

THE ANCESTRY AND YOUTH OF GOVERNOR GRIMES.

From the First Chapter of His Life, in Preparation.

BY WILLIAM SALTER, BURLINGTON.

IN response to a request for a short memoir of himself, from a gentleman at Washington who was preparing a volume upon the public men of the country, Mr. Grimes, the year he became a senator of the United States, furnished the following sketch of his life:—

“There are no events in my life worthy of record. I have done nothing to distinguish me above the great mass of my fellow men.

“I was born in the town of Deering, Hillsboro county, New Hampshire, on the 20th of October, 1816. My parents were John Grimes and Betsy Wilson, both of whom were born in the same town, and both sprung from Scotch-Irish parentage—the mother from the settlement at Londonderry, N. H., and the father from a small band of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, who settled in Boston in the early part of the eighteenth century. My father was a farmer. I was the youngest of a family of seven children.

“I was prepared for college at Hampton Academy, New Hampshire, then under the charge of Rev. Roswell Harris, and entered Dartmouth College in August, 1832; remained in college two and a half years, and then commenced the study of the law with James Walker, Esq., in Peterboro, N. H. I settled in Burlington—then Michigan, afterwards Wisconsin, and now Iowa—in May, 1836, and have resided here ever since. The territory of Iowa was created July 4th, 1838, and at the first election, in the month of August

following, I was elected a member of the first general assembly, and was chairman of the judiciary committee in the house of representatives, all laws for the new territory passing through my hands. I have been several times elected to the territorial and state legislatures, though I have always been in a political minority in the county.

"In August, 1854, I was elected governor of Iowa for the term of four years. In January, 1858, I was elected senator of the United States from the state of Iowa for the term of six years from the 4th of March, 1859.

"I have done nothing and said nothing to justify you in placing my name in your book. I am only entitled to a place there, if at all, by the accident of my election to the senate."

It is the object of this paper to fill out the above sketch so far as relates to the ancestry and youth of Mr. Grimes. In the early part of the seventeenth century a colony of people from Argyleshire, Scotland, emigrated to the north of Ireland, and settled in the province of Ulster, encouraged by grants of land from James I., made for the purpose of strengthening his throne and the Protestant interest in Ireland. "Ulster," says the historian Hume, "from being the most wild and disorderly province of all Ireland, soon became the best cultivated and most civilized."—*History of Great Britain, Chap. 46*. In process of time, the appellation "Scotch-Irish" was fixed upon the descendants of these people, though they always insisted upon their pure Scotch blood. Emigrants from this body of people came to America, and commenced the settlement of Londonderry, New Hampshire, in 1719; and others of them about the same time settled in and near Boston, Mass.

Of this sturdy and vigorous stock were the parents of Mr. Grimes. His mother's father, Capt. David Wilson, was born in Londonderry in 1743, and her mother, Sarah Cochran, was born in the same town the same year. On his father's side, his grandfather, Francis Grimes, was born in 1747, upon Noddle's Island, now East Boston, and his

grandmother, Elizabeth Wilson, in Londonderry, in 1736. The first permanent settlement of the town of Deering was made in 1765, and these persons were among the early settlers. The town was incorporated in 1774, and named, with Francestown, which adjoins it on the south, for Frances Deering, wife of John Wentworth, the last royal governor of the province of New Hampshire.

In response to a resolution of the Continental Congress, of March 14th, 1776, the male inhabitants of Deering colony over twenty-one years of age, with two exceptions, signed the following declaration, April 12th, 1776:—

“To show our determination in joining our American brethren in defending the lives, liberties, and properties of the inhabitants of the United Colonies, we, the subscribers, do hereby solemnly engage and promise that we will, to the utmost of our power, at the risk of our lives and fortunes, with arms, oppose the hostile proceedings of the British fleets and armies against the United American Colonies.”

Among the thirty-three subscribers to this declaration, the original of which is preserved at the State House in Concord, are the names of Francis Grimes and David Wilson.

