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Alexander Moseley, editor of the Richmond Whig

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ALEXANDER MOSELEY,

EDITOR OF THE

RICHMOND WHIG

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

University of Richmond

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Harrison Mosley Ethridge

May 1967

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*Approved,
Spencer D. Albright*

PREFACE

The following pages are the study of a man, Alexander Moseley, and of the newspaper with which he was intimately connected for forty-five years.

There are, admittedly gaps in the study. The period of Know-Nothingism is omitted, for example, because no substantial material could be found to show his associations during the era. At other times, much more material could be found concerning Moseley's personal life than on his public life. And, of course, often it is difficult to prove that an editorial opinion was necessarily his.

Alexander Moseley's career was unique, however, in the great span of history it covered. His association with many of the events of his time are shown in this paper, and also some of the personal life of a respected editor of mid-nineteenth century Virginia.

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CHAPTER I

THE EARLY YEARS, 1809-1836

Virginia in the beginning of the nineteenth century was quite a different place from what it had been at the end of the American Revolution. The removal of the capital from Williamsburg to Richmond during the Revolution was, in many ways, symbolic of the change. The old Tidewater families who for so many decades had led Virginia's political, social, and economic life, were rapidly succumbing to the new and prosperous middle class which had arisen since the Revolution. The tired lands of Tidewater Virginia could only compete with difficulty with the vigorous new lands of Piedmont Virginia where was centered the new class of Virginia planter. Richmond, on the fall line of the James River, curiously was located at the dividing point of the two rival sections of Virginia.

Among the rapidly growing Piedmont counties was Buckingham. Formally established in 1761, the settlement followed the usual pattern of rapid expansion, partially attributable to the county's fine location on the James River. Not only did the almost legendary Peter Francisco settle in Buckingham, but such distinguished old families as Hubard, Patterson, Bolling, and Epes "took up" large portions of the county's acreage. Among the earliest members of the westward trek to Buckingham was Robert Moseley of "Summerville" in Chesterfield County. The Moseley family was a prominent, though not conspicuous, one, having arrived in Norfolk County,

Virginia in 1649 in the person of William Moseley. This progenitor, a man of mysterious background, was obviously a gentleman of means: his possessions on his arrival here included jewelry of great value acquired during his tenure as an English merchant in Holland, family arms, books, and a collection of family portraits.¹ The immigrant ancestor had two sons. William, the elder, took up his father's lands and his descendants became locally, in Princess Anne County, the most influential family well into the nineteenth century. Arthur, the younger son, was chiefly distinguished as a member of the House of Burgesses in 1676--the memorable year of Bacon's rebellion. Arthur's great grandson, Robert Moseley formerly of Chesterfield County, was the master of a good sized plantation, "Willow Lake," in Buckingham County, and in time became the father of a large family of fourteen children. His prosperity was typical of the new middle class Virginia planter. Most of his children survived him upon his death in 1804, when, family tradition relates, he left a large estate. In this period of still further westward movement, several of Robert Moseley's children left home to seek their fortune elsewhere; Thomas, his eldest son, and John both succeeded admirably in Kentucky, while Peter did not do quite so well in Tennessee.

¹"Virginia Council Journals, 1726-1753," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, Vol. XXXV, No. 1 (January, 1927), pp. 49-54.

But several children remained at their home in Buckingham. Robert, his father's namesake and one of the older sons, was among these. He, like his father, was a prosperous planter, working twenty-six slaves. Born in 1768,² his cousin Mary Moseley became his first wife; a custom to be often repeated within the family. After Mary's death, Robert married Elizabeth Putney.³

Robert Moseley's family was relatively small, although he did live to be only forty-six. Two girls and three boys were his offspring until June 10, 1809,⁴ when Elizabeth Putney Moseley, gave birth to the last of her and Robert's children. He was named Alexander Moseley.

As one of the youngest members of a family fast growing in political and financial stature within Buckingham County, Alexander Moseley's childhood days undoubtedly saw little unhappiness until just a few days before his eighth birthday, in 1817, when his father died. Thus, at an early age the youngest son became a property owner. Alexander, like each of his brothers and sisters, received three slaves; in his case, Davy, Letty, and Maria, worth in aggregate \$1500.⁵

²Moseley Family MSS possession of the author.

³Ibid.

⁴"Proceedings of the Faculty of the University of Virginia, 1828-1832," Alderman Library, University of Virginia. Alexander Moseley's birth date was recorded when he matriculated on September 6, 1828 at the University of Virginia.

⁵Arthur and William P. Moseley Papers, 1756-1907, Buckingham County, Virginia, MSS in the Duke University Library.

Most of the estate, including a "parcel of books," silver, a "clock and case," nine beds and a "gigg and harness," went to the widow, Elizabeth. Among the slaves inherited by her was the valuable blacksmith, Travis, whose services were to be performed free to any of the children.

Elizabeth Moseley, Alexander's mother, of necessity had to spend much of her time working with the executors of her husband's large estate to ensure an adequate income for raising her family.

In addition to her own six children, Elizabeth Putney Moseley was raising her niece and nephew, Martha and Henry Ellis Guerrant, whose parents, William and Mary (Putney) Guerrant had died. Martha and Henry, who was only a few months older than his cousin Alexander Moseley, having been born August 15, 1808 and only two or three years old when his parents died, were made full members of her home in Buckingham County. Here Henry was reared and educated with her son Alexander Moseley. . . The two cousins became congenial companions and lifelong friends."⁶ Education was of particular concern to the mother, too, and a good academic education, tradition relates, was provided for her talented youngest son in the neighborhood schools. The preparation was adequate enough to ensure Alexander "optimum" grades in his subjects, chemistry, natural philosophy, and Euclid's elements, at the end of his first year of study

⁶J. Gray McAllister and Grace Owings Guerrant, Edward Owings Guerrant, Apostle to the Southern Highlands (Richmond, Virginia: Richmond Press, Inc., 1950), pp. 2-3.

at Washington College.⁷

Alexander had entered the "Junior Class" there in the session of 1826-27, but despite his success, he transferred to the University of Virginia for the term beginning September 6, 1828. Perhaps the relative nearness to his home in Buckingham prompted the change, but more probably the celebrated faculty assembled by the recently deceased founder of the school, Thomas Jefferson, was attractive to the keen-minded student. Alexander took full advantage of the opportunity and in his first session matriculated in ancient languages, modern languages and mathematics. The following term, in September of 1829, saw him attend the schools of Moral Philosophy and Law. After three days of examination in June and July, 1830, by Professors Tucker, Emmit, Patterson, and Harrison, a faculty meeting declared Alexander Moseley and two of his classmates "Graduates in Greek in this University."⁸ Again Alexander triumphed, and was among those "students who were distinguished at the intermediate and final examination" in both schools.⁹

⁷Letter from Henry E. Coleman, Librarian, Washington and Lee University, to the author, January 1965. J. Gray McAllister, *op. cit.*, p. 3. Alexander Moseley's cousin, with whom he was raised, Henry Ellis Guerrant, had attended Washington College earlier in the 1822-23 session. The next year, at age 16, he went to live and study medicine with his uncle, Dr. Richard Putney of Charleston, Virginia.

⁸"Proceedings of the Faculty of University of Virginia, March 14, 1829 - February 2, 1831," pp. 470, 482, 484-5, 490.

⁹Ibid., p. 627.

Fatherless since he was eight years old, Alexander had matriculated at the University under the guardianship of Colonel John M. Harris of Maysville, the then primary community in Buckingham County.¹⁰ By his second year at Charlottesville, young Moseley reached his majority and no longer required a guardian. Probably encouraged by the new freedom provided by age, he and a fellow student, Robert M. Saunders, in December, 1830 applied to the faculty for permission to "board out of the precincts with Captain John M. Perry."¹¹ The faculty decided in the negative, but the two students were persistent, and had their renewed application approved just a few days later, on the grounds of a privilege extended by an enactment of the Board of Visitors to those students above twenty years of age.¹²

Not only was Alexander Moseley a good student, but his abilities as an orator and essayist, precursors of his future, were becoming known to his classmates. To an older cousin he wrote in 1831, his last year at the university:

The election of orators and essayists for the end of session, took place a few days since, and you may probably have expected that I should have been one of them. But previous to the election, for various reasons, some good and some bad, I informed my friends who pressed me to accept, that it would be out of my power to serve in the

¹⁰Ibid., September 6, 1828, no page given.

¹¹Ibid., p. 654.

¹²Ibid., p. 654.

capacity either of orator or essayist. . . . Two of those who were elected, resigned and I was again pressed and again declined being run. . . already I almost repent of my rashness.¹³

He went on to rationalize that:

As to the benefit that would accrue to me abroad, I can place but little value upon it. My future success in life will depend upon my future actions. I have always been of opinion that college honors have rather an injurious tendency. . . they puff a man up and raise expectations which he will find it difficult to equal.¹⁴

But Alexander Moseley's future was unwittingly being determined at the same time.

A more plausible reason for declining the honor of orator or essayist, was Alexander's active part in the student body's determination to edit a literary paper. "A man in town," he wrote, agreed "to perform the manual labor and furnish paper, etc. for \$950."¹⁵ The venture was expected to do little more than clear expenses, however, and was to "contain a little of everything--some good and much bad--."¹⁶

Two successful years at the University ended in July 1831 when Moseley was graduated from the schools of Moral Philosophy, Political

¹³Letter from Alexander Moseley to Col. T. M. Bondurant, March 27, 1831, in possession of author.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

Economy, and Law,¹⁷ placing him in an elite number of college educated Virginians. Presumably he then returned to practice law in the Jeffersonian court house of his home.

The literary and political life soon attracted the young country lawyer, however, and in October 1835, he returned to Charlottesville to join William Tompkins in editing the Virginia Advocate.¹⁸ Moseley's initial experience with the journalistic world lasted less than a year-- he left the Advocate in July, 1836--but the experience gained was invaluable. His youth and eagerness led him into indiscretions, but also brought him to the notice of many of the great political minds of the day. The Advocate thus proved to be, in a short period of time, the starting point of a career that brought Moseley a certain measure of fame for over forty years.

Established in 1827 by Thomas W. Gilmer and John A. G. Davis as a Jeffersonian organ, the Advocate had come under the control of William Tompkins in 1832.¹⁹ By the time Alexander Moseley joined Tompkins, the journal was becoming Whig in its viewpoint, although that party name was not yet in popular use.

¹⁷Faculty Minutes, p. 709.

¹⁸Virginia Advocate, October 9, 1835.

¹⁹Lester J. Cappon, Virginia Newspapers, 1821-1935, (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1936), p. 66.

Alexander Moseley joined the journalistic world at a most opportune and important period. The revised political allegiance of the Virginia Advocate from Jeffersonian to Whig, was graphic illustration of the change. In this third decade of the eighteenth century, extension of the suffrage had reached new dimensions. Conservatives, fearful of the ability of the new voters who had little stake in society, saw ample evidence of their fears in the Administration of President Jackson. The president, the idol of the new democracy, was, in turn, distrustful of those with ability as well as those who were rich or well born. With the election of Jackson in 1828, the old Federalist and Republican political parties came to an end. Jackson, under the Democratic-Republican banner, had defeated John Quincy Adams, the National-Republican Candidate. Party names remained the same in the next presidential election, in 1832, when Jackson again was victorious, this time over Henry Clay.²⁰ The year 1834 saw the emergence of what was to become the Whig party. A majority of the old National Republicans, the Anti-Masons, and a sprinkling of disgruntled Democrats formed what was, essentially, a coalition of anti-Jackson forces.²¹ The Whig party, probably owed its name to James Watson Webb of the New York Courier and Enquirer, who, along with others "sought

²⁰Dumas Malone and Basil Rauch, Empire for Liberty (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1960), I, p. 434.

²¹Glyndon G. Van Deusen, The Jacksonian Era (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), p. 96.

thus to give the party a sound middle-class identity,"²² in contrast to the "Tory" followers of Jackson. Much earlier, in 1824, however, John Hampden Pleasants had entitled his new newspaper, essentially anti-Jackson in policy from 1828, the Constitutional Whig.

Socially conservative, the Whig party also contained men of strong economic vision, such as Horace Greeley, William H. Seward, Abraham Lincoln, and, of course, the most visionary of them all, Henry Clay.²³ Various economic interests rallied behind the Whig banner. In New England and the Middle States, the party's members included industrialists and businessmen, together with many of their employees, and much of the conservative farmer community. The "pushing, ambitious, go-ahead bankers and businessmen, canal promoters, land-owning interests, lawyers with an eye to the main chance, and farmers anxious for internal improvements were more apt than not to be found in the Whig ranks" in the Ohio Valley.²⁴ Not only the wealthy planter class in the South favored Whiggery, but urban commercial and banking men who had deserted Jackson on the Bank issue joined the new party. States Rights believers, particularly in the South, were among the other smaller elements which constituted the Whig party.

Despite the varied groups which made up the Whig party, it became known for its social conservatism which often manifested itself by a certain

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 97.

²⁴Ibid., p. 96.

smug attitude of superiority. Of the Southern Whigs, it has been said that

as a type they were honest, hightoned, and patriotic, and not more controlled by opportunism than is usual in American politics. Nearly all of them throughout the Whig period were anxious not only to safeguard southern control of southern affairs, but to preserve the union of the fathers, and, in fact, a main function of their party throughout its life was to postpone the disruption of the Union.²⁵

In May 1835, the Democrats, as the Jackson supporters were now called, met in Baltimore and nominated Martin Van Buren, Jackson's choice, for president.²⁶ The Whigs, not yet fully organized as a party and full of conflicting political views, refused to hold a National Convention, declaring that to hold one would merely be reviving "King Caucus."²⁷ There was no party platform issued. Even though Clay again wanted the nomination, sentiment was against nominating a man who had been so disastrously defeated on the Bank issue in the last election. The decision, then, of a presidential nominee was settled by running candidates who were regarded as strongest in the various states.²⁸ Webster was nominated in Massachusetts, and General Harrison had strong support in the Western states. The choice of the Southern Whigs was Hugh Lawson White, a former Democrat and

²⁵Ulrich B. Phillips, The Southern Whigs, 1834-1854, Reprinted from Turner Essays in American History, pp. 203-229 (Henry Holt and Co., 1912), p. 228.

²⁶Van Deusen, op. cit., p. 110.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

strict constructionist, who had become disenchanted with Jackson and who greatly disliked Van Buren.²⁹

It was into this political situation that Alexander Moseley stepped when he joined the Virginia Advocate in the fall of 1835.

The Advocate boldly asserted, late in 1835, that "Mr. Clay is not a candidate. . . Judge White is. . . the Southern candidate for the Presidency in opposition to the Northern Missouri restrictionist, Van Buren."³⁰ The appeal to the South was plainly drawn: "Van Buren is a tricky Yankee, to say the most for him. Judge White a plain, unassuming Southern gentleman."³¹ General Harrison was not completely discounted as a candidate, however. "Let the people calmly and dispassionately investigate the claims of each," editorialized the Whig," and give their vote to the most deserving."³²

Although there was no bank problem to be discussed in the campaign of 1836, there were other issues. Paramount among these was slavery. The Webster-Hayne debates, the Nat Turner uprising in 1831, the Virginia Legislature Debate in 1832, and the rapid rise of the abolition movement, all combined to make the slavery issue a live one. Virginia Whigs were particu-

²⁹Ibid., p. 111.

³⁰Virginia Advocate, December 5, 1835.

³¹Ibid.

³²Virginia Advocate, May 20, 1836.

larly opposed to Van Buren's desire for the restriction of slavery in Missouri, causing the Virginia democrats to seek an answer from Van Buren satisfactory to the Southern viewpoint on slavery. Van Buren, in an attempt to placate his Virginia adversaries, assured them that he considered it "impolitic to interfere with slavery in the District of Columbia, and that the constitution did not give Congress any right to interfere with relations between master and slave in any state."³³ The Virginia Whig press nevertheless pushed the abolition issue to the front. The subject of Abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia led to the publication in the Advocate of the speech of Representative Garland of Virginia. The unfortunate misinterpretation of the speech given by the Advocate probably taught the inexperienced Alexander Moseley a bitter lesson; even though the wrong interpretation may have been written by the other editor, Tompkins, apology to Garland was necessary.

The speech had been highly recommended to the Advocate editor as reflecting the true spirit of an independent Southern. It was read with pleasure, until "we arrived near the conclusion,"³⁴ commented the Advocate.

³³Henry H. Simms, The Rise of the Whigs in Virginia, 1824-1840 (Richmond, Virginia, The William Byrd Press, 1929), pp. 100-101.

³⁴Virginia Advocate, January 9, 1836.

We found that Major Garland after having boldly and patriotically asserted the rights of the South, surrenders the whole thing to the mercy of the abolitionists. . . he afterwards, for reasons to us utterly inexplicable, yields up everything, and says, the South will not complain of the abolitionists if they do not assert the constitutional power, if they will not exercise it now.³⁵

Garland, in reply to the matter which could easily prove politically damaging, stated the he "never intended that any remark I made upon that occasion should bear the interpretation you have placed upon it. . . my object was to ascertain the true opinion of the House on the constitutional question, in order that the south might understand its true position in relation to it."³⁶ Admitting its mistake, the Advocate gladly conceded that the South was "one man stronger than we at one time feared she was."³⁷ The battle lines of the slavery question were readily being formed, and in a short time there would be no doubt as to the side on which Alexander Moseley stood.

Another issue of importance in the 1836 campaign was States Rights. To the Virginia Whig press it was of great significance, and, in reality, it was often the one issue which held Northern and Southern Whigs together during the next several years. The Advocate felt that

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., January 20, 1836.

³⁷Ibid.

fatal apathy has come upon the people. Now that every vestige of State Sovereignty is well nigh swept away, and unheard of powers assumed by, and merged in the Federal Head, no appeals however fervid can awaken the Nation to a sense of its danger. . . the power of Andrew Jackson is at this moment four-fold greater, than that of the elder Adams ever was. The immense patronage which he wields. . . can buy into servitude or to clamorous and indiscriminate praise, hundreds, for one that the Sedition law could have forced into silence.

The only check to this rapid growth of consolidation, is a thorough reform of our Government. Economy should be introduced--the patronage of the Government reduced--the President elected but for one term--the system of appointing members of Congress prohibited--and a rigid adherence to the Constitution observed in every instance.³⁸

Echoing sentiment more often found in the deep South, States Right feeling was carried to the extreme when the Advocate declared in February, 1836, that "one of the current humbugs of the day" was "THE UNION IT MUST BE PRESERVED."³⁹

Not only was the presidential election a heated one in Virginia in 1836, the local elections were equally as impassioned. No contest drew more attention than that in Albemarle. The candidates for the House of Delegates there, Thomas Jefferson Randolph and Alexander Rives, Democrats, and T. W. Gilmer, founder of the Advocate and V. W. Southall, Whigs, were known throughout the state. In a day when politics were practised in a

³⁸Virginia Advocate, November 27, 1835.

³⁹Ibid., February 20, 1836.

much more personal way than in the twentieth century, there were certain actual dangers to being an editor, as Moseley, the fiery young newspaperman discovered. Colonel William Moseley of Buckingham County wrote to his brother, Colonel John Moseley, in Kentucky, that their nephew, Alexander, had challenged to a duel one of the members of the Albemarle County electorate, Alexander Rives, "but he would not meet him and they had a fite [sic] last week so it stands. . . Moseley is a very smart young man. Political is the dispute. Rieves [sic] is an Expunger⁴⁰ and Moseley the reverse and very warm in his cause against power and corruption."⁴¹

When the 1836 election results were announced, Rives and Randolph were victorious in Albemarle County. Indeed, the Democrats were triumphant throughout the state, reversing the Whig state legislature of the previous session. Van Buren won over the two Whig candidates by a decisive vote. Patronage and the popularity of Jackson's name had led Van Buren to victory, while the opposition of the State Rights Whigs to Harrison and of the old Clay faction to White, caused the Whigs to lose.⁴²

Despite the general sweep of the Democrats in the state legislature, there were some Whig triumphs. One of these was Colonel Thomas Moseley

⁴⁰One who supported the Senate bill rescinding a previous bill disapproving General Jackson's conduct in removing public deposits from the U. S. Bank.

⁴¹Letter, Col. William Moseley, Buckingham Co. Virginia, to Col. John Moseley, Jessamine Co., Ky., May 22, 1836, in possession of Mrs. Andrew Young, Nicholasville, Kentucky.

⁴²Simms, op. cit., p. 116.

