

by Charles Hammond, 1779-1840 ⁶

[From "Truth's Advocate," Cincinnati, Ohio, January, 1828.]

VIEW
OF
GENERAL JACKSON'S DOMESTIC RELATIONS,
IN REFERENCE TO HIS FITNESS
FOR THE PRESIDENCY.

There is no subject connected with the Presidential canvass, upon which the supporters of Gen. Jackson have evinced more political generalship, than that which stands at the head of this article. They have asserted with a species of deafening fury, that to touch it, was a violation of all the charities and all the decencies of life. They have thrown out upon every one who was not confounded into silence by their denunciations, torrent after torrent of opprobrium, evidently intended to overwhelm with the noise of their reproaches, all whom they could not gag by intimidation. I have marked the employment of these means and their effects: and I have been alike unmoved by the violence of one party, or the shivering moderation of many amongst the other. My own judgment has long been clearly satisfied, that it was an affair in which the National character, the National interest, and the National morals, were all deeply involved, and that, therefore, it was a proper subject of public investigation, and exposure. This, it was my determination should, at a proper time, take place. In my judgment that time is now, and I proceed upon my own responsibility, and without consultation with a single individual, to the performance of what I deem a solemn duty.

Whatever may be thought or said of other offices, every candid man must agree that the office of President necessarily brings the immediate family of the officer, into direct connection with the public. It is impossible to separate them from public observation. If the President be a married man, his wife at least, must share the distinction of the station he occupies. If she does not, the reason will be sought after. If she does, her qualification for the station, her character, and standing, her personal defects, or excellencies, must all be drawn out, and made subjects of remark, and will be commended, caricatured or ridiculed, as they may furnish occasion.

It has so happened, in other countries, as well as in our own, that highly gifted men have associated themselves, in the connubial relation, with ignorant and vulgar women. This association never fails to lessen our respect for the individual. We feel that it impeaches his taste, his judgment, or his moral conceptions. Whilst, however, it would not operate to deter us from employing him as a lawyer, or a mechanic, or confiding in his judgment as a merchant, it would assuredly indispose us to engage him as our clergyman, or to select him as the guardian of our daughters. And for this plain reason, that it would involve an intimate intercourse, where there was nothing of example or precept to recommend it.

Every prudent and discreet person, entrusted with the charge of a family holds it a duty to examine well the female character where they cultivate acquaintance. If the female family head be destitute of the characteristics and accomplishments which adorn the station she moves in, it never fails to produce an unfavorable effect upon her connections. A talented husband, or great wealth, may insure her a cold endurance, but they can do no more. This law of society is more irrevocable than any laws of the Medes and Persians. It is founded in the pure

morals, exquisite sensibility, and pervading influence of the female sex, in every christian country. An attempt to subvert it, an effort to inculcate the doctrine, that an enquiry into the character, of a man's wife, for the purpose of regulating intercourse with his family, is an unhallowed invasion of the domestic sanctuary, can never be successful. This enquiry must and will be made, in all cases, where the station or the employments of the husband necessarily places his wife in connection with society. Such being the relation in which the wife of a President is placed, the character and the interest of the nation must be more or less affected by her capacity, or incapacity to acquit herself with credit, in the elevation to which she is called. If she be weak and vulgar, she cannot escape becoming a theme for ridicule, a portion of which, and its consequent contempt, must attach to her husband, and to the people that have selected him for their chief ruler. If she be intelligent and accomplished, the influence of her talents, her virtues, and her manners, must inevitably reflect a mild and benignant lustre upon all around her, and upon all connected with her. When, then, in our country, a man is suggested as a candidate for the Presidency, the fathers and husbands, the matrons and the maidens of the land, have a deep stake in knowing the character of his wife; and if she be a weak and vulgar woman, for that reason alone, his pretensions should be passed by. But if a stain be cast on her, which, in general cases, excludes the unfortunate subject from society altogether, then the investigation and inquiry becomes doubly indispensable. It applies not only to the propriety of permitting her to occupy the station proposed, but it touches also the character and qualifications of the husband.

I am far from insisting that whispers and surmises, insinuations and suspicions, whether of ancient or recent origin, are sufficient reasons for making these investigations. Present correct conduct and the possession of countenance and respect from reputable persons, should be received to silence all these. But when the stigma is affixed by legislative acts and judicial records, the case is widely different. It then calls for enquiry; and there is no escape from the conclusion. We must see a degraded female placed at the head of the female society of the nation, or we must proclaim and urge the fact as a ground for excluding her husband.

The case of Gen. Jackson and his wife, is, in every respect, an uncommon one. Wherever he was known, public rumor had circulated suspicions as to the correctness of his matrimonial alliance, long before he was dreamed of as a man, in whose connubial connections the nation could have any possible interest. It was no case of mere surmise against an unmarried female, arising out of possible indiscretion, and resting upon a peculiar freedom of manners too little regardful of the restraints of society. On the contrary it involved an accusation of the most exceptionable character, extending to the gentleman as well as to the lady, and resting, for proof, upon a legislative act, and the record of a court of justice. It was an accusation of gross adultery, in which outrage upon the rights of the husband was urged against Gen. Jackson, and desertion from her husband to the arms of a paramour, was charged against the wife. Such were charges; such the evidence upon which they rested. Whether true or false, necessarily became a matter of public concern, from the fact, that the parties accused were presented as candidates for the most conspicuous station in our country, in which the accused female must be placed at the head of the female society of the land. Were she innocent of the crimes alleged against her, their long circulation, the strong evidence to sustain them, and the serious manner in which they affected the present claims of her husband conducted to call for investigation. An upright and an honorable man, confident of

the purity of his wife, and sensible that he occupied a station which connected that purity with the character of his country, would have rejoiced at an opportunity to repel a long endured calumny. He would have seen, in a call for enquiry and investigation, no spirit but that of manly patriotism. He would have regarded the man who moved it, as the friend of himself and of the country, and he would have met it, rejoicing as one who had found a pearl of great price. It has not been so received. It has not been so met. Why it has not? there can be but one opinion.

Mrs. Jackson was the wife of Lewis Robards, of Mercer county, Kentucky, then a component part of the Commonwealth of Virginia. In December, 1790, Lewis Robards applied to the Legislature of Virginia, charging his wife with adultery, and for that cause praying a divorce. Such proof was offered as induced the Legislature to act upon the charge. A law was passed directing a judicial investigation, and providing that if it were found true, Lewis Robards should stand divorced from his wife. These proceedings were instituted and prosecuted to final trial. In September, 1793, twelve men, constituting a jury, after hearing proof, declared upon their oaths, that Mrs. Robards was guilty of the adultery charged upon her, and Lewis Robards obtained the divorce prayed for. The law of Virginia, and the record of the Kentucky court are inserted at the end of his review, so as to place the matters beyond all dispute.

This fact being thus established, the question fairly presents itself to a christian and a moral people, ought a convicted adulteress, and her paramour husband, to be placed in the highest offices of this free and christian land? It is useless to answer with ranting vituperation. It is a plain and fair question, one which every citizen has a right to ask; one which no citizen should be denounced for asking. Was the offence committed? Can lapse of time eradicate its contamination? Party prejudice, party passion, may answer as they please. Those who value good character, and the institutions, and moral sentiments that preserve it, can give but one answer.

An answer has been attempted, not by denying the fact of the adultery, but by admitting, and attempting to excuse it. This vindication is the work of able men; it has been skillfully adapted to the sympathies and the passions of the multitude, totally disregarding all moral feeling and just intelligence. It shall be reviewed and exposed, not by appeals to passion and vulgar prejudice, but by submitting such a commentary as applicable to every case similarly circumstanced.

The Nashville Committee commence their vindication by noticing an allegation against the chastity of Mrs. Jackson, which none had before objected against her, in any tangible form. A number of witnesses are brought forward, who testify that her husband was jealous of her before she was acquainted with Gen. Jackson. Judge Overton is made to name the individual of whom her husband was jealous, and to state that some of the facts transpired under his own observation. I am unable to perceive how these facts can be deemed elucidatory of Mrs. Jackson's good conduct. But I rely nothing upon them as proof against her. I would be the last man to impeach a lady's chastity, upon the single circumstance of her husband's jealousy; yet every man must admit, that jealousy is very odd evidence to bring forward in support of her character. And when a second fit of jealousy turns out to be well founded, it is singular enough to allege the first to excuse it. Such, however, is the case before us.