Of such an ancestry, among a people inheriting these traditions, breathing the air of the hills, in a community of intelligent, self-reliant, and independent farmers, James Wilson Grimes was born and bred. He was named for a brother of his mother. His father was born August 11th, 1772, and his mother March 19th, 1773. He was the youngest of eight children, of whom one died in infancy; the others survived him, except a sister, Susan, who became the wife of Mr. Alden Walker, and died October 31st, 1846. She was the mother of Capt. John G. Walker, U. S. Navy. Being thirteen years older than her brother, she assisted very much in the care of his childhood. Through life he cherished a grateful recollection of her kindness, and of her pious counsels and instructions, and always regarded her

children with peculiar tenderness and affection. His father, whom he resembled in temperament and appearance, was a substantial farmer, a man of unpretending goodness, affectionately attached to his family, hospitable and kind to all, of thrifty habits, and highly esteemed among his neighbors and in the surrounding region of country for sterling integrity and worth. His mother was a woman of energy and determination of character, and gave herself to the duties of home and household care with serious industry and devotion. The happy parents lived together more than half a century, the mother dying in 1850, and the father suddenly in 1851. His father's farm was situated in the northern part of Deering, about two miles and a half distant from the village of Hillsboro Bridge, upon the broad expanse of a hill-top, affording an extensive outlook over the valley of the Contoocook, whose rushing waters flow into the Merrimac, and stretching far away to distant hills that ennoble the landscape on every side. In 1806, the house which his grandfather had built in the early settlement of Deering gave place to a large two-story double house, erected by his father. Here was his birthplace. A short distance down the road stood the district school house, where the child mingled with his mates in study and in play. The town of Deering had ten school districts, each with a school house, and also possessed a social library.

In early childhood he was fond of reading, and eagerly devoured books. He commenced the study of Latin and Greek with Rev. Eber Child, pastor of the church in Deering, and boarded in his family for a few months. Mr. Child was highly esteemed in the region as a scholar. He was a graduate of Dartmouth College, in 1821, and of the Theological Seminary at Andover in 1826. His widow, who now resides at Natchez, Mississippi, has kindly furnished the following reminiscences of her husband's pupil. Mrs. Nancy T. Child writes:—

“Mr. Grimes was but a lad when I knew him, over forty years ago. But I can think of no young man out of my

own family of whom I have such vivid recollections. I remember the tones of his voice, and his smiling countenance. James always laughed with his eyes. He had a happy disposition, and an uncommon flow of spirits. I have no recollection of ever seeing him angry or put out at anything. If for nothing else, I should love his memory — he was so kind to my children. He would often undress our youngest child, and put him in his cradle to hear him sing his lullaby. After the child's death he went to his scrap-book, and cut out some beautiful lines written over the grave of a child of his age. I kept them a great many years. He did not like his studies, still I think he always got his lessons. My husband thought a great deal of James, and was proud to hear of his success in life. When my husband died (December, 1847) I was left in a land of strangers, with my family of little ones, to get through the world as best I could. But the God of the widow and fatherless has never forsaken me. My husband left a small farm of unimproved land in Rock Prairie, Wisconsin, but mortgaged for all it was worth at the time of his death. I managed to clear the incumbrance, and went on it to make a home. I needed money, and wrote Mr. Grimes, asking a loan of a hundred dollars, to which he readily responded. In his letters to me he never alluded to self in any shape, only the state of his health and his family; but always remembered his old friends and relations with unabated interest and affection. In one he said: 'Could you see my gray hair and wrinkled face, you would not recall the gay, rollicking boy I used to be.' In the dark hours of the nation's peril, when I read, in a description of the senate, 'There is Senator Grimes — he is always found in the right place,' I thought, James has not altered any. The boy is father to the man. When the disappointment of 'impeachment' flashed over the land, I told a neighbor I was confident there was one that decided according to the evidence. I knew Mr. Grimes and his father before him, and he had not swerved from what he thought was right and duty."