Bondurant, the politically ambitious cousin and mentor of Alexander Moseley, of Buckingham County, who won his first Senate term as a Whig. The previous Whig legislature in 1834, had given some financial aid to the James River and Kanawha Canal Company, of which Bondurant was a director, and this undoubtedly explains the Whig strength in central Virginia, where Bondurant won his election.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST YEARS WITH THE RICHMOND WHIG 1836-1845

It was written in 1836 of Alexander Moseley that he was "a fine writer and is rising very fast in the opinion of the people."¹ His fortitude in the Democratic controlled county of Albemarle reached the notice of the noted Whig, John Hampden Pleasants, editor of the widely read Richmond Whig. On July 29, 1836, Alexander Moseley announced his withdrawal from the Advocate in order to join the editorial staff of the Whig. The two years with the Advocate had seen mistakes and even disagreements with the acknowledged leader of the Southern Whig press and the paper he was to join, the Richmond Whig. Moseley's indulgent friends of the Advocate years were thanked "for their generous support in trying and difficult times, and for their kind forbearance to censure my many indiscretions, I can never repay them. My gratitude and good wishes they have; it is all I can give."²

Richmond was not only the political and economic center of the nineteenth century Virginia, but as a journalistic center the city had few peers in the young nation. The Richmond Enquirer, the first of the

¹Letter from Col. William Moseley, Buckingham Co., Virginia, to Col. John Moseley, Jessamine Co., Kentucky, May 22, 1836, in possession of Mrs. Andrew Young, Nicholasville, Kentucky.

²Virginia Advocate, July 29, 1836.

great Richmond journals, had been established in 1804 by Thomas Richie, and came to be one of the most important organs of the Democratic party in the United States. To meet the opposite political viewpoint, John Hampden Pleasants established in 1824 his Constitutional Whig. Both papers were widely read outside the borders of Virginia.

To read the pages of the Richmond Whig is to follow the course of Virginia Whiggery. 1836, the year Moseley joined the Whig, saw the election of Van Buren to the presidency. The next four years were spent by Pleasants and Moseley bitterly opposing the Democratic regime and preparing for the next presidential election.

On the local scene their efforts were successful far in advance of the 1840 election, and gave the editors great hope for the future success of their party. Troubles within the Democratic party gave the Whigs control of the House of Delegates in 1838, 1839 and 1840, although the Democrats retained a majority in the Senate for the entire period. It has been said that the success of the Whig party in Virginia is attributable to the conspicuous coalition character of the Whigs, and less to the social differentiation of the two parties which was a trait often found in other Southern states. The state was largely unprosperous, the Piedmont country a possible exception. The "plantation system was decadent, and the gentry assiduously avoided the drawing of class lines in

politics."³ Local needs for transportation facilities and the tradition of state rights were the primary factors of the Whig alignment in Virginia. Thus the Whig strongholds were centered along the actual or proposed routes of the Potomac Canal, the James River and Kanawha Canal, and in the area of the Dismal Swamp Canal, and in the areas of strong state-rights sentiment such as the tidewater region, particularly in the district between the James and York Rivers and the Accomac Peninsula.⁴

The success of the Whig party within the State of Virginia brought sanguine expectation of a national Whig victory in 1840, ending four years of Van Buren rule. Actually, the Van Buren regime was anticlimactic to that of Jackson, and there was comparatively little strife during Van Buren's four years in office. The administration of the first president from New York got off to a very disastrous start, however, with the depression of 1837. Jackson, in his haste to destroy the second Bank of the United States, had overlooked the possibility that the "pet" state banks might become merely smaller version of his feared "Monster." The state banks were privately controlled for profit, and not all of their officers were scrupulous. Several banks defaulted in 1837 with losses of millions of dollars to the federal treasury. The Whig told its readers

³U. B. Phillips, op. cit., p. 215.

⁴Ibid.

that from "the highest pitch of national prosperity we find ourselves, by the folly and knavery of our rulers, suddenly precipitated into the slough of national bankruptcy and ruin."⁵ With the fall of the Northern banks, it was inevitable that "a similar humiliating confession would be extorted from every other banking institution in the country."⁶ The Richmond banks fell, too, whereupon a meeting of angry citizens suspended the directories of the various banks. The Whig agreed that the old U. S. Bank must not be rechartered and felt that "a tolerable substitute for a national bank may be devised; but it must be wholly unconnected with the party politics of the country. The present system of pet banks, as so many party engines, ever will keep the currency in a deranged condition."⁷

The bank problem and the resultant Panic of 1837 became two of the primary rallying points for unity between the Northern and Southern Whig parties. To the Southern Whigs, the bank situation was representative of the usurpations of the Democratic regime. In the end, however, even the bank problem could not entirely hold Northern and Southern Whigs together. In this regard the Whig very candidly admitted on October 10, 1837, that:

⁵Richmond Whig, May 16, 1837.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Richmond Whig, April 11, 1837.

The fact is, and cannot be disguised that the Whig party of the whole Union have agreed, and do agree, on only one point--resistance to the usurpations of the Executive. On most of the other questions of the day, Abolition, Tariff, Banks, the Whigs of the South and North entertain very different sentiments. Mr. Webster and his friends have sustained almost every proposition having for its object the expenditure of money, while the Southern Whigs, representing the taxpayers, have uniformly resisted extravagant appropriations. . . . We will. . . labor to maintain those principles which for years we have urged--the separation of the monied from the political power--the arrest of Executive usurpations and official corruptions--and the overthrow of the present unprincipled dynasty.⁸

The defeat of the Democratic party was long planned by the Whig press. As early as 1838, John Hampden Pleasants wrote to Moseley, who was then editing the Whig in Pleasants' absence, that he fully approved Moseley's "indicated preference of Mr. Clay for the Presidency."⁹

As it developed, Clay's policies were much too well known to the American public to make him a likely candidate to defeat the incumbent Van Buren in 1840. The Whig campaign of 1840 was a new and ill experiment in American democracy. Realizing that the Democratic party had won its elections by organization around policies which served the masses, and that its own policies had little public appeal, the Whig hierarchy determined to win the election by sheer enthusiasm. Since the Whig convention at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania could agree on no platform, none was

⁸Ibid., October 10, 1837.

⁹Richmond Whig, October 18, 1842.

offered or argued. Instead, the Whig candidates, General William Henry Harrison and John Tyler, campaigned to the excitement of slogans, and political symbols of cider barrels, log cabins, and coonskins.

"Tippicanoe and Tyler too" won the election by a small popular majority. Within the five counties of the 8th Congressional district of Virginia, for example, only Buckingham, Alexander Moseley's home, gave Van Buren a majority. The others, Albemarle, Nelson, Amherst, and Campbell, preferred Harrison. If Pleasants and Moseley had any regret over the tactics used in the Whig victory, they didn't express them in their enthusiasm of the victory. Their hopes for a bright political future, however, were dashed by the untimely death, a month after his inauguration of General Harrison. But at least the Whigs could feel jubilant that they had brought the Jacksonian era to a close.

"THE WHIG ADMINISTRATION LASTED ONLY ONE SHORT MONTH," the Whig fairly shouted to its readers after many months of tenable support of Tyler.¹⁰ To the Whig, the Jacksonian policies were still in effect.

The great popular triumph of 1840, which the people vainly imagined would arrest this vicious and mischievous system utterly failed of its object. . . the cause of this disastrous failure is most manifest. . . the treachery of John Tyler threw the government into the rut of Locofocism. . . The promised reforms were scattered to

¹⁰Richmond Whig, February 25, 1842.

the four winds of Heaven--all the wise measures. . . were rendered of no effect, by the defeat of that, which was the pivot of them all--the giver and regulator of a sound currency.¹¹

For Alexander Moseley, the early eighteen forties, despite the setbacks of his chosen political party, were to be particularly important years. More and more his name was being closely associated with the Whig, which was rapidly expanding into one of the great journals of the day. To meet its expanding circulation, new mechanical techniques were used. Early in 1842 the editors invited "those curious in mechanism" to visit any morning its new power press "unsurpassed by any South of the Potomac."¹² Conscious of its Southern location, readers were informed later in the year of the commencement of the Weekly Whig, the "cheapest ever attempted South of the Potomac," with a subscription of \$2.50 per year. By offering such low rates the editors were gratifying their desire to "diffuse correct political information throughout the entire body of the community."¹³

The subscription lists of the Whig had so far exceeded the boundaries of Virginia that by 1843 it was necessary to appoint a collecting agent and four assistants in the South and Southwestern States "and

¹¹Ibid., February 4, 1842.

¹²Richmond Whig, February 25, 1842.

¹³Ibid.

Florida." Even the Western States and Iowa and Wisconsin had an agent assisted by two men.¹⁴ Closer to Richmond, in Washington, the Whig was received daily at the State Department, where its views were compared with other great journals for formation of diplomatic and national policy.

Alexander Moseley's name was gaining prominence largely because of the increasingly independent role he was assuming at the Whig office. From November 17, 1841, until March 22, 1843, and from June 20 through December 8, 1843, he had sole editorial control.¹⁵ During this time, however, Pleasants was much in evidence, being at his nearby home in Goochland County, and often acting as a correspondent of the Whig. Indeed, he sometimes returned to join with Moseley in the editorial conduct of the paper in the early eighteen-forties.¹⁶ As early as 1839, Pleasants appears to have given his subordinates editorial license in his absence. Because of Pleasants' absence we have a short but poignant view of Moseley as seen by Thomas Ritchie of the Enquirer. On this particular occasion, two correspondents had criticized Pleasants in the columns of the Enquirer. Pleasants replied to them, and included a swipe at Ritchie as well. It must be remembered that journalism in those days was all personalities,

¹⁴Ibid., January 24, 1843.

¹⁵Cappon, op. cit., 1821-1935, p. 192.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 192.

and few journalistic battles were more bitter or hotly contested than that between Pleasants and Ritchie. At any rate, Pleasants wrote Ritchie and requested that letters which he, Pleasants, had written be published in the Enquirer. Ritchie, in his reply, refused to publish the letters, but tried to appear conciliatory to Pleasants and the Whig. "I have never felt," wrote Ritchie, "a greater disposition to extend any courtesy in my power to the members of the Whig office. I can say with the most perfect truth that my intercourse with Mr. Gallaher [at that time and later associated with the Whig, and at other times with the Richmond Compiler, the Winchester Republican, and Winchester Virginian] for the last three months, has been of the most liberal and friendly character."¹⁷ "I have seen less of Mr. Moseley," commented Ritchie, "but it has served to remove any little prejudice I once entertained towards that gentlemen."¹⁸

Moseley, too, as his responsibilities increased, became the subject of editorial invective, common to editors in the early days of journalism. The Valley Star mistakenly accused Alexander Moseley (Pleasants was the real author), of assailing the newly elected Governor, James McDowell for his proemancipation views in 1832.

¹⁷"Unpublished Papers of Thomas Ritchie," John P. Branch Historical Papers of Randolph-Macon College (Richmond, Virginia, Edward Wadley Co., 1911), Vol. I, No. IV, June 1911, p. 236.

¹⁸Ibid.

Who is Alexander Moseley, that he should thus take it upon himself to arraign the best men in the land, and, by inflammatory appeals, attempt to rouse up sectional prejudices? In mental calibre, about seventh rate--in political principle, about as fixed and stable as the wind--in all that relates to the purer and better feelings of the heart, (if his Editorials are taken as evidences), below "COMPARE"--A wretched demagogue, whose whole desire seems to be to create mischief--one of those fellows who can only live in faction. . . .Such is the leading Whig Editor in Virginia!¹⁹

The Whig, in turn, attacked the Enquirer for republishing the Valley Star's "grossest and most illiberal attack upon Mr. Moseley, that malice ever conceived."²⁰ Adding to the baseness of the charge, continued the Whig, was its "full knowledge of the high intellect, the unassuming modesty, the elevation, above all unworthy motives of Alexander Moseley--of the universal esteem in which he is held and of the universal esteem in which he deserves to be held."²¹

On another occasion, in 1843, the short term return of Pleasants as associate editor to Moseley, brought both men to ridicule, and demonstrated a weakness in their editorial policy.

"Mr. P.," said the Enquirer, has blunders enough to answer for, without fathering the follies of his associate Mr. A. M., (Master of Arts). . . squeaks forth, yesterday, in the following piano style:

¹⁹As quoted in the Richmond Enquirer, January 10, 1843.

²⁰Richmond Whig, January 11, 1843.

²¹Ibid.

Relief Laws----It is due to the Editor of the Whig to state, that the opinions advanced upon this subject are not HIS--but those of his associate, who, as a correspondent, or any other citizen might, states what he thinks on a subject of great public interest and feeling.²²

Thus, continued the Enquirer, "the good Whigs of Virginia have two voices."²³

The feud did not settle down for some time. In early 1843, the Enquirer accused Pleasants and Moseley of attempting to sow dissention between Dr. Brockenbrough, president of the Bank of Virginia, and the editor of the Enquirer. "The office," believed the Enquirer, "was worthy of Mr. Alexander Moseley--who hesitates not to say anything, however coarse, which may gratify his vindictive feelings or his party resentments."²⁴

Despite the setback of the Tyler administration, the Whig party remained sanguine about the election 1844. Virginia Whigs were particularly confident, and to help guide them Pleasants returned to the Whig, to be assisted by Moseley, who was now among the hierarchy of the Virginia Whig organization.

Clay received his second presidential bid, and was opposed by the Democratic candidate, James K. Polk. The disorganized enthusiasm of the

²²Enquirer, January 14, 1843.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Enquirer, January 12, 1843.

1840 Whig campaign was succeeded in the 1844 affray by sophisticated organization. Clay Clubs were formed all over Virginia, and Alexander Moseley, as a member of the Whig Central Committee, spent much time visiting the Clay Clubs and the many large rallies. His enthusiasm for the Whig cause even led him to be a Whig candidate for a state legislature seat from his home county, Buckingham.²⁵

Clay's nomination had been accepted by Whigs all over the nation as inevitable and with little enthusiasm. Van Buren's apparent nomination by the Democrats was defeated by the southern block nomination of Polk. The sanguinity of the Whigs was soon clouded by one issue, territorial expansion. "Manifest Destiny," as the expansion issue came to be known, was a timely issue and an appealing one to the uninhibited American imagination. Oregon, Cuba, and California all seemed ripe for picking, but mighty Texas stood ready to be plucked into the union. The Texas question had been debated as early as 1837 when Texas presented a formal proposal of annexation, denied by President Van Buren. President Tyler, in an apparent bid for Southern support, reopened the question of Texas annexation. Fear of an independent Texas free of slavery led to an active Senate debate when Tyler's annexation treaty was submitted. Southern extremists forecast "Texas or Disunion" while Northern abolitionists countered that annexation would lead

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See pp. 61-62.

to dissolution of the Union. Although the treaty was rejected by the Senate, the issue was left to the 1844 election campaign for decision.

Polk, a pro-Texas annexation man, led the Democratic party in their appealing platform of expansion. The Whigs, on the other hand, had no stand on the Texas question, and Clay was forced to awkwardly straddle the issue. The Richmond Whig correctly assessed the situation in 1844 when, in an editorial opposing Texas annexation, it declared the question was designed by Tyler to be a trap for Clay who, if he opposed annexation, would lose the South, or he would lose northern votes if he favored annexation.²⁶ Pleasants' and Moseley's position of opposing the annexation of Texas was unusual in the South where the voters, particularly in the lower states, were anxious to have Texas join the Union. The campaign of 1844, which was partly instrumental in the ultimate breakup of the Whig party, had the effect of forcing all of the extreme pro-slavery men into the Democratic party and causing the Whigs to decry sectional agitation.²⁷

Although the Richmond Whig had issued a stand against the annexation of Texas, it soon vaguely amended its opinion when it admitted that the Senate and President had treaty power, "but this power must be restricted by the rules of Reason and Commonsense."²⁸ The proper control,

²⁶Richmond Whig, April 5, 1844.

²⁷Phillips, op. cit., pp. 218-219.

²⁸Richmond Whig, April 19, 1844.

the Whig editors felt, was by public opinion.²⁹

Public opinion in the United States indicated preference for Polk who triumphed in Virginia also. In an apparent attempt to salvage the party image, the Whig declared that "there is no proposition in Euclid clearer than that the Abolitionists have elected Mr. Polk. . .[the people] did not vote as citizens, but as Abolitionists."³⁰ Moseley, too, lost his election bid, having been defeated for a legislative seat, although the House of Delegates did get a majority of Whigs in opposition to the State Senate's plurality of Democrats.³¹

His campaign work ended, Moseley ended his association with the Whig on June 30, 1845, and began preparation for a lengthy European tour.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Richmond Whig, November 12, 1844.

³¹Richmond Whig, May 3, 1844.

CHAPTER III

THE EUROPEAN SOJOURN, 1845-1846

Within a few months after leaving his post at the Whig in June of 1845, Alexander Moseley began his European sojourn which was to last well into 1846. The exact dates of his European visit are unknown. Accounts written many years later state that he visited for a year; however, the journal kept by Moseley while travelling in England and on the Continent covers only the period from November 24, 1845 through May 8, 1846. There are no indications on either of those dates that he had either just arrived or was just leaving, so it is entirely possible that the sojourn lasted for much more than the recorded six months.

The journal that Moseley diligently kept records not only his impressions of the usual tourists attractions, but also indicates his acute social perception. His university education in the classics and the broadening experience of journalistic work, gave Moseley an insight into Europe's people and places enjoyed by few tourists. His visit, as recorded, was confined to the principal centers of France and Italy and London, but the great length of time spent in these places afforded him a concentrated insight.

Through his European journal, one gains an insight into Moseley himself. One discovers that he is no prudish Victorian, but instead is a man of many interests, politics being just one of them. Neither the bistro dancers of Paris nor the more pungent findings in Pompeii affected

his sensibilities, and one finds that Moseley is not only interested in art, but artists as well.

Where Moseley entered Europe is unknown, but on November 24, 1845 he was in London, having arrived there, presumably, thirty days prior.¹ The days of his London visit were leisurely. After usually arising very late in the morning, the daytime hours in London were spent in largely the same manner as any tourist would spend them: The Exchange, the Bank of England, the British Museum, St. James and Buckingham Palaces, Hyde Park, the Strand and Belgrave Square, "the most splendid and fashionable in the city," all had to be seen. While visiting the docks, he saw a "turbaned Turk with his whiskers curled--the first I ever saw--deeper bronze than I had thought."² Some places were fleetingly visited, while others held more attention. The sight of Westminster Abbey and "its noble monuments," recorded Moseley, "has repaid me for my visit across the Atlantic. The monuments. . . to say nothing of the architecture--the ceiling of network of stone in the chapel of Henry VII--the knights banners. . . and the thousand historical associations connected with the place were an ample remuneration. The whole will live in my memory many a day."³

¹"Diary of Alexander Moseley," November 24, 1845; "The weather during the past 30 days has been uncommonly fine for London. . ." MSS in possession of the author. Hereinafter referred to as Diary.

²Ibid., December 3, 1845.

³Ibid., November 25, 1845.

On one morning, Moseley and his travelling companion James Bowdoin,⁴ a New York City lawyer, breakfasted with the Secretary to the American Legation, Melville Gansevoort, who was found to be "an enthusiastic advocate of the widest liberty."⁵ Moseley observed too, that Gansevoort was "thoroughly conversant with the rules, and the great men of the British and American ring."⁶

Shopping and banking matters also consumed part of the daytime hours. Evenings presented a variety of diversions for Moseley. One evening was spent at the Drury Lane Theatre watching an opera in which he "enjoyed the dancing and music greatly."⁷ A "quite interesting scientific lecture on the Potato disease"⁸ at the Polytechnic Institution on Regent Street, while dinner at the Arundel House with his travelling companion, James Bowdoin, provided amusement on other occasions.

Mr. George Tucker, presumably the University of Virginia professor, had provided Moseley with a letter of introduction to a Mr. Petty Vaughn. . .

⁴James Bowdoin and his brother George R. J. Bowdoin were the sons of Sarah Bowdoin Winthrop and George Sullivan. They assumed the name Bowdoin to meet the conditions of the wills of Governor Bowdoin's son James, who died in 1811, and his wife Sarah who died without issue. New York Genealogical and Biographical Record (New York: New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 1914), XLV, p. 108.

⁵"Diary", November 29, 1845.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., November 25, 1845.

⁸Ibid., November 26, 1845.

At the home of Mr. Vaughn, whom he found to be kind and "willing to render me any assistance," were two other American visitors.⁹

There were several visits with the American Minister to England, Louis McLane and his family. The first of these, a dinner party with seven other American guests at the Minister's house, was on November 30.¹⁰ After spending the entire evening there, the Minister loaned the Virginia journalist copies of American newspapers which he read until three o'clock in the morning in his hotel room. The next visit at the Minister's home, on December 1, there were no other guests. Mr. McLane revealed to the visiting journalist that he was "very warm on the Oregon question, and not indisposed to a war."¹¹ On another occasion, on December 3, Mrs. McLane, asked Bowdoin and Moseley to "come up and take tea with her and the girls, Miss Kitty and Miss Mary, at six o'clock, to cheer them up as they were all much cast down by the departure of the Minister and Miss Juliet," another daughter, for Paris.¹² The two Americans spent the evening listening to Mrs. McLane's anecdotes concerning the notorious Lady Holland.

⁹Ibid., November 24, 1845.

¹⁰Ibid., November 30, 1845.

¹¹Ibid., December 1, 1845.

