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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by David Lawson Eubanks entitled "Dr. J. G. M. Ramsey of East Tennessee: A Career of Public Service." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in History.

LeRoy P. Graf, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

William M. Hastings, S. J. Folmsbee, Bain T. Stewart, Glendon Brokaw, J. Healy Hoffmann

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges


Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

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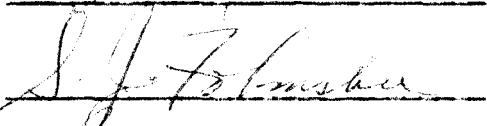


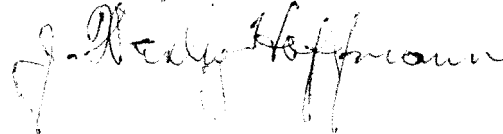
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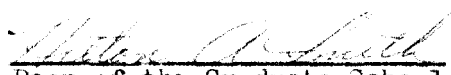
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Major Professor

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and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:


Dean of the Graduate School

DR. J. G. M. RAMSEY OF EAST TENNESSEE:

A CAREER OF PUBLIC SERVICE

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Graduate Council of

The University of Tennessee

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

David Lawson Eubanks

August 1965

PREFACE

Although I was acquainted with and had earlier used Ramsey's Annals of Tennessee, I really became interested in Ramsey when I edited some of his correspondence for a seminar in Tennessee history under Dr. Stanley J. Folmsbee at the University of Tennessee in the summer of 1962.¹ The real justification for another study of the Tennessee historian was the uncovering of a rather large collection of Ramsey letters and manuscripts which had been given to the University of Tennessee Library by one of Ramsey's great-granddaughters, Miss Ellen LeNoir, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Although Mary Margaret Hoskins (now Mrs. Graeme Canning), at the University of Tennessee in 1929, in a master's thesis written on Ramsey's life and work, mentioned these papers in her bibliography, neither she nor William B. Hesseltine, in his edition of Ramsey's autobiography published in 1954, made use of them. Of less value to the Ramsey biographer, but of significance in their own right are letters of Lyman C. Draper to Ramsey, which Professor Hesseltine looked for, but was unable to find when he wrote his biography of Draper.

In subsequent research I ran across numerous manuscript collections containing Ramsey materials, some of which Miss Hoskins and Professor Hesseltine had used, but others of which they had not utilized. The Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina

¹That seminar paper has since been published in the East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications, No. 36 (1964), 81-99.

has its own Ramsey Papers. A large mass of Ramsey letters to James K. Polk in the 1839-1848 period are to be found in the Polk Papers in the Library of Congress. This correspondence fills a significant gap in Ramsey's life's story which resulted from the burning of his papers and manuscripts during the Civil War. In addition, the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies have contributed to information about the Ramsey family's activities during the Civil War, especially Ramsey's son Crozier, who was the Confederate district attorney for East Tennessee. The manuscript materials of the Tennessee Historical Society in the State Library and Archives in Nashville revealed a large quantity of Ramsey correspondence and papers dealing with his activities as president of that organization from 1874 until his death, a less well-known period of Ramsey's life and activity. Also in the State Library and Archives is the McIver Collection containing many letters from Ramsey to his brother W. B. A., who was Tennessee's secretary of state from 1847 to 1855. A thorough study of the Knoxville newspapers available in the McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, brought some answers to obscure phases of Ramsey's life story and shed new light on other facets of his career. County records and records of Chancery and Circuit courts which met in Knoxville were consulted to throw light on the legal controversies in which he was involved. Moreover, Ramsey's letters to Draper, most of which were merely reproduced without analysis in Hesseltine's edition of Ramsey's autobiography contributed to a balanced treatment of his life when correlated with other Ramsey materials.

It is hoped that this study will be a more thorough presentation of those better known areas of Ramsey's life and work than has been done before, as well as offer a fresh treatment of those facets of his career about which little has been known or said. In addition, his children have been given more than a mere passing glance, especially Crozier, who was a rather well-known figure in his own right. Although it was necessary throughout the work to place Ramsey in various aspects of the milieu in which he lived, I have tried above all to portray Ramsey himself in his many faceted career.

For putting at my disposal many manuscript materials I am indebted to the staff of the Southern Historical Collection, at the University of North Carolina Library, and to Miss Pollyanna Creekmore, Chief, McClung Historical Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville. In addition Mrs. Harriet C. Owsley, Director of the Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, graciously sacrificed of her own time to assist me while I was in Nashville. Especially helpful from the time I began research on this project has been Mr. John Dobson, Special Collections Librarian, University of Tennessee Library. Mrs. Frances Johnson and Mrs. Frank Keough, granddaughters of Ramsey, graciously allowed me to use Ramsey materials in their possession.

I am especially grateful to members of my doctoral committee: Dr. LeRoy P. Graf, Chairman, Dr. Stanley J. Folmsbee, and Dr. Ralph Haskins, who carefully read this dissertation and offered numerous helpful corrections and suggestions. Without the encouragement and guidance of Dr. Graf the work would certainly not have been completed.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND AND EDUCATION

"One of the first born of the sons of the State of Tennessee" and "the connecting link between the pioneers and their successors in the Volunteer State"¹ were terms in which Dr. J. G. M. Ramsey was fond of referring to himself. Ramsey considered the real pioneers of Tennessee to be the Scotch-Irish, from whom he traced his own lineage, and any biographer of Ramsey is obliged to recognize and treat the inherent pride which he always had in them.

His paternal grandfather, Reynolds Ramsey, came with his parents to this country from Ireland in 1730 and settled in New Castle, Delaware. After his marriage to Naomi Alexander they moved to a spot on Marsh Creek,² about six or eight miles from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.³

¹J. G. M. Ramsey to Lyman C. Draper, June 20, 1876, in Draper Correspondence (State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison). Most of the letters in the Draper Correspondence from Ramsey to Draper which have been used are printed, with corrections and occasional omissions, in William B. Hesseltine (ed.), Dr. J. G. M. Ramsey: Autobiography and Letters (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Commission, 1954). Inasmuch as J. G. M. Ramsey is the subject of this biography, he will hereafter be cited as Ramsey. See Appendix I for a Ramsey family genealogy.

²William Rule (ed.), Standard History of Knoxville, Tennessee (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1900), 506; Ramsey, Genealogical Notes, Box 3-C, Ramsey Papers (University of Tennessee Library, Knoxville). The Ramsey Papers are a part of the Ramsey Collection, which includes Ramsey's books, as well as some other materials. Items used from the Ramsey Collection, not included in the Ramsey Papers, will be cited as Ramsey Collection (UT).

³Gettysburg was name after Samuel Gettys, whose wife was the sister of Reynolds Ramsey. Ramsey, Historical & Genealogical Sketch of the Tennessee Branch of the McKnitt Family, 2, in Ramsey Papers

Much later, he not only fought with Washington at Valley Forge, Trenton, and Princeton, but also, as a rather well-to-do flour mill owner, supplied the colonists during the Revolutionary War, deeds that Ramsey always pointed to with pride.⁴

Ramsey's father was the eldest son of Reynolds Ramsey. Francis Alexander Ramsey, who was born near Gettysburg May 31, 1764, left his family in 1783⁵ at the age of nineteen in response to an invitation from his uncle, John Alexander,⁶ who earlier had settled in Washington County, North Carolina, and was now living in the Holston settlement. Joining him in this frontier community, F. A. Ramsey began a career that was to comprise thirty-seven years as a public official on the Tennessee frontier and make of him "a man of the very first order."⁷ In October of the year of his arrival he laid claim to four hundred acres of land on

(Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill), hereafter cited as Ramsey Papers (NC).

⁴Ramsey, an ardent lover of relics, placed great value on a cane in his possession, reputedly used by his grandfather in the Battle of Trenton. Moreover, he often compared his lost fortune during the Civil War to that of Reynolds Ramsey in the Revolutionary War; both were sacrifices made and prices paid for the sake of liberty. Hesseltine, Ramsey, 6; Ramsey, Genealogical Notes; Ramsey to W. N. Foote, January 18, 1844, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁵Samuel Cole Williams, History of the Lost State of Franklin (Rev. ed.; New York: The Press of the Pioneers, 1933), 312.

⁶John Alexander was the grandfather of Chancellor Samuel Ramsey Rodgers of Knoxville. Hesseltine, Ramsey, 13.

⁷Elizabeth Skaggs Bowman, "Swan Pond: Francis Alexander Ramsey's Stone House, A Tennessee State Shrine," East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications, No. 27 (1955), 9 (hereafter cited as ETHS Publications); William Martin to Lyman C. Draper, May 13, 1843, in Draper Manuscripts (State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison). Most of the letters in the Draper Manuscripts from Ramsey to Draper which have been used are printed, with corrections and occasional omissions, in Hesseltine, Ramsey.

Big and Little Limestone Creeks.⁸ Having already mastered the art of surveying, he "qualified as a surveyor" in the Washington County court in November, 1783, and found steady employment in this frontier community.⁹ During the organization of the State of Franklin he sided with the revolting settlers and was appointed to several responsible positions--military, diplomatic, and civil--in the Franklin government. His very excellent penmanship,¹⁰ among other qualities, brought about his appointment as secretary of the convention that adopted a constitution for the new state. He was one of its councillors, clerk of the superior court of its Washington District,¹¹ and in 1787 one of the commissioners sent to negotiate terms of separation between the two rival governments, North Carolina and the State of Franklin. Following the collapse of the new state and the reconciliation of the pioneers to North Carolina, he was elected second major of the Washington District by the North Carolina Assembly, and also became clerk of that North Carolina district's superior court.¹²

⁸Greene County Deed Book (Greene County Courthouse, Greeneville, Tennessee), IX, 206-208.

⁹Williams, Franklin, 312; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 6-7.

¹⁰The elder Ramsey's pride in this skill would lead him on a number of occasions to admonish his sons when they were at Washington College to improve their handwriting. F. A. Ramsey to J. G. M. and W. B. A. Ramsey, July 24, 1815, Ramsey Papers (UT).

¹¹Franklin, like North Carolina, was divided into districts. Williams, Franklin, 312.

¹²Ibid.; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 7-8. For two official notices by F. A. Ramsey as clerk of the Washington District superior court see folder labeled "Washington District Indictments, 1788-89," in Ramsey Collection (UT).

On April 7, 1789, "Colonel"¹³ Ramsey married Peggy Alexander, eldest daughter of John McKnitt Alexander of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. Her Scotch-Irish heritage was as distinguished as her husband's. John McKnitt Alexander served as secretary of the Mecklenburg Convention of May 19, 1775, which penned the declaration that J. G. M. Ramsey championed throughout his life as the first American declaration of independence.¹⁴ Soon after their marriage Mrs. Ramsey visited with her husband's parents in Pennsylvania while he was attending to business in western North Carolina.¹⁵ Upon her return the newlyweds settled on part of Colonel Ramsey's four hundred acre grant on Little Limestone Creek at or near Jonesborough (now Jonesboro), in Washington County, where their first son William Baine Alexander Ramsey was born March 26, 1791. The naming of their first child revealed a propensity to commemorate family connections by multiplying given names, a practice that would characterize the naming of their other children. This habit was later adopted by their fourth son, the subject of this biography.

Colonel Ramsey continued to serve as clerk of the Washington District superior court after the organization of the Southwest Territory,

¹³Inasmuch as there is no evidence of his actually having been appointed Colonel, the title was possibly an honorary one.

¹⁴A more thorough treatment of Ramsey's interest in the Mecklenburg Declaration will follow in this biography. Of the historical significance of the settlers of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, he could not say enough. See Mnemonika (Ramsey), "Sketch of Mecklenburg County," Land We Love, II (December, 1866), 129-45, Ramsey Collection (UT); Hesseltine, Ramsey, 3-4.

¹⁵Peggy A. Ramsey to F. A. Ramsey, February 23, 1790, Ramsey Papers (UT).

and at the same time advanced from second to first major of the Washington District cavalry. With the formation in 1792 of Hamilton District, out of Knox and Jefferson counties, he was appointed clerk of its superior court by Governor Blount and decided to make Knox County his home.¹⁶

With the intention of taking advantage of the North Carolina "land grab" act of 1783, Colonel Ramsey, with James White, the founder of Knoxville, Robert Love,¹⁷ and others had explored as early as August, 1783,¹⁸ the country destined to become Knox County, Tennessee. In fact, the very spot, the confluence of the Holston and French Broad Rivers, on which they chose to stake their claims on this first trip became the site of Colonel Ramsey's future home in Tennessee.¹⁹ However, it was not until November of 1786 that he obtained a North Carolina land grant calling for "200 acres in Greene County upon a water of the Holston, including the Swan Pond." Shortly after receiving this grant, Colonel

¹⁶Clarence Edwin Carter (ed.), Territorial Papers of the United States, IV, The Southwest Territory (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1936), 437-38, 438n; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 8; Williams, Franklin, 312.

¹⁷Williams asserts that Robert Young accompanied Ramsey and White on this expedition. Ibid.

¹⁸J. G. M. Ramsey, Annals of Tennessee . . . (Charleston, South Carolina: Walker and James, 1853), 278; Mary U. Rothrock (ed.), The French Broad-Holston Country: A History of Knox County, Tennessee (Knoxville, Tennessee: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1946), 25. Both Betsy Beeler Creekmore, who indicates that this trip was made in 1785, and Ramsey, who says in his autobiography that F. A. Ramsey entered his claim in 1786, are in error. The grant was actually issued in 1786. Creekmore, Knoxville (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1958), 45; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 10n.

¹⁹Creekmore, Knoxville, 47.

Ramsey entered another calling for three hundred acres adjoining it.²⁰ On part of this grant, a peninsula near the fork of the French Broad and the Holston, about six miles east of Knoxville, Colonel Ramsey settled in 1792 or 1793, for his second son John McKnitt Alexander was born May 2, 1793, Ramsey says, "probably at this place [Swan Pond]."²¹

Draining a beaver lake close by, known as Swan Pond after the swans that frequented it, Colonel Ramsey changed the site into a lovely meadow. In 1794 he began the erection of a mansion, appropriately called Swan Pond, that became one of the finest structures in the West and was to be his home until his death. Indeed, Ramsey asserts that at the census of 1800 it was not only "the best house in the state," but also "the most costly and most admired building in Tennessee."²² The structure, whose architect and builder was an Englishman, Thomas Hope, was Gothic in style and constructed of stone.²³

²⁰Washington County Deed Book (Washington County Courthouse, Jonesboro, Tennessee), I, 48-49. The original survey of these grants can be found in the Secretary of State's Office, Raleigh, North Carolina. Photostatic copies are in the McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville. There is also in the Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Tennessee Historical Society, Nashville, a survey by Hugh Blair of two hundred acres of land, dated February 23, 1779, and transferred by Blair to F. A. Ramsey April 4, 1786. After being on the frontier only eight years, F. A. Ramsey had acquired an estate in excess of two thousand acres. Bowman, "Swan Pond," 15.

²¹Hesseltine, Ramsey, 9.

²²Ibid., 9, 10n. Ramsey always possessed a sentimental attachment to Swan Pond. He purchased W. B. A.'s share in the estate when his brother moved to Nashville in 1848, and gave the mansion in the 1850's to his son, Francis Alexander Ramsey, named after Ramsey's father. In his autobiography he was to compare the damaging of Swan Pond during the decade of the Civil War by the "vulgar and uncultivated" to the desecration of Jerusalem by the Turk. Ibid.

²³Swan Pond still stands today. For further information concerning its physical description see Bowman, "Swan Pond," 9-18.

Another son, Samuel Reynolds Ramsey, who died in 1800, was born while Swan Pond was being constructed.²⁴ Shortly before its completion,²⁵ a fourth son, James Gettys McGready, was born March 25, 1797, in a log cabin erected as a temporary dwelling and located a few feet from the "Stone House."²⁶ He was named after a cousin of his father, General James Gettys of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and also for the Reverend James McGready, the great Presbyterian revivalist at the turn of the nineteenth century, who, emigrating from North Carolina to the Cumberland settlement in 1796-97, was invited by Ramsey's father to winter at his house.²⁷ Still another son, the second William Baine Alexander Ramsey,

²⁴F. A. Ramsey to Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds Ramsey, December 18, 1802, Ramsey Papers (UT).

²⁵Ramsey says that Swan Pond mansion was occupied by his father for twenty-three years, until his death in 1820. It would appear, then, that the family moved into it sometime in 1797. Hesselstine, Ramsey, 10.

²⁶Some confusion surrounds the family history of F. A. Ramsey. Rule and Goodspeed indicate that he had only three sons born after his removal to Knoxville, of whom Ramsey was the youngest, while Mrs. Sarah Booth Conroy, in a newspaper article, says "Colonel Ramsey had three children by his first wife: J. G. M., the historian; W. B. A., who became Tennessee Secretary of State; and Eliza Jane Naomi Baine Ramsey." Moreover, some accounts of Ramsey's birth record that he was born in the stone house, not in the log house. All of these assertions are contrary to the evidence presented in this biography. Rule, Knoxville, 506; Goodspeed Publishing Company, History of Tennessee . . ., East Tennessee edition (Nashville, 1887), 1031 (hereafter cited as Goodspeed's East Tennessee); Sarah Booth Conroy, "Ramsey House Once Finest in Tennessee," Knoxville News-Sentinel, December 4, 1955; newspaper article in Scrapbook No. II, between pages 8 and 9, Ramsey Papers (UT).

²⁷Not only was Ramsey named after James McGready, but McGready's daughter, born at the same time, was named after Ramsey's mother. Moreover, the Ramsey-McGready relationship continued, and, when Ramsey was in school later, McGready corresponded with him frequently. Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 3-4, Ramsey Papers (NC).

was born March 26, 1799, and baptized by Colonel Ramsey's brother, the Reverend Samuel Graham Ramsey, at the funeral of the brother whose namesake he was.²⁸ Two other children, Eliza Naomi Jane Ramsey²⁹ and Francis Alexander Ramsey, were born to Colonel and Mrs. Ramsey before she died on July 7, 1805, at the age of thirty-nine.³⁰

In the meantime Colonel Ramsey had continued to hold responsible civil and military positions both on the local and state levels in the newly emerging state of Tennessee. Locally, in 1794, he was named a charter member of the board of trustees for Blount College, and on February 4, 1797, was appointed, with others, a commissioner to fix on a site and contract for the building of a courthouse. Beginning in 1796, he served with distinction as clerk of the Senate of the infant state of Tennessee,³¹ while his continuing activity as clerk of the superior

²⁸The Reverend Samuel Carrick, Knoxville's pioneer Presbyterian pastor and founder of Blount College, officiated at the funeral service. F. A. Ramsey to Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds Ramsey, March 26, 1799, Ramsey Papers (UT). The journal of John Sevier records for Thursday, March 21, 1799, "The son of Colo. Ramsey died." John H. Dewitt (ed.), "Journal of John Sevier," Tennessee Historical Magazine, V (October, 1919), 259.

²⁹Ramsey in his autobiography confused the birth dates of his brother W. B. A. and his sister Eliza Naomi Jane Baine. Hesseltine, Ramsey, 11; Ramsey Family Bible, between pages 726 and 727, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³⁰Ibid. Hesseltine probably miscopied Ramsey's handwriting when he listed the date of her death as July 9. Hesseltine, Ramsey, 11. Undoubtedly, Ramsey himself meant "July 7" when he noted the date of her death as June 7 in Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 11, Ramsey Papers (NC); in a letter to his parents, F. A. Ramsey requested that they wear black scarves, for which he would later pay them, as a symbol of mourning for his wife. F. A. Ramsey to Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds Ramsey, July 15, 1805, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³¹Goodspeed Publishing Company, History of Tennessee . . ., Knox County edition (Nashville, 1887), 810 (hereafter cited as Goodspeed's Knox County); Rothrock, French Broad, 468.

court seems to have taken a great deal of his time.³² When Andrew Jackson, as major-general of the Tennessee militia, in December, 1806, was obliged by Jefferson's prodding to take some semblance of action to prevent further Tennessee involvement in the Burr conspiracy, Colonel Ramsey was placed in command of "about fifty men stationed at the mouth of the Cumberland."³³

Following his wife's death, he took his surviving children to visit her parents in North Carolina, and afterward his own parents in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. While there he renewed an acquaintance with Mrs. Ann Fleming, now a widow, and they were married August 13, 1806.³⁴ He returned with his family to Swan Pond, where his father and mother followed him the next year.³⁵ Born to Colonel Ramsey and Mrs. Fleming was one son, John McKnitt Alexander Ramsey, named after F. A.'s second child, who had died while a student at Blount College shortly after their marriage.

Being a scholar himself, Colonel Ramsey was necessarily interested in his children's education. For this purpose he first employed as tutors

³²F. A. Ramsey to Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds Ramsey, April 6, 1803, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³³Impartial Review (Nashville), January 10, 1807.

³⁴F. A. Ramsey to Rev. Samuel G. Ramsey, August 18, 1806, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³⁵F. A. Ramsey also invited his uncle John Alexander, who had befriended him when he first came to western North Carolina, to come and live with him. Hesseltine, Ramsey, 13. Reynolds Ramsey's wife died in 1813 and he in 1817. Ramsey does say in the autobiography that his grandmother died "about 1814." Ibid.; Ramsey, A Short Sketch of the Course of Education Pursued by the Author, 8, Ramsey Papers (NC).

young men who also served as clerks in his law office.³⁶ In 1806 he enrolled his second son, John McKnitt Alexander,³⁷ in Ebenezer Academy, founded by Colonel Ramsey's brother, Samuel Graham Ramsey, a Presbyterian minister³⁸ who had followed his older brother into the Tennessee country. Three years later, in 1809, J. G. M. and his brother W. B. A. matriculated in this academy and began a close relationship in their education and life's work that lasted for decades to come. Their course of instruction included English grammar; Latin studies in grammar, The Colloquies of Corderius, Aesop's Fables, Erasmus, "Selectae Veteri," Cornelius Neros, Ovid, and Virgil; Greek studies in Horace, the Greek Testament, Lucian, Xenophon, and Homer; and studies in the "sciences": arithmetic, surveying, Euclid's Elements, bookkeeping, geography, natural philosophy, logic, moral philosophy and eloquence, and evidence (probably evidences of the Christian religion).³⁹ A perusal of his brief

³⁶ Among these young clerks was William Smith from New England. Hesseltine, Ramsey, 13. He is probably to be associated with a young man who kept a diary found in the Ramsey Papers, dated 1802-1803, Of an Unknown Boy of Twenty One from New England Who Boarded at Swan Pond and Studied Law under Francis Alexander Ramsey, Clerk of the Superior Court, Box 3-E, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³⁷ McKnitt Ramsey, as he was known, wrote to his father from Ebenezer Academy, expressing his contentment at living with his uncle and aunt while in school. McKnitt Ramsey to F. A. Ramsey, December 23, 1806, ibid.

³⁸ Samuel Graham Ramsey also organized the Ebenezer and Pleasant Forest Presbyterian churches and was pastor of the Knoxville church. Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 4, Ramsey Papers (NC); Rothrock, French Broad, 334-35; Ramsey, "Samuel Graham Ramsey," in W. B. Sprague (ed.), Annals of the American Pulpit (7 vols.; New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1957-60), III, 392-97.

³⁹ Ramsey, A Short Sketch of Education, 1-13, Ramsey Papers (NC). Ramsey seems to have imbibed a special interest in astronomy during his

diary kept at the time, as well as his uncle's favorable comments concerning his study and deportment, attest to Ramsey's diligence as a student. He indicates in his autobiography that he was often given the responsibility of leading a class when the ill health of his instructor made it necessary.⁴⁰ Perhaps Samuel G. Ramsey felt himself somewhat of a prophet when he reported March 29, 1811, "James"⁴¹ G. M'G. Ramsey's uniformly strict morality, his unremitting attention to study, and his regular observance of academical laws, are pleasing intimations of his future usefulness to the world, and his being an Honor to himself and his connections.⁴² J. G. M. Ramsey himself could not have more accurately phrased what he was later to consider to be his position in society nor the means by which he reached it. W. B. A., on the other hand, was of a "naturally fluid, and yielding disposition," and his father, who often admonished them in letters to guard "against youthful follies" and "take all opportunities of storing your mind with

school days at Ebenezer Academy and Washington College. For an indication of this interest as well as other sidelights on his studies, see Ramsey, *Astronomy: Being a New and Comprehensive System of Astronomy Extracted from the Most Correct Authors; and Geography of the United States of America: Being an Abridgement [sic] of Morses Abridgement [sic] of the Universal Geography*, Ramsey Papers (NC).

⁴⁰Hesseltine, Ramsey, 14.

⁴¹Ramsey seems to have been referred to, by himself and others, during these early years as "James." Ramsey, Address--1815: on The Superiority the Modern World Justly Claims over the Ancient; and Arguments against Skepticism, September 2, 1815, Ramsey Papers (NC).

⁴²Certificate of F. A. Ramsey's 2 Sons, Jas. McGready Ramsey & Wm. Bain[e] Ramsey Respecting their Prospects at School with their Uncle Samuel Ramsey in 1810, ibid.

useful and ornamental knowledge," encouraged Ramsey to "lead to virtue" his younger brother.⁴³

Ramsey and his brother remained at Ebenezer Academy for five years until October, 1814, at which time they were sent to Washington College, founded by Dr. Samuel Doak, first known as Dr. Doak's "Log College,"⁴⁴ and later named Martin Academy.⁴⁵ From his contacts with Samuel Doak and his son Samuel Whitefield Doak, Vice President of Washington College, Ramsey emerged with a feeling of respect and admiration for them that persisted throughout his lifetime.⁴⁶ Here also, his powers with the pen

⁴³F. A. Ramsey to J. G. M. Ramsey, March 25, 1813, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁴⁴Hesseltine, Ramsey, 53.

⁴⁵Some interesting letters written during the Ramsey boys' Washington College days have been preserved in which their father gives them instructions in everything from spiritual growth to the improvement of their penmanship and the means of borrowing money to get home from school. F. A. Ramsey to J. G. M. and W. B. A. Ramsey, July 24, September 18, and September 27, 1815, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁴⁶An interesting acrostic written by Ramsey at this time in honor of Dr. Doak has been preserved and is in the Ramsey Papers (NC).

A Merited Acrostick [sic]

December 15th 1815

Science and virtue both unite)
Acceptable to make the man)
My grateful Muse would not describe.)
Useful he is to all mankind)
Excelling in all mental worth:)
Loaded with Learnings richest stones)
Divinity's his chief delight,)
Ontology he too knows well.)
Among bad men he is upright,)
<u>Kindly</u> forewarning them of Hell)
Attentive reader pray, disclose)
My friend who so much Science knows.)

S A M U E L . D O A K . A M)
 Samuel Doak Magister Artrium)

James Ramsey

began to blossom, giving some indication of the literary bent his life was to take.⁴⁷ Apparently as a result of their previous training in Latin and Greek, the two Ramsey were so far ahead of the rest of the class that they were allowed to study Hebrew. In fact, J. G. M. was fond of boasting that his class was the first in Tennessee which ever studied the Hebrew language. He went on to observe that on the occasion of the public examination and exhibition during the graduation in the spring of 1816 the building was filled to overflowing with "aged gentlemen" and "Presbyterian elders," not merely the usual "ladies," because the rumor was abroad that Genesis and Psalms would be read in the original language of the Old Testament by a Hebrew class.⁴⁸ This occasion has been referred to as perhaps the first public examination of a college class in this branch of study in the West, perhaps in the United States.⁴⁹ In March, 1816, J. G. M., now nineteen years old, and W. B. A., seventeen, received their A. B. degrees from Washington College.⁵⁰

⁴⁷At least two addresses and an essay which Ramsey presented before the student body and faculty of Washington College have been preserved. Address--1815 on The Modern World; Skepticism; and Address to Students and Faculty [1815], ibid.

⁴⁸Hesseltine, Ramsey, 14; newspaper article in a scrapbook, p. 68, kept by Mrs. Elizabeth Breck, daughter of Ramsey. This scrapbook is in the possession of Mrs. Frances D. Johnson, 532 Woodlawn Pike, Knoxville, Tennessee. Hereafter cited as Breck Scrapbook.

⁴⁹Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 4-5, Ramsey Papers (NC); newspaper article in Breck Scrapbook.

⁵⁰There is some confusion over the year of Ramsey's graduation from Washington College. One source places him in the class of 1815. Moreover, in a letter to his brother, W. B. A., in 1878 Ramsey refers to them as the only survivors of the "class of 1815." In another place he writes simply that he and his brother "graduated together there

Following his graduation Ramsey remained for about a year at home, availing himself of his father's rather extensive library. Although not of age, he was elected register of Knox County in July, 1817,⁵¹ and kept his office in town. Inasmuch as this position did not require his whole time, he entered the office of Joseph Strong, "senior physician of Knoxville," and began the study of medicine in the summer of 1817.⁵² During the time he worked under Dr. Strong his duties, besides diligent application to his studies, seem to have included "attending to his [Dr. Strong's] drug-store, keeping his books," having "charge of his keys, his bank deposits," and sometimes visiting his patients.⁵³ Having completed this apprenticeship, and during the process having "become fond of the Divine Art of Healing & the investigations of disease & the study

[Washington College] March, 1815," Ibid. Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, February 13, 1878, J. G. M. Ramsey Letters, McIver Collection (Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville). However, the evidence seems conclusive that the date was March, 1816. Ramsey so asserts in his autobiography. Furthermore, his father wrote the two brothers at Washington College at least three letters in the summer and fall of 1815. If Ramsey graduated at the age of nineteen, as he and others state, the date had to be March, 1816. Hesselstine, Ramsey, 14; F. A. Ramsey to J. G. M. and W. B. A. Ramsey, July 24, September 18, September 27, 1815, Ramsey Papers (UT); newspaper article in Scrapbook No. II, between pages 8 and 9, ibid.

⁵¹Goodspeed's Knox County, 814.

⁵²Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 5, Ramsey Papers (NC). One source indicates that he began his medical practice at the age of twenty-one. Newspaper article in Scrapbook No. II, between pages 8 and 9, Ramsey Papers (UT). It would appear, however, that he was nineteen when he entered the office of Dr. Strong and twenty-three when he set up his own practice.

⁵³Hesselstine, Ramsey, 14.

of the 'Aesculapian mistries [sic],"⁵⁴ Ramsey sought to further his training by attending medical lectures in Philadelphia. Upon the urging of his uncle, Dr. Joseph McKnitt Alexander, to accompany his son Moses M. Alexander, who was going to the University of Pennsylvania to complete his medical education, Ramsey left in October, 1817, to attend the medical lectures in Philadelphia. Dr. Strong's confidence in him is reflected in a letter of recommendation to Dr. N. [Nathaniel] Chapman, a member of the medical faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, in which Strong asserts that Ramsey's "correct deportment, industry, integrity and moral conduct cannot fail to give satisfaction to his Preceptors."⁵⁵ Again Ramsey's diligence is manifest in his often repeated declaration that in the two years that he was in Philadelphia he "never lost a day--not even one lecture."⁵⁶ In a letter to his father he praised two of his instructors, Dr. William Gibson and a certain Dr. Ely, but was especially fond of Dr. Nathaniel Chapman, "a student of the immortal Rush,"⁵⁷ and "very tenacious of the peculiarities

⁵⁴Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 6, Ramsey Papers (NC).

⁵⁵Joseph C. Strong to Dr. N. Chapman, September 21, 1819, ibid.

⁵⁶Hesseltine, Ramsey, 15; Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 6, ibid.

⁵⁷An allusion to Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia, who loomed as a major figure in early medical education in this country. Richard A. Shryock, "Benjamin Rush," in Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (eds.), Dictionary of American Biography (20 vols., 2 supplements, and index; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928-1958), XVI, 227-231. Dr. Nathaniel Chapman became professor of theory and practice of medicine and clinical medicine at the University of Pennsylvania in 1816. Rush had been chosen for the same chair in 1789, and except for a short

of that great teacher." Of his medical studies he asserts, "The present however is said to be the best course of lectures that has been delivered since the death of Rush."⁵⁸ While in Philadelphia he was voted a member of the medical society of that city. Here he also acquired a fairly extensive medical library.⁵⁹

Completing his studies in Philadelphia in the summer of 1819, he returned to Knoxville, only to travel on to Memphis, "then only a hamlet," Brownsville, and other recently established towns, intending to set up his practice west of the mountains.⁶⁰ In the end it was the pleas of his aged father, as well as the advice of Dr. Strong, that prevailed upon him to establish himself in Knoxville. On August 1, 1820, he opened his office on Main Street, between Water (now Central) and State streets.⁶¹

occupancy by a third individual, these two men held it for more than sixty years. In addition, Doctor Chapman founded in 1817 the Medical Institute of Philadelphia, considered by some the first post-graduate school in the United States, and he was for many years editor of the Philadelphia Journal of the Medical and Physical Sciences. James Gregory Mumford, "Chapman, Nathaniel," Dictionary of American Medical Biography, edited by Howard A. Kelly and Walter L. Burrage (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1928), 213. William Gibson, educated at the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Edinburgh, was one of early America's most famous surgeons. After establishing the medical department at the University of Maryland in 1811, he held the chair of surgery in that school until he moved to the University of Pennsylvania in 1819 to accept the same position, which he held until 1854." "Gibson, William," ibid., 465-66.

⁵⁸Ramsey to F. A. Ramsey [n.d.], 1819, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁵⁹Hesseltine, Ramsey, 15; Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 6, Ramsey Papers (NC).

⁶⁰Ibid.; A brief diary, dated May 5-June 12, of his trip across the state in 1820 has been preserved. Box 3-E, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁶¹Hesseltine, Ramsey, 15; Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, Ramsey Papers (NC). However, his "card" in the Knoxville Register, October 10, 1820, stated that "he may be called upon at his shop on Market Street nearly opposite the dwelling house of William Bowen."

In the meantime Colonel Ramsey's second wife had died, November 19, 1817.⁶² He did not marry again, however, until shortly before his death in 1820. In April of that year Mrs. Margaret Humes of Knoxville became his third wife. One of the best known of Knoxville's pioneer women, she had first been married to James Cowan, whose brothers were Knoxville's first merchants.⁶³ Colonel Ramsey and Mrs. Humes had one son, Francis Alexander Ramsey, born five months after his father died.⁶⁴ At the time of Colonel Ramsey's death, November 5, 1820, he still held several responsible positions of leadership in Tennessee and Knox County. He had been clerk of the circuit court of Knoxville since 1810.⁶⁵ On January 29, 1819, he was appointed a commissioner under an act passed by the Tennessee legislature November 5, 1817, calling for the governor "to appoint commissioners to examine the several surveyors and registers offices" in order to prevent frauds in the granting of lands in West Tennessee purchased from the Chickasaw Indians. It was Colonel Ramsey to whom Governor McMinn directed his "first solicitation."⁶⁶ In pursuance

⁶²Hesseltine, Ramsey, 14; Ramsey, Genealogical Notes, Ramsey Papers (UT). Although this date appears certain, there are other sources which assert that her death came in 1816. Rothrock, French Broad, 468; Conroy, "Ramsey House."

⁶³Creekmore, Knoxville, 184-87.

⁶⁴A rather interesting sidelight on Colonel Ramsey's third wife is the fact that she had been married twice previously, both times bearing sons after her husbands' deaths, as she also did for Colonel Ramsey. Ibid., 186-87.

⁶⁵Goodspeed's Knox County, 814; Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 2, Ramsey Papers (NC).

⁶⁶Williams, Franklin, 312-13. McMinn wrote Ramsey "with a confident expectation that your patriotism will overrule any partial

of the act of July 26, 1820, to establish the Bank of the State of Tennessee, he was appointed president of the Knoxville branch, located on the corner of Cumberland and Water streets.⁶⁷ It was while putting the bank into operation that he died.⁶⁸

Several of his sons by his first wife: the first William Baine Alexander Ramsey, Samuel Reynolds Ramsey, and the first Francis Alexander Ramsey; and John McKnitt Alexander Ramsey, by his second wife, had preceded Colonel Ramsey to his grave. Ramsey's younger brother, the second William Baine Alexander Ramsey, better known in his lifetime as W. B. A. or Colonel W. B. A. Ramsey, after graduating from Washington College in 1816, returned to live on the farm with his parents. Unlike J. G. M., who soon moved into Knoxville, W. B. A. remained and upon the death of his father in 1820, took over for several years the management of Swan Pond. Meantime he served as magistrate of the seventeenth district.⁶⁹ Later, after studying law under Judge Hugh Lawson White,

inconvenience that may present themselves against your acceptance." See Gov. Jos. McMinn to F. A. Ramsey, January 29, 1819, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

⁶⁷Rothrock, French Broad, 468; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 15; Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 2, Ramsey Papers (NC); William E. Beard, "Joseph McMinn, Tennessee's Fourth Governor," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, IV (June, 1945), 164.

⁶⁸A letter of Ramsey's to his uncle, Samuel G. Ramsey, representing a deep outpouring of grief over his father's death, has been preserved. Ramsey to Samuel G. Ramsey, December 20, 1820, Ramsey Papers (NC).

⁶⁹"In Memorium," 3, a printed obituary of W. B. A. Ramsey, Box 3-E, Ramsey Papers (UT).

he became a law partner of General R. G. Dunlap, a prominent East Tennessean, who afterwards became secretary of the treasury of the Texan Republic.⁷⁰ Of W. B. A. it was said, "While not a brilliant man he possessed excellent judgment, and had he applied himself to his profession he could, undoubtedly, have attained distinction as a jurist. During the greater part of his life, however, he was engaged in filling some official position."⁷¹

Like his older brother, the younger Ramsey became early in life an enthusiastic advocate of the internal improvements. After the appearance in March, 1828, of the Atlas, the first steamboat to reach Knoxville, W. B. A., as the organizer and large stockholder of a swiftly formed steamboat company, was sent to Cincinnati to contract for and superintend the building of the boat that was to be christened a few months later the Knoxville.⁷² His interest in internal improvements continued, and in later years he was a supporter and promoter of the enterprises that resulted in the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad.⁷³ From 1832 until he left Knoxville in 1848 he held the office of clerk and master of the chancery court.⁷⁴ While serving in this capacity, he was editor and part owner of the Knoxville Register from 1837 to 1839, at which time he sold his interest and "retired from the editorial control

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Goodspeed's Knox County, 823.

⁷²Ibid., 807; "In Memorium," 4, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁷³Ibid., 4; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 30; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, March 25, 1868, March 31, 1870, March 31, 1871, McIver Collection.

⁷⁴Goodspeed's Knox County, 814.

of the paper."⁷⁵ Chosen by his fellow aldermen to be mayor of Knoxville in 1838, he succeeded himself for a second year-term the following January as the first mayor elected by the vote of the people.⁷⁶ In 1847 the Tennessee legislature named him secretary of state, a post in which he served under four governors until his retirement from that office in 1855,⁷⁷ when he withdrew to his estate at Edgefield, outside Nashville. His retirement was broken but once for a short term of service as secretary and treasurer of the Edgefield and Kentucky Railroad.⁷⁸

Although of different political persuasions throughout much of their lives, J. G. M. and W. B. A. appear to have been fairly intimate in their personal relationship and closely allied in business endeavors. Especially does this seem to have been the case in the middle years of the century. In the late forties and during the fifties Ramsey was able to take care of W. B. A.'s business affairs and property in Knoxville,

⁷⁵ Clara Estelle Masterson, "A History of Knoxville Journalism" (unpublished Master's thesis, George Peabody College, Nashville, 1933), 21; Moses White, "East Tennessee Journalism," address delivered to Press Association, Knoxville Tennessee, 1878 (typescript, McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville), 14. That his brother was editor of the stanch Whig Register was certainly a source of irritation to Ramsey, the stanch Democrat. See Ramsey to James K. Polk, December 18, 1839, James K. Polk Papers (Library of Congress, Washington).

⁷⁶ Rule, Knoxville, 95, 127.

⁷⁷ The appointment by the Tennessee legislature in early 1856 of a committee to investigate W. B. A.'s official conduct, while apparently causing him and Ramsey a great deal of vexation, does not seem to have uncovered any startling evidence against his integrity. Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, February 7, March 19, 1856, McIver Collection.

⁷⁸ "In Memorium," 4, Ramsey Papers (UT).

while W. B. A., as secretary of state located in Nashville, was in a position to offer Ramsey many favors, including aid in his railroad promotion, and opening to him the state archives for historical research. Because W. B. A. had taken the amnesty oath in the Civil War, he was able following the war to render help and encouragement to his brother, J. G. M., who was in exile in North Carolina.⁷⁹

While for Ramsey W. B. A. was without question the most congenial member of his own immediate family, three other children of Colonel Ramsey survived to adulthood. Of these, a sister, Eliza Jane Naomi Bane Ramsey, and a half-brother, John McKnitt Alexander Ramsey, seem to have played but a limited role in Ramsey's life. Eliza Jane, born November 28, 1801, was educated at Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and later married James Scott.⁸⁰ Of John McKnitt, Ramsey tersely wrote, "He had sons & daughters--was a good man--an Elder in Lebanon Church & died in 1865 or 6. He was cruelly treated by Burnside."⁸¹

Ramsey's youngest half-brother, Francis Alexander Ramsey, followed him into the medical profession. Twenty-four years younger than J. G. M., Francis read medicine under him, studied under Professor Samuel Henry Dickson at the Medical College in Charleston, South Carolina, and

⁷⁹Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, March 24, 1852-March 8, 1874, McIver Collection.

⁸⁰Hesseltine, Ramsey, 14; Ramsey Family Bible, between pages 726 and 727, Ramsey Papers (UT). Ramsey's wife was also educated in Winston Salem, North Carolina, known at that time as Salem. Hesseltine, Ramsey, 218. Miss Rosa Naomi Scott, Knoxville writer, is a descendant of James Scott and Eliza Jane Ramsey. Rothrock, French Broad, 468-69.

⁸¹Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 11, Ramsey Papers (NC).

in 1841-42 under Professor Dudley at Lexington, Kentucky. After a few years of medical practice in Knoxville, during which he became the first corresponding secretary of the Medical Society of East Tennessee, when it was organized on May 7, 1845, he left in the same year to accept a position as professor in the Memphis Medical College. While there he edited numbers four and five (1847 and 1848) of the Southwestern Medical Advocate, published in Memphis. Dr. Ramsey resigned his teaching position to return to Knoxville in 1847. During the following years he became one of East Tennessee's most prominent physicians, serving as president of the Medical Society of East Tennessee. He continued to edit medical journals, including the East Tennessee Record of Medicine and Surgery and the Southern Journal of the Medical and Physical Sciences, both official organs of the Medical Society of East Tennessee published in the 1850's. In 1859 he contributed a medical column to Brownlow's Knoxville Whig. Dr. Ramsey also became a medical educator when he established a primary medical school in Knoxville in 1852, responding to a recommendation of the American Medical Association that such schools be founded. He proposed to direct the studies of young men who intended to practice medicine, but was unable to get the necessary support for such an enterprise to be successful. During the Civil War, as chief medical director of the hospital department of East Tennessee and also of General Felix K. Zollicoffer's command, he was taken prisoner, but, after being confined at Fortress Monroe, was exchanged. The post-Civil War years saw him return to Knoxville where he served on the editorial staff of the Southern Medical Journal and became one of the organizers

of the Knox County branch of the East Tennessee Medical Society in 1871. He also was a contributor to the Grange Outlook in 1871.⁸² Although Dr. Frank Ramsey had first studied medicine under his half-brother, and although Ramsey seems to have been proud of Frank's professional accomplishments as well as of his Confederate sympathies, the absence of any preserved correspondence between the two, as well as the absence of all but two or three brief references in Ramsey's autobiography to Frank's position during the Civil War, indicates the lack of any close relationship between the two, certainly after Frank's formative years.

As the oldest member of Colonel Ramsey's family J. G. M. obviously had obligations and acted as something of a family leader, but his principal energies would be expended in pursuing his own multifaceted career, which began in the practice of medicine and gave him the title by which he was known throughout his lifetime.

⁸²Ibid.; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 117, 197, 240; Rothrock, French Broad, 469; S. J. Platt and Mary Louise Ogden, "The Knox County Medical Society, 1857-1957: An Abstract," Journal of the Tennessee State Medical Association, L (March, 1957), 77-81; Samuel L. Clark and H. D. Riley, Jr., eds., "Outline of the Organization of the Medical Department of the Confederate and Department of Tennessee, by S. H. Stout," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XVI (March, 1957), 80; Knoxville Whig, V, August 2, November 19, 1865.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL PRACTITIONER

There were no regular physicians among the earliest settlers of East Tennessee, and generally those in the area who first practiced medicine or "physick," as it was called, also followed several other occupations. For instance, Dr. Samuel Carrick, first president of Blount College, was physician, pastor, and school teacher at the same time. Dr. James Cozby, regimental surgeon under John Sevier, was Indian fighter, farmer, politician, and a ruling elder in the Presbyterian church. With such lack of specialization crude methods of surgical practice were often used, and much of the medical treatment was administered in the form of home remedies by the pioneers themselves, who brought with them to the frontier currently accepted knowledge and superstitions involving the handling of disease.¹

The nineteenth century, however, saw the rise of a generation of better trained physicians who played important roles in Knoxville and Knox County affairs. These included Drs. J. C. Strong, Frank A. Ramsey, James King, Donald McIntosh, R. O. Currey, William J. Baker, B. B. Ilenoir, and J. G. M. Ramsey. Ramsey is always numbered among Knoxville's outstanding medical practitioners of the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, his medical interests, which lasted throughout his lifetime, and by which he made his living at various times, played such an important part

¹Platt and Ogden, "Knox County Medical Society," 77-78.

in his career that any biography would be incomplete without a treatment of them.

Already having been appointed by Governor Joseph McMinn to be a surgeon of the 10th Regiment in the Tennessee State Militia in May, 1820, Ramsey set up his medical practice in Knoxville in August of that year.² Unmarried, he took his meals at the hotel on Gay Street kept by Archibald Rhea and "did as much practice as any junior member of the profession could expect to do in a place as healthy as Knoxville."³ While thus engaged in his medical practice, Ramsey attended the Presbyterian Church, where he "saw every Sabbath sitting in Capt. Crozier's pew a beautiful young lady his eldest daughter Peggy Barton Crozier."⁴ Margaret Barton Crozier, born September 18, 1802, had been educated at Salem Female Academy in Winston Salem, North Carolina.⁵ Upon her return from school in 1817, according to Ramsey, she became the "Belle of Knoxville."⁶

Like her husband-to-be, Margaret came from a prominent Knoxville family. Her father, John Crozier, a pioneer Knoxville merchant who was

²Copy of Commission, May 13, 1820, in metal cylinder, in Ramsey Papers (UT).

³Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 6, Ramsey Papers (NC). Throughout his medical career, Ramsey was to differentiate between areas conducive, or not conducive, to good medical practice as unhealthy or healthy areas, respectively.

⁴Ibid., 7.

⁵Ibid.; Adelaide L. Fries to McKnitt Ramsey, March 23, 1893, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁶Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 7, Ramsey Papers (NC).

conspicuous in many civic improvements, was for thirty-four years Knoxville postmaster. Elizabeth, her sister, married David A. Deaderick, an influential Knoxville merchant, clerk and master of the chancery court, and secretary of the board of trustees of East Tennessee University. Her brother, John H. Crozier, a Knoxville lawyer, was twice elected to the United States House of Representatives, while another brother, Arthur, served as comptroller of the treasury of Tennessee from 1851 to 1855.⁷

Ramsey was twenty-three and Margaret eighteen when they were attracted to each other. After a few months' courtship, they were married March 1, 1821,⁸ and took a bridal trip to Mecklenburg County and Winston Salem, North Carolina, before settling in Knoxville. The Register of February 26, 1822, announced that in the previous December Ramsey had moved "his shop to a new building joining his dwelling house on Gay Street immediately opposite Doctor King's and will continue to practice medicine in Knoxville and vicinity."⁹ The Ramseys' first child, Margaret Jane, who died at the age of six, was born while they were living there.

After two years' residence and practice in Knoxville following his marriage, Ramsey moved in January, 1823, to a building he had erected on one of his father's farms near Gilliam's Station at the forks of the

⁷ Rothrock, French Broad, 403.

⁸ Kate White, "Marriage Records of Knox County, Tennessee," Tennessee Historical Magazine, VI (October, 1820), 189.

⁹ Knoxville Register, February 26, 1822.

Holston and French Broad rivers. From here he carried on his medical practice during the ensuing decades, though he was engaged in agricultural, banking, railroad, and other activities and enterprises. There is no little amount of confusion among historians and biographers concerning the place Ramsey's medical practice played in his life after he left Knoxville in 1823. One newspaper story flatly asserts, "Dr. Ramsey gave up the practice of medicine early in life."¹⁰ Yet in his obituary we are told that he "at 21 began the practice of medicine which profession he followed successfully for a number of years."¹¹ The truth of the matter seems to be, however, that Ramsey, while being prominently involved in many other activities, was actively, albeit at times sporadically, engaged in the practice of medicine throughout the rest of his life.¹²

In fact, Ramsey was not satisfied merely to carry on a general medical practice. In November, 1828, while on a trip to South Carolina for his health, as well as for the promotion of railroad communications between that state and East Tennessee, he attended the Medical College in Charleston. Although Ramsey's railroad activities in Charleston on this trip have attracted the notice of subsequent historians, his correspondence with his wife and brother indicate that his medical training, as well, involved a great deal of his time. His rooming house

¹⁰Newspaper article, Breck Scrapbook, 80.

¹¹Knoxville Daily Chronicle, April 12, 1884.

¹²Goodspeed's Knox County, 1031-32.

was chosen "convenient to the Medical College--the Marine Hospital & the Surgery all of which I shall attend during my stay in town."¹³

The treatment of various diseases and the performance of every kind of surgery seem to have been his special interests during this period of study in Charleston. He was apparently highly pleased with the members of the faculty and the rather free intercourse he was able to carry on with them. Especially was he impressed by the fact that "the same austereable [sic] feeling is not indulged here as was by the Professors at Philadelphia toward the students."¹⁴ He called upon the professors after lecture hours and occasionally dined with them at their invitation.¹⁵ The importance to Ramsey of the medical training which he received in Charleston is amply illustrated by his assertion that his extreme discomfort at being absent from home was only alleviated by the feeling that "I shall improve myself much in my profession."¹⁶ Indeed, his medical interest became so acute that he seems to have become a leader and organizer in the class.¹⁷ That this attention to his studies in the medical college involved more than mere observation on his part

¹³Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, November 26, 1828, Ramsey Papers (UT). Ramsey always addressed his wife in letters as "Mrs. M. B. C. Ramsey." He also referred to her as "Peggy." Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, August 27, 1864, ibid.

¹⁴Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, November 27, December 15, 1828, ibid.

¹⁵Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, November 26, 1828; H. R. Frost to Ramsey, March 17, 1829, ibid. Ramsey apparently thought so much of H. R. Frost, Dean of the Medical College of South Carolina, that he named a son born while he was on this trip to South Carolina, Francis Alexander Frost Horlbeck Ramsey. Ramsey Family Bible, between pages 727 and 729, ibid.

¹⁶Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, November 26, 1828, ibid.

¹⁷Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, January 14, 1829, Ramsey Papers (NC).

is indicated by the fact that when his wife became somewhat anxious for his return, he wrote that he could not leave until the examinations and commencement were over in March, 1829, some five months after his arrival there. Nor did he feel that he could request the faculty to excuse him from these requirements.¹⁸

The Medical College of South Carolina in turn displayed its regard for Ramsey in conferring on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Medicine at its commencement March 18, 1831.¹⁹ He apparently maintained his interest in the college long after this period of his training there. Some years afterward he recommended his half-brother Frank to this school, and in later life Ramsey had a close relationship and corresponded with Dr. Samuel Henry Dickson, professor at the college, and also an eminent Charleston physician and author in the field of medicine.²⁰

Ramsey was also extremely prominent in the contributions he made to the medical profession as a whole. In his day the only three medical colleges in the United States were located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Charleston, South Carolina; and Lexington, Kentucky. Since the distances to these schools was often great, and one could practice medicine

¹⁸Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, February, 1829, Ramsey Papers (UT).

¹⁹Knoxville Register, April 13, 1831. Ramsey believed that he had been so honored, in part, because of his successful treatment of a case of dropsy in the chest, which he had been invited to see and treat while he was in Charleston in 1829-30. Hesselstine, Ramsey, 55.

²⁰Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, December 9, 1851, Ramsey Papers (UT); S. Henry Rickson to Ramsey, May 29, 1861, Ramsey Papers (NC); "Samuel Henry Dickson," National Cyclopaedia of American Biography (46 vols. and 10 current vols.; New York: James T. White & Company, 1900), X, 285.

after only a short period of apprenticeship under a practicing physician, few men had had any formal training or received their M. D. degree.

Ramsey himself had studied at two of these three schools and realized the need for educated doctors. Therefore, he was one of five charter members from Knox County who helped organize in 1830 the State Medical Society of Tennessee, whose hope was to remedy "this uncontrolled practice of medicine, and to curb this growing number of unqualified practitioners."²¹

Ramsey's pen was also used in advancing the cause of his profession. Following the general belief of the period that it was of great practical importance to understand the influence of climate and locality upon diseases, Ramsey in May, 1831, sent "An Essay on the Medical Topography of East Tennessee" to be read before the state society in Nashville. It was later printed in the Transylvania Journal of Medicine.²² Knoxville's first sanitary ordinance, one that remained unaltered on the books for over half a century, was drafted by him.²³

When the increased number of physicians and the difficulty of traveling to Nashville for the state meeting necessitated the organizing of a sectional society patterned after and closely affiliated with the state society, Ramsey became one of the founders of the East Tennessee Medical

²¹Platt and Ogden, "Knox County Medical Society," 78; Philip M. Hamer, The Centennial History of the Tennessee State Medical Association (Nashville: Tennessee State Medical Association, 1930), 27.

²²W. W. Clayton, History of Davidson County Tennessee (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis and Co., 1880), 272; Hamer, Centennial History, 37.

²³"Resolutions of Respect," Knox County Medical Society to Mrs. J. G. M. Ramsey, May 1, 1884, Ramsey Papers (UT).

Society, established in May, 1845. He, along with Dr. S. B. Cunningham of Washington County, drafted its constitution and by-laws, and Ramsey wrote its code of ethics.²⁴ He was a member of a committee of physicians who conferred in 1846 with the officials of East Tennessee University in an attempt to establish a medical college in connection with that institution.²⁵

Ramsey's interest in medicine even in the prime of his life, however, extended beyond mere contributions to the profession. There is an abundance of evidence that he was an active physician, though at times more involved with other matters. A letter to Draper, dated September 20, 1845, while indicating an intermittent practice, reflects anything but a medical career that had long since been abandoned. In apologizing for not having responded to an earlier letter from Draper, he says,

And now at the end of nearly seven months I can only excuse myself by the reflection that in that time I have not had one leisure hour--and especially since your last favor came to hand I have not set at my desk five minutes at a time unless when writing prescriptions. After I left the bank²⁶ I found it necessary to nurse my practice a little which I necessarily had to some extent relinquished while financing. I advertised accordingly, and I have been overwhelmed with its duties ever since. And just now is our sickly season and I scarcely eat one regular meal at home or abroad--and some days do not even see all of my family.²⁷

²⁴Ibid., Knoxville Register, December 18, 1884; Platt and Ogden, "Knox County Medical Society," 77.

²⁵Stanley J. Folmsbee, "East Tennessee University: Pre-War Years, 1840-1861," ETHS Publications, No. 22 (1950), 61.

²⁶A reference to the Knoxville Branch of the Southwestern Railroad Bank, founded in 1839, of which Ramsey had been president. When the charter of the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad was suspended in the early forties, so were its banking privileges in Tennessee. Hesseltine, Ramsey, 36-37.

²⁷Ramsey to Draper, September 20, 1845, Draper Manuscripts.

Earlier in the same year he had written to Polk concerning the use of time that he could "snatch from the pressure of a very laborious & extensive country practice."²⁸ After having apparently sought an appointment as surgeon in the army during the Mexican War, he was forced to write Polk declining the appointment because of the discrepancy in income between the pay of a surgeon and the income from his practice at home. The claims of his large family would not allow him to relinquish his "good practice" at home,²⁹ a practice which apparently carried him into several counties, sometimes as many as four in a single day.³⁰ In fact, Ramsey's professional services were in such demand that he formed two or more partnerships in order to give more time to other interests.³¹ One of these partnerships was with Dr. Samuel H. Dickson, his son-in-law.³² As his private fortune grew during the fifties, Ramsey certainly became less dependent on his profession for income, although he did continue it. In the early fifties he wrote his brother, "I have as much good practice here as I want."³³ To Draper in February, 1861, he

²⁸Ramsey to Polk, March 4, 1845, Polk Papers.

²⁸Ramsey to Polk, November 7, 1847, ibid.

³⁰Mrs. Ramsey to F. A. and W. W. A. Ramsey, September 2, 1849, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey [?], Governors' Papers--William Trousdale (Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville); Ramsey to Draper, September 9, 1853, Draper Manuscripts.

³¹Hamer, Centennial History, 230.

³²Statement of Financial Condition, Addressed to "My Family Alone," December 25, 1876, Box 3-F, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³³Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, 1852 [?], McIver Collection.

observed, "I select my patients, take only such as I choose."³⁴

During the Civil War, although Ramsey had other duties which absorbed most of his time and efforts, he did make use of his medical training when need required it and opportunity allowed. Early in the war he served as the resident surgeon of Colonel J. C. Vaughn's regiment when they were camped in Knoxville. At the battle of Chickamauga he improvised a hospital which apparently saved the lives of many of the soldiers wounded there.³⁵ Ramsey himself said of his Confederate medical service, "I [was] a financial agent by day & a surgeon after business hours in the field camps or hospitals doing all I could for the wounded Rebels."³⁶

The post war years found him once again a practicing physician. At the close of the war in 1865 he and his wife, having lost their fortunes and being alone in "a strange country" with forty-two dollars between them, sought refuge near Charlotte, North Carolina. Ramsey says of this experience

We had nothing here or elsewhere. I bought at least 37 1/2 cents worth of medicine, borrowed my son's cavalry horse and saddle and from another, borrowed a pair of medical wallets and, still wearing the Confederate grey, fell back on my old profession.³⁷

Living in exile in North Carolina between 1865 and 1871, at various times near Charlotte, Salisbury, and in the city of Charlotte itself, Ramsey

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Ramsey to Draper, February 12, 1861, Draper Correspondence.

³⁵ Hesseltine, Ramsey, 100, 141-43; Ramsey to Robert Ramsey, April 28, 1861, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³⁶ Ramsey to Draper, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence.