Judge Overton professes to be conversant of all the facts implicating the conduct of Gen. Jackson and Mrs. Robards at their early acquaintance, and also many of the facts that relate to Mr. Robards, and her husband. He comes forward as the apologist of them both, at this

time; and it may be fairly assumed, that he makes the best case for them. His statement is also published at the close of this article, and I shall make it the basis of my exposition.

Judge Overton lived in the family of Robard's mother, with Robards and his wife, in 1787 and in 1788. They lived unhappily, in consequence of his jealousy; and in the fall or summer of 1788, Mrs. Robards's brother, at the request of Robards, who had said, he did not intend to live with her any longer, removed her to her mother's in Tennessee, leaving Robards in Kentucky. This removal was "said to be a final separation at the instance of Robards." The whole family held Mrs. Robards blameless.

After her departure, the elder Mrs Robards spoke to Judge Overton, who was about to settle in Tennessee, to interest himself, "to get her son Lewis, and daughter-in-law Rachel, to live happily together." He conversed with Robards, who expressed regret for what had passed, acquitted his wife of all impropriety, and joined in requesting the judge's good offices to restore harmony, and this the Judge undertook in consequence of Robard's, assurance, that he would give up "all nonsensical notions about jealousy."

In March, 1789, Judge Overton was at Mrs. Donalson's, mother of Mrs. Robards, in Tennessee, where he and General Jackson about that time became boarders. The Judge "frequently conversed with Mrs. Robards, on the subject of living happily with her husband," and she assured him of her disposition to do so. He communicated this to Robards and his mother, and received their thanks, and Robards and his wife became re-united in 1788, or 1789. In the arrangement for re-union, Robards agreed to reside in Tennessee, and for a time at Mrs. Donalson's. "Not many months elapsed before Robards became jealous of Jackson," and his upbraidings reached the ear of the Judge, who remonstrated with him, but to no effect. The Judge then informed Jackson, who determined to remonstrate with Robards. This resulted in a quarrel, and Jackson left the house to board elsewhere. "Robards remained several months with his wife, and then went to Kentucky, in company with Mr. Thomas Crutcher." There came a report, that "*Robards intended to come and take his wife to Kentucky.*" After this, again Mrs. Donalson told the Judge, "her daughter intended to go down the river to Natchez, to some of their friends, IN ORDER TO KEEP OUT OF THE WAY OF ROBARDS, as she said he had threatened to haunt her." Jackson became greatly distressed, and made the judge his confidant, communicating "*his intentions of going to Natchez with Col. Stark, with whom Mrs. Robards was to descend the river, saying, that she had no friend or relation to go with her, and assist in preventing Mr. Stark his family and Mrs. Robards from being massacred by the Indians.*" He went accordingly, and returned in May, 1791. About or shortly after this time, information was received, that a divorce had been granted, upon the application of Robards. The Judge remarks: "THIS APPLICATION HAD BEEN ANTICIPATED BY ME." Jackson returned to Natchez in the summer of 1791, and in the fall, brought Mrs Robards back as his wife. The General never knew that there was no divorce until after the decree was pronounced, when the Judge informed him of it, and advised a second marriage, which was solemnized in January, 1794.

Such is the palliatory narration of a partial friend. It is an insult to common sense, to say that it does not place the seduction and adultery, in as prominent and reprehensible a light, as it is placed by the legislative and judicial proceedings themselves. Jackson avows his attachment to a married woman, and his determination to travel with her as her protector, in a journey undertaken avowedly, to "*keep out of the*

way of her husband." The apology for this journey, is, that her husband threatened to take her to Kentucky. Jackson united himself as a husband to this same married woman, upon the mere report of a divorce, and lived with her three or four years, in open adultery. For this, the plea of ignorance is advanced; as if the perpetrator of an acknowledged enormity, which nothing but the knowledge of facts could palliate, might be permitted to justify himself upon the plea of ignorance.

In the whole course of my life, I have never witnessed a defence, even of the lowest criminal by the meanest pettifogger, of such a demoralizing and profligate tendency, as the one here attempted. It is maintained that a convicted and avowed adulteress shall be permitted to say, that, the unfounded and unjust accusations of her husband were the occasion of her crime, and constitute her apology. Assuming an innocence, negatived by every part of the transaction as the very ground of the defence, making strong and almost irresistible presumptions of guilt, an excuse for its undisguised consummation."

The affection of Robards for his wife; and his anxiety to enjoy her company in peace, is evident from all the statement furnished. Judge Overton affirms this, in terms, and he states clearly, that after Jackson left the house of Mrs. Donalson, "*Robards remained several months with his wife, and then went to Kentucky, in company with Mr. Thomas Crutcher.*" Mr. Crutcher relates the parting of Robards and his wife, when this journey was taken, and he also relates their conduct after Jackson had left Mrs. Donalson's. He says:

"Captain Robards continued to live with Mr. Donalson without interruption, as long as he remained in the country. I have seen Mr. and Mrs. Robards together at Nashville, and have seen them together at Col. Hay's, where they have staid days and nights."

Of the parting he says:

"When I was ready to set out on my journey, I went by Mrs. Donalson's for Capt. Robards; on my arrival I found Mrs. Robards and her mother packing up his clothes and provisions. I suppose it was about an hour before Capt. Robards was ready to start. When we were ready Capt. Robards, with much apparent friendship, took his leave of Mrs. Donalson, *and his wife, walking to the gate with him, in a very tender and affectionate manner took her leave of him.*"

Thus the parties lived, and thus they separated; after Jackson left Mrs. Donalson, which Overton says was several months. Robards's jealousy subsided, when the object was no longer in association with his wife. Let us enquire what he was subsequently guilty of, that should justify a wife in abjuring his authority and society.

On this journey he said to Mr. Crutcher, that, "he be damned if he would ever be seen in Cumberland again;" Mr. Crutcher replied "the friends of Mrs. Robards would not like, and perhaps would not consent for her to go back to Kentucky to live." He said, he did not care what they liked or disliked, he should do what he thought proper."

Most men, I believe, act pretty much upon this principle. But few certainly deem it necessary to consult "*the likes or the dislikes*" of their wives' friends, as to their place of residence. And surely no man, who values our institutions, and the social intercourse founded upon them, can contend that a jealous temper in a husband, and an unwillingness to reside where he may prefer, can justify a wife in placing herself "*beyond his reach,*" in the society of a person towards whom he has once expressed a feeling of jealousy. Yet these are the only reasons adduced in vindication of the conduct of Mrs. Robards.

Mr. Crutcher tells us, "it was reported, however, that he *threatened to come and take his wife to Kentucky, and compel her to live there.*"

She, as well as all her friends, was much opposed to this, *and in order to place herself beyond his reach*, as I understood at the time, determined to descend the river in company with Col. Stark's family, and under his protection, to Natchez."

We have the same information from Overton. Both concur in stating that Mrs. Robards made her journey to Natchez, to avoid her husband, and in disregard of the duty which required her to accompany him to Kentucky. There is no essential difference in the case, whether she left her husband's own house, or that of her mother, where he left her in kindness, and in contemplation of meeting her again in the same spirit. The facts of the case, as exhibited by Overton, in connexion with Crutcher, when divested of the strong opinions which the gentlemen themselves give, present a case of very gross misconduct in both parties: and such as the record evidence would naturally lead us to expect.

Among the curious anomalies which this vindication presents, it is not the least singular, that its authors boldly assume and assert, what their own witnesses and authentic records prove to be impossible.

They say: "At the time when Mr. Robards separated from his wife, applied for a divorce, obtained it, and Gen. Jackson married her, when all the facts were fresh and distinct, public opinion was formed, and the contemporaneous judgment of the society in which those persons resided, came to a clear and decisive result in their favor."

Of the twelve persons whose statements accompany the vindication, two only, Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Bowen, venture to make this assertion. Even to Judge Overton is careful not to say quite so much, Judge McNairy speaks of "*irreproachable character*," and Gen. Jackson's *incapacity* to do certain things, but still, he stops short of the fact, that the "*distinct public opinion*" was formed and expressed in their favor.

