FEUDS THAT COST THE PRESIDENCY

Repeatedly Leaders within sight of the White House have been thwarted by Personal Enemies

Personal feuds have played their part, and a fateful one, in the history of the presidency. Had not Alexander Hamilton been the unyielding foe of Aaron Burr, the latter, and not Jefferson, would have succeeded the

Aaron Burr

elder Adams; but even more momentous in its consequences was the long battle between Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay. When Jackson first ran for the presidency, in 1824, the candidates opposing him were Adams, Crawford and Clay. None of the four secured a majority of the electoral college, and the election thus devolved upon the House, with choice to be made from the three candidates—Adams, Crawford and Jackson—who had received the most electoral votes. This debarred Clay, who, forced, as he expressed it, to choose betwen two evils, announced that he had decided to support Adams. But Clay's determination no sooner became known than some of Jackson's friends attempted to drive him from it.

A few days before the time set for the election in the House a letter appeared in a Philadelphia newspaper, asserting that Clay had agreed to support Adams upon condition that he be made Secretary of State. The same terms, the letter alleged, had been offered to Jackson's friends; but none

Roscoe Conkling

of them would "descend to such mean barter and sale." The letter was anonymous, but purported to be written by a member of the House. Clay at once published a card, in which he pronounced the writer "a dastard and a liar," who, if he dared avow his name, would forthwith be called to the field. Two days later the letter was acknowledged by a witless member from Pennsylvania, Kremer by name, who asserted that the statements he had made were true, and that he was ready to prove them. A duel with such a character was out of the question. Something, however, had to be done, and Clay immediately demanded an investigation by a special committee of the House. Such a committee was duly selected. None of its members had supported Clay for the presidency. Kremer promptly declared his willingness to meet the inquiry, but in the end the committee reported that he had declined to appear before it, sending instead a communication in which he denied the power of the House to compel him to testify. No further action was taken, and in this shape, for the time being, the matter rested.

Soon, however, came the election of Adams by the House, followed quickly

Alexander Hamilton.

by his appointment of Clay as his Secretary of State. Though it is now generally acknowledged that there has been no bargain between Adams and Clay, it was natural that, at the moment, the rank and file of Jackson's following should regard Clay's appointment as conclusive proof that such a deal had been made. By accepting it Clay made himself the victim of circumstantial evidence. As a matter of fact, he hesitated to accept the place, and finally assumed its duties with reluctance. What chiefly determined him was the belief that if he did not accept it would be argued that he dared not. This to Clay was more obnoxious than the other horn of the dilemma. He, therefore, took the alternative of bold defiance; but in so doing committed a calamitous error.

In 1880 the unrelenting animosity of Henry B. Payne alone prevented Allen G. Thurman from being made the nominee of the democratic national convention. In 1857 Payne was a candidate for the democratic nomination for governor of Ohio. The convention met in Columbus, and Thurman, then fresh from a period of brilliant service on the supreme bench of his state, had a friend in whose candidacy for state treasurer he was much interested. Some of Payne's lieutenants, without his knowledge, promised Thurman the support of the Payne forces for his friend in return for the votes he controlled in the convention; but the Thurman candidate for treasurer failed at the last moment to receive the promised support of the Payne following, and was defeated. Payne was not aware of the trick that had been played upon Thurman, but the latter, who scorned double dealing in any form, was quick to resent it. Within the hour the opportunity to do fell in his way. The convention ended, Payne went to a hotel for dinner, accompanied by some friends, and in jovial mood opened wine in celebration of his success. Presently Thurman and a few friends came in and took seats at an adjoining table. Payne bade the waiter carry a bottle of wine to the newcomers, but in a moment it came back with the gruff message that Mr. Thurman did not care for any of Mr. Payne's wine. In evident surprise at this refusal, Payne rose from his seat and crossed to the group of which Thurman was the central figure.