³⁷ Ibid.

depended mainly on his medical profession for a livelihood. It would appear, however, that this livelihood was somewhat meager at first compared to what he and his family had been accustomed to. He speaks of poor patients "nearly as impoverished as ourselves," from whom he "made only a meagre [sic] support & got no money, in payment of my bills."³⁸ Added to this situation was his observation that North Carolina was "healthy," with few patients to be had.³⁹ Although Ramsey's practice did increase while he was in North Carolina, and some of the people began to pay their bills, had he not had other sources of income, he and his wife could hardly have lived on the earnings from his profession. To Draper he wrote as late as 1871, "I have a little practice in Charlotte and have to nurse it for a living."⁴⁰

In spite of such unpromising results, Ramsey's medical profession played a vital part in his adjustment following the war. At one time while in North Carolina, he planned to move to Dickson, Alabama, where he had been promised a physician's office and a practice already established by another doctor.⁴¹ When he finally returned to Knoxville

³⁸Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, December 1, 1868, McIver Collection; Ramsey to Draper, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence; Financial Statement, December 25, 1876, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³⁹Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, Margaret Jane Dickson, and Elizabeth Breck, October 5, 1866; Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, January 17, 1867, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁴⁰Mr. and Mrs. Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, Margaret Jane Dickson, and Elizabeth Breck, December 31, 1866, ibid.; Ramsey to Draper, April 1, 1871, Draper Correspondence.

⁴¹Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, Margaret Jane Dickson, and Elizabeth Breck, October 5, 1866, Ramsey Papers (UT).

in late 1871, Ramsey continued to practice at his daughter's farm "Riverside," outside Knoxville, and later in the city of Knoxville from 1872 until his health failed some years afterward. Here even in his late seventies and early eighties, Ramsey seems to have carried on a fairly active practice.⁴² He speaks of having "as much practice as I can perform." To Draper he wrote in 1872, "I am well and am making a comfortable living by my practice."⁴³ He still rode distances of several miles to visit his patients, at times staying all night.⁴⁴ Certainly his account book, listing patients called on, medicine prescribed, and fees received, indicates beyond doubt that he carried on an active, if somewhat limited practice.⁴⁵ In 1874 he observed, "I practice in a limited circle to make my 'daily bread.'"⁴⁶ Moreover, in 1880, at which time he would have been eighty-three, the census taker still listed him as an M. D.⁴⁷ Not only did he actively practice medicine, but even in his declining years Ramsey continued to make some contribution to the medical field with his pen. For instance, in 1875 he furnished materials for

⁴²Ramsey to Draper, February 3, 1873, Draper Correspondence; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, March 12, 1873, McIver Collection.

⁴³Ramsey to Draper, May 6, 1872, Draper Correspondence; Ramsey to Draper, October 3, 1872, Draper Manuscripts.

⁴⁴Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, December 20, 1871, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, February 18, 1873, McIver Collection.

⁴⁵Ramsey Account Book Begun at Riverside in 1871 & Continued in Knoxville in 72 & 73, Box 3-H, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁴⁶Ramsey to Draper, July 8, 1874, Draper Correspondence.

⁴⁷Tenth Census (1880), pop., Tenn., Knox, 38.

J. Berrien Lindsley's proposed "Medical Annals of Tennessee," that was never published.⁴⁸

Certainly any student of Ramsey's life is forced to recognize that the practice of medicine was a primary influence in his life, one that even affected other phases of his life significantly. He was forever offering his friends medical advice, recommending specific cures in given situations, and traditionally using Latin terms in practically every instance where he sought to emphasize a point in an article or letter. In spite of the part that medicine played in Ramsey's life, however, there were at times more predominant interests that absorbed his time and efforts, not the least of which was the siring of a rather large family at Mecklenburg.

⁴⁸Hamer, Centennial History, 70-71; Platt and Ogden, "Knox County Medical Society," 81.

CHAPTER III

FAMILY MAN

At Mecklenburg, the estate to which the Ramseys moved in 1823, they established a very warm and strong family relationship. They evidently loved each other dearly, whether they were together or apart. Although Ramsey's many varied activities carried him from home often, he disliked being away from his wife, and his letters home are filled with warm messages of love and affection.¹ For example, while on a rather extended stay in Charleston when his history of Tennessee was being published, he averred in several letters that he never intended to leave his wife again.² Perhaps one of the Ramseys' own grandchildren, who was an avid student of J. G. M.'s life, best described their home life when he wrote,

The predominate [sic] virtue in that household was contentment. . . . What was the greatest inspiration to my grandfather was to know that he had "Peggy's" approval and my grandmother was always proud of the many honors that were conferred [sic] upon her husband.

¹Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, November 26, 30, 1828, Ramsey Papers (UT).

²Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, December 6, 9, 1852, ibid. On this same trip he addressed a letter to relatives who had visited his wife during his absence in which he thanked them for doing so and expressed a warm love, respect and admiration for Mrs. Ramsey, who

has often made before such sacrifices for the good of others by remaining at home when I am roaming over the world in the service often as now of the public that she has entitled herself to the sympathy--condolence & comfort of all her friends & acquaintances--I know what she sacrifices--the rest of you cannot appreciate it fully--I think I can never leave her again.

Ramsey to William Swan, December 11, 1852, ibid.

For more than sixty years they lived this contented life as far as each other was concerned.³

In this warm family environment the Ramseys reared a family of fourteen children. Margaret Jane Crozier Ramsey, born while they were living in Knoxville, died at Mecklenburg in 1828, at the age of six.⁴ Their oldest child to reach maturity was Hannah Elizabeth Alexander Ramsey, born February 4, 1823, shortly after removal to their new home. Little is known of the early life of Elizabeth, or "Lizzie" as her family called her, before her marriage in 1845 to Colonel Daniel Breck, a Richmond, Kentucky, lawyer and a graduate of Centre College and Transylvania Law College.⁵ They first made their home in Richmond, where Elizabeth was stricken with a serious illness in 1847 and almost died.⁶ For a brief period in 1851-52 Colonel Breck practiced law in St. Paul in the Minnesota Territory.⁷ Upon his return to Richmond, in partnership with Ramsey's son Alexander, he established a large lumber mill that furnished Frankfort and the surrounding areas.⁸ Not many years

³Dr. J. Ramsey Alexander, Recollections about his Grandparents, Ramsey Papers (NC). See Appendix I for a Ramsey family genealogy.

⁴Ramsey Family Bible, between pages 727 and 729, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁵Printed obituary in Breck Scrapbook, 64.

⁶Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, June 8, 15, 1847; Daniel Breck to Ramsey, July 1, 1847, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁷Daniel Breck to Ramsey, October 25, 1851; Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, December 6, 1851; Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, December 9, 1852, ibid.

⁸Ramsey, Financial Statement, December 25, 1876, ibid.

later, probably in 1856,⁹ Colonel Breck died, and Elizabeth returned to Mecklenburg to live with her parents.

Ramsey had earlier offered the Brecks a farm, which they had declined. With Mrs. Breck's return to Knoxville as a widow he deeded the farm to her.¹⁰ Thus in 1860 she was listed by the census taker as a farmer in the household of her father and in possession of real estate valued at \$3,110 and personal property at \$2,000.¹¹ Mrs. Breck remained with her parents the rest of their lives, except in periods of forced separation, and was a constant aid and encouragement to them, as well as a loyal defender of the political views of her father. Her relations with them became more significant in the Civil War and Reconstruction periods.

Ramsey's first son, John Crozier Ramsey, named after his mother's father, was born June 7, 1824, a little over a year after his sister Elizabeth. Following in his father's steps, Crozier received his preparatory education under the tutelage of a Doak, the Reverend S. W. Doak, president of Tusculum Academy (later Tusculum College), and son of the illustrious Samuel Doak, under whom J. G. M. had studied at Washington College.¹² Crozier then matriculated in East Tennessee University.

⁹Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, March 19, 1856, McIver Collection.

¹⁰Ramsey, Financial Statement, December 25, 1876, Ramsey Papers (UT).

¹¹Eighth Census (1860), pop., Tenn., Knox, 250.

¹²Hesseltine, Ramsey, 54; Ramsey to Crozier and Wilberforce Ramsey, April 30, 1842, Ramsey Papers (UT).

After receiving his diploma in 1845,¹³ he studied law, and became one of Knoxville's most successful lawyers.

Little is known of Crozier's personal life. He remained a bachelor all his life, but in his early forties became concerned about the matter and wrote Elizabeth in 1865 that he hoped to find a wife.¹⁴ Like his father, Crozier was interested in business matters, as well as in his profession. As early as 1846, when he was but twenty-two years of age, he owned a stage line which carried the mail from Knoxville to Warm Springs, North Carolina.¹⁵ He and his uncle W. B. A. were partners in land grants, which Crozier called "our mountain lands," in the extreme eastern part of the state. In 1853 he proposed to W. B. A. that they turn these lands over to a New York speculator for development.¹⁶ His father added to Crozier's material interests in the 1850's by willing to him as his share of the inheritance the building in Knoxville on Gay Street in which his law office was located.¹⁷

From his father Crozier inherited "an acquaintance with the political affairs of the country" and a loyalty to the Democratic party. In

¹³A copy of Crozier's diploma can be found in the metal cylinder in ibid.

¹⁴Crozier Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck [undated], 1865, ibid.

¹⁵Cave Johnson to Andrew Johnson, June 17, 1846, in the Knoxville Standard, July 14, 1846; Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, November 9, 1849, Ramsey Papers (UT); Knoxville Register, January 12, 1857.

¹⁶Crozier Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, January 11, 1853, McIver Collection; W. B. A. Ramsey to Ramsey, May 5, 1853 [abstract], Ramsey Papers (UT).

¹⁷Ramsey Will, undated [after 1853, possibly 1856], ibid.

addition, he was an active campaigner who took the stump often for Democratic candidates for the presidency and other national and local offices, "defending and maintaining" the party's principles. Numerous references in correspondence and newspaper articles in the fifties attest to this fact. For example, on one occasion in 1852 Ramsey reported to his brother, W. B. A., that all were well at his household "except Crozier who is constantly on the stump & has injured his lungs." The Knoxville Register in October of this same year, while claiming that Crozier had been defeated in a recent political debate, described him as an "old stager" in politics. The Democratic organ in Knoxville, the Standard, asserted concerning a political speech he made in August, 1855, that Crozier "exceeded himself in the speech he made--that he became warmed up and pitched into Know Nothingism with gloves off." Reporting Crozier's announced intention to run for Congress that year, the opposition paper, the Knoxville Whig, declared him to be a "clever fellow" and called on the Whigs to narrow their candidates to one in order to give this formidable opponent "lots of trouble." Thus when the Knoxville Standard in 1855, commenting on Crozier's intimate connection "with the political machinery of the Knoxville district," averred that "no man in the district has served his party with more fidelity than he has,"¹⁸ it would appear not to have overstated the case.

¹⁸Knoxville Standard, March 21, April 25, August 9, December 13, 1855; Knoxville Register, October 6, 1852, May 3, 1855, January 17, May 29, 1856, January 22, 1857; Knoxville Whig, March 17, 1855; Herschel Gower and Jack Allen, eds., Pen and Sword: The Life and Journals of Randal W. McGavock (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Commission, 1959), 51n, 382; Knoxville Mercury, January 6, 1857; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, October 7, 1872, McIver Collection.

Unlike his father, however, Crozier sought political office. As early as 1849, when he was only twenty-five, his name was being mentioned in Knox County and East Tennessee Democratic circles for both the Tennessee legislature and for Congress. He did not, however, command enough support to warrant his candidacy until March, 1855, when he announced himself as a candidate for Congress. Reporting his campaign announcement, the Knoxville Whig remarked that he was "a very clever fellow, and has strong claims on the Democratic party." Although Crozier felt that his "prospects for success were very flattering," he subsequently withdrew to allow Colonel D. H. Cummings, another Democratic hopeful, to run in an attempt to vindicate himself against an earlier defeat in a "military election," probably for colonel of a local militia. Crozier made another futile attempt to gain the Democratic nomination in 1857. His third attempt, however, was crowned with success, for he became the Democratic candidate for Congress against Horace Maynard in 1859. Although Brownlow indicated that much "noise and confusion" was created over Crozier in Knox County and that he ran a "very creditable race," Maynard defeated him soundly, by a larger margin than he had received against Wayne Wallace in 1857. John Bell Brownlow, W. G.'s son, noted on the border of a microfilm copy of the Knoxville Whig, August 13, 1859 (now in the McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee), that when Ramsey heard of Maynard's defeat of Crozier, he remarked that it made him "lose all faith in the perpetuity [sic] of the Union."¹⁹

¹⁹Crozier Ramsey to Wilberforce Ramsey, May 7, 1849; Mrs. Ramsey to Wilberforce and Alexander Ramsey, May 30, 1849, Ramsey Papers (UT);

Although Crozier was unsuccessful in his attempts to secure elective office, he had been rewarded with the office of United States district attorney for East Tennessee because of his active campaigning for Franklin Pierce in 1852. Though accused of inconsistency and ingratitude by the Knoxville Register, he supported James Buchanan for the nomination in 1856 and then strenuously campaigned for Buchanan during the general election. Because of his efforts in this campaign, the Register, January 22, 1857, reported that Crozier's name was being suggested for "our next minister to Spain." Instead, he continued to serve as district attorney for East Tennessee up to the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln.²⁰

The most dramatic episode in Crozier's professional and political career before the Civil War involved his actions as district attorney and his relations with James Newman, a fellow Knoxville Democratic leader, and his brother Tazewell, who in 1860 was the speaker of the Tennessee senate and a senator from Franklin and Lincoln counties. The controversy between the Newmans and Crozier grew out of a pension claim, in 1853 in which the Newmans had served as agents of two pensioners, Elizabeth Davis and Rachel Hatfield. Crozier had been directed by the federal government to investigate the case. Although proof of the pension

Knoxville Whig, March 17, 24, April 7, 1855, August 6, 13, 1859, March 17, 1860; Knoxville Register, March 21, May 3, 1855; Rothrock French Broad, 131; Gladys Inez Williams, "The Life of Horace Maynard" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1931), 16; Goodspeed's Knox County, 833.

²⁰The American Statesman (Knoxville), April 20, 1853; Knoxville Register, April 24, May 29, 1856; Ramsey to Draper, January 14, 1853, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey to Henrietta Lenoir, September 7, 1858, Ramsey Papers (UT).

claims involved the affidavits of some people whom he could not locate, Crozier, after an interview with the Newmans, was satisfied that the claims were legitimate. Some years later, in 1859, however, according to him, certain "things had come to light" with reference to the affidavits which caused him to question the Newmans' honesty. He renewed his investigation and discovered that fraud and forgery had been committed in the securing of the affidavits in 1853. After corresponding with the commissioner of pensions concerning the matter, Crozier was instructed that the statute of limitations prevented the case's being tried in a federal court. He then asked the commissioner to send an agent to investigate and to indict the Newmans in the state court, while intimating that they had committed fraud in other cases. In addition, Crozier presented documents and other results of his investigations in "cards" in the Nashville Union and American and in the Knoxville newspapers.²¹

A furor resulted from this case, with Crozier and the Newmans using the newspapers to hurl charges and countercharges against each other. Taz Newman charged that the district attorney was a "puppet," being used by Arthur Crozier, his uncle and the state comptroller, and William Spence, owner of the Exchange Bank of Tennessee, to slander the

²¹Robert M. White, Messages of the Governors of Tennessee (6 vols.; Nashville: Tennessee Historical Commission, 1952-63), V, 100; Will T. Hale and Dixon L. Merritt, A History of Tennessee and Tennesseans . . . (8 vols.; New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1913), III, 594; Gower and Alled, eds., Pen and Sword, 559; Crozier Ramsey to George C. Whiting, February 10, 1860, in Knoxville Whig, March 7, 1860; ibid., March 17, 24, 1860.

Newmans and cover up a swindle that Spence and Arthur Crozier had perpetrated on the state. James Newman claimed that Crozier had attacked him because he thought Newman had dishonestly used funds designated for Crozier's campaign for Congress in 1859. Newman denied such a charge, alleging that he had actually given money out of his own pocket for Crozier's campaign and had also "composed his speeches and furnished anecdotes." In addition, the Newmans charged Crozier with numerous cases of corruption: as a director of the branch bank of Tennessee at Athens, as a political candidate in the promising of offices during his campaign, and as a lawyer in instructing a client to commit perjury. James Newman gave as his reason for having previously opposed Crozier's nomination for Congress on the Democratic ticket that "Ramsey would turn upon me and sting me for a fee of five dollars." Criticizing Crozier's "grammar and lack of real training in spite of his seven years of college and ten years at the bar," he alleged that Crozier did not write his own speeches or his "cards" for the newspapers. Besides hurling such charges at the district attorney, the Newmans apparently also sought to have him removed from office.²²

Crozier responded that he was not the instrument of anyone, that he had "only discharged my official duty," and that documents and county records stood as proof of the fraud committed by the Newmans. Defending

²²George C. Whiting to Andrew Johnson, March 30, 1860; James W. Newman to Johnson, March 9, 1860; John A. Hood to Crozier Ramsey, March 28, 1860, Johnson Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. (This biographer used typescript copies in the University of Tennessee Library, Knoxville.); Knoxville Whig, March 2, 17, May 5, 1860.

himself in a letter to Andrew Johnson, March 30, 1860, Crozier declared, "If I should be entitled to more credit for one official act than another-- it should be given to me for my action in the exposure of the fraud and forgery in the Newman case." Ramsey, defending his son against any attempt to dismiss him from office, also asserted to Johnson, "Official fidelity will hardly be considered cause for removal."²³

The results of the controversy were entirely inconclusive, George C. Whiting, the commissioner of pensions, rejected Crozier's plea for an investigation and an indictment of the Newmans in a Tennessee state court, expressing his doubt that any case could be brought against them. He instructed Crozier to present "concrete evidence" if he desired the matter to be pursued. Taz Newman, moreover, certainly considered himself vindicated by his re-election as speaker of the Tennessee senate upon his return to Nashville in March, 1860, after a trip to Washington to defend himself. Crozier, on the other hand, was not removed from office. W. G. Brownlow, delighted to see two Democrats at each other's throats, gave front page coverage to the incident several times, placing equal blame on the three. However, he was convinced that the political influence of the Newmans in Nashville and Washington placed Crozier on the losing end of the battle. The most dramatic result of the feud was a shooting scrape between James Newman and Crozier, in which the latter's arm was broken, while Newman was seriously wounded by the

²³Crozier Ramsey to Johnson, March 30, 1860; Ramsey to Johnson, March 2, 1860, Johnson Papers; Knoxville Whig, March 17, 24, 1860.

district attorney.²⁴

Crozier's character and conduct, particularly as district attorney of East Tennessee are debatable issues. He was certainly criticized much more harshly by his contemporaries than was his father. William Gibbs McAdoo, lawyer and professor at East Tennessee University, wrote in his diary on November 27, 1860, that Crozier was a "complete mixture of the fool and the knave." However, any reader of McAdoo's diary soon realizes that he had good opinions about very few of his fellows. Moreover, in 1860 he had designs on the office of East Tennessee district attorney, which position Crozier held at the time. The Knoxville Register, January 22, 1857, criticized and ridiculed Crozier's pride and boastfulness. In another article, a year later, referring to Crozier's recent appointment as General on Governor Isham G. Harris' staff, the paper commented,

We congratulate the Major upon his steady progress in titular distinctions. We are glad to notice his increasing honors have not disturbed his equanimity--he wears them with all the modesty of genuine merit.

One wonders if these remarks were not made with tongue in cheek. Chiding Crozier for a recent trip he had made to Columbia, Tennessee, this same paper remarked on May 13, 1858, "Our District Attorney, we fear, is inclined to travel beyond his jurisdiction. In what Court, Gen'l, do you practice--Cupid's or Justice's?"²⁵

²⁴Tazewell Newman to Johnson, March 8, 1860, Johnson Papers; Knoxville Whig, March 2, 17, May 5, 1860.

²⁵William Gibbs McAdoo Diary, January 28, 1860, University of Tennessee Library, Knoxville (microfilm copy of the original diary in the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.); Knoxville Register,

W. G. Brownlow, obviously biased, referred to Crozier as a "corrupt scoundrel," "most unprincipled knave," and "miscreant," and criticized his professional capabilities and conduct with such terms as "villainous and corrupt lawyer," "third-rate county court lawyer," and "one-talent" district attorney. He described Crozier's service as district attorney under Pierce and Buchanan as an "unequaled course of corruption, bribery, and perjury" and as "a long career of crime, bad morals and lying meanness [sic]." However, as we shall see later, these charges seem to have resulted partly from Brownlow's arrest early in the Civil War at the hands of Crozier, who was the Confederate district attorney for East Tennessee. Brownlow's writing and newspaper articles before this experience do not indicate quite the low opinion of Crozier that he expressed of him after it. For instance, in one editorial in the Knoxville Whig during the fifties Brownlow praised Crozier highly for his labors in Nashville on behalf of internal improvements for East Tennessee.²⁶

In fact, this biographer discovered very few of Brownlow's criticisms of Crozier's service as district attorney during the period while he was actually practicing. In an article in the Knoxville Whig in

January 22, 1857, January 28, 1858. On the edge of a microfilm copy of the Knoxville Whig, December 31, 1859, in the McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee, John Bell Brownlow, W. G. Brownlow's son, noted that Crozier was "called Gen. from having been on Gov. Trousdale's staff;" Knoxville Register, May 13, 1858.

²⁶W. G. Brownlow, Sketches of the Rise, Progress and Decline of Secession (Philadelphia: George W. Childs, 1862), 290, 295, 318, 332; Knoxville Whig, January 31, 1852, January 11, 1865.

1857, Brownlow, referring to a case involving a local Democratic leader, remarked that all eyes would be on Crozier in June to see if he prosecuted his Democratic friends. Also, while Brownlow was in New Orleans in 1858, in a letter to O. P. Temple he made a passing criticism of Crozier as a district attorney. In describing the district attorney of Louisiana, who had framed a "true bill" against General William Walker, the noted filibusterer, in spite of the fact that there was no chance of conviction, Brownlow said of him, "The District Attorney, for Louisiana, seems to have been a sort of Crow Ramsey of a fellow." He did in addition, denounce Crozier in his 1859 campaign for Congress against Horace Maynard, whom the Whig editor supported, but in none of Brownlow's references to Crozier during the years before the war, and there are many in the Knoxville Whig alone, did he indulge in the extremely bitter criticism that he used after the war began.²⁷

The Knoxville Standard, a Democratic paper and equally biased, on several occasions complimented Crozier for displaying "a degree of energy and legal ability rarely met with in those of more experience." In October, 1855, this paper reprinted an article from the Washington Union in which Crozier was praised by the officers of the United States Pension office "for his vigilance in ferreting out" pension offenders

²⁷ Knoxville Whig, March 21, 1857; Brownlow to O. P. Temple, January 26, 1858, O. P. Temple Papers (University of Tennessee Library, Knoxville). In addition there appears to be no other real evidence in contemporary papers, such as the T. A. R. Nelson Papers and the O. P. Temple Papers, of specific charges leveled against Crozier before the Civil War began. He does seem, however, to have been considered a little obnoxious by many of his neighbors, Knoxville Whig, May 5, 1860.

and "for his zeal and activity in prosecuting them to judgment," and the Standard went on to comment, "It is understood the judge expressed a like opinion."²⁸

Another charge that Brownlow hurled against Crozier during the war was that he was a "dirty little drunken attorney."²⁹ While there does not appear to be a great deal of evidence to substantiate this charge, a newspaper article in the Knoxville Whig, August 13, 1859, ridiculing Crozier's recent loss of his Congressional race, reported an alleged statement Crozier had made, to the effect that his liquor bill would not be paid if he lost the election. In addition, there are several receipts to Crozier for purchases of whiskey and ale in the Ramsey Papers at the University of Tennessee Library.³⁰ These receipts may, however, represent purchases of whiskey used for entertaining others, as well as himself. There are records of other attacks on Crozier's character and conduct during the war. These will also be discussed later, but at this point it should be noted that they can possibly also be explained in part on the basis of opposing political views and the circumstances of the war. In spite of his shortcomings, Crozier was a responsible, if perhaps somewhat over-industrious, person and seems to have been a faithful son to his parents. Several years after Crozier's death his father described him as "our first-born son . . . idol of his parents

²⁸ Knoxville Standard, June 6, October 25, 1855.

²⁹ Brownlow, Sketches, 318.

³⁰ Knoxville Whig, August 13, 1859. See Box 3-I, Ramsey Papers (UT).

in peace or war."³¹ In the face of so much criticism of Crozier, however, one is forced to conclude that he must have been to some degree an obnoxious character, and was so considered by many of his contemporaries.

A third daughter, born to the Ramseys May 2, 1827, was later named Margaret Jane Crozier Ramsey, after their first child, who died the following year.³² Not much is known of the early life of "Audie,"³³ as she was known by her family, during the years before her marriage. She was probably³⁴ the daughter whom the James K. Polks offered to board in 1842 so that she could attend the Female Institute at Columbia, Tennessee. She was, however, unable to go. If she was the daughter whom the Ramseys hoped to send to this Institute, she had already had private instruction by a governess from Europe, with whom she had studied French and reviewed other courses she had already learned.³⁵ The highlight of Margaret Jane's formative years seems to have been a trip which she took with her father to West Point, New York, in 1848 for a meeting of the Board of Visitors of that institution. Entertained by President and Mrs.

³¹Ramsey to Anson Nelson, December 16, 1879, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

³²Ramsey Family Bible between pages 727 and 729, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³³Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, August 27, 1864, ibid.

³⁴Ramsey to Polk, April 18, February 26, May 10, September 22, 1842, Polk Papers. Inasmuch as Ramsey refers only to "our daughter" in these letters, he could mean Elizabeth, who would now have been about nineteen years old and not yet married. He is in all likelihood, however, referring to Margaret Jane, who would have been about fifteen years old, a much more likely age for a young lady to be entering a female institute.

³⁵Ibid.

Polk in Washington, Ramsey later referred many times to the kind hospitality and graceful courtesy with which Mrs. Polk treated Margaret Jane.³⁶ In 1852 she married Samuel Howard Dickson, a Charleston, South Carolina, physician, and they had two sons, William Wilberforce Ramsey Dickson and Charles Melvin Howard Dickson.³⁷ The Dicksons lived a few years in Morganton, North Carolina, before moving in the middle 1850's (possibly 1856) to Knoxville,³⁸ where Dr. Dickson established a professional partnership with Ramsey.³⁹ Margaret Jane and her husband cultivated a farm north of the Holston River known as Riverside, which Ramsey deeded to them at the time he was dividing his property among his children.⁴⁰ She continued to reside here after Dr. Dickson's death in 1860.⁴¹

Ramsey's second and third sons, though born three years apart, seem to have paired together in a fairly close relationship. Perhaps this relationship is to be partially explained on the basis of their contrasting personalities and characters. William Wilberforce Alexander Ramsey, born January 3, 1826, was more the stable intellectual, while

³⁶Ramsey to Polk, March 19, 1848, *ibid.*; Ramsey Will, March 25, 1882, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Anson Nelson, July 14, 1877, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

³⁷Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 12, Ramsey Papers (NC); Mary Margaret Hoskins, "James Oettys McGready Ramsey, the Man and His Works" (unpublished Master's thesis, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1929), appendix.

³⁸Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 12, Ramsey Papers (NC).

³⁹Financial Statement, December 25, 1876, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁴⁰*Ibid.*; Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 12, Ramsey Papers (NC).

⁴¹Ramsey to Draper, February 22, 1860, Draper Correspondence.

his brother Francis Alexander Frost Horlbeck Ramsey, born January 2, 1829, was more the unstable adventurer. Wilberforce received his preparatory education at Tusculum Academy with his brother Crozier and later graduated with distinction from East Tennessee University before studying law under his uncle John H. Crozier.⁴² In 1848 Wilberforce was licensed to practice law in the state of Tennessee.⁴³

These two boys were the very antithesis of each other. Wilberforce, Ramsey said, "had the stamp of genius on his face, was exceedingly intellectual and fond of study."⁴⁴ He possessed his father's physical features: tall and slender, flat chested, dark eyed, dark haired, and dark complexioned.⁴⁵ His correspondence that has been preserved, moreover, gives every indication of a flair for literary phraseology not at all unlike that of his father.⁴⁶ At the time of Wilberforce's death Ramsey called him "our most promising son . . . the favorite of the whole connection."⁴⁷ Alexander, on the other hand, was a somewhat wild and adventurous youth, and appears religiously to have been the black sheep of the Ramsey family. As late as 1864 Mrs. Ramsey instructed Margaret Jane to "write to Alexander tell him not to rest till he makes his

⁴²Hesseltine, Ramsey, 134; John H. Crozier to Wilberforce Ramsey, January 11, 1847, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁴³A copy of the license, issued August 24, 1848, can be found in ibid. in the metal cylinder.

⁴⁴Hesseltine, Ramsey, 134.

⁴⁵Ibid., 118, 136.

⁴⁶See his letters to his parents in 1849-50, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁴⁷Ramsey to Draper, April 15, 1852, Draper Manuscripts.

peace with God, man has him now in bondage. I pray he may be free in Christ."⁴⁸

The contrasting characteristics of these two brothers are vividly illustrated in their conduct while on a trip which they took to California in 1849-50. This adventure was probably the most notable event, before the Civil War, affecting the lives of Ramsey's children, with the possible exception of Crozier's political career. Although other members of the family, especially Dr. and Mrs. Ramsey, did not want them to go,⁴⁹ the two brothers joined an expedition, organized by Alexander Anderson of Knoxville, and known as General Anderson's East Tennessee Mining Company. While Alexander Ramsey was possibly motivated to join the company because of the adventure and lure of gold, Wilberforce, according to his father, was greatly inspired by his devotion to antiquarian and historical researches. Ramsey asserts,

Such were the two brothers enroute to California. The one was the sua vitur in modo--the other fortitu in re. The one eager in the pursuit and capture of the buffalo on the plains or the hostile Comanche lurking in the Nevada vastnesses, the other talking to the padre in Latin at his ranch or investigating the features and language of the inoffensive and quiet Fernos in their lodges or wigwams.⁵⁰

Certainly Wilberforce's correspondence bears out the fact that he was an astute observer of all that he saw on the way, especially in his encounters with Mexicans and Indians. Keeping in mind his father's

⁴⁸Mrs. Ramsey to Margaret Jane Dickson, August 1, 1864, Breck Scrapbook, between pages 74 and 75.

⁴⁹Wilberforce Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, May 30, 1849, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁵⁰Hesseltine, Ramsey, 135.

antiquarian interest, he wrote from Santa Fe a detailed description of its population, high prices, church architecture, and the religion and customs of the Aztecs.⁵¹ To his brother Crozier he described at length the Mexican entertainment, customs, and women in and around Albuquerque.⁵² To his sister Margaret Jane he wrote concerning the characteristics of the Pijmo and Huma Indians, especially the dress of the women through whose villages they passed on the banks of the Gila River.⁵³ His letters are filled with significant and penetrating observations made along the way. In fact, Wilberforce seems to have considered the trip to be both a step toward psychological maturity and a mental stimulus. He wrote to Crozier not quite a month after the company left, "My life has heretofore been one of ease and pleasure and it is probable this trip will be of great advantage to me hereafter."⁵⁴ It may be noted that this correspondence alone points up a difference between the two boys. Alexander apparently failed to write at all, for no letters of his are extant, and his mother was continually reminding him through Wilberforce to write to her.

It would appear that the Anderson enterprise which the Ramsey brothers joined was quite a large one, for Parson Brownlow wrote to T. A. R. Nelson from Washington in March, 1849, "General Anderson is here--

⁵¹Wilberforce Ramsey to Ramsey, November 3, 1849, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁵²Wilberforce Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, January 18, 1850, ibid.

⁵³Wilberforce Ramsey to Margaret Jane Ramsey, April 15, 1850, ibid.

⁵⁴Wilberforce Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, May 30, 1849, ibid.

has money in abundance--and is fitting a company for California. David A. Deadrack [sic] goes with him."⁵⁵ David Deaderick, prominent Knoxville villian, Ramsey's brother-in-law, and one-time cashier of the Southwestern Railway Bank, whose president Ramsey had been, was to travel with the company as its secretary and treasurer. A stock venture, the company was, as Mrs. Ramsey wrote to her sons while they were enroute to California, the most talked about subject at home and in town.⁵⁶

The two Ramsey boys were to encounter on this trip what, in many ways, one would consider typical experiences for a group of miners traveling to California during the gold rush era. Forty-one men with sixteen loaded wagons left Knoxville May 4, 1849, bound for the gold fields of California by way of Independence, South Pass, and the Mormon settlement at Salt Lake City, undoubtedly planning to follow the route known as the California Trail.⁵⁷ From the very start they faced the characteristic problems of delay and change of plans. The company traveled up through Kentucky to Louisville, and, according to Deaderick,

⁵⁵W. G. Brownlow to T. A. R. Nelson, March 19, 1849, T. A. R. Nelson Papers (McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee).

⁵⁶Mrs. Ramsey to Wilberforce and Alexander Ramsey, May 6, 1849, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁵⁷Mrs. Ramsey said that there were fifty who left, while Deaderick in his diary noted forty-one. Mrs. Ramsey to Wilberforce and Alexander Ramsey, July 3, 1850, *ibid.*; David Anderson Deaderick, *Diary; Register of Events and Facts Recorded Annually by David Anderson Deaderick, 1825-1873* (copy of the original, McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee), 36; Wilberforce Ramsey to J. G. M. Ramsey, July 14, 1849, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier* (2nd ed.; New York: Macmillan Company, 1960), 557.

this leg of the journey actually prevented their long range plans from being carried out. He believed that they were encumbered needlessly in crossing the mountains by property, provisions, horses, and other articles exchanged for stock in the company, most of which could have been purchased more cheaply with less trouble at St. Louis. They were, moreover, delayed in Kentucky in an attempt to trade their horses, which he thought they should never have brought in the first place, for mules.⁵⁸

After crossing Indiana and Illinois to St. Louis, and traveling up the Missouri River, they reached St. Joseph, Missouri, too late to pass through the snows of the Sierra Nevadas.⁵⁹ Wilberforce also pointed out to his father that the scarcity of grass to be found on the South Pass Trail, as well as the warning of the Mormons at Salt Lake City that they could not furnish one single article of provisions for any expedition, had inclined them to change their route.⁶⁰ So the plans were changed, and the group decided to travel the Santa Fe, Gila River route, which they considered to be free of all these dangers.

All along the trip the Ramsey boys were made vividly aware of the normal fears that a loving mother back home entertained for her wandering sons. Mrs. Ramsey continually bombarded them with instructions on the proper clothing to wear, expressed fears over daring things that she had heard they were doing, gave detailed advice on the proper care of their health and the eating of the right diet, and regularly encouraged them

⁵⁸ Deaderick, Diary, 85 ff.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 36 ff.

⁶⁰ Wilberforce Ramsey to Ramsey, July 14, 1849, Ramsey Papers (UT).

to keep the Sabbath and look to God for care and protection. She had read much of the dangers they would face on the trip and warned them of the horrible things on the prairies, especially the elephants which they would begin to see "after they had gotten out of the United States." She was forever encouraging them to turn back if their chances did not look good.⁶¹

Taking the Santa Fe route, the brothers and their company had to contend with the typical threat from Indians, who, they had learned, were gathering in large bodies on the Arkansas River to attack the first train that came that way. Wilberforce was convinced that the Indian threat was exaggerated, but to prepare against the emergency the company, most of them "Tennesseans and good shots," organized themselves into four military divisions of fourteen men, better armed "than any company that has ever crossed the plains."⁶² One division could shoot one hundred and ten shots without reloading, while all together could fire over three hundred. This threat of an Indian attack on the Arkansas River vanished, however, with a report that cholera had dispersed the Indians.⁶³

Before reaching New Mexico the company, experiencing other hardships of traveling westward, dropped many wagons and left dead or unserviceable animals on the plains. In fact, they were packing with only a

⁶¹Ramsey and Mrs. Ramsey to Wilberforce and Alexander Ramsey, May 6, 1849, ibid.

⁶²Wilberforce Ramsey to Ramsey, July 14, 1849, ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

light wagon when they stopped to winter in New Mexico.⁶⁴ Anderson with a few of the company spent part of the winter in Santa Fe, while Deaderick and the rest, including Wilberforce and Alexander, went on to Albuquerque. Wilberforce particularly enjoyed his stay with the Mexicans of this settlement, especially a visit he made with a wealthy family of the area. His infatuation with their customs, entertainment, and parties helped to relieve some of the hardships of the trip.⁶⁵

The company moved on to the west bank of the Rio Grande River, where they stayed six weeks in January and February, intending to follow Colonel Cook[e]'s⁶⁶ route west, which made "a great bend, southerly, from a direct line," passing through El Paso, the area south of the Gila River, and on to San Diego, California.⁶⁷ Instead, they changed their plans again and followed the advice of a mountain man named Hatcher, who instructed them to follow a shorter route due west of Tucson along the Gila River. According to Deaderick, they were only the fifth party, including one led by John Fremont in the mid-forties, to travel this route.⁶⁸

⁶⁴Deaderick, Diary, 89.

⁶⁵Wilberforce Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, January 18, 1850, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁶⁶Donald F. Berthrong and Odessa Davenport, eds., Joseph Reddeford Walker and the Arizona Adventure, by Daniel Ellis Conner (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 23n.

⁶⁷Wilberforce Ramsey to Ramsey, July 14, 1849, Ramsey Papers (UT); Deaderick, Diary, 87.

⁶⁸Ibid.

Before they reached Tucson, they experienced a serious split in the company, resulting from the internal discord that plagued so many westward expeditions during this period. Trouble had been evident in the group for several months. In June, 1849, Ramsey had urged his sons to remain united and avoid involvement in the "fracas" that was dividing their companions.⁶⁹ In August Mrs. Ramsey wrote to the boys, praising them for not following the example of other members of the company who sent accusing letters back home which upset the town.⁷⁰

However, as the company traveled farther, and the trouble brewed, the boys could hardly fail to become involved. In fact, as early as July, Wilberforce had written Crozier concerning their lack of confidence in Anderson.⁷¹ Also, their uncle Frank Kellar had left the train the same month, and when Anderson had refused to give him an honorable discharge, Wilberforce and others had written certificates for him.⁷² The two Ramsey boys were joined by their companions W. Sam Bailey, Joe Bailey, and Moses McNutt in a little clique known as the "Adelphi,"⁷³ and in August, 1849, the Adelphi had informed General Anderson that they had formed a resolution to stick together under all circumstances.⁷⁴

⁶⁹Ramsey to Wilberforce and Alexander Ramsey, June 10, 1849, ibid.

⁷⁰Mrs. Ramsey to Wilberforce and Alexander Ramsey, August 12, 1849, ibid.

⁷¹Wilberforce Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, July 18, 1849, ibid.

⁷²Wilberforce Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, July 14, 1849, ibid.

⁷³Crozier Ramsey to Wilberforce Ramsey, May 7, 1849; Wilberforce Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, July 18, 1849; Mrs. Ramsey to Wilberforce and Alexander Ramsey, August 12, 1849, ibid.

⁷⁴Mrs. Ramsey to Wilberforce and Alexander Ramsey, September 2, 1849, ibid.

Wilberforce wrote to his father in November concerning the distrust of General Anderson by all, and stated that if his uncles, William Swan and Arthur Crozier, had made him their agents, he would already have withdrawn their stock.⁷⁵

At any rate, more than half⁷⁶ the company deserted because of dissatisfaction over lack of water and what they considered this mismanagement and slow progress of the expedition.⁷⁷ Although Wilberforce and Alexander had been approached about the matter earlier, they refused to join the deserters, while the Bailey brothers, both members of the Adelphi, did.⁷⁸ The conflicting reports sent home by Anderson, Deaderick, and others concerning the desertion apparently caused Knoxville to divide into two opposing camps over the issue. Many Knoxvilleians had expected the company to disband at Santa Fe. Many stockholders felt that the adventurers would never stay in California and pay up the debts of the company.⁷⁹ Even Dr. and Mrs. Ramsey were convinced that Wilberforce and Alexander would never get justice by remaining with the company. According to local gossip Deaderick had already written disparagingly of Wilberforce before they had left Knoxville. Mrs. Ramsey felt that

⁷⁵Wilberforce Ramsey to Ramsey, November 3, 1849, ibid.

⁷⁶Deaderick, Diary, 89-90. Wilberforce claimed that the number was twenty-four. Wilberforce Ramsey to Margaret Jane Ramsey, April 15, 1850, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ramsey and Mrs. Ramsey to Wilberforce and Alexander Ramsey, July 3, 1850, ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid.

the leaders were steeped in intrigue and would throw her sons off when their ends were satisfied. Finally, J. G. M. encouraged the boys not to try to refund the debts of the whole company, since there were only seventeen members of the expedition left.⁸⁰

Wilberforce and Alexander, however, remained with the group as it moved on to Tucson for provisions.⁸¹ About eighty-five miles west of Tucson they visited Piman and Maricopa Indian villages on the Gila River, where they traded white beads for wheat, beans, corn, and other items. Wilberforce, as usual, was intrigued with the Indian customs and way of life, as he had been all along the journey. Earlier in New Mexico he had written Crozier concerning the Indian town of Los Lestos and of Pueblo Indian living conditions, and later he would manifest the same interest in the Yumans.⁸²

They then crossed the desert, passing near Fort Yuma. In the face of another obstacle which confronted them when they attempted to traverse the Gila River, the company moved on to the Colorado River to cross. Some "Yankees" had constructed a ferry at the best crossing place on the Gila and were forcing everyone to pass over at that point and pay the required fee of seven dollars per head for man and animal. At the Colorado Wilberforce and Alexander's experience with their

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Wilberforce Ramsey to Margaret Jane Ramsey, April 15, 1850, ibid.

⁸²Wilberforce Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, January 18, 1850; Wilberforce Ramsey to Margaret Jane Ramsey, April 15, 1850, ibid. Wilberforce incorrectly spelled these Indian names "Piimo," "Miricopas," and "Humas."

father's ferry paid off. The boys engineered the building of a boat, using "their shirts to answer for caulking." They not only ferried their own company across the river, but aided as well about one thousand Mexican emigrants, peons, and Indians who had been unable to cross and had sought their assistance. Before moving on, they sold the boat to an Indian chief from Athens, Tennessee.⁸³

After crossing the Colorado, the company continued on to Los Angeles, arriving there with "each man having in his knapsack only a teacup full of bean-meal procured from the Indians by exchange of some worn out shoes and clothes."⁸⁴ From Los Angeles they traveled up and down the San Joaquin Valley, stopping for a brief time at Stanislaus on the Calaveras River.⁸⁵ Here Wilberforce and Alexander, with about half the remaining members of the company, broke with the rest and contracted with a group of Mexicans to dig for gold. Anderson's refusal to allow the men to see the constitution of the company, complaints of scanty food, and Anderson's secretive keeping of the financial records, which caused Wilberforce and others to believe that he intended to get most of the money for himself if any was made, were all given as reasons for this final division. By far, however, the main complaint seems

⁸³ Ibid.; Deaderick, Diary, 88; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 135.

⁸⁴ Wilberforce Ramsey to Margaret Jane Ramsey, April 15, 1850, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁸⁵ The Calaveras River was probably the river Wilberforce spelled "Calabarais" in a letter to William Swan, August 4, 1850, ibid. A city of Stanislaus at the junction of San Joaquin and Stanislaus rivers was founded in 1849 and is shown on maps until the 1860's. Erwin G. Gudde, California Place Names (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), 342.

to have been the prolonged inactivity of Anderson in refusing to select a site and begin mining operations.⁸⁶ Anderson, Deaderick, and the remaining members of the company moved south again, this time to Sonora, California, reaching that point May 16, 1850. The company was dissolved September 13, 1850, and its assets sold at auction to "the members of the company present."⁸⁷

The most heartbreaking experience of this western trip for the Ramsey family came November 16, 1850, when Wilberforce died at Volcano Diggings, Sutter's Creek, California, at the age of twenty-four. Although Ramsey and his wife had experienced the loss of children before, this shock came as a severe blow, and as late as May, 1852, his grief for Wilberforce still weighed "like an incubus on my heart."⁸⁸ Ramsey was especially fond of a poem Wilberforce had written in a camp along the way, every verse of which ended, "Oh carry me back—oh carry me back! To Mecklenburg once more!"⁸⁹ For a long time his father worried that Wilberforce was buried in strange ground, and desired to bring him back to Knoxville. Unfortunately, however, this desire was never satisfied.

Alexander, still not writing, instructed the family through Deaderick that he would return home following the winter.⁹⁰ Although

⁸⁶Wilberforce Ramsey to William Swan, August 4, 1850, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁸⁷Deaderick, Diary, 99 ff.

⁸⁸Ramsey to Draper, May 27, 1853, Draper Manuscripts.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰David A. Deaderick to Ramsey, November 20, 1850, Ramsey Family Bible, Ramsey Papers (UT).

he came back ill himself, Alexander's California adventures gave him popularity enough to get him elected Colonel in the East Tennessee regiment of the militia following his recuperation.⁹¹ Also not long after his return, his father offered him a farm containing Swan Pond mansion, built by his grandfather after whom he was named. Alexander refused possession of the property, and traveled to Kentucky to become partner with his brother-in-law Daniel Breck in a rather large lumber mill enterprise. However, when Colonel Breck died, he returned to Mecklenburg, took possession of his farm, and improved it. He married Nannie Presley of South Carolina, and they lived at Swan Pond until the Civil War.⁹²

The next two sons born to the Ramseys seem to have been "thrown together" even as their older brothers Wilberforce and Alexander had, and they seem also to have demonstrated a similar contrast in personalities. Robert McGready Ramsey, born November 8, 1832, had tastes for "wild adventure and romantic daring,"⁹³ while his brother James Gettys McKnitt Ramsey, born June 30, 1835, was "essentially practical," possessing "little of the visionary and enthusiast."⁹⁴ Both boys received

⁹¹Hesseltine, Ramsey, 137.

⁹²Their children were Lizzie Bell Ramsey, Barron [?] Presley Ramsey, Margaret Crozier Ramsey, Arthur Crozier Ramsey, and James Alexander Ramsey. Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 12, Ramsey Papers (NC). In a letter to Margaret Jane in 1864, Mrs. Ramsey refers to a daughter of Alexander named Margaret Frances. This daughter may be the Margaret Crozier Presley Ramsey, mentioned by J. G. M., or she may be another daughter who died. Mrs. Ramsey to Margaret Jane Dickson, August 4, 1864, Breck Scrapbook, between pages 74 and 75.

⁹³Hesseltine, Ramsey, 125.

⁹⁴Ibid., 138.

preparatory training at Mecklenburg Academy near their home, and both attended Tusculum College together, although neither graduated.⁹⁵ Robert did fairly acceptable school work at Tusculum, but intellectual studies were not his major interest. Since he was primarily athletic and physically active, all of the known circumstances of his youth deal with physical feats and daring achievements.⁹⁶ In 1853 he was discouraged by his father from emigrating to Kansas and "rising with the country."⁹⁷ In 1859, however, he did go to Texas, where he stayed until shortly before the Civil War.⁹⁸

One should possibly point out that this desire to travel west which stirred in Wilberforce, Alexander, and Robert seems also to have characterized their father, at least in part. Ramsey had first wanted to set up his medical practice in the unsettled western part of Tennessee.⁹⁹ He had manifested real interest in traveling with the armies during the Mexican War. Moreover, in the same year that Robert went to Texas Ramsey wrote to President Buchanan and to Andrew Johnson seeking some position in the public service, such as the War or Interior departments, in Texas or the Southwest.¹⁰⁰ In the midst of his

⁹⁵Ibid., 54-55, 125, 138; Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, December 6, 1857, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁹⁶Hesseltine, Ramsey, 125-28.

⁹⁷Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, October 3, 1853, McIver Collection.

⁹⁸Ramsey to William M. Lowry, April 5, 1860, Johnson Papers; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 127.

⁹⁹Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 6, Ramsey Papers (NC).

¹⁰⁰Ramsey to Andrew Johnson, December 7, 1859, Johnson Papers.

hardships following the Civil War he was again to express his desire to settle in the West. One can say, therefore, that even though Ramsey sometimes discouraged his children from western adventure, they inherited some of this drive, for there certainly burned in his own breast the flicker of a longing to move west.

Following his return from Texas Robert received from his father a farm on his Mecklenburg property, including the sawmill.¹⁰¹ Robert's real estate and personal property were valued at \$2,000 and \$400, respectively, by the 1860 census taker.¹⁰²

While such an adventuresome spirit prevailed in Robert, McKnitt was characterized by a pattern of "sobriety, industry, patient attention to business," and was "always and under all circumstances reliable and efficient."¹⁰³ He never married and seems to have stayed at home, holding an extremely strong sentimental attachment to his parents. He and his sister Elizabeth were to be a very definite help to them in their old age. McKnitt could always be found aiding his father in his medical shop, acting as druggist by compounding medicines, keeping his books, even prescribing for patients when his father was away. He supervised the farms and the ferry, doing the work of both laborer and manager. He often worked as teller in his father's bank, and was also assistant postmaster at Mecklenburg. In fact, in later years Ramsey

¹⁰¹Ramsey Will, undated (possibly 1856), Ramsey Papers (UT).

¹⁰²Eighth Census (1860), pop., Tenn., Knox, 250.

¹⁰³Hesseltine, Ramsey, 138.

was to assert that the work which McKnitt performed for Mrs. Ramsey and him, if valued, would amount to many thousands of dollars.¹⁰⁴ In the mid-1850's Ramsey gave McKnitt a farm on the northern side of the Mecklenburg property, including the ferry.¹⁰⁵ The 1860 census listed him as a farmer in the Ramsey household with real estate valued at \$2,500 and personal property at \$1,000.¹⁰⁶

Between Robert and McKnitt, the Ramseys had another daughter, Mary Henrietta Rutledge Ramsey, born December 27, 1833. Little is known of her early life except that she attended a school in Kentucky in the late 1840's, while she was staying with her sister Elizabeth.¹⁰⁷ In 1855 "Etta" married Dr. B. B. Lenoir, a physician of Lenoir, Tennessee. Dr. Lenoir, who had graduated from East Tennessee University, had also studied at the Medical College in Charleston, South Carolina, and had graduated from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia in 1846, before he returned home to set up his practice.¹⁰⁸ When Ramsey parceled out his property in the 1850's, he gave to Henrietta as her part of the inheritance a lot on Cumberland Street in Knoxville.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴Financial Statement, December 25, 1876, Ramsey Papers (UT).

¹⁰⁵Ramsey Will, undated (possibly 1856); Ramsey Will, March 25, 1882, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶Eighth Census (1860), pop., Tenn., Knox, 250.

¹⁰⁷Mrs. Ramsey to Wilberforce and Alexander Ramsey, May 30, 1849, Ramsey Papers (UT).

¹⁰⁸Goodspeed's East Tennessee, 1085. Children born to the Lenoirs were James Ramsey Lenoir, William Ballard Lenoir, Charles Ballard Lenoir, and Henry Ramsey Lenoir. *Ibid.*; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 118, 251.

¹⁰⁹Financial Statement, December 25, 1876; Ramsey Will, March 25, 1882, Ramsey Papers (UT).

Hardly anything is known of the lives of Ramsey's four remaining children before their experiences during the Civil War. Charlotte Barton Ramsey, born September 10, 1838, was followed on August 25, 1841, by an infant brother who died two months later. The Ramsey family was further increased by the addition of Susan Amelia Ramsey on April 23, 1843, and Arthur Baine Crozier Ramsey, "the Benjamin of our flock," born February 28, 1846.¹¹⁰

Ramsey assumed and fulfilled the many responsibilities of rearing a large family. He not only provided a comfortable home for their physical needs, but was also vitally interested in furnishing them with better-than-average educational training. In addition, he divided a large part of his estate among his numerous progeny long before his death. By his own example he imbibed in them an intense sense of comradeship and family loyalty. A person's ties, however, involve him in more than merely family relationships. Also to be considered must be his interest in the larger society in which he lived. Ramsey's role in the life of his community will be considered next.

¹¹⁰ Ramsey to Anson Nelson, December 16, 1879, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Ramsey Family Bible, 727-729, Ramsey Papers (UT).

CHAPTER IV

SQUIRE RAMSEY

In his study of Ramsey Professor Hesseltine makes much of Ramsey "the squire." For example, he asserts, "Dr. Ramsey was a student of a region where the tradition of the squire, spiritual descendent of the manorial lords of England, held sway."¹ He affirms that Ramsey was not merely a student of such a tradition, but that his life more than demonstrates his own adherence to the principles of the landed gentry. According to Hesseltine, he was "a Presbyterian in his religion, a gentleman in his relations with his fellow man, and a squire who assumed an obligation to raise the intellectual standards of his people, to serve his community, and to seek to maintain the integrity of his region."² While, as will be shown in this chapter, there is evidence to support this view of Ramsey, it is an aspect of his life that can be overemphasized.

Certainly Ramsey possessed the substance to qualify him as a landed gentleman. He inherited approximately one-third of his father's money and real estates, which at the time of Colonel Ramsey's death consisted of a half lot in Knoxville, a lot adjoining Knoxville, and 2,400 acres of land at the fork of the French Broad and Holston rivers, consisting

¹William B. Hesseltine, "Ramsey and Draper vs. Bancroft: History for the Common Man," ETHS Publications, No. 33 (1961), 6.

²Ibid., 13.

of several farms.³ It was on one of these farms at the juncture of the rivers that Ramsey built his estate, Mecklenburg, to which he moved in 1823. From this rather impressive beginning Ramsey, the farmer, railroad promoter, banker, and postmaster at Mecklenburg,⁴ expanded his financial resources until he became a very wealthy man. In 1848 he purchased Swan Pond, Colonel Ramsey's estate, from his brother, W. B. A.⁵

Besides farming several tracts of land, Ramsey operated a saw mill and a ferry across the Tennessee river.⁶ He took a business man's approach toward his farming, as well as his other activities. Much of his correspondence while he was away from home is filled with instructions to his sons concerning the proper management of the farms, ferry, and mill.⁷ On one occasion he carefully directed a son not to "let any debtor of mine off without settling his account."⁸ Ramsey seems to have been scrupulous in his business dealings with others, particularly debtors.⁹

Through hard work and sound business management he had accumulated

³Description of the real estate of F. A. Ramsey; Receipts from J. G. M., W. B. A., and E. N. J. B. A. Ramsey to the administrators of the F. A. Ramsey estate, April 13, 1822, Box 3-B, Ramsey Papers (UT); Hesseltine, Ramsey, 17.

⁴Joseph L. Williams to Lyman C. Draper, July 18, 1842, Draper Manuscripts.

⁵Hesseltine, Ramsey, 10.

⁶Ibid., viii; Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, November 30, 1828, February [n.d.], 1829, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁷Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, February, 1829, September 18, 1850, ibid.

⁸Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, December 9, 1852, ibid.

⁹C. G. Olmsted to Ramsey, May 6, 1822, ibid.

by the mid-1850's quite a large fortune in real estate and personal property, including Tennessee bonds and East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad stock.¹⁰ One should note that his real estate consisted of property in Knoxville, as well as the land between the rivers. Concerning the commercial convention that was to meet in Knoxville in 1857, the Knoxville Whig mentioned that a committee of reception "have fitted up the first floor of Ramsey's new building, on the east side of Gay Street between Cumberland and Church Streets as a reception room."¹¹ This building, a large three-story brick structure, was known as Ramsey's Hall or Ramsey's Block, and was used for the purpose of an auditorium in town.¹² William Gibbs McAdoo, a prominent Knoxville lawyer and East Tennessee University professor, noted in his diary for Saturday, January 28, 1860, that he and his wife had gone to hear some minstrels at Ramsey's Hall.¹³ In addition, Ramsey also owned another house and several lots in town.¹⁴

A study of the censuses of the period reveals the growth of the Ramsey substance. The censuses of 1830 and 1840, although not indicating

¹⁰Ramsey Will, undated [possibly 1856], ibid.

¹¹Knoxville Whig, August 8, 1857.

¹²Ramsey, Financial Statement, December 25, 1876, Ramsey Papers (UT); Brief in the case of J.G.M. Ramsey vs. Cynthia White, J. R. Ludlow, and S. Vail, September 5, 1867, Nelson Papers.

¹³McAdoo, Diary, January 28, 1860.

¹⁴Brief in Ramsey vs. White, Ludlow, and Vail, Nelson Papers; Financial Statement December 25, 1876; Ramsey Will, March 25, 1882, Ramsey Papers (UT). See Appendices II and III.

the value of his property, do list ten and nine slaves, respectively, in his household.¹⁵ While the 1850 census shows real estate valued at only thirty-two hundred dollars,¹⁶ the census taker of 1860 recorded Ramsey's real estate as \$20,000 and his personal property at \$15,000. In addition his wife's personal property was valued at \$1,000.¹⁷ This sum is all the more enlightening when one considers that in the middle 1850's Ramsey had deeded farms, or tracts of land, including Swan Pond, his ferry, and his saw mill, to five of his children, a house and lot in Knoxville to a sixth, and a lot in town to still another.¹⁸ In 1860 two sons and a daughter were listed in his household by the census taker with total real estate valued at \$7,610 and total personal property valued at \$3,400.¹⁹ Furthermore, in 1853 Ramsey had paid \$5,000 toward the publishing of his history of Tennessee.²⁰ It is evident from the above that he had amassed quite a fortune in his lifetime and was well able financially to live the life of a country squire.

¹⁵Fifth Census (1830), pop., Tenn., Knox, 336; Sixth Census (1840), pop., Tenn., Knox, 20.

¹⁶Seventh Census (1850), pop., Tenn., Knox, 36.

¹⁷Eighth Census (1860), pop., Tenn., Knox, 250.

¹⁸Ramsey Will, undated [possibly 1856]; Financial Statement, December 25, 1876; Ramsey Will, March 25, 1882; Statement of J. G. M. Ramsey to be Exhibited to the Arbitrators [in the Swan suit, to be discussed later], 1877, Box 3-F, Ramsey Papers (UT).

¹⁹Eighth Census (1860), pop., Tenn., Knox, 250.

²⁰Statement of Ramsey to the Arbitrators, 1877, Ramsey Papers (UT).

