House, he moved an amendment to the naval appropriation bill, abolishing the spirit ration and prohibiting flogging in the navy. The amendment prevailed, but failed in the Senate. This motion was renewed in the Senate in 1849, and in 1850, after an impassioned appeal by Mr. Hale, flogging was abolished; but the spirit ration continued till 1862. He was justly proud of these achievements, and they are appropriately commemorated on the pedestal of the statue recently erected in the State-house yard at Concord.

As an antislavery leader, Hale followed his own methods of warfare. While Seward, Sumner, and Chase were forging their antislavery thunderbolts, and firing them at the enemy at long range through the press of the Northern States, Mr. Hale was using his lighter artillery on the skirmish-line, and in well-executed flank movements. In 1850 he was prompted by the presence of a pro-slavery mob in Washington to introduce a resolution providing for the reimbursement of persons whose property should be destroyed by riotous assemblages. Foote of Mississippi denounced this resolution as intended to protect «negro-stealing.» Addressing Mr. Hale, he said: «I invite him to visit the good State of Mississippi, in which I have the honor to reside, and will tell him beforehand in all honesty that he could not go ten miles into the interior before he would grace one of the tallest trees of the forest with a rope around



ENGRAVED BY DAVID NICHOLS.

JOHN P. HALE.

FROM A DAGUERRETYPE BY BRADY.

his neck, with the approbation of every virtuous and patriotic citizen; and that, if necessary, I should myself assist in the operation." Mr. Hale answered: "The senator invites me to visit the State of Mississippi, and kindly informs me that he would be one of those who would act the assassin and put an end to my career. . . . Well, in return for his hospitable invitation, I can only express the desire that he should penetrate into one of the (dark corners) of New Hampshire; and if he do, I am much mistaken if he would not find the people in that (benighted region) would be very happy to listen to his arguments and engage in an intellectual conflict with him, in which the truth might be elicited." The popular instinct at once labeled the Mississippi senator as "Hangman Foote," and the epithet is still instantly recalled by the mention of his name.

Mr. Hale, however, did not confine himself

to the brief speeches and occasional sharp-shooting into which he was drawn by the current debates. In 1850 he made an able and carefully prepared speech, which occupied two days, in reply to Mr. Webster's famous speech of the 7th of March. Among other things, he said: "The senator says he would not reenact the laws of God. Well, sir, I would. When he tells me that the law of God is against slavery, it is a most potent argument for our incorporating it with any Territorial bill." His most telling speeches, however, were brief, and seemed to be inspired by the immediate occasion which called them forth. In his defense of the rescuers of the slave Shadrach, he said:

"John Deeree claims that he owns Shadrach. Owns what? Owns a man! Suppose, gentlemen, John Deeree should claim an exclusive right to the sunshine, the moon, or the stars! Would you sanction the claim by

your verdict? And yet, gentlemen, the stars shall fall from heaven, the moon shall grow old and decay, the sun shall fail to give its light, the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; but the soul of the despised and hunted Shadrach shall live on with the life of God himself. I wonder if John Debree will claim that he owns him then!»

In speaking of the Mexican war, Hale referred to the Western man who said he «got caught by opposing the last war, and he did n't mean to get caught again; he intended now to go for war, pestilence, and famine.» Not less amusing was his reference to President Polk's backdown on the Oregon treaty, in which he said: «The President exhibited a Christian meekness in the full scriptural degree; but he did n't inherit the *blessing* of the meek—he did n't get the land.» The Congressional records abound in such examples of Mr. Hale's pleasantries. They always embodied some truth which could thus be more impressively told than in the form of a serious argument.

During his sixteen years of service in the Senate he was known to the whole country for his knightly courage in facing the embattled hosts of slavery. He was equally well known by his sallies of ready wit and his abounding good nature, without which he would not have been able to stand in his place as the representative of a hated cause. They softened the asperities of debate, and perhaps averted personal assaults. He kept down the ire of

his enemies by compelling them to laugh at the moral grotesqueness of the attitude in which he placed them. He was anything but a fanatic on the slavery question; he never gave countenance to any scheme of disunion or any form of revolutionary action. His whole public life was guided by his strong common sense. He had no desire to be singular. He loved the approbation of his fellows, and would have lived in peace with all men. But he had convictions and followed them, and for the sake of those convictions he would have been ready to lay down his life.

Of the old Free-soil leaders of 1848 and 1852 who stood shoulder to shoulder with Mr. Hale in Congress, one only survives.

And the names he loved to hear
Have been carved for many a year
On the tomb.

The men who so gallantly unfurled the flag of freedom in their day and generation, and shouted for «Free soil, free speech, free labor, and free men,» are now rarely mentioned; but what they wrought endures. The question which so stirred their blood and kindled the wrath of their opponents is lifted out of the tangle and jargon of debate into the clear light of accomplished facts. They played a grand part in completing and crowning the work begun by our fathers in 1776, and history will so make the record; but none of them will be more deservedly honored or more lovingly remembered than John P. Hale.

George W. Julian.

«OH, WASTE NO TEARS.»

OH, waste no tears on Pain or Fate,
Nor yet at Sorrow's dire demand;
Think not to drown Regret with weight
Of weeping, as the sea the strand;
When was Death's victory less elate
That Grief o'er-sobbed his grasping hand?

Not for the flaws of life shall fall
The tear most exquisite—ah, no;
But for its fine perfections all:
For morning's joyous overflow,
For sunset's fleeting festival,
And what midwinter moons may show;

For wild-rose breath of Keats's line;
For Titian's rivalry of June;
For Chopin's tender notes that twine

The sense in one autumnal tune;
For Brunelleschi's dome divine,
In wonder planned, with worship hewn.

Save them for heroes—not their blood,
But for the generous vow it sealed;
For babes, when mothers say, «This bud
Will be the blossom of the field»;
For women, when to Vengeance' flood
They hold for Guilt a stainless shield.

And when two hearts have closer come,
Through doubts and mysteries and fears,
Till in one look's delirium
At last the happy truth appears,
When words are weak and music dumb,
Then perfect love shall speak in tears.

Robert Underwood Johnson.