¹²Ibid., December 3, 1845.

One anecdote was of a dinner at

"Mr. Addington's when and where the late Lady Holland was freely dissected. Who could have written the obituary notice of her, said one. It could not be a woman, for all women knew her too well. It could not be her maid for the same reason, nor her butler. It must have been her coachman who came least in contact with her, or some such person utterly ignorant of her real character. . . ."13

Mrs. McLane was found to be entertaining throughout the evening, and she in turn must have found the visiting American entertaining. "She wished," recorded Moseley, "we would come up and take tea with her every evening while in town."14

Leaving London on December 6, 1845 in the company of Bowdoin, Moseley arrived in France where "the queer attire of the women. . . and the unintelligible jargon of the men" made him realize he was far from home, in the "midst of an alien race--a heavy sensation to the heart."15 On December 8, they arrived in Paris where, after initially lodging at the Hotel de Paris, they took quarters at Number 5, Rue 29 Juillet, "neat, commodious and sumptuously furnished."16

13 Ibid., December 3, 1845.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., December 6, 1845.

16 Ibid., December 9, 1845.

There was much to be seen in Paris--the Madelaine Church, Pont Neuf, Place Vendome, Place de la Concorde, and the Garden of Tuileries "which are no gardens but very like what Chickahominy Swamp would be if the undergrowth were cleared out." The appearance of Notre Dame was displeasing to Moseley, but the "associations of the place atone for any defect. Caesar had his camp nearby--and it is the site of the ancient temple of Jupiter--the first time my foot has trodden the ground known to have been consecrated to the worship of Jove."¹⁷ The Louvre, which he felt delightful, was visited more than once.

There were also visits to his bankers, Rothschilds, and much time was spent trying to learn French, "a terrible [sic] hard task. A man, after reaching the years of reflection, or rather having contracted the habit of thinking, finds it very irksome to resume the labours of the child, and undergo the mere mechanical drudgery of acquiring words."¹⁸

Paris, even in 1845, was known for its merry life, and Moseley delighted in its restaurants--the Palais Royal and the dazzling Cafe de Paris where he dined sumptuously--and in its night life. One night he went to the theatre "to see the French girls dance. They are hard to beat. . . .But some of their postures are of questionable civility--such as turning up their legs."¹⁹ After describing in his diary the exact

¹⁷Ibid., December 12, 1845.

¹⁸Ibid., December 16, 1845.

¹⁹Ibid., December 8, 1845.

steps of their dance, he noted that the dancers last act was to throw up their legs frontward "so as to give every part of the House a fair peep."²⁰ On December 27, in company with several American friends, he visited a midnight Bal Masque where three thousand people danced and where "the women mostly dressed in men's clothes [which] shows their longing. . ." ²¹

A week after leaving his cards at the home of the American Minister, Mr. King, Moseley visited him and found him "talkative and sensible-- rather didactic--thinks the change of ministry in England not favorable to us--in which opinion I'm rather inclined to concur. The Whigs are weak and they will resort to violent measures, and those of a demagogue character, to sustain themselves. War, besides, gives a great deal of patronage, and is moreover popular with the million."²² The Oregon question had come to a head, and Lord John Russell had been asked to form a ministry to replace the resigned Peel government. Russell was unable to form a government, however. The new Peel ministry, which was more conciliatory in its mood towards the United States, was to allay the fears of Moseley and King.²³

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., December 27, 1845.

²²Ibid., December 15, 1845.

²³Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1950), pp. 240-241.

Another evening was spent in the company of the Comtesse Monthalon and her daughter. But despite the delights of Paris, Moseley, longing for sunshine decided to cut short his Paris visit and left for Lyons on December 31.²⁴

The first ten days of 1846, were spent visiting various towns and cities--Lyons, Avignon, Marseilles, and Genoa--before arriving in Naples by boat by way of Leghorn. In Marseilles Moseley saw one Denby "who was full of a magnificent scheme for establishing an American paper at Paris--wished me to be its editor, to be assisted by his son and a Mr. Dueroy," but declined the offer although he agreed to think of it.²⁵

In Genoa he strolled by the house of the Marquis de Negro where a bust of General Washington, the sight of which "in such a place made emotions crowd each other."²⁶ His first day in Italy "was one of the most agreeable I ever experienced," and he "could hardly realize the fact that [he] was in Italy--in a land so famous--the scene of so many mighty deeds."²⁷ During the following weeks Moseley was to have constant reminders of his classical studies, and to have the fortunate experience of

²⁴Ibid., December 31, 1845.

²⁵Ibid., January 5, 1846.

²⁶Ibid., January 6, 1846.

²⁷Ibid.

being in Italy at a time of a great revival of interest in the classical age.

Responding to the lax way of life in Naples, the first morning was spent, after breakfast, sitting, enjoying a cigar and the glorious sunshine "which was as warm as that of May in Virginia."²⁸ Much time was passed sitting upon his balcony which overlooked the Bay, and he amused himself "looking at the groups of Ragazzi--the lazy, lousy, contented-looking wretches! What a life! How they do enjoy the sunshine!"²⁹ Visiting Virgil's tomb proved to be a humbug, and at the Villa Reale, the women, though fashionably and richly dressed, he found "awfully ugly."³⁰ Mr. Harnet, the United States Consul in Naples since 1809, and a "very pleasant gentleman, and very kind," was visited.³¹

Pompeii in 1846 was just beginning to be brought out from its centuries of concealment. Alexander Moseley's visit to the ancient "City of the Dead" was one of the highlights of his European visit. On the day of his first visit he wrote that he should

²⁸Ibid., January 10, 1846.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., January 11, 1846.

³¹Ibid., January 12, 1846.

never forget the indescribable emotions of the day, I felt as though I was 2000 years back-- standing in the forum, or walking the streets, worn by Roman carriage wheels. . .opposite the Temple of Vesta stands the sign of a bawdy house--an erect Priapus!! . . .the excavations are in progress, and many more wonders are yet to be brought to light. Spent the evening at home talking. . .over the curious things at Pompeii.³²

On his next visit to Pompeii, he and his travelling companions were the first visitors to enter a newly excavated house, its walls covered with figures of animals, fishes, and birds in frescoes. Appropriately the place was named the House of the Hunters, but Moseley felt that it "ought to have been called after us--the American House--as we first visited it."³³

The attractions of Rome were enough to keep Moseley and his band of fellow American tourists a month and a half. He was prepared to be disappointed at the sight of Saint Peter's Cathedral, but "therefore was not."³⁴ Art by Raphael and Titian at the Barbareni Palace, the Forum, and the sight of the Coliseum by moonlight, all impressed the visitor. One Tuesday Moseley visited Saint Peter's "to hear the Requiem to some dead Pope's soul. Saw the Pope--a feeble old man--and a host of cardinals."³⁵ On a later

³²Ibid., January 13, 1846.

³³Ibid., January 27, 1846.

³⁴Ibid., February 4, 1846.

³⁵Ibid., February 10, 1846.

visit to the Vatican he saw the Apollo Belvedere "which impressed me more than any piece of sculpture I ever saw. It seems to remind me of some divine being that I had known in my dreams. I returned to it again and again."³⁶ At the Chapel of Clement XII at the Church of Saint John Lateran he stood under the alter which was the "exact height of Christ," and which fitted him precisely.³⁷

Moseley, with his training in the classics, delighted at every step and turning in Rome. Associations with the classic Roman past were everywhere. He saw the "famous Pompey, at whose base the great Caesar fell; the statue came up to my notion of Pompey, and I have more faith than ever that it is the veritable one. I would rather the blood stain was not on his leg."³⁸ The ruins of the Caesar's Palace were visited repeatedly. On the way to Tivoli "where the old Romans had magnificent villas,"³⁹ he passed the ruins of Adrian's Villa which he found covered by cypress, pines, olives and violets.

The people of Rome fascinated Moseley. Beautiful women were everywhere, and at the carnival he was particularly attracted by three turbaned

³⁶Ibid., February 10, 1846.

³⁷Ibid., February 17, 1846.

³⁸Ibid., February 23, 1846.

³⁹Ibid., February 28, 1846.

women in a carriage, whose beauty was such that the lighted tapers they carried were instantly blown out by men around them, Moseley concluded, as a gesture of admiration. "I repaid them," stated Moseley, "for the injury I had done them by supplying them with a match. Their gratitude was unbounded."⁴⁰ Passing by a church on another occasion, he noticed a large number of enciante women, who had apparently gone to that church for some special reason. At the Scala Santa he saw a dozen people ascending the steps on their knees. "Absurd as it seemed to me," Moseley related, "I could not forbear admiration at the devotion which dictated it."⁴¹

The visit to Rome was a long one and a particularly delightful one to Moseley. The dancing of the famed Taglione thrilled him more than once. Shopping for cameo and lava jewelry for the ladies in Virginia consumed time. Meals, in company with his American travelling companions, were a constant delight. And in Rome, Moseley even did what he "never did before, won \$1.50 at cards" with a couple of his American friends, but he intended "to treat it away--as I don't want ill-got gold."⁴²

The pleasant associations with ancient Rome and his landlady and her family came to an end on March 21, 1846, when Moseley set off for Leghorn and Florence where he found the people "well off--they laugh louder

⁴⁰Ibid., February 24, 1846.

⁴¹Ibid., March 3, 1846.

⁴²Ibid., February 25, 1846.

and stronger."⁴³ But art was the principle object of the visit to Florence. Several days were spent viewing the usual famous works, including the Cellini gold enameled cups which Moseley particularly admired. In the nineteenth century, however, Italy was the artistic center of Europe from the American artist's point of view, and Florence, and Rome, too, was the home of several American and English artists and sculptors. In Rome he visited the studio of one Wyatt, and of one Gibson where he saw "many pretty things--among them a Queen Victoria."⁴⁴ He also visited the studio of Thomas Crawford who shortly thereafter gained renown in Virginia for his equestrian statue of Washington placed on the capitol grounds in Richmond. Hiram Powers, who later achieved notoriety in the United States and England for his Greek Slave, "very civilly received" Moseley at his studio.⁴⁵ Powers' "Eve is very pretty," observed Moseley, "also his Greek slave--but much alike--there is a resemblance between all his female faces."⁴⁶ The storm of disapproval of the nude Greek slave at the Crystal Palace Exhibit in England in 1854,⁴⁷ and its later acceptance in the United States, because of its symbolic representation with the Greek freedom movement then underway, must have been a source of much amusement to Moseley

⁴³Ibid., March 25, 1846.

⁴⁴Ibid., March 17, 1846.

⁴⁵Ibid., March 31, 1846.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Sir Kenneth Clark, The Nude (London: Penguin Books, 1956), p. 379.

in later years, recalling his visit to the studio of Powers. During the several days of his visit in Florence, Moseley spent much time with Powers and with another American, one Kellogg, a painter, at whose studio he saw many sketches of Turkish and Greek faces and scenes.⁴⁸

While in Florence, Moseley had the first indication of one of the most singular events in Virginia journalism and of his beloved Whig in particular. On March 26, after returning from a horse race, he went to a "reading room to see the news from America--saw a brief notice of a fight between Hugh Pleasants and William Ritchie in which the former was reported to be killed."⁴⁹

Taking leave of Powers and Kellogg, Moseley continued his Italian tour by proceeding on to Venice in the company of several other Americans. The reality of Venice far exceeded the traveler's expectations! A night gondola ride, beneath a bright, full moon, in the company of ladies, was like a fairy scene to Moseley. After seeing the women strolling about St. Marks Square, he was "no longer surprised that Titian painted the most voluptuous of women--he drew from no imaginary models. The women here have the finest busts I ever saw. . ."⁵⁰ Even though he liked Venice, and even

⁴⁸Ibid., March 31, 1846.

⁴⁹Ibid., March 26, 1846. Pleasants died two days after a duel, fought on February 23, 1846, with Thomas Ritchie, Jr., after an implication of some dishonor passed between the two men. Ritchie was later tried and acquitted. See W. H. T. Squires, Through Centuries Three, A Short History of the Virginia People (Portsmouth, Virginia; Printcraft Press, Inc., 1929), p. 401.

⁵⁰Ibid., April 13, 1846.

felt he could live there, Moseley soon pressed on for Lake Como where he indulged in his favorite sport, angling. Eventually, he and his friend Bowdoin reached Geneva where he found letters from home which confirmed the tragic death of Pleasants. Moseley records that he "walked about [and] mused over the sad fate of Pleasants--killed by young Ritchie."⁵¹ But distractions were to be found in Geneva too. Every morning Moseley was "waked by the Jackasses. What queer animals. They roar and gain the very earth and seem perfectly unconscious of anything about them, and look like they were communing with some distant spirit, or some dear friend beyond the mountains or seas. I like to hear them. There can be nothing in the musical line nicer than the last dying note of a Jackasses' bray. It's worth all the operas in Italy."⁵²

After visiting the watchmakers, Moseley, on May 8, determined to move on to his next stopping place. Unfortunately his diary ended with the entries concerning Geneva. Where he next visited and when he returned to the United States, he does not tell us, but considering the distance of either Mediterranean or Atlantic ports from Geneva, it must have been at least late summer before Moseley touched upon homeland.

⁵¹Diary, May 2, 1846.

⁵²Ibid., May 7, 1846.

The long European journey was certainly one of the momentous events of Alexander Moseley's life. Not only did he have the pleasure of seeing the sources of so much of what he had learned at the university, but the trip was invaluable to one in his profession. The pages of the Whig in future years were to contain much European news and sagacious editorial comment, undoubtedly attributable to the 1845 tour.

CHAPTER IV

EDITOR OF THE WHIG, 1848-1850

The campaign of 1848 beckoned Moseley, and on May 30, 1848 he rejoined the Whig in guiding its political strategy. The more pressing reason for Moseley's reassociation with the Whig at this particular time was the death of its then editor, Richard H. Toler. Toler, previously the editor of the influential Whig Lynchburg Virginian, had come to the Richmond Whig in 1846 after Pleasants had been killed in his unfortunate duel with Thomas Ritchie, Jr.¹

When Moseley resumed the helm of the paper in 1848, he was assisted by his twenty-five year old first cousin, Wyatt Moseley Elliott. Elliott, who had joined the Whig in 1846,² in his youth had been under the guardianship of his older first cousin, Colonel Thomas Moseley Bondurant. After receiving his degree in the first graduating class of the Virginia Military Institute in 1842, Elliott taught at the Slate River Academy, a Buckingham County boarding school owned and operated by his relatives. Elliott, following a familiar family custom, married his first cousin, Marcia Povall Moseley, the daughter of Judge Thomas Moseley of Kentucky.^{2a} Elliott in later years became distinguished as a captain of the celebrated

¹Cappon, op. cit., p. 192.

²Ibid.

^{2a}Elliott Papers, MSS in Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

Richmond Grays, which were called to the John Brown crisis at Harper's Ferry, and during the Civil War, was a Lieutenant-Colonel of a battalion of six companies, the Fifteenth Virginia, which was raised by him.³

Wyatt Elliott's association with the Whig was long and in different capacities, but at the time of Moseley's association with him in 1848, he was undoubtedly serving in a business capacity rather than as a writer.

Again, as in 1844, in addition to his important editorial duties at the Whig, Moseley entered the active side of the election. Still a member of the powerful Whig Central Committee, he was also to be found at "Rough and Ready Club" meetings. The importance of the Richmond Whig to its political cause can be readily seen in the fact that the Central Committee meetings were sometimes held in the newspaper's offices.

In the 1848 election, the Democrats and Whigs alike were divided over sectional issues. After much party strife, General Lewis Cass of Michigan, regarded by some Northerners as a "Northern man with Southern principles," received the Democratic presidential nomination.⁴ Reviving the only political formula the Whigs had ever found successful in a presidential election, a military man, General Zachary Taylor, the popular

³Iyon Gardiner Tyler, Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1915), III, p. 261.

⁴Malone and Rauch, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 565.

hero of the recently ended Mexican War, was nominated, with Millard Fillmore of New York, regarded as a free-soiler, as his running mate. The Whigs again adopted no party platform; instead Taylor's military record and his sturdy, unpretentious ways were used to attract votes. To some Virginians there was even the question of whether or not Taylor was a Whig. Compared with Webster and Clay he had little qualification, but the Richmond Whig replied that he was surely a Whig or else the opposition would not have been so eager to prevent his nomination.

With no party platform, adroit Whig leaders stumped their areas with arguments prepared strictly for local consumption. In Virginia the question was slavery. Although Taylor was a slave owner, Virginia Democrats charged the General as being an abolitionist. The Whig Central Committee replied with vague Southern logic, that they disbelieved the charge "because he is a man of sense and a patriot."⁵

The slavery question was further extended to the dispute of sovereignty in the territories. Sovereignty, felt the Whig, was reserved to the citizens of the states and citizens of the United States, the former including the latter. Sovereignty "exists, in this country, among the people of the several states to whom the general government belongs, for they can at any moment, alter, amend or abolish it according to their

⁵Richmond Whig, June 16, 1848.

pleasure."⁶ The Constitution, continued the Whig, said nothing of the citizens of territories, therefore they had no sovereignty. General Cass, according to Moseley, supported the doctrine that the people of the territories had sovereignty and could therefore decide for themselves the slavery question, in opposition to the theory, advocated by Moseley, that the territories belonged to all of the states which should make the decision.⁷

Taylor won the close election, partly because of the New York electoral votes gained from the Democratic split in that state. In Virginia, as in other Southern states he certainly won because he was a Southerner who supported slavery. Furthermore, it had been felt that the Whig Congressional leaders could control Taylor after electing him.

In the months succeeding the election of Taylor until he retired from the Whig in July 1850,⁸ Moseley generally supported Taylor who, the Whig stated in retaliation to Democratic criticism, had "labored for the preservation of peace, at the same time that he has carefully maintained the honor of the Republic."⁹

⁶Ibid., July 1, 1848.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Cappon, op. cit., p. 192.

⁹Richmond Whig, March 22, 1850.

Following the election, in 1850 territorial expansion became once again a national, and yet sectional, issue. California was seeking admission to the Union, and in this matter the Whig completely reversed its previous view, of Texas annexation days, that the territories had no sovereign viewpoint, and that the other states had the decision whether or not to admit a territory. In support of admission of California, Moseley stated that the territory was "Southern ground, and we see not how Southern men can get around it," and contended that California should present her constitution to Congress, and that Congress had no right to call a state convention.¹⁰ The Whig in advocating the admission of California was taking a view contrary to that of most Southern states. Meanwhile, Clay, in an attempt to settle not only the California matter, but other territorial matters as well, proposed five bills that came to be known as the Compromise of 1850. As they were finally decided by Congress they provided, in the case of California, that it should be admitted as a free state by her own choice; and also strengthened the fugitive slave law, in addition to other provisions. The effect was to shift the balance of power to the Northern states "while assuming that slavery would not spread in the remaining territories."¹¹ Clay's compromise did not meet the full

¹⁰Ibid., February 21, 1850.

¹¹Malone and Rauch, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 568.

approbation of the Whig, however, although it felt something good would come out of it. "We confess," stated the editor, "that we have breathed freer since we have seen Mr. Clay preparing to throw himself in the breach, and so. . .has every man in the land, who is not opposed to the continuation of the Union."¹²

While the Whig did not fully support Clay's proposals, neither did it agree with Calhoun's notable speech against the Compromise. His speech was pessimistic and discussed larger sectional grievances. Calhoun, editorialized Moseley, was a conservative, but he advocated many notions and measures "which were calculated to defeat the very objects which he desired." Moseley went on to say that Calhoun's

annexation policy was of this nature. Since the foundation of the government, there has been nothing so destructive to the conservative influences which were scattered through the Union, as the extension of our Empire. There has been nothing so fatal to State Rights--nothing of so strong a tendency to Consolidation in the Federal Government. Conservative, State Rights influences, predominated in the old thirteen, and in the older of the new States, but since the thirst for territorial aggrandizement has seized upon the people, the spirit of progressive Democracy has pervaded all parts of the Union.¹³

Although the effect of the discussion of compromise was to give hope to the Southern cause, Southern extremists and disunionists such as

¹²Richmond Whig, February 9, 1850.

¹³Ibid., April 8, 1850.

Robert Barnwell Rhett of South Carolina, and Edmund Ruffin and Beverly Tucker of Virginia, called for a Southern Convention to meet in Nashville in June to consider Southern rights and problems. While the Richmond Enquirer supported the Nashville Convention, the Whig was vehemently denunciatory of its aims, feeling that it could accomplish nothing. Moseley desired "no more talk--Let us act. If we have reached the point where a dissolution of the Union is preferable to its continuance, let us act accordingly. If we have not attained that point, we perceive neither the wisdom nor good taste of braggadocio resolutions."¹⁴ When the convention did meet, the Whig criticized the "ravings of this madman" Rhett, who despaired of the government ever coming back to the limitations of the Constitution, and who advocated dissolution of the Union.¹⁵ "We will venture to say, wrote Moseley, that [Virginia] will repudiate these sentiments with the deepest abhorrence."¹⁶

Always the proud Virginian, Moseley made a noble statement in defense of the Union and in criticism of Rhett's disunionist statements.