This could not possibly be the case. Robards applied for the divorce. The Legislature of Virginia would not pass a law, upon such a subject, without some evidence of its propriety. Were the facts such as to justify Mrs. Robards and General Jackson, Robards never could have thought of a divorce. Judge Overton has inadvertently furnished pretty good proof of this. He says, he had himself *anticipated*, that Robards would apply for a divorce. Whatever he may say now, it is very clear he did not *then anticipate* such an application, in behalf of Robards, without a supposition that he had some cause for it. The idea would be absurd. Robards had confessed the injustice of his first suspicions, and he had become reconciled to his wife, after his second fit of jealousy, had parted from her in tenderness, and wished her to come and reside with him in Kentucky. These were the events of the summer of 1790, as the committee would have us believe. No impropriety had then, it is pretended, taken place on the part of Mrs. Robards. She had not then, as the witnesses say, descended the river with Jackson, yet Judge Overton "*anticipated*" that Robards would apply for a divorce!! Nay, he evidently intimates his "*anticipation*" that the application would be successful, and this is done for the purpose of explaining why the fact of the divorce was taken upon trust. Though not much in point for this purpose, it is a strong intimation of what were the real facts. The Judge knew that Robards had just grounds to apply for a divorce; hence, he "*anticipated*" both the application and success.

Gen. Breckenridge is also brought out to contradict the record, and to prove that the passage of the law was predicated upon no proof against Mrs. Robards. He is absurd enough to say:

"I was a young man at the time, and the deep impression made on my mind was the novelty and importance of the case, combined with the

interest which I felt in behalf of the female concerned, remain with great distinctness.

“Mr. Robards was represented to be a man of vile, wild habits and harsh temper, and his wife lovely and blameless in her disposition and deportment, and so cruelly treated by her husband, as to make a separation necessary to her happiness. It was under impressions produced by a state of facts like these, that I voted for a judicial enquiry on the subject, which I have understood eventuated in a divorce.”

Before we can credit this statement we must believe that the Legislature of Virginia received an application from a man of vile habits, and harsh temper; accusing a lovely and blameless wife, whom he had cruelly treated, of adultery, and praying to be divorced from her on that account: that with a full knowledge of his vileness and her worth and innocence, and with a strong conviction that separation was necessary to her happiness, they enacted a law authorizing a judicial enquiry, whether she had or had not committed adultery!! This law, enacted because a separation was necessary to her happiness, did not allow a separation unless she was judicially found guilty of adultery!!! and of this the framers of the law believed her innocent! When a man of sense utters such absurdities as these, we know he does not speak the truth. His assertions are in direct contradiction to our common sense. They prove his readiness to stultify himself to support Gen. Jackson, and they prove nothing further.

It is useless to insist that in a case where a single man has avowed his affection for another man's wife, (for the admission to Judge Overton “that he was the most *unhappy* of men, in having been *innocently* and unintentionally the cause of the loss of peace and happiness of Mrs. Robards, whom he believed to be a fine woman,” amounts to neither more nor less,) and who accompanies that wife in a long journey to “*keep out of her husband's way,*” and “*place herself beyond his reach;*” and where the *unhappy* swain, and the “*fine woman*” live in union as man and wife, and their conduct is made the subject of legislative and judicial investigation, resulting in a conviction of adultery; it is useless, I say, to assert, in such a case, that the contemporaneous judgment of society was in their favor, and that there “did not exist an injurious suspicion as to their previous conduct.” The assertion is a libel upon all society, where female chastity is valued, or connubial fidelity regarded; as well as an idle contradiction of the record evidence in the cause.

It is alleged as an apology, that “thirty-seven years of domestic peace and useful virtue, have given a sanction, which must operate upon every candid and generous mind with irresistible power.” This is a persuasive and plausible appeal.” It addresses itself to our kindest sympathies, and where it a case for the indulgence of sympathy, would be almost incontrovertible. In most cases of female aberration, there are very many extenuating circumstances, by which sympathy in one sex, and both sympathy and gallantry in the other, would be almost persuaded to forgive the offender? It is because of this that, a stern uncompromising judgement of censure, is universally past. The unfortunate is resolved to have fallen never to rise again, unless all memory of her fall can be obliterated. So great are the temptations, so numerous and so seducing the approaches to the commission of the offence in question, nothing short of utter and irremediable disgrace is sufficient to hold it in proper check. Can forty years of exemplary virtue, restore the wretched Elsie D. Whipple to the station she has lost in society? Would not we be startled at the bare suggestion, that forty years hence she might be placed as the wife of our President, at the head of the females of our country? There is no record proof of her adultery, and no evidence to charge her with further crime, but the as-

sertions of a most abandoned villian. The cases are not analagous, but the principle is the same; and however painful it may be felt, the more recent one is a decisive illustration of the unsoundness of the apology in question.

That oblivion had not cast her shade upon the offence of Mrs. Jackson, is most notorious; nor has it, in the canvass for the Presidency, been raked up from a comparative forgetfulness, to be used for the purpose of prejudicing her husband. From the period of the transactions themselves, the subject has never ceased to circulate, and supply a theme of conversation, wherever Gen. Jackson was known. Of this, the vindication itself gives one decisive item of proof, in the letter from A Foster, to Caleb Atwater, written in reply to enquiries with respect to it, in 1824. Had public opinion, at the time, been as is now represented, the fact itself would have furnished no aliment for tittle tattle, and might have been forgotten.

In the view here presented of the case, upon the facts stated by the vindicating committee themselves, no intelligent mind is permitted to doubt, that Mrs. Jackson was unfaithful to her marriage vow with Robards. No man of the world can believe that she would have been guilty of the great indiscretion of flying beyond the reach of her husband, with a man charged to be her paramour, were she innocent of the charge. Her conduct, his conduct in the flight, in the alleged marriage, in the illegal union, in the subsequent legal marriage, furnish presumptions of guilt, which admit of no explanation consistent with correctness and duty. It would be as rational to give credit to asseverations of innocence, had they been found at midnight, undressed, in the same bed. In that case there would be proof of a single indiscretion, whilst in the real cause there is a succession of corroborative facts, which could not, in any probability, take place, were the parties innocent.

It has been urged that the effect of the record is invalidated by the fact, that the proceedings were *ex parte*. But with what propriety can General Jackson, or any one of his advocates advance this argument? The transcript does not show when the judicial proceedings were first instituted. But Judge Overton places the first union of Gen. Jackson and Mrs. Robards, in the summer of 1791. When they assumed the open relation of husband and wife, it was an illegal and criminal act. It is asserted, that they supposed it to be legal. They were, upon their own assumptions, greatly mistaken. How was it practicable to effect such a state of things, as to make it lawful for them to continue in the relation of husband and wife? The answer admits of no dispute. It could be in no way effected, but by permitting Robards to obtain a divorce. It is no where pretended that Mrs. Robards could apply for a divorce with any hope of success. Robards could only obtain a divorce under the law, by proving the facts of desertion and adultery upon his wife. Gen. Jackson and Mrs. Robards, therefore, voluntarily, and for the gratification of their own appetites, placed themselves in a situation to render it necessary that Mrs. Robards should be convicted of desertion and adultery, in respect to Robards. To this conviction they must submit, or separate, or continue to live in open defiance of law and decency. It is absurd to suppose, that, in such a predicament, they could either of them desire that the application of Robards should be defeated. It is obvious to the meanest understanding, that they could scarcely do otherwise than pander to their own disgrace, or remain quiescent and hope for it.

We are told the first marriage took place, in confidence that the Legislature of Virginia had granted a divorce upon the application of Robards. He could not apply upon an allegation of his own misconduct. He must have charged some dereliction of duty, some crime

upon his wife, as the foundation for granting to him a divorce. He must have adduced some proof in support of his charge. The parties both knew this, and they married in 1791; if indeed, they did *then* marry at all, of which there is no proof, with a full knowledge that the capacity to do so arose from a legislative conviction of crime against Mrs. Robards, and none other than adultery could be supposed.

Those, then, who believe that an adulteress, who has become, after a time, the legal wife of her paramour, is not a suitable person to be placed at the head of the female society of the United States, cannot with propriety, vote for Gen. Jackson. Those who are of opinion that all enquiry, as to the character of a President's wife, is improper, and are therefore indifferent what her character may be; and those who conceive that a fallen female may be restored by subsequent good conduct, may conscientiously give Gen. Jackson their support. But to ground themselves upon an affected belief, that the allegation of unchastity is not true, is to defy the lights of truth, and to close the understanding against conviction.

The state of facts, as the exposition I have made, shows them to have existed, vitally affects Gen. Jackson's pretensions to the Presidency, in many views, that relate principally to himself. They affect him as a man, as a husband, as a patriot; in each character, evidencing his unfitness for the station to which he aspires.

They affect him as a man. His acquaintance with Mrs. Robards commenced in March, 1789. He was then a veritable stripling to cast the eyes of affection upon another man's wife, and in less than two years secure her to himself. A gallant, gay Lothario, according to Mrs. Smith, who assures us, that "*his character and standing*" [twenty-two years old, and a few months in the country!!] "*added to his engaging and sprightly manners, were enough to inflame the mind of poor Robards.*" They certainly did inflame the mind of Mrs. Robards, and a perception of this, would very naturally inflame that of her husband.

