

REVERDY JOHNSON DEAD

THE SAD END OF A GREAT MAN

Particulars of the Melancholy Event—Mr. Johnson Falls and Fractures His Skull—Governor Carroll's Statement.

MR. JOHNSON'S LIFE AND SERVICES

Special Dispatch to the Gazette.

ANNAPOLIS, February 10. —This evening between 8 and 9 o'clock the repose of this quiet and tranquil old city was suddenly broken by the announcement of the death of the Hon. Reverdy Johnson. At first the report was discredited, and it was regarded as a mere idle sensation. Inquiry at the governor's mansion, where the melancholy event was alleged to have taken place, soon confirmed the sad intelligence, and when all the tragic particulars were made known the consternation over the sad event and the sorrow for the deceased statesman and jurist were intense, extending to all ranks and classes in the community. At the time of his death Mr. Johnson was the guest of his Excellency Governor Carroll. He came to this city yesterday to attend to a case before the Court of Appeals, and to those who saw him he looked hale and hearty and vigorous. In an interview with your correspondent this evening Governor Carroll gave the following particulars of the tragic occurrence: Mr. Johnson came to town last night to argue a case in the Court of Appeals, that of *Metcalf vs. the Brooklyn Life Insurance Company*. By invitation he came to my house, as I told him I could make him more comfortable here than he could be elsewhere. Today I invited Judge Bartol and six or eight other gentlemen to meet Mr. Johnson at dinner. We dined at half-past five o'clock. He enjoyed his dinner very much; was agreeable as usual, talked, laughed and told anecdotes. We were talking about Madeira wine after dinner, and Mr. Johnson took one glass, but not more. He turned and said, "Governor, will you take me into the parlor?" I said, "Certainly, Mr. Johnson; let me take you in." So he took my arm and walked into the parlor and sat down on a sofa. I said, "Mr. Johnson, I think we will have coffee brought in here." He replied, "If you want to smoke I will remain here." I said, "Very well, we will join you in a few moments." I then returned to the gentlemen and sat down. I felt very uneasy about my guest being alone, and said, "Gentlemen, suppose we go in and join Mr. Johnson." His son-in-law, Mr. Charles G. Kerr, who had come in after he left the table, said "He always takes a nap after dinner, and I presume he has gone to sleep." I then dismissed it from my mind, and we went on talking, when a servant appeared at the door, and calling me out, said: "Mr. Johnson is lying in the yard." This was about 8.15 o'clock, and we went out and found him lying there apparently dead. He was taken into the house at once and physicians summoned. He evidently walked out to the east side of the house, and falling cut his head, causing instant death. He must have been lying there a half hour. The physicians called were Drs. W. G. Tuck, John Ridout and Abraham Claude. Some are of opinion that he was stricken with apoplexy, but the physicians say there is nothing to indicate it. There were severe gashes upon the forehead and temple, causing a fracture of the skull, and the finger of the left hand was dislocated and the knee bruised.

Dr. D. C. Handy and Drs. Steiner and Waters were present. A consultation was had with the following decision: The chief and fatal injury of Mr. Johnson is a fracture of the frontal bone of the skull, extending from near the outer angle of the right orbit upward and backward to or beyond the coronal. Future dissection would probably reveal a more extensive fracture. The apparent injury is sufficient to account for his death. He received also other minor injuries, fracture of the bridge of the nose, dislocation of a finger of the right hand, slight cut on some fingers of both hands, and abrasion of both knees. The body has been placed upon ice by Daniel Caulk, an undertaker. Jenkins & Co., undertakers, of Baltimore, have been telegraphed to make arrangements for the burial. Mr. Kerr states it is undecided whether the remains will be conveyed to Baltimore to-morrow evening or retained here a day longer. He thinks Mr. Johnson's death resulted from apoplexy. He received a stroke resembling apoplexy about two years ago, in Newben, while conducting a case there. Edwin Higgins was his colleague in to-morrow's case.

It is probable that while standing near the house he stepped on some loose coals and fell, striking his head upon the sharp projecting corner of the granite foundation, though there is a difference of opinion on that point. When found his face was lying downward. The hemorrhage from the wound was very great. A large number of persons and members of the Legislature have called at the Governor's house since the announcement. The dinner party consisted of Senator Lloyd, Captain Hardcastle, Colonel Samuel Hambleton, of Talbot county; ex-Governor Groome, Edwin Higgins and Chief Justice Bartol.

Mr. Johnson's Life and Services.