As one of Virginia's sons. . .we will venture to say. . .Treason can find no foothold here, no man can use in a public assembly, avow himself a Disunionist, and live, politically, one

¹⁴Ibid., January 4, 1850.

¹⁵Richmond Whig, July 24, 1850.

¹⁶Ibid.

moment after it.--When Virginia has been wronged, and can find no ordinary remedies in the Constitution, she knows how to take her own course into her own hands.¹⁷

At a time when dissolution of the Union was a lively matter of discussion, the Whig allowed no possibility of error of opinion of its own stand. Replying to criticism of the Enquirer, the Whig avowed that it meant "to stand by the Union, under any and all circumstances. We will not be driven out of it. If it be dissolved, the dissolution shall be effected by the North--not by us. Our rights can be much more effectively vindicated in the Union than out of it.¹⁸

Ill omens for the continued unity of the Whig party were evident when Alexander Moseley retired again from the editorial chair of the Whig in July 1850.¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid., July 26, 1850.

¹⁸Ibid., February 19, 1850.

¹⁹Cappon, op. cit., p. 192.

CHAPTER V

THE WHIG GENTLEMAN: PERSONAL LIFE AND PERSONAL POLITICAL ACTIVITY 1836-1860

In keeping with the popular image of the typical Whig gentleman's high social standing and cultivated tastes, Alexander Moseley saw to it that he fulfilled the conception. As the holder of a university degree, he certainly was among the young nation's educationally elite and he further enhanced his position by travelling in Europe in an age when only the wealthiest or best educated Americans could afford the great amount of time necessary for the grand tour.¹

Being a bachelor gave Moseley the unrestricted leisure necessary to travel in Europe, and also enabled him to follow a variety of pursuits complimentary to the life of the nineteenth century Virginia gentleman.

After residing in Richmond only about six months, Moseley was elected on February 16, 1837 to membership in the Virginia Historical and Philosophical Society,² which was founded in 1831 and which often met in the Capitol building, illustrating the high regard of the society. Joining the society's galaxy of distinguished members at the same time as

¹For a detailed account of Moseley's European sojourn in 1845 and 1846, see pp. 32-47.

²"Early Records of the Virginia Historical Society 1837-1838," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (January, 1960), Vol. 68, No. 1, p. 95.

Moseley were his University of Virginia classmate Willis P. Bocock of Buckingham, Gessner Harrison, Professor of Ancient Languages at the University, and R. T. Daniel, one of the rising Whig leaders of Virginia.³ Membership in the Virginia Historical and Philosophical Society gave Moseley ready access to such distinguished men as Robert C. Nicholas, Conway Robinson and David Campbell, the Democrat-turned-Whig governor. The society even afforded Moseley and his journalistic rival, Thomas Ritchie, a means of friendly intercourse through their common membership.⁴

The high esteem of his fellow alumni of the University of Virginia led Alexander Moseley's election as the first president of that school's newly organized Alumni Association. "Such societies," the Whig editorialized, "we think ought to exist at all our colleges. They would have the happiest effect in keeping up a laudable rivalry in the cause of letters, and in awakening remembrances of interesting incidents connected with the history of each institution. Such an association. . . [would be] always ready to inspire in the bosoms of the rising youth, a desire to be an inmate of its classic walls."⁵

Answering the invitation of the faculty to the graduates of the university, twenty-four alumni met at the Rotunda on July 4, 1838. Alumni

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 100.

⁵Richmond Whig, July 10, 1838.

came from as far as Lynchburg and Southampton County, and among the seven from Richmond was Alexander Moseley. A constitution was adopted and officers elected, Moseley being selected as president. Elected with Moseley, was Willis P. Boccock, as first vice-president, classmate of Moseley and a resident of his home county.⁶ Interestingly, Boccock was just as strong a Democrat as Moseley was an avowed Whig.

After the necessary business was conducted, the alumni, it was recorded, "partook of an elegant supper. . .at which wine and wit flowed in equal profusion. "We understand," reported the Whig, "that a classic supper will constitute one of the regular (and not least delightful) proceedings of the Society."⁷ The meeting was a complete success. "We have never seen more happy meetings," the writer extolled, "more unaffected joy, than has thrilled the bosoms of those who, after years of separation, have thus convened amid the scenes of their youthful studies and youthful pleasures."⁸

Alexander Moseley's gentlemanly services extended in other directions. At the eighth annual stockholders meeting of the James River and Kanawha Company, in Richmond on May 2, 1842, Moseley was one of eleven persons appointed as a committee to "inquire and report. . .the measures

⁶Charlottesville Advocate, July 13, 1838.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

which they may deem proper to be adopted" from the speech of the Company's President, Joseph C. Cabell.⁹ To meet the pressing needs of the company in their canal building enterprise, the Virginia legislature had agreed to loan money to the company, and it was to meet this urgency and other matters that the president of the company addressed the stockholders.

The James River and Kanawha Company was one of Virginia's most ambitious attempts at internal improvement. One of the canal's chief advocates was Colonel Thomas Moseley Bondurant, first cousin and mentor of Alexander Moseley, for many years a director of the company, and at one point its acting president, and a long time member of the Internal Improvement Committee of the Virginia Senate. Appreciation for Bondurant's long service to the canal company was expressed by giving one of the packet boats his appellation. Colonel Bondurant's job and that of his fellow directors was a thankless task, because of the many problems besieging the company. Typical of the complaints was the alleged deficiency of depth of water at various places along the canal. To settle the question, in November, 1844, an "examination was made under the supervision of Messrs. James A. Turner, Thomas M'Kinney and Alexander Moseley, gentlemen of high respectability, and in no way connected with the administration of

⁹"Speech of the President, Joseph C. Cabell," Eighth Annual Report of the President to the Stockholders of the James River and Kanawha Company (Richmond, 1842), p. 87.

the company."¹⁰ The three gentlemen's examination of most of the canal's 146 miles from Lynchburg to Richmond revealed a depth of less than four feet, required by law, at only a few places.¹¹

The three men were able to report that

in relation to the general state and condition of the line, it gives us great pleasure to be able to state that we found the towpath, lamps, lockhouses, locklots, etc. in excellent order, the lockkeepers steady men, and prompt and efficient in attending to their respective duties, particularly between Lynchburg and Scottsville, and the canal generally in fine condition, and under good management.¹²

Moseley had long been interested in the affairs of the James River and Kanawha Company, probably largely through his connection with Colonel Bondurant. In 1836, when it was proposed that a railroad be constructed to parallel the canal from Richmond to Lynchburg, Moseley vehemently opposed the move in the editorial columns of the Charlottesville Advocate of which he was then editor. Among his objections to the railroad plan was its infringement upon the rights of the stockholders of the Canal Company as supposedly guaranteed in their charter.

¹⁰Tenth Annual Report of the President to the Stockholders of the James River and Kanawha Company (Richmond, 1845), p. 485.

¹¹Ibid., p. 517.

¹²Ibid.

As to the effort. . .to produce distrust in the public mind of the James River Directory, we have only to say, that, we believe great injustice has been done to that Board. We have the utmost confidence in their zeal, their judgment, and their honesty; and they will accomplish as much for the good of the Commonwealth as any sort of men with the same means can accomplish.¹³

It must also be remembered that internal improvements were one of the chief interests of the Whig party.

Politics was Alexander Moseley's one consuming passion. Fortunately for him it was a pursuit restricted primarily to gentlemen in the early nineteenth century. His one brief fling at active political participation came in 1843 when the Buckingham Whig Delegation selected Moseley as the candidate for the House of Delegates in place of Colonel Thomas H. Flood who declined being a candidate. To the Delegation Moseley replied that

I have received your note of the 23'd inst. informing me, that at a meeting of the Whig Delegation from this county to the Farmville Convention, I was unanimously elected as one of the Whig candidates for this county. . .Gentlemen, the manner in which this nomination has been made, leaves me no choice. I accept it, and pledge myself to use all honorable means to sustain a cause, of which I have been an unwavering friend, 'amidst darkness and storm as well as in sunshine,' and which I honestly believe to be emphatically, the cause of the people.¹⁴

¹³Charlottesville Advocate, July 8, 1836.

¹⁴Richmond Whig, March 31, 1843.

How actively Moseley campaigned is not known, but it is certain that he had an uphill fight in a county that was traditionally Democratic, despite the previous election of Colonel Bondurant, a Whig, to the State Senate. Seventeen men, including Alexander Moseley and such locally prominent men as Thomas H. Flood, Robert C. Nicholas, Robert K. Irving, Philip Bolling, David Reuben and John Patterson, and Moseley's cousins, Rolfe Eldridge and Grandison Moseley, the latter also a candidate to the legislature, formed a county Committee of Correspondence and Vigilance to espouse the Whig cause.¹⁵ Their efforts were to no avail and on election day in May 1843, Moseley was defeated, receiving third place in a field of four candidates. In only two of the six county precincts did he receive more votes than his Democratic opponents.

As a formulator of public opinion, Moseley was far more successful than as an active candidate for office. Combined with his editorial duties, his participation as a political strategist within the Whig party must surely have made him an influential Whig.

Virginia in the days of Whig and Democratic rivalry was a genuine two-party state. Political gatherings were occasions of great social interest, and Fourth of July celebrations in the early days of the Republic particularly lent themselves to political flurry. Views were readily ex-

¹⁵Ibid., April 5, 1843.

changed between the leaders and candidates of the two parties, necessitating the best possible image on the part of the party representatives. At one such celebration, in Buckingham county on July 4, 1842, the barbeque prepared for the occasion was followed by the reading of the Declaration of Independence by Alexander Moseley. Drinking was as customary a part of the celebration as judicious debate. Thirty-eight toasts resulted, most of them politically inspired. In reply to one toast, "Henry Clay: God grant that he may be our next President," another countered "Henry Clay: May his wife be a widow, and his children fatherless, before he is made President of the U. S."¹⁶ Alexander Moseley, whose political views were already well known to those gathered, proposed instead a toast to "Virginia: 'Breathes there a man with a soul so dead, who to himself has never said, this is my own, my native land.'"¹⁷ Alcohol perhaps becoming the best of him, he later castigated, "The Veto Power: a monarchial feature in the Constitution, which ought never to have been there."¹⁸ The day ended on a more amicable note when another praised "Our worthy host, J. B. Sanders: None know better how to appreciate the Scripture [sic] injunction, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat!"¹⁹

¹⁶Ibid., July 12, 1842.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

Moseley's participation in the Whig organization of Buckingham County was zealous, despite his defeat in open election. At a meeting of Buckingham Whigs in January 1843, he was one of several men appointed to attend the state convention in Richmond on February 22.²⁰ At the state convention, held in the Hall of Delegates, Benjamin Watkins Leigh was elected chairman, assisted by Alexander Moseley and R. H. Toler, editor of Lynchburg Virginia, as secretaries pro tem. Apparently Gloucester County was without a native representative, for Moseley, in addition to his secretarial duty, represented that county. The convention closed after declaring its preference for Henry Clay, but avoided the touchy subject of a vice-presidential candidate by leaving that matter to the National Convention.²¹

After several years of experience, by 1844 the Virginia Whigs were becoming well organized. Among the actions of Whig State Convention of February 22, 1843, was the appointment, by the Convention's chairman, B. W. Leigh, of a Central State Whig Committee. Among the twenty-one benighted men appointed to this intersanctum of the party was Alexander Moseley, along with such luminaries as R. T. Daniel and James Lyons. To

²⁰Ibid., January 14, 1843.

²¹Ibid., February 24, 1843.

these men was entrusted the strategy for the forthcoming confrontation. The vigorous campaign, after the National Whig Convention met in Baltimore on May 1,²² centered largely about the question of Texas annexation, to which Clay was opposed. Clay Clubs were formed all over Virginia. At the Buckingham Clay Club meeting in October 1843, Alexander Moseley acted as secretary and was selected as a member of Corresponding Committee whose duty it was "to correspond with similar associations throughout the State."²³ Moseley, with the time necessary for such pursuits, visited other political rallies, perhaps sometimes in the company of his cousin, Colonel Bondurant, who on one occasion spoke before a crowd of fifteen hundred at the Amherst Festival. Two previous speakers spoke for a total of three and a half hours; Bondurant "spoke but a short time, but it was multum in parvo. He gave some home thrusts to the great Democratic party, who felt as uncomfortable in his hands as he could have desired."²⁴

Alexander Moseley was kept particularly busy during the campaign of 1844. When eight hundred Whigs met at the Whig Convention in Richmond for two days in February 1844, he not only was a delegate from Buckingham County, but also served as secretary to the convention along with fellow journalists R. H. Toler of Lynchburg, John S. Gallaher of Jefferson and

²²W. H. T. Squires, op. cit., p. 44.

²³Richmond Whig, October 14, 1843.

²⁴Ibid., November 9, 1843.

John W. Syme of Petersburg. Colonel Bondurant took an active part at the convention, and was rewarded by being named as the alternate to Richard Toler, the delegate to the Whig National Convention in Baltimore, and also was rewarded by appointment as an assistant to the Election in the Fourth Congressional District.²⁵ There were other meetings as well. At Howard's Grove, near Richmond, over two thousand people ate watermellon and heard B. W. Leigh state that the "true question is Union or Disunion--or Mr. Calhoun for President or Disunion."²⁶ Valentine Southall "reviewed the whole field of political discussion,"²⁷ all of which it was Moseley's duty to report. In September, he was invited to attend a meeting at Cumberland Court House.²⁸ Back in Buckingham County, he was appointed, along with Colonel Bondurant as part of a Committee of Invitation for the District Convention and free barbeque to be held in September.²⁹ The convention turned out to be a complete success, with between three and four thousand in attendance from six surrounding counties.³⁰ After a parade of "carriages and horseback," the meeting was called to order by Colonel Bondurant, the State Senator.

²⁵Ibid., February 16, 1844.

²⁶Ibid., July 26, 1844.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., September 28, 1844.

²⁹Ibid., August 20, 1844.

³⁰Ibid., September 24, 1844.

The Curdsville Club, in Buckingham County, designated Moseley as a member of a Committee of Vigilance, whose duty it was to "entreat every Whig in his neighborhood to give ONE DAY to his country."³¹ The Curdsville Club had been particularly active earlier, in September, when three hundred Whigs had gathered to erect a "Clay Pole," one hundred feet high. After marching to the Masonic Hall, they heard Alexander Moseley, in the absence of the expected speaker, tell them of Henry Clay's

successful efforts for the preservation of the Union, whenever it had been menaced. The signs of the times showed that great events were on the gale, and Mr. Clay was the only man in the Nation who could safely steer the Ship of State through the impending storm. Every age and every Nation had its master spirit to whom the people turned in the hour of peril and danger for deliverance. Such is the proud position which Mr. Clay occupies in this our day and Nation. Throughout his long and eventful political life he has been distinguished for his patriotism, and as the Flag which they have this day raised, was elevated above surrounding objects, so has Mr. Clay's political career been elevated above personal considerations, and marked by a continual devotion to his country's welfare.³²

The campaign strategy even drew outsiders to Virginia. One of them, General Thomas William Henry Harrison Moseley of Illinois, a distinguished

³¹Ibid., November 1, 1844.

³²Ibid., September 13, 1844.

first cousin of Alexander Moseley, came to Richmond in March to campaign for Clay.³³ His visit with his journalist cousin, was long remembered by the General's family.

The results of the campaign were divided. The State House of Delegates saw a substantial Whig Majority, including the election Colonel William Moseley of Buckingham, but in the Senate, Colonel Bondurant was politically in the minority.³⁴ Despite the concerted efforts of the Whig Central Committee and Whigs throughout Virginia, the Democratic presidential candidate, Polk, prevailed.

After Moseley's return from his lengthy tour of Europe in 1846, he resumed his labors at the Whig in 1848, just in time to enter the current presidential contest. Still a member of the Whig Central Committee, he was warm in support of General Taylor in his lack-luster campaign against General Cass. In Richmond, a "Rough and Ready Club," of which Moseley was elected one of the four assistant secretaries, was organized "to support the Whig nominees, and mutually promising each other and to our compatriots all over the Union" and "compatible with the principles of personal honor, the law and the constitution."³⁵ At the Buckingham

³³Ibid., March 19, 1844.

³⁴Ibid., April 30, 1844.

³⁵Ibid., June 23, 1848.

Rough and Ready Club, Moseley's parliamentary abilities were called upon to report a suitable constitution.³⁶ In September, he was selected to represent his home county at the major Whig convention to be held at Lexington.³⁷

Although Moseley was very warm in his support of General Taylor, General Winfield Scott, "the Conqueror of Mexico," and a contender for the Whig presidential nomination, was held in high esteem by many of his fellow Virginians, including Moseley. Hoping that Scott would visit his native state, the Mayor of Richmond appointed a Committee of Invitation consisting of fifteen of Richmond's most distinguished citizens. Serving along with Moseley were such luminaries as Generals William H. MacFarland, E. C. Carrington, J. P. Harvie and Bernard Peyton, and William F. Ritchie.

Although the Virginia Whigs were not as excited over the impending election as they were in 1844, General Taylor was victorious, probably largely because of his supposed pro-slavery stand in contrast to Cass' alignment with much of the abolition support. To Moseley, it must have been particularly gratifying that Richmond, often called the "Gibraltar of Whiggery," went overwhelmingly for General Taylor, especially when his home county maintained a close Democratic edge.

³⁶Ibid., August 23, 1848.

³⁷Ibid., September 5, 1848.

To all practical ends the Whig party was largely dissolved in Virginia after the Taylor victory. Moseley appears to have never taken such an active interest in any campaign thereafter. Except for much of the period of 1852 through 1854 when he again became editor, Moseley probably spent much of his time as a farmer.

Alexander Moseley's interest in farming asserted itself as early as 1843, when, at a meeting in Buckingham County called to form a "Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Horticulture, and the Mechanic Arts," his parliamentary skills were prevailed upon to be one of six members of a committee to draft a constitution for the organization.³⁸

In keeping with the popular conception of the typical Whig gentleman as a prosperous slave holding planter, Moseley had acquired in the years preceding the Civil War, a considerable estate in Nelson County, "Sycamore Island," just across the James River from Buckingham County. Its 468 acres were supervised by a farm manager, S. W. Marshall,³⁹ and worked by thirty-seven slaves over twelve years of age.⁴⁰ The magnitude of Moseley's farming operation is shown by that fact that in 1863, only twelve other planters in Nelson county had more than the fifty slaves of both sexes and all ages held by Moseley at that time.⁴¹

³⁸Richmond Whig, June 3, 1843.

³⁹"Farm Journal of Sycamore Island, October 22, 1855-December 2, 1856", MSS in Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

⁴⁰"Personal Property Tax Book, Nelson County, Virginia, 1860," MSS in Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia.

⁴¹"Personal Property Tax Book, Nelson County, Virginia, 1863" MSS in Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia

Living with Moseley at "Syccamore Island" were his mother and several other people, some of them probably relatives. One Henry Bradley, a Mulatto, twenty-two years old in 1860, also lived in the plantation home.⁴²

In 1863, there were twenty horses, thirty-three cattle, seventy-five sheep and sixty-five hogs.⁴³ The plantation was diversified in its yield. Presumably, however, tobacco was the money crop. Moseley's interests were further extended, however, to a steam mill and grist mill. The steam mill, capitalized at one thousand dollars, used 1,600 logs to produce an annual product of 120,000 feet of plank valued at \$12,000.⁴⁴ The grist mill was capitalized at \$1200, and primarily produced corn meal but also produced other articles including plaster.⁴⁵

With real estate valued at \$30,000 and a personal estate of \$70,000, largely represented in slaves, Moseley was well within the more prosperous class of Virginians. He undoubtedly relished the life of the country-gentlemen, and even after the financial collapse he suffered during the Civil War, Moseley still spent much time with his relatives at

⁴²United States Bureau of the Census, "Eighth Census of the United States, Nelson County, Virginia, 1860," MSS in Department of Archives, Washington, D. C.

⁴³"Personal Property Tax Book, Nelson County, 1863," op. cit.

⁴⁴United States Bureau of the Census, "Eighth Census of the United States, Nelson County, Virginia, Schedule 5, Industry, 1860," MSS in Department of Archives, Washington, D. C.

⁴⁵Ibid.

"Fish Pond," a Buckingham County farm he apparently acquired during the war and deeded to his cousin Alexander Bondurant after the fall of the Confederacy. The halcyon days of anti-bellum Virginia were never revived for Moseley, however.

CHAPTER VI

THE CIVIL WAR PERIOD 1860-1865

Few events of pre-Civil War history had more impact on the South than that of John Brown's raid on the arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, in October, 1859.¹ Besides alerting the South to the danger of the abolition movement, the raid increased the number of secessionists and weakened the faith of countless others to the need for permanent union with the Northern states. More tangible was the incident's wrecking of the Virginia political parties' plans for the election of 1860. The previous possibility of the Virginia Whigs joining with the conservative Republicans was completely changed, and the Richmond Whig soon became as bitter in its denunciation of the Republican party as the Democrats were.²

The altered political situation required a new program for the "Opposition Party," as the remnants of the old Whig party had come to be known. No longer could the slavery issue be ignored, and union effected with the conservative Republicans. Instead, a new party, the "Constitutional Union Party," was formed to fight the "corrupt" Democratic party on non-slavery issues.