At Hampton Academy he completed his preparation for college under the instruction of Rev. Roswell Harris, a graduate of Middlebury College, 1821, and a classmate of Mr. Child at Andover. In one of his compositions, written while a member of the academy, he describes the beauty of Hampton Beach, and the picturesque and sublime scenery of Boar's Head. At this period many portions of the country were visited with seasons of special religious awakening. The year 1831 was distinguished for revivals. Rev. Dr. Dana, who had been president of Dartmouth College, Rev. L. F. Dimmick, of Newburyport, and other clergymen, came to Hampton and preached to the students. Young Grimes wrote home an account of the work, and of the feelings of his mind. His letters show how deeply his mind was stirred, and the impressions and convictions he entertained. We make a few extracts:—

“On Monday Dr. Dana addressed the students, and it was an affecting time. At that time, mostly, my sins were exposed to me. It seemed as if I was the greatest sinner under Heaven. I immediately retired to my room, and before that night found joy, and peace, and comfort to my soul. Yesterday, in the morning, there was a prayer meeting. Mr. Harris proposed that all who were determined to have religion and to seek the Lord should rise. Ten in our department rose. It is a very interesting time. It seems as if the Holy Spirit was in our midst. Imagine, if it is possible, the happiness I now feel. Supposing there was no hereafter, I would be constrained to have religion for the sole purpose of having temporal happiness. Mr. Harris is very much engaged, and I am afraid will wear himself out. All in the school are anxious, with the exception of three or four. God is working wonders among us. May God in His mercy bless you!”

Entering college in his sixteenth year, his tastes led him into habits of general and miscellaneous reading, rather than to pursue the prescribed course of study with close application. His favorite books were in the department of his-

tory and light literature. A journal of his reading and reflections at this period shows a free range of mind over a wide circle of subjects. One of his essays is a criticism on the college course of study as prescribing too much Latin, Greek, and metaphysics, and not enough deep and laborious reading of the British classics. Among other topics are the following : —

Independence of Spirit.

Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, with an abstract of the 40th chapter.

Hume and Robertson as Historians.

The English Constitution, and the superior advantages of the Constitution of the United States.

British Jealousy of America.

Cooper's Novels.

Paulding's Novels.

Sketches of Public Characters — Webster, Calhoun, Everett, Livingston, Chancellor Kent.

Dissensions among Christians.

A Republican Government for France.

The Error of Students in depending too much upon their Talents and not enough upon Application.

The Mistake of depending upon Riches.

Selfishness.

Discrimination in Alms-giving.

Intellectual Improvement conducive to true Happiness.

An esteemed classmate, for whom he predicted, in their Freshman year, the distinction he has attained as a scholar, Rev. Samuel C. Bartlett, D. D., Professor in the Chicago Theological Seminary, says : " He was a man of general intelligence, and had acquired an easy, fluent style both of writing and talking, but was entirely modest, and free from all arrogance or assumption. He was a very genial person, with a steady vein of humor and good nature. I always liked and respected him. I think he had no enmities or jealousies. He took little active part in class or college excitements and office seekings. He gave no offence, and took

none. He was liked by his classmates, who all knew he could have made more of himself in college. When he left, he was beginning to wake up to greater earnestness of purpose, thought, and application." Another classmate, subsequently a member of congress for twelve years, two of which were during the period of Mr. Grimes's senatorial career, Hon. John Wentworth, of Chicago, says: "I never saw or heard of Grimes until we met at Hanover, Freshman year, 1832. He left at the close of the first term of the Junior year, 1835. James F. Joy was our tutor that year, and I have often heard him say that Grimes and myself recited in Tacitus to him. After that I did not meet him until he came to Washington, whilst I was congressman. Grimes was a whig, and I was a democrat, but was then quarrelling with our democratic president (Pierce) about the Douglass Kansas-Nebraska bill. General Pierce knew Grimes's people well, and he knew their whig affinities, and I thought it would be a good joke to take Grimes to him, and introduce him as the next governor of Iowa, as he was. Pierce thought he would have to change his politics first. Grimes was looked upon as a keen, shrewd, odd, eccentric boy, fond of notoriety, indulging in all sorts of freaks in dress and personal appearance. He had no intimates. If he indulged in any boyish mischief, it was when he was alone, and then he took delight in hearing other boys brag about tricks that he himself had perpetrated. After I got into congress, I called upon President Lord to send him his degree, the same as if he had graduated, and I noticed that his name appeared in the next triennial catalogue as a graduate. Our classmate, Rev. E. E. Adams, now deceased, preached at Washington in the winter of 1866-7, and Grimes, Daniel F. Merrill, and myself went together to hear him."