We learn from Judge Overton, the Pandarus of the play, that after Gen. Jackson and Mrs. Robards became acquainted, "not many months elapsed before Robards became jealous of Jackson," but "*without the least ground.*" This unfounded jealousy broke out in reproaches against Mrs. Robards and violent altercation with Jackson, who in consequence, changed his residence to keep out of the way of giving offence. After this, Robards remained several months with his wife, and parted from her in apparent confidence and kindness, in the month of June, 1790. From the time of the altercation with Jackson, which must have taken place in the summer of 1789, we hear of no difficulties between Robards and his wife, until the fall of 1790, when his determination to remove his wife to Kentucky was made known. Then new troubles arose: THEN "*the whole affair gave Gen. Jackson great uneasiness;*" THEN he informed Judge Overton "*he was the most unhappy of men, in having innocently and unintentionally been the cause of the loss of the peace and happiness of Mrs. Robards, whom he believed to be a fine woman.*"

This disclosure is utterly irreconcilable with the whole case set up by the Nashville Committee, of which Judge Overton is the main effective witness. It is an additional instance, to the thousands that have occurred, how very difficult it is to give a gloss to matters of fact, different from that which they naturally import. How, in the fall of 1790, was Gen. Jackson "*innocently and unintentionally the cause of the loss of the peace and happiness of Mrs. Robards?*" I think it will puzzle Judge Overton and the Nashville Committee to boot, to make a satisfactory explanation upon the facts they have adduced.

The jealousy of Robards in 1789, they say was unfounded. At that time then, Mrs. Robards had conceived no affection for Gen. Jackson. It could not be the corroding canker of unhallowed attachment that destroyed her

peace and happiness; of which attachment, Gen. Jackson was the innocent object. Robards had become reconciled to his wife, and there is no pretence that he had either deserted her, or was in the habit of upbraiding her, upon account of Jackson. Why then was she unhappy, and Jackson the cause of that unhappiness? Was it a continuance of the unfounded jealousy of Jackson that induced Robards to wish the removal of the wife? This does not appear; if it did, upon what common principle of action would it make Jackson *“the most unhappy of men?”* or, wherefore should it cause *“the loss of peace and happiness of Mrs. Robards.”* She, conscious of innocence, and devoted to the performance of conjugal duties, had no cause for a total *“loss of peace,”* in the fact that her husband wished to remove her from the occasional society of a man against whom he entertained suspicions. On the contrary, such removal was pursuing the plain path of prudence and of duty, and was exactly that, which should have given confidence and comfort to the mind of an affectionate wife. Jackson having felt no attachment himself, conscious that the lady felt none, and doubly conscious that no act of his had given cause for the jealousy of Robards, could have no reason to feel unhappy, or indulge regret. If there was no intercourse between Mrs. Robards and himself, but that of common politeness, he could have no knowledge of her *“loss of peace and happiness,”* much less were it possible for him to know, that he was the occasion of it. After the ebullition of jealousy which had escaped Robards, every principle of prudence, of duty, of decent respect for themselves, and for the society in which they moved, forbade any intercourse but that of distant civility, between Gen. Jackson and Mrs. Robards. Had such been the feelings and the conduct of the parties, there could have been no *“loss of peace,”* on one side; no *“most unhappy of men”* on the other.

The avowal made, that Jackson was most unhappy, because he was innocently the cause of the *“loss of the peace”* of Mrs. Robards, inevitably asserts a state of facts totally different from that which the vindication attempts to make out. It includes the admission, that Mrs. Robards was attached to Jackson, that he reciprocated this attachment; that this mutual attachment had been mutually disclosed and had deeply affected the peace and happiness of both. In such circumstances, it is possible that the grossest indulgence of this criminal attachment had not taken place. But when the parties so far forget what is due to themselves, and to the world, as to become partners in a journey, avowedly to place the wife *“beyond the reach”* of the husband, it is an insult to our common sense to talk of their virtue, or to tell us that the man is incapable of seducing his neighbor's wife.

Here then we find Gen. Jackson, in the first stages of his manhood, conceiving an attachment for his neighbor's wife, while a resident in the bosom of her family, and indulging that attachment so as to secure a reciprocation from its object. We find him accompanying her in a flight, to get beyond her husband's reach, finally giving occasion for a divorce, upon the broad ground of the wife's adultery, and afterwards making her the partner of his life, and probable mother of his children. Were an occurrence like this now to take place, no matter what was the conduct of the husband, how should we estimate the youthful hero of such an adventure?

Let us exclude Gen. Jackson's case from our recollection, until we reflect upon the proper answer to the inquiry here made.

To indulge an affection for a married woman, even in a man's own secret heart, is a great aberration from correctness, it is permitting unhallowed passion to obtain the mastery over reason and duty. To approach a married woman with a declaration of affection, is an indecent outrage. If she does not so feel and receive it, she is already more than half a participator. The outrage against society and the husband is not the less; and he who has the hardihood to make such an approach, would at once be

regarded as a youth prepared to sacrifice his own duties, and the rights and happiness of others, to the gratification of his own appetites. When the rein is so given to indulgence, that it runs the whole race, and ends in divorce and marriage, the most favorable estimate we can make of the parties, is, that they are the mere creatures of passion, and the victims of its uncontrolled predominance. We should draw the conclusion, that he whose career of appetite was not restrained by a regard for his obligations to society, nor by a dread of reproach, nor by an apprehension of vindictive, or retributive justice, could never be a safe depository of power over others. Such would be the natural inference in the case stated, and in Gen. Jackson's case, his whole life shows, that the deduction would be a correct one. Thus does this transaction vitally affect Gen. Jackson's pretensions to the Presidency. It does not stand an isolated act of self-willed gratification, regardless of duty and of right, but it stands the first in a series of similar acts, extending over his whole life, and assimilated in principle, though not always in degree, with much of his conduct.

It touches him too in the relation of husband.

Notwithstanding the criminality attending their courtship and marriage, the evidence is full and clear that, as Mrs. Jackson, the lady's conduct has been exemplary and irreproachable. There is no situation that imposes on a man higher and more responsible duties, than the relation of husband to a woman once known to have fallen from the virtue of chastity. If he were the original occasion of her fall, and conuzant of all the circumstances, unites his character with her's he owes her the most scrupulous delicacy of deportment, as well as the tenderest affections. She is a bruised and broken flower, which he alone can properly appreciate, and cherish. To raise her to respectability, to obliterate the remembrance of her offences, to reconcile her to herself, to restore her peace of mind should be the great effort of his life, to which his whole conduct should be directed, unobtrusive retirement from the world, and respectful difference, for those with whom he associated, would be the plain course of a man who felt as he ought to feel, in such a predicament. He should do nothing, say nothing, place himself in no position which would bring his wife before the public. To act otherwise, is to be as regardless of her feelings, as he had formerly been of the feelings of others, and to expose her, in the wayward indulgence of his own temper, to the remarks and sarcasms of those whom he encounters. It is no evidence of a good, or of a great man, to attempt by a high hand to force a suspected wife into society, or to imagine that the tongues of men are to be paralyzed by terror. Were Gen. Jackson possessed of the enlarged, the subdued and the corrected intelligence, essential to the proper discharge of the Presidential functions, affection for his wife, and tenderness for her feelings, would have decided him never to be a candidate. And more especially, were he a true patriot, who esteemed the honor, the fame, and the interest of his country as deserving all consideration, he would feel, that his matrimonial relation ought to exclude him from the office of President.

Since the affair was brought before the public, we have had a goodly portion of sickly and mawkish sentiment, from Mr. Walsh, and from Mr. Coleman, from Duff Green, and Amos Holton, about gallantry, and the respect due to female character, and the cowardice and baseness of dragging a lady before the public, in matters of electioneering concern. These things sound very finely, and would always apply when female crime called for investigation and exposure, as well as in the present case. But what would constitute female excellence, if no difference were made between her, who subjected all her actions to the restraints and regulations of propriety, and her who gave a loose to her feelings, inclinations, and passions, regardless of the decorum which alone renders the sex estimable.