James G. Blaine

"I trust you and your friends will drink a bottle of wine with me, judge," he said, urbanely. "Drink to my success and the victory of the democratic party."

"I do not want any of your wine, sir," was the reply. "I told that damned waiter to say as much to you, sir, a moment ago." And so saying, Thurman turned his back abruptly on the man from Cleveland.

Payne never forgot nor forgave this public insult. The quarrel thus begun

Henry B. Payne

ever after kept the two men apart, and three and twenty years later thwarted Thurman's highest ambition. In 1880 he was a candidate for the presidential nomination before the democratic national convention. Had he had the unflinching support of the Ohio delegation, there is little doubt that he would have been the nominee. The delegation was solid for him on the first ballot. Then it broke and the chances of his nomination vanished into thin air. Payne was behind the break. The delegates from the district in which his influence was supreme led it and were strongest in the claim which stampeded the convention to a dark horse. As Ohio was then an October state and practically certain to go for Garfield, the result would be disastrous to the democratic cause. That argument defeated Thurman and nominated Hancock, and the revenge of Payne was complete.

But the most dramatic of all the political feuds of the last forty years, both in its inception and its sequel, was that between Blaine and Roscoe Conkling. The two men entered the popular branch of Congress at about the same time, and both soon became leaders in that body. There was, however, little in common between them save the gift of pre-eminent ability. Conkling made Blaine the object of his sarcasm whenever opportunity offered, and the member from Maine was prompt to retort in kind. Thus the enmity grew until, in the course of one of their many encounters, Blaine, stung to the quick by an unjust and ungenerous taunt, burst forth in an onslaught on his tormentor which wrought the House into a high pitch of excitement and marked the beginning of a fierce struggle in the Republican party that ended in the humiliation of Conkling and the defeat of Blaine for President. Here are Blaine's words, and they are a model of excoriation:

"As to the gentleman's cruel sarcasm, I hope he will not be too severe. The contempt of that large-minded gentleman is so wilting, his haughty disdain, his grandiloquent swell, his majestic, supereminent, overpowering turkey-gobbler strut has been so crushing to myself and all members of this House that I know it was an act of the greatest temerity for me to venture upon a controversy with him."

Then, referring to a chance newspaper comparison of Conkling to Henry Winter Davis, lately dead, he continued:

"The gentleman took it seriously and it has given his strut additional pomposity. The resemblance is great; it is striking—Hyperion to a satyr, Thersites to Hercules, mud to marble, dunghill to diamond, a singed cat to a Bengal tiger, a whipped puppy to a roaring lion. Shade of the mighty Davis, forgive the almost profanation of that jocose satire."

There could be no reconciliation after such an onslaught, and the battle was to the death. Defeated for the Republican nomination by Conkling and his friends in 1876 and again in 1880, Blaine in the latter year threw his following to his friend Garfield, who, nominated and elected, made Blaine his secretary of state and official right hand. Then came the struggle over the New York patronage, which retired Conkling, and was followed by the assassination of Garfield. In 1884, when Blaine was finally the formal choice of his party, Conkling was no longer in politics, but the sequel proved that his was still the will and power to strike a mortal blow. A defection of a few hundred votes in Conkling's home

Allen G. Thurman

county of Oneida gave that county, normally Republican, to Cleveland, and with it the electoral vote of New York and the presidency. Conkling had wiped out the score against his ancient enemy.—Rufus Rockwell Wilson in Philadelphia Ledger.

What a City Boy Misses.

Poor li'l Boston kid!
Ever seen a muscadine
Scuppernong on hanging vine?
Bet you never did.

You city boys don't have much fun;
Never do the stunts we done
When I was a kid.

Ever heard a mock' bird sing—
Fished for tadpoles in a spring?
Bet you never did.

Ever go out killing snakes,
Over bogs and through cane-brakes?
Bet you never did.

Ever seen watermelons grow,
Hundreds of 'em row by row?
Oh, you never did!

—Boston Transcript.