

## Hon. Samuel J. Kirkwood

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## HON. SAMUEL J. KIRKWOOD.\*

SAMUEL JORDAN KIRKWOOD was born December 20th, 1813, in Harford county, Maryland, on his father's farm. His father was twice married—first to a lady named Coulson, by whom he had two sons, and, after her death, to Mary Alexander, by whom he had three children, all sons, the youngest of whom is the subject of these notes. Of these children, one of the first and one of the second marriage are dead. The father of Governor Kirkwood was a native of Maryland, his ancestors having settled there previous to the revolutionary war; his mother was born in Scotland, and both parents were strict members of the Presbyterian church.

When ten years old, young Kirkwood was sent to Washington city to attend a school taught by a relative named John McLeod. He remained at school four years, when he entered a drug store at Washington as clerk, in which occupation he continued till after attaining his majority, with the exception of about eighteen months spent in teaching in York county, Pennsylvania. Daniel Kirkwood, a cousin, now a professor in the State University of Indiana, and a man well known in the world of science, was one of his pupils.

In 1835, Governor Kirkwood left Washington, and settled in Richland county, Ohio, where he assisted his father and brother (who had removed from Maryland there) in clearing a farm. In 1841 he entered, as a student, the law office of Thomas W. Bartley (afterwards governor of Ohio), and in 1843 was admitted to the bar by the supreme court of Ohio. He then engaged in the practice of law with his former preceptor, Mr. Bartley, forming an association which continued for eight years—Governor Kirkwood in the meantime attaining a high standing at the bar of Ohio. From

\* For many of the facts embraced in this sketch, we are indebted to the *Western Life-Boat*, a magazine devoted to western biography, published at Des Moines, under the chief editorial management of Abraham C. Edmunds.

1845 to 1849 he served as prosecuting attorney of his county. In 1849 he was elected, as a democrat, to represent his county and district in the constitutional convention. This body met in Columbus in 1850, but, after a session of three months, adjourned to Cincinnati, where it sat for six months. In these long sessions, in which was framed the present constitution of the state of Ohio, Governor Kirkwood was an active and influential member. In 1851, Mr. Bartley, his partner, having been elected to the supreme judiciary of the state, Kirkwood formed a co-partnership with Barnabas Barns, with whom he continued to practice until the spring of 1855, when he removed to the west.

Up to 1854 Governor Kirkwood had acted with the democratic party. But the measures proposed and sustained that year by the democracy in congress, concentrated in what was known as the Kansas-Nebraska act, drove him with hosts of anti-slavery democrats, out of the party, and he was besought by the opposition in the "Richland district" to become their candidate for congress, but declined,

In 1855 he came in a quiet way to Iowa, and settled two miles north-west of Iowa City, where is now the manufacturing town of Coralville, but which was then a mere mill-site, and known as "Clark's Dam," where his brother-in-law, Ezekiel Clark, had, years before, constructed a dam in the Iowa river, and built a flouring mill. Here Kirkwood entered into partnership with Clark in the milling business, and kept aloof from public affairs, few of his new-made neighbors dreaming that the careless, burly-looking, but good-natured, miller carried a statesman's head and an orator's tongue. Iowa City was then the state capital, red-hot and sizzling with political excitement over the first consequences of the adoption by congress of Douglas's "squatter sovereignty" theory, and it was impossible that an old stumper like Kirkwood could long conceal his powers of oratory. One evening, while attending a political meeting in the capitol as an auditor, he was called out by some one conversant with his past history, and in response he deliv-

ered such an address as at once secured for him a reputation of the very highest character, which he has maintained to this day, for native eloquence in off-hand debate.

In 1856 he was elected to the state senate from the district composed of the counties of Iowa and Johnson, and served through the last session of the legislature held at Iowa City and the first one held at Des Moines. At this latter session, held in 1858, was adopted for Iowa, mainly through his advocacy, the state banking system, which had been found advantageous and safe in Ohio and Indiana, and some other states; and it proved a great blessing to Iowa, not a dollar's loss having been sustained through it to any person, from the time of its adoption till superseded by the present national banking system.

In 1859 Kirkwood was made the standard-bearer of the republicans of Iowa. This was before the days of "Grangers' lodges," but, as a miller, he "told his beads to Ceres," and bore on his banner the device of the "plow-handle," and, after a stern contest with as able and popular a competitor as General A. C. Dodge, he was elected governor of Iowa by a majority of over three thousand. In the October preceding his inauguration, John Brown had made his fatal misadventure at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, and, with some of his followers, had been captured, tried, condemned, and executed with a cruel dispatch that startled the country, and which has hardly been equalled in any land, except by the judicial murder of Mrs. Surratt and her co-conspirators. But not all of John Brown's associates went to the gallows. Among others, Barclay Coppic, whose brother had been hung two weeks subsequent to Brown's execution, had escaped, and returned to his home at Springdale, Cedar county, Iowa, and Governor Letcher, who succeeded Wise (Brown's hangman) as executive of Virginia, made a requisition for him on Governor Kirkwood. The sympathies of the governor of Iowa were all in favor of the fugitive, but his oath of office would have required the surrender of Coppic if the requisition had been made in due form.