I have already noticed the imperious necessity for imposing severe penalties, upon certain female aberrations. If she who has offended in this

particular so rankly, that her offence has become matter of Legislative and Judicial record, may aspire to high places, and may claim to silence all censure and all enquiry, who does not see the dangerous consequences that may be produced in society? What virtuous woman, what upright man can call for such a relaxation of public morals? What father, who descants earnestly upon the duty of throwing a mantle over the domestic relations of Gen. Jackson, shall be at liberty to reproach a fallen daughter? In such case, what daughter may not shelter her frailties under such an illustrious example? No true patriot would seek distinction, when to obtain it, would be to inflict a stab upon the morals, and upon the female morals too, of his country. The maxim of Cæsar was a correct one. The wife of a distinguished public man, should not only be pure, but unsuspected. If her character be stained with suspicion it affects all around her, the whole community of which she is the head.

Gen. Jackson cannot be insensible to the true state of his own case. He cannot be deceived by the glossing of his vindicators, though possibly enough, he may be mistaken as to public opinion. But were he a lofty patriot, such as he is represented to be, his love of country would compel him to decline being a candidate for the Presidency. He would never consent that the wife of his bosom, should be exposed to the ribald taunts, and dark surmises of the profligate, or to the cold civility, or just remark of the wise and good. He would never consent, that his name should be associated with sneers at his country, or with suggestions of evil and dangerous examples to her daughters. The truth of what I have asserted, must be felt by every candid man. It presents an obstacle to the election of Gen. Jackson, which can only be surmounted by the headlong devotion of party.

The denunciations which have been uttered against those who consider Gen. Jackson's domestic relations a proper subject of investigation, have not been confined to the writers of newspaper essays, or to the declaimers in booths and taverns; nor have these denunciations been levelled only at those who were concerned in perpetrating the alleged offence. The Legislature of Tennessee have made them the matter of a solemn Legislative resolve, and have included "some of the members of the present administration" in their charges. The following is their language:

"But the retreats of private life are no longer sacred. This beloved citizen, this genuine republican, venerable for his age, illustrious for his services, and still more illustrious for his inflexible patriotism, has seen, not only his conduct distorted by slander, and his glory tarnished by calumny, but the partner of his bosom traduced and exposed for the sport of the idle, and the malice of the infamous. That couch which has so often been forsaken, that others might sleep in safety and peace; that breast that has so often braved danger, that others might not even feel its alarms; which felt a stain on the honor of the country, like a stab into his own vitals, has been invaded and cruelly outraged. *That some of the members of the present administration of the general government, are accountable for the slander and persecution of Gen. Jackson and his wife, is reluctantly, though solemnly asserted. No moral distinction can be drawn between the act of hiring a man to commit a crime, and that of rewarding him after he has committed it; and it is notorious, that the prostituted miscreants, who invent and circulate these slanders, are the continued objects of ministerial favor patronage and pay.* Hired with the money of the very people whose willing gratitude and just admiration, are the real causes of this defamation and rancor. This foul injustice, not only aggravates the demerit of its procurers, but should endear to his country the hero who sustains it."

I make no remark upon the principles avowed, or the language employed in this extract; God help us, when such morals and such taste prevail in our Legislative assemblies! But it is an act of duty to repel the insinuation,

that Mr. Clay is accountable for any thing published with respect to Mrs. Jackson, for it would be affectation not to understand the allusion to *some of the members* of the cabinet, as being aimed at him. The following extract of a letter from Mr. Clay, dated, Washington, December 23, 1826, and copy of a letter from myself to Major Eaton, will show how this matter stands.

“I had a curious call the day before yesterday from Major Eaton. He came at the instance of Gen. Jackson to inform me, that the General had received a letter from some person in Kentucky, (whose name was not given) communicating to him, that you had, during your visit to Kentucky, last summer, obtained from me, papers which I had collected, for the purpose of an attack on Mrs. Jackson, which you were preparing; and to enquire if I had furnished any such papers. As there was not a particle of truth in the communication which had been made to the General, I of course, contradicted it adding, what is perfectly true, that I had never seen the papers relating to the transaction referred to, nor did I know that you had, on your above mentioned visit, procured any such papers. I have now, no recollection that the case of Mrs. Jackson formed any topic of conversation between us, when you were at Lexington.”

“CINCINNATI, Jan. 3d, 1827.

“SIR, I am advised information has been communicated to Gen. Jackson, that Mr. Clay had furnished me with certain documents, in relation to Mrs. Jackson; upon which I am preparing an attack on her. I deem it an act of justice to say to you, that this information is wholly incorrect. I never received from Mr. Clay any paper or document upon that subject: it was never but once, a subject of conversation between us.

“According to my present recollection, from my earliest knowledge of Gen. Jackson’s character, I had heard exceptions taken to the manner in which his connubial relation was commenced. I had heard various stories with respect to it. At Columbus, in the summer of 1824 I enquired of Mr. Clay, what was the true state of facts. He stated, that he knew nothing but by report. The relation he gave was palliatory; and he expressed his opinion that the subject ought not to be brought before the public. I mentioned this conversation to Colonel Andrew Mack of this city, on our return from Columbus, who is now, and was then, a warm supporter of Gen. Jackson for the Presidency, and he expressed himself entirely satisfied with the conduct of Mr. Clay.

“It has been for some time, my opinion, that the matter should be investigated. And I set on foot an enquiry to obtain the information, that would enable me to decide, for myself at least, how far the public were interested in it. From Mr. Edward Day, a travelling collector for merchants of Baltimore, I obtained such reference as enabled me to find the application of Robards for a divorce, addressed to the Legislature of Virginia, in 1790: the Legislative act that was passed by that body, December 20th, of the same year, and the judicial proceedings founded upon it, in Mercer county, Ky. What use I shall make of these documents, and the facts connected with them, must depend upon future events. I meditate no attack upon Mrs. Jackson. I do not view the character of the General in a light so favorable as you, and many others do, and I propose to use this affair, in no other manner, than to elucidate my estimate of that character. I wish to shun no proper responsibility, and should I make any publication, it will be accompanied with my name.

“This letter is addressed to you in a spirit of frankness, to prevent any misconception of my intention, and any mistake as to the channels through which I derived my information.

“Respectfully, yours, &c.

C. HAMMOND.

J. H. EATON, Esq.”

These papers show conclusively, that Mr. Clay is in no respect “accountable” for the investigations that have taken place, through my agency, and they warrant the inference, that he has in no way interfered to aid, or countenance the course pursued. It is just that he should be exonerated from an imputation so wholly unfounded in fact.

Gen. Jackson’s application to Mr. Clay, was certainly a “curious” one. Whilst Gen. Jackson made his domestic hearth, and social circle, a theatre for uttering various imputations against the character of Mr. Clay, what just cause of offence could be taken, had Mr. Clay furnished papers bearing upon the General himself, through his wife, or other relation? Suppose Mr. Clay had collected copies of the different papers in existence, touching the divorce of Mrs. Robards, and had put these papers in my hands, what right had Gen. Jackson to question him about it? I can conceive of none. Gen. Jackson had put an end to all relations of amity with Mr. Clay, by his Swar-

tout letter and other slanders. As an avowed antagonist, Gen. Jackson could have no just pretension to prescribe to Mr. Clay, the weapons he should use, or the manner in which he should employ them. It is therefore matter of "curious" speculation what could be the object of the call, and upon what ground the General assumed the right to make it. The most obvious conclusion is, that it was made with the intention of operating as an engine of intimidation. As much as to say, the standing of my wife shall not be impugned by any man I hold my equal, but at the risk of direct responsibility. If a more apposite explanation be given, I shall be glad to hear it.

Those who have perused this article, are now apprised of the ground on which I have deemed this investigation a proper and necessary one. They are possessed of what, I think, a just view of the case. It is for all who have pretensions to intelligence and candour, to say, whether the subject is not one, which it is the right, and the duty of a free and moral people to investigate? and whether the facts are such, as to justify the charge of slander and calumny against all, who have dared to speak plainly, the clear convictions of their judgments upon it? I am prepared to abide the sentence of just and reflecting men; of men, who do not judge of fitness and propriety, in reference to a particular case, but who make the broad principles of general right the foundation of their judgments. The censure, or the applause of those who accommodate their opinions to the circumstances that surround them, is of but little consideration. The one inflicts no pain, the other gives very partial satisfaction.

C. HAMMOND.

APPENDIX.

An act concerning the marriage of Lewis Robards, (Passed the 20th of Dec. 179—.)