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Reverdy Johnson was born in the city of Annapolis May 21, 1796, and was in the 80th year of his age at the time of his death. His family on his father's side was of English descent, and on that of his mother French, and his ancestors were among the earliest settlers of Maryland, several of them holding prominent positions under the colonial government. His father, John Johnson, was an eminent lawyer, who after serving in both houses of the General Assembly was successively Attorney General, one of the judges of the Court of Appeals and Chancellor of the State. His mother was a daughter of Reverdy Ghiselin, who was long known as commissioner of the land office at Annapolis. Educated at St. John's college, in his native town, Reverdy Johnson entered the grammar school at six and left the institution at sixteen years of age. He immediately commenced reading law under the direction of his father, and was afterward for a while a student in the office of the late Judge Stevens. He was admitted to the bar and began practice in Prince George's county, in the village of Upper Marlboro', in 1815, when only in his twentieth year. He was soon appointed by the Attorney General of the State his deputy for the judicial district, and performed the duties of that responsible office in the most creditable manner until November, 1817, when he removed to Baltimore, and started in his career as a lawyer, which for brilliancy and success has seldom been equaled. Developing thus early that wonderful vigor of intellect and determination of character which so distinguished him, he at once took an excellent position, and notwithstanding his youth was soon recognized by lawyers and laymen as a man of unusual ability. In a short time he became the professional associate and intimate companion of Luther Martin, Robert Goodloe Harper, Wm. Pinkney, Roger B. Taney, Wm. H. Winder and several others who had already made the bar of Maryland famous. Laboring with untiring energy and earnestness of purpose, Mr. Johnson obtained a large practice which to the present day has only been interrupted by his various public services.

Soon after coming to Baltimore he was appointed chief commissioner of insolvent debtors. In 1821 he was elected to the state Senate for a term of five years and re-elected for another term. After serving two years of the second term he resigned, and devoted himself exclusively to his practice from that time to 1845, when he was elected to the Senate of the United States. Composed as the Senate then was of the very ablest intellect from all parts of the country, Mr. Johnson was among the leading members. Chosen by the Whigs, he was naturally very intimate with Clay and Webster and the other statesmen of that school, but his course in the Senate was marked with the most liberal and comprehensive view of public measures, and by an independence which rendered him conspicuous. Regarded alike by friend and foe as possessing the clearest foresight and capable of the boldest step, the position he might assume in any important debate was looked for with more than ordinary interest. Retaining always the personal regard of senators on both sides, he was never without influence, and was invariably listened to with attention. In the memorable debate on the question of war with Mexico, Mr. Johnson differed from the sentiments of his party and was among the supporters of the Democratic administration of President Polk, in the advocacy of that war. In 1849 he resigned his seat in the Senate to accept the position of attorney general tendered him by President Taylor. As a cabinet minister, during the short term of General Taylor, Mr. Johnson was no less distinguished than in the Senate. On the accession of Mr. Fillmore he retired, and, resuming the practice of his profession, at once appeared in the foremost rank. He was retained in almost every important case in the courts of Maryland and in the Supreme Court. His advice and services were sought from distant states, and in 1854 he was employed by an English house to argue a case involving a claim of great magnitude against the United States government before the joint English and American commission then sitting in London. He was associated professionally in this matter with the present Lord Cairns, then in the House of Commons and a leading member of the chancery bar and subsequently Lord Chancellor, under the Disraeli administration. During his sojourn in England, Mr. Johnson received much attention from the public men and members of the English bar. Returning home he was unceasingly engaged with his practice and took no active part in politics until the winter of 1860-61, when he was called upon by the exigencies of that memorable period. He was sent as one of the delegates from Maryland to the peace convention, which assembled at Washington. He avowed himself a union man, and warmly repudiated the doctrine of secession, holding it to be a violation of the letter of the Constitution, and inconsistent with the spirit and stability of our Government. He was, however,

conspicuous in that convention by his earnest and eloquent efforts to avert the threatening calamities of civil war by measures of compromise and conciliation. When all hope of a peaceful settlement of sectional difficulties had vanished Mr. Johnson advocated the preservation of the Union by the military power of the general government. Soon after the war had actually commenced the position of the State of Maryland became one of peculiar difficulty and embarrassment. Although refusing by legislative enactment to join the southern states in secession the sympathies of the large majority of her people were undoubtedly against the government. In this trying crisis and throughout the strife Mr. Johnson, while maintaining firmly the position he had taken in favor of coercion, was zealous in endeavoring to allay the bitterness of feeling which was naturally evoked. He did all he could to prevent and as far as possible to redress personal wrongs and to save the soil of Maryland from the actual havoc of war.

