

PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S ACCUSERS AND THE
"SALARY GRAB" OF 1873.

On the third ultimo Harper's Weekly contained a striking article entitled, "From the Presidency to the Senate," in which is vividly described Andrew Johnson's return to the Senate of the United States after his tempestuous career as President. The writer is Mr. Julius Chambers (quondam editor of *The New York World*) who seems to have been at once an eye-witness of the dramatic event and a most ardent friend and admirer of President Johnson. His article is largely a series of vicious stabs (albeit picturesquely delivered) at Johnson's enemies and accusers in the then recent impeachment trial. Much of the article we suspect gets within close range of libel—at least, such surely is the case with the following statement which contains a gross imputation upon a distinguished Iowan which is absolutely without shadow of justification:

"The indictment [viz. the articles of impeachment] was prepared," says Mr. Chambers, "by seven partizans, every one of whom, remaining alive and in Congress, afterward participated in filching \$1,125,000 from the people under the pretext of 'back pay.'"

Let us see. The committee of the House that presented the bill of indictment before the Senate consisted of seven men, most of whom had achieved distinction as members of the House. They were John A. Bingham of Ohio, George S. Boutwell and Benjamin F. Butler of Massachusetts, James F. Wilson of Iowa, Thomas Williams and Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania, and John A. Logan of Illinois. What part did these men play in the passage of the "back pay" appropriation or "salary grab," as it was generally designated?

In the closing days of the 42d Congress in 1873, General Butler of Massachusetts introduced a bill increasing the salaries of the members of Congress from \$5,000 to \$7,500 per annum. This bill, proper enough in itself, had a

“chequered and discreditable career.” Instead of having it referred to the committee on appropriations to which it should have been committed for consideration preliminary to submission to the House for passage, the bill was referred to General Butler’s own committee, that on judiciary. The bill aroused much general criticism—so much that it was soon apparent that it could not be passed on its own merits. Thereupon in the closing hours of the session the friends of the measure resorted to the legislative trick of attaching its provisions as a “rider” to the great budget-bill known as the Executive, Legislative and Judicial appropriation bill. In the course of these proceedings a retroactive clause was added making the salary provision apply not only to future congressmen but to the members of that Congress. In other words, Congress voted itself an increase of pay amounting to \$5,000 for each member—a performance that justly aroused a nation-wide storm of furious criticism and denunciation.

Mr. Chambers is guilty of gross negligence or serious lapses of memory in his sweeping charge that all those who conducted the case against President Johnson were involved in the salary grab. In 1868, not long after the trial, Thaddeus Stevens died. Mr. Williams did not return to Congress after 1869. Geo. S. Boutwell became Secretary of the Treasury March 11, 1869, and continued in that office until March 16, 1873, when he entered the Senate. And our own James F. Wilson retired from Congress in 1869 not to return until his elevation to the Senate in 1882. So that of the seven members of the Johnson committee, Mr. Chambers is in flagrant error as to four. There were but three of its members present and voting in the session of the 42d Congress that passed the Back-Pay bill—Bingham, Butler and Logan. They, however, voted for it. Here it may not be irrelevant for us to note the almost solid chorus of “Noes” that came from Iowa’s delegation, when the famous “rider” was on its passage: Senator James Harlan, “Not

voting"; Senator Geo. G. Wright, "No"; Representative George W. McCrary, "No"; A. R. Cotton, "No"; W. G. Donnan, "No"; M. W. Walden, "No"; F. W. Palmer, "No"; and Jackson Orr, "No." Mr. Wm. G. Donnan, now, as then, an honored citizen of Independence, Iowa, just before the vote was to be taken upon the obnoxious measure, rose in his place and addressing the speaker said, "I ask that the rule be read which prohibits members from voting on a question in which they are interested." The Speaker (Mr. Blaine), with more promptness than logic, declared, "That has no application here whatever." So it seemed. Congress at its next session proceeded forthwith to repeal the law.