SECT. 1. *Be it enacted by the General Assembly,* That it shall, and may be lawful, for Lewis Robards to sue out of the office of the Supreme Court of the District of Kentucky, a writ against Rachel Robards, which writ shall be framed by the Clerk, and express the nature of the case, and shall be published for eight weeks successively, in the Kentucky Gazette; whereupon the plaintiff may file his declaration in the said cause, and the defendant may appear and plead to issue, in which case, or if she does not appear within two months after such publication, it shall be set for trial by the clerk on some day in the succeeding court, but may for good cause shewn to the Court, be continued until the succeeding term.

SECT. 2. Commissions, to take depositions and subpoenas to summon witnesses shall issue as in other cases.

SECT. 3. Notice of taking depositions published in the Kentucky Gazette, shall be sufficient.

SECT. 4. A jury shall be summoned, who shall be sworn, well and truly to enquire into the allegations contained in the declaration, or to try the issue joined as the case may be, and shall find a verdict according to the usual mode; and if the jury, in case of issue joined shall find for the plaintiff, or in case of inquiry into the truth of the allegations contained in the declaration, shall find in substance, *that the defendant has deserted the plaintiff, and that she hath lived in adultery with another man, since such desertion,* the said verdict shall be recorded, and, THEREUPON, the marriage between the said Lewis Robards, and Rachel shall be totally dissolved.—*See Henning's Statutes at large, vol. 13, page 227.*

The following is a true extract from the record, and proceeding in the Court of Quarter Sessions, for the county of Mercer, wherein Lewis Robards is plaintiff and Rachel Robards is defendant.

KENTUCKY, SCT.

Lewis Robards complains of Rachel Robards in custody, &c. of a plea of adultery, for this, to wit: That whereas, the said Rachel Robards on the day of in the year 17— was in due form, according to law joined in the holy bonds of matrimony, with the said Lewis Robards; nevertheless the said Rachel in violation of her most solemn promise, did on the 1st day of July, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety, clope from her said husband Lewis, and live in adultery with another man, and still continues with the said adulterer: Therefore the said Lewis prays that the said marriage between the said Rachel and Lewis may be dissolved, according to an act of Assembly, in that case made and provided.

J. BROWN, for Plaintiff,

At a Court of Quarter Sessions, held for Mercer County, at the Court House in Harrodsburgh, on the 27th day of September, 1793, this day came the plaintiff, by his attorney, and thereupon came also, a jury, to wit: James Bradsbury, Thomas Smith, Gabrael Slaughter, John Lightfoot, Samuel Work, Harrison Davis, John Ray, Obediah Wright, John Miles, John Means, Joseph Thompson, and Benjamin Sanless, who being elected, tried, and sworn, well and truly to enquire into the allegation in the plaintiff's declaration, specified, upon oath, do

say, that the defendant, Rachel Robards, hath deserted the plaintiff, Lewis Robards, and hath and doth still, live in adultery with another man. It is therefore considered by the court, that the marriage between the plaintiff, and the defendant be dissolved.

MERCER, SCT.

I do certify, that the above and foregoing, is a true extract from the record in my office.— Given under my hand, as Clerk of the court aforesaid, this 8th day of August, 1825.

THOMAS ALLEN.

[NOTE.—This transcript of the record was made out for Mr. Edward Day in 1825, at his own request and without any suggestion from one. It was in 1826, that I first conversed with him about it.

Intimations have been thrown out, not only that the proceedings were *ex parte*, but that the directions of the law were not followed, either in the mode of proceeding, or in respect to the court where the proceedings were had. On this subject, it is only necessary to remark, that we are bound to presume the court took care to see that it had jurisdiction, and that the law under which it acted was complied with. It may be further remarked that if this record does not furnish evidence of a legal divorce, then the General and Mrs. Robards had lived in adultery all their lives, for there is no pretence that she was ever, in any other mode, divorced from Lewis Robards.]

MAY 8th, 1827.

Dear Sir.—In the fall of 1787, I became a boarder in the family of Mrs. Robards, the mother of Lewis Robards of Mercer county, Ky. Capt. Robards and his wife, then lived with old Mrs. Robards. I had not lived there many weeks, before I understood, that Capt. Robards and his wife, lived very unhappily, on account of his being jealous of Mr. Short.—My brother who was a border informed me, that great uneasiness had existed in the family for some time before my arrival, but as he had the confidence and good will of all parties, a portion of this confidence fell to my share, particularly the old lady's, than whom, perhaps, a more amiable woman, never lived. The uneasiness between Capt. Robards and lady continued to increase, and with it, great distress of the mother, and considerably with the family generally—until early in the year 1788, as well as now recollected, I understood from the old lady and perhaps others of the family, that her son Lewis had written to Mrs. Robards's mother, the widow Donalson, requesting that she would take her home, as he did not intend to live with her any longer. Certain it is, that Mrs. Robards's brother, Samuel Donalson came up to carry her down to her mother's, and my impression is, in the fall or summer of 1788. I was present when Mr. Samuel Donalson arrived at Mrs. Robards's, and when he started away with his sister; my clear and distinct recollection is, that it was said to be a final separation at the instance of Capt. Robards; for I well recollect the distress of old Mrs. Robards, on account of her daughter-in-law, Rachel, going away, on account of the separation that was about to take place, together with the circumstance of the old lady's embracing her affectionately. In unreserved conversations with me, the old lady always blamed her son Lewis, and took the part of her daughter-in-law.

During my residence in Mrs. Robards's family, I do not recollect to have heard any of the family censure young Mrs. Robards, on account of the difference between her husband and herself, if they thought otherwise, it was unknown to me. But recollect frequently to have heard the old lady and Capt. Jouett, who married the elder daughter of the family, at that time, express the most favorable sentiments of her.

Having finished my studies in the winter of '88—9, it was determined to fix my residence in the country now called West Tennessee. Previously to my departure, from Mrs. Robards's, the old lady earnestly entreated me to use my exertions, to get her son Lewis and daughter-in-law, Rachel, to live happily together again.

Their separation for a considerable time, had occasioned her great uneasiness, as she appeared to be much attached to her daughter-in-law, and she to her. Capt. Lewis Robards appeared to be unhappy, and the old lady told me he regretted what had taken place, and wished to be reconciled to his wife. Before I would agree to concern in the matter, I determined to ascertain Capt. Robards's disposition from himself and took an occasion to converse with him on the subject, when he assured me of his regret respecting what had passed; that he was convinced his suspicions were unfounded, that he wished to live with his wife, and requested that I would use my exertions to restore harmony—I told him I would undertake it, provided he would throw aside all nonsensical notions about jealousy, for which I was convinced there was no ground, and treat his wife kindly, as other men. He assured me it would be so; and it is my impression now, that I received a message from old Mrs. Robards, to Mrs. Lewis Robards, which I delivered to her on my arrival at her mother's, where I found her some time in the month of February or March, 1789. The situation of the country induced me to solicit Mrs. Donalson to board me, good accommodations and boarding being rarely to be met with—to which she readily assented.

Mr. A. Jackson had studied the law at Salisbury, N. C., as I understood and had arrived in this country in company with Judge McNairy, Bennet, Searcy, and perhaps David Allison, all lawyers seeking their fortunes, not more than a month or two before my arrival. Whether Mr. Jackson was at Mrs. Donalson's, when I first got there in March, 1789, I cannot say; if he was, it must have been but a little time. My impression now is, that he was not living there, and having just arrived, I introduced him into the family as a boarder, after becoming acquainted with

him. So it was, we commenced boarding there, about the same time. Jackson and myself, our friends and clients, &c. occupying one cabin, and the family another, a few steps from it.

Soon after my arrival, I had frequent conversations with Mrs. Lewis Robards, on the subject of living happily with her husband—she, with much sensibility, assured me, that no effort to do so, should be wanting on her part; and I communicated the result to Captain Robards, and his mother, from both of whom I received congratulations and thanks. Capt. Robards, had previously purchased a pre-emption in this country, on the south side of Cumberland river, in Davidson county, about five miles from where Mrs. Donelson then lived. In the arrangement for a re-union between Capt. Robards and his wife, I understood it was agreed, that Captain Robards and his wife, was to live in this country, instead of Kentucky; that until it was safe to go on his own land, which was yearly expected, he and his wife were to live at Mrs. Donelson's. Capt. Robards became re-united to his wife some time in the year 1789 or 1789. Both Mr. Jackson and myself boarded in the family of Mrs. Donelson—lived in the cabin room, and slept in the same bed. As young men of the same pursuits and profession, with but few others in the country, with whom to associate—besides sharing, as we frequently did, common dangers, such an intimacy ensued, as might reasonably be expected.