¹Henry Thomas Shanks, Secession Movement in Virginia, 1847-1861 (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1934), p. 95.

²Ibid., p. 101.

After a particularly unharmonious convention, the Southern Democrats selected John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky as their presidential nominee for the election of 1860, while Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois became the Northern Democrat's nominee. A moderate, Abraham Lincoln, was selected by the Republican Party which was exuberant over the Democratic disunity. Meanwhile, in Baltimore in May, a convention of old Whigs officially formed the Constitutional Union Party. Its candidates, John Bell of Tennessee and Edward Everett of Massachusetts, pledged themselves to no political principles but the support of the Constitution, the Union, and the enforcement of laws, trying, therefore, to avoid the divisive nature of the slavery issue.³

Thus, four presidential nominees entered the political arena of 1860. In Virginia there was certainly no political unity of the electorate. This, too was reflected in the newspapers. Of the Richmond press, the Enquirer was vehemently pro-Southern and ardently in support of Breckenridge. The Dispatch, even though it was neutral, carried several editorials showing the inadvisability of secession to the Southern states.⁴ The Whig, under the editorship of Robert Ridgway, a Moderate, was warm in its support of Bell and the Constitutional Union Party. By supporting Breckenridge, the Whig felt, the lower South was favoring dissolution of the union.⁵ Breckenridge

³Malone and Rauch, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 681.

⁴Richmond Daily Dispatch, August 7, 9, 29, 1860.

⁵Richmond Whig, July 3, 1860.

supporters, on the other hand, tried to discourage support of Bell by maintaining that he was opposed to slavery. The editor of the Whig declared that "experience, and observation, have taught Mr. Bell, as they have taught the whole South, together with large numbers of the North, that slavery in the South is a fixed and unalterable, necessary, and beneficial institution. . ."⁶

Many Southerners, and the Enquirer in particular, had long expressed the opinion that the election of Lincoln would result in the dissolution of the Union.⁷ With particular foresight, the editor of the Whig, just before election day, stated that "the only issue involved in the coming election is the momentous and paramount issue of the preservation of the government itself."⁸ Despite the assertion of each of the parties that votes cast for its candidates were votes for union,⁹ there was wide division of votes and Lincoln was the winner nationally. Despite the ominous situation, the Whig could at least rejoice that its nominee, Bell, carried Virginia, although by a small plurality of 358.¹⁰

⁶Ibid., July 31, 1860.

⁷Enquirer, July 10, 1860.

⁸Richmond Whig, November 2, 1860.

⁹Shanks, op. cit., p. 115.

¹⁰Ibid.

Consternation reigned in Virginia in the period immediately following the election of Lincoln. Virginia's political leaders urged different forms of action. At the opposite ends of the pole were Edmund Ruffin and ex-Governor Wise who urged immediate secession, and John M. Botts, a former prominent Whig, who maintained that the Commonwealth should remain in the Union under any circumstances.¹¹ The press was equally as divided, with the Enquirer urging preparation for dissolution. The Whig quickly emerged as the champion of moderation and caution, and remained so through most of the period of agitation until the secession of Virginia. Unlike the advocates of secession, the conservatives of Virginia were disunited. Nevertheless, it was to their credit that they proposed various plans for obtaining redress. Among the most widely advocated plans were proposals for a national convention.¹² Wyndham Robertson, a States' Rights Unionist and former acting Governor of Virginia, writing on the subject of the National Crisis in the Whig, proposed a constitutional amendment convention.¹³ Robertson felt that the kernel of the current troubles was the North's "denial of our right of property in our slaves and their assertion of our criminally holding them."¹⁴ For the sake of peace and justice,

¹¹Ibid., p. 122.

¹²Ibid., p. 130.

¹³Richmond Whig, December 21, 1860.

¹⁴Ibid.

Robertson proposed "further legislation to counteract or punish all interference whatever to the facile recovery of our fugitive slaves."¹⁵ The Constitution, he maintained, recognized the equality of rights in the territories and constitutional protection against all legislation interfering with slavery in the states choosing it. More importantly, he acknowledged the right, as did so many conservative leaders, to secede, but denied that the time was right to secede, until all proper measures for redressing grievances had failed.¹⁶

In reply to Robertson's views and proposals, Alexander Moseley wrote a letter which was published in the columns of the Whig.

Fish Pond, Nelson County,
December 26, 1860

My Dear Sir:--I've read with much interest your letter to the Whig, and concur in most of the positions you take. With respect to the remedy you propose for the troubles of times--a National Convention--that doubtless is the proper remedy, and, if it could be held in time, might avert the impending catastrophe. But that is a remedy depending on others. The South alone cannot call it--and I see not a sign that the North will concur. That region has obtained the power--and it snaps its fingers at any proposition

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

likely to impair its exercise. But, if called, it is not possible for it to assemble in time to meet the crisis.

The later authorized announcement by the New York Tribune gives us to understand, that Mr. Lincoln's policy will be one of coercion, and we may expect that his inauguration will be immediately followed by Civil War. The point to be gained is to prevent that catastrophe--How is it to be affected? The only means that occurs to me is by a sudden and total arrest of the action of the Federal Government. It is that Government--the mere creature and common agent of the States--which alone threatens war and endangers the peace of the country.--But how is this arrest to be effected? In several Governments there have been checks provided for extraordinary emergencies. The Athenians were in the habit of ostracising their most illustrious citizens, when they became dangerous to the public liberties. In Rome, the Dictatorship, or Tribunitial veto was the resource, according as the general or plebeian interests were imperiled. We have no check at all similar either in our Constitution or usages. One branch of our Government has a check upon another branch; but there is no suspensive veto anywhere provided upon the action of our whole Government. This is a great defect in our system--and may, at this very time, prove destructive of the public peace and fatal to the Republic. We have not hitherto felt the want of it, and now, at the hour of need, we must invent or improvise a substitute. That substitute, it occurs to me, might be provided in this way: Let Virginia and Maryland--the two States most directly and vitally interested, and as many more as may choose to join, interfere in their sovereign capacities, take possession of Washington, before the 4th of March, and forbid the inauguration of a President, until a Convention of all the States can be held. They might announce their determination to their sister States to the following effect:

"We, two of the sovereign States of this Confederacy, justly apprehending that our common agent is about to involve the country in war, interpose for the sake of peace, until all the States can meet in Convention to settle the matter in dispute. The Confederacy is already dismembered, and we cannot consent that a part shall take possession of the army and navy, created by us all for our common defence, and employ them for our oppression. Let all the States meet in Convention and come to a distinct understanding; if we cannot agree to live together in peace or to part in peace, if we must fight, let the common army and navy be disbanded or divided, and let us have a fair fight. But until a Convention of all the States is held, and all matters of difference adjusted, no more Presidents shall be inaugurated on this soil."

I think this line of conduct promptly adopted and vigorously pursued by Maryland and Virginia might save us from Civil War altogether, or failing in that, leave us to a war on fair and equal terms. The proceeding, you observe, is purely pacific and conservative in its tendency. It merely suspends the action of the common agent of the States, until the States themselves can meet and take the matter in their own hands. It does seem to me, that not only Virginia and Maryland, but all the border slave States would readily join in such a movement; and I can see nothing in it to forbid the hope that New Jersey and even Pennsylvania might give their countenance and cooperation. In the event of the cooperation of either or both of these States, I would suggest that some such eminent citizen as Commodore Stockton should be called to the command in chief of the allied army of occupation. This would take from the movement both the appearance and reality of being section.

As the object is peace, unless some more effective means could be devised, I should hope it would meet with a general concurrence. Even Mr. Lincoln, if he has any regard for his own peace or his country's welfare, should rejoice at such an interposition, as it would relieve him of the heaviest responsibility that ever rested on the head of man.

In conclusion, I will say, that, in my opinion, Virginia and Maryland (Virginia alone, if others will not cooperate), should at all hazards prevent the consummation of the revolution, by which they will be stripped of all their rights in the Government, and have war thrust directly upon them. The inauguration of a sectional President, elected by a sectional

majority, would be that consummation--and should be resisted by all the means that God and nature have put into our hands.

Very truly yours,

A. MOSELEY.¹⁷

Notwithstanding the efforts of many conservatives to check the growing radical sentiment in Virginia and in the lower South, their endeavors finally came to a head in the Secession Convention which convened in Richmond on February 13, 1861.¹⁸ Contrary to the outcome of the convention, it opened with a considerable play of strength on the part of the conservative element. While it is difficult to classify the membership of the convention according to unionist or secessionist sentiment, the members might be grouped into three principal, and overlapping, segments: the secessionists, moderates, and the Unionists. The first of these segments was composed mainly of previous Breckenridge Democrats, and because the group comprised only about one-fourth of the delegate strength, its leaders had to follow a course of agitation to achieve its final goal. The moderates were chiefly State Rights' Whigs and supporters of Douglas and a few followers of Breckenridge. Never a united group, the moderates nevertheless favored using all means of concession before resorting to secession.

¹⁷Ibid., January 5, 1862.

¹⁸Shanks, op. cit., p. 158.

Cooperating with the moderates at the outset of the convention were the Unionists whose ranks were composed of old National Whigs and a few followers of Douglas. While denying the right of secession, this group did oppose the enforcement of Federal laws in a seceded state.¹⁹

The opening period of the conference, until March 9 when the report of the Federal Relations Committee was heard, was marked by relative inactivity and delay. It was during this span that the ill-fated Peace Conference met in Washington. Its failure, largely a result of the feeling of many Republicans that there was nothing to lose, greatly strengthened the cause of the Secessionist element not only in Virginia, but in the other Southern states that had not already seceded.²⁰ Lincoln's inauguration caused still other moderates to waiver.²¹ Conservatives still preferred to delay the work of the convention, despite the agitation of the radical element of the convention.

The conservatives were still well in control of the Virginia Session Convention following the report of the Peace Conference and the inauguration of Lincoln. Then, on March 9, the Federal Relations Committee presented its preliminary report, followed ten days later by a report de-

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 159-160.

²⁰Ibid., p. 172.

²¹Ibid., p. 174.

signed as a thirteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States, recommending a series of guarantees to the integrity of the states. From March 9 on the conservatives abandoned their previous tactic of delay, and instead pushed forward in all manners possible. The report did not specifically recognize the right of secession, but was more forthright in its opposition to the use of force by the Federal government against a state.²² To put its program through the convention, the conservative element urged Seward, who was regarded as the real leader of the newly elected Republican administration, to withhold all forms of "coercion."²³ The secessionists, on the other hand, changed their tactics. To convert the populace to their side, they began delaying the proceedings by such means as presenting resolutions showing the moderates how secession sentiment was rapidly growing.²⁴

Aiding the secessionists at the Convention "in their efforts at agitation were the aggressive and well-edited Richmond newspapers."²⁵ The Dispatch, the Enquirer, and the Examiner, all continued their secessionist commotion. Even the Whig had become lukewarm for the Union cause since the inauguration of Lincoln. Combined with the growing radical

²²Ibid., pp. 180-181.

²³Ibid., p. 181.

²⁴Ibid., p. 183.

²⁵Ibid., p. 183.

sentiment throughout the Virginia countryside, the large circulation of the secessionist journals had great influence on the final outcome of the Convention. The conservative newspapers could do little to counteract the growing lawlessness and "the little knot of persons about the court houses and crossroads of some of the counties [who] commit a grievous mistake in imagining. . .that because they are in favor of immediate secession and revolution, therefore the whole people of the State are equally as run mad as themselves. . ."26

The cause of the conservatives continued to weaken. On April 15 Lincoln called for the raising of 75,000 troops and the repossessing of forts.²⁷ This, combined with the firing on Fort Sumpter, thoroughly dismayed the conservatives, despite their hope that the North would not back Lincoln. Both moderates and secessionists outside the Convention considered Lincoln's Proclamation cause for immediate independent state action. Even the Whig conceded that the proclamation meant war.²⁸

The excitement caused many conservative convention delegates to switch to the secessionist cause, and many expected an ordinance of secession to be presented on April 15, but the secessionists were not ready to take that drastic step without almost unanimous support. The next morning the Convention went into secret session with almost unanimous approval. An ordinance "to repeal the ratification of the Constitution

²⁶Richmond Whig, March 15, 1861.

²⁷Malone and Rauch, op. cit., p. 697.

²⁸Richmond Whig, April 17, 1861.

of the United States of America, by the State of Virginia and to resume all the rights and powers under said Constitution" was introduced, but the Convention was adjourned before acting upon the ordinance, the secessionists still waited for a more favorable majority to support disunion.²⁹

Earlier, in the latter part of March, a call had been sent out to selected men, mainly in Tidewater and Piedmont, to meet in Richmond on April 16 for the purpose "of consulting 'with the friends of Southern rights as to the course which Virginia should pursue in the present emergency.'"³⁰ Henry A. Wise, the originator of the idea, held that the main purpose for calling the meeting was to organize a "resistance party" for the spring elections. The call was sent out, however, not only by Wise, a secessionist member of the Secession Convention, but by three other radical members of that body, and by two members of the House of Delegates, and three other prominent Democrats, all of them secessionists.³¹

The delegates to the "spontaneous" "Southern Rights Convention" included some of the most influential men in Virginia. In addition to H. A. Wise were P. H. Aylett, G. W. Randolph, J. A. Seddon, Willoughby

²⁹Shanks, op. cit., p. 201.

³⁰Charlottesville Review, April 5, 1861, as quoted in Shanks, op. cit., p. 203.

³¹Shanks, op. cit., p. 202.

Newton, G. W. Bagby, Judge Robertson and O. Jennings Wise. Many members were delegates to the regular Secession Convention and frequently went from one meeting to another. Among the ninety-one delegates from Richmond that were asked to attend the meeting was Alexander Moseley.³²

The Southern Rights Convention met behind closed doors on April 16 and immediately a call went up to overthrow the regular convention. Some of the more conservative members persuaded the group to allow the other group a little more time, reports coming from the Secession Convention showing that the conservatives in that body were weakening.³³ On the second day of the Southern-Rights Convention, reports were constantly received of the proceedings of the supposedly secret Secession Convention. Members who were attending both meetings carried to the Southern Rights meeting the news of the particularly vehement speech of Henry A. Wise. In his denunciary and violent speech, Wise is reputed to have told the regular convention that Harper's Ferry and its armory were being taken over by Virginia soldiers, and in Norfolk the Federal Navy yard and property were seized by state troops, he having taken the responsibility because the Governor was unwilling to react to the inevitableness of war. Wise's impassioned speech, combined with the pressure and the excitement of the Southern Rights Convention, are credited with the final passage, on

³²Richmond Dispatch, April 16, 1861.

³³Shanks, op. cit., p. 202.

April 17, of the ordinance of secession by the regular convention.³⁴ The Southern Rights Convention, attended by Alexander Moseley, while it did not have to resort to conclusive measures, did have great influence on Virginia's final decision to sever her ties with the Union of which her membership had for so long been a cornerstone.

The ordinance of secession provided for ratification at the election of May 23, but for all practical purposes Virginia was out of the Union after April 17, Virginia having cast her lot with the already seceded states of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. Within a few weeks Arkansas, North Carolina and Texas followed Virginia's lead, and soon afterward the Confederate Congress voted to move the seat of government from Montgomery to Richmond.

Earlier, on March 29, Robert Ridgeway, who had so ably and admirably edited the Richmond Whig, resigned³⁵ because, it was later said "he was unable to agree with the proprietors" of the newspaper on the subject of secession.³⁶ The proprietor of the Whig, Colonel Thomas M. Bondurant, who, it was later written, belonged to a "class of public men usually denominated conservative and national,"³⁷ and after Lincoln's triumph was

³⁴Ibid., pp. 203-204.

³⁵Ibid., p. 180.

³⁶"A Sketch of the Whig," in the Richmond Whig, March 17, 1869.

³⁷Richmond Whig, May 10, 1862.

"one of the first and most decided of his party to declare that they [Southern rights] should be defended out of the Union,"³⁸ had brought on a demand to end the unique pro-Union position of the Whig after Lincoln's inauguration. A few weeks later, on May 9, it was written that

the Examiner still fires shot and shell at Governor Letcher and the dominant majority in the Convention. . . .
The Enquirer is moderate and kind to Gov. Letcher. . . .
The Whig now goes into the secession movement with all its might. Mr. Mosely [sic] has resumed the helm; and he was, I believe, a secessionist many years ago. The Dispatch, not long since neutral and conservative, throws all its powers, with its large circulation, into the course. So we have perfect unanimity in the press.³⁹

Thus, Alexander Moseley was once again called in a time of crisis, to take charge of the Richmond Whig. This time his position was unique. Now that Virginia was out of the Union, the Richmond newspapers took on a new status. At the capitol of the Confederacy, the Richmond newspapers would be eagerly read, by citizens in all of the Confederate States, and the contents of the Richmond journals would be minutely examined by the Northern States and foreign countries as a barometer of happenings to the new experiment in government. The Whig, "ranked with the Enquirer and the Examiner as one of the great newspapers of the South,"⁴⁰ would certainly be read with care.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Joseph B. Jones, A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, Vol. I, p. 33.

⁴⁰Harrison A. Trexler, "The Davis Administration and the Richmond Press, 1861-1865," The Journal of Southern History, Vol. XVI (Feb.-Nov., 1950), p. 52.

Moseley was a logical choice to be editor of a secessionist newspaper. He later wrote, referring to himself, that

we were secessionists for long years from the deep conviction that Yankeeisms were gradually undermining the admirable Republican institutions which we inherited from our English ancestors, and would sooner or later sweep them from existence. The Constitution [of Virginia] of 1851, by introducing universal suffrage and the election of all officers directly by the people and for short terms, almost realized our worst fears. We were spared only one evil--the Yankee system of free schools, by which all individuality is destroyed and men are made as exactly alike as a gross of wooden nutmegs. . .⁴¹

To Moseley, the new Confederate government was a chance to correct what he considered the weaknesses of the United States Constitution. While avowing confidence in President Davis, Moseley confessed, in September, 1861, "some indications. . .we do not like. . .we have been taught to believe that a loose League or Confederacy of free, sovereign and independent commonwealths constituted the best form of government, for the happiness and freedom of man, which human ingenuity has devised. The old Articles of Confederation, which bore us triumphantly through the Revolution, is our beau ideal of a perfect government."⁴² The editor further complained that the Confederate system was drawing near the old government, and dis-

⁴¹Richmond Whig, January 27, 1863.

⁴²Ibid., September 6, 1861.

liked the "disposition to concentrate in the Confederate Head functions that properly belong to the State authorities."⁴³

In fact, the Confederate Constitution, adopted on March 11, several weeks before Virginia's secession, and never submitted to popular ratification, was essentially like the Constitution of 1787, but "slanted in a state-rights direction."⁴⁴ Moseley continued to object to the Confederate Constitution, contending that it was adopted with great haste and little deliberation by only seven states.

"A great mistake was committed by all in not prolonging the Provisional Government during the war. . .It is not yet too late to repair the mischief. . .but we detest with all our heart, the system which exists, and which is teeming with corruption and despotism. . .Let us, while we may, perfect our scheme by the establishment of just and equal laws, and such a distribution of power that no one man can upset our liberties."⁴⁵

The Whig, "neutral at first. . .became frankly critical of all elements of Confederate government."⁴⁶ by the early part of 1862. The "perfect unanimity" of the Richmond press, referred to by the chronicler J. B. Jones,⁴⁷ was gone, and the Whig had returned to its previous label

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Malone and Rauch, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 691-692.

⁴⁵Richmond Whig, January 3, 1862.

⁴⁶Trexler, op. cit., p. 53.

⁴⁷Jones, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 33.

as an "opposition" newspaper.

The campaign of invective editorial writing against the Davis administration really got underway in March, 1862, when Moseley wrote that the "knowledge of a disease is necessary to a cure--our President has lost the confidence of the country. . . We have not indulged in strictures on the members of the Cabinet. . . The impression has gone abroad that they have little or no discretion in the performance of their functions; that they are merely head clerks, and that the President undertakes to do everything himself. . ."48

Moseley's criticism of the administration "caused Provost Marshal John H. Winder to threaten to suppress the paper 'if it does not abandon its vicious habit of uttering unpalatable truths'"49 The Whig countered by stating that had as the suppressions of Lincoln were, those of Davis were not far behind.⁵⁰

Censure of the government reached its high point in 1863, however. In February of that year, the new Conscription Law of the Confederacy was attacked. "If it be desired," stated the editor of Whig, "to introduce such a system in the Southern States. . .the transfer of the whole military from the States to the central head, will be the best means. . .But

⁴⁸Richmond Whig, March 18, 1861.