In addition to an aristocrat's wealth, Ramsey possessed many aristocratic views and ideas. It is not without significance that he was called the "Duke of Mecklenburg."²¹ According to an undated newspaper clipping, he lived on his estate "surrounded by all the appurtenances of a refined and intellectual life, dispensing a noble hospitality, and thus he bore without abuse, the good old name of gentleman."²² Swan Pond had been famous for its hospitality. In 1800 and twice in 1802 Bishop Asbury had been entertained there by Colonel F. A. Ramsey.²³ Likewise did J. G. M.'s Mecklenburg become a center of aristocratic hospitality. There he entertained numerous Presbyterian divines, governors, senators, congressmen, historians and literary men.²⁴ Among frequent visitors during the late thirties and early forties was James K. Polk. When John Howard Payne, author of "Home Sweet Home," came to Knoxville in 1835, Ramsey's doors were open to him.²⁵ In 1873 the Reverend W. A. Harrison wrote that he remembered well the hospitality of the Ramseys in hosting a meeting of an entire presbytery many years before.²⁶ Judge John M. Lea of

²¹Ramsey to Draper, April 28, 1870, Draper Correspondence. For further evidence of Ramsey's wealth see court house records in Appendices II and III.

²²Newspaper article, Scrapbook II, 34-35, Ramsey Papers (UT).

²³Walter B. Posey, ed., "Bishop Asbury Visits Tennessee, 1788-1815: Extracts from His Journal," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XV (September, 1956), 261-64; Goodspeed's Knox County, 885.

²⁴Hesseltine, Ramsey, viii.

²⁵S. G. Heiskell, Andrew Jackson and Early Tennessee History (2nd ed., 2 vols.; Nashville: Ambrose Printing Company, 1920), II, 111. A newspaper article in Scrapbook II, 45, Ramsey Papers (UT), indicates that Ramsey entertained Payne in 1838.

²⁶W. A. Harrison to J. G. M. Ramsey, November 25, 1873, ibid.

Nashville wrote in 1883 that he recalled vividly a social gathering at Mecklenburg nearly fifty-five years before.²⁷ Reminiscing after the Civil War, a confederate colonel remarked, I came "to know personally the doctor, to enjoy at his home not only his elegant hospitality but the rich feast which his well stored mind and easy expression placed before those who found access to his person."²⁸ Mecklenburg was certainly famous for its social gatherings, whether they were political strategy sessions, church meetings, or parties to entertain the ladies from some local female institute.²⁹

If Ramsey possessed the aristocrat's love of hospitality and entertainment, he also had some of the aristocrat's snobbishness. His aristocratic view of the Negro will be discussed at some length later. He also possessed, however, a rather intolerant attitude toward the lower class whites. When a certain lady mentioned to him that his daughter Margaret Jane was too aristocratic, he responded, "All superior & excellent people were considered aristocratic."³⁰ While he was in North Carolina following the Civil War, he wrote to Elizabeth, "We have some of the better sort of the kin & of other people to visit us."³¹ Ramsey cautioned his grandchildren to avoid "the rude, the uncultivated--the

²⁷ John M. Lea to Mrs. Ramsey, April 29, 1883, ibid.

²⁸ Newspaper article in the Breck Scrapbook, 72.

²⁹ Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, December 26, 1860, McIver Collection.

³⁰ Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, December 27, 1866, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³¹ Ibid.

ungenteel & the unrefined."³² In the same tone he said on another occasion, "The genteel & enlightened appreciate us as they should & as to the others we have little to do with them."³³ He once asserted, "I believe in Blood--noble blood,"³⁴ and certainly he considered himself and his family to possess such blood.

Another tradition of the squire to which Ramsey adhered was an allegiance to the agrarian way of life. As a farmer he considered agriculture a superior means of livelihood. In addition to farming on a rather large scale, he raised every kind of prime stock. He contributed to the farming community as the sometime leader in staging in Knoxville the eastern division of the state fair,³⁵ and as the author of several articles on better methods of improving East Tennessee agricultural production.³⁶ While he loved the beautiful scenery of the East Tennessee farm country,³⁷ Ramsey "saw no beauty in smokestacks, in blast furnaces,

³²Ramsey to William and Henry Lenoir, December 25, 1871, ibid.

³³Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, June 4, 1867, ibid.

³⁴Ramsey to Marcus J. Wright, October 18, 1879, Marcus J. Wright Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.

³⁵Knoxville Times, October 11, 1839; Knoxville American Statesman, July 16, 1854; Ramsey to Draper, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence.

³⁶Knoxville Enquirer, January 18, 25, 1826 [under pseudonym Clinton]; Knoxville Register, June 16, 1841 [signed R.]; Knoxville Register, February 3, 17, 1859 [under pseudonym Agricola]; Knoxville Tribune, April 12, 1884.

³⁷Ramsey to Nelson, December 19, 1850, Nelson Papers.

in the power loom."³⁸ He believed that the agrarian life was reflected in the innocence, simplicity, patriotism, regard for law and order, and the health of the people of East Tennessee.³⁹ Such a view he expressed in 1852 when he wrote his daughter from Charleston, "Ah I relish still better, as found in Tennessee, what is primitive, simple, unsophisticated by age or art."⁴⁰ In commenting on industrialization, on the other hand, Ramsey saw it as resulting in love of money, corruption, profligacy, vagrancy, pauperism, servitude, luxury, fashionable opinion in politics and religion, new vices, new crimes, destitution, want, violence, infidelity, mobocracy, and rebellion.⁴¹ It produced a people who were cringing, subservient, and grasping.⁴² He even blamed on this industrialism, which he called the "commercial spirit," the failure of the Historical Society of Nashville in 1851. To Draper he wrote, "Don't you observe that commerce chokes the growth of any such infants? It does not furnish the pablums by which science and literature are nourished."⁴³ This commercial spirit Ramsey also referred to as Yankeedom. Denouncing a Knoxville merchant because the merchant represented "the commerce of the country," he lamented to Draper that "Yankeedom is taking a vigorous

³⁸Hesseltine, Ramsey, xi.

³⁹Ramsey to Nelson, December 19, 1850, Nelson Papers.

⁴⁰Ramsey to Henrietta Ramsey, [during] 1852, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁴¹Ramsey to Nelson, December 19, 1850, Nelson Papers.

⁴²Hesseltine, Ramsey, xi.

⁴³Ramsey to Draper, September 18, 1851, Draper Manuscripts.

growth everywhere."⁴⁴

One might be inclined to charge Ramsey with inconsistency, inasmuch as he was a chief proponent of railroad improvement, the very means by which East Tennessee was to achieve closer contact with industrialization. Such a charge, however, would be unfounded. Although he favored the agrarian way of life as theoretically superior, he recognized that practical progress required a high cost in what he considered to be the virtues of the rural life. Although admitting to T. A. R. Nelson that "the simplicity & virtue of rural life as we see it in our own E. T. I am sorry to say are expelled & annihilated by the steam engine," he concluded, "still progress is the order of the day."⁴⁵

As an aristocrat, Ramsey considered his main duty to be to demonstrate to the fullest an attitude and behavior which he designated "patriotism." This patriotism most vividly manifests itself in an intense love for his native soil, East Tennessee. Such patriotic affection involved a devotion to his Scotch-Irish ancestors who had settled here. It extended, however, beyond them to the land itself. He really seems to have had more than an ordinary attachment to his region. Poetically identifying himself with the geography of the East Tennessee country, Ramsey said that he left something of his own heart in every place where joy or where sorrow in his practice had met him.⁴⁶ When his son Robert

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ramsey to Nelson, December 19, 1850, Nelson Papers.

⁴⁶W. A. Harrison to Ramsey, February 21, 1873, Ramsey Papers (UT).

wanted to travel to Kansas and rise with the new country, Ramsey's reaction was to describe Tennessee as a new country, having "new channels of employment--new chances of investment--new sources of usefulness--new openings of business. . . . I told him this was the newest [sic] country of the two."⁴⁷ Following the Civil War he wrote to Draper, "If only I had a country to love as I once did love Tennessee and the old union."⁴⁸

Ramsey also believed in a patriotism "which placed an emphasis on community service, upon an individual's responsibility for the well-being of his neighbors,"⁴⁹ what Ramsey himself called "the public spirit of the patriot."⁵⁰ This kind of patriotism he considered to be "something else than party zeal, or a 'selfish scramble for office.'"⁵¹ Hesseltine asserts of Ramsey,

He was a fit representative of a Southern tradition, running back through Thomas Jefferson even to William Byrd the first, of cultured gentlemen who read the classics in their own libraries, took an active part in politics, contributed to the intellectual advancement of their communities, and stood in the forefront of movements for civic improvement.⁵²

This concept of patriotism not only led Ramsey to take a patriarchal approach to his slaves, tenants, and poorer neighbors;⁵³ it also caused

⁴⁷Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, October 3, 1853, McIver Collection.

⁴⁸Ramsey to Draper, July 13, 1870, Draper Correspondence. To be treated in a later chapter is the patriotic bias in Ramsey's historical writing that resulted from this intense affection for his native soil and its founders.

⁴⁹Hesseltine, "Ramsey," 16.

⁵⁰Knoxville Register, May 11, 1831.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Hesseltine, Ramsey, vii.

⁵³Ibid., x.

him to consider most of his activity to have been spent in serving his community.

It was undoubtedly this feeling of civic duty that prompted him to write his wife in 1828, while he was enroute to Charleston, South Carolina, on behalf of internal improvements and further medical training, that although he hated to be absent from her, the benefit for mankind to be derived from his trip would justify his trying separation from home. "I know my duty to myself to my family & to my country requires the sacrifice," he wrote.⁵⁴ In fact, his whole fight for internal improvements was made, he said, "for the good of my country, with no prospect of reward, but that of an approving conscience."⁵⁵ In the same manner he expressed his desire on the birth of a new son that the boy would become "an honor to his parents--an ornament to his country . . . --a useful member of society--a friend of his country."⁵⁶ Perhaps Ramsey best summarized what he considered to be his patriotic duty to his fellows when he said, "Next to my family is my country--& my services are at her bidding."⁵⁷

One outgrowth of this feeling of civic responsibility on Ramsey's part was his interest in the intellectual improvement of his community. Throughout his lifetime he seems to have recognized the significance of

⁵⁴Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, November 11, 26, 1828, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁵⁵Knoxville Register, May 10, 1837.

⁵⁶Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, January 21, 1829, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁵⁷Ibid.

education. His senior oration in 1815 to the students and faculty of Washington College was a minor treatise on education, in which he encouraged the students to persevere in their "laudable undertaking" and commended the faculty for filling their "honorable and useful stations" in life.⁵⁸ Considered by his contemporaries to be a prominent literary and cultured gentleman, Ramsey was a leader in a Lyceum that became very popular in Knoxville in the 1830's.⁵⁹ He encouraged President James K. Polk to appoint men to office who were learned in science and literature if they were qualified.⁶⁰ Certainly Ramsey's strong interest in his children's education, already treated, demonstrates amply his enthusiasm for educational advancement. In fact, in his first will (probably made in 1856), he left specific instructions for his wife to put aside money for the education of those children who had not yet reached college age.⁶¹

Ramsey was more than a mere friend of educational improvement; he took many practical steps to encourage it. For instance, he served as trustee for many of the academies and colleges in East Tennessee. Early in life he was elected in 1822 to replace his father on the board of trustees of Blount College, later East Tennessee University.⁶² Sometime

⁵⁸ Ramsey, Address to the Students and Faculty of Washington College [1815 is penciled in, but the probable date is 1816], Ramsey Papers (NC).

⁵⁹ Ramsey to Draper, July, 1880, Draper Manuscripts.

⁶⁰ Ramsey to Polk, January 14, 1845, Polk Papers.

⁶¹ Ramsey Will undated [probably 1856], Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁶² John Trotwood Moore and Austin P. Foster, Tennessee the Volunteer State: 1769-1923 (4 vols.; Nashville: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1923), II, 217; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 52.

in or before 1827 he became the chief organizer and secretary of the board of trustees of Mecklenburg Academy,⁶³ for which he donated all the land, more than half the money for a building, and fuel in perpetuity.⁶⁴ This academy seems to have become a popular and effective educational institution under the tutelage of the Reverend Thomas Davis, and later under the Reverend Noble A. Penland, both of whom held at different periods the pastorate of Lebanon Presbyterian Church. Although the school continued down to the Civil War, it seems to have faltered after

⁶³Goodspeed's Knox County, 892, indicates that Mecklenburg Academy was founded in 1835. This information probably came from Ramsey's History of Lebanon Church, which he wrote, much from memory, in 1875. Ramsey, History of Lebanon Church . . . (Knoxville, Tennessee: Larew Printing Company, 1918), 23. The Knoxville Enquirer, on the other hand, had articles on February 21, 1827, and March 19, 1829, concerning "Mecklenburg Academy" and its efficient instructor, Mr. Davis. Ramsey does mention in his autobiography that the Reverend Thomas Davis was at one time the pastor of Lebanon Church and the principal of Mecklenburg Academy. Hesseltine, Ramsey, 125. In the absence of any act of incorporation and any recorded deed for the property donated for the building, one can assume that Ramsey and Goodspeed are in error as to the date of the school's founding. There is, however, an alternative assumption that can be made. Ramsey mentions in his Lebanon Church that there had been before 1835 "something of a high school" in the area, also under the leadership of the pastor of Lebanon Church. Ramsey, Lebanon Church, 22-23. Goodspeed also indicates that a high school had stood on the edge of Ramsey's property since "about 1828." Goodspeed's Knox County, 892. Therefore, it is entirely possible that there was a high school in the vicinity also known as Mecklenburg Academy, before 1835, the date when Ramsey and the other trustees may have authorized the building of a new building and the establishment of a new academy by the same name. Ramsey does seem to declare emphatically that the Reverend Noble A. Penland, who became pastor of Lebanon Church in 1835, was the first principal of the Mecklenburg Academy that he played such a part in establishing. Ramsey, Lebanon Church, 23. One finds it hard to believe that he would be mistaken in this matter.

⁶⁴Hesseltine, Ramsey, 50; Goodspeed's Knox County, 892. Ramsey's gift of the land contained a condition that the property would revert to him if the school ever ceased to function. Since the deed was not recorded, many years after the school had failed this condition was to cause some trouble when Ramsey's property was being confiscated following the Civil War, over three decades later. Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, November 6, 1866, Ramsey Papers (UT).

the Reverend Mr. Penland left.⁶⁵ Ramsey also served for many years as a trustee of Washington College, an institution which had honored him in the late 1830's with the master of arts degree.⁶⁶ In addition, he was a trustee of Tusculum College near Greeneville⁶⁷ and Hampden Sydney Academy in Knoxville.⁶⁸ Besides serving as trustee for these institutions, Ramsey seems to have taken an active part in review examinations at various academies and institutes throughout the area.

In 1829 the Tennessee legislature passed an act that called for the creation of school districts and the election of five trustees from each district. These five trustees would in turn select five to seven commissioners of education for every district, each of whom would be assigned a specific area in which he would visit and examine the condition of all the schools once each year and submit a fiscal and financial report to the legislature and the secretary of state.⁶⁹ Ramsey was selected as a school commissioner from Knox County under this act⁷⁰ and

⁶⁵Goodspeed's Knox County, 892; Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, November 6, 1866, Ramsey Papers (UT); Knoxville Enquirer, February 21, 1827, March 19, 1829; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 50-51, 125.

⁶⁶Moore and Foster, Tennessee, II, 217; Ramsey to Crozier and Wilberforce Ramsey, April 30, 1842, Ramsey Papers (UT); Hesseltine, Ramsey, 52.

⁶⁷Ibid., 54; newspaper article in Scrapbook II, 66, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁶⁸Knoxville Register, March 6, 1844; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 51.

⁶⁹Robert H. White, Development of the Tennessee State Educational Organization, 1796-1929 (Kingsport, Tennessee: Southern Publishers, Inc., 1929), 19-35.

⁷⁰Hesseltine, Ramsey, 46. The Knoxville Register, June 6, 1832, listed him as a common school commissioner.

worked hard for a successful school system. He argued in 1832 for state investment in internal improvements on the basis that state profits from such investment would enable Tennessee to establish and support a general system of education.⁷¹ Ramsey continued to serve as a common school commissioner for several years even though his efforts, as well as those of others, proved fruitless. Lack of centralized authority, lack of funds, lack of uniformity in school term, in short, lack of organization, doomed the Tennessee school system to failure.⁷² Ramsey and others also blamed the taint of the "pauper idea," that common schools were only for the poor, for the failure of the school system.⁷³

It can be said of him, however, that he did not allow this failure to thwart his efforts to improve Tennessee's educational system. When one scans the newspapers of the period, he readily notices that Ramsey was always at the forefront of school improvement in East Tennessee. In May, 1846, he became one of the board of managers of the recently organized "Town School Association of Knoxville," formed for the purpose of establishing a school to provide primary education.⁷⁴ In February, 1847, he was appointed a delegate from the seventeenth civil district in Knox County to attend a general convention of those in East Tennessee

⁷¹Railroad Advocate, February 28, 1832.

⁷²White, Tennessee Education, 35-36.

⁷³Ibid.; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 49.

⁷⁴Knoxville Standard, May 26, 1846.

desirous of improving their common schools.⁷⁵ In May, 1851, he served as a delegate from Knox County to a meeting of the Free School Convention that assembled in Knoxville that month.⁷⁶

One of Ramsey's most energetic efforts in behalf of Tennessee's school system came in his attempt to induce Lyman C. Draper to come to Tennessee after Draper had been defeated in 1859 for reelection as state superintendent of public instruction in Wisconsin. Ramsey, in complete agreement with Draper's exhaustive 1858 report, "Of the Condition and Improvement of Common Schools and Educational Interests of the State of Wisconsin," was vitally interested in the remodeling of the Tennessee school system along the lines outlined by Draper in his Wisconsin report. By 1860 Ramsey was so disgusted with the Tennessee common school system that he considered it to be not only a failure, but a positive harm. He wrote Draper,

We had better schools, better teachers, more pupils fifty years ago when I was at school than now when money (sixty or eighty cents per pupil) is furnished by the state, and the teacher is appointed by functionaries here called school commissioners. Decidedly better in 1806-10 than 1860. Self-reliance then prompted the better men in every neighborhood to associate together, build a school house, employ a good teacher; while now, this association of the better class is nullified by the masses usurping the power of electing commissioners in each civil district for the reason that they will disburse the patronage to someone related or who will teach cheaper than someone else.⁷⁷

⁷⁵Knoxville Register, February 10, 1847; Knoxville Standard, February 16, 1847.

⁷⁶Knoxville Register, May 15, 1851; Knoxville Whig, May 17, 1851.

⁷⁷Ramsey to Draper, January 17, 1860, Draper Correspondence.

Ramsey saw in Draper the man to accomplish educational reform in Tennessee. To this end he wrote letters to Governor Isham G. Harris, A. W. Putnam, the Nashville Union and American, and others.⁷⁸ Nothing seems to have come from his efforts, although Draper, probably unknown to Ramsey, did write Felix Robertson, prominent Nashville physician, seeking more information concerning the matter.⁷⁹ Ramsey, however, still did not give up, and as late as May, 1873, he suggested to J. M. Fleming, superintendent of public instruction in Tennessee, that he seek Draper's aid in promoting the educational interests of Tennessee.⁸⁰

Even in his old age, following the Civil War, one of Ramsey's major interests was education. He apparently became somewhat obsessed with the education of his grandchildren. In 1870 he was invited, he says, to settle on the campus of Davidson College and almost decided to do so in order to see his grandchildren through college. He continually encouraged them to persevere in acquiring an education, a necessary achievement "to bring credit to themselves and honor to their families."⁸¹ Tennessee's educational system also seems to have remained a major concern of his even in his old age. In 1879 he wrote to Governor Marks

⁷⁸Ramsey to Draper, February 6, 1860, ibid.; Hesseltine, "Ramsey," 11-12.

⁷⁹Lyman C. Draper to Felix Robertson, February 4, 1860, Draper Manuscripts; Philip M. Hamer, Tennessee A History: 1673-1932 (4 vols.; New York: American Historical Society, Inc., 1933), I, 943, II, 371, 476.

⁸⁰Ramsey to Draper, May 5, 1873, Draper Correspondence.

⁸¹Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, December 7, 1870, McIver Collection; Ramsey to J. Ramsey Alexander, November 26, 1879, Ramsey Papers (NC).

that he had dedicated the remainder of his life to making Tennessee the cultural and educational center of the region. Calling upon the state to found universities and colleges and to improve its common schools, he averred that there could be "no valid reason why Tennessee should not become the great educational center of the Southwest."⁸²

Always true to the tradition of his Scotch-Irish ancestors, the Ramseys and the Alexanders, who had been devout and orthodox Presbyterians, J. G. M. reared his family according to the rigid piety of the Presbyterian faith. His father before him seems to have been throughout his lifetime a religious pillar in the community. When F. A. Ramsey and his wife first married, they lived on Little Limestone Creek in the Tennessee country of North Carolina where they came under the influence of the Reverend Samuel Doak, pastor of the Salem congregation close by.⁸³ Thus it is not surprising that the first Presbyterian church established in what later became Knox County, when it was organized by the Reverend Samuel Carrick in 1791 at Gilliam's Station, was located on land that belonged to F. A. Ramsey. Colonel Ramsey later gave to this church, known as Lebanon Presbyterian Church, nine acres of land on which a building was erected.⁸⁴ He became one of the ruling elders of the Lebanon church, as did J. G. M. after him, and one of J. G. M.'s sons

⁸²Ramsey to Governor A. S. Marks, 1879 [?], Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, December 7, 1870, McIver Collection.

⁸³Hesseltine, Ramsey, 8.

⁸⁴Ramsey, Lebanon Church, 4-5, 8; Rothrock, French Broad, 280, 468.

after him.

Through F. A. Ramsey's hospitality the Lebanon church shared in the great western revival at the turn of the nineteenth century. This biography has already noted that the Reverend James McGready, "The Great Revivalist," was invited to spend the winter of 1796-97 at Swan Pond. This he did and not infrequently filled the Lebanon pulpit for the Reverend Mr. Carrick. He also spoke at other points throughout the area while he stayed at Colonel Ramsey's home.⁸⁵

F. A. Ramsey's piety seems to have extended beyond mere church affiliation and leadership. He had a deep faith in God and was devoutly orthodox in his Presbyterian convictions. Writing on one occasion concerning a possible schism in the Presbyterian church in the west, he almost reached a poetic strain as he affirmed his confidence in God by asserting, "'The Lord reigneth, let the Earth rejoice,' the Ark is his own, he will preserve it from unhallowed touches, or if so touched, he will overrule it to the furtherance of the Gospel."⁸⁶ J. G. M. asserted that Colonel Ramsey's religious convictions were so strong that "Lawyers Governors Judges Senators could not make him bend."⁸⁷ Perhaps Bishop Francis Asbury best illustrated Colonel Ramsey's strong convictions on matters which he regarded as moral when he noted in his diary, "It may not be amiss to mention that our host has built his house and takes in

⁸⁵Newspaper article in Scrapbook I, 13, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey, Lebanon Church, 18.

⁸⁶Certificate of F. A. Ramsey's 2 Sons, 1810, Ramsey Papers (NC).

⁸⁷Ramsey to Samuel G. Ramsey, December 17, 20, 1820, ibid.

his harvest without the aid of whisky."⁸⁸

J. G. M., like his father, was a lifelong, uncompromising, orthodox Presbyterian. A very close friend of the Reverend Samuel Doak and numerous pastors of the area, he was an elder in the Presbyterian church, indeed, at his death he had probably been an elder longer than any other man in the state.⁸⁹ It is not without significance that upon the birth of a new son in 1829 he wrote his wife that he hoped the boy would become an honor to his parents, to society, and to his country, "& a member of the Presbyterian Church."⁹⁰ Expressing his strict observance of the Presbyterian sabbath, Ramsey once closed a letter to a friend by asserting, "It is now late Saturday night & I try always to keep Sabbath holy & never write anything worldly on Sunday."⁹¹ Regular church attendance was the rule in the Ramsey household. Crozier's assurance to his mother while he was in Nashville, "I go to church every Sunday,"⁹² seems indicative of the family attitude. Most members of the family, children or parents, always in their correspondence reassure the others that they attended church when away from home.⁹³

⁸⁸Posey, "Bishop Ashbury," 262.

⁸⁹Newspaper article in Scrapbook II, 53, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁹⁰Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, January 21, 1829, ibid.

⁹¹Ramsey to Anson Nelson [n.d.], Box RL-No. 7-R, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

⁹²Crozier Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, August 11, 1865, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁹³Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, November 30, 1828, ibid.; Crozier Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, August 11, 1865, ibid.; Mrs. Ramsey to Margaret Jane Dickson, August 1, 1864, Breck Scrapbook, 74-75.

Ramsey took a Calvinistic, predestinarian approach to the vicissitudes of life. He believed that James K. Polk's election to the presidency was a direct act of the providence of God.⁹⁴ Certainly one can see his stern Calvinism at work as he writes his wife, who finds it hard "to keep down rebellious feelings"⁹⁵ in the midst of their Civil War hardships: "Peggy I hope you are trying to submit to God's severe chastisements on us as a Christian & philosopher. It is hard very hard. Submission is not a plant of earthly growth but we must cultivate it assiduously."⁹⁶ Along the same line he wrote to his Nashville friend Anson Nelson, who had lost a son. Urging him not to distrust God but to ask for "Grace to lead us to submit to thy will--to thy chastisement--to the inscrutable mysteries of thy wise providence."⁹⁷ Both Mr. and Mrs. Ramsey's attitude toward hardship was an orthodox one of submission and anticipation of relief after death.⁹⁸

In general Ramsey also adhered to Presbyterian social views toward what he considered to be such evils as the theatre, drinking, and gambling. During a stay in Charleston in 1828 he commended the religion of his landlady when he noticed that she refused to board an actor.⁹⁹ To a ladies

⁹⁴Ramsey to Polk, January 14, 1845, Polk Papers.

⁹⁵Mrs. Ramsey to Margaret Jane Dickson, August 1, 1864, Breck Scrapbook, 74-75.

⁹⁶Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, August 27, 1864, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁹⁷Ramsey to Anson Nelson, December 16, 1879, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

⁹⁸Mrs. Ramsey to Margaret Jane Dickson, August 1, 1864, Breck Scrapbook, 74-75.

⁹⁹Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, November 26, 1828, Ramsey Papers (UT).

aid meeting he once pictured gambling and intemperance as the great evils spreading across the country and urged them to stamp them out.¹⁰⁰ Early in the Civil War he wrote to one of his sons, "None of you must take ardent spirits. . . . Take a cracker always in your pocket when on duty at night--& coffee. This is far better than all the whisky in Savannah."¹⁰¹

Undoubtedly, such religious convictions on the part of the Ramseys could not fail to have their effect on the training of their children. The parents seldom missed an opportunity in writing to their children and grandchildren who were away from home to admonish them to "avoid the company of the vulgar--the profane."¹⁰² J. G. M. seems regularly to have warned them that under all circumstances they must maintain good character and conduct, emphasizing more than once that a good name and a good reputation could all be lost by "one [in]discretion."¹⁰³

It would be unfair to Ramsey or his father to give the impression that they were unthinking adherents of all the views that their church held. Far from this, they were capable of both independent thought and action. On a certain occasion when the Presbyterian Synod of Kentucky had dismissed a minister for what F. A. Ramsey considered an inadequate cause, he condemned such action and voiced feelings that the Presbyterian church "is now large and unwieldly, and it will require great caution to

¹⁰⁰Ramsey, Speech to Ladies-aid Meeting, Box 3-C, ibid.

¹⁰¹Ramsey to Robert M. Ramsey, April 28, 1861, ibid.

¹⁰²Mrs. Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, November 9, 1849; Ramsey to William and Henry Lenoir, December 25, 1871, ibid.

¹⁰³Ramsey to Robert M. Ramsey, April 28, 1861, ibid.

preserve it from splitting."¹⁰⁴ J. G. M. parted ways with orthodox thinking when he wrote in the Watchman of the South, a religious journal, that the Presbyterian Church in America should welcome into its fellowship immigrants who came from the unorthodox Free Church of Scotland. He wrote "We must cordially sympathize with the Free Church in their devotion to the . . . Sole Headship of Christ over the church, and the right, the inalienable right of the Christian people to choose their own spiritual teachers."¹⁰⁵ Moreover, not going along with a contemporary solution to the problem of intemperance but looking to religious convictions to do what law cannot do, Ramsey rejected prohibition. To Draper he wrote,

The Maine liquor law will never be a statute in any state two years. That is a hard saying for a Progressive Democrat and a friend of temperance who has never drunk in his life of fifty-six years to make--but mark the result. A law to prevent covetousness or adultery though sustained by Divine sanction could not be enacted or enforced. Much less a law to regulate men's diet, drink, etc. The only corrective of intemperance is the propagation of the religion of Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁶

Such views must illustrate a certain amount of independent spirit in things moral and religious.

In his role of the "squire" Ramsey was at the forefront of

¹⁰⁴Certificate of F. A. Ramsey's 2 Sons, 1810, Ramsey Papers (NC).

¹⁰⁵J. G. M. Ramsey, article in Watchman of the South, to be found in James G. M. Ramsey, Contributions to the Political, Secular, and Religious Press, being clippings from the Knoxville Argus, and other newspapers of 1827-1845 (McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee), 15.

¹⁰⁶Ramsey to Draper, September 9, 1853, Draper Manuscripts.

movements to raise the intellectual level of his community. Moreover, he considered himself responsible to his Creator to do all that he could to secure the moral growth of his family and neighbors. But what Ramsey himself would have considered perhaps his greatest civic contribution was his nearly lifetime of effort spent in behalf of internal improvements. His views and contributions in this field constitute the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

"MECKLENBURG POLITICS"

Undoubtedly the most significant area of public interest into which Ramsey's sense of civic responsibility thrust him was that of improved transportation facilities. According to his way of thinking, a responsible citizen naturally favored internal improvements. He once described a certain individual as "full of enterprise and public spirit, & much in the spirit of internal improvements."¹ Very early in life he became an ardent supporter of measures to improve the transportation routes of East Tennessee.

In December, 1825, he began a series of articles in the Knoxville Enquirer under the pseudonym "Clinton" on the subject of internal improvements. In this series, as well as in another in the Railroad Advocate in 1831, also under the same pseudonym, Ramsey argued that East Tennessee was gradually becoming less prosperous, that this lack of prosperity was attributable to the absence of transportation facilities that would enable East Tennesseans to get their produce to markets at a reasonable expense, that these facilities could and ought to be provided, and that the people themselves were to blame for suffering because of the lack of such means of transportation. To Ramsey, who for many years had "witnessed, and painfully regretted, East Tennessee's gradual, but evident deterioration," it was obvious

¹Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, November 26, 1828, Ramsey Papers (UT).

that there is some cause operating against the interest of East Tennessee paralysing [sic] her vital functions; discouraging her domestic manufacturers; making her agriculture unproductive; and extending its baneful influence to the state of society; and of learning amongst us.²

He called attention to the universal complaint in East Tennessee of hard times, scarcity of money, and the impossibility of converting property into cash without sustaining an enormous loss.³

Ramsey particularly ascribed this condition to an inadequate system of internal improvements and saw only a further decrease in the productiveness of East Tennessee and the value of her exports unless such improvements as would enable her citizens to transport their goods to market were inaugurated. There was no reason for East Tennessee's not being the most prosperous area in the South. Besides enjoying productive soil, adapted to almost every article produced in all states, with the exceptions of sugar and a few others, she was blessed with pleasant and healthy climate, abundant water and streams, and an abundant supply of mineral resources. Her major problem was that the transportation of products to market took such a large part of their value that little or nothing was left for the producer. Ramsey argued that while a few might prosper under existing circumstances, the mass would continue to get poorer until an adequate market was found for their surplus produce. In order to demonstrate the superior profits enjoyed by the citizens of

² Knoxville Enquirer, December 22, 1825, January 25, 1826.

³ Railroad Advocate, December 3, 1831.

states like Kentucky, Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana, which had canals and railroads, as compared with the residents of East Tennessee, Ramsey contrasted the cost of transporting certain products to market. He contended that the loss due to inadequate transportation facilities actually represented a larger sum than would be collected as a result of heavy taxation. In fact, he was forever compiling mathematical illustrations of the feasibility of internal improvements.⁴

Ramsey castigated the people themselves for their apathy in the face of the rapidly approaching ruin of East Tennessee, and their failure to embrace the means of averting it, although they were easily aroused "in every little petty controversy."⁵ While he placed much of the responsibility on members of Congress and the legislature for failing to commit themselves to internal improvements and take the lead in this field for fear they would lose a few votes, his main burden was to prepare his readers for "a radical reform in the conduct & opinions of the people concerning the matter."⁶ He was convinced that since the legislature would not take the responsibility itself, it would be necessary for the people to assume it "by issuing your orders for immediate adoption of an enlightened and vigorous system of internal improvements."⁷ Ramsey called upon them to "unite as one man, in giving your Representatives positive and express instructions, to use their utmost efforts

⁴Ibid., November 19, December 20, 1831.

⁵Ibid., November 11, 1831.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., December 20, 1831.

for the immediate adoption" of such a system.⁸

In these articles his tone took on an evangelistic fervor (he himself sought to excuse his "warmth of expression"⁹ on the basis of the urgency of the situation) as he exclaimed, "We should consider opposition to improvements and hostility to the public good, as synonymous terms."¹⁰ Convinced that the state's continued backwardness in transportation projects was in danger of causing her to fall behind the times, Ramsey asked, "In these improvements of such momentous interest to her, shall Tennessee continue to be an idle, uninterested spectator? Or animated by the spirit of the age, can she be excited from lethargic stupor to exertion, to enterprise, to glory?"¹¹ Now (1825-31) was the time to act.

This ought to be considered by us, as the all absorbing question in politics; compared with which the Tariff, the Bank, the Presidential election and all other elections, except so far as they affect this question, shrink into insignificance. This question involves nothing less than whether East Tennessee shall continue to decline until its inhabitants are driven from their homes by poverty; or shall become the most prosperous, delighted and happy portion of the United States.¹²

To Ramsey prosperity could come in no other way. Even the federal government could provide no help until the people and the states had accomplished what they could in this area.

⁸Ibid., February 16, 1832.

⁹Ibid., December 20, 1831.

¹⁰Ibid., February 16, 1832.

¹¹Knoxville Enquirer, February 15, 1826.

¹²Railroad Advocate, December 20, 1831, February 16, 1832.

There were many objections raised to any system aided by the state. It was said that internal improvements were impracticable from the nature of East Tennessee geography, that they could not be constructed without intolerable taxation, that the cost would exceed the profit, that the legislature would engage in log-rolling and squander large sums of money, and that some portions of the country would derive greater benefit than others.¹³

To answer these and other objections Ramsey maintained that the state should employ a skilled civil engineer to survey the area and report to the legislature on the feasibility of needed transportation facilities. Boards of internal improvement should be set up for the three sections of the state, and every project should be studied at length as to cost and profit. To finance proposed improvements, Ramsey advocated that the state incorporate companies, in which one-half to two-thirds of the stock would be subscribed by private individuals. In this manner the vigilance of the stockholders would contribute to a better expenditure of funds, and private capital would thus be invested in the public good. The state should also subscribe from one-third to one-half of the stock at not less than 6 to 8 per cent interest. By following such a policy the state could invest in several different improvements.¹⁴

Ramsey also recommended that the state secure the funds for these

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., December 3, 1831, February 16, 28, 1832.

investments, not by levying new taxes, but by borrowing. He believed that it could borrow at 4 to 6 per cent interest, and no state investment in internal improvement would be made that did not yield at least 2 per cent above the cost of borrowing the money and other expenses. After improvements had been in effect from three to five years, the return on such investments would be much higher. "I confess I am at a loss to conceive a stronger proof of idiotism than a refusal to make such a loan," Ramsey asserted.¹⁵ This was not the time to let the fear of public debt stand in the way of progress.

In general Ramsey seems to have supported state-aided local internal improvements. That he opposed federal assistance is evident from a letter that he wrote to President Polk in 1846:

I hope that the Internal Improvement or Harbor Bill of the H. of R. if it pass the Senate may be met by the veto of the Executive. They are mistaken who suppose that these appropriations are popular or demanded by public sentiment even in the Districts whose Representatives have voted for them. Every place cannot be provided for--Every appropriation therefore seems to be partial--Hence their general unpopularity with the masses--I touch not the Constitutional objection to the measure--On that I may be almost ultra--But such appropriations are popular only in the localities where the disbursement of the money is made--General sentiment is against & does not demand them.¹⁶

While Ramsey favored state-aided improvements of a local nature, he consistently supported federal aid to projects of a "national character." Considering the extension of the South Carolina Railroad from

¹⁵Ibid., February 28, 1832.

¹⁶Ramsey to Polk, April 20, 1846 [listed under August 20, 1846], Polk Papers.

Augusta, Georgia, to the Tennessee River "an internal improvement of a national character," Ramsey proposed in 1829 a congressional appropriation to aid it.¹⁷ Arguing his case in an article in the Charleston Mercury, he pointed to what he said was four million dollars that the federal government had spent for internal improvements north of the Potomac contrasted with eight hundred thousand appropriated south of it.¹⁸ While calling upon interested states to cooperate in assisting the extension of this railroad, he continued to allude in later newspaper articles to the possibility of federal aid.¹⁹ He also took the lead in organizing a meeting in Knoxville in 1830 that resolved that the Tennessee delegation in Congress be requested to help procure the passage of a bill to build a national road from Buffalo, New York, to New Orleans.²⁰ Moreover, it is obvious to the disinterested person that Ramsey actually reached the point that he reacted with a consciousness of state and sectional interest, although he himself never recognized it. For example, much later, in 1850, in memorializing Congress for land grants and a remission of duties on iron for the East Tennessee and Georgia and the East Tennessee and Virginia railroads, he argued that such grants would be both just and fair because Tennessee "has received literally

¹⁷Knoxville Register, February 4, 1829 [article reprinted from the Charleston Mercury]; Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, January 21, 1829, Ramsey Papers (UT).

¹⁸Knoxville Register, February 11, 1829 [article reprinted from the Charleston Mercury].

¹⁹Railroad Advocate, November 11, 1831, February 16, 1832.

²⁰Knoxville Register, February 17, 1830.

nothing from the national treasury. With no Light Houses--forts--arsenals--public works of any kind, etc."²¹

Not only did Ramsey in a general manner seek to arouse the people of East Tennessee to the need for internal improvements and propose that the state government, and sometimes the federal government, aid these undertakings; he also made pointed suggestions concerning specific improvements. Some of his earliest proposals, however, did not deal strictly with internal improvements, but rather with agricultural changes which he considered necessary before East Tennesseans could be aided by such improvements.²² Ramsey contended that the region's lack of productivity and prosperity resulted not only from the lack of an adequate market, but also from the failure of her farmers to cultivate articles that were best suited for her peculiar situation and the markets she did have.²³ Grain, particularly corn, still the main staple in East Tennessee, had been introduced by the first settlers from Pennsylvania, and the present farmers had blindly followed this habit in spite of significant changes that had taken place in the Mississippi Valley. East Tennessee was no longer a favorable region for grain production because of several factors. In the first place, he argued, the price

²¹Ramsey to Nelson, December 19, 1850, Nelson Papers.

²²His views on agriculture attracted some attention, and he was later referred to in an obituary as the "first agricultural reformer in East Tennessee." Knoxville Tribune, April 12, 1884.

²³Knoxville Enquirer, January 25, 1826.

was so low in New Orleans as to render it unremunerative even if East Tennessee farmers had a direct route to that port. However, in the face of the circuitous and unsafe route down the Mississippi, corn raising was doubly unprofitable. Since the grain growing states to the North possessed superior transportation facilities, East Tennesseans, therefore, had to compete at a serious disadvantage with them, as well as those on the Missouri River.²⁴

As early as 1826 he recommended several changes. He urged East Tennesseans to seek closer markets for their corn, particularly in Mobile and the country above, a cotton staple area where Tennessee grain would bring a better price. Calling upon the farmers to change their crops as well as their markets, he proposed the introduction of cotton as a major staple. On the basis of experiments conducted in the past year (1825), he argued that it could be grown in all but ten or twelve of the higher counties of East Tennessee. An acre of cotton would bring more profit than three or four of corn.²⁵

In counties where cotton could not be grown Ramsey recommended the production of tobacco and hemp. In fact, he seems to have championed the cultivation of tobacco for several decades. In 1841 he was still calling upon the farmers of East Tennessee to produce tobacco and illustrating mathematically what an acre of tobacco could profit them. Contending that this area had the soil best adapted for the production of all varieties of tobacco, he asserted, "Its [tobacco's] production will develope [sic] her [East Tennessee's] resources, extricate

²⁴Ibid., January 15, 25, 1826.

²⁵Ibid.

the people from debt, and place them in easy, comfortable, and independent circumstances." In typically poetic phraseology, Ramsey continued, "We have a mine of wealth, our soil is our bank, and tobacco should be the valuable ore which we extract from its vaults."²⁶ Tobacco would begin "a new era of commercial enterprise" in Knoxville. Since a ready market for hemp to be used for rope, bagging, and other purposes existed to the south, and East Tennesseans could ship it there cheaper and quicker than the farmers in Kentucky, he also advocated the production of hemp as a better crop than corn.²⁷

Agricultural changes had to be united with transportation improvements, however, before the East Tennessee farmer could hope for any real solution to his problem. Ramsey also had definite ideas and made specific suggestions along this line. An internal improvement that dominated much of East Tennessee's thinking in the 1820's was the removal by a canal, or some other means, of the obstruction to transportation on the Tennessee River known as Muscle Shoals. Although Ramsey possibly favored this scheme in 1825²⁸ and would appear to support it again in 1832, during the intervening years he recommended caution on several grounds. The removal of the obstruction at Muscle Shoals, he asserted, would not solve the problem of East Tennessee farmers, inasmuch as the route from there to New Orleans would remain just as long, perhaps longer, and still as

²⁶ Knoxville Register, June 16, 1841 [article signed "R."].

²⁷ Knoxville Enquirer, January 25, 1826.

²⁸ Stanley John Folmsbee, Sectionalism and Internal Improvements in Tennessee: 1796-1845 (Knoxville, Tennessee: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1939), 86.

circuitous. The loss of profit caused by the long distance to market would remain. Ramsey's real objection seems to have been less concerned with the Muscle Shoals canal than with New Orleans as a port; he considered it to be too far from East Tennessee.²⁹

Ramsey raised still another objection that if the shoals were removed or by-passed, Tennessee would be opened to grain and stock competition from Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, whose farmers could pay a greater freight cost and still undersell the East Tennessee farmer. He said that if the shoals were cleared East Tennessee trade with Mobile would be "rendered unproductive if not annihilated" by competition with all the western states, for Muscle Shoals had afforded "a bulwark of safety for Tennessee grain growers and stock raisers."³⁰ Ramsey further contended that the cost of such a venture would be prohibitive.³¹ His main objection to the proposed canal around Muscle Shoals, however, seems to have been that East Tennesseans should not spend precious time and energy trying to secure an internal improvement which would not actually shorten their distance to market.³²

Because of what appeared to be his vehement opposition to the Muscle Shoals canal scheme and his general resistance to river trade

²⁹Knoxville Enquirer, February 8, 1826.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Two years later Ramsey was still contending that the combined efforts of Tennessee and Alabama would be inadequate to construct a canal around Muscle Shoals. Knoxville Register, March 12, 1828.

³²Knoxville Enquirer, February 8, 1826; J. G. M. Ramsey, Some cursory remarks on the contemplated removal of the obstruction in the Tennessee River--called the Muscle Shoals, 1829 [?], Box 3-E, Ramsey Papers (UT).

between New Orleans and East Tennessee as "not only impracticable, but . . . if affected, destructive of her best interest," Ramsey gained the reputation of being opposed to river navigation and improvement. Nothing could be further from the truth. In certain areas Ramsey was at the very forefront in river improvement. At the time he was opposing the Muscle Shoals project he was supporting the building of a canal to connect the Hiwassee and Coosa Rivers and thus open a new market to East Tennessee produce, a market in which he considered she would almost have a monopoly. In 1825 after a survey was made for this proposed canal, Ramsey was appointed one of fifty-five commissioners to sell bonds for the Hiwassee Canal Company.³³ At about this same time he was also proposing that a company be formed to introduce steamboat navigation on East Tennessee rivers.³⁴ In fact, as early as July, 1826, on behalf of a steamboat company, reportedly formed by him, he corresponded with an English firm concerning the building of a boat to navigate the Holston River.³⁵ He was also a member of the Steamboat Company of Knoxville, which put the steamboat Knoxville, built in Cincinnati in 1831 under the

³³Knoxville Enquirer, February 8, 1826; Knoxville Register, January 10, 1827. By March, 1828, Ramsey had rejected the Coosa Canal scheme, he contended, because the Coosa River could not be ascended during many months of the year, because of the great distance of receiving imports through that channel, and because it would lead only to a quick exploitation of the resources of East Tennessee, and thus to its ruin. Knoxville Register, March 12, 1828; Donald Davidson, The Tennessee: Frontier to Secession (2 vols.; New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1946-48), I, 243.

³⁴Knoxville Enquirer, February 15, 1826.

³⁵Ibid., July 12, 1826.

direction of his brother W. B. A., in the Tennessee River trade.³⁶ Moreover, J. G. M., along with W. B. A., James King, and William Swan, all associates in this company, appealed to Governor Carroll in 1831 to have the Suck and Boiling Pot, in the Tennessee River below Chattanooga, surveyed with the intention of removing these obstructions.³⁷ Even more astounding than the above is the fact that at a railroad convention in Asheville, North Carolina, in 1832 Ramsey reported for the Tennessee delegation that while his state was willing to join North Carolina and another state in opening up a direct communication with the Atlantic by railroad, the Tennessee River claimed Tennessee's first attention at that time. He went on to note that the river had been surveyed, that a canal or railroad was being considered to remove the Muscle Shoals obstruction, and that the state of Tennessee and the United States government had appropriated sums of money to improve the river along these lines.³⁸

When the Tennessee legislature passed an act in 1842 calling for the appropriation of one hundred thousand dollars for the improvement of East Tennessee's rivers, the governor appointed Ramsey as a Knox County representative to the board of commissioners to superintend the improvement to be made.³⁹ In accepting the appointment, Ramsey stated,

³⁶Knoxville Register, May 11, June 8, 1831; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, March 25, 1868, McIver Collection; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 33.

³⁷Knoxville Register, June 8, 1831.

³⁸Ibid., September 12, 1832; Col. Tomlinson Fort, "Early Railroad History," Knoxville Sentinel, July 18, 1903.

³⁹Knoxville Register, February 23, 1842; Knoxville Argus, February 23, 1842.

We have ever viewed the improvement of natural channels of our trade as a subject of primary importance to all the interests, but especially to the agriculture and manufactures of East Tennessee. . . . It is therefore every way desirable that the obstructions in our rivers should be removed, and as far as they are susceptible of it, that they should be made navigable at all seasons of the year.⁴⁰

Soon thereafter elected president of the board of commissioners, Ramsey was later appointed as executive authority to carry out the improvements decided by the board.⁴¹

There are several possible explanations for Ramsey's conflicting views concerning river improvement which have been presented on the preceding pages. One answer is to be found in his changing his mind over the years concerning the feasibility of certain improvements. Another is that although Ramsey opposed in principle the removal of the Muscle Shoals obstruction because of the direction East Tennessee trade would take as a result, he realized that so many were determined to see this improvement made that in time he reconciled himself to it. For instance, in 1829 when he was advocating strongly a railroad communication between Charleston, South Carolina, and the Tennessee River, he used the imminent opening of the Muscle Shoals as an argument for the completing of such a railroad. He asserted that when the shoals were obviated by means of a canal which was to be built with the aid of the land grant of 1828, more territory in Alabama would thus be brought into contact with

⁴⁰Knoxville Argus, February 23, 1842, in Ramsey, Contributions, 107.

⁴¹Knoxville Post, April 13, 1842; Knoxville Argus, April 13, 1842.

the Atlantic Coast by way of the railroad network.⁴² Still another answer may be that Ramsey's personal interest in the company that built the Knoxville in 1831 caused him to modify temporarily his views on removing certain obstructions to the navigation of the Tennessee River, such as Muscle Shoals.

One can also partly account for Ramsey's apparent inconsistency by suggesting that he favored all kinds of internal improvements so strongly that he even helped organize a steamboat company and accepted significant appointments in behalf of river improvements, when he actually had grave doubts concerning the feasibility of some projects. Although he did buy stock in the company that built the Knoxville, he confesses in his autobiography that he had little faith in its success.⁴³ He wrote Polk in 1839, "As to river improvements I confess I am sceptical [sic] I carefully examined the result of such efforts elsewhere & find they always have failed to meet public expectation & in the Carolinas they are dropped [sic]."⁴⁴ Again he wrote to Polk immediately after his appointment to the board of commissioners in charge of river improvements in East Tennessee, "If I accept the appointment . . . I shall act till they begin to waste the public money & then resign & leave the impossibility [sic] upon their own people."⁴⁵

⁴²Knoxville Register, February 4, 1829.

⁴³Hesseltine, Ramsey, 34.

⁴⁴Ramsey to Polk, September 26, 1839, Polk Papers.

⁴⁵Ramsey to Polk, February 26, 1842, ibid. Ramsey asserts in his autobiography that the efforts of these river commissioners were almost worthless. Hesseltine, Ramsey, 33.

The main explanation for Ramsey's apparent conflicting views, would seem to lie, however, in the fact that at a time when most people in Tennessee were looking toward New Orleans and the improvement of the Tennessee River to expedite trade with that city, Ramsey was looking in the direction of the Atlantic Ocean and improvement that would expedite trade with that coast. He says in his autobiography,

I was misrepresented as an opposer of river-improvements when in fact I favored the removal of the obstructions at Muscle Shoals by federal appropriations, denying, however, in toto that it would essentially contribute to our commercial relief or improve our trading facilities.⁴⁶

Ramsey was not nearly so opposed to improvement of the Tennessee River as he was to the impetus to trade with New Orleans that he feared would result from it. As early as 1826 he favored improving the French Broad River, which he considered "destined to become the medium of communication from that sea [the Atlantic] to this and contiguous Western States."⁴⁷ In that same year he attended an internal improvement meeting in Dandridge and was appointed a member of a committee to urge the legislature to survey and aid in the building of an East Tennessee turnpike to connect with another one being constructed in western North Carolina to open a land communication between the head waters of the Tennessee and Savannah Rivers. He had already written newspaper articles advocating the building of this turnpike.⁴⁸

South Carolinians, particularly citizens of Charleston, had

⁴⁶Ibid., 19.

⁴⁷Knoxville Enquirer, February 15, 1826.

⁴⁸Ibid., February 15, September 20, 1826.

desired trade with the West for a long time to offset the commercial loss they had sustained by the fall in the price of cotton.⁴⁹ Ramsey had for several years reciprocated this feeling. Back in 1822 he had written concerning South Carolina's efforts to achieve a trade with East Tennessee,

From the intelligence and public spirit which prevailed in the councils of that state and the princely appropriations already made for Internal Improvement, the belief is justly entertained that nothing will be wanting on her part to invite and encourage a commercial intercourse with her sister states.⁵⁰

Thus he seems first to have advocated import trade with South Carolina and later to have considered a communication for exporting. In 1825 he wrote a letter to a friend in Charleston deploring Tennessee's importing of goods from New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore by way of Virginia and North Carolina when the same goods could be imported from Charleston, nearer to East Tennessee, at a cheaper price. At this time he asserted, "Charleston is destined to become the depot for all European commodities for the South Western States of the Union."⁵¹ About a year later he again wrote, "Whatever may be the channel of exportation from East Tennessee, her imports must be received through South Carolina."⁵² Ramsey was forever complimenting South Carolina's governor, legislature, and the inhabitants of Charleston for their

⁴⁹ Stanley J. Folmsbee, "The Beginnings of the Railroad Movement in East Tennessee," ETHS Publications, No. 5 (1933), 85.

⁵⁰ Knoxville Enquirer, February 15, 1822.

⁵¹ Ibid., April 24, 1825.

⁵² Ibid., February 15, 1826.

efforts to improve trade with the West.

Ironically, it was in March, 1828, in an address of welcome at Mecklenburg to visitors and the captain and crew of the Atlas, the first steamboat to reach Knoxville up the Tennessee River, that Ramsey first adequately presented his views on improving transportation and trade between East Tennessee and Charleston. Even though the arrival of the Atlas might have caused many East Tennesseans, indulging in easy optimism, to believe their great problem was solved, it was not so with Ramsey. As Donald Davidson comments, "The arrival of one small valiant steamboat was not enough to convince him that regular packet service was about to be established between Knoxville and New Orleans."⁵³ Even if such were the case, he would still have argued against trade with New Orleans as being necessarily of a limited nature. In his address he proceeded to present his well known arguments against trade with New Orleans. Then, turning his attention to South Carolina, he contended that East Tennessee was "essentially an Atlantic country," and its hope lay in improved forms of land transportation to connect her with Charleston. If a road were constructed between East Tennessee rivers and the Savannah, and improvements made in the navigation of these rivers, trade with the South Atlantic ports would in several ways be superior to trade with New Orleans. The transporting of goods would be over a shorter distance, requiring less time and less expense. Cotton was commonly quoted at a higher price in Charleston than New

⁵³Davidson, The Tennessee, I, 243.

Orleans. The country between the sea coast and East Tennessee afforded an excellent market for the breadstuffs of East Tennessee. The farmers of this area would have the added advantage of importing and exporting through the same agent. Ramsey maintained, moreover, that a natural unity should exist between the two areas. A commercial identity between the Southeast and the West would lead to other ties. If the Atlantic Coast were invaded by a foreign foe--or a domestic one, for that matter--the coast would have to look to Tennessee for soldiers and supplies. Thus both political and national considerations dictated a commercial intercourse between these two areas.⁵⁴ Ramsey seems to have accepted without question the idea propagated by the South Carolinian, Robert Y. Hayne, that the political unity, indeed the political ascendancy, of the West and the South would be greatly enhanced by internal improvements connecting the two areas. He assented completely to a statement which he said Hayne once made to him: "Bind the South to the West by links of iron . . . give them a commercial identity, and thus prevent a political disintegration which paper constitutions and congressional restrictions etc., etc., are all unable to guard against."⁵⁵

Ramsey's rejection of the proposed plan of building canals to

⁵⁴Knoxville Register, March 12, 1828; Folmsbee, Sectionalism, 85-86; James W. Livingood, "The Tennessee Valley in American History: The Old Valley, Land of Challenge and Contention," ETHS Publications, No. 21 (1949), 25; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 18-19; Lewis Cecil Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860 (2 vols.; New York: Peter Smith, 1941), 1027, 1031.

⁵⁵Hesselstine, Ramsey, 40. See also the Knoxville Register, February 4, 1829.

facilitate trade via the gulf ports and his contention that Tennessee as an Atlantic state should trade with the Atlantic seaboard were labeled "Mecklenburg Politics," and for the moment, as we shall see, were rejected by most Knox County inhabitants. Reacting to the criticism of his "impolite" Atlas speech, Ramsey afterwards protested that the newspapers had misrepresented his opinions.⁵⁶

Ramsey came to believe that his proposed land communication between East Tennessee and the Atlantic Coast could be realized by the extension of the newly organized South Carolina Railroad from Augusta, across the Savannah River from the proposed terminus at Hamburg, to the Tennessee River. While in South Carolina in 1828-29, he contributed several articles to the Charleston Mercury, again under the now familiar pseudonym Clinton. He enumerated again his arguments for East Tennessee's trading with the Atlantic ports, adding that a commercial bond between the Southeast and the West would allow wealth to be introduced from abroad that would give an impetus to East Tennessee industry.⁵⁷

According to Ramsey, H. L. Pinckney, editor of the Charleston Mercury, gave him credit for originating this plan to extend the South Carolina Railroad to the Tennessee River. Robert Y. Hayne is reported to have said that

It gave me much pleasure Sir to tell you that your pieces have been the subject of much conversation throughout our city & I have become a stock holder since I saw your views

⁵⁶ Hesseltine, Ramsey, 19.

⁵⁷ Knoxville Register, February 4, 11, 1829.

of extending the improvement to the Tennessee River--which I always had refused to do when it was viewed as extending only to Augusta.⁵⁸

Although Ramsey possibly overstated the significance of his Clinton articles as the "entering wedge of all our subsequent Internal Improvement schemes in Tennessee . . . [laying] the foundation for all the Rail Road Conventions which followed in rapid succession," Stanley J. Folmsbee does say that he "seems to have been the first in East Tennessee to envision the possibilities of rail communication with the Atlantic Seaboard."⁵⁹ Moreover, when one considers that nowhere in the world was the railroad a commercially successful form of conveyance in 1828-29, he is forced to acknowledge that Ramsey was indeed a man of vision. For at a time when most people understood roads and canals, but rejected railroads as "impractical," he realized the potential of this new and almost untried form of commercial transportation. In fact, the novelty of Ramsey's views will perhaps help to explain a measure of the opposition which they received.

Inasmuch as there was a proposed plan to continue the railroad from Augusta to Florence, Alabama, Ramsey in these articles pressed the claims of the upper part of the Tennessee River as the best point to which to extend the road. When the projected canal around the Muscle Shoals should be completed with federal aid, an extension of the railroad merely two hundred or two hundred and fifty miles beyond its terminus opposite

⁵⁸Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, January 14, 1829, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁵⁹List of Ramsey's Writings, March 25, 1879, Miscellaneous Materials, Box 3-E, ibid.; Folmsbee, "Railroad Movement," 85.

Augusta to the new highest point of navigation on the Tennessee (probably in the neighborhood of Chattanooga or Knoxville) would open up trade between the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee.⁶⁰

These Clinton articles appear sufficiently to have aroused influential men in Charleston that a memorial was circulated in that city calling upon Congress to make the appropriation that Ramsey had advocated to aid in the building of the proposed extension of the South Carolina Railroad.⁶¹ However, Ramsey was also anxious about arousing the interest of East Tennesseans in the venture. His articles that had appeared in the Charleston Mercury he sent to F. S. Heiskell, editor of the Knoxville Register, asking him to print them. To Judge Hugh Lawson White and others he wrote, imploring their support of the proposal. He inquired of his wife, "Will Knoxville do nothing? Can they not instruct our Representatives to support the Charleston Memorial?"⁶² To his brother he confided, "This city [Charleston] generally are [sic] aware of the advantages the proposed communication holds out to itself, as also of its advantages in a national point of view. East Tennessee should take care of herself and not sleep while others are acting."⁶³

In general East Tennessee still paid little attention to Ramsey's proposals. The Register, while reprinting three of his Clinton articles,

⁶⁰Knoxville Register, February 4, 1829; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, January 14, 1829, Ramsey Papers (NC).