Happily for Coppic and the governor, this was not the case, and the governor was obliged to deny the demand of the requisition, on the ground of its invalidity. Here was a question, at the very threshold of his gubernatorial office, the proper solution of which might have baffled a weak or wavering executive, for it must be remembered that at the time this demand was made public sentiment, even in the north, so strongly condemned Brown's act, that it would have remanded all participators in it, despite mere technicalities. Some sharp correspondence on the subject passed between the two executives, in an indirect way, as special messages to the legislatures of their respective states, then in session. In concluding his special message to the legislature on this subject, Kirkwood said, prophetically, alluding to the threats of secession on the then approaching accession of Lincoln to the presidency, and speaking for the people of Iowa, "They will see to it that the Union shall still be preserved." And they did see to it, with more than forty thousand volunteers, and with their blood, that reddened nearly every battle-field of the rebellion. For then came the great civil war, which began before the expiration of his first term, with all its new and perplexing difficulties for loyal governors to solve. As governor, during the darkest days of the rebellion, he performed an exceedingly important duty. He secured a prompt response by volunteers to all requisitions by the federal government on the state for troops, so that during his governorship no "draft" took place in Iowa, and no regiment, except the first, enlisted for less than three years, and he maintained the state's credit. The legislature, at its extra session in 1861, authorized the sale of \$800,000 in bonds, to assist in arming and equipping troops. So frugally was this work done, that but \$300,000 of the bonds were sold, and the remaining \$500,000 not having been required, the bonds representing this amount were destroyed by order of the succeeding legislature.

In October, 1861, Kirkwood was, with comparatively lit-

the opposition, re-elected governor — an honor accorded for the first time in the history of the state — his majority having been about eighteen thousand. During his second term he was appointed minister to Denmark by President Lincoln, but declined to enter upon his diplomatic duties till the expiration of his term as governor. The position was kept open for him till that time, but, when it came, pressing private business compelled a declination of the office altogether.

In January, 1866, he was a prominent candidate before the legislature for United States senator. Senator Harlan had resigned the senatorship upon his appointment to the office of secretary of the interior by President Lincoln, just before his death, but had withdrawn from the cabinet soon after the accession of Mr. Johnson to the presidency. In this way it happened that the legislature had two terms of United States senator to fill — a short term of two years, to fill Harlan's unexpired term, and a long term of six years, to immediately succeed this, and Harlan had now become a candidate for his own successorship, to which Kirkwood also aspired. Ultimately, Kirkwood was elected for the first and Harlan for the second term. During his brief senatorial service, Kirkwood did not hesitate to measure swords with Senator Sumner, whose natural egotism had begotten in him an arrogant and dictatorial manner, borne with humbly until then by his colleagues, in deference to his long experience and eminent ability, but unpalatable to an independent western senator like Kirkwood.

At the close of his senatorial term, March 4th, 1867, he resumed the practice of law, which he has lately relinquished to accept the presidency of the Iowa City Savings Bank.

Governor Kirkwood was married in 1843, to Miss Jane Clark, a native of Ohio. They have no children. In height, he is five feet eleven inches. Though turning three score years, he appears still in his prime. His gait is firm; his blue eyes are bright; his dark hair is but slightly tinged

with gray. In matters of dress, he is prone to negligence. Nevertheless, when occasion requires, he dons apparel the most becoming (eschewing, however, all such neck covering as ties or kerchiefs), and with ample folds of smooth white linen covering his broad chest, and his throat bronzed and hoarse from the suns and speeches of many political campaigns, when he ascends the stump and sends his voice, loud and clarion as the calliope, through acres of auditors, few have a more manly bearing than he. In manners, he is affable and pleasant, and, above all, he has a soul magnanimous enough to overlook a fault and forget an injury. In short, in some of his attributes he resembles Abraham Lincoln. By the people of Iowa, or by the central government, he may yet be recalled from the retirement he delights in to honors higher than he aspires to.

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NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY.

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BY D. C. BLOOMER.

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(Continued from page 539.)

THE Pacific Railroad bill became a law on the 1st of July, 1862.

The following is the official communication from President Lincoln, explanatory of his order fixing the terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad:—

*To the Senate of the United States:—*

“In compliance with a resolution of the senate of the 1st instant, respecting the points of commencement of the Union Pacific Railroad on the one hundredth degree of west longitude, and of the branch road from the western boundary of Iowa to the said one hundredth degree of longitude, I transmit the accompanying report from the secretary of the interior, containing the information called for.

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