⁴⁹Trexler, op. cit., p. 53.

⁵⁰Richmond Whig, March 25, 1862.

we utterly repudiate that sort of construction, which refines away the Rights of the Sovereign States to an intangible and imperceptible myth."⁵¹ President Davis in March was criticized for asking Congress to suspend habeas corpus, "the great bulwark of freedom," in the Confederacy.⁵² The Enquirer, generally pro-administration in policy, felt that suspension of habeas corpus was necessary, but the Whig continued to maintain that impressment was not authorized by law.⁵³ Initially, the Whig opposed direct taxation by the Confederate government,⁵⁴ but the journal later amended its position by urging the people to accept the Tax Bill despite its faults and inequities.

While Moseley, in his editorials, rarely assailed the military situation of the South, he finally could contain himself no longer. "It was not until the fall of Fort Donelson," he wrote in July, 1863, that the President deemed it necessary to raise an army of any magnitude to meet the gathering hordes of Yankee Vandals who were pressing on all sides."⁵⁵ The editorial further criticized the Confederacy's failure to get abundant food from some areas to places where it was needed, and censured the

⁵¹Ibid., February 5, 1863.

⁵²Ibid., March 10, 1863.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid., March 20, 1863.

⁵⁵Ibid., July 24, 1863.

failure of the army to build a bridge over the Pearl River to save the valuable rolling stock.⁵⁶

Disapprobation continued to flow forth from the pages of the Whig. Rather than humiliate the Confederacy, Moseley felt at one point, by asking recognition by England, he urged Davis to recall Mason.⁵⁷ A few days later Davis was reproved for his selection of the Southwest Command, which showed "favoritism and the insane idea that anybody would do for the Southwest."⁵⁸ Governmental criticism reached its high point in September 5 when a Whig editorial called for the remodeling of the Administration, "the respectable gentlemen who compose it being of too light metal and too small calibre for the heavy work they have in hand."⁵⁹

Just when Moseley terminated his wartime association with the Whig is undetermined. Certainly it was before November 14, 1863, for at that time the chronicler of Confederate events, J. B. Jones, referred to Moseley as the "former editor" of the Whig.⁶⁰ Moseley perhaps was writing his own Swan Song in August when, in an editorial entitled "Government Organs,"

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., August 4, 1863.

⁵⁸Ibid., August 12, 1863.

⁵⁹Ibid., September 5, 1863.

⁶⁰Jones, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 9.

he wrote that it was "indeed, a willful prostitution of the functions of a newspaper to descend to the justification of every act of a government."⁶¹ He continued by expressing the opinion that

it is a sorry commentary on the independence of the press, and sadder still on the purity of the government. . .the true mission of the Press, as we conceive, is to assail error and sustain right wherever seen. . .towards those in power, the bearing of an honest journal will always be that of independence, sustaining measures that make for the public good, opposing those that tend to mischief, and applauding or denouncing motives as they may seem praiseworthy or reprehensible. . .Long distant be the day when the Press of the Confederate States shall be anything but independent and honest.⁶²

The war years came to be to Alexander Moseley, as to most citizens of the Confederacy, a particularly disappointing era. Not only were Moseley's visions of an ideal government dashed, but personal tragedy also struck.

Although unconnected with the war, the fall from his horse and subsequent death of Colonel Thomas Moseley Bondurant, Alexander Moseley's cousin, mentor, and business and political associate for many years, must have come as a great shock to Moseley. The May 10, 1862, issue of the Whig its pages bordered in black, carried a long editorial on Bondur-

⁶¹Richmond Whig, August 29, 1863.

⁶²Ibid.

ant's death. Bondurant, who had amassed a fortune from tobacco growing, was a power in Piedmont Whig politics for many years, having started and ended his public political career in the House of Delegates, and in the intervening years, from 1836 through 1848 had served in the Virginia Senate.⁶³ During much of the time of his public service and at the time of his death, Col. Bondurant was the proprietor of the Whig. Of his association with the Whig it was written "that it would be impossible for the relation between proprietor and conductor of a journal to be more generous, or upon more honorable facing, than that maintained by him towards the different gentlemen who have had the editorial conduct of the Whig during his ownership. That relation has been one of entire independence on the part of its editors--but rarely, and then in the most unobtrusive and modest way, trammelled even by counsel."⁶⁴

Being out of the editorial seat did not prevent Moseley from revealing his opinion. "Mr. A. Moseley, former editor of the Whig," noted J. B. Jones on November 14, 1863, "writes in response to a letter from the Secretary of War, that he deems our affairs on a rather critical condition."⁶⁵

⁶³ "Register of the General Assembly," Fourteenth Annual Report of the Library Board of the Virginia State Librarian, 1916-1917 (Richmond: David Bottom, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1917), p. 349.

⁶⁴ Richmond Whig, May 10, 1862.

⁶⁵ Jones, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 97.

He is perfectly willing to resume his labor, but can see no good to be effected by him. He thinks, however, that the best solution for the financial question would be to cancel the indebtedness of the government to all except foreigners and call it (\$800,000,000) a contribution to the wars--and the sacrifices would be pretty equally distributed. He suggests the formation of an army, quietly, this winter, to invade Pennsylvania next Spring, leaving Lee still with his army on this side of the Potomac. Nevertheless, he advises no time should be lost securing foreign aid, while we are still able to offer some equivalents, and before the enemy gets us more in his power. Rather submit to terms with France and England, or with either, than submission to the United States. Such are the opinions of a sagacious and experienced editor.⁶⁶

⁶⁶Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

THE POST CIVIL WAR YEARS

Immediately following the evacuation of Richmond on April 3, 1865, the fortunes of the Whig fared comparatively well, even though, because of war conditions, publication had ceased on March 31. Despite the general destruction of Richmond, the Whig was fortunate enough to survive the conflagration which destroyed the plants of its principal rivals, the Examiner, the Dispatch, and the Enquirer. The Whig, therefore was the first newspaper to resume publication, having obtained the consent of the military authorities. "The Editor," the first postwar edition of April 4 informed its readers, "and all who heretofore controlled its columns, have taken their departure. The proprietor. . .¹ has had a conference with General Shepley, the Military Governor. . .the Whig will therefore be issued hereafter as a Union paper." Within a few months, however, the Dispatch, the Examiner and the Enquirer, had all resumed publication.² Just as in previous years, the Enquirer, and the Whig again dictated public opinion, usually in opposition to each other. "Far behind, the Dispatch gathered news and talked business."³ The Examiner survived only until July, 1867 when it combined with the Enquirer.⁴

¹William Ira Smith, from April 4-June 22, 1865. Cappon, op. cit., 1821-1933, p. 192.

²Cappon, op. cit., pp. 169-174.

³Charles C. Pearson, The Readjuster Movement in Virginia (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1917), p. 15.

⁴Cappon, op. cit., p. 174.

In previous years the Whig had proved a great source of income to its proprietors. As late as April 22, 1863, Wyatt Moseley Elliott informed his cousin, Alexander Bondurant, now a proprietor through the terms of the will of his father, that he found "the surplus of funds on hand on account of the Whig sufficient. . .to justify a distribution of twenty thousand dollars among the partners. . .your proportion is twenty five hundred dollars. . ." ⁵ Even though the Whig had the initial advantage of early resumption of publication, financial matters soon came to a head, and Alexander Moseley became quite concerned. It is difficult to ascertain Alexander Moseley's exact relationship with the Whig in the immediate post-war years; surviving letters indicate he was still living at "Fish Pond." Even if he was not actively associated with the journal, he was concerned over its financial condition, for on February 18, 1867 he inquired of his cousin Alexander Bondurant, "What have you done with the Whig? George [Bondurant] says the Enquirer was anxious to amalgamate. Better that than a dead stop--as you might thereby collect some of the debt." ⁶

Financial matters continued to worsen. By December 19, 1867, J. C. Shields, ⁷ acting as editor, found it necessary to ask Alexander Bondurant to send him a "style of notice suspending publication if necessary." ⁸

⁵Letter from Wyatt Moseley Elliott to Alexander J. Bondurant, April 22, 1863. All letters referred to in this chapter, unless otherwise designated, are in the possession of the author.

⁶Alexander Moseley to Alexander J. Bondurant, Feb. 18, 1867.

⁷Formerly associated with the Lynchburg Virginian, Cappon, op.cit., p. 123.

⁸Letter from J. C. Shields to Alexander J. Bondurant, Dec. 19, 1867.

Publication continued, but on January 29, 1868, Moseley received a letter from Shields telling him that "tomorrow is not to be thought of--there is no such thing. As matters now stand it is best to stop. The future is darker than ever. . . We are now urging in dues for subscription and spending it in place of funds that formerly came from advertising which is now but very little. . ."9 Moseley clearly saw that sale of the newspaper was the solution to the financial dilemma of the Whig. On April 24, 1868, he suggested to Bondurant that he might "do something with the White Republicans. . . Scofield's¹⁰ [sic] declaring against the constitution give me better hopes of our future. He and his set will want an organ."¹¹

By April the situation was desperate. Apparently the Enquirer made an offer which was too little¹² and Shields even approached Edgar "Yankee" Allan, a prominent Republican, who had indicated a desire for an organ.¹³ Another man interested in acquiring the Whig was General William Mahone.

⁹Ibid., January 29, 1868.

¹⁰Virginia Writers' Project, Virginia, A Guide to the Old Dominion (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940). General John M. Schofield was Military Commandant of Virginia until June 1, 1868. During his term of duty, the Underwood Constitution was adopted, but the General refused to authorize the funds necessary for the constitution's implementation since he was opposed to its provisions disenfranchising many military officers and government officials and the proposal that holding of public office be withheld to those who had voluntarily aided the South during the war.

¹¹Letter from Alexander Moseley to Alexander J. Bondurant, April 24, 1868.

¹²Alexander Moseley to A. Bondurant, April 19, 1868.

¹³Ibid., May 27, 1868.

Mahone, the Hero of the Battle of the Crater at Petersburg in 1864, was devoting his postwar years to consolidation of the Virginia railroads. While president of the Southside Railroad, he fought heartily for consolidation, discussion of which centered largely around his person. Mahone's perserverance was not without success, and on April 28, 1867, the Southside Consolidation Act was passed by the General Assembly.¹⁴ By 1868, Mahone had extended his interests to include the Republican party. For some time he had been in the confidence of both the Federal authorities and the conservative Republicans.¹⁵ Mahone's first brush with politics came with the appointment of General Henry H. Wells as Governor of Virginia. Wells, appointed on April 4, 1868, by General Schofield, the military commandant, was further overwhelmingly nominated for governor on May 6 at the Republican State Convention in Richmond. The Conservative Convention met the next day and nominated Colonel Robert Withers for governor. The appointment of Wells as governor was condoned by Mahone since he understood that Wells sympathized with his policy of railroad consolidation. Withers, on the other hand, Mahone felt was opposed to consolidation. Consolidation, therefore, became the question which the General felt should be the main issue of the campaign.¹⁶ Needing a political organ, Mahone approached the Whig.

¹⁴Nelson M. Blake, William Mahone of Virginia, Soldier and Political Insurgent (Richmond, Virginia: Garrett & Massie, 1935), pp. 70-86.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 99-100.

On May 22, 1868, Moseley informed Bondurant that "Imboden¹⁷ and General Mahone have got up a scheme for making a joint stock company of \$15,000 for purchase of the Whig. They propose to give proprietors \$5,000: \$2500 cash and \$2500 in stock. I thought this seemed to [sic] little; but after considering the chances of carrying on the paper on our own hook and regarding them very bad, I concluded it best to take the terms; they ask thirty days to raise the money, but think it can be done in a week."¹⁸ The succeeding days were touch and go for the newspaper. Moseley, who by now was apparently actively engaged in the business of the Whig, informed Bondurant on May 20 that it would require at least one thousand dollars to meet debts if the paper could be kept alive until July the first. After several meetings to form the new company failed to materialize, Bondurant was informed by Moseley on June 12 that Imboden had gone "to Petersburg to confer with the parties there. . ."¹⁹ He thinks the scheme will succeed ---but I doubt it."²⁰ Moseley still felt discouraged about chances of success for the company until June 22 when he wrote Bondurant that:

¹⁷J. D. Imboden, a friend of Consolidation; see Blake, op. cit., p. 81.

¹⁸Letter from Alexander Moseley to Alexander J. Bondurant, May 28, 1868.

¹⁹W. E. Cameron, soon to be closely associated with the Whig, and General Mahone were both living there, Blake, p. 118.

²⁰Letter from Alexander Moseley to Alexander J. Bondurant, June 12, 1868.

Imboden reported Saturday evening, that Lancaster considered the company as good as formed, and thought the affair could be concluded today. But Imboden has been engaged in court today and up to this hour (3 o'clock) I have not seen him. I proposed to them to give Proprietors \$4,000 in cash, instead of \$2,500 cash and \$2500 in stock and the proposition was favorably received. . .Some, I hear, have agreed to take stock on condition that I take charge-- which may put me in a tight place. . .²¹

The company was formed with Moseley once again at the helm. "The change seems to be favorably received," Moseley confided to Bondurant on July 19, "but I fear there is not money in the State to make it much of a success."²² The public was not notified of the change of proprietorship until August 14, when an announcement in the paper signed "Bondurant, Elliott and Shields," stated, "We have sold the Whig to Messrs. Alexander Moseley and John C. Shields." In a statement prepared in 1872 for Alexander Bondurant, a former proprietor of the Whig, it was stated that the paper "was sold to parties represented by Col. Shields," and the sale was only possible because Moseley agreed to take charge of the editorial department.²³ It would thus appear that Moseley was not at all an owner of the journal after the takeover by Mahone. For over two years, until December 31, 1870, Moseley continued to be editor of the Whig,²⁴ although

²¹Ibid., June 22, 1868.

²²Ibid., July 19, 1868.

²³Ibid., April 26, 1872.

²⁴Cappon, op. cit., p. 193.

his informal association extended long past that time.

In many respects, the postwar years were the most interesting and ironical years of Moseley's life and may well have been the most influential years of his long journalistic association. Indications are that he put himself completely at the disposal of General Mahone, a man at first glance unlikely for Moseley's loyalty. Mahone was autocratic and had complete self-confidence; his actions left him few friends.²⁵ On the other hand, Moseley probably admired Mahone's determination to bring about the recovery of Virginia, Moseley's great love, and Mahone's interest in public works, always one of Moseley's concerns. On the other hand, Mahone probably readily saw the great use that could be made of Moseley's wide personal connections throughout the state. Furthermore, Moseley had emerged from the war fairly untarnished. He had been too old to serve in the field, and had even resigned as editor of the Whig during the war, apparently at least partly out of vexation at official policy. Political expediency also made Moseley a useful man. There was no doubt as to his pre-war Whig party affiliation, and the membership of the Republican party, both North and South, was to a large extent previously Whig. Beyond the political realm, Moseley and Mahone became close personal friends, even though it is doubtful that they met before Mahone's assuming the control of the Whig.

²⁵Blake, op. cit., pp. 265-266.

Although observers at the time and writers since have noticed Mahone's influence over the Whig, there apparently was not at the time conclusive evidence of ownership of the journal by Mahone and his faction. It is possible that Mahone did not personally have a financial share, but is unlikely. C. C. Pearson notes that "Mahone appears to have negotiated for the purchase of the Whig in 1868 without success," but goes on to say that "from that year records of its business were regularly sent him."²⁶ In 1872, Moseley wrote a letter to the General, advising him that President Grant was seeking an organ in Virginia. "The wish is to buy the Whig. . . . In a mere business aspect, the opportunity is a good one to realize handsomely on the investment in the Whig."²⁷ This would seem to indicate that the General had an actual share in the paper.

At one point there seems to have been considerable agitation to abandon the Whig attachment. William E. Cameron, probably a shareholder in the Whig, wrote Mahone on November 13, 1869 that to "continue in a rut which is enduring, which has been faithfully tried, and which has led to nothing but loss, cannot be wise."²⁸ Furthermore, Cameron felt that he could not "conscientiously advise. . . any extension of expenditure to be

²⁶Pearson, op. cit., p. 29.

²⁷Mahone Collection Duke University Library, letter from Alexander Moseley to General William Mahone, April 15, 1872.

²⁸Mahone Collection. Letter from W. E. Cameron, Richmond, to William Mahone, November 13, 1869.

applied in the old Channels, and under the old ideas."²⁹ The Whig survived the threat, though, and continued for many years to be the Mahone organ as evidenced by the payment, through October 11, 1879 of a total of \$77,200 to the Whig by Mahone's A. M. & Co. Railroad.³⁰ The paper obviously was still having financial problems and Moseley reported to the General a talk that Shields had had with one "W" who thought that seventy-five or a hundred thousand dollars could be raised "to form a company and put the establishment on an impregnable basis and defy all competition."³¹

By the late 1870's, the long opposition of the Whig to policies approved by the leading classes, saw its transformation from the journal of the aristocracy to that of theoretically a democratic paper.

In the shaping of this attitude well-born men had played a leading part--Mosely [sic] and Meade as editors, Cameron, Ruffin, and Ruffner as contributors. Nonetheless the belief gained ground that for certain purposes at least the Whig was but the 'personal organ' of General Mahone; and as Mahone and democracy were unpopular in Richmond, it had ceased to be read in the best homes there.³²

In many respects Alexander Moseley's editorship of the postwar Whig must have been a purely perfunctory task, with editorial policy and opinion largely under the dominance of General Mahone. This is particularly true of the great "consolidation" issue which so filled the columns

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Pearson, op. cit., p. 29.

³¹Mahone Collection, Letter from Alexander Moseley to William Mahone, November 13, 1869.

³²Pearson, op. cit., p. 29.

of the paper. Writers such as Meade and Cameron and Bassett French were enlisted to write articles concerning railroad consolidation with the result that it would be difficult, since no bylines were used, to ascertain Moseley's own thoughts on the subject. He undoubtedly was not opposed to Mahone's policy; indeed, Moseley had long supported public works. Like many pre-war Virginians, however, he had probably not entirely supported all improvements; in his own case, ironically, he had favored the canal interest in opposition to the railroad faction. As early as November 19, 1868, upon the re-election of Mahone as president of the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, the Whig praised Mahone for his "Virginia System."³³ Later, after Virginia was restored to the union in 1870, the Whig carried article after article in favor of consolidation which had again become the dominant question.

Political matters, aside from the railroad controversy, greatly interested Alexander Moseley and his observations and contacts in this realm were probably of even greater use to General Mahone. Virginia politics following the Civil War took a curious course. The first session of the legislature, in 1865, was largely Old Line Whig in representation,³⁴ and in its conservative fashion, agreed to recognize the vast debt of the commonwealth as

³³Richmond Whig, November 19, 1868.

³⁴Squires, op. cit., p. 491.

absolutely binding.³⁵ This session also partially allowed for the consolidation of railroads.³⁶ By 1867, Radical influence had completely replaced the conservative legislature of 1865. Under the Act of March 2, 1867, Virginia became "Military District No. 1," under command of Lt. General John M. Schofield.³⁷ By the terms of the congressional Act a constitutional convention was convened in Richmond on December 3, 1867. The convention's 105 members, two-thirds of them Radicals, wrote a constitution which contained many worthwhile features, such as a uniform system of free schools, but two salient points proved the undoing of the Radicals.³⁸ One, the clause disenfranchising many ex-Confederates, and the other, prohibiting from public office those who had voluntarily aided the South during the Civil War, alarmed not only the conservative element of the state, but General Schofield himself, who refused to appropriate the funds necessary to have the constitution ratified.³⁹

During this period, in an attempt to avoid the extremes of black rule or of military rule, the Whig, which had already indicated its desire

³⁵Pearson, op. cit., p. 8.

³⁶Ibid., p. 16.

³⁷Virginia, A Guide to the Old Dominion, op. cit., p. 70.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

to cooperate with the Republicans, urged the agreement between moderate leaders in both parties. The Whig argued for cooperation with the Republicans on the ground that the party had the power to give Virginia self-government and admit the state into the Union, and "as we have said, it is under a pledge to do so."⁴⁰ The old anti-Democratic attitude of the Whig also expressed itself: "The Democratic party would. . .do the same, if it had the power, but it has not."⁴¹ Coalition, between whites and blacks was the result of the efforts of the Whig, and the "Cooperation Convention" at Charlottesville was followed by others throughout the state.⁴² But its good effects came to an end in August at the Republican convention in Richmond where the negroes rejected white cooperation as too conservative.⁴³ Finally, in October 1867, the election for the delegates to the constitutional convention was held. Victory lay with the Radical element, partly as the result of conservative apathy, evidenced by the failure of 44,000 white men to vote.

Virginia thus continued to live under military rule for another year. In the meantime, on April 4, 1867, General Schofield replaced Governor Pierpont, the "loyal" governor of Virginia, with General Henry H. Wells

⁴⁰Richmond Whig, April 22, 1867.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Hamilton J. Eckenrode, The Political History of Virginia During the Reconstruction (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1904), p. 75.