⁶¹Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, January 21, 1829, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, January 14, 1829, Ramsey Papers (NC).

flatly rejected his arguments. An editorial in June, 1829, stated, "We disagree with all those, who believe a Rail Road, Canal, or any other contrivance to connect our trade with either South Carolina or Georgia will be of more advantage to us than a free passage down the river, to New Orleans."⁶⁴ Pryor Lea, a congressman from the Knoxville District, favored the obviation of the Muscle Shoals and the improving of access to the New Orleans market. Although the American Whig and Knoxville Enquirer supported Ramsey in rejecting the New Orleans market, it favored his earlier proposal to seek Mobile as the best outlet for East Tennessee products.⁶⁵

Characteristic of Ramsey's reaction to opposition and indifference to his efforts and activities, he did not diminish his efforts to secure railroad communication between Charleston and Knoxville. Believing beyond doubt that the commercial, political, and social salvation of East Tennessee lay in her union with the Atlantic coast by rail, he continued vigorously to promote the extension, particularly to the upper Tennessee area, of the South Carolina Railroad, under construction from Charleston to Hamburg. It is significant to note again that Ramsey believed in the power of the press and masterfully used it to publicize these views. He went to great lengths to compile statistics on East Tennessee commerce, agriculture, manufactures, resources, and population figures to advertise East Tennessee to the railroad-minded people.

⁶⁴Knoxville Register, January 17, 1829.

⁶⁵The American Whig and Knoxville Enquirer, April 1, 1829.

In short, Ramsey was not merely a silent advocate, but an active promoter of the railroad idea.⁶⁶ In fact, his enthusiastic promotion of the scheme to connect Tennessee with the Atlantic Coast in this manner was mainly responsible for the fact that "it was East Tennessee . . . which was first [of the three divisions of Tennessee] to be afflicted--also the most violently--with the railroad fever."⁶⁷

Even before the South Carolina Railroad was completed to Augusta in 1833, and the possibility of its being extended to the Tennessee River seemed more likely, great interest began to be aroused. A railroad convention held in Knoxville in 1831, two years before its completion, to which two representatives of the South Carolina Railroad came to press the possibility of this extension, led to a declaration by interested East Tennesseans that every means ought to be used to see that this object was accomplished. Ramsey offered the resolution

that this meeting considers the co-operation of the contiguous states essential to the success of the contemplated improvement, and would respectfully request the executive of the State of Tennessee to take such measures in relation to it as will awaken abroad a corresponding spirit.⁶⁸

He was placed on a central committee of three to request the war department to make a survey of the land between the Savannah and Tennessee Rivers and to memorialize the Tennessee legislators for aid.⁶⁹

⁶⁶Ramsey to Nelson, December 19, 1850, Nelson Papers.

⁶⁷Stanley J. Folmsbee, Robert E. Corlew, and Enoch L. Mitchell, History of Tennessee (4 vols.; New York: Lewis Publishing Company, Inc., 1960), I, 379.

⁶⁸Knoxville Register, June 15, 1831.

⁶⁹Ibid., June 15, 1831, May 16, 1832.

In September, 1831, the committee reported that a survey had been made which indicated that a railroad from Augusta to the valley of the Little Tennessee was feasible. They also reported that another suitable route, although not yet surveyed, ran via western North Carolina, over the mountains and along the French Broad River. Ramsey can be given most of the credit for the proposal of the alternate route. He had ridden on horseback over a good part of it, following the meanderings of the French Broad River to its source⁷⁰ and in 1829 had urged the claims of the upper Tennessee in the extension of the railroad. Writing to his brother in January of that year, he called upon

The mayor and aldermen of Knoxville and the citizens at large . . . [to] request their representatives in congress to get the secretary of war to instruct the engineers now surveying the site for the Charleston and Augusta Railroad to continue the survey over the Alleghany to some of the upper branches of the Tennessee River--French-Broad, etc., etc.⁷¹

As a representative from Knox County, Ramsey attended a convention in Asheville, North Carolina, in September, 1832, which adopted resolutions supporting the connecting of the west with the Atlantic by a railroad to be built along the French Broad and calling for a survey of this route by United States engineers. He singlehandedly wrote the report from Tennessee which disclosed that while most of Tennessee's efforts at that time were being expended in improving the Tennessee River, she would support the building of a railroad between

⁷⁰Ibid., September 14, 1831; Railroad Advocate, September 15, 1831; Newspaper article, Scrapbook II, 29, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁷¹Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, January 14, 1829, Ramsey Papers (NC).

East Tennessee and the Atlantic coast. He asserted in his report,

To what point our river can be navigated by steam, future surveys and experiments must determine, but the committee have no hesitation in saying that from the head of ascending navigation to the North Carolina boundary, no country possesses more abundantly the materials for the construction of an artificial road, which pursuing the French Broad, may be easily graduated to the declivity of that stream.⁷²

Because of the failure of the North Carolina legislators to appropriate funds for the proposed survey, and because of some indifference in Tennessee to the venture, it was not made at that time, and the proposal languished for a few years.⁷³

Interest was revived, however, in 1835 with the news of a proposal initiated by the citizens of Cincinnati that a railroad be built from that city to Charleston. The South Carolina legislature, enthusiastically prompted by Robert Y. Hayne and the people of Charleston, incorporated the proposed railroad and appropriated ten thousand dollars for a survey of the route. North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky soon gave charters to the company, and the Tennessee legislature followed with an appropriation of five thousand dollars toward the survey.⁷⁴ When the first survey through the mountains of North Carolina was made in 1836, Ramsey went with the corps of engineers and accompanied them on to

⁷²Knoxville Register, September 12, 1832. While Ramsey in his autobiography mentioned having prepared this report, he proudly relates it only to the railroad movement, omitting any reference to river improvement. Hesseltine, Ramsey, 38-39.

⁷³Folmsbee, "Railroad Movement," 87; Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, A History of Transportation in the Eastern Cotton Belt to 1860 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1908), 171.

⁷⁴Folmsbee, Sectionalism, 117; Rothrock, French Broad, 101-102.

Knoxville.⁷⁵

In the interest of this railroad, known as the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston, a great convention was held in Knoxville in July, 1836, comprising three hundred and eighty delegates, representing nine states. Robert Y. Hayne was elected president of the gathering. Ramsey, although a Knox County delegate, assisted in drawing up a South Carolina report, which stated,

There is no route within the limits of the existing charter by which a railroad can be carried across the Blue Ridge, that must not pass along the valley of the French Broad River, and the commissioners are under full conviction that this valley affords by far the best channel of communication between the Ohio River and the Atlantic Ocean.⁷⁶

The convention adopted this route which was to begin west of Charleston on the South Carolina Railroad line and run from there to Columbia, South Carolina, thence over the mountains from North Carolina, along the French Broad to Knoxville, and up through Cumberland Gap into Kentucky.⁷⁷

In 1836 the Tennessee legislature passed a law authorizing the state to purchase one-third of the stock in internal improvement companies chartered by the legislature. Such aid, however, was contingent on the other two thirds' first being subscribed by individuals or other

⁷⁵Knoxville Register, May 18, 1836; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 39.

⁷⁶John B. Cleveland, Controversy between John C. Calhoun and Robert Y. Hayne as to the Proper Route of a Railroad from South Carolina to the West (Spartanburg, South Carolina, 1913), 16-17; Knoxville Register, July 13, 1836; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 23, 39.

⁷⁷Folmsbee, Sectionalism, 116-117, 132; Rothrock, French Broad, 101-102.

companies.⁷⁸ To secure the purchase of such stock, the subscription books of the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad were opened in October, 1836, in each of the five states that had incorporated the road. Not only was Ramsey one of the three individuals responsible for the sale of stock in the Knoxville area;⁷⁹ but he was also named one of the three directors of the company from Tennessee at a meeting of the stockholders in 1837, at which Robert Y. Hayne was chosen president. Ramsey held this position until the railroad dissolved in 1840.⁸⁰ In fact, he seems to have been the most influential representative of the road in the Knoxville area, taking positions of leadership in meetings of the stockholders, corresponding with Hayne, and keeping the East Tennessee stockholders posted on the condition and prospects of the railroad.⁸¹

The Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad, unable to

⁷⁸Folmsbee, Sectionalism, 121-126.

⁷⁹Knoxville Register, October 12, 1836.

⁸⁰Theodore D. Jervey, Robert Y. Hayne and His Times (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1909), 418-419; Knoxville Register, October 25, 1837, January 3, 1838; Ramsey to Polk, August 3, 1839, December 2, 1840, Polk Papers; Knoxville Times, September 24, 1839.

⁸¹Knoxville Register, August 15, 1838; Knoxville Times, October 1, 1839. That Ramsey was recognized in South Carolina as a chief proponent of this venture is evidenced by a letter he received in 1837 from John Douglas, a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives, in which he wrote:

Dear Sir--I with great pleasure, and overflowing feelings, announce the loan of the credit of this State to the L. C. & C. Rail Road Company, for two millions of dollars, to carry out this great enterprise. . . . My knowledge of the deep and abiding interest which you feel in this matter, together

take advantage of the 1836 act because it could not secure subscriptions for two-thirds of its stock, memorialized the Tennessee legislature for state aid in 1837. Complicating the receiving of such aid, however, was competition between this project and another East Tennessee line, the Hiwassee Railroad, which was also seeking state aid.⁸² The Hiwassee company, incorporated in 1836, shortly after the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston, proposed to build a road from Knoxville southward to connect with an extension of the Charleston and Hamburg line across the state of Georgia, instead of crossing the mountains, as was contemplated by the earlier company. A controversy raged in East Tennessee, particularly in 1836, over which road should receive the aid. The dispute became so heated that a long list of Knoxville citizens went on record in the Register as favoring aid for both lines.⁸³ Ramsey, however, in a newspaper article in the same paper in January, 1838, again under the pseudonym "Clinton," argued strongly in favor of aid for the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston as opposed to aid for the Hiwassee. His company, he contended, had the most direct route to the Atlantic and could, therefore, be built at less expense. Since it was owned by one company, this road would require less delay in

with my own anxious desire to see East Tennessee wedded to my own S. Carolina, will be an apology for this hasty scroll [sic].

John Douglas to Ramsey, December 16, 1837, in the Knoxville Register, January 3, 1838.

⁸²Folmsbee, Sectionalism, 155-58.

⁸³Knoxville Register, February 28, 1838.

construction and make it easier to place blame in case of failures. The Hiwassee Railroad, on the other hand, though starting at Knoxville and winding toward the southwest for about ninety-eight miles to the Georgia line, was hardly closer to Charleston than at its starting point. Thus it would still fail to connect East Tennessee with a place where her surplus products could be sold. Furthermore, Ramsey contended, no assurance had been given by Georgia that she would cooperate with Tennessee in the construction of this road. He frankly asserted, "If any of us ever entertained a feeling of favor to the Hiwassee R. Road it was only when a doubt existed that the Charleston R. R. might possibly fail. That doubt is happily removed."⁸⁴ The answer of the Tennessee legislature to this controversy over appropriations was to pass a law in 1838 calling for state subscription of six hundred and fifty thousand dollars of the stock of each of the roads.⁸⁵

Included in the petition of the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad to the Tennessee legislature for aid was a request for banking privileges.⁸⁶ Writing as "Clinton" in the Washington Republican in May, 1837, he criticized a certain candidate who claimed to favor internal improvements, including the Louisville, Cincinnati,

⁸⁴Ibid., January 31, 1838. Ramsey's stern opposition to the Hiwassee railroad is all the more interesting when one is aware that his brother, W. B. A., was a strong proponent of this road. Rothrock, French Broad, 103.

⁸⁵Folmsbee, Sectionalism, 167; Folmsbee, "Railroad Movement," 95-96.

⁸⁶Folmsbee, Sectionalism, 154, 158-161.

and Charleston Railroad, but was opposed to its banking privileges in Tennessee. Ramsey called upon the voters to "speak at the ballot box in a voice to be felt and understood . . . for the man who goes with his whole heart for the Rail Road and for all lawful means to make it."⁸⁷ This request for banking privileges was granted in 1838 in accordance with like favors that the South Carolina and North Carolina legislatures had given to the railroad. In January, 1839, the board of the Southwestern Railway Bank in Charleston, which had thus been set up by the railroad, selected Ramsey a director of its branch to be established in Knoxville. Ramsey's fellow directors unanimously chose him president of the branch bank.⁸⁸ His uncanny success in this position during years of panic will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter.

The Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad, however, was doomed to failure. Besides the rivalry between the two competing roads, the main agent acting against its success was the panic of 1837, which had produced an unstable money market and, thereby, made it almost impossible for stock subscribers to make payments or for state securities to be sold at anything but ruinous rates. Added to these problems were both the vast expense and engineering difficulties involved in building the road across the mountains, and the opposition of John C. Calhoun, who opposed a rail connection with Cincinnati and proposed instead a

⁸⁷ Newspaper article, signed "Clinton," copied from the Washington Republican, in the Knoxville Register, May 10, 1837.

⁸⁸ Folmsbee, Sectionalism, 192-94; Rothrock, French Broad, 102-103.

connection with Memphis. The final blow came in September, 1839, with the death of Hayne, at which time even the usually unyielding Ramsey began to doubt the ultimate success of the venture.⁸⁹

When it became evident that the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad was on the verge of collapse, a real attempt was made by the Hiwassee company to consolidate with it in an attempt to secure a reassignment of its six hundred and fifty thousand dollar state stock subscription. Although most of his colleagues favored it, Ramsey emphatically opposed⁹⁰ this move on several grounds. He argued that it would be bad faith on the part of Tennessee to abandon a project that she and North and South Carolina had entered into jointly. Tennessee stockholders, moreover, had met their installments punctually, and the state had already issued thirty-two thousand dollars in bonds as part payment of its subscription. This capital, he contended, was completely secure in the vaults of the Southwestern Railway Bank, since no funds were to be expended until the railroad reached the Tennessee line. It would, moreover, be unfair and unwise, Ramsey said, to take this fund which "my prudence has saved to the state" and "to place it in the hands of those who have exhausted their own resources State bonds & all" in an attempt to unite with a road that Governor Gilmer of Georgia had said

⁸⁹Hesseltine, Ramsey, 24, 35-36; Folmsbee, Sectionalism, 192.

⁹⁰There is every reason to believe that Ramsey might have supported this proposed consolidation if a plan could have been accepted whereby the route through the valley of the French Broad would have been adopted. He was placed on a committee by the stockholders of the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad to consider this matter. Knoxville Times, December 17, 1839.

in all probability would be suspended. In addition, an injustice would be committed against the upper counties of East Tennessee to deprive them of any benefit to be derived from state aid by expending all the funds in behalf of the lower counties. He also maintained that if the Hiwassee Railroad received the extra funds, the desired balance between private and state investments would be upset and the Hiwassee thereafter should be considered a state road.⁹¹

Ramsey also resisted the consolidation proposal, which included certain changes in the policies of the Southwestern Railway Bank, because he considered it a design on the part of the Whigs to gain control of the branch bank by deposing him as president, a position he was not prepared to relinquish. He wrote to Polk:

It is all a humb-bug [sic] to barter away our Banking privileges for the use of the Whigs--To you I need not say my little salary has no influence in dictating these remarks--True I do not like for another to reap where I have sowed but I do object as a representative of the interests of this Co. & for a short time the guardian of the good faith & credit & funds of the State to the proposed amalgamation.⁹²

As it was, the division among East Tennesseans over the matter and increased West Tennessee opposition to state subscription of stock in either of the roads defeated the consolidation, and the state subscription for the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad stock was later cancelled.⁹³ Ironically enough, in opposing the proposed

⁹¹Ramsey to Polk, December 18, 1839, September 27, 1841, Polk Papers.

⁹²Ibid.; Folmsbee, Sectionalism, 212-15.

⁹³Ibid., 213-15; Folmsbee, "Railroad Movement," 98-100.

amalgamation of the two roads, Ramsey possibly had inadvertently checked by several years Knoxville's progress in obtaining a rail connection with the Atlantic coast.⁹⁴

Even in the midst of what appeared to be imminent failure, however, Ramsey characteristically refused to admit defeat and continued to fight for the survival of the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston scheme. During the fall of 1839 when the fortunes of the road were at their lowest, he advocated that the road should be built a section at a time, even if only ten miles per year, and that it should not be abandoned "till experience & estimates formed from experience dictate that its further extension would not be productive." He even proposed that if the states where no construction was going on became impatient, the railroad charters should be amended so that those states could borrow on railroad installments and state bonds issued by and paid for in those states. In October, 1839, when it became evident that construction had to be stopped because bonds could be sold only at great sacrifice, he referred to the cessation as a temporary halt and opposed "abandoning the work as that would be to surrender our charters."⁹⁵ When the situation finally worsened to the point that often a quorum could not be had at directors and stockholders meetings, Ramsey attended practically all of them even in North Carolina and South Carolina, serving in the extra capacity as the governor's proxy for the state

⁹⁴Rothrock, French Broad, 104.

⁹⁵Ramsey to Polk, September 26, October 26, 1839, Polk Papers.

of Tennessee.⁹⁶

Although it eventually became evident even to Ramsey late in 1840 that the charters of the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad were to be relinquished, he could still hardly bring himself to concede defeat. Writing to Governor Polk in October, 1840, concerning a forthcoming Charleston meeting of the directors, at which time the proposal to abandon the railroad was to be made, he asserted, "As the Representative of Tennessee I shall neither compromise her honor nor sacrifice her interest by assenting to it." Yet he did assent to the dissolution of the company, and as Tennessee's representative freed the other states from their obligation to her.⁹⁷ Years later he said of the proposed project, "The whole scheme was from the first too large and unwieldly to be effected by any one company. The work was too Herculean for 1839."⁹⁸ With the dissolution of the company, Ramsey's labors in its behalf were not ended. Before it could return its funds to the stockholders and the states, the expenses of the surveys made before 1839 and the interest on this past due debt had to be paid. Ramsey urged the Tennessee legislature in 1841 to do the honorable thing by appropriating the funds to handle this matter with the stipulation

⁹⁶Ramsey to Polk, September 26, October 26, November 1, 1839, October 20, 27, 1840, ibid.; Ramsey to Polk, December 10, 1840, Governors' Papers--James K. Polk (Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville).

⁹⁷Ramsey to Polk, October 27, 1840, Polk Papers; Ramsey to Polk, December 10, 1840, Governors' Papers--Polk; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 39.

⁹⁸Ibid.

that the state would receive for future use the maps and other resulting materials from the survey.⁹⁹

Continuing to oppose the Hiwassee project even after the dissolution of his own company, Ramsey rejected as late as September, 1841, the Hiwassee road's claim to the six hundred and fifty thousand dollar fund that reverted to the state as a result of that dissolution and persisted in calling the Hiwassee a "moon stricken enterprise."¹⁰⁰ Starving for lack of funds, that road also collapsed in 1842. Yet in 1845 Ramsey supported a movement to revive the Hiwassee venture. When the company was actually reorganized in 1847 under T. Nixon Van Dyke's presidency, Ramsey was appointed by Governor Brown a director on the part of the state.¹⁰¹ As usual, he took his new responsibilities seriously, attended regularly the company's quarterly meetings at Athens, and became a strong advocate of the enterprise, traveling to other states in its behalf.¹⁰² To remove the stigma of failure from its name the railroad was rechartered by the Tennessee legislature in 1848 as the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad.

Although for the present Ramsey was obliged to relinquish his idea of a railroad that would enter East Tennessee through the mountains

⁹⁹Ramsey to Polk, August 25, September 27, 1841, Polk Papers; Ramsey to Polk, September 24, 1841, Governors' Papers--Polk.

¹⁰⁰Ramsey to Polk, September 27, 1841, Polk Papers; Knoxville Argus, December 6, 1841, in Ramsey, Contributions, 104.

¹⁰¹Knoxville Register, January 20, 1847.

¹⁰²Knoxville Standard, March 2, 1847, February 29, 1848; Knoxville Register, March 3, 1847; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 24.

from North Carolina, he did see in the East Tennessee and Georgia line a partial fulfillment of his long desired "Mecklenburg Politics." The Western and Atlantic Railroad, linking Atlanta and Chattanooga, was in process of completion. Atlanta had already been connected with Charleston in 1845.¹⁰³ Therefore, when the proposed East Tennessee and Georgia road joined Knoxville to the Western and Atlantic at Dalton, Georgia, Ramsey's dream of rail communication between Knoxville and Charleston would be realized. At that time the export of Tennessee's agricultural produce would be so stimulated that she would become "the garden spot of the West." Excitedly anticipating the effect of such a connection, he wrote to his son, "You will live to see Major Lenoir's¹⁰⁴ excellent pippins eaten in Charleston two days after they ripen & the products of your Mas garden in the same market." He also envisioned such results as a rise in real estate values, a stimulated economy, a thriftier population, more neatly kept farms, and a rise in the wages of hired laborers that would follow the completion of the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad.¹⁰⁵

The venture faced the usual financial problems from the beginning. After the company rejected a Tennessee law passed in 1848, offering to endorse company bonds to the amount of three hundred and fifty thousand dollars, the legislature in January, 1850, passed an act which provided

¹⁰³Folmsbee, et al., Tennessee, I, 383, 388-89.

¹⁰⁴The father of Ramsey's son-in-law, B. B. Lenoir.

¹⁰⁵Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, July 19, 1850, Ramsey Papers (UT).

for a direct loan in state bonds to the railroad of the same amount. In addition the law called for the governor to appoint an agent who would be responsible for the sale of these bonds and the purchase of equipment for the railroad with the proceeds.¹⁰⁶ After Governor Trousdale chose Ramsey, already a state-appointed director of the railroad, to be this agent, he traveled to Nashville in the spring of 1850 to accept the appointment.¹⁰⁷ In doing so he met with opposition from the board of directors at Athens, particularly from Duff Green, the contractor for the road, who felt that at least a part of the state funds should go into the company treasury to be expended by the contractor. Ramsey distrusted Green and his "fraudulent" management of the construction and refused to do so, keeping the control of the funds in his own hands, for he construed the law positively to mean that the agent was to sell the bonds and buy the equipment. Notwithstanding this opposition, he left for New York, where he remained during the summer of 1850.¹⁰⁸

According to Ramsey, when he arrived in New York, Tennessee's bonds were selling at 80 per cent of par and threatening to fall lower.

¹⁰⁶ Acts of the State of Tennessee, 28 General Assembly, 1 sess., 132-34.

¹⁰⁷ Knoxville Register, February 2, 1850; Knoxville Whig, February 2, 1850; Ramsey to William Trousdale, January 8, 1851, Governors' Papers--Trousdale; "Railroads in Tennessee," DeBow's Southern and Western Review, IX (July, 1850), 227. For a more thorough treatment of Ramsey's service as a state-appointed agent to sell bonds and buy equipment for the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad, see David L. Eubanks, "J. G. M. Ramsey as a Bond Agent: Selections from the Ramsey Papers," ETHS Publications, No. 36 (1964), 81-99.

¹⁰⁸ Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, February 24, 1850, Governors' Papers--Trousdale; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 25-26; Knoxville Register, July 20, 1850.

Moreover, since the law positively forbade him to sell his bonds below par, Ramsey faced a difficult assignment. Somewhat despressed, he wrote his wife on July 25, "I do not believe a bond can be sold at par & of course no iron can be bought." Very soon his difficulties were compounded by the necessity of paying for a purchase of rails that he had made at what he considered to be an especially good bargain. Feeling such pressure, he again confided in his wife, "I can . . . make no negotiations of my bonds & occasionally wish my agency were over."¹⁰⁹ However, he was able on this first trip to dispose of a block of the bonds at 104 1/2 per cent of par and relieve his obligation for the iron. Some of the bonds even sold at 106 per cent. Ramsey was fond of boasting that he "brot [sic] up the market value of Tennessee bonds from eighty to 104%" of par value. Indeed, V. K. Stevenson, president of the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad, commented to Ramsey concerning his sale, "I have thought you obtained for the first bonds you sold more than twenty five hundred dollars higher price than could have been obtained by all most any other person."¹¹⁰ Ramsey had apparently convinced purchasers of the financial stability of the state of Tennessee, in part by exhibiting the state comptroller's report and emphasizing especially the resources of Tennessee and her freedom from a large debt.

¹⁰⁹Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, July 25, September 18, 1850, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, September 21, 1850, ibid.; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 29. Ramsey does not indicate in his autobiography such dependency as this over the sale of the bonds.

¹¹⁰Hesseltine, Ramsey, 27-30; Knoxville Register, October 3, 1850; Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 14, Ramsey Papers (NC); V. K. Stevenson to Ramsey, March 12, 1852, Ramsey Papers (UT).

After traveling to other cities on business, he returned to Knoxville in the winter of 1850.

Serving the state as its agent for more than two years, Ramsey traveled at various times to Washington, Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Savannah, Charleston, and Augusta. Although the bond market naturally fluctuated during this period, he sold bonds with a face value of \$350,000.00 for \$358,614.47, an advance of approximately 2 1/2 per cent. This money he disbursed for locomotives, passenger and baggage and freight cars, iron rails, chairs, spikes, and other equipment necessary for railroad construction. In fact, he claimed to have "bought the first rails--the first locomotive & cars ever used in Tennessee." He even memorialized Congress to remit duties on the iron for the railroad because the cost of ocean transportation and overland travel to Dalton made up such a large part of the cost.¹¹¹ There is extant a mass of cancelled checks, letters, and legal and financial papers which indicate that Ramsey was a shrewd business man in carrying out the responsibility of handling such a large sum of money.¹¹² That the agency required a substantial amount of his time is evident from his assertion to Draper that the work postponed at least a year the completing of his Annals

¹¹¹Ramsey, Report of the Agent of Tennessee on the Affairs of the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad, Sept. 20, 1851 (Nashville: McKennie and Brown Printers, 1851); Ramsey to W. B. Campbell, November 18, 1852, Ramsey Papers (UT); Hesseltine, Ramsey, 30; Ramsey to Draper, January 30, 1852, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey, Sketch of the McKnitt Family, 14, Ramsey Papers (NC); Ramsey to Nelson, December 19, 1850, Nelson Papers. Actually the La Grange and Memphis Railroad had operated for a few weeks in 1842. Folmsbee, Sectionalism, 239.

¹¹²For specific examples see Ramsey to Fullerton and Raymond, April 5, 1852, and Legal and Financial Materials in Ramsey Papers (UT).

of Tennessee, which was nearing publication at the time. He states in his autobiography that he was totally responsible for the buying of the equipment for the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad from Dalton to Loudon. W. H. Conner, a railroad president and a Charleston banker, Ramsey reported, said of him, "Doctor you galvanized a dead road into life and equipped it afterwards for \$350,000." Although Ramsey denied the whole truth of the first part of the statement, he seconded emphatically the veracity of the latter.¹¹³

It should be noted that the hard feelings, already alluded to, between Ramsey and the officials of the railroad over what they considered interference in the purchase of equipment, continued up to and after he resigned his agency. There is correspondence to indicate that Thomas Callaway and Campbell Wallace, successive presidents of the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad in 1852 and 1853, refused to purchase a locomotive, the "Holston," that Ramsey had led the Tredegar Locomotive Works of Richmond, Virginia, to believe the railroad board had authorized. A serious disagreement, lasting over a year, developed concerning the matter, and Ramsey was accused of acting arbitrarily without the consent of the officials of the railroad or the board of directors.¹¹⁴

¹¹³Ramsey to Draper, September 18, 1851, Draper Manuscripts; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 27; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, December 7, 1870, McIver Collection; Knoxville Register, August 29, 1850. That Ramsey expected to receive some financial remuneration for his labors is evident from a letter V. K. Stevenson wrote to him in which Stevenson recommended that Ramsey receive at least twenty-five hundred dollars plus expenses for his services. V. K. Stevenson to Ramsey, March 12, 1852, Ramsey Papers (UT).

¹¹⁴Thomas H. Callaway to Anderson and Southern, June 30, 1852; J. T. Anderson to John Southern, October 28, 1853; Thomas H. Callaway

With the successful conclusion of his railroad agency for the state Ramsey did not end his efforts in behalf of the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad, for the connection of Dalton, Georgia, with Blair's Ferry, near Loudon, Tennessee, in 1852 completed only a part of the road. Ramsey was dedicated to seeing that the line was extended on to Knoxville, while he feared that the people of Loudon wanted it to stop at Blair's Ferry, hoping "that Knoxville would be drawn to and absorbed by" Loudon.¹¹⁵ Already having realized this threat, Ramsey had been pressing before 1852 for the completing of the line. At a railroad meeting held in Knoxville in November, 1851, he had presented a resolution that the Tennessee legislature be petitioned to furnish equipment and iron to complete the road on to Knoxville and that the community be aroused to the need of such action.¹¹⁶

Awakened by such pleas, the legislature included in a law passed in 1852 allowing railroad companies loans of eight thousand dollars for each mile of road completed, a provision that the East Tennessee and Georgia was not to receive such aid unless the road was extended to Knoxville to join the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad.¹¹⁷ Although there was still strong opposition to continuing the road, Ramsey sought

to Campbell Wallace, November 27, 1853, Campbell Wallace Papers (University of Tennessee Library, Knoxville).

¹¹⁵Hesseltine, Ramsey, 31.

¹¹⁶Knoxville Whig, November 8, 1851.

¹¹⁷James W. Holland, "East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad," ETHS Publications, No. 3 (1931), 101-103.

the aid of prominent Knoxvilleians and East Tennesseans, such as "Colonel [W. H.] Sneed, Colonel G. W. Churchill [Churchwell], Major [William] Swan, and Colonel [John H.] Crozier," and others to make the necessary subscription of stock to secure the liberal appropriation by the state.¹¹⁸

When the line was completed to Knoxville in 1855 what had been a cherished object of Ramsey's life for over a quarter of a century became a reality. As he himself said on the eve of the road's completion, "What was once deemed the illusion of youth is now almost a glorious reality."¹¹⁹ He was, moreover, going to do all he could to prevent the reality from becoming an illusion again, for when the railroad faced serious financial difficulties in that same year, it was he who was placed on a committee to represent Tennessee, with two others from Georgia and South Carolina, as trustees to mortgage the railroad and its equipment to pay off its debts. Thereafter, he continued to serve as a state-appointed director for more than eight years.¹²⁰

Extremely significant is the fact that at the very moment that

¹¹⁸Hesseltine, Ramsey, 31-32; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, March 24, 1852, McIver Collection. That Ramsey's efforts were not altogether unselfish is evidenced by a comment he made to William Swan: "Major what came of the R. R. contract? I hope you did not lower the bid. As your subscription got the whole Knox County subscription we ought to make some money out of it." Ramsey to William Swan, December 11, 1852, Ramsey Papers (UT).

¹¹⁹Holland, "E. T. and Ga. Railroad," 101-103; Knoxville Standard, January 10, 1855.

¹²⁰Knoxville Register, September 27, October 11, 1855; Knoxville Standard, September 27, 1855; Knoxville Whig, February 21, 1857; Campbell Wallace to Isham G. Harris, September 4, 1862, Governors' Papers--Isham G. Harris (Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville); "To Whom It May Concern," January 20, 1863, Campbell Wallace Papers.

Ramsey was vigorously championing the cause of the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad he had not given up his desire for and active support of a road to connect Knoxville with the Atlantic Coast by a route through the mountains of western North Carolina. The Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston project was revived in the early 1850's by the chartering of the Blue Ridge Railroad at the South Carolina end of the line. The road was to pass through Georgia and cut through Rabun Gap in northeastern Georgia and travel through western North Carolina to Knoxville by the valley of the Little Tennessee River. Several companies joined in this project, known as the Rabun Gap Railroad. The Tennessee company, chartered in 1852, was known as the Knoxville and Charleston Railroad. It is interesting to note at this point that back in 1839 Ramsey, referring to Kentucky's failure to cooperate in the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad, had reported to Polk, "This great undertaking & the work is of course narrowed down (the better for Tennessee) to the Knoxville & Charleston Rail--Road."¹²¹ At any rate, the Knoxville and Charleston Railroad was organized and controlled largely by citizens of Knox County with Ramsey among the leaders of the enterprise. In fact, he seems to have been temporarily elected the first president of the company against his will. Although as a director of the road, he continued to advocate its extension during the 1850's, only a few miles of line from Knoxville toward Maryville were graded

¹²¹Ramsey to Polk, September 26, 1839, Polk Papers.

before the Civil War.¹²²

Following the war, work was resumed, and the line was completed to Maryville by August, 1868. Construction was, however, eventually stopped a few miles beyond this point. The road changed hands in 1875, and its name was changed to the Knoxville and Augusta Railroad, but its prospects of success were still far from bright. Ramsey, however, even after so many years, characteristically refused to give up the idea that this was the most direct route between East Tennessee and the Atlantic ports, most nearly fulfilling the original plan of Robert Y. Hayne. In an unsigned article in the Knoxville Tribune in 1877 entitled "A Straight Line from our Great South Atlantic Port," he argued that a straight line from Port Royal or Beaufort, South Carolina, across the United States to San Diego or Los Angeles, California, passed close to Augusta, Rabun Gap, and Knoxville, all on the route of the Knoxville and Augusta Railroad. In later articles he tried to interest the people of East Tennessee and offered suggestions for the completion of this road from Maryville to the North Carolina line and from there through Rabun Gap to Georgia. His lifelong dream never materialized, for the road was not extended beyond Blount County.¹²³

In the meantime Ramsey had also been advocating another route to the Atlantic Coast through western North Carolina and on to Charlotte.

¹²²Knoxville Whig, May 20, 1852; Edward Frost to Ramsey, July 27, 1856, Ramsey Papers (UT); Knoxville Register, February 5, July 30, 1857; Rothrock, French Broad, 110.

¹²³Ibid., 110-11, 231; newspaper articles in Scrapbook II, 24, 31-32.

The Cincinnati, Cumberland Gap, and Charleston Railroad, chartered in 1853, a road which did not actually touch Knox County, but passed through Morristown, had reached Wolf Creek in upper East Tennessee by 1869, only four miles short of Paint Rock, its destination on the Tennessee-North Carolina border. Here it was supposed to be joined by the Western North Carolina, but this road, experiencing financial troubles, was a good distance short of completion to Paint Rock. In 1871 while he was in exile in North Carolina, Ramsey, reverting to his earlier pseudonym "Clinton," wrote a series of articles in the Charlotte Southern Home urging the people of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, to buy bonds and complete the Western North Carolina Railroad between Morganton, North Carolina, and Paint Rock, a distance of approximately sixty miles. Although he pointed out to the people of North Carolina the benefits which would accrue to them through such a rail connection with Tennessee, Ramsey really saw in the completion of this road at least another partial fulfillment of his dream of the 1830's to see East Tennessee joined to the Atlantic Coast via a route through western North Carolina, even if the line did not pass through Knoxville. He wrote to his brother concerning this matter:

Is it not a most singular co-incidence that in 1828 Clinton in Charleston Mercury of that date should have given pater-nity & incipency to the great measure of uniting the South & West by Rail Road & that the same Clinton has now to urge the completion of the last link of that important chain. . . . Noah was 20 years building the ark---Clinton was 40 years scribbling to unite the South Atlantic Ports with the West. Have I not patience & perseverance.¹²⁴

¹²⁴Charlotte Southern Home, March 14, 28, April 11, 1871; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, March 31, 1871, McIver Collection.

After moving back to Knoxville in 1871 Ramsey continued to advocate in the press and elsewhere that the East Tennessee, Virginia and Georgia Railroad, which had purchased the Cincinnati, Cumberland Gap, and Charleston Railroad, should complete its four miles to the North Carolina state line, and that the Western North Carolina should complete its line to that point as well.¹²⁵ He finally saw success in 1881 when the Tennessee road was completed to Paint Rock where the connection was made with the Western North Carolina. As he had prophesied, Knoxville was greatly benefited by trade carried on with North Carolina merchants over this road.¹²⁶

As a strong advocate of internal improvements, and perhaps the first person in East Tennessee to advocate a rail connection with the Atlantic Coast, Ramsey played a significant role in arousing and stimulating the interest of his countrymen in railroad building. In the eighteen twenties, thirties, forties, and fifties, writing in the newspapers, acting on committees, attending conventions in several southeastern cities, serving as a member of the board of directors of several railroad companies, and selling railroad bonds in eastern cities for the state of Tennessee, Ramsey publicized and promoted the building of a railroad between Knoxville and Charleston. Realizing only a part of the fulfillment of his dream in the completion of the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad to Knoxville in 1855, he continued following the

¹²⁵Ramsey to D. H. Hill, February 14, 1875, in Charlotte Southern Home, in Scrapbook I, 23, Ramsey Papers (UT).

¹²⁶Rotnrock, French Broad, 231.

Civil War to advocate his long cherished desire to see Knoxville linked to the Atlantic Coast by a route through the mountains of North Carolina. Although the Cincinnati, Cumberland Gap and Charleston Railroad, completed in 1881, only three years before his death, did not actually pass through Knoxville, it provided the nearest thing to the full realization of Ramsey's "Mecklenburg Politics."

Although railroad interests exerted a major influence on Ramsey throughout his lifetime, another interest which was just as important and often was directly related to his railroad ventures was his equally prolonged involvement in banking.

CHAPTER VI

KNOXVILLE BANKER

Upon the death in 1820 of his father, who was serving at the time as a director and president of the Knoxville branch of the second Bank of the State of Tennessee, Ramsey at the age of twenty-three was appointed to fill the vacancy in the board of directors. Thus he began an association with banking that lasted for over half a century. Defending its policies in private and public with word and pen and officially investigating its business affairs, Ramsey served as a director of the bank until 1833, when it was liquidated by the state legislature because of an unsound policy of speculation with the depositors' funds.¹

As was observed in the last chapter, the Tennessee legislature granted banking privileges to the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad in 1838. As a result, in January 1839, the Southwestern Railway Bank in Charleston appointed directors for a branch bank in Knoxville. Ramsey, numbered among them, was unanimously elected president and David Deaderick cashier by the Knoxville board, and the bank opened for business February 25, 1839, with a capital of one hundred thousand dollars.² Ramsey served in this capacity until the bank was

¹Hesseltine, Ramsey, 35; Knoxville Register, January 2, 1828, February 24, 1830, February 1, 1832; Claude A. Campbell, "Branch Banking in Tennessee Prior to the Civil War," ETHS Publications, No. 11 (1939), 38-39.

²Hesseltine, Ramsey, 36-37; Deaderick, Diary, 29; Knoxville Register, January 16, 23, February 20, 1839.

forced to close as a result of the failure of the railroad late in 1840.

As president of this bank his policies were somewhat unusual. For instance, although banks customarily loaned primarily to merchants, he believed that the community would be benefited if loans were made to the exporter, as well as the importer. Therefore, his policy was to invest in the man who bought farm products, exported them, and employed the money again in the same manner. In this way, Ramsey argued, money was circulated among the farmers, who did not hoard it. He asserted, "Let us encourage the exporter and the value of our money is raised, because the great balance of trade, at present, against us will be greatly reduced." In fact, such a policy was necessary, he contended, if the farmer were to survive, because there were none in East Tennessee who represented foreign markets interested in buying farm products.³ Ramsey actually believed that this policy was the main reason for the success that the Knoxville bank experienced when most other institutions in the South and the West failed following the panic of 1837. He later explained:

Our policy was to lend our issues generally to our Tennessee stock drovers--taking their bills payable at the principal banks of South Carolina and Georgia. These bills, as they matured, were collected, deposited to our credit, and constituted a fund equivalent to gold against which we could draw, and thus kept us fully supplied with gold, or issues equal to it, in all the southern marts. In this way we

³Knoxville Register, March 6, 1839. This biographer is positive that the writer of the article in this paper, signed "R.," is Ramsey. Both the language and the ideas correspond to others known to be his.

always protected our own circulation, and were rarely called on for specie as our check or drafts were always preferred by our customers to coin at our own counter. Thus we financed well and safely, and when that great crash and commercial convulsion occurred [sic] in 1837 and forced banks North and South to suspend specie payments, no rush was made on our branch.⁴

As a result of unhealthy financial conditions throughout the country, all Tennessee banks, with the exception of the Southwestern Railway Branch Bank in Knoxville, and practically all other banks in the United States were forced to suspend specie payments in October, 1839.⁵

The main bank in Charleston did suspend specie payments and left to the Knoxville branch directors the discretion of doing the same. Although there was some sentiment to follow the example of the parent bank, Ramsey urged his directors not to do so until it was absolutely necessary. Because of his efficient and conservative management the necessity never arose. Ramsey wrote at various times that he believed his branch to be the only such bank "in Tennessee," "South of the Potomac," and on "this side of New York" to continue specie payments.⁶ He wrote to Polk in December, 1839,

⁴Hesseltine, Ramsey, 36.

⁵Claude A. Campbell, The Development of Banking in Tennessee (Nashville: Claude A. Campbell, 1932), 108-109; Claude A. Campbell, "Banking and Financing in Tennessee During the Depression of 1837," ETHS Publications, No. 9 (1937), 29; Folmsbee, Sectionalism, 29.

⁶Ramsey to Polk, October 26, 1839, September 27, 1841, Polk Papers; Ramsey to Polk, September 24, 1841, Governors' Papers--Polk; Ramsey to the editor of the Mecklenburg Jeffersonian, in Ramsey, Contributions, 124.

The Branch has never suspended specie payments & we continue to redeem our issues wherever presented--indeed our specie has increased. . . . I feel as the President of this Branch as much obligation to meet its liabilities as I would to take up my own were there any out against me. I believe we shall weather the storm with entire safety.⁷

When Ramsey read in the Charleston Courier that notes of the Southwestern Railway Bank were quoted at a discount of 10 per cent, he advertised that the branch at Knoxville would receive all notes of the bank in exchange for specie.⁸ By September, 1841, his bank had weathered two major suspensions, and he could report,

Our business has been large considering the times & the capital invested--& we have been able nearly the whole time to keep ourselves in Eastern & Southern exchange--Our merchants were never better supplied--My financing has been thus far fortunate to our holders advantageous to the country--& I must say creditable to myself.⁹

The bank apparently rendered a genuine contribution to Knoxville citizens and business interests during these hard times.¹⁰

Ramsey, however, faced other difficulties as president of this bank. At a time when his branch was maintaining itself in the midst of a financial crisis which was forcing banks all around it to close, it was in danger of losing its charter with the failure of the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad. Therefore, when it was proposed to consolidate that road with the Hiwassee Railroad, some

⁷Ramsey to Polk, December 18, 1839, Polk Papers.

⁸Ramsey to editor of the Mecklenburg Jeffersonian, in Ramsey, Contributions, 124.

⁹Ramsey to Polk, September 27, 1841, Polk Papers.

¹⁰Ramsey to Polk, September 26, 1839, September 27, 1841, ibid.

of the directors of the bank supported the idea as the only way to preserve their corporate rights. Ramsey, however, considered the proposed consolidation, which called for a sufficiently increased capitalization of the Southwestern Railway Bank to enable stockholders of the Hiwassee Railroad to own stock in the bank, to be an attempt "to get banking privileges for an insolvent company." Since the measure would also allow the Tennessee directors to appoint the president and cashiers of the Tennessee branches, Ramsey further saw in it a Whig intrigue to secure control of the management and depose him as president. Practically all of the directors were Whigs, and he had already faced difficulties with those in "high places" because of his "currency sentiments . . . banking & political principles." As late as September, 1841, he wrote that he continued to be saddled with a Whig directory that "sustained--(rather indulged me)." Still more disastrous was the fact that although the Knoxville bank outlived the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad about a year, its charter was tied to the company and had to be relinquished in 1841.¹¹

In spite of his naturally conservative policies on banking, Ramsey was a Democrat and took that party's view of banking most of the time. For instance, he supported Andrew Jackson's stand on the United States Bank, and exerted his influence to maintain support for Jackson when many Tennesseans broke with him over this issue.¹² Ramsey likewise

¹¹Ramsey to Polk, December 18, 1839, September 27, 1841, ibid; Folmsbee, Sectionalism, 212-15.

¹²Newspaper article, Scrapbook II, 34-35.

supported James K. Polk in the midst of the depression of 1839 when the governor sent a message to the legislature opposing an increase in the banking capital of the state and declaring that "the only substantial relief is to be found in the habits of economy, and industry, and the productive labor of our people." If managed prudently the existing banks could aid the citizens in shipping goods to market, advance a reasonable amount of credit on these products, and meet all necessary demands of trade. Beyond these helps, banks and banking facilities were an evil. Ramsey's response to this message was to say, "Your inaugural is the very thing--& will take like contagion in Carolina & elsewhere--Your views of Banks are exactly correct & tho an officer of one I endorse every word in it."¹³

Although not as strong a supporter of Van Buren as he was of Jackson, and, therefore, not a strong supporter of Van Buren's independent treasury bill, Ramsey did believe that the plan was "in a state of successful execution" when repealed in 1841 and "should have received a fair trial."¹⁴ On the other hand, unlike most other commercial bankers, he was violently opposed to Henry Clay's United States Bank bill and wrote several newspaper articles contending that it was "unconstitutional, inexpedient, dangerous and unwise." Placing branches of the bank in the states, with or without the sanction of their legislatures, was another example of "the abuses of Federal power and the

¹³Tennessee House Journal, 1839-40, pp. 53-60; Ramsey to Polk, October 26, 1839, Polk Papers.

¹⁴Knoxville, Argus, February 15, 1843.

usurpations of Executive ambition and misrule." He further contended that the United States government and the states could raise their shares of stock in the bank only by levying heavier and heavier taxes on a people already too heavily burdened. Since the only way such money could be raised would be to take it from present circulation, an added evil would be a shortage in currency and a resulting bankruptcy for many. It would also cripple state institutions which, to compete with the United States Bank, would have to collect in specie. Moreover, since the bank would only loan for one hundred and ninety days without the accommodation of renewal, it would help the merchants while destroying the farmer. Ramsey believed that sagacious capitalists and prudent money lenders would not invest in the bank. Thus it would be obliged to operate "upon credit and promises to pay without a metallic basis." As he observed the matter, the only alternatives were "no United States Bank or an unsound one."¹⁵

Although Ramsey had served as a director of the Knoxville branch of the Bank of the State of Tennessee and would later become a director and president of a branch of the Bank of Tennessee, he particularly favored the local independent bank. Writing to Polk in 1841, he asserted, "East Tennessee & especially Knoxville is an excellent point for an independent bank to be located in--That is a novel idea to you but I

¹⁵Ibid., July 7, 1841, in Ramsey, Contributions, 122; Ramsey to Polk, August 25, 1841, Polk Papers; Paul H. Bergeron, "The Election of 1843: A Whig Triumph in Tennessee," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XXII (June, 1963), 130; Washington Union, July 12, 1843; Charles Grier Sellers, Jr., "Who Were the Southern Whigs?" American Historical Review, LIX (October, 1953), 338-46.

have proved it to be so in our Branch [Knoxville branch of the Southwestern Railway Bank]." In fact, he strongly urged that the six hundred and fifty thousand dollars which reverted to the state as a result of the failure of the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad should be used to establish a separate East Tennessee bank, whose profits would be set apart for future internal improvements.¹⁶

After the dissolution of the Knoxville branch of the Southwestern Railway Bank, Ramsey continued to be closely allied with Knoxville banking circles. He was elected a director of the Knoxville branch of the Union Bank of the State of Tennessee, which had been in operation since 1833.¹⁷ On February 13, 1844, the Knoxville Post listed him as one of the commissioners which the governor appointed to open periodically the books of the Bank of East Tennessee, which had been established in 1843. And sometime before November, 1854, he became a director of this bank, at the insistence, Ramsey maintained, of the principal owner and president, William M. Churchwell.¹⁸ Inasmuch as it was an independent institution, however, it would have received his support.

Ramsey's association with the Bank of East Tennessee furnished

¹⁶Ramsey to Polk, September 27, 1841, Polk Papers; Knoxville Argus, December 6, 1841, in Ramsey, Contributions, 104.

¹⁷Hesseltine, Ramsey, 41; Campbell, "Banking Prior to Civil War," 39-40.

¹⁸Knoxville Post, February 13, 1844; Knoxville Register, November 20, 1854; Knoxville Whig, November 20, 1854; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 41; Ruth Osborne Turner, "The Public Career of William Montgomery Churchwell" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Tennessee, 1954), 48.

one of the most controversial episodes in his long life. This institution had been the center of much dispute and criticism for several years, having experienced an unfriendly press in other cities, having had numerous changes in its presidency, and having suffered a constant run from 1852 until 1854.¹⁹ Finally, in December, 1856, its financial footing became so precarious that it was forced to suspend specie payment. To insure the redemption of the notes or issues of the bank, the president and directors filed a deed of trust, assigning all the effects of the bank to two trustees, Thomas C. Lyon and Ramsey. They were to use the assets to redeem the notes of the bona fide holders. In addition, Churchwell assigned to these two trustees all of his private real estate. Ramsey indicates in his autobiography that his other obligations and responsibilities caused him to accept the trusteeship only with the greatest reluctance. He agreed to it, he asserts, only because Lyon would not serve otherwise, and under the condition that Lyon would do most of the work.²⁰ The trustees were allowed some latitude in the time and income of the sale, but the business settlement was not to extend beyond two years, at which time the deed was to be closed.²¹

At first public sentiment was moderately favorable towards the bank and its appointed trustees. The Knoxville Register, for instance,

¹⁹Turner, "Churchwell," 48-50.

²⁰Deed of Trust, Exhibit B, in Deposition of William M. Churchwell, October 6, 1858, Chancery Records, Knox County Courthouse, Knoxville, Tennessee; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 41.

²¹Turner, "Churchwell," 53-54.

observed in December, 1856, "We would remark that the Trustees--Maj. T. C. Lyon and Dr. J. G. M. Ramsey--have the confidence of our community, and whatever can be done by them, for the benefit of bill-holders may be confidently expected to be done." It was held at first that Churchwell's real estate would meet the bank's liabilities. Ramsey asserts that their administration of the trust was at first perfectly satisfactory to the holders of the bank's notes, and it was believed that if given time the matter could be settled.²² One should note, however, that there had been early charges from some quarters that the bank had indulged in speculation and had taken advantage of the panic of the mid-fifties at the public's expense.²³ As time passed, the criticism of the bank increased, and the trustees were condemned for the apparent slowness with which they handled their business. They were also charged by some with giving preference in choosing creditors to be paid, allowing holders of large sums to realize a profit, while holders of small sums hardly received anything.²⁴

The facts would seem to indicate that Ramsey and Lyon received the harsher criticism, whereas Churchwell, the president of the bank, was treated more leniently, although many did charge him with embezzling its funds to speculate in real estate. Regardless of his guilt, however, Churchwell "was saved the humiliating effect of court charges by deeding

²²Knoxville Register, December 25, 1856; McAdoo, Diary, November 29, 1856; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 42.

²³McAdoo, Diary, November 29, 1856.

²⁴Knoxville Whig, April 17, 1859.

his property to the trustees," whose responsibility it was to handle the indebtedness of the bank.²⁵

Probably the sternest criticism of the bank and its trustees was leveled by W. G. Brownlow, editor of the Whig, who characterized the failure as a swindle by Democrat trustees of a "villainous bank," trustees who had contrived the fraud in order to buy up the bank's notes for fifteen to thirty cents on the dollar.²⁶ He kept his presses hot with articles denouncing the bank and its officers, even advertising that if holders of its notes would send them to him, when a sufficient number was accumulated, he would bring suit to force the trustees to redeem the issues. He expected to get at least thirty cents per dollar note. He further accepted Bank of East Tennessee notes for thirty cents on the dollar in payment for subscriptions to his newspaper.²⁷ When he had accumulated issues amounting to three thousand dollars, he brought suit against the two trustees in Chancery Court in March, 1858, under the title "Brownlow, Ross & Others versus Thomas C.

²⁵Turner, "Churchwell," 52, 57; McAdoo, Diary, November 29, 1856.

²⁶Knoxville Whig, February 26, 1857, March 8, 1858; Brownlow, Sketches, 290, 302.

²⁷Knoxville Whig, February 27, March 8, 1858, April 17, January 14, 1860; Knoxville Register, March 4, 1858. Brownlow seems to have gotten in some trouble by inviting the people to send notes in payment for his paper, for the court decreed in January, 1860, that noteholders had six months to prove their debts and claims or be forever barred from becoming parties in the suit. He began immediately instructing readers not to send any more notes, and in March, 1860, he issued to his subscribers an ultimatum not to send any more. In April, 1861, he was still instructing them that any more issues sent to him would be returned. Knoxville Whig, March 30, 1860, April 6, 1861.

Lyon, J. G. M. Ramsey, Directors of the Bank of East Tennessee." They were charged with showing preference to creditors and were asked to be forced to fulfill their duties and responsibilities under the deed of trust.²⁸ Notes continued to flow into Brownlow's office. By June 5, 1858, they amounted, he claimed, to twenty thousand dollars, and by August 25, 1860, to nearly one hundred thousand dollars.²⁹ The two trustees fought the case and seem to have resisted the early attempts to force them publicly to account for their trusteeship. Ramsey felt that the whole suit was a result of "combinations between speculators," who had victimized alarmed noteholders into unnecessarily selling to them at ruinous rates of depreciation.³⁰

Even before the suit was filed, Ramsey had begun to divide much of his property among his children, apparently to prevent its being used to meet claims of the bank's noteholders if the case were decided against the trustees. That such a circumstance was more than a mere possibility seems evident from an article in the Whig which announced in February, 1858, that the legislature had passed resolutions calling on the attorney general to institute proceedings against the trustees. Brownlow commented, "The real and personal property of these men will be forfeited."³¹ Ramsey, however, denied the charge that he had turned his

²⁸ Bill filed March 4, 1858, Chancery Records, Knox County Courthouse, Knoxville, Tennessee.

²⁹ Knoxville Whig, June 5, 1858, August 25, 1860.

³⁰ Ibid., April 10, 1858; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 42.

³¹ Knoxville Whig, February 27, 1858.

property over to his children to avoid liability in the bank suit.

He asserts concerning the matter,

Distribution had been commenced long before 1856 by my will & due notice of this distribution to my devisees had been given to several of them & although no deeds had been made some of them had taken possession of their farms & were either cultivating or renting them.³²

Over against this defense must be placed the charge of Brownlow that Ramsey had taken part in a "nefarious bank-swindle, and to avoid the damages of which, the old rebel has put his property out of his hands, making this corrupt son [Crozier] his trustee."³³

This biographer is forced to conclude that both Brownlow and Ramsey were in part correct. There is reason to believe that Ramsey had intended to divide his property between his children before the suit was filed. Indeed, there is extant a will to this effect, possibly written in 1856 before the suit was filed. Ramsey states in later life that it was written even earlier, in 1852 or 1853, when he went to Charleston to supervise the publication of his Annals.³⁴ However, there is little doubt that the threat of a suit against the trustees of the bank caused him to proceed with haste in deeding much of his property to his children before such a suit could be decided. This conclusion is unavoidable when one realizes, for instance, that Ramsey

³²Ramsey, Financial Statement, December 25, 1876, Box 3-F, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³³Brownlow, Sketches, 302.

³⁴Ramsey Will, undated [possibly 1856], Box 3-F; Ramsey, Financial Statement, December 25, 1876, Box 3-H, Ramsey Papers (UT).

deeded Swan Pond mansion and two hundred and fifty acres of land on December 4, 1858, nine months after the suit was instituted, to his son Alexander "for and in consideration of love & affection & four thousand five hundred dollars, to him in hand paid." However, on the same date Alexander had signed a promissory note for that exact sum to be paid on or before February 28, 1867. The note is extant and contains an added notation by Ramsey that it is to be cancelled. There is also a promissory note of the same nature signed on December 5, 1859, by Robert, another son to whom Ramsey deeded property.³⁵ Moreover, in January, 1867, Crozier wrote his father that he had uncovered notes in the name of Ramsey's children, which he presumed to be for property the father had sold them, and that he, Crozier, was sending the notes to him, so that in case of Ramsey's death, they could not be used by the administrators against his own family.³⁶ One is forced to ask why Ramsey would deed property to his children for sums of money taken care of by promissory notes, which he apparently did not intend for them to pay. He must have done so to secure the property from the claims of litigation.

In the midst of the court proceedings in 1858, a branch of the Bank of Tennessee was established in Knoxville, and both Ramsey and Lyon were appointed by the parent board to be directors. Although

³⁵Promissory notes to Ramsey, signed by Francis A. and Robert M. Ramsey, December 4, 1858, December 5, 1859, Legal and Financial Papers, *ibid.*; Record Book W (Knox County Courthouse, Knoxville, Tennessee), III, 503.

³⁶Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, January 31, 1867, Ramsey Papers (UT).

Ramsey was unanimously elected president of the Knoxville branch, he declined in favor of John H. Crozier. Very shortly, however, he was elected president again and served in that capacity through the Civil War. Coming at the time they did, these appointments were considered by Ramsey to be works "of Divine Providence in behalf of two innocent and deserving citizens."³⁷

The case was decided against the directors of the bank in Chancery Court January 26, 1860. So far as Ramsey and Lyon were concerned, Chancellor Lucky decreed that they had no authority to make preference among creditors, and that they were liable to the complainants and other creditors for the amounts due. However, at present it was decreed that they had "not been guilty of either fraud or negligence." A special commissioner was appointed to make a report in the case. The clerk and master of the court was instructed to sell the trust property in six to twelve months, and an investigation was to be made of Churchwell's indebtedness, losses, and compensation for his services.³⁸ Ramsey and Lyon then appealed the case to the Supreme Court. Declaring that he was prepared to continue to fight the case, Brownlow announced that the suit had been filed in the first place because the trustees, believing that no suit would be filed, had refused to pay the twenty-five cents

³⁷Knoxville Register, April 15, 22, 1858; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 43-45; Ramsey to Draper, February 12, 1861, Draper Correspondence; Knoxville Daily Tribune, April 12, 1884.

³⁸Decree, January 21, 1860, Chancery Records, Knox County Court-house, Knoxville, Tennessee; Knoxville Whig, January 28, October 13, 1860, August 3, 1861.

on the dollar that he desired for his subscribers.³⁹ The Supreme Court sustained the earlier verdict with modifications. Ramsey and Lyon were given permission to bring the people to whom payments had been made before the court in order to determine whether such creditors were liable to refund in freeing Ramsey and Lyon from their personal responsibility.⁴⁰ In March, 1860, the state legislature declared the charter of the bank to be forfeited and repealed the act of incorporation. It, however, instructed that such action was not to be interpreted in a manner to release any stockholder from liability against him in favor of the bank's noteholders.⁴¹

Since the case was, however, still undecided, it dragged on for some twenty years. Following the Civil War, while Ramsey was in North Carolina, his son Crozier, representing him in an attempt to settle it, made unsuccessful attempts to compromise with Brownlow and Ross. In 1873 Ramsey himself, now back in Knoxville, sat in court practically all day for ten days while the matter was under consideration.⁴² Finally in 1877 the case was decided. The headline of the article that reported the matter, "Dismissed with Costs: A Twenty Year Old

³⁹Knoxville Whig, October 20, 1860.

⁴⁰Supreme Court Minutes, volume 7, 1858-62, pp. 582-83, Knox County Courthouse, Knoxville, Tennessee.