It is possible that Mr. Chambers had in mind the members of the House committee on "Reconstruction" that first reported in favor of an impeachment (February 22, 1868), composed of Thaddeus Stevens, Boutwell, Bingham, C. T. Hulburd, John F. Farnsworth, F. C. Beaman, and H. E. Paine. But here again he errs. Except those already considered Farnsworth was the only member present March 3, 1873, and he voted "No." Or Mr. Chambers may have had in mind the committee appointed to draw up the articles of impeachment which consisted of Boutwell, Stevens, Bingham, Wilson of Iowa, Logan, George W. Julian of Indiana, and Hamilton Ward of New York. But here too his memory slips. Neither Mr. Julian nor Mr. Ward took part in the vote on the salary bill for the reason that neither gentleman was in that Congress.

Mr. Chambers makes the oft-repeated mistake of the over zealous. In his laudable desire to defend a friend who suffered sadly at the hands of perverse and fitful fates, he recalls only his virtues and his wrongs. He can see only the defects of his opponents: all of their actions he sees through glasses colored with memory's fond recollections of that friend. The times and the infinite crisscross of men's affairs their crowding and clashing interests and their influence on men's actions he for the time forgets, and to exalt that

friend whom the public had wronged he likewise does wrong to others. It is not necessary to pervert history or overstate or underestimate events to recompense Andrew Johnson or to restore to him his rights and proper place in history. Neither should his advocates forget that Johnson largely brought his troubles on himself.

Andrew Johnson was of gigantic size in mental and moral stature. His large mould was fit for the rough and stormy politics that prevailed in ante-bellum days. When the great cleavage came in 1861 he stepped boldly away from friends and associates and espoused the Union Cause when it took not only physical courage but heroic moral character to keep one's courage to the sticking point. And in the titanic struggle which followed he did his country's cause yeoman service. But as with all strong characters he suffered from the defects of his virtues. His was a nature stubborn, stiff-necked. He could crash through hosts of enemies and scatter them by his terrific onslaught, but he could not deal easily with friends and party workers. Opposition he would beat down by frontal attacks, not dissipate or utilize it by skillful maneuvers as does the tactful politician and statesman. Suddenly put at his country's helm when the seas were tempestuous his irascible temper, his tactless, impolitic conduct and stubborn refusal to pursue diplomatic courses wrecked his own career and almost hurled the ship of state on the rocks.

But all the virtues did not appear with the opposition to President Johnson. The charges against him were not all well considered. The trial was pushed with strange disregard of the defendant's rights and indefensible speed. But the times were out of joint. Passions were hot. The air was surcharged with suspicion and dread and malevolent hate that the turmoil of fratricidal war always engenders. Seen through such a medium, all things, all acts were distorted, mistakes and intentions magnified, minimized, perverted according to one's point of view in the controversies

that split the air. No one in particular was chargeable with the blunders that were made. All were at fault and recriminations now are futile. Let us rejoice rather that the one great mistake was not committed. And here again we of Iowa may well look aloft, because among the clear-eyed men who saw the dangers to the nation in the storms that were raging about them and staunch in their high-minded patriotism stood steadfast against wrong courses was James W. Grimes, the illustrious Senator from Iowa. H.

TERRITORIAL JOURNALS MISSING.

We do not miss things till we want them. Then we suffer astonishment and aggravation to find that data or documents that we supposed easily accessible are not obtainable. This rather prosaic platitude is suggested by a footnote in Professor Herriott's article on "Legislation in Iowa Prior to 1858" in this number of *THE ANNALS*. At the bottom of his statistical table (No. I), showing the bills introduced in the legislature and the laws passed and vetoed during the days of the territory, he states that the Journals of the Proceedings of the Council and House of Representatives of the Legislature that convened in extra session in July, 1844, are not only unprinted, but what is worse the originals can not be found in the office of the Secretary of State. The fact that the Journals were not printed is not strange. Nor would it be more than an inconvenience to the public and to scholars if the originals were safe and sound among the State's archives. It will be recalled that the Historical Department in 1902 printed for the first time the Journals of the two houses in the special session in 1840. But if the Journals are lost beyond recovery it is a loss of very serious character. So great is it that we are prone to hope that further diligent search will result in the discovery

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