Not many months elapsed, before Robards became jealous of Jackson, which I felt confident was without the least ground. Some of his irritating conversation on this subject with his wife, I heard amidst the tears of herself and her mother who were greatly distressed. I urged to Robards the unmanliness of his conduct, after the pains I had taken to produce harmony, as a mutual friend of both families, and my honest conviction that his suspicions were groundless. These remonstrances seemed not to have the desired effect; as much commotion and unhappiness prevailed in the family, as in that of Mr. Robards in Kentucky. At length I communicated to Jackson the unpleasant situation of living in a family, where there was so much disturbance, and concluded by telling him, that we would endeavor to get some other place; to this he readily assented, but where to go, we did not know. Being conscious of his innocence, he said he would talk to Robards. What passed between Capt. Robards and Jackson, I do not know, as I was absent some where, not now recollected, when the conversation and results took place, but returned afterwards. The whole affair was related to me by Mrs. D. (the mother of Mrs. Robards) and as well as I recollect, by Jackson himself. The substance of their account was, that Mr. Jackson met Robards, near the orchard fence, and began mildly to remonstrate with him respecting the injustice he had done his wife, as well as himself. In a little time Robards became violently angry and abusive, and threatened to whip Jackson; made a show of doing so, &c. Jackson told him, he had not bodily strength to fight him, nor should he do so, feeling conscious of his innocence, and retired to his cabin, telling him at the same time, that if he insisted on fighting, he would give him gentlemanly satisfaction, or words to that effect. Upon Jackson's return out of the house, Capt. Robards said that he did not care for him nor his wife—abusing them both—that he was determined not to live with Mrs. Robards. Jackson retired from the family and went to live at Mansker's station. Capt. Robards remained several months with his wife, and then went to Kentucky in company with Thomas Cruther, and probably some other persons.

Soon after this affair, Mrs. Robards went to live at Col. Hays', who married her sister.—After a short absence, I returned to live at Mrs. Donelson's, at her earnest entreaty, every family then desiring the association of male friends, as a protection against the Indians. This affair took place; to the best of my recollection, in the spring of 1790. Some time in the fall following, there was a report afloat, that Capt. Robards intended to come down and take his wife to Kentucky; whence it originated I do not now recollect, but it created great uneasiness, both with Mrs. Donelson and her daughter, Mrs. Robards the latter of whom, was much distressed, as she was convinced after two fair trials, as she said, that it would be impossible to live with Capt. Robards, and of this opinion was I—with all those I conversed with, who were acquainted with the circumstances. Some time afterwards, during the winter of 1791, Mrs. Donelson told me of her daughter's intention to go down the river to Natchez, to some of their friends, in order to keep out of the way of Capt. Robards, as she said, he had threatened to "haunt her." Knowing as I did, Capt. Robards' unhappy jealous disposition, and his temper growing out of it, I thought she was right to keep out of the way; though do not believe that I so expressed myself to the old lady or other person.

The whole affair gave Jackson great uneasiness, and this will appear strange to one as well acquainted with his character as I was. Continually together during our attendance on wilderness courts, whilst other young men were indulging in familiarities with females of relaxed morals, no suspicion of this kind of the world's censure, ever fell to Jackson's share. In this—in his singularly delicate sense of honor, and in what I thought his chivalrous conceptions of the female sex, it occurred to me, that he was distinguishable from every other person with whom I was acquainted.

About the time of Mrs. Donelson's communication to me respecting her daughter's intention of going to Natchez, I perceived in Jackson, symptoms of more than usual concern. I determined to ascertain the cause, when he frankly told me, that he was the most unhappy of men, in having innocently and unintentionally been the cause of the loss of peace and happiness of Mrs. Robards, whom he believed to be a fine woman; in this I concurred with him, but remonstrated upon the propriety of his not giving himself any uneasiness about it. It was not long after this, before he communicated to me his intention of going to Natchez with Col. Stark, with whom Mrs. Robards was to descend the river, saying that she had no friend or relation that would go with her, or assist in preventing Stark, his family, and Mrs. Robards from being massacred by the Indians, then in a state of war and exceedingly troublesome. Accordingly, Jackson in company with Mrs. Robards and Col. Stark, a venerable and highly esteemed old man, and friend of Mrs. Robards, went down the river from Nashville to Natchez, some time in the winter or spring of 1791. It was not, however, without the urgent entreaties of Col.

Stark, who wanted protection from the Indians, that Jackson consented to accompany them, of which I had heard before Jackson's conversation with me, already alluded to.

Previously to Jackson's starting, he committed all his law business to me, at the same time assuring me that as soon as he should see Col. Stark and family, and Mrs. Robards, situated with their friends in the neighborhood of Natchez, he would return and resume his practice. He descended the river; returned from Natchez, to Nashville, and was at the superior court in the latter place, in May, 1791, attending to his business as a lawyer and solicitor General for the Government. About, or shortly after this time, we were informed that a divorce had been granted by the Legislature of Virginia, through the influence principally of Capt. Robards' brother-in-law, Major John Jouett, who was probably in the Legislature at that time.

This application had been anticipated by me. The divorce was understood by the people of this country, to have been granted by the Legislature of Virginia, in the winter of 1790—1791; I was in Kentucky in the summer of 1791, remained at old Mrs. Robards, my former place of residence, part of my time; and never understood otherwise, than that Capt. Robards' divorce was final, until the latter of the year 1793. In the summer of 1791, Gen. Jackson went to Natchez, and I understood, married Mrs. Robards, then believed to be freed from Captain Robards by the divorce; in the fall of 1791, returned to Nashville, settled in the neighborhood of it; where they have lived ever since, beloved and esteemed by all classes.

About the month of December, 1793, after General Jackson and myself had started to Jonesborough, in East Tennessee, where we practised law, I learnt for the first time, that Captain Robards had applied to Mercer court, in Ky. for a divorce, which had then, recently been granted, and that the legislature had not absolutely granted a divorce, but left it for the court to do. I need not express to you my surprise, on learning that the act of the Virginia Legislature, had not divorced Capt. Robards. I informed Gen. Jackson of it, who was equally surprised; and during our conversation, I suggested the propriety of his procuring a license on his return home, and having the marriage ceremony again performed so as to prevent all future cavilling on the subject.

To this suggestion, he replied, that he had long since been married, on the belief that a divorce had been obtained, which was the understanding of every person in the country; nor was it without difficulty he could be induced otherwise.

On our return home from Jonesborough, in January, 1794, to Nashville, a license was obtained and the marriage ceremony performed.

The slowness and inaccuracy with which information was received in West Tennessee, at that time, will not be surprising, when we consider its insulated and dangerous situation, surrounded on every side by a wilderness, and by hostile Indians, and that there was no mail established, till about 1797, as well as I recollect.

Since the year 1791, Gen. Jackson and myself have never been much apart except when he was in the army. I have been intimate in his family, and from the mutual and uninterrupted happiness of the Gen. and Mrs. Jackson, which I have at all times witnessed with pleasure, as well as those delicate and polite attentions which have ever been mutually reciprocated between them, I have been long confined in the opinion—that there never existed any other than what was believed to be the most honorable and virtuous intercourse between them. Before their going to Natchez, I had daily opportunities of being convinced that there was none other; before being married in the the Natchez country, after it was understood that a divorce had been granted by the Legislature of Virginia, it is believed there was none.

JOHN OVERTON.

The Hon. R. C. FOSTER, *Chairman of the Select Committee,*

REMARKS.