⁴¹Acts of the State of Tennessee, 33rd General Assembly, 1 sess., 383.

⁴²Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, January 14, 1868 [?], August 11, October 3, 1868; T. R. Cornick to Ramsey, January 16, 1871, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, June 16, 1873, McIver Collection.

Suit Torn Up by the Roots," would indicate that even Brownlow's and Ramsey's contemporaries felt that it was an unduly prolonged affair. In fact, the case involved a volume of twelve hundred legal cap pages before it was completed.⁴³ The matter of most concern to Ramsey was that he was completely exonerated from any alleged maladministration of his trusteeship. He was, moreover, refunded the sum that had arisen from the sale of his property confiscated by previous attachment proceedings in the case, and for his service as a trustee and for payments he had made for legal counsel he was compensated out of the bank's trust fund, which was still under the control of the Chancery Court. Perhaps he was most gratified that the original bill was dismissed at the cost of the complainants. The court decided that Brownlow, who claimed to have ten thousand dollars of notes, and Ross, who claimed to have over twenty five hundred, had no proof that they were genuine holders of the notes. Moreover, the court decreed that if they had so desired, Brownlow and Ross could have taken the business and effects of the bank out of the hands of the trustees and into those of the receiver appointed by the court. Their hesitation to do this, joined with the accompanying shrinkage in money values and the bankruptcy of the bank's debtors that naturally resulted from the war, placed more blame on them than on the trustees for their supposed losses.⁴⁴

⁴³Newspaper article, Scrapbook I, 46.

⁴⁴Id.; Copy of the November 5, 1877, Decree of the Court, Covering the Exoneration of the Bank Trustees from Charges of Mismanagement in the Bank Suit, October 31, 1878, Legal and Financial Papers, Ramsey Papers (UT).

Undoubtedly this court case played a most significant role in the personal antagonism that existed between Ramsey and Brownlow. The Ramsey family seem, however, to have had an early dislike for Brownlow. In 1849, when Alexander and Wilberforce Ramsey were on their way to California, Mrs. Ramsey wrote them concerning a political feud between two East Tennessee newspapers, commenting, "Nothing better could be expected of McKee and Brownlow." Again she wrote, describing a recent visit of Governor Trousdale to their house, and remarked that she was inclined to think well of him until "she learned that Brownlow had been in his carriage."⁴⁵ Added to the Ramseys' general dislike of Brownlow was the natural political antagonism that existed between an ardent Democrat and an equally ardent Whig. Brownlow, moreover, played a significant part in the defeat which Crozier Ramsey sustained at the hands of Horace Maynard in their race for Congress in 1859. There seems little doubt, however, that the suit which Brownlow brought against Ramsey, more than any other single factor, caused him to speak of Brownlow as a devil and to remark of him, I "have but one enemy that I know of in the world and I have the satisfaction of believing that he hates me only for my virtues."⁴⁶

The bank suit also caused a reaction on Brownlow's part toward Ramsey. In the fifties he seems not to have been too critical of Ramsey, even praising him on occasion, though differing with him politically.

⁴⁵Mrs. Ramsey to Alexander and Wilberforce Ramsey, August 13, September 2, 1849, ibid.

⁴⁶Ramsey to Draper, February 12, 1861, Draper Correspondence.

For instance, on hearing the rumor in 1851 that the Tennessee Senate was to appropriate one thousand dollars for the publication of a history of Tennessee, he strongly recommended in the Whig that Ramsey, "better posted upon this subject than any other man in Tennessee," be given the appropriation. He could, in fact, hardly compliment Ramsey enough in his paper when the Annals was published.⁴⁷ Moreover, when Ramsey served as the state agent in selling bonds and equipping the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad, Brownlow was one of the first to say that he had "acquitted himself with honor" and saved thousands of dollars for the railroad.⁴⁸ The court suit and Brownlow's political antagonism toward Ramsey's son in the late fifties changed his tone dramatically. And after Crozier, as a Confederate district attorney, treated him as he did at the beginning of the Civil War, Brownlow came to describe Ramsey as a Democrat swindler, "that vain old historian of Tennessee," and "the old Rebel."⁴⁹

Ramsey's banking activities would continue through the Civil War period and will be examined later. In fact, his exploits as a Confederate treasurer during the war represented what he considered his outstanding achievement in this field. But it is necessary here to consider Ramsey's political activities, for politics was still another area of endeavor, besides medicine, farming, railroading, and

⁴⁷ Knoxville Whig, November 22, 1851, April 2, December 4, 1852, February 19, August 18, 1853.

⁴⁸ Ibid., May 1, 1852.

⁴⁹ Ibid., February 26, 1857; Brownlow, Sketches, 290, 302.

banking, in which he had an avid interest and took an active part. Although he did not run for high political office himself, he played an important role in electing and influencing others who attained such positions.

CHAPTER VII

EAST TENNESSEE DEMOCRAT

Inasmuch as his father had been involved in politics practically all of his adult life, Ramsey inherited a natural inclination toward this activity. His brother, W. B. A., and his brother-in-law, John H. Crozier, were also influential men in East Tennessee political circles. In addition, Ramsey was in close contact with many Tennessee officeholders throughout much of his lifetime. Thus in 1878 he claimed to have been personally acquainted with every governor of Tennessee from the time it became a state down to the present. In fact, many of them had visited in his home. Ramsey's political involvement, moreover, went beyond mere acquaintance with important figures to a deep interest in political principles and policies. He once asserted that he had "read every message of every President, from 1789 down to 1844."¹

Ramsey was a lifelong Democrat in an area that was predominantly Whig and Republican. For the most part, he voted the straight Democrat ticket. In 1876 he penciled in his autobiography,

57 years ago last August 1 I gave my first vote for General William Carroll² for governor of Tennessee against his then

¹Newspaper article, Scrapbook II, 53; Mrs. Ramsey to Wilberforce and Alexander Ramsey, August 13, 1849, Ramsey Papers (UT); Knoxville Sentinel, February 7, 1911; Ramsey to the editor, December 13, 1845, Washington Union, December 24, 1845, in Ramsey, Contributions, 77.

²Ramsey's memory had failed him, for Carroll did not run for governor until 1821. He must have voted in 1819 for Joseph McMinn, who was opposed by Enoch Parsons who might have been considered a Federalist. Both Carroll and his opponent in 1821, Edward Ward, whom Andrew Jackson supported, were Republicans (or Democratic-Republicans).

competitor, a Federalist though a good man and a patriot. Ever since, at every biennial election in Tennessee and every presidential and congressional election, I have steadfastly adhered to the same political faith and have in every instance always voted for a Democratic candidate and supported the Democratic party.³

As a loyal party man, he believed strongly in its unity and worked vigorously for regular and systematic nominations to prevent several Democrats from running for the same office. It should be noted, however, that in spite of his ardent party loyalty, Ramsey was shrewd enough to realize that his only hope of success, as a Democrat in an opposition area, was to disparage the use of party names. So one finds him asserting, "What has party names to do in promoting the great interests of the country?--They are its deadly enemy, are only used by the artful and designing to promote selfish and party ends."⁴

Despite his strong political convictions and influence, Ramsey was not elected to high political office and appears seldom to have considered himself as a potential candidate. A minor exception would be his election as register of Knox County for a number of years between 1817 and 1836. Certainly after East Tennessee became predominantly Whig in the mid-thirties, his Democratic affiliation would have worked against his possible election in an area where men of his political

³Alexander, *Recollections*, Ramsey Papers (NC). It should be noted that the *Knoxville Post*, February 21, 1841, accused Ramsey of past Federalist sympathies and of voting in 1827 for Thomas D. Arnold, an Adams candidate for Senator from Tennessee. Charles Grier Sellers, *James K. Polk: Jacksonian, 1795-1843* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 136.

⁴*Knoxville Register*, May 10, 1837; *Knoxville Argus*, March 1, 1843, Ramsey, Contributions, 82.

persuasion were "few & far between." However, even before the mid-thirties he does not appear actively to have sought political office. He considered running for the state senate in 1829 and allowed friends in Knoxville to promote his candidacy while he was in Charleston, South Carolina. His primary interest, however, seems to have been to promote his proposed railroad communication between the Tennessee River and Charleston.⁵

While he did not officially become a candidate in 1829, there would be other unsuccessful attempts to draw him into the political arena. In 1832 some interested individuals printed a newspaper advertisement asking him to become a candidate for the state senate and pledging their support to him. In response to an apparent effort by Samuel H. Laughlin, editor of the Nashville Union, to get Ramsey to run for the state legislature in 1836, he wrote that he would not be a good Democratic candidate, because he had "had no experience at the Hustings & it will be proper here at least for our candidate to take the stump."⁶ Although there is some evidence that Ramsey was a "forcible and eloquent talker," he certainly had no such opinion of his own abilities as a public speaker. Patently overstating the case, he once declared, "If I can write a book I never made a speech in

⁵Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, January 21, 1829, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, January 14, 1829, Ramsey Papers (NC); Ramsey to Samuel H. Laughlin, July 19, 1836, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Goodspeed's Knox County, 814.

⁶Ramsey to Laughlin, July 19, 1836, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

my life."⁷ Perhaps this conviction also contributed to his refusal to seek public office. Some of his contemporaries were obviously convinced, however, that he stood a good chance of election to political office had he chosen to seek it.⁸

Although not a candidate, Ramsey was, nonetheless, an active participant in the political struggles of his day. Anything he attempted he energetically pursued, and politics was no exception. Even in this field he made his greatest contribution with his pen, drafting multitudes of newspaper articles and carrying on a voluminous correspondence with political figures both inside and outside the state. His correspondence with James K. Polk alone demonstrates that he was a recognized leader of the Democratic party in Knoxville and East Tennessee. With an intimate knowledge of the political scene in East Tennessee, he played a significant role in drafting candidates and planning campaigns. In 1839 he was appointed by the Democratic State Convention to serve as a member of their state central committee. Subsequently he was elected chairman of this committee and served in that position until the late fifties.⁹ Certainly his influence was strongly felt in Tennessee Democratic circles, but the author of an undated newspaper article, writing later about the 1830's, undoubtedly overstates the

⁷ Knoxville Tribune, April 12, 1884; Ramsey to Anson Nelson, June 9, 1874, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

⁸ Newspaper article, Scrapbook II, 34.

⁹ Knoxville Register, August 11, 1827; Knoxville Enquirer, December 12, 1827; Ramsey to Draper, February 20, 1852, Draper Manuscripts; Knoxville Mercury, April 13, 1857.

case when he asserts, "Few men in the great valley of the Mississippi wielded a larger influence than did Dr. Ramsey."¹⁰

During the early years of his adult life Ramsey was an avowed Jacksonian Democrat. Even when many Tennesseans looked unfavorably on Jackson's policies,¹¹ Ramsey's support "was one of the pillars of strength on which President Jackson securely rested."¹² As was mentioned in the last chapter, he upheld Jackson in the United States Bank controversy. But the best evidence of Ramsey's Jacksonian sentiments is his whole-hearted support of the president against South Carolina's attempted nullification. While in Charleston in 1828, he refused to attend a states' rights ball because of his opposition to disunion. To his wife he reported, "I told them [his South Carolina friends] I was not only off the fence on these subjects--but I was entirely on the other side. . . . I have told these Southrons we will not support them in the cause of disunion."¹³ In view of Ramsey's extreme states' rights sentiments of a few years later, his avowed support of Jackson's stand on nullification is, indeed remarkable. In fact, Ramsey himself must have later forgotten his own feelings, for several decades after this controversy he wrote that a part of his "youthful political sentiments in 1820" was that "the

¹⁰Newspaper article, Scrapbook II, 34.

¹¹Folmsbee, *et al.*, *Tennessee*, I, 314; Cartter Patten, *A Tennessee Chronicle* (Chattanooga: Cartter Patten, 1953), 124-28.

¹²Newspaper article, Scrapbook II, 34.

¹³Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, February [n.d.], 1828, Ramsey Papers (UT).

states [are] really sovereigns--the creators of the union and not its subjects--and that in this sovereignty the states could at their option nullify unconstitutional acts of congress--or secede from the union" whenever interference from the central government made it necessary.¹⁴ Perhaps his own lapse of memory helps to explain why Ramsey was erroneously charged in the 1840's with being a Jacksonian who inconsistently sided with Calhoun during the nullification controversy.¹⁵

Ramsey's support of Jackson carried into the presidential election of 1836 when many Tennesseans broke with Jackson for passing by his loyal supporter and kinsman, Tennessee Senator Hugh Lawson White, and picking Van Buren for the presidency. White was, nonetheless, nominated and ran for the office. Though a past admirer and backer of White, Ramsey opposed him in 1836 and continued to do so until White's death soon after.¹⁶ In 1837 Ramsey upheld Jackson by heartily endorsing General Robert Armstrong for governor against incumbent Governor Newton Cannon, the anti-Jackson candidate. This position is somewhat interesting when one considers that Cannon had actively campaigned for a strong program of internal improvements and had also refused to make a state subscription to the Hiwassee Railroad, which Ramsey, a promoter of the

¹⁴Hesseltine, Ramsey, 47; Knoxville Post, February 21, 1843.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Patten, Tennessee, 127-28; L. Paul Gresham, "Hugh Lawson White as a Tennessee Politician and Banker, 1807-1827," ETHS Publications, No. 18 (1946), 31; Nancy N. Scott, A Memoir of Hugh Lawson White (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott & Co., 1956), 31; Knoxville Register, April 11, 1827; Knoxville Enquirer, April 11, 1827; Ramsey to Laughlin, July 19, 1836, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad, opposed, while Armstrong was condemned for sending out a rather "general circular on the subject" of internal improvements. Ramsey responded, "Tho [sic] an ardent friend and advocate of Internal Improvements I feel perfectly satisfied with Genl. Armstrong's circular on this subject."¹⁷

At this point one is also forced to wonder about Ramsey's near worship of Jackson in the face of the latter's stand on internal improvements. As was noted earlier, Ramsey supported the Hemphill Bill, which called for the construction of a national road from Washington to New Orleans in 1830 before Jackson vetoed the Maysville Road Bill. According to the Knoxville Register Jackson was also later violently opposed to the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad. There are other instances revealing their lack of agreement. For instance, Jackson was a bitter enemy of John Williams of Knoxville. Ramsey, on the other hand, while considering Williams a "heretic" politically, seems to have had a favorable and kindly attitude toward him. Ramsey was also a consistent backer of Governor William Carroll, who carried on a running, bitter feud with Jackson during the twenties, before making peace with the president in 1829.¹⁸

In spite of minor differences of opinion, however, Ramsey remained an admirer of Jackson even after the former switched his

¹⁷Folmsbee, et al., Tennessee, I, 321-32; Ramsey, Circular Sent to the Sentinel and the V. B. [Van Buren] Paper at Athens [1837?], Box 3-E, Ramsey Papers (UT).

¹⁸Folmsbee, Sectionalism, 65; Knoxville Register, June 21, 28, 1837; Folmsbee, et al., Tennessee, I, 309-17; Ramsey to Laughlin, July 19, 1836, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

allegiance to Calhoun in the forties. He could never praise Jackson enough for his "contributions to the securing and preserving of American independence and democracy." In 1834, at a time when Ramsey was opposing Van Buren and favoring Calhoun for the Democratic presidential nomination, he quickly came to Jackson's defense when the latter's veto of the distribution bill was criticized. Ramsey's patriotic response was to declare that he could not see how any Tennessean could ever criticize Jackson, whose "reputation is the property of his countrymen . . . every American citizen should be proud of it." He went on to assert, "It is self-degradation to pluck one laurel" from the brow of this "Christian Patriarch of the beloved Hermitage."¹⁹

Ramsey's political attachments centered in men as much as principles and policies. Just as he unflinchingly supported Jackson, so he was completely devoted to James K. Polk, both as governor and as president. In the 1840's Ramsey's political views coincided for the most part with the policies and fortunes of Polk. Ramsey's interest in Polk, however, went beyond mere political considerations. Polk had been born in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, from which place Ramsey's father and mother had emigrated. In fact, some of Polk's ancestors had married Mecklenburg Alexanders. Polk and Ramsey had apparently been friends since the days of their youth, and the latter felt an historical kinship to the Polk clan in North Carolina. Mrs. Ramsey, moreover, had attended Salem Female Academy in Winston-Salem,

¹⁹Ramsey to Andrew Jackson, 1826 or 27, Ramsey Papers (UT); Knoxville Argus, June 28, 1843, Ramsey, Contributions, 72.

North Carolina, with Polk's wife, Sarah Childress.²⁰

Polk, who had served in Congress as a Representative from Maury County from 1825 to 1838, was also a staunch Jacksonian Democrat. After two hard fights with John Bell, he had been elected speaker of the house in 1835 and again in 1837. With the prospects of a Whig victory in the congressional elections of 1840 and his losing the speakership to Bell, Polk, prompted by a desire to further his prospects for the vice-presidency and a desire to resuscitate the Democratic party in Tennessee, decided to run for governor in 1837 against Newton Cannon.²¹ Ramsey immediately became one of his most open and avowed supporters. Ramsey-Polk correspondence in 1839 leads one to the conclusion that Polk relied heavily on Ramsey's advice concerning the time and method of conducting the East Tennessee phase of his campaign. Indeed, Ramsey can possibly be considered Polk's lieutenant in East Tennessee. There is every reason to believe that the gubernatorial candidate stayed at Mecklenburg part of the time when he was in East Tennessee campaigning during the spring and summer of 1839, and many other times afterward. Ramsey, always an optimistic observer, kept Polk posted on political events in this area and regularly encouraged him concerning his chances of success. The Ramsey-Polk correspondence also discloses that Ramsey

²⁰Sellers, Polk, 9-25; Ramsey to Anson Nelson, November 19, 1874, July 14, 1877, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Ramsey to Polk, March 4, 1845, Polk Papers; Alexander, Recollections, Ramsey Papers (NC); Charlotte Observer, March 8, 1931.

²¹Sellers, Polk, 362.

carried on a rather extensive correspondence with other political leaders in the state on behalf of Polk's candidacy.²²

Unlike Polk, however, Ramsey does not seem to have spent much time on national issues in this 1839 campaign, feeling that undue association with President Van Buren, who would probably be running for re-election in 1840, might hurt Polk's chances in East Tennessee, where "moderate Whig men if . . . not pressed will vote for you & C[lay]." He further asserted, "We cannot . . . stand the party question here just now."²³ While Ramsey, loyal Democrat that he was, voted for Van Buren and backed his candidates in the state, he does not seem to have had near the devotion for Van Buren that he did for Jackson and Polk. As a result he appears to have taken a rather apologetic approach, not too different from his brother-in-law, Arthur Grozier, who, while avowing his intention to vote for Polk and Van Buren, "entered into no defense of the administration & said little of Federal politics."²⁴

However, after Polk arranged for the financing of a new Democratic paper, the Argus, in Knoxville, and secured a young New England Democratic journalist, E. G. Eastman, to edit it, Ramsey penned for this paper several articles favoring Polk. In fact, the establishment of the Argus was a welcome relief to Ramsey, who had worked without success in early 1839 to purchase the Knoxville Register and make it

²²Ramsey to Polk, October 18, 1838, January 5, 21, February 19, June 21, 28, 1839, August 5, 1842, Polk Papers.

²³Ramsey to Polk, June 21, 1839, ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

a Democratic paper. He was particularly perturbed and embarrassed by the fact that his brother, W. B. A., was the editor of the Register, which, Ramsey asserted, "I know has done more for Whiggery here than all other Whig papers put together." He triumphantly reported to Polk late in 1839 that "Col. Ramsey has sold the Register & retired."²⁵

After Polk carried the election by 2,500 votes, Ramsey, echoing the sentiments of Democrats all over the country, was indeed thrilled beyond words with this triumph. Tennessee had been redeemed from Whig control, and he was "prouder of being a Tennessean in 1839 than . . . [he had] ever been before."²⁶ One of the main results of Polk's victory was to enhance his already rising aspirations for the Democratic vice-presidential nomination in 1840. Ramsey played a prominent part in organizing East Tennessee Democratic rallies and committees of correspondence to promote Polk's candidacy against his main rival, Vice-President Richard M. Johnson. Attending directors' meetings of the Cincinnati and Charleston Railroad in Asheville, North Carolina, and Charleston, South Carolina, in September and December of 1839, Ramsey did "missionary work" in Polk's behalf. At Charleston he met with Calhoun, and was partly responsible for Calhoun's open support of Polk. Failing to achieve the endorsement of the powerful New York delegation or the nomination of the Democratic National Convention that

²⁵Sellers, Polk, 361; Ramsey to Polk, February 19, June 28, December 18, 1839, Polk Papers.

²⁶Sellers, Polk, 375; Ramsey to Polk, August 20, 1839, Polk Papers.

met in Baltimore in May, 1840, Polk subsequently withdrew from the race in June.²⁷

Meanwhile, the Whigs in Tennessee and elsewhere had organized a vigorous and boisterous campaign to appeal to the common man and win the national election for William Henry Harrison against Martin Van Buren. The dignified Ramsey reacted as could be expected against the Whigs "with their log cabins & cider barrells [sic]," of whom he declared that their "boyish frivolities--& sophomoric (for they have not given one manly argument) appeals disgusted their sober & considerate friends & have actually run the thing into the ground."²⁸ By June, 1840, Ramsey, exuding his usual optimism, wrote to Polk that a reaction in East Tennessee had already resulted from the Whig approach. He asserted,

Our time comes next--I send you our last Argus--You will see the spirit of our friends is up--In this county Democracy is gaining. Fun & anecdote & theatrical bombast are not the materials with which to beat down Tennessee Republicanism[.] Foster has mistaken our countrymen--Calm & temperate [sic] discussion was expected from an ex-U. S. Senator & not puerile vaunting & vulgar witicism [sic]-The latter will do for a day but the sober second thoughts of the people nauseate & reject them.²⁹

In East Tennessee the Whig campaign included a major assault on Polk and his policies in Congress and as governor. In response to

²⁷Ramsey to Polk, August 20, September 26, October 26, December 18, 1839, ibid.; Knoxville Argus, October 15, 1839; Sellers, Polk, 406-18.

²⁸Ibid., 420; Ramsey to Polk, June 10, 1840, Polk Papers.

²⁹Ibid. It is interesting to note that he had not criticized Polk's somewhat similar type of campaign against Cannon in 1839.

this attack, Ramsey and others wrote to Polk, asking him to come to East Tennessee for a Democratic convention to defend himself and to elucidate Democratic principles. Polk, who realized that his own political survival depended upon the success of the Democratic party in Tennessee, had been "itching to plunge into the struggle." In the face of charges that he was neglecting his executive duties, he accepted the East Tennessee invitation and made it his first extended tour for the national ticket. It was in Knoxville on July 4, 1840, that Polk announced that he would be a candidate for re-election as governor in 1841. Ramsey not only made the arrangements for this convention, but he personally planned many of the speaking engagements that Polk made on this trip.³⁰

Ramsey worked feverishly in writing scores of letters to state and national Democrats, such as Jackson, Laughlin, Felix Grundy from Nashville and General Alexander Outlaw Anderson from Knoxville, both senators from Tennessee, and John F. Gillespy, state senator from Madisonville. Writing articles in the Knoxville Argus for the Van Buren ticket, but still not dealing much with national issues, he seems to have centered his attack on Tennessee's present and past political positions. Ramsey, evidently disregarding the election of 1836, asserted that since the days of Jefferson his state had supported Republicans against the "Federalists." For Tennessee to support the

³⁰Knoxville Argus, April 26, June 16, 1840; Ramsey to Polk, May 14, 27, June 26, 27, 30, 1840, Polk Papers; Polk to Ramsey and others, June 4, 1840, in Knoxville Vedette, June 18, 1840; Sellers, Polk, 421.

Whigs, he contended, was for her "to take a position in the present contest antagonistic to all her past policy, her past pledges, and her past votes." Still convinced that the Whigs were "losing by their pageantries," Ramsey commented to Polk in June, "We . . . are making and doing everything plain--& without noise or show."³¹ Like most Tennessee Democrats, he could not bring himself to believe that the Whig tactics could carry the state. On the eve of the election, however, while expressing a faint hope that "Tenn. is yet safe," Ramsey realized that the Whigs were likely to win and consoled himself in the belief that "these log cabin boys" would "drop to pieces after Nov.," when they came to realize that there would be "no money dropping into their pockets from every bush they walk under--& that they must live by the sweat of their brow under every administration."³² The Whigs did win the election, and Tennessee gave Harrison a majority of 12,000 out of some 108,000 votes cast.³³

Before Ramsey could recover from the smashing defeat that the Democrats received in Tennessee, he had to plunge into plans for Polk's second campaign for the governorship in 1841. Heartened by their victory in the national election, the Tennessee Whigs nominated James

³¹Ramsey to Polk, June 10, 13, 26, October 27, 1840, Polk Papers; Knoxville Argus, October 21, 1840, Ramsey, Contributions, 43; Sellers, Polk, 421; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), 477, 562, 981; White, Messages, III, 762.

³²Ramsey to Polk, October 27, 1840, Polk Papers.

³³Sellers, Polk, 426.

C. "Lean Jimmy" Jones to run against Polk and followed a campaign strategy of jokes, bands, barbecues, and ridicule.³⁴ Again Ramsey played the part of Polk's lieutenant in East Tennessee, planning and aiding in a tour of that area which Polk made in the summer of 1841. Through his articles in the press, primarily in the Knoxville Argus, Ramsey followed the standard Democratic strategy of attacking the United States Bank as a device to increase federal power at the expense of state legislative control and condemning Clay's distribution bill as a device to raise the tariff. He accused the Whigs of promising retrenchment and reform, but delivering increased expenditures to "refit & adorn the capitol," to pension Harrison's widow, and to pay congressmen six dollars per day. Calling the Whig government a merchants' administration, Ramsey appealed to the farm vote by pointing to what he said were higher prices but lower profits on farm products, neither of which helped the "poor log cabin folks." The farmers longed for the return of the days of Jackson and Van Buren, he declared. He joined Polk in habitually blasting "Federal Whiggery." In fact, throughout the mid-thirties and forties, like other Democrats, he chose to refer almost wholly to the Whigs as Federalists and to the Democrats as Republicans in his political articles.³⁵ For example, in August, 1841, he wrote, "If presented under the more deceptive name of Whiggery, it is alike odious . . . Prostituted by designing men to the base purpose

³⁴Ibid., 427-43; Patten, Tennessee, 144-45.

³⁵Ramsey to Polk, April 27, 1841, Polk Papers; Knoxville Argus, July 18, 21, 1841, in Ramsey, Contributions, 73, 117.

of concealing the deformities of Federalism, the name Whig is discarded by the best Republicans of the country as infamous."36

Although Polk was defeated by Jones, he lost by only 3,000 votes, a gain of 9,000 over the Democratic loss in Tennessee in the 1840 national election. Ramsey believed, as would Polk's later biographers, that the governor almost single-handedly prevented a stunning defeat of the Democratic party in Tennessee. Ramsey asserted to Polk,

Contrary to our wishes but certainly not to any just ground of expectation the election has terminated in favor of Mr. Jones. The triumph is yours--Your vote is more than we could have rationally calculated from the posture of things-- & the nature of the ground on which the late battle was fought--Every thing was against you--the note of triumph had scarcely sounded in our ears last Nov. when flushed with their recent victory the Federal party throughout the U. S. & especially in Tennessee marked you for its next victim . . . lights not less illusory & deceptive than those that misled & deceived during the Tippecanoe excitement were still held out by your opponents & it is matter of boasting to your friends that under all these circumstances formidable & disheartening as they were you have been able to diminish the Whig vote 9000. I repeat it the victory is yours.37

He characteristically expressed optimism that a revolution had commenced, and "Democracy must again be in the ascendant."38

Indeed, Ramsey and other Democrats in Tennessee did have some grounds for consolation. The Democrats had a majority of one in the new state senate, while the Whigs held a three vote majority in the house. Ramsey was convinced that the Democrats were in a position

36 Knoxville Argus, August 4, 1845, in ibid., 37.

37 Ramsey to Polk, August 25, 1841, Polk Papers

38 Ibid.

to dominate the legislature if they used the proper means to woo Whigs who were opposed to Clay. Moreover, he believed that Tyler's veto³⁹ of the bank bill would cause several of his supporters to swing into the Democratic column if they were treated in the right manner. Since the Democrats, having a majority in the senate, could thus prevent the joint convention of both houses of the state legislature, by which United States Senators were normally elected in Tennessee, they were in a strong position to secure at least one of the Senators from among their ranks and be a party in any compromise that resulted.⁴⁰ Strong feeling developed to elect Polk. In response to this sentiment, Ramsey addressed a lengthy letter to Polk, in which he refused to advise him one way or the other, acquiescing in any decision that Polk would make as the best policy to "insure his future elevation." Ramsey did declare emphatically that he was opposed to Ephraim Foster, prominent Whig aspirant to the office, as a compromise candidate, on the ground that Foster "sung Tipecanoe [sic] songs" and "set the woods on fire" during the election. As it was, Polk refused to run for the senate, and Foster was not elected, because of a stalemate that developed in the legislature over the matter.⁴¹

No sooner had the 1841 election ended than Ramsey, like other

³⁹Ramsey had earlier felt that Tyler, who had stooped "to be run by the old blue light Federalists and Abolitionists of the North," would not veto the bank bill. Knoxville Argus, July 21, 1841, in Ramsey, Contributions, 41.

⁴⁰Ramsey to Polk, August 25, September 27, November 9, 1841, Polk Papers; Sellers, Polk, 450-57.

⁴¹Ibid.

Democrats in Tennessee, began to look to the 1843 campaign. Actually he became even more involved in the canvass in 1842 and 1843 than he had before. His letters to Polk became more frequent and longer, filled with information and advice concerning both the latter's campaign and that of other candidates and their chances of success. As usual, he kept Polk posted on all matters political in East Tennessee and directed correspondence to other Democratic leaders and newspaper editors throughout the state, such as Laughlin, past editor of the Nashville Union, Robert Frazier, editor of the Athens Courier, James Walker, editor of the Columbia Democrat, and John Blair, former Tennessee Democratic Congressman (1823-35) from Jonesboro, and others already mentioned.⁴² In addition, he kept in close contact with many local East Tennessee political figures. Ramsey was well aware of the fact that the nation was looking to the Tennessee gubernatorial election of 1843 for an indication of the next year's presidential result. Moreover, Polk, who was now mentioned often as a vice-presidential candidate, could hope for success only if Tennessee returned to the Democratic column. Once again his opponent was "Lean Jimmy" Jones, the incumbent governor.⁴³

Articles by Ramsey flowed regularly into the Knoxville Argus.

⁴²Ramsey to Polk, February 26, July 25, August 5, September 22, October 12, November 29, December 28, 1842, February 6, March 10, May 11, 31, June 24, 1843, Polk Papers; Knoxville Argus, June 8, 1842, February 15, July 19, 1843; Knoxville Post, February 21, 1843; Sellers, Polk, 362-63; Biog. Dir. Am. Cong., 562; White, "East Tennessee Journalism," 17; Goodspeed's East Tennessee, 813-14.

⁴³Sellers, Polk, 469.

In fact, he seems to have played a significant role in keeping that paper alive during much of the campaign, for Polk's editor, E. G. Eastman, was out of town part of the time and appears to have been a heavy drinker while in town. Undoubtedly many of the editorials in the Argus in 1842 and 1843 were from Ramsey's hand.⁴⁴ In these articles and editorials he again slashed out at Jones' campaign tactics, asserting that "his manner was undignified . . . his buffoonery undignified, his humor coarse, and his wit vulgar." Ramsey, as usual, made his nostalgic appeals to Tennesseans, who had "stood up for nearly a half century for the men and principles of the Democratic party," to renounce and disown the awkward "position . . . [they] now held within the Whig ranks." He hammered incessantly on the "false position in politics in the National family" that Tennessee now held.⁴⁵

With the national implications which the race for governor in Tennessee held, this contest could not be separated from the national issues. In addition, Jones took a bold and unequivocal stand for Clay and the United States Bank. In the face of such a stand, Ramsey, who had dwelt more on local issues in the past, was forced to state boldly his position on federal policies. During this 1843 governor's election, he probably presented more clearly his views on national issues than he had at any other time. His ideas on the sub-treasury and the United States Bank were treated in detail in Chapter VI. Ramsey also

⁴⁴Ramsey to Polk, December 28, 1842, March 10, May 11, 1843, Polk Papers.

⁴⁵Knoxville Argus, June 8, 1842, June 21, 1843, Ramsey, Contributions, 30, 76.

violently opposed Clay's distribution of public lands, contending that it was just a scheme to deplete government finances and allow a protective tariff to be levied. It was thus an unfair measure, taking from one state to give to another. Distribution would result in increased taxation, for, although it gave money to the state legislatures, the federal revenue loss resulting from it would have to be replaced by taxes on individual citizens. He also contended that the measure was productive of discord among states, because it pitted new states against old, "the non-indebted against the indebted." By withdrawing one of the main sources of revenue and credit, distribution would be harmful to the national defense. The credit of the nation at home and abroad, Ramsey maintained, was based upon fixed property and real estate. With decreased property the government's credit would suffer a loss which might be critical in time of war.⁴⁶

Tied to Clay's distribution bill was the raising of the general tariff level above the 20 per cent prescribed by the 1833 tariff. Ramsey charged Clay with promoting a protective tariff system that would tax the farming interests of the country for the advantage of a few wealthy manufacturers in New England. The South would suffer, and with the South, East Tennessee, for her trade was tied to the Southern states, and she had the added handicap of her inland position. Ramsey assailed the new tariff as destructive of the Compromise Tariff of

⁴⁶Sellers, Polk, 474-84; Knoxville Post, February 21, 1843; Knoxville Argus, February 15, 1843; ibid., November 10, 1841, June 28, 1843, in Ramsey, Contributions, 49, 72.

1833, thus opening "afresh all the sources of discontent, producing anew the conflicts of sectional interest." In addition, distribution would produce the added harmful result of actually prohibiting the import of certain products, thereby diminishing the usual duties from these goods. Thus, according to Ramsey, it became an unconstitutional, oppressive, and unjust indirect form of taxation.⁴⁷

Ramsey, like Polk, also attacked the Whigs at the point where they were most vulnerable, on the Bankruptcy Law that Clay had pushed through the special session of Congress in 1841. Besides violating contracts and allowing no right of appeal on the part of the creditor, this law, Ramsey maintained, had partly resulted in panic, because it had produced premature collection of debts by frightened creditors. It had also resulted in the tightening of money, for creditors were afraid to lend, choosing rather to lose interest than risk their principal. This attack by Ramsey, Polk, and other Democrats was so successful in making this law "odious all over Tennessee" that the entreaties by Whigs in Tennessee can probably be given credit for hastening the congressional repeal of this law in 1843.⁴⁸

Ramsey's outspoken support of Polk and opposition to the Whigs brought him under fire from the Whig press. The Knoxville Post, February 21, 1843, castigated him for inconsistently condemning as

⁴⁷Mecklenburg Jeffersonian, November 10, 1842; Knoxville Argus, June 21, July 19, 1843, in Ramsey, Contributions, 33, 39, 47; ibid., February 17, 1843.

⁴⁸Sellers, Polk, 479; Knoxville Argus, February 15, 1843; ibid., July 19, 1843, January 21, 1845, in Ramsey, Contributions, 33, 36; Ramsey to Polk, February 17, 1843, Polk Papers.

"Federalists" the very people who had been his previous associates. The paper also alleged that he had taken part with "a few boys and one or two loafers" in a reputed incident in which Henry Clay was burned in effigy. Perhaps the strongest charge hurled at him was inconsistency in party affiliation. In twenty-five years he had been, it was reported,

first a Jackson man, shooting Mr. Clay in effigy--second, an Anti-Jackson Calhoun man, sustaining the doctrine of Nullification--third, a National Republican, voting for Thomas D. Arnold, the Anti-Jackson and Adams candidate for Congress--and, 4th, a modern Democrat of the Van Buren school.⁴⁹

Actually, Ramsey had sided with Jackson against South Carolina during the nullification controversy, as was noted earlier in this chapter. One should also note that Arnold was a strong proponent of Federal aid to internal improvements. Moreover, although Ramsey had campaigned for Van Buren, his support had never been as enthusiastic as it was for Polk and Jackson. It must be pointed out, however, that by this 1843 campaign, Ramsey was a Calhoun Democrat, having become by his own admission "something of a nullifier myself." He was beginning to accept some of the doctrines of the states' rights Southerners that would make him a strong adherent of the doctrine of secession some years later.⁵⁰

In spite of the efforts of Ramsey and other Tennessee Democrats,

⁴⁹ Knoxville Post, February 21, 1843.

⁵⁰ Folmsbee, Sectionalism, 67; Ramsey to Polk, November 9, 1841, Polk Papers.

Polk was defeated the second time by Jones, this time by a slightly larger margin than in 1841. In the eyes of many Democratic leaders from New York to Mississippi, Polk's defeat removed him from the ranks of the eligible candidates for vice-president the next year.⁵¹ Ramsey, dauntless and loyal, would never have accepted such a conclusion. He had been perhaps the staunchest supporter in Tennessee of Polk's claim for the vice-presidency. Back in 1841, when Polk had indirectly opened his campaign for the nomination with a visit to his plantation in Mississippi in autumn of that year, Ramsey was already hard at work in behalf of his friend's candidacy. In fact, he seems to have entered into this fight to get the vice-presidential nomination for Polk with an enthusiasm that he had not shown before. For over three years (1841-44), he carried on a voluminous correspondence with Polk on this matter. In these communications he referred to an extensive interchange with many editors, correspondents, and political figures in other Southern states. No sooner did he receive a letter from one of them than he relayed the information on to Polk, so that the latter might have the reactions of Ramsey's correspondents to his chances of securing the nomination.⁵²

In 1841 Calhoun's political managers, desiring to cultivate Polk's support while at the same time realizing that Calhoun's running mate

⁵¹Sellers, Polk, 490-91.

⁵²Ramsey to Polk, November 9, 1841, February 2, 26, March 30, April 18, May 10, July 25, September 22, October 12, November 29, December 28, 1842, February 6, 17, March 10, May 31, October 12, 1843, May 6, 15, 1844, Polk Papers.

had to come from the North, offered overtures through Ramsey to Polk that he run with Calhoun on the Democratic ticket. Charles Grier Sellers, Polk's biographer, asserts of J. C. M., "Inexperienced at political intrigue but delighted to have a hand in it, Ramsey thought this a capital suggestion." Expressing his belief that "Mr. C. would make the best President we ever had except Jackson & in some respects as good or better than he," Ramsey flatly rejected Van Buren, whom Polk had already determined to support.⁵³

It is difficult to determine whether Ramsey understood Polk's feelings concerning this matter as early as 1841-42 or not. He certainly had no hesitation in his correspondence with Polk in frankly criticising Van Buren's eligibility for the nomination. However, if Ramsey was attempting to convince Polk of the validity of his view, he was unsuccessful. For example, early in 1842, at the very time Polk was trying to stir up public sentiment in Alabama and Mississippi for a Van Buren-Polk ticket, Ramsey was suggesting to him that Democratic newspapers in Tennessee, South Carolina, Alabama, etc., which Ramsey considered opposed to Van Buren, should be urged to declare their opposition to the ex-president so that he could realize the futility of any attempt to gain Southern support. There is no better instance of this difference of opinion between Polk and Ramsey than in their attitudes toward Van Buren's visit to Tennessee in April, 1842.

⁵³Sellers, Polk, 462-63; Ramsey to Polk, November 9, 1841, Polk Papers.

While Polk eagerly looked upon this trip as an opportunity to sound Van Buren out on his chances for the vice-presidency, Ramsey considered the trip to be a threat to the chances for a Democratic victory in Tennessee. He wrote to Polk, "While he [Van Buren] shall receive the attentions due to a great statesman & deserving citizen we will consider him as a retired politician--nothing more." He even cautioned Polk, "We should avoid on the present visit of Mr. V. B. to Tennessee any step that would identify us with the attempt entertained elsewhere with too much favor, to bring him forward again."⁵⁴ Perhaps Ramsey's feelings concerning this matter can be explained, in part, on the basis of his living in the center of a Whig area, where he was convinced that the Democratic party had to lure the Whig vote to win. He was convinced that few Whigs would go for Van Buren.

Actually, Ramsey was more opposed to Van Buren as a presidential nominee and more in favor of Polk as a vice-presidential nominee than he was a supporter of Calhoun. If Calhoun stood the best chance of election, then Polk should be associated with him. However, Ramsey's purpose from the beginning was to see Polk nominated early as vice-president. Since South Carolina Democrats had convinced Ramsey that they could not afford to announce publicly for Polk and since Ramsey felt that Tennessee should not take the initiative in announcing its own candidate, he carried on correspondence throughout the spring of

⁵⁴Ramsey to Polk, February 2, 26, March 30, 1842, ibid.; Sellers, Polk, 464.

1842 with North Carolina and Virginia Democrats, such as J. W. Hampton, editor of the Mecklenburg Jeffersonian (Charlotte) and Thomas Ritchie, editor of the Richmond Enquirer, concerning the desirability of Polk's nomination, urging them to announce in some state convention for a Calhoun-Polk ticket. Ramsey maintained that Calhoun could not be elected without Polk, for, he asserted, "The West has its claims & cannot be expected to cooperate if they are disregarded." Moreover, Calhoun needed a statesman like Polk, truly Democratic in spirit but not directly associated with the nullification controversy, to neutralize and counteract the force of the objection of Calhoun's part in that issue. In addition, Polk would greatly enhance the Democrats' chances in Tennessee and in North Carolina, his native state. Answering the objection that one party nominee had to come from the North, Ramsey, with questionable logic, pointed out that since the Whig party, which he chose to identify with the North, constituted a majority of both houses of Congress, "it is therefore not unfair that we should have the Executive." He also referred to the example of 1828, when "the West and South gave the P. & V. P. & they were sustained not only with unanimity but with enthusiasm." Contending that New England, with the exception of Massachusetts and Vermont, would cast a similar vote again, he called for a Calhoun-Polk ticket.⁵⁵

By May, and certainly by July, 1842, either as a result of Polk's support of Van Buren, or because Ramsey had become convinced of South

⁵⁵Ramsey to Polk, November 9, 1841, February 2, 26, April 18, May 10, 1842, Polk Papers.

Carolina's insincere flirtation with the Polk camp, or both, Ramsey ceased to demand a Calhoun-Polk ticket and became almost wholly interested in pressing Polk's claims upon the vice-presidency. He expressed to Polk in the summer of 1842, "Whether V. B. [Van Buren] or C. [Calhoun] runs--or if both do you ought to be the V. P. [vice-present] in either case--I'll keep up the fire in the South." To correspondents in other states he declared, "Tennessee is not to be humbugged . . . we are in earnest in presenting . . . [Polk's] claims & . . . the friends of all the Pres. candidates must so consider us." Ramsey concurred in 1843 with the movement in Tennessee among many Democrats to express themselves committed only to Polk as the vice-presidential nominee and to the presidential nominee that the national convention would choose the following year. He did, however, impose the condition that "if a V. B. [Van Buren] or Calhoun editor does the least injustice to the pretensions of Tennessee we must retain the privilege of rapping him across the knuckles."⁵⁶

Ramsey stoutly rejected Senator Silas Wright of New York, Richard M. Johnson, Van Buren's vice-president, Thomas Ritchie, editor of the Richmond Enquirer, Mississippi Senator Robert J. Walker, Virginia Representative Andrew Stevenson, and any other man who might be brought forward as a competitor to Polk's claims to the vice-presidency. Responding to the Charleston Mercury's endorsement of New Hampshire's Levi Woodbury, Ramsey declared, "I shall write a scorching letter to

⁵⁶Ramsey to Polk, May 10, July 25, September 22, 1842, October 12, 1843, ibid.

some S. C[arolinian]."⁵⁷

Not receiving from out of state many favorable responses to his pleas, and believing that the common man in the South favored Polk, Ramsey voiced the feeling, unusual for him, that the party leaders were disregarding the sentiments of their constituents. To Calhoun he wrote in 1843 complaining that party rule was in danger of thwarting the will of the people. He was opposed to the choosing of delegates to the Democratic National Convention by state convention or by state legislature, and proposed, instead, that district conventions be held so that the delegates could be chosen "fresh from the people." Ramsey became so emotionally involved in his battle for Polk that he paid no attention to party leaders throughout the country who, he said, would not recognize that Polk was the only logical choice.⁵⁸ Therefore, he unfalteringly continued right up to the eve of the Democratic convention in Baltimore in May, 1844, trying to get others to declare openly for Polk and attempting to line up support for him at the convention.⁵⁹ It is not too much to say that Ramsey played a significant part in placing Polk in the minds of men throughout the South.

After Polk realized far more than his vice-presidential

⁵⁷Sellers, Polk, 328, 464-65; Ramsey to Polk, October 12, November 29, December 28, 1842, February 6, March 10, May 31, 1843, Polk Papers.

⁵⁸Knoxville Argus, February 15, 1843, Ramsey, Contributions, 81; Ramsey to Polk, October 12, 1843, Polk Papers; John C. Calhoun to Ramsey, February 25, 1843, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

⁵⁹Ramsey to Polk, May 6, 15, 1844, Polk Papers.

aspirations, being nominated for the presidency as the compromise candidate at the 1844 convention, Ramsey characteristically claimed to have prophesied it from the beginning. Writing to Draper concerning the possibility of a deadlocked Democratic convention in 1852, Ramsey asserted, "I said this in 1843 and that Polk would be the nominee."⁶⁰ He also affirmed that he was the first person who seriously suggested Polk for the presidency. To Polk he declared, "Genl. Jackson was mentioned as the candidate in my office in Knoxville Feb. 1823--as Pleasant M. Miller & others will recollect⁶¹--& I have a pride in being the first any where a bout here that mentioned you." He reported in another letter, "I said to my correspondents years before you were nominated that your Administration would be the best since that of Washington." In fact, Ramsey asked Polk after he was elected to return to him a letter he had written Polk in 1841 urging him to let Ramsey announce him as the Democratic candidate for president in 1844.⁶² It is true that Ramsey wrote Polk in November, 1841, suggesting that "if Calhoun is not taken up you are decidedly the strongest man in the party & I believe would be his choice." He went on to say, "You cannot be defeated if he [Calhoun] is not a candidate & will give you his support

⁶⁰Ramsey to Draper, January 30, 1852, Draper Manuscripts.

⁶¹Charles Grier Sellers, Jr., indicates that the movement to nominate Jackson developed in the winter of 1821-1822 with the circle surrounding Judge John Overton in Nashville. While not mentioning Ramsey, he does significantly include Pleasant M. Miller, an East Tennessee member of the Overton faction, as a prime mover in this area for Jackson's candidacy. Charles Grier Sellers, Jr., "Jackson Men With Feet of Clay," American Historical Review, LXII (April, 1957), 537-51.

⁶²Ramsey to Polk, November 20, 1844, January 14, 1845, Polk Papers.

& influence." It should also be pointed out, however, that Ramsey subsequently cast his lot with Calhoun, and even after dropping his open support of Calhoun, he does not seem to have promoted Polk's candidacy for the presidency. But in all fairness to Ramsey, one should note that no one else even considered Polk seriously for the presidency, not even Polk himself, until after Van Buren had penned his now famous letter in April, 1844, disavowing his support for the annexation of Texas.⁶³

In the presidential campaign of 1844 Ramsey outdid himself in his efforts for his old friend. He helped plan itineraries, assign speakers, and arrange for barbecues in East Tennessee. On one occasion he even rode on horseback up the French Board into Sevier County in an attempt to secure a large Whig attendance at a Democratic rally at which Aaron V. Brown was to speak. As usual, his pen produced numerous articles in the Knoxville Argus, and numerous letters left Mecklenburg addressed to such influential Democrats as J. K. Kane of Philadelphia, Samuel H. Laughlin of Nashville, A. O. P. Nicholson, former Senator, Governor C. C. Clay of Alabama, Julius Blackwell, former Tennessee state representative, former Congressman John P. Blair of Jonesboro, Tennessee, James White McClung from Alabama and a good friend of C. C. Clay, Aaron V. Brown, former Tennessee Congressman, William W. Lowry of Greeneville, Tennessee, and numerous local Democratic friends of Ramsey and Polk in East Tennessee counties.⁶⁴

⁶³Ramsey to Polk, November 9, 1841, ibid.; Eugene Irving McCormac, James K. Polk: A Political Biography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1922), 224-34.

⁶⁴Ramsey to Laughlin, October 9, 1844, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Ramsey to Polk, October 9, 14, 15, 17, 22, 24, 28,

Ramsey concurred completely with Polk's stand on Texas annexation, accepting and applying the jingoistic arguments of the period to support this stand. He maintained that, aside from its justly belonging to the United States as a part of the Louisiana Purchase, it had been settled by Americans, who were now requesting annexation. America was, moreover, forced to annex Texas in order to secure an unsettled country for her expanding and adventurous population and to prevent Texas from falling into enemy hands. Ramsey particularly warned against the threat of England, "that grasping and ambitious monarchy."⁶⁵

Besides drafting articles on other national issues that have already been discussed at some length in this chapter, Ramsey helped Polk tremendously by repelling an old revived charge, which particularly annoyed Polk, that his grandfather, Ezekiel Polk, had been a Tory. Ramsey naturally leaped to his friend's defense, but in this case he had an added incentive: Colonel Ezekiel Polk was a native of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, a section of the country which Ramsey considered to be the most patriotic in the United States. His defense of Colonel Polk centered in the contention that Polk, though a Revolutionary officer who had sought British protection, had done so because of the threat of Colonial guerillas. On the advice of Aaron V. Brown, Ramsey's

1844, Polk Papers; Ramsey to Polk, July 10, 1844, Sam M. Fleming Collection (Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill); McCormac, Polk, 261, 275-76; Sellers, Polk, 358-59, 373, 404, 435; Ruth Ketring Nuernberger, The Clays of Alabama (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1958), 21, 25, 65, 89, 96, 98; William M. Lowry to Andrew Johnson, Johnson Papers, passim.

⁶⁵Knoxville Spectator, May 23, 1844, in Ramsey, Contributions, 53.

vindication was sent to Judge W. H. Haywood in July, 1844, to be published first in North Carolina, Polk's native state.⁶⁶

Ramsey's correspondence with Polk during this campaign reveals his practical attention to matters of detail. For instance, realizing the significance of the German vote, even in East Tennessee, Ramsey wrote to correspondents in Philadelphia, Charleston, and Nashville, seeking Democratic newspapers and documents in the German language to be used in influencing their vote. Receiving such papers from J. K. Kane of Philadelphia, Samuel H. Laughlin of Nashville, and a friend in Charleston, he distributed them among German Lutherans in East Tennessee, who were "charmed with a news-paper in their own language" to the point that Ramsey believed the Democrats would get practically all of their votes. From the number of times that he mentioned this item, one would conclude that Ramsey considered it a major campaign victory.⁶⁷

He also regularly pointed out to Polk other practical details, such as incorrect listings of Democratic electors in newspapers scattered over the state that he had investigated and noticed. Ramsey's Knox County Democratic Committee took advantage of the presence of Democrats at the federal court in Knoxville as witnesses or jurors, to appoint them to hand out copies of correct tickets and to act as "committees

⁶⁶ Knoxville Argus, May 23, July 17, 24, 1844, ibid., 43, 45, 51; Knoxville Register, July 24, October 23, 1844; Ramsey to Laughlin, October 9, 1844, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Ramsey to Polk, July 10, 1844, Fleming Collection; McCormac, Polk, 273.

⁶⁷ Ramsey to Laughlin, October 9, 1844, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Ramsey to Polk, October 9, 14, 15, 22, 1844, Polk Papers.

of vigilance" at their respective polling places. In fact, as the election drew near, Ramsey paid a great deal of attention to the technicalities of the canvass itself. To Polk he asserted in October, 1844, "We have taken all possible pains to guard the Ky. & N. C. frontier--& illegal & fraudulent voting elsewhere as far as we can." He related to Samuel H. Laughlin, "I am . . . writing to our friends in all E. T. to guard the purity of the ballot box." Ramsey also kept Polk posted on a controversy in Jefferson County involving two sets of voting places, which had resulted from a clash between two claimants to the sheriff's office. Reporting to Polk that the Democrats were going to vote at both places, he called upon Nashville authorities to be prepared for any eventuality.⁶⁸

During the last month before the election Ramsey addressed letters to Polk practically every other day, part of the time every day, and Polk wrote to him almost as regularly.⁶⁹ To win the national election for the Democrats and to "rescue Tennessee from Federalism" Ramsey had indeed worked hard in his own Knox County, where he believed "the Whigs have laboured more to retain their strength than in any others [districts] in the country." As it was, Polk, although winning the national election, lost Tennessee by the narrow margin of one hundred and thirteen votes.⁷⁰

⁶⁸Ramsey to Polk, October 15, 17, 22, 28, November 4, 1844, ibid.; Ramsey to Laughlin, October 9, 1844, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

⁶⁹Ramsey to Polk, October 9, 14, 15, 17, 22, 24, 28, November 4, 6, 1844, Polk Papers.

⁷⁰Ibid.; McCormac, Polk, 277.

One of Polk's biographers, Eugene Irving McCormac, says of the president-elect, "Directly and indirectly Polk received much unsolicited advice on the subject of patronage, and especially on the selection of his cabinet."⁷¹ Although Ramsey was perhaps not too overburdensome in his advice, he, nonetheless, was not an exception to this assertion. Before Polk took office, his old friend, who had sought patronage favors before,⁷² addressed to him a rather lengthy letter on this subject, commenting, "We all think you will invite Mr. Calhoun to remain." He went on to caution Polk that "patronage of the Government should certainly not remain in or be given to those who are unfriendly to the existing administration." One such "unfriendly" group would obviously be most Whigs, although he refused to "pollute" his letter to Polk by mentioning those in East Tennessee. Another class of a different kind would be "genuine democrats--but unworthy of confidence in trust where money is concerned" because they were "a parcel of idle-spend thrift reckless . . . speculators--who hope to live from the public rib & riot on the money of the U. S."⁷³ Ramsey, himself, promised "not to recommend . . . for appointment to office any one who will not by it render service to the public interest or do credit to the Administration that employs him & in no case to recommend a Whig--unless a suitable Democrat

⁷¹Ibid., 286.

⁷²Ramsey to Polk, September 9, 1839, September 24, October 12, 1842; Arthur R. Crozier to Polk, August 25, 1841, Polk Papers.

⁷³Ramsey to Polk, January 14, 1845, ibid.

cannot be found."⁷⁴ He was thoroughly pleased with Polk's appointment of Thomas Ritchie to edit the Washington Union, successor to the Globe as the official administration organ. His advice to Polk on the desirability of appointing men of letters to office was treated in an earlier chapter.⁷⁵

Throughout Polk's term in the White House Ramsey quite frequently addressed to him letters opposing certain rumored appointments and suggesting other patronage assignments for Democratic friends, such as Arthur H. Crozier, R. B. Reynolds, both of Knoxville, William M. Lowry of Greeneville, Roger Barton of northern Mississippi, and W. H. Conner of Charleston. As was discussed in Chapter II, Ramsey himself sought, received, and declined an appointment as surgeon in the army in 1847. During the same year he considered an appointment to some office in the Interior or War departments either on the Mexican-Texas border

⁷⁴Ibid. In 1850 Democratic Governor Trousdale appointed Ramsey state agent in charge of selling railroad bonds and buying equipment for the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad. It is interesting to note that in October, 1851, after William B. Campbell, the Whig candidate, had been elected governor of Tennessee, Alexander Williams of Greeneville wrote to T. A. R. Nelson that Ramsey should be dismissed by Campbell. He declared of J. G. M.,

Dr. Ramsey of Knoxville or rather of the (fork) has been rewarded by Gov. Trousdale purely on the ground of Ramsey being a devoted Democrat--now just upon the same ground Gov. Campbell ought to turn Ramsey out, and put some one in his place. I have known Ramsey for 35 years and he has always been the tool of somebody in some way;--now sir I am for turning out every Democrat in the Land that ask office at the hands of the present Legislature.

Alexander Williams to Nelson, October 11, 1851, Nelson Papers.

⁷⁵McCormac, Polk, 333; Ramsey to Polk, May 19, 1845, Polk Papers.

or in the West.⁷⁶

There is no reason to believe that Polk, who was inclined to follow an independent course, paid any more attention to Ramsey's suggestions concerning patronage than he did to any of his other friends. Moreover, it is clearly evident that Polk did not respond as frequently to Ramsey's correspondence as he had when he was running for state office or even when he was campaigning for the presidency. Ramsey's letters to Polk after March, 1845, contain such phrases as, "Do not suppose that I can be disappointed in not receiving answers to my frequent letters--I know the constant demands upon your time & that you must be absorbed with your important & weighty public duties." His correspondence contains other apologetic messages, like "I know your own time must be constantly absorbed with other & weightier matters," or "I have frequently intended for the moment to write you on some public topics--but I have still supposed that your whole time was so absorbed with the momentous subjects of national importance as to allow you no leisure to read a letter from a private citizen." In spite of such an apologetic attitude, Ramsey continued to correspond with Polk and to advise him on many different issues.⁷⁷

One need not suppose, however, that Polk had forgotten Ramsey or

⁷⁶Ramsey to Polk, February 6, March 4, 31, May 19, October 11, 1845, January 31, April 20, July 31, 1846, November 7, 1847; R. B. Reynolds to Polk, December 21, 1847; Arthur R. Crozier to Polk, February 28, 1848, ibid.; W. L. Marcy to Ramsey, February 28, 1848, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁷⁷Ramsey to Polk, March 31, 1845, January 31, April 20, 1846, Polk Papers.

no longer considered him of any further importance. That Polk still valued his friendship highly is rather evident from an incident which occurred early in 1847. Ramsey, who was postmaster at Mecklenburg, was removed from office, apparently by mistake. Upon receiving a report of his friend's removal, Polk quickly notified Cave Johnson, postmaster general, demanding Ramsey's immediate reinstatement, and declaring of him,

He is one of the best men and most faithful public officers in the Union. Surely there must be some mistake about it. You certainly could have known nothing of it. I wish you to investigate the matter immediately. . . . He is an honest upright man and one of the best personal and political friends I have in the world. The error must be corrected immediately. I will see you tonight if you can come up. . . . P. S. I am so concerned about this matter that I must see you tonight if practicable.⁷⁸

In another addressed to Johnson the very next day, Polk instructed him to investigate and discover "through whose agency--among your subordinate officers so inexcusable a blunder has occurred" and to submit a written explanation of the incident.⁷⁹

Ramsey upheld Polk in practically every policy of his administration. On the subject of the tariff Ramsey sought a modification of the tariff of 1842 to the point that "except for the purposes of revenue & that not always & every where no restrictions should be laid upon commerce for the purpose of protecting one interest over another--especially one section over another." In fact, he was not at all certain that the

⁷⁸Polk to Cave Johnson, May 20, 1847, in "Letters of James K. Polk to Cave Johnson, 1833-1848," Tennessee Historical Magazine, I (September, 1915), 255.