In his mature reflections, several years after leaving college, he thought that he had been sent there too young, and advised that a boy should not enter until he is eighteen or nineteen years old.

In February, 1835, he entered the law office of Mr. Walker, at Peterboro, and in Mr. Walker's absence from home was frequently intrusted with important matters of business. He became a member of his family, and won a place in the affectionate regards and care of his wife, a gifted and most amiable lady, whose superior intelligence and friendly and judicious counsels were so helpful to him in his studies; that he sometimes said, "he read law with Mrs. Walker." A few extracts from some of her letters will show the high tone of her mind, and how beautifully she blended the wisest counsels with her happy influence. When he was planning to go west she wrote to his parents: "I wish to see you, and converse with you respecting his project of going to the west. Allow me to say that I am much interested in his welfare, and I should be ungrateful were it otherwise. His whole conduct since he entered our family has been that of a kind and dutiful son, and his society has added much to my happiness." Soon afterward she writes to her young friend: "Do you still look to the west as your future home? If so, I pray God it may be a happy one. The world is open before you, and 'tis a world full of blessings to the wise and good. Let me hope that you will be both. I can hardly account for the interest I feel in your welfare. I have known those a great deal better than you that I did not like half so well. Now you must turn out well, that I may have some excuse for this predilection. What pride I shall take in my old age, when I shall see your name among the great ones, in saying, 'I aye thought he would be something.'" The following summer, after hearing from him of his settlement in the west, she wrote to him, in a letter full of affectionate counsel: "Let me caution you against expecting uninterrupted good fortune, and do not make haste to be rich. Every day's experience confirms me in the belief that our happiness does not depend on the abundance of the things which we possess. Be honest and honorable in all your dealings, and leave the event to Him who orders all things for our good. Excuse the motherly counsels of

one who feels it her privilege to address you in that character." And a few years later she wrote: "Can you really think I have forgotten you, or that time and distance have made me indifferent to your welfare? Do not you know, that in spite of all your faults, I loved you almost as well as if you had been my own son? I hardly know why, but so it was. Most sincerely do I rejoice in your brilliant success, and most earnestly do I pray that you may be a good and happy man. Do not let your prosperity make you unmindful of the Bountiful Giver. There is much in your situation unfavorable to serious thought; but you have a mind capable of judging whether something more than fame and riches be not necessary to your happiness. I cannot bear to think of your being devoted wholly to politics and money-making."

On the 2d of March, 1836, he left the paternal roof with a heavy heart, but with buoyant hopes, for "the far west." He came first to Alton, Illinois, and after visiting a few other places in that state, landed in Burlington, and though not yet twenty years of age, embarked in business as an attorney at law. A census taken the following summer returned a population of 10,531 souls in the "Black Hawk Purchase." Burlington was a frontier town. Fifty miles west was the Indian line.

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE AND TIMELY DISCOVERY

BY HAWKINS TAYLOR, WASHINGTON, D. C.

PROBABLY no settlers in any new country in modern times ever saw such hard times as the early settlers of Iowa, summing up from 1835 to about 1848. In Keokuk, as in all parts of the territory, there was no such thing as getting money for any kind of labor. I laid brick at three

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