

THE SUN'S REPORTS OF CONVENTION WRITTEN BY FRANK A. RICHARDSON

The announcement in The Sun that this book was about to be printed resulted in the disclosure that the reporter of The Sun who wrote the accounts of the convention was Frank A. Richardson, probably the only person now living who has personal knowledge of its deliberations. Mr. Richardson, before he retired some years ago, was acknowledged to be one of the best newspaper men in the country. For 35 years Washington correspondent of The Sun, he was the personal and political friend of many of the notable figures in recent history, and his articles in The Sun, signed "F. A. R.," were widely read. The information that Mr. Richardson reported the convention was contained in the following letter to The Sun:

To the Editor of The Sun—Sir: The interesting article of "H. S. S." on the Maryland Constitutional Convention of 1867, in The Sun of this date, brings back to me a flood of recollections. The anonymous reporter of whom he speaks was your humble servant. I was the representative in Washington of the Baltimore Sun at that time. As Congress was not in session, I was requested by the proprietors of The Sun to go to Annapolis to report the proceedings of the constitutional convention. This work I did from the first to the last day of its session, continuing from May to August.

The membership of that convention was solidly Democratic. It was a choice body of men. I am quite sure that in all the history of the State of Maryland there was never an assembly under its authority that was more representative of the culture, the wisdom, the refinement of the Commonwealth. I was then, as now, accustomed to the debates in Congress, and I tell you these men of Maryland did not suffer by comparison.

Very few, if any, of these men are alive today, but my memory retains a vivid impression of the grace of oratory and pause of logic possessed by many of them. I remember that so far as possible in the limits of newspaper reporting my endeavor was always to give these men a fair showing. There was at one time a proposition to have an official reporter for the convention. It was discussed for several days and finally laid on the table. The greatest influence promoting this action emanated from the late Judge Albert Ritchie, the father of the present Governor of Maryland, and a member from the city of Baltimore. He said the convention would not be justified in putting the State to the heavy expense of an official reporter that the reporter of the Baltimore Sun gave an accurate account of everything that was worthy of record. Perhaps I should ask pardon for mentioning this.

The visit of Andrew Johnson and his reception by the convention was intensely dramatic. President Johnson was in the midst of his conflict with Congress over the brutal oppression of the South and the trampling on popular rights and liberties. There were in that convention men who had been put in prison for opinion's sake, men who had been dispossessed of their possessions and for years had been denied all political rights. The president of the convention had been dragged from the bench and knocked senseless with the butt end of a pistol by Federal officials.

So you may imagine how enthusiastic they were over a President who was trying to bring back the happier days of the Republic. Judge Carmichael, the president of the convention, with a lively sense of his own wrongs, welcomed the President of the United States with a voice deep with emotion. President Johnson responded in a similar vein, serious and sincere.

The times were perilous, it was not a scene for bravos and handclapping. It was solemn and earnest and thrilled all who were present. F. A. R.

Washington, D. C., May 12, 1923.

It is a coincidence that Frank R. Kent, one of the editors of The Sun, who assisted in making the files of the paper available for this work, is a nephew of Mr. Richardson.