⁷⁹Polk to Cave Johnson, May 21, 1847, ibid.

free trade policy should not be "fairly tried." Although he does not appear to have said much on the subject, Ramsey also publicly declared himself in favor of Polk's "constitutional treasury," as he preferred to designate what others called the independent treasury.⁸⁰

Ramsey took his boldest stand in support of the foreign policies of the administration. He concurred completely in the measure that completed the annexation of Texas and brought that new state into the union by December, 1845.⁸¹ Having recently made a study of the significance of cotton to the British, he was convinced

that the country between the Potomac & the Rio Grande monopolising as it may the exclusive growth of that valuable staple may thereby control the commerce of the world & secure thereby to the American Union inappreciable political & commercial advantage.⁸²

Moreover, he seems to have taken an almost belligerent attitude toward England over the Texas issue, declaring that the menacing attitude of England would only create more Democrats when considered against the background of the disrepute of the anti-war Federalists of 1812.⁸³

In his inaugural address Polk declared that American title "to the whole of Oregon is clear and unquestionable." Since many people contended that the United States held claim in the Oregon territory to

⁸⁰McCormac, Polk, 666-67; Ramsey to Polk, October 11, 1845, Polk Papers; Ramsey to the editor, December 13, 1845, Washington Union, December 24, 1845, in Ramsey, Contributions, 77.

⁸¹Ibid.; Washington Spectator, May 23, 1844, in ibid., 53; Folmsbee, et al., Tennessee, I, 359-61.

⁸²Ramsey to Polk, October 11, 1845, Polk Papers.

⁸³Ramsey to Polk, May 19, 1845, ibid.

the 54° 40', there was sentiment in the country to go to war with England over the issue.⁸⁴ Although appearing to favor such a policy if necessary, Ramsey wrote to Polk somewhat hesitantly on the matter:

I hope the Oregon negotiation may terminate alike favorably & gloriously--I cannot be supposed to look far into the subject . . . the policy of Mr. Monroe not to allow European colonization or interference in American affairs appears to me to be right & I think has the sanction of enlightened sentiment every where among our people.⁸⁵

However, on the eve of the final treaty that compromised the boundary at the forty-ninth parallel, Ramsey asserted to Polk, "Without equivalents I would not compromise if I belonged to the treaty making power upon the 49 Degree--with sufficient equivalent I would."⁸⁶

Ramsey had no hesitation about declaring his unequivocal support of the administration's foreign policy toward Mexico over the Texas question, particularly our relations with England over this matter. Even before the Mexican War began, when war with England was considered to be a definite possibility if war with Mexico developed, Ramsey looked upon such a contingency as a fateful fight of "monarchy against popular freedom." Perhaps now was as auspicious a time as ever. In case war with England resulted, he declared, although "America may be the theatre on which the commencement of the tragedy will take place--it will--it must terminate in Europe--convulsing the government & undermining the thrones of the kings & the despots of the old world." Still he hoped

⁸⁴Folmsbee, et al., Tennessee, I, 361-62.

⁸⁵Ramsey to Polk, October 11, 1845, Polk Papers.

⁸⁶Ramsey to Polk, April 20, 1846, ibid.

for a negotiated settlement of the differences between this country, Mexico and England.⁸⁷

When war with Mexico ensued, however, and Polk came under extreme criticism from certain quarters, Ramsey declared to him more than once, "I have always been decidedly for the annexation of Texas--most decidedly in favor of your war-message--& your war policy out & out." He wrote to the Tennessee legislature calling upon it to adopt resolutions in favor of the administration's prosecution of the war. After the signing in February, 1848, of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ending the war, Ramsey affirmed that if this treaty, which he described as "a beautiful finish, as architects say, to an otherwise useful and brilliant administration," had not been signed, he, as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention, would have called upon Polk to serve a second term.⁸⁸

Back in 1843 Ramsey had sought Polk's aid in getting an appointment as a member of the West Point Board of Visitors, made up of leading officers in the army, navy, and militia, members of Congress, and distinguished educators, who annually looked into the details of the academy's academic activity and the physical plant and reported their findings to the secretary of war. At that time the board of visitors were temporarily not being appointed. In 1848, however, Polk appointed

⁸⁷Ramsey to Polk, January 31, 1846, ibid.

⁸⁸McCormac, Polk, 537; Folmsbee, et al., Tennessee, I, 362-64; Ramsey to Polk, November 7, 1847, March 19, 1848, Polk Papers; Ramsey to Draper, January 17, 1848, Draper Manuscripts; Copy of a letter Ramsey wrote to Secretary of War, William L. Marcy, November 9, 1847, Ramsey Papers (UT).

Ramsey a member of this board, and he traveled to West Point. On this trip Ramsey and Margaret Jane visited with the Polks at the White House. Mrs. Polk's gift to Ramsey of a portrait of the president and her kind treatment of his daughter made an impression on Ramsey that he remembered vividly until his death. In corresponding with him years later Mrs. Polk called Ramsey an "esteemed friend" of her husband, and there seems to be little reason to doubt that her assertion was true.⁸⁹

Although Ramsey had been appointed a delegate to the Democratic National Convention of 1844, he had apparently been unable to attend. He, however, did attend the May, 1848, convention, which met again in Baltimore. It was perhaps fitting that Polk, who had maintained from the beginning that he would not seek a second term, chose his old friend Ramsey⁹⁰ to read to the convention his letter declining to stand for re-election.⁹¹

Polk's term in the White House may be said to represent the peak

⁸⁹Ramsey to Polk, February 17, 1843, March 19, 1848, Mrs. Polk to Polk, March 27, 1843, Polk Papers; Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, June [n.d.], 1848; Mrs. Polk to Ramsey, October 24, November 2, 23, 1872, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Draper, October 28, 1872, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey to Anson Nelson, July 14, 1877, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Ramsey Will, March 25, 1882, Box 3-F, Ramsey Papers (UT); Sidney Forman, West Point (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 46, 184.

⁹⁰Back in January, 1846, Ramsey had informed Polk that he would probably be called on to reconsider his refusal to seek a second term and had commented, "Time only can disclose what may be right--or demanded by the general good." Ramsey to Polk, January 31, 1846, Polk Papers.

⁹¹Knoxville Argus, February 15, 1843; Polk to Ramsey, May 20, 1848, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis; Ramsey to Draper, April 4, 1848, Draper Correspondence; Hesseltine, "Ramsey," 11; Allan Nevins, Polk: The Diary of a President, 1845-49 (New York: Longmans, Greene and Company, 1952), 321; McCormac, Polk, 714.

of Ramsey's political activity and influence before the Civil War. There are several explanations for this fact, not the least of which was the choice of the Democrats for their presidential nominees following Polk. Attending the Democratic National Convention in 1848, Ramsey did not cast his vote for Cass, but, as he said, "stood up and threw three ballots for a better man and a real Democrat and statesman Levy [sic] Woodbury." He believed that Cass was only popular with the politicians, not with the masses of people. Moreover, Ramsey supported men as much as politics and issues. For instance, in a letter to Polk back in 1845, complaining about the Democratic party in Tennessee, he asserted, "I fear there is no emanating point--no combining or concentrating of remote influences--I am you know no centralist--but we need a common head to suggest--arrange--converge & control." Likewise in 1848 he did not see in Cass another Jackson or Polk for him to battle for. Therefore, in spite of two urgent appeals from Polk to work for Cass' election, Ramsey seems not to have entered into this campaign with any of the enthusiasm that he had shown in recent elections.⁹²

Still dissatisfied with the major contenders for the Democratic nomination in 1852, he wrote to his friend Draper, "You can hardly get me into politics in this fight. I want to be not on the pensioned but retired list," and again in 1853, "I do little in politics."⁹³ Another

⁹²Hesseltine, Ramsey, 47; Ramsey to Polk, May 19, 1845; two letters from Polk to Ramsey, both dated October 17, 1848, Polk Papers.

⁹³Ramsey to Draper, February 20, 1852, April 14, 1853, Draper Manuscripts.

partial explanation for Ramsey's decreased political activity is that much of his time was taken up in the early fifties in selling railroad bonds for the state. It would take the states' rights issue of secession and the battle over slavery in the late fifties and sixties to bring out in Ramsey the strong allegiance that had been manifested in his support of Jackson and Polk.

One should not, however, draw the erroneous conclusion that Ramsey had retired from the political arena. He continued to support Democratic nominees, to take part in local politics, to serve on the Democratic State Central Committee, to seek patronage favors, and to exert continued influence in the state legislature. For example, he supported William Trousdale for governor in 1849 and 1851, and corresponded in behalf of Trousdale as a dark horse Democratic candidate for the presidency in 1852. Furthermore, Ramsey almost seemed to be his old self as he declared to Draper after Andrew Johnson's election as governor in 1853, "Your expectations have been gloriously realized. Andrew Johnson is our governor. Tennessee is revolutionized." Ramsey's main interest politically in the fifties, however, seems to have been in the career of his son Crozier, who replaced him temporarily as the more active of the two in political affairs.⁹⁴

⁹⁴Knoxville Standard, December 6, 1847; Ramsey to Polk, March 19, 1848, Polk Papers; Ramsey to John Crozier, November 9, 1849; Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, July 25, 1850, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to William Trousdale, January 8, 1851, Governors' Papers--Trousdale; William M. Churchwell and Ramsey to Isham G. Harris, September 18, 1848; Ramsey to Harris, August 14, 1861, Governors' Papers--Harris; Ramsey to Draper, January 30, February 28, 1852, April 14, September 9, 1853, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, February 7, 1856, McIver Collection; Knoxville Register, September 17, 1857; Knoxville Mercury, April 13, 1857.

Still another interest which, temporarily replacing politics and other activities, consumed more and more of Ramsey's time during the late forties and early fifties was the research and writing of his Annals of Tennessee. Any study of Ramsey's life and work would be incomplete which failed to treat his efforts as a historian, the field in which his activities are most certainly best known.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ANNALS OF TENNESSEE

Judge John M. Lea of Nashville once characterized Ramsey with the simple description: "His fondness for reading was great and his tastes literary." And typically declaring to his brother on one occasion, "I have everything I need but books," Ramsey seems partly to have deserved the title of "book worm," which some of his friends gave him. However, although he was certainly infatuated with books and libraries all his life, Ramsey possibly exaggerated the description of his own private collection, which burned during the Civil War, as "the largest Historical Library in the west, probably, and certainly in Tennessee."¹

Added to Ramsey's love of reading was an early intense fondness for writing. Already in this biography references have been made to the essays which he penned at Ebenezer Academy and Washington College, and to the multitude of articles that flowed from his pen on various subjects, ranging from agriculture and internal improvements to religion and politics. Undoubtedly his ability with the pen was a major reason for Ramsey's being continually appointed to serve on various committees of publication, committees to draw up resolutions, and committees to memorialize Congress or the state legislature. Space

¹Newspaper articles, Scrapbook I, 66, II, 9, 34; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey [n.d.], 1852, McIver Collection; Ramsey to Draper, October 26, 1881, Draper Manuscripts; Knoxville Daily Tribune, April 12, 1884.

will not allow allusion to the hundreds of newspaper obituaries and eulogies which he wrote of prominent men in banking, medical, railroad, political and business circles.²

In his writing style Ramsey combined a note of real power with a genuine flair for phraseology. His voluminous correspondence drew from his correspondents much praise for his strong and vigorous style. Perhaps Lyman C. Draper best described Ramsey's letter writing technique when he commented, "You have a good old fashioned way of throwing your heart, full of generous impulses, into your letters." Others remarked in a similar manner.³

History was, however, Ramsey's first literary love, and it was in this field that he distinguished himself as a writer. In fact, his choice of the site for his house was largely dictated by his early antiquarian interest. Mecklenburg was constructed on the site of a large Indian mound which contained prized relics, later removed to a Boston museum after Ramsey's death. Because of his pride in the historical associations of this house and its contents, Ramsey sought to use it to help him lure George Bancroft into a visit to Mecklenburg in 1858.

²General Directions Relating to Ideals, Ramsey Papers (NC); "Agricola" in Knoxville Enquirer, January 17, 1827; Knoxville Chronicle, 9, 1834; Knoxville Register, November 15, 1837, November 12, 1845, March 8, 1859; Knoxville Argus, July 21, 1841; Knoxville Standard, June 8, 1845; Knoxville Whig, May 28, 1858, March 17, 1860; List of Ramsey's Writings, March 25, 1879, Miscellaneous Materials, Box 3-H, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³Draper to Ramsey, April 22, 1871; W. A. Harrison to Ramsey, November 25, 1873, ibid.; Anson Nelson to Ramsey, June 10, 1879, March 27, 1882, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Ramsey to Draper, May 26, 1875, Draper Manuscripts.

Our dining room is old "Gilliams Station"--your [Bancroft's] bedroom is at the base of the largest Tumulus in East Tennessee--on which (in 1789) the first Christian rite (Baptism) was performed on this frontier & close by are the ruins of the oldest Presbyterian Church in this general section--where Sevier worshiped [sic] & his "captains" commissioned. Besides these & many Aboriginal remains in my private collection I will shew you a vast number of written & private dispatches--papers & letters which I know you will examine with great interest.⁴

This same love of antiquities prompted Ramsey to desire to travel west in 1859 so that he could "cultivate my taste for Aboriginal investigations--their languages--traditions--customs--history &c., &c."⁵

The best example, however, of Ramsey's early interest in history centered in the Mecklenburg Convention and its so-called "Declaration of Independence." Since 1819 North Carolinians had asserted that on May 20, 1775, more than thirteen months before the Continental Congress accepted the Declaration of Independence, citizens of Mecklenburg County had assembled in Charlotte and adopted resolutions declaring their independence from Great Britain. This claim to priority was "called in question in Massachusetts and other places," notably by Virginia historian Governor Swain, archivist Peter Force, and historian George Bancroft. Because of this challenge and because of his personal interest, which arose from the fact that his father-in-law, John McKnitt Alexander, was the secretary of the convention which penned the "celebrated declaration," Ramsey enthusiastically entered, as early as 1822,

⁴Ramsey to George Bancroft, July 7, 1858, Bancroft Collection (Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston).

⁵Newspaper articles, Breck Scrapbook, between pages 60 and 61, Scrapbook II, 54; Goodspeed's Knox County, 890. Ramsey to Andrew Johnson, December 7, 1859, Johnson Papers.

into an investigation which he trusted would "rescue from comparative oblivion so brilliant an event in the early history of our country," and vindicate the authenticity of this document.⁶

In pursuance of this purpose he addressed correspondence to Andrew Jackson, Judge John Haywood, and numerous individuals who were either past residents of Mecklenburg, or knew men who were, asking for signed statements concerning the convention, its members and their lives, and any other pertinent information they might have. On the basis of such bits of information and "a small pamphlet containing the Mecklenburg Resolves with names of delegates and others by whose influence and popularity the meeting had been gotten up," Ramsey concluded that the Mecklenburg Resolves, adopted by

the noble and determined patriots who assembled in the town of Charlotte, on that memorable occasion, made the first Declaration, which announced to the world, that the great object was not merely redress, but revolution! It was the actual beginning of the Revolution. . . . At that time, no step like this had been taken.⁷

According to him, these resolves were "afterwards adopted by the General Congress," whose declaration contained "not only the same lofty spirit," but also "the same phraseology and even the same words."⁸

⁶Ramsey to R. H. King, September [n.d.], 1822, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey to F. S. Heiskell, January 2, 1826, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Draper, May 23, 1875, Draper Manuscripts; William B. Hesseltine, Pioneer's Mission: The Story of Lyman Copeland Draper (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1954), 255.

⁷Knoxville Argus, January 14, 1840.

⁸Copy of Ramsey to [no address and no date, but probably written about 1823 or 24], Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to R. H. King, September

From the Raleigh pamphlet allegedly containing the Mecklenburg Resolves Ramsey extracted three of the more prominent resolutions and had them, with the names of the members of the convention which he had uncovered (the resolves contained no signatures), printed by Heiskell and Brown of Knoxville. He had two copies printed on satin, one of which he gave to Andrew Jackson to hang in the Hermitage. Ironically, Ramsey's extracted version with printed signatures was exactly copied years later in the New York Herald, May 20, 1875, on the centennial anniversary of the Mecklenburg Convention, as "a fac-simile of the original handbill distributed before 1800."⁹

Ramsey continued to be interested in the Mecklenburg Declaration for the rest of his life. He was regularly invited to the celebrations of the convention on May 20, every ten years, and was present for the jubilee celebration in 1825. Concerning the authenticity of the resolves, he wrote in June, 1835, that they had "been established by testimony irrefragable and undoubted." To Draper he affirmed in 1878, when he was eighty-one years old and still seeking to vindicate the Revolutionary document: "The more I look into this subject the

[n.d.], 1822, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey to Andrew Jackson, May 28, 1823, [n.d.], 1826 or 27; Ramsey to Rev. J. R. Bain, May 29, 1823; copy of Ramsey to Judge John Haywood, May 30, 1823; Jackson to Ramsey, June 14, 1823; Rev. J. T. Bain to Ramsey, June 20, 1823; W. B. M. to Ramsey, July 20, 1824, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁹Copy of Ramsey to unnamed correspondent, February 23, 1823; Ramsey to F. S. Heiskell, January 2, 1826; Ramsey to Jackson [n.d.], 1826 or 27; Jackson to Ramsey, January 15, 1827, ibid.; Ramsey to Polk, September 26, October 26, 1839, Polk Papers; New York Herald, May 20, 1875.

more thoroughly do I believe in the entire authenticity of the Mecklenburg Declaration. . . . I preserve in my scrapbook everything that I meet on the subject." It is ironic that Draper, one of his best friends, who had also done a book-length essay on the Mecklenburg Declaration, using much of the material which Ramsey had supplied him, concluded that the resolves were spurious, although he apparently never divulged his conclusion to Ramsey.¹⁰

Another of Ramsey's early historical interests was the East Tennessee Historical and Antiquarian Society, organized in 1833 or 1834, primarily because of his efforts.¹¹ In fact, Ramsey, who served as the "perpetual corresponding secretary" of the group, characteristically taking pride in it as in practically all undertakings with which he was associated, considered it to be "my society" and referred to himself, and was referred to, in turn, by others, as "the society." For example, in a speech at the Knoxville semi-centennial celebration in 1842, the president of the society, William B. Reese, eulogistically declared, "If the Emperor Napoleon could claim to be France, our Secretary could with more justice and truth claim to be the society."

¹⁰Knoxville Register, June 17, 1835; Ramsey to W. J. Alexander and others, May 11, 1844, in Ramsey, Contributions, 67, 99; James Wallace to Ramsey, April 22, 1871, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Draper, May 7, 23, 26, 1875, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey to Draper, September 20, 1875, August 7, 19, 1878, Draper Correspondence; Hessel-tine, Ramsey, 287n; Hessel-tine, Draper, 255; Alexander, Recollections, Ramsey Papers (NC); Charlotte Observer, June 8, 1830.

¹¹The National Intelligencer, September 27, 1834, in Ramsey, Contributions, 95, refers to the first annual meeting of the East Tennessee Historical and Antiquarian Society in 1834. Rothrock, French Broad, 474, however, indicates that the society was organized in 1830.

Although the accomplishments of this group were certainly something less than outstanding, Ramsey, with his usual energy, succeeded during the thirties and forties in collecting for the society some Sevier and Blount papers, as well as other journals and correspondence, all subsequently burned, stolen, or destroyed, probably when his home was destroyed during the Civil War. After Lyman Draper became very active as the secretary of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Ramsey was discouraged by the inactivity of his society and sought with Draper's help to reorganize it in 1860-61. The Civil War, however, marked the end of this organization, although Ramsey still considered himself, following the war, to be an acting officer of the society.¹²

In addition to his intensive work on the Mecklenburg Declaration and his labor of love for the East Tennessee Historical and Antiquarian Society, Ramsey wrote numerous essays, addresses, and articles on historical and antiquarian subjects. The Knoxville Register, April 13, 1831, announced a lecture by him on "Antiquities and History of Tennessee." The National Intelligencer, September 27, 1834, referred to a recent address he had delivered in Knoxville concerning the history of the aboriginal population of America. He penned historical articles for the newspapers on such subjects as Desoto's expedition into Tennessee, the origin of the names of many of Tennessee's rivers, and the

¹² Knoxville Argus, June 16, 1841, February 16, 1842; Ramsey to Nelson, September 24, 1841, Nelson Papers; Ramsey to Draper, September 3, 1844, January 17, 1860, February 1, 1870, January 14, 1871, May 23, 1874, September 6, 1880, Draper Correspondence; Ramsey to Draper, May 27, 1853, October 3, 1872, Draper Manuscripts; Hamer, Tennessee, I, 379; newspaper article, Scrapbook II, 33; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 46-47.

historical accuracy of the name Franklin, instead of Frankland, for the lost state. And he played a significant role in proposing, organizing, and staging Knoxville's semi-centennial celebration in February, 1842.¹³

On the basis of his historical and antiquarian activities Ramsey readily achieved a reputation for being one of Tennessee's most reliable historians, even before he published his Annals of Tennessee. In answer to Draper's request for information on early East Tennessee history, William B. Carter, Whig member of Congress from Elizabethton, replied in June, 1840, that Ramsey knew "more of the history of the early settlement of Tenn. and the character and public and patriotic acts of the western pioneers, than any other gentleman in that state." He reiterated the same sentiment to others. Responding to a similar inquiry from Draper, Knoxville Congressman, Joseph L. Williams, asserted, "I know of no man living who possesses in an equal degree with him [Ramsey], the very information which you seek." Ramsey was also well regarded outside the state, particularly in South Carolina. During the 1840's and 1850's he was elected either a corresponding or honorary member of the Georgia Historical Society, the Wisconsin Historical Society, the Ethnological Society of New York, the Maryland Historical Society, the South Carolina Historical Society, and

¹³Knoxville Enquirer, March 28, 1827; Knoxville Register, April 13, 1831, December 22, 1841; National Intelligencer, September 27, 1834, in Ramsey Contributions, 94; Knoxville Argus, February 23, 1842; Knoxville Post, September 13, 1842; Goodspeed's Knox County, 845; Draper to Col. William Martin, July 1, 1845; Ramsey to Draper, September 18, 1851, Draper Manuscripts.

the Tennessee Historical Society.¹⁴

Still another result of Ramsey's growing reputation was the beginning of a lifelong friendship between him and Draper, the wisconsin historian. In 1844, while Draper was making a brief visit to Knoxville, he spent an evening with Ramsey in his library at Mecklenburg. Draper's biographer affirms that "from the time of his visit to Dr. Ramsey's death in 1881 [1884], the two historians kept in touch with one another, consulted on their problems, gave each other encouragement and exchanged information."¹⁵ Their correspondence certainly substantiates the truth of this assertion.

It should be noted, however, that Ramsey was not universally received in his own state as an able historian. In response to an inquiry from Draper concerning a rumored legislative appropriation for a history of Tennessee, Whig Governor William B. Campbell asserted, "I think you would be able to produce a work far superior to any that could be prepared by Doctor Ramsey." Another who mocked Ramsey's historical ambitions was A. W. Putnam of Nashville. His bias against Ramsey can be explained, in part, on the basis of professional jealousy

¹⁴John Sevier to the Cherokee Chiefs, December 8, 1809 [note written by Ramsey on it]; William B. Carter to Draper, June 1, 1840; Joseph L. Williams to Draper, July 18, 1842; Draper to Col. William Martin, September 29, 1843, *ibid.*; William B. Carter to Cap'n Caswell, June 10, 1840, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, December 9, 1852; J. Morrison Harris to Ramsey, June 2, 1854, Ramsey Papers (UT); *Biog. Dir. Am. Cong.*, 668, 1823; Ramsey to Draper, March 23, 1854, Draper Correspondence; M. G. King to Ramsey, December 7, 1852; Maryland Historical Society to Ramsey, June 1, 1854; South Carolina Historical Society to Ramsey, June 2, 1855, Ramsey Papers (NC); Hesseltine, *Ramsey*, 55.

¹⁵Hesseltine, "Ramsey," 8.

between competing historians and also on the basis of a misunderstanding between the two men over some of the Sevier papers. Ramsey had in his possession in the early fifties part of the Sevier papers, which he said had been given to him by Sevier's son, and which he intended to give to the Tennessee Historical Society. Putnam, on the other hand, declared bitterly that Ramsey had promised years before to give them to him to have bound with other Sevier materials already in Putnam's possession. Furthermore, Ramsey also disparaged Putnam as a historian who "writes badly and has little patience or industry in collecting anything."¹⁶

Ramsey's greatest literary achievement, and the work which ultimately classified him as a historian was his Annals of Tennessee. Following John Haywood's Civil and Political History of Tennessee, published about thirty years earlier, the Annals is considered to be the second important general work written on Tennessee history. John Tyree Fain, one time secretary and treasurer of the Tennessee Historical Society, said of Ramsey's history, sixty years after it was published, "The Annals contain more historical data relating to Tennessee than any other book," and others had voiced the same sentiment during the intervening years.¹⁷

Ramsey began organizing the material for his book at least as

¹⁶Ramsey to Draper, April 15, 1852, May 29, 1853; A. W. Putnam to Draper, May 4, August 11, 1853, Draper Manuscripts.

¹⁷Stanley F. Horn, "Twenty Tennessee Books," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XVII (March, 1958), 10; Creekmore, Knoxville, 58; Rule, Knoxville, 506-507.

as early as 1840. And rather prematurely he wrote to Draper in 1842 that his work was being completed, and to Polk in 1845 that all the time he could snatch he was devoting to the completion of his Annals. Still maintaining in 1846 that he had all the materials to complete the work, Ramsey confided to Draper, "My cares increase and my public and private duties multiply so as to leave me too little leisure" to devote to the work. Therefore, he proposed to Draper that they "put our capital together, form a partnership in the work, and finish it at once." Affirming that the Tennessean was fortunate his friend turned him down, Hesselstine says that Draper was "notorious for his inability to get his proposed writing done." So in 1848 Ramsey was still lamenting that other pursuits were so engrossing him that he had made little progress on his history and declaring that if he should happen to die, "the full history of Tennessee will never be written." Yet he persevered in the compiling of materials, including visits to the libraries in Washington and other cities of the East and to publishers in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York in his proposed trip to West Point in 1848. And there seems little doubt that Ramsey would have published earlier than 1853 if he had not accepted the position in 1850 of state agent in charge of selling bonds and buying equipment for the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad.¹⁸

¹⁸Ramsey to Draper, February 2, 1842, October 26, 1846, January 17, 1848, September 18, 1851, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey to Polk, March 4, 1845, March 19, 1848, Polk Papers; Ramsey to Wilberforce and Alexander Ramsey, February 13, 1850, Ramsey Papers (UT); Hesselstine, "Ramsey," 11.

After finally contracting with J. Russell of Charleston and J. P. Lippincott of Philadelphia to publish his book at Ramsey's own expense "without the promise of a single subscriber," he traveled to South Carolina in December, 1852, to revise and read proof as the book was being published. Ramsey depended heavily on Draper concerning technicalities such as engravings, illustrations and maps. The 744 page history of Tennessee down to 1800 cost him approximately \$5000 for this first edition of 5000 copies. The retail price for the work was three dollars, cloth, three-fifty, leather, and four dollars, fancy.¹⁹

Although he seemed rather apologetic to Draper concerning the "manner of my book," Ramsey was indeed proud of his "bantling" or his "first born," names he was fond of applying to his history, and promised that its contents contained "much really new and interesting." A later editor's comment that it "was at once pronounced by the leading reviewers in Great Britain and America a masterpiece of local history" is perhaps unwarranted, although the Annals did receive universally favorable reviews. Outside Knoxville itself, newspapers in such cities as Charleston, Nashville, Asheville, Memphis, Charlotte, Washington, New York, and others, and journals like the Southern

¹⁹Ramsey to Draper, April 4, 1848, September 18, 1851, February 20, 1852, January 14, 1853, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey and Elizabeth Breck, December 6, 1852, Ramsey Papers (UT); M. G. Ring to Ramsey, December 7, 1852, Ramsey Papers (NC); Horn, "Tennessee Books," 10. Some of the volumes of the Annals published in 1853 have Lippincott & Co. listed as the publisher on the title pages, others have John Russell of Charleston, and some have Walker and James of Charleston.

Quarterly Review and the Home Journal lavished praise on Ramsey. The work was commended for "the painstaking research" of its author, for much of the "entirely original" material it contained, for its "high-toned patriotism," for being "local history of the best sort," for its "copiousness, completeness, and authenticity," and for its style, "good--forcible, without straining after affect and copious without diffusion," and for the author's distinctive presentation of several sections of the content itself. Although the author of Ramsey's obituary obviously overstated the case when he affirmed that the Annals made Ramsey's "name a household word," the work did materially enlarge his reputation as a historian outside the state.²⁰

Whereas Ramsey accepted the favorable reviews and notices as "some commendation," he was most pleased with the acclaim of his fellow historians, particularly Lyman C. Draper, George Bancroft, and Benson J. Lossing. And years later the publisher of Draper's King's Mountain and Its Heroes included Ramsey along with Bancroft, Lossing, and a few others in a list of noted historians whose recommendations should be sought and used in advertising Draper's work. Moreover, while Ramsey was in South Carolina engineering the

²⁰Ramsey to Draper, November 4, 1851, January 30, 1852, May 27, 1853; Dr. Felix Robertson to Draper, December 18, 1853, Draper Manuscripts; A. P. Butler to Ramsey, July 12, 1852, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, October 7, 1852, McIver Collection; Knoxville Register, December 28, 1853, May 24, 1855; Southern Quarterly Review, VII (April, 1853), 543; American Statesman (Knoxville) April 1, 1854; Knoxville Standard, May 9, 1855; Alexander, Recollections, Ramsey Papers (NC); newspaper articles, Scrapbook I, 1, 40; Ramsey to Bancroft, May 20, 1857, Bancroft Collection; Knoxville Daily Tribune, April 12, 1884.

publishing of his history, Mitchell King, Dr. S. Henry Dickson, and Louis Agassiz, the noted naturalist, who was lecturing at the Medical College of South Carolina at the time, were effusive in their praise of the work. In fact, Ramsey liked to recount his experience at a meeting of the literary elite of Charleston in December, 1852, at which time a certain "Col. McBeth" referred to "Drs. Ramsay of S. C. & of Tennessee--the historians of their respective states."²¹

Again one must note, however, that Ramsey's work did have a few adverse critics, primarily among Middle Tennesseans. W. B. Campbell described it to Draper as "a dull heavy work of no great merit. His account of the King's Mountain battle is a miserable affair, and unworthy of a man who has the independence to have an opinion. I predict that it will fall still born." A. W. Putnam criticized Ramsey for choosing "a publisher of little notoriety & influence," for having neglected Middle Tennessee in his researching, for "not giving enough credit to others," and for his uninteresting chapter on the Watauga government. Hesselstine comments that both Campbell and Putnam "assured Draper that the field of Tennessee history had not been closed by Dr.

²¹Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, December 9, 1852, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Draper, June 6, 1853, Draper Manuscripts; C. S. Todd to O. P. Temple, January 15, 1857, Temple Papers; Ramsey to Bancroft, May 20, 1857, July 7, 1858, Bancroft Collection; Ramsey to Benson J. Lossing, February 1, 1861, Ramsey Papers (NC); David Starr Jordan and Jessie Knight Jordan, "Jean Louis Rodolphe Agassiz," DAB, I, 119. David Ramsey of South Carolina (1749-1815) was one of America's early historians. His History of the Revolution of South Carolina, much of it copied from the Annual Register, caused later historians to charge him with plagiarism. Robert L. Meriwether, "David Ramsay," ibid., XV, 338-39.

Ramsey's work." In addition, Thomas J. Campbell, Athens lawyer, felt that the Annals had "done injustice to the memory of Colonel Outlaw, as he was one of the leading spirits of our day." Even among those who considered Ramsey to be "one of the best historians" there were occasional references to other instances of error in the work, particularly concerning the battle of King's Mountain. Less critical was the assertion of Dr. Felix Robertson, son of James Robertson, the founder of Nashville, that the history was "justly correct," although "some errors of course must get into such a work."²²

Not only did Ramsey's Annals, for the most part, receive favorable reviews; it also sold well at first. In Tennessee the demand for the book was so great that throughout 1853 Ramsey reported to Draper that the publisher could not keep up with the requests, and declared that although the booksellers and agents charged what he considered to be a high commission of 25 to 50 per cent, "the thing pays well." After expressing even at the time a guarded feeling that "this happy state of things may not last long," he confided to Bancroft four years later, "My first Vol. has not yet paid back the Publisher's Bill--I will realise [sic] little when the edition is all sold." In fact, far from reaping any profit, Ramsey apparently sustained an unanticipated loss. For following the war he declared to Marcus J. Wright that over half the copies had been seized or burned with his

²² A. W. Putnam to Draper, December 25, 1852, May 4, August 11, 1853; Dr. Felix Robertson to Draper, December 18, 1853; Col. Arthur Campbell to Draper, n. d. [8 DD89], Draper Manuscripts; Hale and Merritt, Tennessee, III, 803; Gower and Allen, Pen and Sword, 34.

house.²³ Also, more than one of the booksellers who were handling the sale of his books went out of business, particularly among those in Nashville. He was able to report to Anson Nelson, however, in 1879 that the edition was exhausted except for a "hundred in Nashville & about forty here."²⁴

In spite of this personal loss to Ramsey, others must have considered the Annals to be profitable, for in 1860 a second edition was published by J. P. Lippincott of Philadelphia. Sixty years later, in 1920, John Tyree Fain, then secretary and treasurer of the Tennessee Historical Society, compiled a valuable adjunct to Ramsey's work, entitled "Fain's Critical and Analytical Index and Genealogical Guide to Ramsey's Annals of Tennessee, Embracing all Proper Names as well as Important Topical Subjects." And in 1926 the history was reprinted with the addition of Fain's "Index."²⁵

Although he was by profession a doctor and a banker, with whom history was supposed to be only an avocation, he seems to have brought to his historical and antiquarian pursuits a love more intense than

²³A second edition of the Annals had been published by J. P. Lippincott of Philadelphia in 1860. However, in the absence of any evidence that this edition was published at Ramsey's expense or that the copies lost in the Civil War were of this edition, we must assume that he still had in his possession unsold copies of the first edition.

²⁴Ramsey to Draper, April 14, May 27, June 6, 1853, Draper Manuscripts; Knoxville Register, July 31, 1854; Ramsey to Bancroft, May 20, 1857, Bancroft Collection; Ramsey to Anson Nelson, June 11, 1879, August 31, 1880, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Ramsey to Marcus J. Wright, October 18, 1879, Wright Papers.

²⁵Horn, "Tennessee Books," 10.

he had for any of his other interests. Years later, mentioning the burning of his home during the Civil War, Ramsey referred to the loss of his "library--medical, miscellaneous, (& especially that which I principally valued) historical & literary."²⁶ In fact, he apparently treasured his historical and antiquarian collection more than any of his physical property.

I thought little of the loss of property. But the apprehension that my library, my manuscripts, my unpublished second volume of the History of Tennessee, my correspondence, my museum etc. were also taken or burned did give me a bitter pang--none could be more bitter. Property I could replace or live without it. But this loss was irreparable.²⁷

Although the time which he could spend in research was limited, Ramsey availed himself of the materials he had and made long trips to augment those already available to him. These included the journals and papers of his father, who was active in the affairs of the State of Franklin and the early history of Tennessee. To these sources he added as part of his own collection the original papers of John Sevier, Issac Shelby, William Blount, and other men who were publicly involved in early Tennessee history. Ramsey further made trips to many places significant in Tennessee's past to get a better understanding of battles or other incidents of importance that may have taken place there. To Draper he commented in November, 1851, "I have lately visited in person all the Franklin counties. Amongst other places of interest which I examined was the 'Long Island' and the battle ground

²⁶ Hesselstine, Ramsey, 56.

²⁷ Ibid., 144-45.

near it." Visiting the capitols of Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia to consult the archives of those states, he gathered materials on such men as Daniel Boone, Colonel Ben Cleveland, General James Robertson, General William Campbell, Governor Richard Caswell, John Sevier, and others. Concerning certain documents relating to the Franklin Convention, Ramsey reported years later in 1878, "I have been in search of this deposit for forty years but only last week got on the track of it. I hope my patient research may be rewarded by something valuable." In order to have the assistance of other historians, he carried on correspondence with John Hill Wheeler and Governor David Swain, North Carolina historians, and Lyman Draper. In fact, a reading of his correspondence with Draper alone will illustrate how meticulous Ramsey was in his search for primary materials.²⁸ Even Putnam's assertion that Ramsey neglected Middle Tennessee in his researching, never having "spent five days in his life" there, and those days on "short visits on business," seems unwarranted. Although Ramsey did say that he hated "to lose time to go to Nashville if not necessary," he was assisted by his brother W. B. A., who, as secretary of state, made available to him the messages of the governors,

²⁸ Hoskins, "Ramsey," 41; Ramsey to Draper, November 4, 1851, February 20, 1852; Draper to Col. William Martin, March 11, 1844; William Hill to Draper, June 23, 1854; Thomas L. Preston to Draper, January 31, 1881, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey to Polk, February 2, 26, 1842, Polk Papers; Ramsey to J. S. Currick, December 7, 1878; Ramsey to J. M. Lea, December 17, 1878, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Horn, "Tennessee Books," 9; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 57-82.

the Senate and House journals, and other necessary materials to be found in the state archives in Nashville.²⁹ A comparison of Ramsey's Annals with Putnam's History of Middle Tennessee does not reveal any significant documents in Putnam's work which Ramsey missed.

Probably in these areas of gathering and preserving valuable historical materials Ramsey's Annals makes its greatest contribution. The work contains copies of many documents and manuscripts which no longer exist. For instance, in the State Records of North Carolina the copy of the "famous petition" sent by the Wataugans to the North Carolina Assembly during the Cherokee War in 1776, in which they expressed their desire to be annexed by and come under the protection of that state, the petition "on which historians are so largely dependent for knowledge of the early settlement of the Tennessee country,"³⁰ was taken from Ramsey's work. Other documents copied from the Annals for the North Carolina State Records are a letter of Henry Stuart, deputy Indian agent, to the settlers of Watauga, May 19, 1776, "A deposition of Jarret Williams concerning the Hostile Intentions of the Cherokee Indians" against the Nolichucky and Watauga settlers in July, 1776, and an insert intitled "An account of the subjugation of the Cherokees."³¹ Thus Ramsey's history has been extremely valuable

²⁹Col. A. W. Putnam to Draper, December 25, 1852, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, March 24, August 30, October 7, 1852, McIver Collection; Ramsey, Annals, vi.

³⁰Folmsbee, et al., Tennessee, I, 121-22.

³¹William L. Saunders and Walter Clark, eds., The State Records of North Carolina (26 vols.; Goldsboro, North Carolina: Nash Brothers, Printers, 1886-1907), 606, 660-61, 708-11, 881-85; Williams, Franklin, 2.

to scholars who have come after him. Filled with letters, records of meetings, constitutions, petitions, and compacts, it is a veritable encyclopedia of information and original sources for the student of Tennessee history up to 1800.

In spite of his invaluable contributions to the field of Tennessee history, however, Ramsey must be subjected to the tests of historical criticism. Since he was not an academic historian and had neither the time nor the training to become one, his work leaves much to be desired in the areas of organization, form, and style. As has been mentioned before, he was apologetic, especially to fellow historians like Draper and Bancroft, concerning what he called "the manner of my book." Ramsey was extremely interested in dates, and, according to him, the Annals was organized "in exact chronological order," not always the most significant arrangement for a historian to follow. Moreover, since the period from 1780-1800 comprised most of the material, the book lacked balance as a presentation of the whole of Tennessee history up to that point. In reply to a mistaken notion Draper had received that 1779 was the terminal date, Ramsey declared that if this were true, he "would give up and quit, as everything nearly follows that date."³²

Although Ramsey's daughter surely exaggerated when she asserted that he "wrote all of his histories on horseback, while answering the

³²Ramsey to Draper, November 4, 1851, January 30, March 18, 1852, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey to Bancroft, May 20, 1857, Bancroft Collection.

calls of his medical profession," he must have done the actual writing under almost impossible circumstances. Since other responsibilities and activities took most of his time, one can imagine that he often had to leave his manuscripts to make a medical call, only to return coldly to his writing, possibly unable to regain his train of thought. Furthermore, because of the pressure of his other engagements, he said that he was able to rewrite scarcely a single page of the original manuscript.³³

And as time passed and his Annals was not completed as expected in the 1840's, it became Ramsey's "great object . . . to get what was early, obscure and unknown, into a less perishable--much of it old and almost illegible letters and documents--form before I should die. Others can do what remains undone." Proper form and desired style had to be sacrificed, for if the work was going to be published at all, he was convinced, it had to "be done in its present shape--written always currente calamo--at intervals of time, snatched from continued succession of professional and public duties, and with little opportunity to revise or perfect it."³⁴

Actually much of the organizing and writing of his history was done in Charleston while the book was in the process of publication. For example, in seeking information on the founding of Campbell's Station in 1786, Ramsey wrote a letter from Charleston, while the

³³Ramsey, Annals, vii; Knoxville Sentinel, February 7, 1911.

³⁴Ramsey to Draper, January 14, 1853, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey, Annals, vii.

work was being published, in which he reported to David Campbell, "I am now chronologically at 1781 & if you reply at once I may still not have passed 1786 in reading proof before I receive your reply." After A. W. Putnam had learned that Ramsey had written under the same circumstances to Dr. Felix Robertson of Nashville, seeking information concerning his father, General James Robertson, Putnam rather sarcastically commented to Draper, "This is indeed a late day, I think."³⁵

Ramsey believed that the history of a country is "little more than a truthful and impartial biography of its prominent citizens," and "that Biography itself is history in miniature." On the basis of this philosophy of history, he was continually calling for biographies to be written of Tennessee's early pioneers. One can also see his tendency to substitute biography for general history in his Annals. While it is true that Ramsey asserted to David Campbell, "My limits do not allow me in my book to go into biography or I should be unable to resist the temptation to dwell in it upon the excellent character of Col. C. [Campbell]," he succumbed to this very temptation in his treatment of John Sevier. According to Ramsey himself, the "hero" of the book, Sevier, "is not only in every chapter, but every page." After admitting to Draper, "If my Book has one fault greater than another it is the minutiae and details of Sevier. It reads too much

³⁵A. W. Putnam to Draper, December 25, 1852, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey to David Campbell, January 10, 1853, David Campbell Papers (Duke University Library, Durham, North Carolina).

like a biography of him rather than the history of Tennessee," Ramsey's only defense was to affirm that Sevier's "life is the history of East Tennessee as Robertson's is of Middle."³⁶

Since Ramsey considered the historian's task, therefore, to be the recording of the "virtue and patriotism" of his subjects and the mining of "the gems of the past in our state which should sparkle & illuminate the pages of biography & illustrate the virtues of our ancestors," his patriotic bias produced a work which largely eulogizes the heroes of early Tennessee history as it expansively recapitulates their exploits. As a contemporary pointed out, his treatment of the Franklin episode shows "a pretty strong disposition to let Sevier escape without proper reprehension." Ramsey would not write, if he could not praise. For instance, he informed Polk that he hoped to complete his second volume down to the close of Polk's administration, but he would not write a history of the Whig administration that followed. "Another historian must write the Federalism" of Tennessee, "always Republican," he declared. Years later when Ramsey was writing a proposed abridged history of Tennessee as a school textbook, he related to Draper that he only intended to bring it down to 1860, "for fear" that he "would tramp on somebody's toes, hurt the feelings of

³⁶ Ramsey to David Campbell, January 10, 1853, *ibid.*; Ramsey to Draper, January 14, May 27, 1853, Draper Manuscripts; Horn, "Tennessee Books," 9; Ramsey, *Abridged History of Tennessee . . .*, 1857 (typewritten copy of the unpublished manuscript in McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee), 2; "Circular to the People of Tennessee," Box R1.--No. 8.--R; Ramsey to Anson Nelson, November 19, 1874, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Ramsey, *Miscellaneous Undated Materials*, Box 3--C, Ramsey Papers (III).

modern Democrat such as A. Johnson. De mortuis [sic] nil nisi bonum."³⁷

Another of Ramsey's weaknesses as a historian was his lack of training in the criticism of his sources. While he spent a great deal of time and money in researching and compiling valuable manuscripts, he also relied heavily on oral communication with aged people throughout the state. From T. A. R. Nelson and David Campbell, from their mothers, and from multitudes of others he asked for information they remembered concerning Tennessee's past. Concerning every Tennessean of prominence he sought from his countrymen "such facts illustrative of his public services, and such characteristic anecdotes of the man, the patriot, and the soldier, as will enable the Biographer to do the subject of his work the amplest service."³⁸ With reference to his use of this method of oral communication in historical research, Ramsey once asserted to Draper,

The pension office was near my Bank and on the fourth of March and seventh of September of every year dropped all other business to linger around the pension office for several days, take the old and feeble Revolutionary soldiers home with me, take down their services and their recollections of the past into my note book.³⁹

Although this method of securing information is not the most reliable, Ramsey appears to have placed utmost trust in much of it.

³⁷William Anderson to Oliver P. Temple, January 20, 1868, Temple Papers; newspaper article, Scrapbook I, 61; Ramsey to Polk, February 2, 1842, Polk Papers; Ramsey to Draper, November 10, 1875, Draper Correspondence.

³⁸Ramsey to Nelson, August 26, 1841, Nelson Papers; Ramsey to David Campbell, January 10, 1853, Campbell Papers; Charlotte Southern Home, May 5, 1870; Hoskins, "Ramsey," 45; Ramsey, Annals, 9.

Carelessness in note-taking and failure to revise resulted in too few and inadequate footnotes in the Annals. Often when Ramsey did footnote, only the surname of the author was given. John Tyree Fain asserted concerning Ramsey's frequent use, even in the text itself, of merely the surname of his characters, "When we find two Colonel Montgomerys, and at least two Colonel Seviars, we must depend on the environment to arrive at the facts in the case." Moreover, although Ramsey, for the most part, used the name Little Tennessee River in the Annals, he occasionally forgot himself and lapsed back into the older usage of Tennessee.⁴⁰

Archibald Henderson makes the further observation that Ramsey, writing from a merely local point of view, spends most of his time with the hardships of frontier life and fails to treat the economic factors in the colonization of Tennessee. Actually, Ramsey could hardly be expected to stress factors which his contemporaries did not recognize. Besides, he emphasized in the preface to his history that his main intention was "to revive and preserve the knowledge of past events in Tennessee."⁴¹

Even with his lack of training in historical research and

⁴⁰Hoskins, "Ramsey," 45; John Tyree Fain, Fain's Critical and Analytical Index and Genealogical Guide to Ramsey's Annals of Tennessee (Nashville: Paul Hunter, 1920), 4; James H. Montgomery, "The Nomenclature of the Upper Tennessee River," ETHS Publications, No. 28 (1956), 55, 56n, 57.

⁴¹Archibald Henderson, "Richard Henderson: The Authorship of the Cumberland Compact and the Founding of Nashville," Tennessee Historical Magazine, II (September, 1916), 155; Ramsey, Annals, v.

writing, Ramsey prided himself on his accuracy, and, with certain major exceptions, his work has been considered to be reliable. An example of inaccuracy is to be found in his treatment of the founding of Fort Loudon. Following Francois-Xavier Martin's History of North Carolina, and rejecting Judge John Haywood, who erroneously credited North Carolina Governor Arthur Dobbs with sending out the expedition under Andrew Lewis which built the fort, Ramsey was equally wrong in his conclusion that the Earl of Loudon, Governor of Virginia, authorized the expedition. He was further incorrect in giving "1756" for the date of the erection of the fort, instead of "1757," Haywood's date, and the right one. Actually, Fort Loudon was built by an expedition sent out by Governor Glen of South Carolina. Ramsey was correct, however, in placing the fort south of the Little Tennessee River and in mentioning that Captain Dennie (Demere) was sent by the Earl of Loudon to garrison it.⁴²

A. V. Goodpasture further points out concerning the Watauga government that, in addition to confounding the court with the committee of safety, as Haywood had done before him, Ramsey added the irreconcilable statement that "the Watauga settlers, in convention assembled, elected as these commissioners the thirteen members of the committee who signed the Petition of the Inhabitants of Washington

⁴² Ibid., 51-53; John Haywood, The Civil and Political History of the State of Tennessee (2nd ed.; Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1891), 41; Francois-Xavier Martin, The History of North Carolina (New Orleans: A. T. Penniman & Co., 1829), 87-89.

District, although some of these committee members were not even original Watauga settlers. Of Ramsey's error, Goodpasture affirms, "These statements, coming from an author usually so accurate and trustworthy, have misled as able and discriminating writers as Phelan, Roosevelt and Caldwell." Later on, Draper was to question the accuracy of some of Ramsey's dates and statements concerning the battle of King's Mountain.⁴³

In his preface to the Annals Ramsey had affirmed that he had in his possession sufficient material to write a second volume "should the public voice demand it." In the face of the demand of the reviewers that he do so, and also because of an earlier promise which he had made to Polk to bring his history down to the close of Polk's administration, Ramsey planned in 1853 to publish a second volume in another year.⁴⁴

Although he declared years later in correspondence and in his autobiography that his second volume was "all ready for the Press," when the manuscript was burned during the Civil War, this does not seem to have been the case, unless one assumes that he intended to write much of it while it was in the process of publication (which

⁴³Horn, "Tennessee Books," 9; Ramsey to Draper, May 25, 1875, Draper Manuscripts; A. V. Goodpasture, "The Watauga Association," American Historical Magazine, III (April, 1898), 111-15; Draper to Ramsey, July 15, 1880, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁴⁴Ramsey to Polk, March 4, 1845, Polk Papers; Ramsey to Draper, January 14, April 14, 1853, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey to Bancroft, May 20, 1857, Bancroft Collection; Horn, "Tennessee Books," 10.

he had done on a smaller scale for volume one). For in 1857 he wrote to Bancroft in answer to the latter's plea that he complete his second volume:

I feel the force of all you say to induce me to go forward with the remainder of the work which I have begun & have fondly hoped that a period of quiet & repose might arrive & allow me leisure to bring up my second Volume to the commencement of General Jackson's Administration & possibly even the third to the close of Mr. Polk's term or a little further--the end of the war with Mexico. . . . But now at the commencement of my sixty first year--with a large family--a small private fortune--borne down with many public duties which I cannot surrender nor delegate to others--& professional engagements which I cannot relinquish & remain at my present place Mecklenburg I have almost relinquished all thought of publishing further. . . . I will hardly publish again (as I did at my own expense).⁴⁵

He went on to assert, however, that he did some writing and collected material every day. But since the Tennessee legislature was "too niggardly [sic] & too illiberal to assist" him, he supposed "the work of publishing will be left to Posterity." Two years later in 1859, he wrote to Draper: "I progress slowly in the continuation of my work. Will do little till 1860--perhaps later."⁴⁶

This biographer assumes that his materials for the second volume were in this uncompleted state when they were burned. Following the war, however, Ramsey was called upon by many to write his second volume from memory. Dr. J. Ramsey Alexander, his grandson, affirmed

⁴⁵Ramsey to Bancroft, May 20, 1857, Bancroft Collection.

⁴⁶Ibid.; Ramsey to Draper, April 16, 1859, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence; Horn, "Tennessee Books," 10; Knoxville Daily Tribune, April 12, 1884.

that Ramsey did so, and that the manuscript (completed or uncompleted) for this second volume, much of it written from memory, "was stolen by his secretary" and never heard from again.⁴⁷

In summarizing Ramsey's ability as a historian, one does not exaggerate in saying that his contributions to Tennessee history are invaluable. Certainly some of his research has not been duplicated, and some of the sources which he preserved would otherwise have been lost. However, lack of time and training prevented his putting his research to the best advantage, for more time could well have been spent on a more organized presentation of his voluminous materials. Since the Annals records an enormous amount of detail, but is deficient in organization, it is not as interesting and readable as it could have been. Furthermore, because of Ramsey's biased personal feelings, he was prevented from exercising adequate objectivity in his writing. But even when these factors are considered, the historian is forced to admit that Ramsey's Annals has stood the test of time, and over one hundred years later still holds its place as one of the major sources of early Tennessee history.

One of the "many public duties" which prevented Ramsey from giving to his second volume the time necessary to its completion was his ever increasing involvement in Southern politics and the questions of slavery and secession. This phase of his political life would be a prelude to his better known activity as a Confederate treasurer.

⁴⁷Alexander, Recollections, Ramsey Papers (NC).

CHAPTER IX

EAST TENNESSEE SOUTHERNER

"His politics and his social orientation combined with his economic interests to make him a Southerner and to lead him into the Southern Confederacy."¹ In this manner William B. Hesseltine emphasizes Ramsey's strong attachment to the South in the eighteen forties and fifties. Although he lived among neighbors, most of whom did not share his strong allegiance to this cause, Ramsey typified and supported the tradition of the Southern aristocrat.

The reader had occasion earlier to note Ramsey's social orientation toward the South, particularly his aristocratic snobbishness. He manifested this attitude especially toward the "Northerner." Condescendingly considering those above the Mason-Dixon line to be cruder and far less cultured than Southern gentlemen, Ramsey once characteristically described a friend of his as "a man of science--genius, liberal views & a true Southron--an author & all that."² His snobbish attitude toward "Yankees" extended, however, beyond mere condescension to vitriolic diatribes against them. He viewed the Northerner and Southerner as

essentially two people--we are not only not homogeneous but we have become radically heterogeneous. The high toned New-England spirit has degenerated into a clanish

¹Hesseltine, Ramsey, x.

²Ramsey to Temple, July 9, 1859, Temple Papers.

feeling of profound Yankeeism. Our passions, our tastes, our character, our vices even, are different and dissimilar. Our interests conflict. We are no longer one family. The masses of the North are venal, corrupt, covetous, mean and selfish. The proud Cavalier spirit of the South and of the slaveholder, the virtue and integrity of the Huguenot, the probity and honor of the Presbyterian not only remain but have grown and become intensified. They tincture the whole surface of Southern society. I repeat the North and South are heterogeneous. We are essentially two people.³

Following the Civil War, he would remark in still stronger and more bitter language concerning New Englanders,

They were less intelligent, less virtuous, less sensible of their personal rights and personal liberty, than even our unlettered and uncultivated common people. With a great deal of hauteur, and arrogance, and boastful effrontery, they are more selfish, illiberal and narrow than any people I ever saw. That high-souled honor, that strict regard to truth, probity, virtue, jealousy of liberty and personal self respect, that constitute the character of a Southern man, were all wanting in the Yankee and made him offensive and hateful to a Southern freeman.⁴

Ramsey's bias was also directed against European immigrants, who indeed had "some virtue, intelligence and wealth, but with a large mixture of pauperism, vice and crime." It is significant to note that in 1819, while he was a medical student in Philadelphia, Ramsey had directed a letter to the "gentlemen of Philadelphia," calling upon them to welcome immigrants as strangers who needed help and to direct them to the Western and Southwestern states, where their labor was abundantly needed. Now in the 1850's, he is contending that although

³Ramsey to L. W. Spratt, April 29, 1858, in Hesselstine, Ramsey, 93-95.

⁴Ibid., 40.

earlier immigrants to this country had comprised "the very best elements that go in to constitute society," in more recent times those of "another description" were flooding the country, "made up generally of the unworthy, the plebian [sic] and the poor." According to Ramsey, this new flood of foreigners, who sold their labor at a cheaper price than the Negroes, had enabled the people of the North to sell their slaves South or to emancipate those who were worn out, affording them the opportunity to turn against slavery. Thus the South had been victimized by the influx of a lower class of immigrant into this country.⁵

Still a third class of people to feel the sting of Ramsey's paternalistic condescension was the Negro. He shared the prevalent Southern opinion that the Negro race was "remarkable for its improvidence, indolence, submissiveness to the superior race . . . its apathy, its barbarism (in some place its cannibalism), and its general disinclination to or incapacity for civilization and culture."⁶ Believing that Negro slaves should be treated humanely, fed well, cared for in time of illness, and religiously instructed, Ramsey appears to have treated his own slaves in this paternalistic manner. Not unlike other Southern masters, he had slaves, particularly his "faithful boy Levy," who were loyal to Ramsey's family and refused to leave them after the

⁵Ramsey to gentlemen of Philadelphia, November 19, 1819, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Spratt, April [n.d.], 1858, Hesselstine, Ramsey, 83-85.

⁶Ibid., 91.

emancipation proclamation.⁷ But Ramsey considered them vastly inferior to white people and believed that they should be "kept in their places."

If they are well and justly treated by us Caucasians they never scruple about our supremacy. None of them aspire to equality. They are savages and barbarians, know it and submit to the inferiority it implies. Keep their stomachs full and with plenty of feed and sunshine they are more contented and less vicious than the white servants of the North.⁸

Having on one occasion fallen into a ditch and sprained his ankle, he sarcastically reported to Draper that it was "an achievement which any Negro could have performed as gracefully as I did."⁹ And at times he could still be more snobbish and condescending, as when he strongly objected to one of his grandsons being called Jim.

MK [McKnitt] calls him Jim. I hope no one else there does so. Call him James, Jimmie or if not these Ramsey-- any thing but Jim. He will never have any self respect & of course no respect from others if he is spoken of or to by that negro name Jim. I am in sober earnest-- if I had been called that way no A. B. no A. M. nor M. D. would have been legitimately affixed to my name. I never could have aspired to anything high, or excellent or even clever.¹⁰

Besides his aristocratic ties with the South, Ramsey also shared with her an economic kinship. Mentioning elements in East Tennessee

⁷ Ibid., 121, 159, 176-77, 247; Ramsey Will, November 24, 1876, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁸ Ramsey to Draper, February 6, 1871, Draper Correspondence.

⁹ Ramsey to Draper, February 6, 1860, ibid.