In 1861 he was sent from Baltimore county to the House of Delegates. After the capture of New Orleans he was sent to that city by President Lincoln as special commissioner, to revise the decisions of the military commandant, General Butler, in regard to foreign governments. He deemed it necessary and proper to reverse all these decisions, and for the good effect of so doing he received the thanks of the administration. In the winter of 1862-3 he was elected to the United States Senate, and in March, 1863, resumed his seat in that body, after an absence of fourteen years. He soon participated actively in all the debates, and while unwavering in the support he gave the union cause, he frequently resisted measures of the dominant party, which he thought uncalled for by the necessities of war, and subversive of the true liberties of the people and the rights of the states. He voted for the constitutional amendment abolishing slavery, having all his life deplored the existence of that institution. After the surrender of the southern army Mr. Johnson advised the immediate readmission of the seceding states and an unconditional amnesty to their people, and in continued and urgent advocacy of that course by the government, and in his resistance to the passage of the reconstruction acts, he became in Congress and was recognized throughout the country as the leader of the Conservative party. In voting for one of the reconstruction bills which he held to be in violation of the rights of the states, he declared that he did so only because he believed that if its provisions were not accepted by the southern people harder terms would be exacted by the party in power. In the summer of 1868 Mr. Johnson was appointed minister to the Court of St James, and the appointment was immediately confirmed. In England he was the recipient of attentions never before paid to an American ambassador. He visited different portions of the kingdom, and was everywhere met by a popular ovation. In the chief commercial and manufacturing towns banquets were given him, and so general was the demonstration that Lord Clarendon writing to a friend in America, and referring to the matter, expressed his belief that Mr. Johnson was the only diplomatic representative that had ever brought out the true friendly feeling of the British people for those of the United States. Nor was it alone in his official relations that he was so cordially received. His fame as a distinguished American lawyer and jurist brought him into the most agreeable intercourse with the just and leading barristers of England.

In a few months after his arrival in England, Mr. Johnson succeeded in negotiating a treaty between the two nations, for the settlement of the "Alabama claims." This treaty was in strict accordance with the letter of Mr. Johnson's instructions on entering upon his mission, and accomplished in fact more than had ever been expected the English government would yield. The Senate, however, refused to ratify the treaty, although it was privately acknowledged by Mr. Sumner and other leading men to secure all our government had a right to ask or any reason to expect. It is known that a supposed party necessity alone caused the adverse action of the Senate. Mr. Johnson's dispatch to the State Department in explanation and defense of that treaty was given at the time, and was a clear and able vindication of his own cause and of the justice of the terms of settlement proposed. Mr. Johnson returned from England in June, 1869, and resumed his practice in Baltimore and at Washington.

Since that time he has not held any public position, though frequently mentioned in connection with prominent places, which he invariably declined. He has been engaged in many important cases, requiring great labor and close attention, all of which he was able to bestow notwithstanding his advanced age. Among the most prominent causes were the suits between the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company and the State of Maryland, in which he appeared as counsel for the former. During the present winter he visited London on professional business, making a short stay, during which he received marked attention from all the distinguished personages both in public and in private life. About a month ago he returned to Baltimore, both his departure and his return being marked with an avoidance of notoriety and display for which he was ever remarkable. Since his retirement from public life Mr. Johnson has been closely identified with the Democratic party and though never consenting to become a candidate he has at times yielded to the urgent solicitations of his friends and given countenance to the party and its measures by his participation in public meetings and by opinions and expressions, which were always given the widest circulation and commanded universal attention.

In his professional life, it may be truly said of him that, from his very youth, he had uninterrupted success. Great as was his reputation as a lawyer of profound learning and an advocate of strong reasoning powers, and of the most forcible as well as persuasive eloquence, he was perhaps still more remarkable at the bar for his display of an acute knowledge of human nature and an ingenious and irresistible manner of examining and cross-examining witnesses, eliciting truth from the most unwilling, and discovering the falsehood of the most unblushing. In the exercise of this peculiar faculty Mr. Johnson had no superior. Of Mr. Johnson's private life and character nothing could be said more correctly expressing the estimation in which he has ever been held by his personal friends and those with whom he has been brought in contact, than that he was a genial, unassuming gentleman. Married when only twenty-one years old to a lady of rare beauty and force of character and mind, his domestic circle had, for more than fifty years, been the scene of comfort, refinement and happiness. Simple in his tastes, kind and generous in his impulses, a warm and confiding friend, and a most forgiving enemy, he was not only entitled to the place which was given him among lawyers and statesmen, but he commanded an equally elevated position as a man.

The News in the City.

The announcement of Mr. Johnson's death was not received in the city until a late hour last night. The intelligence created the greatest astonishment and excitement among the comparatively few persons who were abroad at the time, and was carried with amazing rapidity from one to another, until the melancholy tidings reached all parts of the city. At the hotels, the theatres, and all public places inquiries as to the cause and manner of the distinguished statesman's death were made, and the telegraph offices were besieged by anxious crowds eager to obtain a contradiction or confirmation of the painful rumor. The members of his family in this city were, of course, all unprepared for the dreadful shock, making it fall more heavily on those who had so long looked upon him as their honored head.