In the foregoing statement, the conduct of Gen. Jackson, in his seduction of the wife of Lewis Robards, and carrying her out of the reach of her husband, and living with her in a state of adultery, is so clearly established, as a fact, that defies either excuse or contradiction; that it must be considered a duty incumbent on every moral man in the union, seriously to reflect upon the consequences that must necessarily attend the election of such a man President of the United States. To those who profess to believe in the truth of scripture history, it will be unnecessary to urge many arguments, or consume much time, in efforts to convince them, that the immorality of nations has, generally, been produced by the vices of their rulers. In the history of God's chosen people, no instance is to be found, where, under the government of pious and upright rulers, that nation did not generally walk in the ways of the Lord. Nor, is there on the contrary, an instance, where under the rule of wicked judges or princes, a majority of the people did not fall into idolatry, and all the abominable vices incident to the age in which they lived. Why then, let it be asked, with these facts before our eyes, shall we disregard all the admonitions of the sacred book, a book which so many of us make great pretensions of revering: and dishonor our country, our religion, and our God, by devoting ourselves to the

support of this mammon of unrighteousness? Are we, indeed, tired of the peculiar favours, which an all wise and beneficent providence has been continually bestowing upon us? Are we disposed to provoke the God of our fathers to wrath, and treat his injunctions with scorn? If not, in the name of all that is dear to us, let us pause, ere we fix the seal of indelible disgrace and ruin, upon our beloved country. Bear with me, my fellow-citizens, whilst I exhort you, by every thing which ought to influence an honorable and virtuous community; to discard all those petty considerations, which party men, for interested purposes, press upon you, as inducements to dishonor yourselves and your country. Ye who profess to labour for the benefit of the souls of men! Ye, who pretend to vindicate the cause of God on earth! Ye, who clothed in sacerdotal robes, profess to inculcate the precepts of religion, morality, and virtue! Ye, who on other occasions declare your veneration for the sanctity of the marriage bed! stand forth: show your sincerity and integrity, by a determined, public opposition, to this unholy adulterer. Show to the world your abhorrence of a man, who disregards the laws which even savages revere. Show to the world, that in teaching the abstract doctrines of christianity, you are not labouring, as at a trade, for a profitable living; but that you are sentimentally impressed with the truth of what you teach; and desire that it should be received as a rule of practice. If you are so impressed, you will no longer, no, not even for a moment, suffer it to be suspected, that you look upon this man as deserving the confidence of the moral and religious part of the community. On the contrary, you will not fail to bear testimony against his wicked and demoralising example: you will come forth and proclaim to the world, that "he who ruleth over man should be just." The man who has had the hardihood, the unblushing, unprincipled effrontery; in a christian land; in an enlightened age, to enter the house of an unoffending citizen; seduce the wife of his bosom to a criminal compliance with his lewd desires, and afterwards take her to live with him as his own wife, must possess a degree of disregard of all the moral and religious restraints, that is rarely to be met with, even amongst the most profligate: and yet he seeks to be President of the United States. Ye, who being members of the church of Christ, and therefore pledged to oppose all departures from the precepts of his gospel: will you give the lie to all your professions? Will you forget all the scripture denunciations against the crime of adultery; and raise to the highest office in the land, the man thus famous for one of the most flagitious adulterous acts? Will you lend your aid thus, to give sanction to conduct, which is calculated to unhinge the fundamental principles of society? Let all inducements to the maintainance of conjugal fidelity be broken down: let all veneration for the marriage state and covenant be destroyed; and let me then ask, what there is in social life worthy of regard? The condition is too horrible for language to depict; and yet appalling as it is, we may fairly expect, at some future time, to see it realized in this country, if the perpetrators of such crimes are regarded as worthy men, and raised to the chief places in the Government. It is a truth which every attentive observer must be fully sensible of, that fear of public censure is one of the strong inducements to the practice of virtue. Elect Gen. Jackson, to the Presidency, and how can we ever hereafter, censure another who may seduce his neighbours wife, and take her to live with him in adultery! It cannot be done: the dishonor of the act is wiped off, done away, by the fact of his being no worse than the President of the United States. But aside from the criminality of the act, and its evil influence upon society, there is a degree of moral turpitude and meanness, discoverable in the whole transaction, which clearly bespeaks him unfit for any highly honorable station. There is a feeling, which glows in the bosom of every honorable man, and may be considered almost inherent: it is this; that the wife of his bosom shall be chaste. It is a quality, without which a woman appears divested of

nearly all her attractions, her charms, and endearments. It is a quality, which no honorable sensibility could ever consent to part with in a wife: and I will venture the assertion, that no such man ever did enter into the marriage state, without a belief that his wife was possessed of chastity. So high were the sensibilities of Cæsar upon this subject, that he said it was not sufficient that his wife should be chaste, but that "*she should be above suspicion.*" Gen. Jackson must be an utter stranger to any such feeling: he not only knew that the woman he thus took to his bed, was destitute of chastity, but he had himself destroyed that chastity, if indeed it existed, at the time of the commencement of their acquaintance. The act, on his part, was committed under circumstances which admits of no excuse or palliation. Without an honorable concern for the moral character of both himself and his wife, what kind of monster must a man be? Can it be possible he can be fitted for the Chief Magistracy of a high-minded, and a virtuous nation? Little, it is to be presumed, did it enter into the minds of the Legislature of Virginia, in 1790, when moved by the piteous complaint of Lewis Robards, they were induced to pass the law providing means for the release of that unfortunate man, from a connexion with an abandoned woman, by whom he had been deceived and disgraced; that the time would ever come, when language would almost fail to dissuade, even some of the reverend clergy, from exerting their influence to procure the election of her adulterous paramour and seducer, Chief Magistrate of the United States. Little, we may suppose, did the jury of high-minded men, who pronounced Andrew Jackson and Rachel Robards, guilty of an habitual adulterous connexion for years, at that time think, that any of them should live to see the day, when persons claiming to be moral and religious, would labour under the sad delusion, would be guilty of the egregious folly, of advocating the election of this man to preside over the destinies of this country; over a nation claiming to have, for the basis of its political institutions, the precepts of the gospel: that gospel, which denounces adulterers as a curse and abomination in the land. Little did the bench of judges, whose duty compelled them to witness the evidences of depravity, detailed in the trial of Robards' application for a divorce from his unworthy wife, expect, that persons, who, by the audacity of their conduct, and total disregard of public opinion, and the laws of society, had so debased themselves, could ever again be countenanced by any pretending, to belong to the decent class of community. Could these men have anticipated the state of things which now exists; could they have refrained from dropping a tear over the increasing follies of mankind? Would they not, in the anguish of their hearts have exclaimed, what a frail, inconsistent creature is man? He labours, as it were, all the day long, to erect an edifice, and in the evening, demolishes it with a single stroke. Andrew Jackson! the man who prevailed upon the wife of Lewis Robards, to desert her husband, her kindred, her friends, and her country; and journey with him into a strange and foreign land, and live with him for years in a state of adultery, in defiance of the laws of God and man; and thus, affording an example of the most pernicious and diabolical character: calculated to debauch the minds, and subvert the morals of the people of the neighbourhood: and who sought to make amends; by the inhuman proposition, to meet him "*as a gentleman:*" in plain language, to fight a duel, in hopes, no doubt, of taking away his life, and thereby securing his guilty prize. This same Andrew Jackson, is now supported by men, who with grave faces, approach the sanctuary of the lord, and essay to commune with him at his holy table!!! Think ye, O! deluded men! think ye, that the God, who thundered on the mount, from whence he communicated that article of the decalogue, "*thou shalt not commit adultery,*" is not still an observer of the thoughts and actions of men, and will not reward them accordingly? Think ye, that when you attempt to seek his face, in the midst of such unholy doings, he will be present with you? No: let me tell you he

will most assuredly remain afar off: he will hide his face, until you put off the uncleanness which you have contracted, by devoting yourselves to the support of this outrageous man. He will not permit you to approach his presence, until you have desisted from a course that must tend to corrupt the morals of his people. Ponder on these things, I pray you: especially such as have wives and daughters, and must needs feel some interest in maintaining the virtue and purity of the female character. Reflect that every thing valuable in human society, depends upon the veneration with which female chastity is regarded; and bear in mind, that were it not for the influence, which that almost angelic quality exercises over the minds of men, the most polished society would, in a short time, degenerate into a despicable state of barbarism. Knowing these things, will you refuse to let them have their proper influence on your mind? Will you shut your ears to the calls of virtue, of morality, of religion, and thus bring disgrace and perhaps ruin on our beloved country? Heretofore the American, when reading the history of foreign governments, and the anecdotes of the revelings and debaucheries of their kings and princes, could exulting exclaim, "Thank Heaven! I live in a land where virtue predominates; and where no man can succeed to a place of high trust who does not respect female virtue: or who stands condemned as the seducer of other men's wives, and the destroyer of female character." But should Heaven, in its wrath, permit folly to prevail, and Gen. Jackson to be elected President, this high eulogium on our country could no longer, with truth, be pronounced.—What a humiliating contrast will then be presented to America, and to the world? How utterly unlike every thing that has ever yet been witnessed in this country? Will our matrons, in that event, forget what is due to themselves, to female character and virtue, and present themselves to this woman, and greet her as the wife of the President? I trust in Heaven they will do no such thing. Could I for a moment suppose, that the placing of such personages in the national mansion, would induce my country-women to abandon their own self-respect, and what is due to female character, and cause them to humble themselves before this modern Jezabel, I should blush at the thought of their degeneracy; and be ready, in the bitterness of my soul, to cry out—"A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and the people love to have it so."

Washington, March 1, 1828.