¹⁰ Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, January 23, 1872, Ramsey Papers (UT).

which supported the Confederacy, Mary E. R. Campbell lists Ramsey among "many considerable slaveholders" and "independent gentlemen," "whom strong economic ties made favorable to the South." Also, as Hesseltine asserts, his "railroad interests--the whole logic, in fact, of the Mecklenburg politics--bound Dr. Ramsey to the South and to the domain of King Cotton."¹¹

Therefore, it was only natural that Ramsey should take an active part in the southern commercial conventions which met in the South in the late thirties and forties and annually in the fifties in various Southern cities, for the purposes of "achieving the economic independence of the South, encouraging direct trade with Europe, promoting a Southern railroad to the Pacific, and furthering Southern education in matters economic." He aroused Knoxville and East Tennessee interest in the convention held in Augusta in 1838, only the second one to be staged. He also played an important part in bringing to Knoxville the convention which met in 1857. In addition Crozier Ramsey was appointed a Knox County delegate to the conventions in Charleston in 1854, and Montgomery in 1858, and his father a delegate to the one which met in Savannah in 1856.¹²

¹¹Mary Emily Robertson Campbell, The Attitude of Tennesseans Toward the Union, 1847-1861 (New York: The Vantage Press, 1961), 201; Hesseltine, Ramsey, ix-x.

¹²Ibid., 83n; Herbert Wender, Southern Commercial Conventions, 1837-1859 (Vol. LVII in Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1930), 19ff.; Knoxville Register, August 15, 1838, April 1, 1854, November 20, 1856, August 13, 20, 1857; Knoxville Whig, August 8, 1857.

In fact, it was Ramsey's connection with the Southern commercial conventions which elicited from him his extremely strong declarations favoring slavery and recommending the reopening of the African slave trade, a view which, Philip M. Hamer says, did not represent "any considerable proportion of the state." At the 1857 Knoxville convention Ramsey was placed on a committee with William L. Yancey of Alabama, David A. Pryor of Virginia, and others to report on the policy of reopening this trade. In correspondence with L. W. Spratt, a "fire-eater" from Charleston, who was chairman of the committee, Ramsey outlined his views on slavery in general and on the reopening of the African slave trade in particular. Out of fairness to Ramsey, it should be noted that he copied these letters and attached them to his autobiography with a note declaring, "The letters marked Private from number 1 to 7 addressed to Mr. Spratt, Chairman, etc., are not to be published, but preserved as speculations of my own and not as part of this Autobiography."¹³

While considering himself to be "sound in my morals and orthodox in my system of ethics," Ramsey was probably East Tennessee's most ardent defender of slavery. Employing numerous arguments to support

¹³Hamer, Tennessee, I, 465, 521; Ramsey to Spratt, April [n.d.], 1858, Hesseltine, Ramsey, 83-85; ibid., 83n; Wender, Commercial Conventions, 211-13. Although the historian of the southern commercial conventions declares of Mr. Spratt's report to the 1858 Montgomery convention, "Mr Spratt, it appeared, had prepared the paper with little assistance from his colleagues and the latter were not conversant with its contents until it had been read to the assembly," many of Spratt's arguments obviously coincide with ideas presented to him in Ramsey's correspondence. Wender, Commercial Conventions, 211-13; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 83-97; Knoxville Register, May 20, 1858.

the master-slave relationship, he theorized in his letters to Spratt that perfect equality existed nowhere and was never intended to be a reality. He considered inequality a law of nature ordained by God. "Indeed, variety and inequality are stamped upon every work of the great Creator," he asserted. In fact, Ramsey averred that inequality was a mark of progress. Although inequality could exist to a limited degree in a primitive society, when civilization advances, "someone becomes, if not in name certainly in reality, superior."¹⁴ So on the American frontier in a squatter society, such equality might exist. Soon, however,

Someone becomes so rich as to employ the daughter of a poorer countryman to wash or scrub for his wife, or an indigent boy or a sojourner to black his boots or do other menial services for him at his table or on his farm. . . . The employer is, quoad hoc, the master; the employee, quoad hoc, is the servant.¹⁵

Thus justifying slavery by his own use of the theory of the "survival of the fittest" as a mark of progress, Ramsey asserted that

it is a fixed law of nature that the "big fishes eat up the little ones." I ask where is the warrant for this? Carry the argument further. It is a fixed law of political economy that the effect of human progress, advancement, civilization, if you will, is to make the rich richer, and of necessity the poor poorer, the influential more powerful and the indolent and ignorant still more insignificant and inferior in society and in the world.¹⁶

Another argument Ramsey propounded was that slavery was absolutely necessary to preserve life among African natives by preventing

¹⁴Ramsey to Spratt, April 15, 16, 1858, Hesseltine, Ramsey, 87-91.

¹⁵Ibid., 89.

¹⁶Ibid., 90-91.

internecine war and providing an outlet other than death for undesirables. Since, he maintained, Negroes are so prolific, although their means of subsistence are insufficient to support their rapidly increased population, they resort to war to obtain food and diminish the number of consumers. Any captives of war are necessarily killed for the same reasons. A like fate awaits the aged, the infirm, and the helpless infant. Slavery provided the solution to these problems. For example, he hypothesized:

A ship arrives on the coast laden with rice and other supplies of food. Will anyone deny that to exchange that cargo for a doomed captive, for an infirm and unfortunate native, for a helpless and starving family of young Negroes is human, is benevolent, is legal, Christian? The great law of love is to do to others as we would that others should ceteris paribus do to us. The sixth commandment is "Thou shalt not kill." This divine command requires "all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life and the life of others." It also forbids "the taking away of our own or our neighbors' life or whatsoever tendeth thereunto." Without arguing the question further as a question of morals I appeal to every New England Puritan to answer my question truthfully and with candor.¹⁷

In addition to the above mentioned arguments to justify slavery, Ramsey used the traditional contention that slavery had a civilizing and Christianizing effect on the native. According to him, the Negro, who was in his own country "a barbarian and a savage, a pagan and an idolater---sometimes a cannibal," when placed under a Caucasian master, "enlightened, humane, refined, Christian," could not fail to progress. Slavery, and slavery alone, produced a higher civilization, characterized by a "high souled, manly, honorable, chivalric tone of feeling and

¹⁷ Ramsey to Spratt, April 23, 1858, ibid., 81-83.

conduct."¹⁸ Echoing these same sentiments, he said to Benson J.

Lossing at the beginning of the Civil War,

Our religion will not allow us even to think of letting others injure the coloured race by emancipating them from our system of slavery & forcing 4,000,000 of at least semi-civilised [sic] & christianised [sic] negroes to return to paganism & barbarism from which they have been elevated.¹⁹

In arguing for the reopening of the African slave trade, Ramsey contended that the great "industrial necessity of the South" was a labor force sufficient to clear and cultivate the large portion of unused Southern soil. Because European immigrants lacked knowledge of Southern agriculture, required "seasoning" to work in the South, and were "dissociated" from the society around them, often to the point of becoming "discontented, sometimes insubordinate and vicious," they were unqualified to accomplish this task.²⁰ African labor, and African labor alone, provided the solution to the South's needs.

The climate suits him and he suits the climate. Miasma affects him as little as it does the alligator or the crane of the everglades of Florida. . . . Further, the description or kind of labor in the South is just such precisely as is suited to the genius and intellectual capacity of the African under the general direction of the white man. With no mental training--with no tedious process of indoctrination--his instincts alone are almost sufficient to teach the Negro the duties of a field hand. A Negro is at home and happy in the field.²¹

¹⁸Ibid., 92-93.

¹⁹Ramsey to Benson J. Lossing, February 4, 1861, Ramsey Papers (UP).

²⁰Ramsey to Spratt [n.d.], 1858, Hesseltine, Ramsey, 85-87.

²¹Ibid., 87.

Realizing, however, that the reopening of the slave trade was "in conflict with the sentiment of the world," Ramsey recommended caution on this score. Affirming that world opinions had demonstrated themselves to be wrong before, he prophesied that the "free soil and equality notions of the North will sooner or later end in . . . radicalism, and the prostration of all law." Then slavery would cease to appear odious. Besides, Ramsey contended, at the present time (1858) the slaveholders of the South, having a monopoly on the slave trade, would lose their vested interests if their monopoly were broken at once. They would hardly accept such a shock without dissatisfaction and opposition. Finally, he maintained that the reopening of the slave trade should await the separation of the Union, and the force and violence that would accompany the breach. Once separated and independent, the Southern states would be in a much better position to revive this trade.²² But he was very optimistic concerning the outcome.

Since we of the south have spoken out upon the subject, have defended the relation of master and slave as a Scriptural and Christian institution, defensible alike by the laws of God, the interests of society, the policy of nations, and by the sanctions of an enlightened conscience, the slave traffic has lost with the candid and the considerate most of its odium. Popular clamor has ceased its reproaches and popular prejudice is every day yielding to the persuasive voice of reason and common sense. This is very apparent.²³

Since he had been during the forties and fifties an "anti-Federalist"

²²Ramsey to Spratt, April 28, 1858, ibid., 95-97.

²³Ibid., 96.

who followed the "states' rights principles of . . . John C. Calhoun," Ramsey was also politically allied to the South. To love the Union was to support states' rights. Chiding Draper in 1851 over a recent trip the latter had taken to Cincinnati, Ramsey declared, "What takes you to Cincinnati? Hang them free-soilers--let them publish for Mormons and abolitionists. No Union loving author should go there."²⁴

When the Southern states' rights Democrats bolted their convention in 1860 and nominated John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky and Joseph Lane of Oregon to run for president and vice-president on a platform favoring the extension of slavery into the territories and the annexation of Cuba, Ramsey wholeheartedly endorsed their stand. In fact, he became president of the Breckinridge and Lane Club in Knoxville. And when the Southern "fire-eater," William L. Yancey, defended their platform in Knoxville in 1860, declaring, "The territory is common property. The Massachusetts man may go there with his clocks, the slave owner with his slaves. To deny the right of the Alabaman is to deny him equality with the clock peddler of Massachusetts," it was Ramsey who led the Knoxville citizens in applause.²⁵

Thus being linked with the South socially, economically, and politically, he naturally cast his lot with the Southern Confederacy

²⁴ Ibid., x; Ramsey to Draper, September 18, 1851, Draper Manuscripts.

²⁵ William B. Hesseltine and David L. Smiley, The South in American History (2nd ed.; Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), 265-67; Marguerite Bartlett Hamer, "The Presidential Campaign of 1860 in Tennessee," ETHS Publications, No. 3 (1931), 16-17; Knoxville Register, September 20, 22, 1860; Campbell, Tennesseans, 125; McAdoo, Diary, August 22, November 5, 1860.

in its secession from the Union. Contrary to Ramsey's later declaration that he had favored nullification and secession since 1820, he had opposed South Carolina's course in the nullification controversy of the late eighteen twenties and thirties. Later, in 1850, the Nashville Convention was called for the purpose, many radicals hoped, of declaring secession as the South's answer to the controversy over California's admission to the Union as a free state and the extension of slavery to all the territories.²⁶ Siding with the more moderate minded, Ramsey rejected this radical proposal offered by the extremists. He confided to his brother:

My heart is decidedly for the South--day & night--in sunshine & in storm--tooth & toenail--with or without the Union. I owe allegiance only to Tennessee--fidelity to the constitution. But still I am not the man for that Convention. A practical debater is wanted & we must find him in time.²⁷

However, becoming convinced by 1858 that secession could not be avoided, Ramsey affirmed, "I conceal from no one my deep conviction that the days of our present Union are nearly numbered." Accepting the explanation for the Civil War now known as the theory of the irrepressible conflict, he affirmed, "We are destined to a separation. Sooner or later it must take place. It is inevitable."²⁸ Furthermore, Ramsey's secessionist convictions went far beyond mere argumentative

²⁶ Hesseltine and Smiley, South, 227.

²⁷ Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, February 24, 1850, Governors' Papers--Trousdale.

²⁸ Ramsey to Spratt, April 29, 1858, Hesseltine, Ramsey, 93-95.

principles and economic interest; "his whole emotional nature was enlisted in the Southern cause." He sentimentally considered himself to be allied to the South by the "blood of the Alexanders--by the hallowed-memories of old Mecklenburg--by 'the proud spirit which my mother gave me.' I pledge to it life fortune & honor."²⁹

Following Lincoln's victory in November, 1860, Ramsey, becoming a more radical secessionist with every day that passed, reported to his brother, with peculiar etymology although clear meaning,

My disunion sentiments like a contagion are extending all around me & will soon be epidemic--epi (upon) demos (the common people). No Government can or ought to last long. Even in the Jewish Government (a Theocracy) the secession of the two tribes from the other ten took place. Those from whom they seceded are now lost.³⁰

Although the people of Tennessee cast a decisive vote against secession in February, 1861, Ramsey was not overly discouraged. He confided to Benson J. Lossing on the eve of the Tennessee referendum, "Tennessee may not--I believe will not now secede--her ultimate position will certainly be with the Southern States--every day is marked by decided changes in that direction by even conservative Tennessee."³¹

Ramsey was not, however, the type of person to tolerate delay very long, especially concerning a matter on which he held strong

²⁹Ibid., x; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, December 26, 1860, McIver Collection.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ramsey to Benson J. Lossing, February 4, 1861, Ramsey Papers (NC).

convictions. As the Confederate government's appeals for Tennessee's support became more urgent, he became overtly impatient over his native state's hesitancy to join her Southern neighbors.³² His irritation was undoubtedly increased, as Hesseltine points out, by the fact that his "attachment to the South was not shared by all his East Tennessee neighbors. The people of the thirty mountain counties of East Tennessee were not agreed that their destiny was wrapped up in the Southern cause."³³ Among those who did second his allegiance were fellow Knoxvilleians William H. Sneed, John H. Crozier, and William M. Churchwell, all former congressmen; William G. Swan, past attorney-general of the state; Thomas C. Lyon, prominent Knoxville lawyer; and Campbell Wallace, president of the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad. However, the two strongest opponents of secession in East Tennessee, Parson W. G. Brownlow, fiery editor of the Knoxville Whig, and Andrew Johnson, United States Senator from Greeneville, were able to muster enough strength to maintain East Tennessee's strong opposition to disunion.³⁴

Displaying ever-increasing displeasure at Tennessee's reluctance to enter the Confederate camp, Ramsey wrote to a friend in Georgia in April, 1861:

³²Patten, Tennessee, 181-88; Hesseltine and Smiley, South, 285-86; Ramsey to J. K. Tifft, April 16, 1861, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³³Hesseltine, Ramsey, x-xi.

³⁴Ibid., x-xi; Campbell, Tennesseans, 180; Patten, Tennessee, 185-88.

I have done all that one man can do to produce her severance with the (late) United States. We secessionists in Tennessee can wait no longer & our young men especially are leaving us by hundreds to join the army of the Southern Confederacy.³⁵

One of these young men was his son Robert, whom Ramsey sent South with his blessings and letters of recommendation to influential friends in Georgia and South Carolina. After Tennessee cast her vote for secession in June, 1861, he declared to John H. Crozier, "I am prouder than ever that we are Southerners & am rejoiced to think that the line of separation between the North & the South is permanent & fixed. No reconstruction is possible."³⁶ This same spirit was destined to lead Ramsey into taking a significant active role in the lengthy war which followed.

³⁵Ramsey to A. Porter, April 16, 1861, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³⁶Ibid.; Ramsey to J. K. Tifft, April 16, 1861; Ramsey to Robert Ramsey, April 28, 1861; Ramsey to John H. Crozier, July 24, 1861, ibid.; Patten, Tennessee, 187-88.

CHAPTER X

CONFEDERATE TREASURY AGENT

Although Ramsey was sixty-four when the Civil War began, he later declared, "I went into it with all my soul my strength & mind." In fact, although no report of his appointment can be found in the official Confederate records, he claimed that even before Tennessee seceded from the Union, some of his friends petitioned the Southern government to make him a quasi-member of their Congress, and that he was so appointed by Jefferson Davis. However, even if he did not serve in the legislature of the Confederacy, Ramsey was throughout the war actively engaged as a treasurer, a physician, and a self-appointed strategist.¹

As president of the Knoxville branch of the Bank of Tennessee, he traveled to Richmond in July, 1861, to attend the Southern Bankers' Convention. Arriving on the day of the first Battle of Manassas, he volunteered his professional services as a physician, only to be refused by the officials of the War Department. However, this trip did bring him again into contact with an old friend, Secretary of the Confederate Treasury, G. G. Memminger, who had served with Ramsey as a director of the Cincinnati and Charleston Railroad in the late eighteen thirties. Their friendship undoubtedly played a part in

¹Ramsey to Anson Nelson, August 16, 1880, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 101-102.

Ramsey's later appointment as a financial agent for the Confederacy.²

In his autobiography Ramsey indicates that he was appointed the chief Confederate tax collector for Tennessee early in 1863, only to resign shortly thereafter because the office took him away from home too often. Although his resignation was possibly in 1863, the date of his appointment is open to question. As early as December, 1861, the Knoxville Register contained a notice to the effect that J. G. M. Ramsey had divided the state into fifty-five collection districts and was asking prospective tax collectors to contact him. These were activities performed by the chief tax collector. Furthermore, Ramsey addressed a letter from the "Office Chief Collector" to Governor Isham G. Harris in March, 1862, concerning Confederate tax matters. Added to this information is the report in the Official Records (which do mention Ramsey as Tennessee's chief tax collector in January, 1863) that the first appointee to the office was unable to serve, although his recovery "was patiently awaited for a long time." In the face of all this evidence which conflicts with Ramsey's own later testimony, one is forced to draw the conclusion that he was either appointed in 1861 or handled the duties of the office in 1861, and received the title early in 1862. Therefore, either Ramsey meant "1862" when he wrote "1863" in his autobiography, or the date was later miscopied. In either case, he served as the chief Confederate

² Ibid., 100-102; Ramsey to John Crozier, July 24, 1861, Ramsey Papers (IT); Knoxville Whig, August 10, 1861; Knoxville Register, December 5, 1838, September 27, 1839.

tax collector in Tennessee for over a year. In spite of the affirmative evidence concerning his role in this capacity, there remains some uncertainty as to what success he actually had. There is little evidence that any significant amount of Confederate taxes were collected in Tennessee.³

In July, 1862, Memminger appointed Ramsey "Depository of the Government" to receive and disburse monies in Tennessee. Following the war a former Confederate official commented that he became very familiar with the name Ramsey, indeed, just as familiar with him as with the other gentlemen who served as financial agents and depositories in Savannah, New Orleans, Mobile, and Charleston.⁴

Ramsey's work as a financial agent was enlivened by the wholesale counterfeiting of Confederate money, much of it done by the federal government and smuggled into Tennessee through Cumberland Gap. He was given the responsibility of handling this problem in East Tennessee. John W. Faxon, a Chattanooga banker, detailed to aid Ramsey in ferreting out counterfeiters and counterfeit money, delivered to

³Hesseltine, Ramsey, 103; Knoxville Register, December 31, 1861; Ramsey to Isham G. Harris, March 18, 1862, Governors' Papers--Harris; T. Allan to G. G. Memminger, January 6, 1863, War of the Rebellion, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (128 vols.; Washington, 1880-1901), Series IV, Vol. II, 324-32. Hereafter cited as OR. E. Merton Coulter, The Confederate States of America, 1861-1865 (Vol. VII in Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter, eds., A History of the South, 10 vols.; Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1947-), 174-82.

⁴Hesseltine, Ramsey, 103; Ramsey, McKnitt Family, 14, Ramsey Papers (NC); check, dated September 29, 1862, Legal and Financial Materials, Ramsey Papers (UT); Knoxville Register, September 7, 1862; newspaper article, Breck Scrapbook, 72-73.

him on one occasion \$10,000 in bogus Confederate bills, which a hotel keeper had smuggled in a coffee sack through Cumberland Gap. As a depository, he was authorized to redeem counterfeit notes of certain denominations with 8 per cent Confederate bonds, and if he had no bonds, he was authorized to give certificates to the holders of issues so that they would be entitled to bonds in the future. In August, 1864, Louis Crueger, a Confederate Treasury Department comptroller, reported that Ramsey had turned into the department for redemption nearly \$1,000,000 in counterfeit currency.⁵

Considering himself to be abreast of more than mere financial matters, Ramsey carried on a correspondence with Jefferson Davis and the War Department concerning the strategy of the war, especially as it affected East Tennessee. Although his letters to Davis regarding foreign aid to the Confederacy have not been preserved, Ramsey advocated in this correspondence that the South make "a commercial treaty with France--giving to that power the entire monopoly of our cotton trade for a term of years, receiving in turn her friendly recognition and the guaranty [sic] of our independence of the United States." In 1864 with the Confederacy suffering defeat, he strongly reiterated

⁵Hesseltine, Ramsey, 103-104, 114, 154-55; Digby Gordon Seymour, Divided Loyalties (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1963), 46-47; Knoxville Register, September 7, November 27, 1862, June 30, 1863; Louis Crueger to Ramsey, August 8, 1864, Miscellaneous Materials, Box 3-E; Undated Materials, Box 3-C; Confederate counterfeit notes; check, dated September 29, 1862, Legal and Financial Materials, Box 3-I, Ramsey Papers (UT).

the same proposal in correspondence with Memminger.⁶

Ramsey had much to say to Davis, Judah P. Benjamin, Secretary of War, and others about the conduct of the war in East Tennessee. Although Rothrock's French Broad-Holston Country notes that the Confederate government "was quick to realize the strategic importance of East Tennessee as a link between the North and South" because of her railroads and food supplies, Ramsey did not believe that official Richmond was sufficiently aware of the significance of his native region to the South, and he was avowedly critical of most of the officers sent to command the forces in that area. Throughout the war he continually warned that a Federal occupation of East Tennessee would cause the Confederacy to be "practically bisected and our cause hopelessly lost."⁷

Therefore, as early as November, 1861, he advised Davis that the enemy, instigated by Andrew Johnson, intended to invade Tennessee, not through Cumberland Gap as most people supposed, but through the passes in Fentress and adjacent counties, where Union sympathy ran high. Suggesting that General Arnold Elzey be detached from the Potomac with Colonel John C. Vaughn's regiment to guard the passes, Ramsey expressed the conviction that this action would force Tennessee malcontents into subjection, frighten the enemy across the border from invading, and "excite . . . the spirit of volunteering, which I am

⁶List of Ramsey's Writings, March 25, 1879, ibid.; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 102, 188.

⁷Ibid., 114; Rothrock, French Broad, 129.

humiliated to say is very low." Although Benjamin reported to him that reinforcements were not available, Ramsey continued to plead the importance of adequately defending East Tennessee, not only against invasion from the North, but also against the divisive and opposing elements inside her own borders. Actually, a Union advance into East Tennessee through Cumberland Gap, desired by Lincoln and anticipated by the Reverend William Blount Carter of Elizabethton, was being developed by United States Secretary of War Simon Cameron and Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas. This plan failed to materialize, however, because of the opposition of General William T. Sherman, commander of the Department of the Cumberland, who considered the real theatre of Federal advance southward into Tennessee to be between Louisville and Nashville.⁸

Typically proud of his native region, Ramsey seems, early in the war, either to have refused to accept or to have misunderstood the extreme degree of Northern sympathy in East Tennessee. Soon, however, he became intensely bitter against the Unionists of the area and strongly reacted against the kind treatment meted out to them by Confederate commanders, who were under orders from Richmond to be lenient as the best means of securing their allegiance. Perhaps it should be pointed out, however, that he himself recommended leniency

⁸Ramsey to Jefferson Davis, November 4, 1861; Judah P. Benjamin to Ramsey, November 12, 1861, OR, Ser. I, Vol. IV, 511, 540; List of Ramsey's Writings, March 25, 1879, Ramsey Papers (UT); Rothrock, French Broad, 130; Jesse Burt, "East Tennessee, Lincoln, and Sherman," ETHS Publications, No. 34 (1962), 3-25.

in the treatment of one Union man in East Tennessee. Thomas A. R. Nelson, in what the Confederate authorities considered their canvass, was elected in August, 1861, by loyalists in the first district over his Confederate opponent. Attempting to get to Washington and take his seat in the United States Congress, he was arrested in Virginia and taken to Richmond, where he was imprisoned. There was a possibility that he would be charged with treason and sent to Nashville for trial. Since Nelson was a friend of Ramsey, the latter wrote to Davis in his behalf, and the president telegraphed Ramsey that he had released Nelson after securing his promise to submit to Tennessee's decision to join the Confederacy and to "abstain from any further words or acts of condemnation or opposition to her government." Another instance of Ramsey's occasional tolerance was his attitude toward Felix Zollicoffer, who was placed in command of the Confederate forces in East Tennessee in July, 1861. Although Zollicoffer was under orders to be lenient to Unionists, Ramsey seems to have regarded him highly, later declaring that Zollicoffer's "great error was that his modesty led him to decline the higher position of Major Genl. first offered him by Gov. I. G. Harris."⁹

In spite of the evidence presented above, however, Ramsey

⁹Rothrock, French Broad, 130-31; Thomas B. Alexander, Thomas A. R. Nelson of East Tennessee (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Commission, 1956), 87-93; Davis to Ramsey, August 13, 1861 (telegram), OR, Ser. I, Vol. II, 827; Nelson to Davis, August 12, 1861; W. H. Humphreys to Felix Zollicoffer, August 13, 1861, Nelson Papers; newspaper article, Scrapbook II, 53; Ramsey to Marcus J. Wright, October 18, 1879, Wright Papers.

considered lenient treatment extended to the Unionists to be a sign of questionable loyalty to the Confederacy and freely affirmed to Davis and Benjamin his conviction that East Tennessee forces needed officers wholly loyal to the South and free from "Union associations."

We need here commanders and officers who have no sympathies with their Union and disloyal acquaintances and relatives and associates. A stern man from one of the cotton States, who has no knowledge of our people and their past political affinities, would be best able to control the conflicting elements out of which our population is constituted.¹⁰

He certainly did not consider General George B. Crittenden in this category. For when in early January, 1862, Confederate forces under Crittenden lost a significant battle at Mill Springs, Kentucky, against General George H. Thomas, who was advancing into Tennessee, Ramsey blamed the disaster wholly on the Confederate general and cast aspersions on his loyalty.¹¹ Absolving Zollicoffer, who was killed in the battle, of all responsibility, Ramsey reported to Davis,

Crittenden's whole army is perfectly demoralized and refused to serve under him, imputing to his constant inebriation the unfortunate advance of General Z[ollicoffer], and against his own earnest protest. Imputations of a graver character against the loyalty of the commanding officer are freely spoken of in the camp and believed.¹²

After Zollicoffer's death, again calling for an East Tennessee commander who was experienced, intensely loyal to the South, competent, sober,

¹⁰Ramsey to Benjamin, November 29, 1861, OR, Ser. I, Vol. VII, 721-22.

¹¹Hesseltine and Smiley, South, 300; Coulter, Confederate States, 353.

¹²Ramsey to Davis, January 24, 1861, OR, Ser. I, Vol. LII, Part II, 256.

and a stranger to the people, Ramsey recommended General Gideon Pillow or General John B. Floyd.¹³

General Edmund Kirby Smith was placed in command of the Department of East Tennessee in March, 1862. And although Smith was "determined to deal kindly, yet firmly, with the Union element, and if possible, to win it over to the side where it rightly belonged," he and Ramsey, according to the latter, were "on good terms" with each other. Perhaps a part of their affinity was due to what O. P. Temple later considered Smith's change of attitude and sterner treatment of Unionists. In the fall of 1862 Kirby Smith joined General Braxton Bragg in a Northern offensive into Kentucky. After a Confederate victory at Perryville on October 8, Bragg, feeling himself unable to hold his position, returned to Tennessee.¹⁴ Ramsey's response to Bragg's strategy was bitter denunciation. "When Smith, in thirty-six hours more, would have been battering down Cincinnati," he later declared,

Bragg gave orders for an inglorious retreat. The former had the Queen City of the West within his easy grasp: the latter made him relinquish it and thus extinguish the hope and paralyze [sic] the efforts of all Kentucky then preparing to espouse our cause.¹⁵

Although Ramsey over-assessed Kirby Smith's knowledge of the situation

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Rothrock, French Broad, 133; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 131; Coulter, Confederate States, 357; Hesselstine and Smiley, South, 311; Oliver P. Temple, East Tennessee and the Civil War (Cincinnati: The Robert Clarke Company, Publishers, 1899), 125.

¹⁵Hesselstine, Ramsey, 131.

and the ease with which he could have won the victory, Kirby Smith's biographer is in basic agreement with the truth of this viewpoint, and, besides, the unpopular Bragg's inept leadership in the campaign is universally criticized. Giving a still more far-reaching appraisal of this unsuccessful expedition, Ramsey charged that it "changed the whole program of Confederate action, disaffected in a tender point our true ally, Kentucky, and thus remotely but certainly ruined the Confederate cause."¹⁶

Feeling throughout 1862 and 1863 that an invasion of East Tennessee was imminent, Ramsey called upon fellow secessionists to act as "minutemen," continued to plead with the authorities in Richmond and Nashville for reinforcements, strenuously opposed by Confederate troop withdrawal from East Tennessee, and often lamented the Union sympathies of his countrymen. Reporting to Governor Harris in March, 1862, he declared, "Disloyalty increases here--Smith is in an enemy's country. You & the Richmond Govt. never would believe how much Lincolnism is spread over all East Tennessee."¹⁷

With the failure of Confederate military activity in the West by early 1862, particularly the loss of Fort Henry and Fort Donelson in Tennessee, it was only a matter of time before the Federal invasion of East Tennessee, long awaited and much feared by Ramsey, took place.

¹⁶ Joseph Howard Parks, General Edmund Kirby Smith, C. S. A. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1954), 217-13; Coulter, Confederate States, 357; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 131.

¹⁷ Ramsey to Harris, March 18, 1862, Governors' Papers--Harris.

When a force under General W. P. Sanders raided East Tennessee in June, 1863, Ramsey took the assets of the Knoxville branch of the Bank of Tennessee and his Confederate depository to Abingdon, Virginia, for safe-keeping. Since Sanders did not occupy Knoxville, these were returned from Virginia not too long before Major General Ambrose E. Burnside invaded East Tennessee in August.¹⁸

Burnside's offensive gave Ramsey another occasion to criticize Confederate strategy in that region. General Simon B. Buckner, now in charge of the Department of East Tennessee, was fortifying Knoxville and the surrounding country in July and August (in what Ramsey chose to call "Buckner's trap"). Trying to convince the general that "ten thousand men properly distributed along the Cumberland chain could prevent any invasion of an army with artillery and other stores," Ramsey later indignantly claimed that Buckner's only reply was that "if the enemy succeed in getting across the Cumberland heights we will then have them in a trap just where we would like to have them," and that he would not abandon Knoxville under any circumstances. Believing that Buckner was under orders from Richmond to retreat, Ramsey frantically telegraphed Davis in August, declaring, "Sir--It is essential that no forces now in this Department be ordered from it as is apprehended."¹⁹

However, Burnside's force crossed the Cumberland Mountains west

¹⁸Hesseltine, Ramsey, 106-12; Creekmore, Knoxville, 97-98; Rothrock, French Broad, 138.

¹⁹Hesseltine, Ramsey, 113-14; Ramsey to Davis, August [n.d.], 1863 (telegram), Ramsey Papers (IT).

of Cumberland Gap in late August and entered Knoxville on September 1. Although Ramsey believed that the Confederate policy of retreat from East Tennessee was "a fatal one to us," he joined Buckner's army retreating South toward Atlanta with the funds of his branch of the Bank of Tennessee and his Confederate depository. As he fell back still critical of what he considered Confederate inactivity in defending East Tennessee, Ramsey exclaimed, "Oh, for the fiery energy and prompt iron-will of Andrew Jackson in this hour of our need."²⁰

In Atlanta he was active in building up morale among a group of "East Tennessee Refugees." He also wrote editorials and articles for the Knoxville Register, removed there by its editor J. A. Sperry. And as was earlier mentioned, Ramsey went out from Atlanta helping the wounded and setting up temporary hospital quarters in Dalton, Marietta, and Chickamauga. Not forgetting the Confederate sympathizers left in East Tennessee, he addressed a letter in their behalf to Davis in April, 1864. Emphasizing that there was

not in this wide Confederacy a single spot where genuine loyalty to your Government, self-sacrifice and self-denial, an elevated patriotism, or a holier chivalry exist to the same extent and to a high intensity

than East Tennessee, he asked for the establishment of "store-houses" on the front lines where loyal destitute families would be invited to come for food. Ramsey recommended Bristol and Zollicoffer, Tennessee,

²⁰ Rothrock, French Broad, 138; Hesseitine, Ramsey, 106-12, 118; Ramsey to Draper, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence; newspaper article, Scrapbook II, 37.

or Spring Place, Georgia.²¹

While in Georgia, Ramsey suffered a real tragedy in the loss of his plantation home, Mecklenburg, pillaged and burned during Burnside's occupation of Knoxville. The loss of his house was magnified by the destruction or plunder of his library, antiquarian museum, and the unfinished manuscript of his second volume of the Annals of Tennessee. Although there was some mystery concerning the person or persons responsible for this action, in his autobiography Ramsey certainly castigated Burnside for what he considered the inadequate punishment of merely drumming out of service the "private" who was responsible. An undated newspaper article, however, records that "none expressed more regret at this destruction than the Federal officers in command." At any rate, Ramsey believed that the real perpetrator of the deed was W. G. Brownlow, who had been imprisoned earlier in the war by Crozier Ramsey, East Tennessee district attorney for the Confederacy.²² Unknown to either Burnside or the soldier responsible for burning his house, Ramsey pointed to the fact that Burnside's forces had left from Cincinnati, where Brownlow was residing, and that his house alone was the first peculiarly selected for such destruction. Ramsey asked

²¹Hesseltine, Ramsey, 122, 141-44; Knoxville Register, September 15, 16, 19, 22, 1863; McAdoo, Diary, September 3, 1863; Ramsey to Davis, April 13, 1864, OR, Ser. I, Vol. LII, 655-56.

²²Davidson, The Tennessee, II, 116; Ramsey to Draper, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence; McAdoo, Diary, October 7, 1863; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 56, 173; Knoxville Register, October 9, 19, 30, 1863; James B. Campbell, "East Tennessee During the Federal Occupation, 1863-1865," ETHS Publications, No. 19 (1947), 70.

his readers to

Trace out the secret history of the whole infernal infamy of the low revenge and private and personal hate. Look especially at the special time at which the incendiary arrived at Knoxville from Cincinnati. Learn that the very day after his arrival he was known to inquire for the road to Dr. Ramsey's house--how to find it, how it was known from other houses across the river, and consider the intensity of his purpose to burn it and it only--and that, too, against the earnest remonstrances of Union men around him. . . . The poor wretch had been bribed at Cincinnati to execute a certain purpose of a malignant prompter.²³

The one thing which continually occupied Ramsey's mind while he was in Atlanta was the recapture of East Tennessee, and he urged this proposal on Davis. Becoming aware of such a plan in October, 1863, he traveled to the front lines at Cleveland, Tennessee, where he proposed an immediate northern advance toward Knoxville through a subordinate officer, John C. Vaughn, one of his friends. Since he had "engineered" this whole country in his railroad activities, Ramsey offered to serve as a "pilot" for the offensive. When an immediate advance was not ordered, he returned to Atlanta, later commenting, "There was too much of West Point in it. Too much delay. Sevier, Jackson, Vaughn--any selfmade commander--would have struck two or three weeks sooner than Bragg's order to Longstreet indicated his 'on to Knoxville.'" Ramsey again assessed the refusal to heed his advice as "fatal" to the campaign. "We never recovered from it," he asserted. Actually, the decision to send troops to Knoxville was not an easy one to make. Although Bragg's Army of Tennessee had won a victory over

²³Hesseltine, Ramsey, 173.

General William S. Rosecrans' Army of the Cumberland when the Battle of Chickamauga ended on September 21, he had not immediately realized it, and instead of following the Union forces into Chattanooga, he decided to lay siege to the city. With Union reinforcements under Grant and Sherman on the way, he needed all available men. As it was, when he did send troops to Knoxville, his lines were weakened in the face of the Union attack under Sherman in November, which saw the Confederates lose the battles around Chattanooga, such as Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge, and retreat to Dalton, Georgia.²⁴

When in mid-November General James Longstreet was detached from Bragg's army at Chattanooga to take Knoxville, Ramsey joined the invading force. As Longstreet's troops moved up Kingston Pike, outside Knoxville, they were joined in battle on November 18 by a Union force under Sanders, who was fighting a delaying action to allow Burnside to complete his preparations for the defense of Knoxville. By that afternoon Sanders' troops were forced to retreat, and Longstreet's siege of Knoxville began that night.²⁵ Again differing with the Confederate officers, Ramsey believed, with some validity, that the retreat should have been followed by immediate pursuit, not the declaration of a state of siege. Affirming later that both Union and Confederate soldiers were of the opinion that an immediate charge on Knoxville

²⁴Ibid., 143, 146-47; Patten, Tennessee, 202-205; Harold S. Fink, "The East Tennessee Campaign and the Battle of Knoxville in 1863," ETHS Publications, No. 29 (1957), 84-87.

²⁵Ibid., 93-95; Rothrock, French Broad, 138; Coulter, Confederate States, 360.

would have resulted in victory, Ramsey characteristically declared,

Had Andrew Jackson led our army it would not have suspended pursuit, but would have assaulted and entered the town before it halted. Indeed, the capital error of this commander [Longstreet] was his tardiness--the fault of fat men generally, and especially of the phlegmatic and apathetic.²⁶

The siege of Knoxville was accompanied by one of the most ridiculous blunders of the war. Longstreet's plan was to starve the Union forces under Burnside. Commanding Knoxville on all sides, he was in a good position to do this. Moreover, realizing that the surrounding country was sympathetic with the Union and would attempt to supply Burnside down the river, Longstreet sent a cavalry force to control the Holston River (the present Tennessee River) between Knoxville and "the fertile grounds upon Little River." There was, however, a serious flaw in his preparations. Since the map he was using showed the French Broad River joined the Holston below Knoxville, he had placed his troops beyond that point above the city where the French Broad actually connected with the Holston. Thus the French Broad was left open for supplies to be sent to Knoxville by the farmers who lived on its banks and its tributaries for "sixty miles above the town."²⁷

Ramsey, whose plantation was situated at the forks of these two rivers, knew perhaps better than anyone else the seriousness of the error in Longstreet's map and attempted in private meetings and in a

²⁶ Hesseltine, Ramsey, 149.

²⁷ Ibid., 150; Fink, "Battle of Knoxville," 95-112; Creekmore, Knoxville, 101. The name Holston was then applied to what is now the Tennessee River between the French Broad and the Little Tennessee.

conference with several Knoxville secessionists to point out the defect. Although he averred that if a cannon were placed on the bluff overlooking Mecklenburg, any traffic down the French Broad could be stopped, Ramsey's advice was to no avail since Longstreet maintained faith in his erroneous map. And when, between November 29 and December 4, the latter made his unsuccessful assault on Fort Sanders, so called after the general who had been mortally wounded in the initial engagement on November 18, there were enough supplies in the fort to last ten days.²⁸

As Longstreet withdrew toward Virginia in the face of Union reinforcements, Ramsey returned to Atlanta to his colony of East Tennessee refugees. During 1864 he traveled more than once between Bristol and Atlanta on official business. For a brief spell early in the year he was called to Jonesboro and Bristol to set up temporarily his depository and allow East Tennessee residents to redeem their counterfeit Confederate treasury notes with bonds or certificates. Fearing a probable invasion of Atlanta, he removed the funds of the Knoxville branch of the Bank of Tennessee to Augusta and placed them under his cashier, Dr. B. R. Strong. But during all this time Ramsey did not relinquish his belief that the Confederates would surely retake East Tennessee. In August, 1864, he telegraphed Governor Harris from Bristol to send additional troops to East Tennessee and come himself to "arouse our masses to make further efforts for the Southern

²⁸ Ibid., 101-107; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 150; Seymour, Divided Loyalties, 164; Temple, East Tennessee, 510; Knoxville Journal and Tribune, November 29, 1902; Rothrock, French Broad, 14C-41.

Confederacy," to which Harris replied, "Physically unable to come-- Impossible I fear to get the troops you want at this time." A similar letter to General Bragg, now Davis' military adviser in Richmond, elicited a like reply.²⁹

In the face of the imminent federal assault on Atlanta in the late summer of 1864, Ramsey removed the effects of his Confederate depository also to Augusta. However, as Sherman, after taking Atlanta, marched South in the winter toward Macon and Savannah, Augusta was also threatened. Since Ramsey had already decided that if Georgia were invaded, he would move to Columbia, South Carolina, and on to Charlotte, he followed this plan, apparently just managing to beat Sherman to Columbia. In Charlotte he placed the funds of his depository in the vault of the Confederate Navy there. With Sherman threatening Charlotte after extending his path of destruction through South Carolina, Ramsey again determined to remove his effects South. In his company for most of his journey from Charlotte to Augusta traveled Mrs. Jefferson Davis and her son Jeff. The president of the Confederacy was in another camp not far away and generally in constant communication with the one in which Ramsey traveled.³⁰

In Augusta, April 26, 1865, seventeen days after Lee surrendered

²⁹Hesseltine, Ramsey, 153-56, 188, 191-97, 210-11; Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, August 13, 27, 1864; Harris to Ramsey, August 21, 1864 (telegram), Ramsey Papers (UT); Robert Strange to Ramsey, August 25, 1864, Ramsey Papers (NC); Ramsey to Davis, April 13, 1864, OR, Ser. I, Vol. LII, 655.

³⁰Hesseltine, Ramsey, 211, 222-23; Coulter, Confederate States, 360-61.

to Grant at Appomattox, Ramsey and his colleagues were faced with the problem of disposing of the funds in their possession. At a meeting of a few officers of the Bank of Tennessee, Ramsey proposed that the funds of that bank be taken across the Mississippi and placed at the disposal of General Kirby Smith, in charge of the Trans-Mississippi Department. A resolution to this effect would have been carried out had transportation facilities been available. As it was, the assets of the Knoxville branch were left in Augusta under the control of Dr. Strong. Although Ramsey hoped that they would be returned to Knoxville still under Strong's and his control, Strong was later captured, and the monies were taken to Nashville.³¹

Another problem that faced Ramsey was the handling of the funds of his depository. In company with other Confederate treasury officials, at least one of them his superior, he started again toward South Carolina. Leaving the remainder of his depository with them at Abbeville, South Carolina, Ramsey made his way alone to Charlotte. After having handled nearly fifty million dollars in Confederate monies, he arrived at his "Exile Retreat," with only seventeen dollars in silver.³²

In spite of his age, Ramsey made many trips throughout the

³¹Hesseltine, Ramsey, 223-26; Ramsey to B. R. Strong, May 22, 1865, Scrapbook I, between pages 20 and 21; Ramsey to Strong, May 22, 1865, Ramsey Papers (NC); Coulter, Confederate States, 358-59. See Samuel M. Arnell's life of Brownlow for the story of his riding from the station to the capitol sitting on the boxes of gold which had been recovered. The Southern Unionist (typescript in University of Tennessee Library, Knoxville [n.d.]).

³²Hesseltine, Ramsey, 226-32.

eastern part of the Confederacy during the war and appears to have more than adequately fulfilled his duties as a depository, while aiding as a physician whenever he could. Ramsey himself later affirmed that between 1862 and 1865 he

disbursed between forty-two and forty-three millions of dollars for the Confederate States treasury, and though I had in that interim made seven or eight hegiras and hair-breadth escapes, I never lost one dollar of my funds.³³

Although his advice on military matters seems generally to have gone unheeded, indeed, probably provoking some irritation in certain quarters, his immediate assessment of certain incidents of Confederate strategy has stood the test of time. Ramsey's major weakness was his natural tendency to exaggerate the significance of events in which he was involved and matters about which he offered advice and criticism. For example, he considered Bragg's refusal to follow up his victory over Buell in October, 1862, the loss of Kentucky and the ruin the Confederacy. When Buckner evacuated East Tennessee in August, 1863, the war was lost for the South. If the assault on Knoxville in November, 1863, had been two weeks earlier, the city would have been taken and the Confederacy possibly saved.³⁴ While containing a grain of truth, these conclusions are not warranted by the facts and indicate a narrow perspective, as well as an element of inconsistency.

Mrs. Ramsey and some of the children, who fled to Bristol during the Federal occupation of Knoxville, had already preceded Ramsey to Charlotte.³⁵ Since they also had played some startling roles in the

³³Ibid., 103.

³⁴Ibid., 114, 131, 147.

³⁵Mrs. Ramsey to Margaret Jane Dickson, August 1, 1864, Breck

fortunes of the Confederacy, their exploits during the war will be the subject of the following chapter.

Scrapbook, between pages 74 and 75; Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, September 1, 1864, Ramsey Papers (NC); Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, August 13, 23, 27, 1864, Ramsey Papers (UT).

CHAPTER XI

REBEL CHILDREN

Since the Ramsey family was a close-knit unit, one of the worst features of the war was the separation that it imposed on the members. None of them felt this strain more than the father himself. Patriotically loyal to the South, however, Ramsey prided himself on the part his children played in that contest. He asserted to Draper following the war, "My five sons were all in the Confederate States army. . . . Each of them had the opportunity to show his gallantry and his patriotism and nobly did."¹ Even some of his daughters took fairly active parts in certain phases of the war, and their father was fond of relating that there was only one "member of my family that was ever reduced to the humiliating necessity of renouncing allegiance to the South"² by taking the Union oath. Indeed, for the most part, Ramsey's children seem to have been just as firm supporters of the Confederacy as he was, although they too faced the pressure of living in an area sympathetic with the enemy. In fact, two of them, possibly three, lost their lives because of their allegiance to the South.³

¹Ramsey to Draper, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence.

²Hesseltine, Ramsey, 187; Although Margaret Jane signed the oath, Ramsey said that her "sympathies remained unchanged, and were always what they ought to be." Ibid.

³Ibid., xi.

Ramsey's oldest son, Crozier, desired to become an officer very early in the war. Although, according to Hesselstine, he held no commission in the Confederate army, his father referred to him as "general," while many others called him "captain." The former title was apparently derived from his having been "attorney-general" of Knox County before the war, whereas the latter possibly can be originally traced to his having begun to raise a company of Confederate volunteers in the spring of 1861, even before Tennessee seceded from the Union. In late April their father wrote to Robert that "Crozier has half of his company made up." In the Knoxville Register of May 23 Crozier announced that he was going "to raise a company of volunteers to defend the rights of Tennessee and the South, and when said company is organized to tender them to the Governor. . . ." Toward the end of the month the same paper announced that "Captain Ramsey's company, of Knoxville, will be mustered into their [Colonel W. M. Churchwell's] Regiment today."⁴

At this point the future of Crozier's company becomes a mystery. His father does not refer to it in his autobiography, although in a letter to Robert in late August, 1861, he commented that Crozier would be able to meet him at Manassas, since he was "helping Genl. [William H.] Carroll to organize a Battalion of Riflemen."⁵ It is perhaps significant that in this same month Jefferson Davis appointed Crozier to the office of Confederate district attorney for the East Tennessee

⁴Ibid., 244n; Ramsey to Robert Ramsey, April 28, 1861, Ramsey Papers (UT); Knoxville Register, May 23, 29, 1861.

⁵Ramsey to Robert Ramsey, August 21, 1861, Ramsey Papers (UT).

district. The biased W. G. Brownlow later asserted that Crozier "attempted to get up a company of volunteers, but never was able to muster more than thirty men, and being detected in drawing rations and clothing for sixty-five, he was, under General Zollicoffer's reign in Knoxville, drummed out of the service."⁶ No evidence has appeared either to support or refute Brownlow's charge.

By far the most interesting and significant incident which occurred to Crozier as a Confederate district attorney involved W. G. Brownlow, accused by him of being involved in the episode known as the "burning of the bridges." Early in the war the Reverend William Blount Carter of Elizabethton persuaded Lincoln and his officers of the feasibility of a plan to burn nine bridges between Stevenson, Alabama, and Bristol, Tennessee, thus crippling the Confederate transportation facilities to the battlefields of northern Virginia. On the night of November 8, 1861, five were actually burned, one of them at Strawberry Plains, outside Knoxville. Although Carter was not apprehended, several of his associates were. Since Knoxville was placed under martial law as a result of the incident, Crozier, as district attorney, wrote to Judah P. Benjamin on November 25 informing him that the military authorities had determined to try the "bridge-burners" by a court-martial. Benjamin replied, "I am glad to hear of the action of the military authorities and hope to hear they have hung every bridge burner at the end

⁶Brownlow, Sketches, 302.

of the burned bridge."⁷

In the meantime, W. G. Brownlow, claiming to fear violence at the hand of the military, had fled before the bridge burning incident to Tuckaleechee Cove in Blount County, where he became a source of embarrassment to the Confederate authorities, who were trying to win East Tennessee over to the Southern cause. Since Benjamin "greatly prefer[red] seeing him on the other side of our lines as an avowed enemy," he prompted General Crittenden, commander at Cumberland Gap, to persuade Brownlow to surrender with the promise of a passport and safe conduct through the lines to Kentucky. Although Brownlow agreed to the proposal, the general postponed action. And before the passport could be delivered, the editor of the Whig was arrested on December 6 on a warrant issued by Crozier charging that Brownlow, "being moved and seduced by the instigation of the devil and not having the fear of God before his eyes," had since June 10, 1861, committed treason against the Confederate government "by speech as well as publication."⁸ Brownlow was lodged in the Knoxville jail until his fate could be decided.

⁷James Welch Patton, Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee, 1860-1869 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1934), 60-61; newspaper article, Scrapbook II, 42; Rothrock, French Broad, 132; Crozier Ramsey to Benjamin, November 25, 1861; Benjamin to Crozier Ramsey, November 25, 1861, OR, Ser. II, Vol. I, 848-49.

⁸Benjamin to Crittenden, November 20, 1861, ibid., 921-22; R. B. Reynolds to the Marshall of Said District, December 6, 1861, ibid., Ser. I, Vol. VII, 806-807; Seymour, Divided Loyalties, 36; Robert Douthat Meade, Judah P. Benjamin: Confederate Statesman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1934), 210.

Aware of Crittenden's proposal to Brownlow, Crozier wrote Benjamin the day of Brownlow's arrest, asking the Secretary of War to postpone any decision until he (Crozier) could present the facts of the case, to which Benjamin responded that he would.⁹ In a letter to the secretary of war the next day, December 7, Crozier outlined the general charges against Brownlow. Relating that he had intended to arrest him in November but had postponed action because the district court had not met, the district attorney affirmed his belief that the Whig editor, who had left Knoxville the Monday previous to the bridge burnings, was a party to the deed. Moreover, he declared that Brownlow's newspaper "was the greatest cause of rebellion in this section, and most of those who have been arrested have been deluded by his gross distortion of facts and incited to take up arms by his inflammatory appeals to their passions and infamous libels upon the Confederate States."¹⁰ Commenting that the military officers in the area were particularly perturbed at the thought of releasing the bridge burner and the one who had "deluded" the "poor ignorant" Unionists, the district attorney reported that some of them were saying that "it would be difficult in such a contingency to restrain their men from laying down their arms and returning home" if they were forced to escort Brownlow across the lines. Indicating that his policy represented

⁹Crozier Ramsey to Benjamin, December 6, 1861; Benjamin to Crozier Ramsey, December 10, 1861, OR, Ser. I, Vol. VII, 740, 753-54.

¹⁰Crozier Ramsey to Benjamin, December 7, 1861, ibid., Ser. II, Vol. I, 905.

"the general desire of all friends to our cause in East Tennessee," Crozier recommended that the "parson" be held for trial or that he be sent to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, for confinement.¹¹

On the same day J. G. M. Ramsey and W. H. Tibbs, a Confederate Congressman, addressed to Jefferson Davis a strenuous protest against any proposed release of Brownlow. Also criticizing what they considered this inconsistency of Confederate policy in allowing him to go free, while arresting "the poor and insignificant dupes of Brownlow's treasonable teachings and example," they pointed out that shortly before the bridges were burned the Whig editor had visited Blount and Sevier counties, "the residence of the malcontents who are known as the incendiaries," as well as "the most disloyal and disaffected neighborhoods." After charging that "a more dangerous and more capable emissary could not be found in the Southern Confederacy to stimulate invasion of Tennessee and advise and carry into effect every kind of mischief," they recommended that the civil or military law be allowed to "take its course" with Brownlow.¹²

In a letter to Benjamin on December 17 Crozier presented his evidence in the case of treason against Brownlow. The district attorney included in this supposed evidence a letter from James M. Toole reporting a conversation he had had with Brownlow before the bridge burnings in which the latter related that his son John, just returned

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ramsey and W. H. Tibbs to Davis, December 7, 1841, ibid., Ser. I, Vol. VII, 743-44.

from Nashville, had informed him that a Federal invasion of Knoxville was imminent. Relying heavily on a newspaper editorial in the Whig, May 21, 1861, also before the bridge burnings, in which Brownlow had recommended that bridges be burned if the Confederates committed certain actions, Crozier asserted, "I think he was the first man in East Tennessee that made the suggestion in regard to the destruction of railroads." He accompanied a copy of Brownlow's last Whig editorial, dated October 24, 1861, and a recent copy of the Nashville Republican Banner, containing an article by Brownlow, with the comment: "You will see from his editorial that he retracts nothing he has said, but indorses all that he heretofore had written." To substantiate his other "evidence" Crozier included a "report" of Brownlow's plotting in the burning of the bridges, an account which originally came from the hired girl of a certain Maryville family who had gotten it from the hired girl of another Maryville family. Also referring to a recent copy of the Knoxville Register, now a Confederate organ, castigating Brownlow and praising the authorities for his arrest, the attorney general again called for Brownlow's imprisonment in Tuscaloosa.¹³

Using every scrap of evidence, most of it circumstantial, that he could gather, Crozier sought to tie the editor of the Whig to the bridge burnings and thus prevent his escape. Even if he had been successful in building his case, however, he faced General Crittenden's

¹³Crozier Ramsey to Benjamin, December 17, 1861; James M. Toole to Crozier Ramsey, December 17, 1861; J. G. Wallace to Crozier Ramsey, December 18, 1861, ibid., Ser. I, Vol. VII, 771-72, Ser. II, Vol. I, 902.

equal determination that Brownlow be released. In the face of a possible stalemate between the military and the civil authorities over the case, Benjamin sided with Crittenden, who made a trip to Richmond partly to settle the matter. As E. Merton Coulter says, "Crittenden and Benjamin had been placed in a position sufficiently suggestive of bad faith to cause both to want to get out of it by ridding the Confederacy of Brownlow." Thus on December 22, acknowledging Crozier's right to take Brownlow from the military authorities, Benjamin asserted that the prisoner would, nonetheless, have to be released in order to remove "any suspicion that Brownlow has been entrapped and has given himself up under promise of protection which has not been firmly kept." The secretary of war concluded by declaring that if Brownlow were harmed by his arrest, he would urge Davis to pardon him. In response to this strongly worded letter, Crozier released his prisoner to the commandant at Knoxville, and he was taken to Nashville, where he was handed over to the Federal authorities.¹⁴

Thus Crozier had again become the center of a controversy. Over against his charges against Brownlow one must consider the Whig editor's defense, as well as other widespread criticism of the district attorney. Through his Sketches of the Rise, Progress and Decline of

¹⁴Brownlow, Sketches, 342; E. Merton Coulter, William G. Brownlow, Fighting Parson of the Southern Highlands (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 199; Benjamin to Crozier Ramsey, December 22, 1861; G. H. Monsarrat to Benjamin, December 27, 29, 1861, OR, Ser. I, Vol. VII, 785, 798, 803; Seymour, Divided Loyalties, 36.

Secession, written during and immediately after the war, and the Knoxville Whig and Rebel Ventilator, which he began to publish after the Federal occupation of Knoxville, Brownlow lampooned Crozier with the ridicule which has already been referred to earlier in this biography. He declared the district attorney to be a "corrupt man, for whom no decent secessionist entertains any respect." Claiming that he had sworn a lie "with a view to injure me," Brownlow said that Crozier was motivated by malice because he had brought a suit against the district attorney's father as a trustee of the Bank of East Tennessee and because he had played a significant role in Crozier's defeat in his race for Congress against Maynard in 1859. Describing Crozier as a member of a small clique which also included John H. Crozier and W. G. Swan, the Whig editor charged that regular meetings were held in the district attorney's office for the single purpose of determining how to dispose of him.¹⁵

In his defense Brownlow argued that although Crozier had charged him with committing treason through his newspaper since June 10, 1861, the district attorney had only mentioned in the evidence an editorial, dated May 25, 1861, before Tennessee seceded from the Union. Actually, Crozier had "mentioned" Brownlow's last Whig editorial, dated October 24. Likewise criticizing the district attorney's policy of citing as evidence an article Brownlow had written before Tennessee's secession,

¹⁵Brownlow to W. H. Carroll, December 4, 1861, Brownlow, Sketches, 284-92; ibid., 302, 332; Knoxville Whig, April 1, 1868; Brownlow to Colonel Robert R. Vance, February 15, 1862, OR, Ser. II, Vol. I, 927.

J. J. Craig, a Knoxville Confederate, wrote to Benjamin in January, 1862, that the reports in the Brownlow case were greatly exaggerated, "indeed are almost wholly without foundation in fact." He went on to assess the significance of the district attorney's action: "I may say with truth that all disinterested parties regard the arrest and imprisonment of the man under the circumstances as shameful and it has done more injury to the fair name of the Confederacy than a thousand Brownlows are worth."¹⁶

Noting that even Judge West H. Humphreys of the Confederate district court had criticized indiscriminate arrests by the authorities, although Crozier was not mentioned by name, Brownlow charged that the district attorney had dealt with others, particularly John M. Fleming, Union member of the state legislature, and Perez Dickinson, a prominent Knoxville merchant, in a manner similar to the way in which he was treated. Having gone north on a business trip "with the written permit of Governor Harris," Dickinson was, according to Brownlow, arrested by Crozier upon his return under the single charge that he "was born in the State of Massachusetts, and that he had recently been to the North and held intercourse with the Northern people."¹⁷ In a similar vein Jesse Glasse of Greencastle, Iowa, wrote to O. P. Temple in 1865, when Crozier was under arrest: "I know Fox [Knoxville jailer] & J. C. Ramsey that [are] now in prison in your town. I was able to make their

¹⁶Brownlow, Sketches, 332; J. J. Craig to Benjamin, January 3, 1861, OR, Ser. II, Vol. I, 923-24.

¹⁷Knoxville Whig, September 21, 1861; Brownlow, Sketches, 139.

acquaintanc[e] while in the Knoxville jail. I and all the balanc[e] of the prisoners received bad treatment at their har[d]s."¹⁸

Claiming that he had spent the summer of 1861 in East Tennessee trying to conciliate the people of that region, Robertson Topp, a west Tennessee Confederate, also castigated Crozier in October, 1861, for what he considered indiscriminate arrests. Apparently accepting the criticism offered by East Tennessee Unionists, he characterized Crozier, W. G. Swan, William Churchwell, and John H. Crozier as a "few, malicious, troublesome men," who had, it was said, "private griefs and malice to gratify." Topp considered that by indiscriminantly arresting Unionists, these rabid Confederates were in danger of causing the people of East Tennessee at a critical moment to rise up as enemies instead of friends. But it was the district attorney whom he attacked the most vigorously. Affirming that Crozier had issued his own warrants in most cases, Topp exclaimed, "Just think of this--an attorney degrading himself by turning an affidavit man." He offered as his remedy: "Turn out Ramsey. Put some man in Middle or West Tennessee in his place who has dignity."¹⁹

¹⁸Jesse Glasse to O. P. Temple, January 26, 1865, Temple Papers.