⁴³Ibid., p. 79.

of Michigan. Pierpont had been conservative and unidentified with any political party, whereas Wells clearly had the support of the Washington Republican faction, a decided victory for the carpetbaggers.⁴⁴

With Wells, Virginia's political life reached a new crisis. Soon after Pierpont's removal from office, General Schofield himself was removed from command of the district on June 1. Schofield, despite the nature of his tasks, had proven himself to be fair-minded to the people of Virginia and intervened in civil affairs as little as possible.⁴⁵ His successor, General Stoneman, became more aggressive, partly as a result of more stringent orders from Congress.⁴⁶ Stoneman, in turn, was replaced on March 5, 1869 by General Canby who remained as commander until the end of reconstruction in Virginia.⁴⁷

Following the constitutional convention, the two rival parties--Conservatives and Republicans--began preparing for the election. The Republicans, in convention, nominated Governor Wells, supported by the military, to succeed himself, while Colonel R. E. Withers was nominated for governor by the conservatives. For the white people of the state matters were worse than ever; although negro suffrage was an inevitable fact, it was opposed obstinately. Only the Whig urged its acceptance.⁴⁸ The public

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 105.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 106.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 109.

remained apathetic, however, and practically no protest was heard from Virginia when the United States House of Representatives, on December 8, 1868, passed a bill which provided for an election on the Underwood Constitution on the fourth Thursday, in May, 1869.⁴⁹

Before the objectionable act could reach the Senate, Congress adjourned for the Christmas recess. At this moment of crisis, Alexander H. Stuart came to the front. Stuart, an Old Line Whig who enjoyed a high reputation both nationally and in Virginia, determined to appeal to the people through the Richmond press. After preparing his letter, he entrusted it to his old friend and neighbor, General John Echols, who was going to Richmond.

When he reached Richmond, General Echols attempts to have Stuart's letter published were met with disappointment. The editor of the Dispatch objected to the letter on the grounds that the public was not ready to accept its proposal that Virginians accept Negro suffrage, and furthermore questioned why Stuart had failed to sign the letter. No commitment was made by the editor of the Dispatch. The editor of the Whig, Alexander Moseley, also made no definite promise, he, too, objecting to the letter for the same reasons as the Dispatch. The Enquirer declined to publish Stuart proposals on any conditions.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Squires, op. cit., p. 501.

⁵⁰Alexander F. Robertson, Alexander Hugh Holmes Stuart, A Biography (Richmond: William Byrd Press, 1925), pp. 268-9.

In the meantime, however, General Echols had met another Old Line Whig, Colonel W. T. Sutherlin of Danville. The General recounted the disappointments of the day to Colonel Sutherlin, who, in the words of Stuart, 'readily volunteered to go with him [General Echols] to see Mr. Alexander Mosely [sic], then editor of the Whig, at his private residence and try to overcome his objections to publishing the communication. They accordingly went to Mr. Moseley's, and had an interview with him, in which, after some discussion, it was finally agreed that Mr. Moseley would publish it in the Whig on three conditions.'⁵¹

The conditions that Moseley demanded were that, first of all, Mr. Stuart should be referred to as the author; that the editor should not be committed to the proposals of the letter; and, last of all, the Dispatch should agree to publish the communication simultaneously and under the same conditions.⁵² The editor of the Dispatch consented to the terms and the letter appeared in both journals on Christmas Day, 1868.

Stuart's proposals created a sensation. Basically he urged Virginians to cease resisting Negro suffrage. Through that action, he felt, Virginia might possibly succeed in having the disenfranchising article of the new constitution removed. Acceptance of negro suffrage would allow the

⁵¹Ibid., p. 424.

⁵²Ibid., p. 269.

"intelligence and wealth of the South. . .to govern as before."⁵³ The entire conservative press of Virginia opposed the idea of negro suffrage, but the Whig supported the proposal. Having paved the way for discussion, Stuart, together with other conservative leaders, called for a conference of other important Virginia leaders to meet in Richmond. At this meeting, on December 31, 1868, a committee was appointed to go to Washington to make known to Congress the willingness of the members of the conference to accept negro suffrage, and to seek to obtain the best possible terms in regard to a constitution.⁵⁴ The members selected to go to Washington became known as "The Nine," and included Stuart, as chairman, John L. Mayre, Jr. of Fredricksburg, James T. Johnston of Bedford, W. T. Sutherlin of Danville, Wyndham Robertson of Washington county, William L. Owen of Halifax, John B. Baldwin of Augusta, James Neeson of Richmond, and J. F. Slaughter of Lynchburg.⁵⁵ The committee was well received in Washington, and after several weeks of agitating for amendment of the Underwood Constitution, returned home, no action having been taken by Congress, only to find the political situation in Virginia changed. The Republican party had become greatly divided, primarily as a result of the conduct and personality of its head, Governor Wells. He had made it clearly known that he was willing to allow

⁵³Eckenrode, op. cit., p. 110.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 111.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 111.

the state to come under negro domination and had thereby brought on the alienation of the conservative element of the party. Furthermore, Wells had incurred the wrath of General Mahone who exerted considerable influence.⁵⁶ Wells had cooperated with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in its attempt to buy the State interest in Mahone's Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, which failed.⁵⁷

Opposition to Wells grew to such an extent that a call was made to hold another convention to set aside the nominations made earlier in 1868. Meanwhile, on February 17, 1869, Alexander Moseley noted that:

The rub with us just now is the Governor. Wells is to be removed, and a man to be appointed, who will be the Government candidate for election. We fear a man who will side with the carpet-baggers or like Wickham, can't get white votes. Walker of Norfolk is our best man--and we are striving to get him the appointment--but the result is very doubtful. The military here favor Wickham--and they may influence Grant.⁵⁸

Although Wells was removed from office on March 27, 1869, by General Stoneman, he was reinstated, April 2, by Stoneman's successor, General A. S. Webb.⁵⁹ The move failed, with the result that General Mahone, who previously had been unaffiliated with the Republican party, and others determined to divide the party by choosing for Governor Gilbert C. Walker, a Norfolk banker and associate of Mahone.⁶⁰

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 116.

⁵⁷Blake, op. cit., p. 101.

⁵⁸Letter from Alexander Moseley to Alexander J. Bondurant, February 17, 1869.

⁵⁹Squires, op. cit., p. 504.

⁶⁰Blake, op. cit., p. 105.

It was evident that as long as there were three candidates in the field, there would be little chance of success for the conservative Republicans of Walker. Evidently General Mahone exerted considerable influence in persuading the Conservatives to convene in Richmond and to withdraw their candidates, including Colonel Withers. After the candidates formally presented their resignations, a long discussion followed. The majority of the Conservatives, led by such men as John B. Baldwin, one of the "Nine," and R. T. Daniel, favored acceptance of the resignations and union with the Conservative Republicans. Although the opposition contained some strong men--the popular ex-Governor William Smith among them--the convention adopted the majority report of the committee on business, which was signed by Alexander Moseley along with Robert Ould, John B. Baldwin, John L. Edmunds, Fayette McMullen, L. B. Anderson, James C. Campbell, W. D. Haskins and W. T. Sutherlin. By the report, the resignations of the conservative candidates were accepted; no other candidates were nominated in their places; and no recommendations as to whom the Conservative voters should support were made.⁶¹ This accomplished, General Mahone was virtually placed in control of the combined forces which were working for the election of Walker.⁶²

⁶¹Eckenrode, op. cit., p. 123.

⁶²Blake, op. cit., p. 106.

At last, in April, 1869, the results of the efforts of the "Committee of Nine" and of other Republicans bore fruit. Alexander Moseley had earlier expressed the opinion that "nothing will be done for us before Grant comes in--and then, some who ought to know, are sanguine, that we shall get more than the 'nine' have asked for."⁶³ President Grant on April 7, 1869, sent to Congress his first message, in which he recommended that the Underwood Constitution should be submitted to a popular vote for ratification or rejection, and "that a separate vote should be taken upon the adoption or rejection of such sections of the constitution as might seem expedient."⁶⁴ After action by Congress, Grant proclaimed July 6, 1869 as the day for an election and ordered a separate vote on the disenfranchising and "test-oath" clauses.⁶⁵

The campaign that followed was a vigorous one. Walker was generally hailed by the white voters of the state, while Wells openly courted the negro vote. Moseley was highly optimistic. "I see nothing discouraging in politics," he reported. "We must succeed--and to that end, all means should be used."⁶⁶ With the election only a few weeks away, he stated that the

⁶³Letter from Alexander Moseley, Richmond to Alexander J. Bondurant, February 8, 1869.

⁶⁴Eckenrode, op. cit., p. 121.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Letter from Alexander Moseley to Alexander Bondurant, June 2, 1869.

Wells faction is all brag, unless they have some great scheme of fraud on hand. The surface indications are all highly favorable to us. The valley is in a blaze, and a fine spirit exists on this side of the mountain.

Our policy should be to keep the negroes at home, election day, cost what it may. Pay freely--better that than to lose all.⁶⁷

The election on July 6 proved to be a great Conservative victory. A majority of some 18,000 approved of Walker, and even larger majorities defeated the two detested articles. Furthermore, the constitution was adopted.⁶⁸ "It was well we made a clean sweep," Moseley stated. "A small majority would have been whittled away. We are threatened with some trouble with the test-oath--but I hope it will amount to nothing."⁶⁹

Canby continued to be a trial to the people of Virginia. On August 30, 1869, Alexander Moseley wrote that:

A good deal of colloquing has been going on with Canby the past week. It was said, that if Danville Conv[ention] would disband, and enough Conservatives w[oul]d resign to make a quorum of ironclads, he would call them together to pass the 15th am[endment] and adjourn, and the rest might afterwards come in, without taking the oath. Some of our friends think by picking counties beyond the mountains, we might find ironclads there who would be Conservative, and still keep up our majority, and [I am] inclined to think we had better accept the proposition, if made. Otherwise, we shall be turned over to Congress, who will do nothing, and we shall not be admitted

⁶⁷Ibid., June, 1869.

⁶⁸Eckenrode, op. cit., p. 125.

⁶⁹Letter from Alexander Moseley to Alexander J. Bondurant, July 15, 1869.

till the next Pres[identia]l election. They are a set of infinite scoundrels, and will cheat us, if possible. I am becoming insufferably disgusted with the whole concern. But if we can beat them at their own game, I shall not hesitate to do it. No doubt Canby's calculation is that an iron-clad Legislature will necessarily be Radical; but we might possibly disappoint him, if we could get reliable men.⁷⁰

The legislature did convene, however, on October 5, and proceeded to ratify the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments. Wells resigned on September 21 in favor of Walker. "As to Mr. Moseley," Governor Walker's secretary, W. E. Cameron, wrote to General Mahone, "I will get the Governor to arrange an interview with him for Monday, and have a free talk with him"⁷¹ Cameron was at this time protesting continuing the Whig affiliation,⁷² but their differences were apparently somewhat resolved when, on December 10, Moseley reported to General Mahone that the "governor was here last week to see me and is hopeful of a company, which will put the engine in good working trim. There is a big fight ahead, and without money, we shall not come out as we should do. With it, we can defy the world."⁷³

On January 26, 1870 Virginia was readmitted to the Union. Reconstruction was over. Moseley could rest contented that he and his newspaper

⁷⁰Letter from Alexander Moseley to Alexander J. Bondurant, August 30, 1869.

⁷¹Mahone Collection, letter from W. E. Cameron to William Mahone, November 13, 1869.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Mahone Collection, letter from Alexander Moseley to William Mahone, December 10, 1869.

had contributed much to the early readmission of Virginia to her unique position among the other states.

With the restoration of Virginia to the Union, the railroad consolidation question was renewed, the Act of 1867 having been voided since its terms had failed to be met within the prescribed time. The legislative battle became one of the most fierce in Virginia history. Newspapers entered heartily into the contest, usually reflecting the opinion of interested individuals and corporations. Thinking that Mahone was partial to building up Norfolk, the feeling in Richmond was greatly opposed to consolidation, so that the Dispatch and the Enquirer, especially, were the most vehement opponents of the legislation. The Enquirer had been purchased by the Pennsylvania Central Railroad for the acknowledged purpose of advocating "Free Railroads." No newspaper in the state approached the support given consolidation by the Whig, whose editorial policy, particularly on this question, was largely controlled by Mahone.⁷⁴ The battle was won by Mahone on June 17, 1870, and the Whig expressed its jubilation over the success of the measure. "We congratulate the people of Virginia," it wrote, "on this triumph of Virginia interests gained under the masterly leadership of that consummate railroad chief, who in peace and war seems to be invincible."⁷⁵

⁷⁴Blake, op. cit., p. 112.

⁷⁵Richmond Whig, June 8, 1870.

Mahone was gratified over passage of the Act, believing himself to be the champion of Virginia's interests in her struggles against northern capitalists. He particularly feared the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad which already dominated the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, thereby dividing the state in half. In 1871, when legislation to merge the Orange and Alexandria Railroad and the Baltimore and Ohio was sought, Moseley cautioned Mahone "that the bill. . . should be killed. That whole scheme is bitterly hostile to Virginia, and if permitted to grow may work us irreparable mischief. It is the entering wedge to another division of the state. Let it die the death before it works us greater evil."⁷⁶ A similar threat to Mahone's scheme of consolidation was the Pennsylvania Central Railroad's purchase of the State of Virginia's stock in the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad.⁷⁷ The importance of the Pennsylvania Railroad threat was recognized as early as February 1, 1871 when Moseley wrote, after having visited General Mahone at Lynchburg, that the "railroad complications and the stupendous swindle. . . by the Pennsylvania Central occupied all our talk. I believe the result will be that I shall have to enlist for the campaign."⁷⁸ The sale of the State's interest in railroads was authorized in the Consolidation Act and proved to be the one great error of the Walker Administration. Not only did the sales permit Northern capital to make great financial headway into Virginia's in-

⁷⁶Letter from Alexander Moseley to Mahone, July 13, 1871.

⁷⁷Blake, op. cit., p. 120.

⁷⁸Letter from Alexander Moseley to Alexander J. Bondurant, February 1, 1871.

dustrial life, but eventually deprived Virginia of vast amounts of income. "We have a terrible fight on hand. The Pennsylvanians are bribing right and left--and there is no telling the result," Moseley wrote his cousin.⁷⁹ "I've been compelled," Moseley related, "to go into the Whig to save us from the Penn:Central. I think the article yesterday killed the concern."⁸⁰ Moseley remained sanguine over Mahone's chance of success in the matter. "I think without some very bad luck, Mahone will gain the Petersburg Road."⁸¹ Luck was against Mahone, for the Pennsylvania Central outbid the General for the State's shares, at great loss to the public treasury.⁸²

Alexander Moseley had long been involved in the inner political machinery of Virginia. The postwar years were no exception, and he probably readily affiliated with the Conservative party. His intimacy with General Mahone as well as with many of the pre-war politicians undoubtedly made him a useful member of that party. In the decisive Conservative Convention of 1869, in which Colonel Withers withdrew his candidacy in favor of the Republican candidate Walker, Moseley played a leading role as a member of the nine man committee of business.

⁷⁹Ibid., February 8, 1871.

⁸⁰Ibid., February 3, 1871.

⁸¹Ibid., March 31, 1871.

⁸²Blake, op. cit., p. 120.

The esteem in which General Mahone held Alexander Moseley is well illustrated in a letter written to the latter in 1871:

"I want your company, beside I wanted to talk with you about that 'Convention.' It strikes me that we have an opportunity to deal some severe blows to our enemies. If our friends of the Southside will take interest in this matter and act in concert, they may chafe the action of the Convention, so as to contribute much towards the selection of good men for the next General Assembly and they may seem secure likewise such control over the organization of the Conservative party especially in the formation of a Central Ex[ecutive] as to put the 'Whig' in the position of organ for that party--these things so accomplished and our ability to repel the future designs of all the Garretts. . .⁸³

On the other hand if our friends of the So[uth]side are not so active, we are liable to have the control and results of the 'Convention' fall under the influence of their combined forces--enemies to our State. . .

I have quietly and confidentially posted as many of our friends in the So[uth]side as I could reach and shall continue this work wherever an opportunity presents---"⁸⁴

By 1872 he was less enchanted with the Conservative party, which had gradually abandoned its semi-independent position and become a branch of the national Democratic party. Even though he supported Greeley for the Democratic presidential nomination that year, he felt that the "current is too strong for tricks" and that the Virginia Executive Committee was "a great pest-it gives Bourbonic twist to everything. I've a great mind to denounce

⁸³John W. Garrett was president of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. See Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁸⁴Mahone Collection, letter from William Mahone to Alexander Moseley, July 31, 1871.

them" Moseley wrote to General Mahone on July 4, 1872.⁸⁵ On the day of the Democratic Convention in Baltimore, July 6, he announced to the General that he had "been obliged to quit the Committee and take issue with it. The object is to deprive the Southside and Tidewater of all voice in the State Convention. The effect will be a fatal schism."⁸⁶

By 1874, Moseley wrote in confidence to his cousin Alexander Bondurant, that the Whig had "got so far from my platform, that I can do nothing with it. It is substantially sold out to the lawyers and the money-changers."⁸⁷ He was, of course, referring to the great debate of the state debt. Soon, however, Moseley himself was found in the middle of the issue.

The attempt to find a solution to the state's pre-war debt first was met in 1871 when the legislature determined to fund the whole debt of more than \$45,000,000, but tentatively assigned one-third to West Virginia.⁸⁸ Arguments began to arise that the changed conditions of the post-bellum period necessitated and warranted a change in the debt.

The proposed solution to the state debt problem brought to Alexander Moseley a certain amount of national recognition. Frederic Hudson, in his

⁸⁵Mahone Collection, letter from Alexander Moseley to William Mahone, July 4, 1872.

⁸⁶Ibid., July 6, 1872.

⁸⁷Letter from Alexander Moseley to Alexander Bondurant, March 19, 1874.

⁸⁸Virginia, The Old Dominion, p. 71.

book Journalism in the United States From 1690 to 1872, written in 1872, related the whole incident of a near duel between James C. Southall of the Enquirer and Moseley of the Whig, both newspapers, according to Hudson, "belligerent journals."⁸⁹

The last quarrel of these papers arose from a controversy on the Funding Bill before the Legislature. The Whig asserted that the Enquirer was the hired organ of the Pennsylvania Central Railroad. The latter retorted that the Whig was under the pay of the 'Virginia Railroad Ring.' It was expected that a duel would have been the result.⁹⁰

On March the sixth, the Enquirer published the following sentiments in its columns:

'The Enquirer of Saturday contained an article in reference to the Whig and its editor which, according to our understanding of the use of language, was, as it was intended to be, as insulting as genteel words could make it. To that article the editor of the Whig was replied by recrimination, and stating that the charges made against Mr. Moseley were true to the letter, and most of them can be substantiated by testimony. If he considered himself aggrieved he should have sought redress otherwise than through the columns of the Whig. Mr. Moseley doubtless knew what all know who have been at all conversant with my life-long opinions, that I would neither give nor accept a challenge to fight a duel, but he no doubt knew as certainly that I am always ready to resist in a proper manner any attack made upon my character or person, and knowing that, he has chosen to defend himself by cowardly recriminations against charges which he knew to be true and declined to resent.'⁹¹

⁸⁹Frederic Hudson, Journalism in the United States, 1690 to 1872 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1873), pp. 767-768.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

Both Southall and Moseley, according to Hudson, were arrested and held in bail.⁹² The outcome of the incident is unknown, however.

Encouraged by friends and moved by the debt problem, which he felt threatened the welfare of Virginia, General Mahone entered the race for governor in 1877. Opposition to Mahone was heavy, necessitating his withdrawal in favor of Colonel Frederick W. Holliday of Winchester. The Re-adjuster movement was thus born.⁹³

The whole debt question had been brought into the open by General Mahone, but it was James Barbour, as chairman of the Finance Committee of the House of Delegates, who introduced the remedial measure. The bill provided for protection of government expenses and schools, and for thirty cents of each tax dollar to be applied to the payment of the interest on the public debt.⁹⁴ Holliday promptly vetoed the Barbour Bill, declaring that it was not strictly fair to the bondholders, even though he had previously pledged himself to abide by the will of the people in the matter of the debt.⁹⁵

Mahone, feeling that the veto of the Barbour Bill brought the "sacred principles of a Republican form of government"⁹⁶ to stake, called

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Squires, op. cit., p. 527.

⁹⁴Blake, op. cit., p. 169.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 170.

⁹⁶Ibid.

for an independent organization to be formed. The organization he had in mind was not established until after the adjournment of the legislative. In Richmond, a series of secret conferences among leading readjusters resulted in the establishment of a committee composed of three legislators, H. H. Harrison, Lewis E. Harvie, and B.W. Lacy, and Alexander Moseley, W. H. Mann, and General Mahone.⁹⁷ The committee was appointed to inform the people what progress had been made by the Readjusters and what should be their course of action. The immediate purpose of the activities seemed, however, to be "the election of readjuster Congressmen in the fall by identifying the state issue with the national Greenback movement on the ground that both were against 'money rings' and their allies the courts."⁹⁸ The presence of Alexander Moseley on the committee is adequate proof that he was intimately involved in the inner circle of the Readjuster movement.

