

## THE KNOW NOTHINGS.

Reminiscences of the American Movement of Fifty Years Ago.

The Life of James Campbell.

The American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia, in the current number of their "Records" publish an account of the life of the late James Campbell, sometime a Judge, and Postmaster General of the United States in the administration of President Franklin Pierce.

Daniel Dougherty once made the remark that it was his early ambition to be elected Senator from Pennsylvania, but that as he became familiar with the ways of the politicians he came to the conclusion that one could not attain to such a position and stand well with his self respect. Judge Campbell took the more militant view that a man could remain secure in his own estimation under whatever stress of circumstances, and while his worldly successes proved that public honors were not to be denied even to a Catholic, the uniform good opinion in which he was held by all with whom came in contact showed that it was not necessary for him to sacrifice his personal honor in order to obtain public prominence.

He was born in Philadelphia September 1st, 1812 and died in that city January 27th, 1898. At twenty-one he was admitted to the bar. He was but little past twenty-nine when he received an appointment as Judge of the Court of Common Pleas taking his seat with judges vastly older than himself, and immediately began to make a record for himself as a worthy coadjutor to his seniors, one of whom, Judge King is described as one of the ablest, most learned and scholarly of men. This appointment was due to his participation in the political life of the state. President Harrison, "Tippecanoe," as he was called, grandfather of ex-president Benjamin Harrison, had died in 1841, and was succeeded by the vice-president, John Tyler, of Virginia. Though still under thirty, Campbell was already one of the leaders of his party in Philadelphia, and had attached himself to the interest of Tyler. In the cabinet reconstruction following the death of Harrison, Tyler saw in Campbell a shrewd young leader. Consequently, when a vacancy occurred in the Court of Common Pleas, Governor Porter called Campbell to the position.

In 1844 the wave of Native Americanism, known as the Know Nothing movement, which was bitterly hostile to all of foreign birth, but especially Irish Catholics, and through them Catholics generally, swept over the continent and the crusade of bigotry spared nothing, respected no one. Judge Campbell threw himself into the controversy and organized the Catholic voting forces. To such a degree did he arouse the enmity of the rioters that a mob attacked his own house and his life might have paid forfeit for his courage, had not one of the chiefs of the Know Nothings, a man with whom Campbell had been on terms of the most intimate friendship since boyhood, a man of great size, invincible courage, and dauntless and impressive bearing rushed fiercely to the rescue and by sheer personal resolution overawed the rioters.

In 1850 the new law was passed which which made the judges of court elective rather than appointive. Judge Campbell was chosen to head the ticket of his party. When the election came on it was found that all except himself were elected by majorities of about twelve thousand, while he, the head of the ticket was in a minority of more than three thousand. This result was due, purely and simply to the fact that James Campbell was a Catholic.

That his Catholic supporters felt bitter about this desertion on the part

of their party friends goes without saying. But their turn was to come.

The election for Governor came on in 1851. The assistance of Campbell was essential to the success of the party which had deserted him. Wisely he gave that assistance. Immediately after the election he was rewarded by being appointed Attorney General of Pennsylvania. This position he held until in 1853 he was called to the cabinet of President Pierce as Postmaster General of the United States. This position was tendered to him by Pierce at the solicitation of W. M. Hirst, a leading lawyer and chairman of the Democratic Committee, who well knew the importance of Campbell's service to the party in Pennsylvania which was then the pivotal state. This appointment opened the floodgates of Know Nothing wrath. Gav. zzi filled the ears of eager listeners with imaginative fabrications. But President Pierce held to his decision.

Campbell introduced the registry system, stamped envelopes, perforated stamps, began the movement for low rates of postage and heroically opposed all unbusinesslike contracts.

One of his associates in the cabinet was Jefferson Davis, afterwards President of the Confederate States, but then Secretary of War. Davis was at that time a very handsome and a very brilliant man; his versatility was always a surprise. He had a knowledge of military affairs exceeded by few tacticians of the time. He could discuss medicine with readiness and accuracy, and his powers of oratory were such as to command the admiration of the most competent judges. Long afterwards there was a conversation between Davis and Campbell the account of which is worth reproducing. It was just before Lincoln's election to the Presidency. Davis was on his way south. He had an idea that the Democrats would carry Pennsylvania. "I told him, that Lincoln would carry Pennsylvania and be the next President. He was dumbfounded. But he said he had never known me to be deceived, and believed what I said."

"I don't think I shall ever forget the scene. Davis sat on the sofa and listened to me gravely and intently. After I had mentioned the Lincoln matter, I waited to see what effect it would have upon him, but he said not a word. Then I continued:

"If you permit Mr. Lincoln to serve out his term, I pledge my life that his successor will be a Democrat. A severe struggle was going on in his mind. After a few moment's study he rose and paced the floor in an excited manner. 'Campbell, I love the old Union!' he broke out; my father bled for it, but my God! you cannot conceive the amount of feeling that exists in our section at the present time. Unless you come among our people in the South, you cannot begin to estimate the bitterness of feeling that has already been engendered—a feeling that will increase and grow in bitterness in the event of Lincoln's election."

The man who could come into such honors as fell to Judge Campbell in times when the present venerable Archbishop Kenrick, then Bishop of Philadelphia was obliged to seek personal protection, and still maintain his reputation as an active and devoted Catholic, was cast in no common mould. When he passed away, so high was the estimation in which he was held, and such the splendor of his example that Bishop O'Hara felt constrained to reject the expressed wish of the deceased that there should be no sermon, in order to point out the merit of his life and to recommend his works as a Christian example.

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- 22 in. All Pure Silk Colored Gros Grains, was \$1, now 39c.
- All shades in Silk Velvets, was \$1, now 39c.

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