Previously, at the end of the year 1870, Moseley formally retired from his association with J. C. Shields as publisher of the Whig.⁹⁹ Col. Shields, who had probably been primarily managing the business affairs of the paper, wrote General Mahone that "not having any one to put forward [as editor] I will have to do the best I can. To break the force of the

⁹⁷Pearson, op. cit., p. 80.

⁹⁸Pearson, op. cit., p. 81.

⁹⁹Cappon, op. cit., p. 193.

injury which Mr. Moseley's withdrawal will produce I must buy articles of ability. . ."¹⁰⁰ Although Moseley continued, on an informal basis, to write for the paper, Shields continued as publisher until December, 1875 when Wyatt Moseley Elliott, who had previously been associated with the Whig, became publisher. This arrangement continued until January 1878 when a new stock company, known as the Richmond Whig Publishing Company was formed. Once again Moseley was actively engaged in the affairs of the newspaper, this time serving as a director, along with Willis J. Dance of Powhatan Courthouse and Stith Bolling of Petersburg, a close friend of Mahone and some years later a member of the Virginia Republican State Committee.¹⁰¹ Wyatt M. Elliott was designated president, assisted by Judge William Hodges Mann of Nottaway Courthouse as vice-president.¹⁰² Mann, a few months later was to serve with Moseley and Mahone on the six man Re-adjuster Committee.¹⁰³ All of these appointments were for the first year, and the capital stock was set at not less than twenty thousand nor not more than thirty thousand dollars. Each member of the Board of Directors was entitled "to receive free of charge one copy of the daily paper in consideration therefor, and in lieu of any other compensation."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰Mahone Collection, letter from J. C. Shields to William Mahone, December 29, 1870.

¹⁰¹Blake, op. cit., p. 242.

¹⁰²Pamphlet of Charter in possession of author.

¹⁰³Blake, op. cit., p. 170.

¹⁰⁴Pamphlet of Charter in possession of author.

The strict partisan nature of the paper was shown in one of the rules governing the Business Manager who was instructed to ensure that

in no case shall any such matter be inserted in the columns of the paper, at any price, where the treatment of the subject is antagonistic to the policy of the paper; and it shall be the particular duty of the Foreman of the composing-room to have always an eye to this intention, and to call the special attention of the regular Editor-in-Chief to any matter of this character, and to be sure to withhold its insertion until directly instructed by that officer to publish the same.¹⁰⁵

As a Readjuster organ in the 1880's, the Whig remained a potent journal long after the death of its illustrious editor, Alexander Moseley, in 1881. Although it had to a great extent ceased to be the aristocratic newspaper in Virginia, and indeed had become one of the most democratic of journals, the Whig also long outlived its most constant adversary, the Enquirer, which expired in 1877.¹⁰⁶ Seldom during its history did the Whig represent the views of those actually in power either within the state or in the national government. It was always an "opposition" newspaper, and since its demise, on December 27, 1888 when it transferred its goodwill to the Times,¹⁰⁷ Virginia has rarely had two newspapers representing consistently different viewpoints.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Cappon, op. cit., p. 172.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 193.

Alexander Moseley's associations with General Mahone were quite intimate and cordial until the very last. It would appear that the two men often travelled together. "I've been absent," Moseley wrote in 1871, "for ten days in New York--called there by Mahone, who has his great negotiation on hand."¹⁰⁸ Mahone was negotiating in New York at the time with John Collison, representative of English capitalists, for a consolidated loan of fifteen million dollars to finance the Atlantic, Mississippi and Ohio Railroad. The agreement was entered on September 29, 1871 and lasted until 1876. The withdrawal of Collison's financial support caused Mahone to lose his railroad.¹⁰⁹ At an earlier time, in 1869, Moseley wrote the General that he "should like very much to take the trip with you. But I wish to run over to Baltimore next week to see my old Dr. in the hope of getting some relief for this pain."¹¹⁰ On another occasion, in 1870, Moseley, with a wry sense of humor, confided that in Lynchburg he "fell, not into the hands of thieves, but of Mahone, who kept me till yesterday."¹¹¹ As late as 1872, Moseley was travelling. "I go," he wrote, "in a day or two to Washington to take a survey of the field,"¹¹² probably on behalf of Mahone.

¹⁰⁸Letter from Alexander Moseley to Alexander J. Bondurant, June 29, 1871.

¹⁰⁹Blake, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-131.

¹¹⁰Mahone Collection, letter from Alexander Moseley to General William Mahone, December 10, 1869.

¹¹¹Letter from Alexander Moseley to Alexander Bondurant, August 3, 1870.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, April 15, 1872.

In the postwar years Moseley was continually besieged by debt. The full extent of the intimacy between the General and his newspaperman friend may be seen in Moseley's appeal for financial assistance.

I am annoyed by debt--contracted pretty much since I've been here [Richmond], during the last four years. To make my position easy, I want \$5,000 without hesitation, I apply to you, in the full assurance, that you will cheerfully render the aid I need, if in your power, and if not, that you will feel no delicacy in saying so. In the present uncertainty of the value of any property, I have no security to offer, but my personal services. I may be good for three or four years more of work.¹¹³

A month later the General wrote Moseley, and sent a draft which he hoped would relieve Moseley "of the annoyance to which you refer."¹¹⁴

When, in October 1875, General Mahone made a trip to London to confer with his agent there about the financial condition of his railroad, Alexander Moseley made an interesting small request. "Get me," he entreated, "a small gold watch, with hunting case, stem-winder, and not more than an inch in diameter--and thin. Can be bought," he continued, "in London for half what it costs here."¹¹⁵

Despite Mahone's younger age--he was born in 1826¹¹⁶ Moseley always referred to him, with deference, as General. The General, on the other

¹¹³Mahone Collection, letter from Alexander Moseley to General William Mahone, April 15, 1872.

¹¹⁴Ibid., letter from William Mahone to Alexander Moseley, May 27, 1872.

¹¹⁵Ibid., letter from Alexander Moseley to General William Mahone, October 6, 1875.

¹¹⁶Blake, op. cit., p. 6.

hand, in an obvious display of affection, in later years called his friend "Uncle Alex." For many years Moseley had wanted a small place, or shanty as he preferred to call it, where he could retire and fish. His wish saw realization through the generosity of General Mahone, who wrote, on January 28, 1879, to his "Dear Uncle Alex," that as "to the matter of the 'Shanty' it is dedicated to your pleasure--to the end."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷Ibid., letter from General William Mahone to Alexander Moseley, January 28, 1879.

CHAPTER VIII

PERSONAL LIFE: THE POST CIVIL WAR YEARS

Notwithstanding Moseley's successful political associations in the postwar years, many difficulties presented themselves. Most pressing was the problem of debt. Like most Southern planters, Moseley found the Civil War ruinous, particularly in the great loss of slave property occasioned by emancipation. He had other debts as well, but probably none exceeded the \$28,180.25 that he owed his cousin and benefactor, Colonel Thomas Moseley Bondurant.¹ Undoubtedly to settle this claim he eventually, after the war, turned over the "Fish Pond" estate to Alexander Bondurant, the executor of Colonel Bondurant's estate.

Evidently Moseley tried to continue farming at "Fish Pond" for about four years after the war, until the sale of the Whig forced his removal to Richmond to resume his editorship of the paper. Farming proved profitless, anyway, and on one occasion, his manager, Stinson, "could do nothing with the sheep-man--who only offered \$2.50 for a few picked ones."² Court cases tried his patience, and money to meet daily needs was a constant problem. "I shall try to go to court and may be there several days," he wrote

¹MSS, "Alexander Moseley in A/C with Tho. M. Bondurant," in collection of the author. All manuscripts in this chapter are in the collection of the author, unless otherwise indicated.

²Letter from Alexander Moseley to Alexander J. Bondurant, April 24, 1868.

in 1868. There was no "money to pay bills. Send me \$20 by Saturday's boat. . ." ³ The financial problem continued to grow worse. "The sheriff called on me today," he advised his cousin on March 1, 1869, "with an execution for Rix's interest, about \$535. I haven't a dollar." ⁴ He had earlier in the year applied, perhaps without success, to his cousin for \$1200 to \$1500 to settle "some debts-which though not pressed-for that very reason annoy me the more. And then, I do not get enough from the Whig to live on." ⁵

The pecuniary condition of Moseley was readily reflected in his places of habitation after his return to Richmond in 1868. In September of that year he was occupying quarters at 703 East Franklin Street, a fine place just a few doors from the house occupied by the Lee family during the war. ⁶ By October, however, he had moved his quarters "to near city Springs. It is on 8th Street beyond Leigh, on left side, adjoining the spring." ⁷ Finding times harder than ever, Moseley was forced to move once more, this time in October, 1869, to the Whig office. ⁸ To further effect savings, expenses were in his own hands now. Caesar, his servant, "as a purse-bearer,

³Letter from Alexander Moseley to Alexander J. Bondurant, April 22, 1868.

⁴Ibid., March 1, 1869.

⁵Ibid., February 8, 1869.

⁶Ibid., September 6, 1868.

⁷Ibid., October 7, 1868.

⁸Ibid., October 1, 1869.

doesn't suit these times."⁹ Two years later, however, in order to prepare for housekeeping once again, he sent to Buckingham County for Tom, a servant, to come and assist him.¹⁰

Poor health plagued the aging Moseley, in addition to financial stress. After one trip, he returned to Richmond feeling "quite renovated," but "after sitting up and reading till one o'clock the first night, my neuralgia returned with as much venom as ever. This satisfies me, that whether I will or not, my days for work are pretty well over."¹¹ He also noted that he found, on his return, "some sick, some drunk." There were, however, periods of good health. "My health is better," he wrote in 1872, "than for years. Hard work suits me."¹²

Alexander Moseley's love for friends and family knew no bounds. To "the limited circle of those to whom he was really fond, he was affectionately gentle and tender," editorialized the Richmond South newspaper in 1881.¹³ James Pleasants, the son of John Hampden Pleasants, wrote at the time of Moseley's death that Moseley

had a paternal affection for my sister and myself; his love and friendship were ever without variableness or shadow of turning. We have always dearly loved him; previous, hallowed ties bound us to him; obligations

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., October 16, 1871.

¹¹Ibid., April 30, 1869.

¹²Ibid., February 24, 1872.

¹³Reprint of editorial in Richmond Whig, September 3, 1881.

conferred, intimacy unbroken, affection unshaken. All my life long have I sought his companionship; ever glad to be with him, and ever sorry to part.¹⁴

His concern for friends once caused to go out of his way to visit one William Glenn, "whose health is bad and pecuniary condition deplorable."¹⁵

The particular delight of Alexander Moseley's last years, however, was the family of his namesake and cousin, Alexander Bondurant. Before the Civil War, Moseley had spent much time at "Variety Shade", the home of Bondurant's father, Colonel Thomas M. Bondurant. Typical of the pre-war visits was that in 1859 when Colonel Jack Thurston, a Mr. Leach, Colonel Spencer Thomas, Nicholas Bocock, Judge Hunter Marshall, and Alexander Moseley all spent the night at "Variety Shade" before going on to court the next day.¹⁶ The happy visits with the Bondurants did not cease after the war.

In the spring of 1868, at the urging of Moseley, Alexander Bondurant and his small family moved to "Fish Pond" where they remained until 1879. To the comparatively new house two new rooms and halls were added to make the bachelor's domain into a comfortable family home.¹⁷ The presence of

¹⁴Letter of James Pleasants, published in Richmond Whig, September 3, 1881.

¹⁵Letter from Alexander Moseley to Alexander J. Bondurant, November 18, 1870.

¹⁶MSS, "Reminiscences of Emily Morrison Bondurant (Mrs. Alexander J. Bondurant)," Duke University Library, p. 106.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 162.

Moseley was felt in Fish Pond's luxuriant garden and orchard where strawberries, apples and pears were abundant. Since the house itself was in view of the Canal, great rolls of newspaper--from Richmond, New York and other places--arrived daily from Richmond, having been sent by Moseley.¹⁸ Surrounding the house were many sycamore trees. To Mrs. Emily Bondurant's question of why he had planted so many, Moseley replied that 'those beautiful bare white arms all winter point Heavenward; they lose their leaves early, but those beautiful white limbs call our thoughts upwards.'¹⁹ The yards of "Fish Pond" abounded in fowl: turkeys, chickens, geese, ducks, and even guinea fowl, for Alexander Moseley considered its meat and eggs the best.²⁰ Several of the Bondurant's servants went along to the new place, but many of Alexander Moseley's old servants remained. Some, however, had moved to "Alexandria," a tract of land in Buckingham County on which Moseley had given them homes.

When not called specifically to Richmond to serve "Mass Alex" to whom he said he "still belonged," Tom, Alexander Moseley's faithful servant, stayed at "Fish Pond." Here Tom, who was a good cook, was always ready for his former master's visits, knowing how Moseley loved the whole wheat

¹⁸Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

biscuit and corn batter cakes. Alexander Moseley's old room was kept in readiness for his visits, and Emily Bondurant, constantly solicitous, always kept a branch of sassafras on his mantle piece. Every morning the young children of the household would come into the room to see the lumps of white sugar "growing" on the tree. One of the Bondurant's daughters remembered in later years her delight in having Cousin Alexander Moseley take her to his "sugar tree."²¹ Moseley loved the children as dearly as they loved him. On one occasion, he bought in Richmond "a horn for Sandy and a doll for Fanny." Not finding a "tin horn with a voice," he "got a French trumpet which is far better. The doll is the largest India rubber I could find."²²

Both Alexander Bondurant and his wife, Emily, were prominent Presbyterians. Her family had been unusually conspicuous in the annals of that church. As a result of the Bondurant's interest in the church, "Fish Pond" was often visited by clergymen. Sometimes Alexander Moseley would be asked by Emily Bondurant to join the family in going to church. Moseley, who never belonged and rarely went to church, would reply, 'I will spend the day with the Sermon on the Mount.'²³ A Christian man he

²¹Ibid.

²²Letter from Alexander Moseley to Alexander Bondurant, February 8, 1871.

²³Ibid., p. 21.

was though, and Mrs. Bondurant recalled him often reading the New Testament, both in English and in Greek.

Alexander Moseley was a last remnant of men, such as Jefferson and Adams earlier, who were guided by the deistic movement, and was uninspired by the Great Awakening that had so swept the country in his early years.

General Mahone, writing of Moseley on his death in 1881, said that:

You made no boast of your religion, but quietly practiced its precepts throughout a long, reproachless life. You belonged to no church communion--much to the loss of the church--but when the great day comes and the unerring Judge passes upon the deeds done in the flesh and metes out rewards and punishment, if you do not stand upon the right hand, not because of any merit of your own, or self-righteousness, then a life of charity and stainless honor--the practice of religions requirements--will count for nothing, and heaven will indeed be--for want of company--a lonesome place.²⁴

Even though Alexander Moseley felt that Richmond was "the only place in the state that is tolerable,"²⁵ he was always delighted to leave the city. The various "springs," such as the Greenbriar, were popular seats of fashion at the time, and were sometimes visited by Moseley, but the frivolous way of life followed at the springs held little fascination for him. Nothing, however, brought him more delight than a fishing expedition. "I got back yesterday from Rapphannock," he wrote on one occasion. "I had a

²⁴Richmond Whig, September 5, 1881.

²⁵Mahone Collection, letter from Alexander Moseley to William Mahone, May 30, 1872.

pleasant time there and gained some flesh. The sport, catching bass in the Shenandoah, was very good--but the largest did not exceed 4 lbs."²⁶

His long-standing fondness for the piscatorial sport led him to an interest on the subject of fish culture. In this connection he corresponded with Mr. Seth Green and other pioneers on that new science.²⁷ Green was successful in hatching enormous numbers from the spawn of shad, trout and other species with which, among other streams, he stocked the Susquehanna and Potomac. Moseley, furthermore, became one of the first Fish Commissioners of Virginia, having been appointed by Governor Kemper, and "by his official reports. . .stimulated the legislation which has assured protection to the fish and game interests of Virginia."²⁸ For three years, from 1875 through 1877, Moseley, along with the other Commissioners, W. B. Robertson and M. G. Ellzey, served and presented his reports to the General Assembly.²⁹

Through the generosity of General Mahone, Alexander Moseley spent the last years of his life at "The Shanty," at Dispatch Station in New Kent County. Here he spent his days angling, writing letters to his friends, and carving curious pipes which he presented to his intimates.

²⁶Letter from Alexander Moseley to Alexander J. Bondurant, September 25, 1871.

²⁷Obituary of Alexander Moseley, Richmond Whig, September 1, 1881.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Bulletin of the Virginia State Library, Vol. X, pp. 635, 642, 650.

One of these pipes was given by Moseley to Edward Virginus Valentine, the Richmond sculptor.³⁰ Out of contrast to the prosperity of former years, he named his new abode "The Shanty," but those who visited him there remembered "the olden time hospitality and good cheer with which they were received and treated."³¹

There--at "The Shanty"--Alexander Moseley died at 6 P.M. on Tuesday evening, August 30, 1881, of congestive chill. Only a few days before his death, with no reference to his own health, he had written a letter expressing the fear that President Garfield could not live.³²

The body was taken to Buckingham County where it was buried in the old family cemetery at "Willow Lake," beside his parents. In later years, the children of John Hampden Pleasants erected a large flat tombstone over the grave, in memory of their "father's friend and their own."³³

The Whig, Moseley's own monument to a lifetime of dedication, carried a two-and-a-half column editorial eulogy, edged in black.³⁴

³⁰"Notes of Edward Virginus Valentine, 1838-1930," in possession of the Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia.

³¹Richmond Whig, August 31, 1881.

³²Ibid.

³³Inscribed on tombstone of Alexander Moseley, "Willow Lake," Buckingham County, Virginia.

³⁴Richmond Whig, August 31, 1881.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Few American newspaper editors have had the distinction of as long an association with a newspaper as Alexander Moseley. For much of the intermittent period of forty-five years, from 1836 to 1881, the name of Alexander Moseley was synonymous with the Richmond Whig, one of the great journals of its day.

The importance of Moseley's long association with the Whig was his unique insight into a great span of American history. The Whig party, in which he exerted considerable influence not only as a newspaper writer but as an active party leader, practically grew up with Moseley. He also witnessed the demise of the same party. All of the great issues of the day, Abolition, Territorial Expansion, the Bank issue, among them, came under the scrutiny of Moseley, and his opinions, as expressed in the Whig, were read regularly by the official circles of the District of Columbia.

Virginia, as a border state, often took a viewpoint different from its northern and southern neighbors, and this, sometimes caused a change in Moseley's editorial opinion. In 1850, for example, when California sought admission to the Union, Moseley reversed his previous view, of Texas annexation days, that the territories had no sovereignty, and contended that California should present her constitution to Congress for approval, a view contrary to most of the southern states.

Alexander Moseley in his long term with the Whig was probably more intimately involved with the North-South crisis than any other single issue, and many editorial issues ultimately revolved about this one issue. Although he was certainly pro-Southern, and at times questioned the validity of continued union with the other states, he nevertheless took the upper-South, for example, view in 1850 when he condemned the Nashville Convention whose leaders were urging dissolution of the Union.

After the dissolution of his beloved Whig party Moseley took little active part in political affairs, and, indeed, for the one considerable length of time in his journalistic career, Moseley was unassociated with the Whig. The election of Lincoln and the rising war fever, however, brought Moseley back into the political arena. Once again, Moseley resumed his labors at the Whig, this time with high hopes that the flaws, as he saw them, of the United States Constitution could be corrected in the new Confederacy. Basically he was striving for a return to the States Right concept of the Articles of Confederation. The restrictive measures of the Davis government soon disillusioned Moseley, and the Whig once again became, as in pre-Civil War years, an opposition newspaper, and Moseley retired from the editorship.

The Civil War did not end Moseley's usefulness, and he proved his adaptability by his association with an unusual colleague, General William Mahone, the dynamic young Civil War hero who had bought the Whig to enhance his political insurgency and his railroad interests. The Whig, often under Moseley's leadership in this period, fought in opposition to many of the ideas

of the Conservative party. The urging of the Whig to allow the Negroes to vote, for example, was a considerable boost to Virginia's readmission to the Union. Moseley, in this period, proved himself politically just as useful as in his pre-Civil War days. Indications are that he was active in Readjuster Party politics and was an intimate of General Mahone, the avowed political leader of post-Civil War Virginia.

As a man, Moseley was certainly interesting. A Virginia gentleman, and a Whig also, he exemplified all of the virtues of those two categories. Well travelled and well educated, he was a man of broad interests and suffered comparatively little from the parochialism of his age. He was also subject to human failings: he once fought a duel over a political matter, and his later years were besieged by debt. One feels, in knowing about him, that Alexander Moseley was an eminently likeable man.

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