¹⁹Robertson Topp to Robert Joselyn, October 26, 1861, OR, Ser. I, Vol. IV, 476-77. Another Confederate, Colonel Landon C. Haynes, according to William Gibbs McAdoo, alluded to Crozier Ramsey and his uncle, John H. Crozier, in a speech at Jonesboro in July, 1862, in which he ridiculed "one or two" who had fled from danger in East Tennessee after the fall of Fort Donelson. It should be noted, however, that Crozier Ramsey considered Confederate Senator Haynes a "Union" man. McAdoo, Diary, December 6, 1862; Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, Spring [n.d.], 1863, Ramsey Papers (UT).

Undoubtedly a part of the criticism of Crozier resulted from his being a Confederate district attorney in an area sympathetic with the enemy, for most of the reproof came at the hands of Unionists. Moreover, while Knoxville was under martial law, he would have been blamed for certain actions for which he was not responsible. In fact, following the war he was charged with murder for having been a member of a court-martial which had handed down the sentence of hanging to certain Unionists, and was acquitted because he had not taken part in this trial.²⁰ However, the weight of the evidence still falls against Crozier. Had he distinguished himself in this capacity, it is probable that Ramsey would have discussed the matter at some length in his autobiography. His failure to do so suggests that there was some degree of accuracy in contemporary criticisms of Crozier's handling of his Confederate district attorney's duties.

Crozier apparently became dissatisfied as a district attorney in a territory under martial law, for O. P. Temple later sarcastically declared that Crozier, "all alive to share in any good work for the Confederate cause, seeking that he was deprived of any hand in the disposal of prisoners, telegraphed to Mr. Benjamin, almost in a wail of despair, asking 'What shall I do?'"²¹ Because of this apparent disaffection and also probably because of his desire to take part in actual battle, Crozier continued to try to raise and lead a company of volunteers.

²⁰Hesseltine, Ramsey, 244; The Knoxville Daily Gazette, August 30, 1865.

²¹Temple, East Tennessee, 394-95.

In the Register of September 7, 1862, he announced that Major General John P. McCown, commander of the Department of East Tennessee, had authorized him to raise a regiment to serve in the war for three years. Encouraging eligible young men to take advantage of the fifty dollar bounty, he asked captains raising companies to address him at Knoxville.²² It is entirely possible that he did raise some men, for he soon joined Confederate forces at Vicksburg as an aide, according to the Register, a "captain," on General J. C. Vaughn's staff.²³

At the siege of Vicksburg, when Crozier was captured, he was in extremely poor health. Paroled with Vaughn's brigade, he returned to Knoxville "much debilitated." Falling back with the Confederate lines to Atlanta, Crozier, according to his father, eagerly awaited a prisoner exchange that would allow him to fight again. From Atlanta he went to Bristol to be nearer the battle action and to hear news of the rest of his family. Although he was able to be on his feet part of the time, traveling at least as far as Jonesboro, he was apparently still in ill health and had to walk with the aid of a cane. While his father said that he suffered from "chronic lumbago and rheumatism first induced by service and exposure in the trenches at Vicksburg," Brownlow claimed that Crozier had a "loathsome disease" which he "contracted in Dixie." In addition, he also had an eye ailment of some sort. According to

²²Knoxville Register, September 7, 1862.

²³Ibid., September 7, 1863; Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, January 11, 18, Spring [n.d.], 1863, Ramsey Papers (UT). Crozier had gone to Richmond in 1862, perhaps to secure permission to join Vaughn at Vicksburg. Ramsey to Alexander Ramsey [n.d.], 1862, ibid.

Ramsey, Crozier was in the hospital at Bristol when he was captured again, this time by a Federal detachment which invaded that city during Christmas, 1864.²⁴

Soon Crozier and J. A. Sperry, editor of the Register, were taken to Knoxville and placed in prison with R. P. Fox, the Confederate jailer at Knoxville. Describing these three as "agents in the arbitrary arrest, cruel imprisonment, and ultimate murder of many of our best citizens," and particularly condemning Crozier, whom he described as "an early and original rebel . . . bloodthirsty from the start," Brownlow called upon the military courts to convict these men, since he was certain that the civil courts would not. A subscriber of the Whig who lived in Poland, Ohio, reading of the arrest of Crozier, Fox, and Sperry, wrote to O. P. Temple that he hoped "strict justice, executed in mercy, will be dealt to each of them." Still another correspondent, in Iowa, wrote: "If justice is met [sic] out to thos[e] infurnal [sic] scoundrils [sic] tha [sic] will hav[e] to die." Particularly galling and humiliating to Ramsey was the fact that Crozier, in ill health, was forced to walk in ball and chains through the streets of Knoxville each day to and from his work on the fortifications of the city. A report came to W. G. Swan in Richmond that Crozier, Fox, and Sperry had "three balls

²⁴Hesseltine, Ramsey, 124, 240-41; Knoxville Register, July 21, 1863; Ramsey to Sue Ramsey, June 21, 1864; Sue Ramsey to Ramsey, August 31, 1864; Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, October 18, November 1, 26, 1864, Ramsey Papers (UT); Mrs. Ramsey to Margaret Jane Dickson, August 1, 1864, between pages 74 and 75, Breck Scrapbook; Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, September 1, 1864, Ramsey Papers (NC); Knoxville Whig, January 11, 1865.

chained to them and they chained together and daily under a Negro guard marched thro the Streets of Knoxville to be looked at." Subsequently, he was taken from the jail and placed in a hospital in the city. Although Crozier was charged with treason and murder, he was released pending trial. His friends advised him to leave Knoxville until his trial date arrived. Remaining in prison until the train left, and accompanied by a guard to the depot, he departed in the summer of 1865 for Nashville, where he opened a law office.²⁵

Crozier's younger brother, Robert, mentioned earlier as an energetic and adventuresome individual, was the first to enlist in the Confederate forces. In mid-April, 1861, before Tennessee seceded from the Union, he, "with quite a company" which left Knoxville "under his advisement & influence," according to his father, joined a group of recruits being organized in Maryville by Captain A. M. Wallace of Georgia. Traveling south with the intention of reinforcing the Southern troops at Charleston, Wallace's company at Atlanta joined Colonel J. H. Williams' regiment, which was headed for Richmond, but they arrived there too late to take part in the first Battle of Manassas.²⁶

²⁵Ibid.; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 241-45; Jesse Glasse to Temple, January 26, 1865; M. C. Butler to Temple, February 4, 1865, Temple Papers; Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, January 10, August 31, 1865; Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, February 1, 1865; W. G. Swan to Ramsey, February 13, 1865; McKnitt Ramsey to Ramsey, March 22, 1865, Ramsey Papers (UT); Alexander, Recollections, Ramsey Papers (NC).

²⁶Hesseltine, Ramsey, 128-29; Ramsey to J. K. Tifft, April 16, 1861; Ramsey to A. Porter, April 16, 1861; Ramsey to Robert Ramsey, April 28, May 17, 1861; Ramsey to C. G. Memminger, April 25, 1861; Robert Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, June 26, 1861; Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, July 24, 1861, Ramsey Papers (UT).

Since young Ramsey was seeking a commission, his father corresponded with several influential friends in his behalf, confiding to Secretary of the Treasury Memminger that he "would be gratified if Robert had a better position than private." As a result of Ramsey's efforts, Robert received a commission in the summer of 1861, not, however, in the army, but as a lieutenant in the Confederate navy. Serving first in the Gulf area around Pensacola, Mobile, and New Orleans, Robert was later transferred to Norfolk, and took part in the defense of Drewry's Bluff against Federal gunboats attempting to advance up the James River to Richmond in May, 1862. With the defense of the bluff secure, he and a few other navy officers asked for and received a day's leave to join the army in the Battle of Malvern Hill, a short distance away. Remaining as the battle raged, longer than their leave allowed, the young officers upon their return were charged with being absent without leave. Not having their explanations accepted, according to Ramsey, they resigned their commissions. Marcus J. Wright's Tennessee in the War, 1861-1865, however, indicates that Robert was dismissed.²⁷

Returning from Virginia to East Tennessee, Robert arrived just

²⁷Ramsey to J. K. Tifft, April 16, 1861; Ramsey to A. Porter, April 16, 1861; Ramsey to Robert Ramsey, April 28, May 17, 1861; Ramsey to C. G. Memminger, April 25, 1861; Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, July 24, 1861, ibid.; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 129-30, 244n; Hesselstine and Smiley, South, 309; J. G. Randall, The Civil War and Reconstruction (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1937), 290-91; Coulter, Confederate States, 355; Marcus J. Wright, Tennessee in the War, 1861-1865 (Williamsburg: Ambrose Lee Publishing Company, 1908), 118.

in time to become "chief courier and scout" to General Kirby Smith as he headed north to join Bragg for their campaign into Kentucky in October, 1862. According to his father, Robert and another son, Alexander, "by their minute knowledge" of the geography of the country, played a significant role in Bragg's "inglorious" retreat after his victory at Perryville, particularly in their having saved the army's magazine and stores in the trip over the mountains near Richmond, Kentucky. After he returned to Knoxville, Robert was dispatched to Cumberland Gap "to superintend the erection of further defenses" at that point of expected attack.²⁸

Still seeking an army commission, Robert apparently wrote to his brother Crozier at Vicksburg in the spring of 1863 asking his help. Although the latter responded that there was no position in his brigade at that time, he advised his younger brother to come and see what could be done. Instead, Robert remained with Bragg's forces as they withdrew to protect Chattanooga from the advancing Federal army under General William S. Rosecrans. He was with Bragg when he attacked Rosecrans' troops at Chickamauga Creek in September, 1863. Serving as a "captain" of a "partisan company of scouts," Robert was attached to the cavalry of General Joseph Wheeler, who raided the Federal lines in Tennessee and Georgia as the Union army assaulted Chattanooga in the fall of 1863. Having been assigned to Longstreet's forces in their unsuccessful attack on Knoxville in November, Robert

²⁸Hesseltine, Ramsey, 131-32.

withdrew with his commander to Bristol. Serving under Wheeler and also General John C. Vaughn, Robert spent the rest of the war in southwestern Virginia. In the summer of 1864 he was with General Jubal Early in the Shenandoah Valley and in the winter and spring of 1864-65 took part in many of the battles and skirmishes in north-eastern Tennessee and southwestern Virginia, in which General John C. Breckinridge, commander of the department in that area, unsuccessfully sought to halt the advancing Union army. As the war came to a close he withdrew to the south into Georgia with the company escorting Jefferson Davis, after which he made his way to his family's refuge near Charlotte, North Carolina.²⁹

There is practically no information outside the Ramsey family with which one can assess Robert's activities in the war. His brother McKnitt's comment: "He seems [sic] to be very lucky. I believe God has taken care of him for some purpose for good," would appear to indicate to some degree the danger of the campaigns through which he had passed. Obviously biased, Ramsey praised his son's courage and daring, his knowledge of the geography of the region, his ability as a scout, his horsemanship, and his marksmanship with the rifle as invaluable

²⁹Ibid., 132, 139-40, 152, 223, 234, 319-21, 244n; Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, Spring [n.d.], 1863, October 18, 1864; Crozier Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, November 1, 1864; Crozier Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, November 26, 1864; McKnitt Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, November 13, 1864; McKnitt Ramsey to Ramsey, December 18, 1864, Ramsey Papers (UT); Coulter, Confederate States, 341; Randall, Civil War, 568-70; Basil W. Duke, History of Morgan's Cavalry (Cincinnati: Miami Printing and Publishing Company, 1867), 545-58; Goodspeed's Knox County, 494-96; Temple, East Tennessee, 481.

aids to Smith, Wheeler, Longstreet, Vaughn, and Early.³⁰

Alexander, Ramsey's second oldest living son, not anxious "to leave home and stay in camp," did not join the Confederate forces as early as his other two brothers. However, he did volunteer for assignment in an artillery unit organized in March, 1862, by Captain W. C. Kain. Although Hesseltine suggested that Alexander was not an officer because of his later imprisonment at Camp Morton, Indiana, a camp "almost completely reserved for enlisted personnel," one should note that Ramsey wrote to him in January, 1863, that his commission had just been "received from the Sec. of the Treasury." The exact nature of the commission is not at all clear. At any rate, the title of "colonel," by which his father always referred to him, resulted from Alexander's "having been elected a colonel of a militia regiment in ante-bellum days."³¹

Alexander was with Kain in his first battle at Bridgeport and his raid on Winchester in 1862. However, after scouting with Robert for Kirby Smith in his Kentucky campaign, Alexander remained with Bragg's forces and was present at the Battle of Chickamauga. Thus he was not at Cumberland Gap in September, 1863, when most of Kain's company under the command of Lieutenant Thomas O'Connor surrendered to the

³⁰McKnitt Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, November 20, 1864; Elizabeth Breck's Account of Kirby Smith's Campaign into Kentucky, Undated Materials, Box 3-C, Ramsey Papers (UT); Hesseltine, Ramsey, 125-33, 139-40, 149, 151-52, 156, 192, 197, 199, 215.

³¹Mrs. Ramsey to Robert Ramsey, July 10, 1861; Ramsey to Robert Ramsey, August 21, 1861; Ramsey to Alexander Ramsey [n.d.], 1862, Ramsey Papers (UT); Hesseltine, Ramsey, 104-105, 116.

advancing Union army. Accompanying Longstreet to Knoxville, Alexander retreated in December, 1863, toward Bristol, where he became attached to General Vaughn's brigade in southwestern Virginia. At the Battle of Piedmont, Virginia, on June 5, 1864, he was captured and later taken to the Federal prison at Camp Morton, Indianapolis, Indiana. Later enumerating the evils of Northern prisons, Ramsey asserted that Alexander's "constitution" was "wholly ruined by the cruel usage he had to endure during his captivity there." Upon his release from prison, following the war, he joined his family near Yorkville, South Carolina.³²

McKnitt Ramsey joined his older brother Alexander in Captain Kain's artillery unit. However, at Chattanooga, where the company went for supplies and equipment, he contracted malaria, according to his father, and was allowed to return home. In 1862, while he was recovering, he served as commander of the steamer James Glover, which transported supplies to Confederate forces below Knoxville "on the Holston [now Tennessee], the Tennessee, Clinch, Hiwassee, and Ocoee [Ocoee] Rivers." McKnitt withdrew to Chattanooga when Burnside invaded Knoxville, and was at Chickamauga and later with Longstreet

³² Ibid., 131, 137-38, 143, 149, 155, 186, 192, 197, 199, 215, 236-39, 244n; Coulter, Confederate States, 47; Goodspeed's Knox County, 836; Ramsey to Alexander Ramsey, January 24, 1863, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, December 1, 1868, McIver Collection; newspaper article, Scrapbook I, 10; Jubal Anderson Early, War Memoirs (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960), 370; Elizabeth Breck's Account of Kirby Smith's Campaign into Kentucky, Undated Materials, Box 3-C, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, August 27, 1864, ibid.; Mrs. Ramsey to Margaret Jane Dickson, August 1, 1864, Breck Scrapbook, between pages 74 and 75.

during the siege of Knoxville. Retreating to Bristol, he again became ill. After he recovered in early 1864, he, like his other brothers, became attached to Vaughn's brigade. Throughout 1864 and 1865, although apparently not as active as Robert, McKnitt took part in some of the battles and skirmishes in southwestern Virginia and northeastern Tennessee in Breckinridge's unsuccessful attempt to halt the Union advance. When the war ended, he made his way to Charlotte, North Carolina, where his father and mother had taken refuge.³³

Throughout the war McKnitt had been intermittently assigned to help his father transport Confederate money and ferret out counterfeiters. He appears not to have had the constitution nor the good health necessary for him to have had his brother Robert's adventurous experiences. A letter written to his sister, Elizabeth, in November, 1864, indicates the sentimental character of this son, as well as his general detestation of the war: "I hope this cruel war will soon be over when we can go back to our old home in Tenn. and we can take better care of our dear parents and smoothe their declining years."³⁴

Perhaps the worst tragedy the Ramseys experienced during the war was the loss of their youngest child, Arthur. In early 1864 at

³³Hesseltine, Ramsey, 138-39, 152-53, 163, 165, 194, 197, 219n; Goodspeed's Knox County, 836; McKnitt Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, November 20, 1864; McKnitt Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, November 13, 1864; McKnitt Ramsey to Ramsey, December 14, 18, 1864; McKnitt's obituary, folder of newspaper clippings; voucher, April 1, 1864, Legal and Financial Materials, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³⁴McKnitt Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, November 20, 1864, ibid.; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 105-107, 112.

at the age of seventeen Arthur joined a company being formed by Captain A. L. Gammon of Jonesboro. Attached to General Vaughn's brigade, Arthur's company was defeated by Federal forces at the Battle of Piedmont, June 5, 1865. During this battle young Ramsey's foot and ankle were shattered by a cannon ball. Five days later his foot was amputated, but lockjaw set in, and he died on June 15. He was buried near the battlefield by a family friend, William Engles. Although Ramsey desired to have Arthur's body brought back home, his wish was apparently not carried out, for in 1879 he sadly lamented to Anson Nelson, "Arthur sleeps in an unknown grave."³⁵

Ramsey's wife and daughters seem to have been just as dedicated to the Southern cause as were he and his sons. Like her husband, Mrs. Ramsey was convinced that although the South was "fewer in numbers," it had "acknowledged God," and thus held a great advantage over the Northern "invaders." Their daughter Sue, in the account of her

³⁵Ramsey to Sue Ramsey, June 21, 1864; Sue Ramsey to Ramsey, August 31, 1864; Richard O. Currey to Ramsey, September 14, 1864; Christian and Rebecca Kline to Mrs. Ramsey, June 31, 1866; handwritten obituary, Fall [n.d.], 1864; R. H. Cartell to I. T. L. Preston, December 12, 1871; I. T. L. Preston to Ramsey, December 27, 1871, Ramsey Papers (UT); Mrs. Ramsey to Margaret Jane Dickson, August 1, 1864, Breck Scrapbook, between pages 74 and 75; Ramsey to Draper, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, November 30, 1872, McIver Collection; Ramsey to Anson Nelson, December 16, 1879, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Sue Ramsey Alexander, *Our Women in the War*, February 19, 1884, pp. 24-25, Ramsey Papers (NC); newspaper article, Scrapbook I, 10; newspaper article, Breck Scrapbook, 17-18; Early, *Memoirs*, 370. Although there is a marker erected to Arthur's memory in the cemetery at the Lebanon Presbyterian Church, the Knoxville Sentinel, January 11, 1925, is probably erroneous in declaring that he was buried there.

experiences during the war, contrasts the "unanimous sentiment of her family" with the divided allegiance of other families in East Tennessee. If anything, the women in the Ramsey household were even more outspoken than the men in the abuse they hurled at the North and the praises they heaped on the South.³⁶

Charlotte Ramsey was perhaps the first of Ramsey's daughters to distinguish herself in service to the Confederacy. As an active leader in the Soldier's Relief Society, she went with Sue on horseback into Sevier County in March, 1863, to gather food, clothing, and supplies for the Southern forces. While on this trip, she contracted typhus and died on April 16, 1863. Her father considered her a martyr to the Confederate cause.³⁷

When Ramsey left Knoxville in August, 1863, as Burnside invaded East Tennessee, his wife and daughters, Sue and Elizabeth, moved to Knoxville for safety. After Sue became ill, however, they were forced to move to Lenoir's, the home of another daughter, Henrietta. Fortunately, they were there when Knoxville was besieged by Longstreet. Since Henrietta became ill, Mrs. Ramsey and Elizabeth, who had been ordered with Sue to leave Knoxville and "go South," were allowed to remain at her home and care for her. Sue, although known as the "Little

³⁶Mrs. Ramsey to Robert Ramsey, July 10, 1861, Ramsey Papers (UT); Sue Alexander, Women, 1, Ramsey Papers (NC).

³⁷Hesseltine, Ramsey, 164-65; Diary of Margaret B. Crozier Ramsey (typescript in McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee), 6; Rothrock, French Broad, 136; Knoxville Register, December 31, 1861, May 30, 1862; newspaper article, Scrapbook II, 211.

Rebel," was only sixteen at the time, she had apparently gained such a reputation among the Federal forces, some of whom had headquarters at Henrietta's home, for being an outspoken Confederate that she was accused of disloyalty to the Union and forced to leave Knoxville in April, 1864, on a "flag of truce" train headed for the lines in southwestern Virginia. From there she went to stay with her uncle John H. Crozier at Liberty, Virginia. Her son, J. Ramsey Alexander, later declared that his mother was "the greatest rebel of them all."³⁸

According to Ramsey, the main offences of which Sue was guilty were that she "played and sang Dixie, declined the attentions offered . . . by Federal officers, refused to walk under the Federal flag, or sign the oath of allegiance to a government hostile to" the Confederacy. In addition, the Federal authorities knew that at her sister's house at Lenoir's she had cared for and helped a wounded Confederate soldier to escape and had hidden his rifle. Probably more galling to the Union officers who had contact with her, however, was the outspoken nature of her Southern allegiance. Not only did she detest blue-coats "as enemies of enlightened liberty and as the tools of tyrants and usurpers," but, according to Sue, a Union general (unidentified) once said to her that she could say "Yankee" with the greatest contempt of any one he had ever known. When she was asked to sign the oath of

³⁸Hesseltine, Ramsey, 158-66, 170-86; Sue Alexander, Women, 1-29; Charles McClung to Sue Ramsey, June 8 [in the 60's, probably 1864], Ramsey Papers (NC); Ramsey to Sue Ramsey, June 21, 1864, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Draper, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence; Charlotte Observer, March 8, 1831.

allegiance to secure a pass to travel to Riverside, the home of another sister, Margaret Jane, she refused, not because of conscience, for she said that she would "have done so, and not considered it binding (done through force)," but because there were some ladies present who had told her before that when the Union soldiers came she would work for them just as hard as she had raised supplies and provisions for the Confederates, and because the "detestable Maj." was saying to her "you shall and you shan't." When placed on the "flag of truce" train to be taken to the Confederate lines, she was told to raise her right hand and swear not to reveal anything injurious to the Union forces; instead, as she boasted later, "I held up my left." Her father declared that she "could concede nothing. She was a rebel. She was a true Confederate. She loved and bowed down before the Southern flag. . . ." ³⁹

Shortly after Sue was exiled to southwestern Virginia, the Ramseys suffered another loss in the death of their daughter Henrietta Ienoir, who had been ill for some time. In fact, according to Ramsey, she had never recovered fully from the death of two of her young sons, James and Charles, in October, 1863. Following the death of Henrietta, Mrs. Ramsey and Elizabeth, hearing news of Arthur's wound, determined to leave Federally occupied Knoxville. In doing so Mrs. Ramsey would leave behind Margaret Jane, who, according to her parents and sisters,

³⁹Hesseltine, Ramsey, 161-66, 170-86; Sue Alexander, Women, 1-29, Ramsey Papers (NC).

had signed the Union oath to protect her small children and as a guarantee for her sister Sue to be allowed to leave Knoxville.⁴⁰

In July Mrs. Ramsey and Elizabeth took a "flag of truce" train headed toward Bristol.⁴¹ In her "Reminiscence of a Trip from Knoxville under a Flag of Truce," Elizabeth likewise expressed her strong Confederate leanings.

We left Knoxville 2d of July, 1864, under a Yankee flag of truce. . . . Yes! we will be free once again--have been slaves--in bondage ten months. Oh! for the inestimable privilege of speaking our thoughts and feelings--of breathing the free, pure air, uncontaminated with Yankee despotism. Our escort for the occasion was a brainless fop, ranking as Major in the Michigan cavalry.⁴²

Staying in Bristol only three months, because of the threat of Federal raids, Mrs. Ramsey with Sue and Elizabeth were taken into North Carolina in October, 1864. Near Charlotte, Sue was left with one of Ramsey's relatives, and Elizabeth became the governess in the household of another. Mrs. Ramsey became the "tutress" for the children of a family near Concord. In this separated state they all remained until after the war ended.⁴³

⁴⁰Hesseltine, Ramsey, 160, 163, 186-88, 198; Dr. and Mrs. B. B. Lenoir to friends, October 9, 1863, Ramsey Family Bible, 726; Hattie Lenoir to Henrietta Lenoir [n.d.], 1863, Ramsey Papers (UT); Sue Alexander, Women, 10, Ramsey Papers (NC).

⁴¹Hesseltine, Ramsey, 198-207; Mrs. Ramsey to Margaret Jane Dickson, August 1, 1864, Breck Scrapbook, between pages 74 and 75; Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, August 16, 1864, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Draper, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence; Anna Mary Moon, ed., "A Southern Woman, in 1897, Remembers the Civil War," EPHS Publications, No. 21 (1949), 114; Sue Alexander, Women, 25-29, Ramsey Papers (NC); Knoxville Sentinel, February 7, 1911.

⁴²Newspaper article, Miscellaneous Materials, Box 3-E, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁴³Hesseltine, Ramsey, 217-19, 230-32; Mrs. Ramsey, Diary, 4-8.

The Civil War years had indeed dealt a hard blow to the Ramsey family. The loss of friends and property was only magnified by the separation of the family and the deaths of three of its members. But the suffering was not complete with the end of the war. Their exile in North Carolina was to be accompanied by other losses characteristic of Reconstruction in the South.

CHAPTER XII

UNRECONSTRUCTED SOUTHERNER

The conclusion of the Civil War found the Ramsey family separated and exiled from their native state. As Ramsey himself later described their situation;

Where was to be the center of . . . [our] circle? We knew nothing of the large property we had left in Tennessee. From what we learned from the banished members of my household, from other exiles and refugees and from an occasional Union paper picked up by our scouts and brought to Dixie, the property was either burnt or destroyed or lawlessly sold, alienated, or confiscated. So that we had little to hope for and expect from that quarter. I had brought home with me from Georgia seventeen dollars all told of silver. My wife had still the twenty-five dollars of contraband gold, . . . making thus our joint fortune of forty-two dollars of available money on which to start in the world again--my wife at the age of nearly sixty-four and myself at the age of sixty-eight. Our daughters were not better provided for. Our four surviving sons were equally penniless.¹

In this condition the Ramseys, with their children, McKnitt, Elizabeth, and Sue, established themselves near Charlotte, North Carolina, on a small farm which the father chose to call "Exile's Retreat." Here he augmented his meager resources by a return to medical practice. Besides receiving from his son Crozier in Tennessee a small income from bank notes and coupons from county and state bonds, Ramsey also wrote several newspaper and magazine articles. Even seeking employment with the Columbia and Augusta Railroad Company, he was courteously refused

¹Hesseltine, Ramsey, 232.

because of the physical labor involved.²

That Ramsey's living conditions were unsettled and insecure in North Carolina is reflected by the frequent moves he contemplated, and sometimes made. Although he seriously considered following a brother-in-law to Texas in 1866, Crozier persuaded him to remain. In the latter part of that same year Ramsey appears to have been overjoyed with the prospects of going to Dickson, Alabama, where he was to take over another physician's practice. However, after relinquishing the lease on the farm near Charlotte, he and his family were unable to move to Alabama because a claim had developed against the house in which they planned to live. They then moved near Hopewell, North Carolina, to another small farm which Ramsey called "Exile's Retreat No. 2."³

Although he stayed on this farm for two years, Ramsey was dissatisfied much of the time, partly because of his and his wife's ill health, resulting from what he called "so much malarian influences." He considered accepting invitations to settle at Davidson College or to move near Alexandriana, North Carolina, where Sue, since October, 1867, the wife of William Davidson Alexander, now resided. Instead, in late 1868 Ramsey persuaded his son, Alexander, who had invested

²Ibid., 246-47; Ramsey to William Johnston, December 26, 1870; correspondence of Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, 1865-67, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, March 3, August 17, 1866; Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, Margaret Jane Dickson, and Elizabeth Breck, December 31, 1866; Mrs. Ramsey to Margaret Jane Dickson, December 27, 1866, ibid.; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 246-48.

the proceeds of his Swan Pond property in an unremunerative grist, saw, and flour mill near Rome, Georgia, to join him in renting a similar operation on a large farm near Salisbury in Rowan County. Calling this property "Exile's Retreat No. 3," he moved there in January, 1869.⁴ Following a trip to Knoxville in the early part of that same year to handle some business arising out of Crozier's death, and prompted by his wife's desire to return home, Ramsey expressed early in 1870 a feeling that, "impecunious" as he had "been since 1863," he hoped to be able to build a "cottage" on a lot which W. B. A. planned to give him in Knoxville. Instead, he remained with Alexander another year before moving into the city of Charlotte. Finally in the summer of 1871, the Ramseys returned to East Tennessee. After spending several months at "Riverside," Margaret Jane's home, in March of the following year they moved into town "to a small colonial cottage" at 809 East Main Street belonging to Elizabeth, a residence which Ramsey quite naturally christened "Mecklenburg Place."⁵

In addition to the insecurity which the Ramseys experienced because they had no roots in the soil, they also felt strongly the restrictions which the loss of their fortune had placed upon them. Mrs. Ramsey

⁴Ibid., 249; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, March 25, December 1, 1868, March 31, December 7, 1870, March 31, 1871, McIver Collection; D. H. Hill to Ramsey, November 19, 1868; Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, December 18, 1868, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁵Hesseltine, Ramsey, 250-54, 267n; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, March 31, December 7, 1870, March 21, May 12, 1871, November 30, 1872, McIver Collection; Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, Robert Ramsey, and Sue Alexander, March 3, 1872; Ramsey, Statement to His Wife Concerning His Will, October 30, 1880, Box 3-F; Our House Book, Legal and Financial Materials, Box 3-H, Ramsey Papers (UT); newspaper article, Scrapbook I, 54.

often expressed such sentiments as "I never expect to be able to get a carriage again," or "luxuries we never see here, we have learned to live on little and that of the plainest kind." Her husband's correspondence likewise contained similar phrases: "fortunes all gone," or "I never felt before the present occasion, the deep regret which the iron hand of poverty imposes upon me." Indeed, for the Ramseys to respond to a request for a needy cause with the apology, "If I was less impecunious than I am," or in traveling, to be forced to take into consideration "the shortest and least expensive route," were new experiences. The new suit that his brother sent to him in which to celebrate his golden wedding anniversary March 1, 1871, was not the only suit of clothes given to Ramsey during the years following the war.⁶

Actually, however, their financial hardships were only extreme when compared to their former state. Although living in obscure surroundings, they were not destitute. Mrs. Ramsey generally had a cook or helper, both while in North Carolina and after her return to Knoxville. Her husband often declared, "we are better off than any one near us"; "I never lived better nor worked less in all my life. It is just as well to be poor as rich. We have tried both"; or that he was "a little impecunious comparatively but plenty to eat and wear."

⁶ Mrs. Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, September 9, December 21, 1866, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, March 31, December 7, 1870, McIver Collection; Ramsey to Draper, May 6, 1872, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey to Draper, February 3, 1873, Draper Correspondence; Ramsey to Anson Nelson, November 19, 1874, February 14, 1880, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 234.

In describing to his brother the farm and mills in Rowan County which he and Alexander rented, Ramsey, possibly exaggerating, said that its land was "unsurpassed," and the house the "best in Western North Carolina."⁷

A particular disappointment, often expressed by the Ramseys following the war, was the scattered location of the various members of the family. During the early part of their "exile" in North Carolina, Crozier and Margaret Jane and her family were in Knoxville, while Alexander was in Rome, Georgia, and Robert, who had married in July, 1866, lived in Rowan County, North Carolina. Probably the Ramsey's worst disappointment was their not being in a position to see their grandchildren. In fact, claiming that Henrietta, before her death, had expressed the desire that they rear her two surviving sons, William and Henry, they addressed several unheeded letters to Dr. Lenoir asking his permission to carry out Henrietta's wish. Actually, here again, their separated state was only extreme when compared to the close-knit relationship which had characterized the family in the past. While Elizabeth and McKnitt were with them most of the time, Sue lived only three miles away when they were near Hopewell. And when Alexander moved to Rowan County, they joined him there close to Robert.⁸

⁷Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, January 17, July 4, 1867, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, December 1, 1868, March 8, 1874, McIver Collection; Ramsey to Draper, May 6, 1872, Draper Manuscripts; Tenth Census (1880), pop., Knox, Tenn., 38.

⁸Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, November 5, 1866, January 17, May 11, June 4, 1867; Mrs. Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, December 21, 1866, January 10, 1867, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, March 25, 1868, March 31, 1871, McIver Collection; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 239.

A penalty associated with Reconstruction which Ramsey had apparently not anticipated fully was the political disability resulting from his having been an active officer in the Confederate government. Writing to B. R. Strong in May, 1865, that he considered "the pacifications as permanent & that under it we ought to prepare for an early return to Tennessee," Ramsey little suspected that he would soon be indicted for treason and warned by his son not to return to Knoxville. Traveling to Washington on business in October, 1865, Crozier, "well received" by Andrew Johnson, his son Robert, and Johnson's son-in-law, Judge David T. Patterson, applied for pardons for himself and his father. After receiving Ramsey's pardon, Crozier instructed him to write Secretary of State William H. Seward "a formal acknowledgement of its receipt" and to inform Seward that he had taken the amnesty oath.⁹ Although Ramsey responded to his son's request, his letter certainly indicates little enthusiasm over his pardon. He briefly and tartly replied to Seward:

I hasten to notify you that the pardon of President J.-- dated Nov. 10 & sent to the care of my son Gen. J. C. Ramsey at Nashville T. has been received by him. He informs me that it is my duty to say to you that the pardon is accepted & that I had taken the amnesty oath prescribed in the proclamation of the President dated May 29, 1865.¹⁰

Although he had received his pardon, Ramsey was still charged

⁹Ramsey to B. R. Strong, May 30, 1865, in newspaper article, *Scrapphook* I, 20-21; Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, August 11, November 16, 1865, Ramsey Papers (IT).

¹⁰Ramsey to William H. Seward, December 2, 1865 (copy), *ibid.*

with treason, and Crozier advised him several times not to come back to Knoxville. Representing his father and brothers, Alexander, Robert, and McKnitt, Crozier finally reported in March, 1867, that he had managed to get the treason cases dismissed under the conditions that they pay the court costs and that they compromise damage suits against himself and Alexander and Robert, suits which also arose from their participation in the war. Even after these matters were settled, however, Ramsey feared returning, and Crozier still advised against it. Although Mrs. Ramsey apparently wanted to go back, her husband, as late as January, 1869, was apprehensive about returning. He feared that if he did so, suits would be brought against him in connection with the Bank of the State of Tennessee, for his salary after 1861, and for any money lost or exchanged for Confederate money after the funds of the Knoxville branch were taken from there when the Union army invaded East Tennessee.¹¹

As one might expect, Crozier, the center of much controversy during the war, experienced more hardships than any other member of his family following it. As we have seen, Crozier, released from jail pending his trial for treason, sought safety in Nashville, where he established a law practice. The Ramseys made much of his kind treatment by the widow of James K. Polk while he was there. In August, 1865, he was arrested, brought back to Knoxville, and charged with

¹¹ Crozier Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, September 15, 1865; Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, April 26, 1866, March 15, 1867; Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey [January, 1865?], ibid.

murder in connection with the military trial and hanging of one of the bridge burners. Released on bail after a week's imprisonment, he returned to Nashville. Probably through the influence of Judge Patterson, he was able to have his case continued until after he had received his pardon, and early in 1866 he returned to Knoxville to defend himself.¹²

Back in Knoxville he continued to be the object of harassment. In May the district attorney, on behalf of Crozier, formally protested to Judge Connally F. Trigg that William G. Dickens, whose father had died in a Confederate prison, and Andrew Knott had "threatened and menaced" Crozier. Knott responded that

he had no intention of molesting Mr. Ramsey while a prisoner, but that when the court should release him, that he would make the streets of Knoxville too hot for him. He urged that he had suffered imprisonment and abuse through Ramsey's agency, and that he now felt justified in avenging himself, at the first favorable opportunity.¹³

The judge placed Knott under \$10,000 bond to keep the peace toward all and "J. C. Ramsey in particular" for twelve months.¹⁴

Since Crozier had not been a member of the court martial which had condemned the bridge burner, he was subsequently acquitted of the charge of murder. Moreover, as we have seen, the case of treason

¹²Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, August 31, October 8, 12, 1865; Crozier Ramsey's pardon and amnesty oath, signed November 10, 1865, Miscellaneous Materials, Box 3-E, *ibid.*; newspaper article, Breck Scrapbook, 4; Knoxville Daily Gazette, August 30, 1865.

¹³Knoxville Commercial, May 25, 1866. ¹⁴Ibid.

against him was finally dismissed.¹⁵ In fact, his trial seems to have been significant in its effects on other such cases in East Tennessee. Speaking of the inconvenience which the indictments for treason in the Federal courts caused many prominent East Tennessee ex-Confederates, and commenting on the fact that there were actually no convictions in these cases, Thomas B. Alexander asserts that "it was not until 1867 that the Bristol News could report that Judge Swan, the judge most inclined to try cases, had dismissed General J. C. Ramsey--thereby signaling the discontinuation of such suits."¹⁶

Crozier's troubles were not ended, however, with this acquittal. Still fearing bodily harm, he wrote to his father in March, 1867, that he anticipated a warm political struggle in Knoxville in the summer and that "it may be prudent for some Southern men not to be here during that time--if so I may go over to N. C." In addition, although his father comments that "the country had become comparatively quiet," during the year before Crozier's death in 1869, a pistol was fired through his window one night, and he was assaulted once, possibly twice.¹⁷

¹⁵Knoxville Daily Gazette, August 30, 1856; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 244; Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, March 15, 1867, Ramsey Papers (UT). There is in the Ramsey Papers a license signed by William Rule, clerk of Knox County, allowing Crozier to practice law for one year. Legal and Financial Materials, Box 3-I, ibid.

¹⁶Thomas B. Alexander, "Neither Peace Nor War: Conditions in Tennessee in 1865," ETHS Publications, No. 21 (1947), 50-51; Bristol News, March 7, 1867.

¹⁷Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, March 15, 1867; Ramsey and Mrs. Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, April 3, 1868, Ramsey Papers (UT); Hesselstine, Ramsey, 253.

The worst of Crozier's troubles involved the damage suits brought against him by Unionists or their heirs. Thomas B. Alexander says concerning this matter:

Union men who had suffered imprisonment or loss of property due to Confederate action were encouraged to enter damage suits against the men responsible for their losses. If it was not possible to identify specific individuals as the responsible parties, then suits were entered against any prominent Confederates of the community whose influence could be said to have encouraged such Confederate actions. This very wide principle of responsibility was applied in many places, and the property of large numbers of East Tennessee ex-Confederates was attached under such suits.¹⁸

Actually, back in March, 1867, when he had just begun to feel the brunt of these damage suits, Crozier, already weary of the litigation and court proceedings involved in such proceedings, exclaimed to his father, "It seems like we will never get through paying cost. I have been paying cost and taxes ever since I have been here and am not through yet."¹⁹

In December of 1867 Governor Brownlow, "determined that justice" should "be done him by the leading rebels of Knoxville," brought a \$25,000 damage suit against Crozier and three others: William H. Sneed, John H. Crozier, and Robert B. Reynolds. William C. Pickens followed with another damage suit of \$50,000 against the same men, with the exception of John H. Crozier. The situation became so bad that Crozier Ramsey lamented to his father in March, 1868, that

¹⁸Alexander, "Tennessee in 1865," 49-50.

¹⁹Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, March 15, 1867, Ramsey Papers (UT).

although he had gotten out of \$100,000 of suits in Greene County, he was "yet sued in this county for ninety thousand." Fearing that he might lose the Brownlow and Pickens cases, Crozier instructed his father to change his will, which gave a lot and building in Knoxville to him, and deed it to McKnitt. If he managed to be freed of the damages, he would retake the property. Brownlow and Pickens were successful in prosecuting their suits, and, although the properties of Sneed and John H. Crozier were attached, Crozier Ramsey thus had no property to be taken.²⁰

Still deeply involved in litigation and court proceedings, Crozier died, as he father says, "shrouded in mystery," January 1, 1869. whereas a newspaper account declared that he had been ill for "some ten days," dying of an "inflammation of the stomach and bowels," and John H. Crozier reported to Crozier's father that his "illness assumed a typhoid form" before his death, Ramsey himself stated that "some of the circumstances lead to the suspicion of poison," and noted that Crozier had been robbed of his money.²¹ The biased John Bell Brownlow asserted, "Ramsey died of . . . [a] loathsome disease, having become so rotten & loathsome that no decent boarding house or restaurant would board him & he was compelled to live & die in his lurid

²⁰ Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, March 15, December 21, 1867, March 6, 1868, *ibid.*; Knoxville Whig, December 25, 1867; Alexander, "Tennessee in 1865," 50.

²¹ John H. Crozier to Ramsey, January 1, 2, 4, 1869, Ramsey Papers (UT); Knoxville Daily Press and Herald, January 2, 5, 1869; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 252-53.

bachelor quarters with an old Negro to bring him his food."²²

Ramsey was convinced that his son's heavy labors involved in attempts to secure the rights and property of his parents and brothers had helped to bring on his early death. Whether this explanation is valid or not, it is a fact that the voluminous correspondence between Crozier and the other members of his family from 1865 to 1869 indicates that he worked unrelentingly in their behalf, as well as his own, to remove the liabilities that the defeat in the war had imposed upon them. It is perhaps indicative of Brownlow's assessment of Crozier that although the latter was the villain of the Parson's Sketches of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of Secession, when Crozier died, he received only a nine-line obituary in the midst of many other news items in the Whig. It is an interesting coincidence that the same issue of the Whig which noted Crozier's death also carried the announcement that Brownlow was relinquishing his paper to other hands.²³

All the Ramsey sons were also indicted in Federal court for treason. In addition, Robert was indicted on two counts of murder in connection with the death of state Senator Samuel Pickens, who died in a Confederate prison, and the killing of a certain Pleasant Pearce. While on patrol duty, Robert and Alexander, who was also charged in

²²Note on the margin of a microfilm copy of Knoxville Whig, January 11, 1865, McClung Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee.

²³Note on the back of John H. Crozier to Ramsey, January 1, 1869; Ramsey to John H. Crozier, January 11, 1869, Ramsey Papers (UT); Knoxville Whig, January 6, 1869.

the Pearce case, along with five other soldiers, encountered three men, who began to run when ordered to halt. According to the soldiers, only after several attempts to get the men to stop did they fire shots, which wounded and killed Pearce. After securing their pardons and after lengthy court proceedings, Alexander, Robert, and McKnitt were freed of the charges of treason under the condition that they pay the court costs, but the two brothers were forced to compromise the case of murder against them by paying, with the other defendants, damages of \$160 each to Pearce's heirs. This biographer has been unable to uncover the settlement in the Pickens murder case against Robert. However, it is significant that in several letters in which Crozier Ramsey announced that the other members of the family could come home, he warned that Robert should not. And when Ramsey informed Draper of his plans to return to Knoxville in 1871, he added, "Others of us can never go back in safety." As it was, only two of the children, McKnitt and Elizabeth, eventually returned to Knoxville with their parents. Whereas Robert and Sue remained in North Carolina, Alexander and his family moved to Texas in the early seventies.²⁴

Perhaps the most frustrating experiences which Ramsey faced following the war concerned the long litigation in his attempts to

²⁴Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, October 5, 1865, March 3, April 26, 1866, March 15, 1867; T. J. Campbell to Robert Ramsey, receipt for \$160.00, March 27, 1868, Legal and Financial Materials, Box 3-I, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Draper, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, February 17, March 19, September 28, 1873, McIver Collection; Ramsey to Anson Nelson, September 14, November 1, 1880, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Knoxville Daily Tribune, April 12, 1884; newspaper article, Scrapbook I, 49.

recover his property, all of which, except for one lot in Knoxville, had been confiscated or attached and sold to satisfy judgments against him or to pay taxes. He appears not to have had much difficulty in recovering a lot and building in town on the east side of Gay Street. In fact, after taking legal steps to recover this property, Crozier was able in 1867 to purchase it "at back tax rates." Ramsey wanted to sell it, probably because of his need of money and his fear that it might be attached in the Brownlow suit against him. Although Crozier persuaded him not to sell under pressure at a loss, after his son's death, he still sought a buyer. This property was possibly the house and lot which Elizabeth bought in 1870 and sold back to her parents in 1876.²⁵

Ramsey had much more difficulty in recovering his other property, particularly Ramsey's Hall on Gay Street in Knoxville, probably his most valuable piece of real estate. When the war began, he owed Cynthia S. White a little over \$300, which, he claimed he tried to pay several times, only to find that she merely desired the interest. After Ramsey fled Knoxville with the Federal invasion, Mrs. White filed a bill against him declaring that he had absconded to keep from paying the debt. An attachment was levied on Ramsey's Hall, and chancery court

²⁵Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, December 11, 1865, December 21, 1867; Ramsey to John H. Crozier, August 16, 19, 1869; Frank A. Scott to John H. Crozier, promissory note, December 15, 1870; tax payment receipt, July 6, 1868, Legal and Financial Materials, Box 3-I, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Draper, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence; Warranty Books H, Vol. 3, pp. 222-23, and O, Vol. 3, pp. 437-38, Knox County Courthouse, Knoxville, Tennessee.

ordered that it be sold to secure the debt. Valued at "from eight to ten thousand dollars," it was sold to Stephen Vail in January, 1865, for \$5,100, and he in turn sold it in 1866 to Jacob R. Ludlow for \$5,000.²⁶

Crozier²⁷ brought suit in Federal court against White, Ludlow, and Vail, charging that the original sale was illegal. He argued that although the publication of the attachment proceedings and the judgment had been made in the Knoxville Whig, Ramsey, not knowing of such action, was denied his day in court. Moreover, if he had come forward to defend himself, he would have been arrested. The conditions of the war thus prevented the rights of due process. It was also argued that the chancellor, appointed by military Governor Johnson, was not elected, and, therefore, was not a legal chancellor. Besides, knowing of Ramsey's other farms, he should have sold a few acres of one of them, and not allowed such a valuable piece of property to be sold to pay such a

²⁶ Brief in Ramsey vs. White, Ludlow, and Vail, September 5, 1867, Nelson Papers; Warranty Book C, Vol. 3, pp. 314-15, Knox County Courthouse, Knoxville, Tennessee.

²⁷ Hesseltine says that T. A. R. Nelson was employed to prosecute this case and another, Ramsey vs. Bowman, Brakebill, and Weigle, to recover Ramsey's Hall in town and also Mecklenburg. Although the briefs in these cases are to be found in the Nelson Papers, one must question the conclusion that Nelson was thus Ramsey's counsel in the face of Crozier's statement to his father, April 16, 1868, "Col. Nelson is the opposing counsel in both cases." In fact, Crozier had earlier reported that a certain Judge [George?] Brown was to assist him. Nelson might possibly have taken the cases after Crozier's death. Hesseltine, Ramsey, 250n; Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, November 13, 1865, February 12, March 15, April 2, July 7, 1866, April 16, 1868, Ramsey Papers (UT); case files of Ramsey vs. White, Ludlow, and Vail, case No. 160, and Ramsey vs. Bowman, Brakebill, and Weigle, case No. 159, Circuit Court, District of Tennessee, Federal Records Center, East Point, Georgia.

meager debt. Ironically enough, Ramsey's brother-in-law, David A. Deaderick, who, as clerk of the chancery court at the time, had carried out the judgment of the court in selling Ramsey's property, now testified in his brother-in-law's behalf that another house and lot or a vacant lot in town of less value belonging to Ramsey could have been sold to satisfy the debt, instead of Ramsey's Hall.²⁸

Realizing that he had a better chance to recover property from the Federal government than from an individual, Ramsey further contended that since the building had been confiscated in September, 1864, the government had a claim on it prior to the attachment bill in chancery court. He called upon the court to restore his property and lost revenues. The court decided in the plaintiff's favor, and, after deducting for expenditures, repairs, improvements, and taxes, directed Ludlow to reimburse Ramsey \$2,190.92, Vail to pay him \$3,443, and Ludlow to return to him his property. Ludlow appealed the case to the United States Supreme Court, and on May 1, 1871, the high court reversed the lower court's decision, ordering Ramsey to pay the court costs and Ludlow's expenses in making his appeal.²⁹

²⁸ Brief in Ramsey vs. White, Ludlow, and Vail, September 5, 1867, Nelson Papers; Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, April 9, 1867, Ramsey Papers (UT); Deposition of David A. Deaderick, in case file of Ramsey vs. White, Ludlow, and Vail, case No. 160, Circuit Court, District of Tennessee, Federal Records Center, East Point, Georgia.

²⁹ Ramsey to John H. Crozier, March 30, 1870, January 16, 1871, Ramsey Papers (UT); Brief in Ramsey vs. White, Ludlow, and Vail, September 5, 1867, Nelson Papers; Brief of Brown and Cornick; decree of Circuit Court, district judge Conally F. Trigg; mandate of the United States Supreme Court, in case file of Ramsey vs. White, Ludlow, and Vail, case No. 160, Circuit Court, District of Tennessee, Federal Records Center, East Point, Georgia.

Ramsey faced similar difficulties in attempting to recover Mecklenburg. Before the Federal occupation of Knoxville he owed Samuel Bowman \$300. After Ramsey had fled East Tennessee in 1863, Bowman brought suit in chancery court to collect the debt, and on March 20, 1865, Mecklenburg was sold to Adam Brakebill for \$3,750 to satisfy the \$300 judgment in the Bowman case. In the meantime, Charles Weigle was living on part of the property and managing Ramsey's ferry. After Brakebill bought Mecklenburg, he apparently sold a tract of the land to Weigle.³⁰

When Crozier brought suit in Federal Court against Bowman, Brakebill, and Weigle to regain the property, he used the same basic arguments as he had in the White, Ludlow, and Vail case. In addition, Crozier argued that, knowing of the proposed sale of the property, he had made an agreement with a friend of the family, Joseph A. Mabry, whereby the latter would buy Mecklenburg, thus pay off the Bowman debt, and hold the farm until Ramsey was in a position to redeem it. Mabry testified that he had intended to do so, but, arriving at the sale, was informed by Brakebill that the latter had agreed with Ramsey to buy the property and hold it for him. It was further contended that there was collusion between Brakebill and Weigle not to bid against each other and thereby keep the price down. Afterward, Weigle would

³⁰Brief in Ramsey vs. Bowman, Brakebill, and Weigle, September 23, 1867, Nelson Papers; Briefs in case file of Ramsey vs. Bowman, Brakebill, and Weigle, case No. 159, Circuit Court, District of Tennessee, Federal Records Center, East Point, Georgia; Hesselstine, Ramsey, 250n.

buy half the property at half the sale price. Further confusing the proceedings in the case was Bowman's testimony that he was a neighbor and "intimate friend" of Ramsey and never thought of bringing suit until the war created an extraordinary situation and forced Ramsey to leave town. He also said that it was "never" his "intention" "to sell or have sold the entire property & estate" of Ramsey for "so small a sum and one so disproportionate to the value of the property sold."³¹

After involved litigation, Ramsey finally compromised the suit with Weigle and Brakebill, whereby he gave title to Mecklenburg proper to Brakebill, with the exception of a large tract sold to Weigle. According to Ramsey's agreement with Brakebill, the latter would pay him \$1,806.25, neither of the parties would charge for rent or improvements, and they would divide equally the court costs. When Brakebill became delinquent in his payments, Ramsey unsuccessfully tried to repurchase a part of the property for "historical, sentimental reasons, burial etc."³²

³¹Depositions of John C. Ramsey and George Brown; Answer of Samuel Bowman, June 1, 1868; briefs in case file of Ramsey vs. Bowman, Brakebill, and Weigle, case No. 159, Circuit Court, District of Tennessee, Federal Records Center, East Point, Georgia.

³²Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, January 29, December 18, 1866, April 16, July 2, August 11, 1868; Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, October 21, 1867; Ramsey to Mrs. Ramsey, March 12, 1869; Ramsey to John H. Crozier, November 11, 1869, February 9, October 31, 1870; Arthur C. Crozier to Ramsey, January 12, 1871; papers A and B., Legal and Financial Materials, Box 3-I, Ramsey Papers (UT); brief in Ramsey vs. Bowman, Brakebill, and Weigle, September 23, 1867, Nelson Papers; Warrantly Books J, Vol. 3, pp. 642-43, and G, Vol. 3, pp. 301-302; Trust Book B, Vol. I, pp. 76-78, Knox County Courthouse, Knoxville, Tennessee; case file of Ramsey vs. Bowman, Brakebill, and Weigle, case No. 159, Circuit Court, District of Tennessee, Federal Records Center, East Point, Georgia.

The suit which apparently involved little legal difficulty, but the one which produced in Ramsey the most bitterness, was one involving his own sister-in-law, Hannah Swan, who had apparently at one time been very close to the Ramsey family. Ramsey claimed that, having expended \$5,000 to publish his Annals, he had borrowed from William Swan in 1854 approximately \$2,000 to meet obligations on East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad stock subscriptions. He further contended that he had paid the interest annually and part of the principal before Swan's death in 1859, but had no records since the receipts were burned with his house. In 1865 Mrs. Swan brought suit against him in chancery court for over \$6,000. Although an attachment was issued, the chancery court records indicate that the court did not handle the matter beyond this point. Bits of information in the Ramsey Papers suggest that Ramsey and Mrs. Swan compromised the suit.³³

Although they ultimately seem to have reached an agreement, Ramsey became extremely bitter toward Mrs. Swan, emphasizing the patience of some of his other creditors compared to her lack of it. "She with a profuse prodigality was lavishing her donations of thousands of dollars on those not more deserving of her charity or kindness than J. G. M. Ramsey."³⁴ In a proposed compromise agreement, he declared

³³Statement of J. G. M. Ramsey to be Exhibited to the Arbitrators [Swan Suit], 1877, Legal and Financial Materials, Box 3-H; note on back of Ramsey to Tennessee Historical Society, 1875 [?], Ramsey Papers (UT); Chancery Court Rule Docket, Vol. F, p. 86, Knox County Court-house, Knoxville, Tennessee.

³⁴Statement of J. G. M. Ramsey to be Exhibited to the Arbitrators [Swan Suit], 1877, Legal and Financial Materials, Box 3-H; note on back of Ramsey to Tennessee Historical Society, 1875 [?], Ramsey Papers (UT).

that, although Mrs. Ramsey could pay if she chose, he refused to pay a \$200 loan (which he thought had been a gift) which Mrs. Swan had made to Mrs. Ramsey. He further asserted that it was "the only help she or any of Mrs. R. family ever rendered any of us during all our troubles."³⁵ Actually, John H. Crozier had helped them a great deal after their son's death, but the relationship had apparently changed by 1875.

To be fair to Ramsey, it must be pointed out that earlier in several letters to his son Crozier and his brother-in-law John H. Crozier, he had mentioned this debt to Swan as the "only honest debt" he owed in the world, and expressed his determination to sell part of his property and pay it to Swan's widow. In fact, when he returned to Knoxville, still not aware of the suit against him, one of the first things he did was to deed to her as part payment of the debt a lot back of Gay Street, which he had intended to give to his daughter Sue. It is further interesting to note that in spite of the ill-feeling between the families, Mrs. Swan at her death willed a lot in the Hannah Swan Addition to Sue.³⁶

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, December 18, 1868; Ramsey to John H. Crozier, February 9, March 30, 1870, January 16, 1871; C. W. Crozier to Ramsey, receipt, December 10, 1871; Ramsey, Financial Statement, December 25, 1876; Statement of J. G. M. Ramsey to be Exhibited to the Arbitrators [Swan Suit], 1877; J. L. C. Shepard, note, September 16, 1878, Legal and Financial Materials, Box 3-H, ibid.; Warranty Book K, Vol. 3, p. 234, Knox County Courthouse, Knoxville, Tennessee.

All of the litigation and loss of property (the reader is reminded that the Brownlow and Ross vs. Ramsey and Lyon case was running concurrently with the others) that Ramsey experienced following the war brought home to him in a forceful manner the fruits of his lost cause. He had over-optimistically reported to Draper in 1871, "I have also recovered after tedious & vexatious delay & litigation two of my farms & one house & lot in K." Actually, because of lawyers' fees, with "other unavoidable & necessary expenses" and debts owed before the war, Ramsey was forced to sell what land he was able to recover, and he asserted that the property he gave to Mrs. Swan was "the last foot of land that I hold or expect ever to hold in the world."³⁷ He had earlier expressed to his brother his astonishment that "prudent & patriotic" as he was, he should, after reaching his "three score and ten," be

perplexed & annoyed about getting . . . [his] rights from people . . . [he had] served so faithfully & confided in so strongly. I never so much realized the force of Christs words "where thieves break through & steal." There, robbery is legalised [sic] & good men as the world calls them practice it--the really good become their victims. There is a place Thank God! where thieves "break not through & steal."³⁸

Ramsey did not, however, die without property. He and Mrs. Ramsey purchased a house and lot in Knoxville from Elizabeth, probably with the intention of giving it to Sue at their death, thereby realizing Ramsey's long cherished desire to have bequeathed to each of his children

³⁷Ramsey to Draper, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence; Statement of J. G. M. Ramsey to be Exhibited to the Arbitrators [Swan Suit], 1877, Legal and Financial Materials, Box 3-H, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³⁸Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, April 16, 1860, McIver Collection.

a piece of property. Moreover, following the successful defense of his suit with Brownlow, he was awarded judgment and received two lots on Gay Street. Mrs. Ramsey also purchased another lot later on. Apparently in their declining years the Ramseys gained back a very small part of the large amount of real estate they had lost during and after the war.³⁹

Although, for the most part, not experiencing the difficulty which their father had, Ramsey's children also faced obstacles in recovering their property. In selling Swan Pond plantation, Alexander suffered a financial loss as a result of the liabilities attached to his Confederate service and because he was forced to remain in North Carolina while the transaction was carried out by Crozier. Elizabeth's brother was unable to dispose of her farm because it became known that Brownlow and Ross had brought suit against it before her father had deeded the property to her.⁴⁰ McKnitt Ramsey seems to have had more difficulty in recovering his land than any of the other children. His farm was confiscated by the order of the United States District Attorney James P. Swan in 1864. The following year it was attached and sold under a "decree of condemnation" to Jared Meade. After the war ended, when McKnitt brought suit in the United States Circuit Court to recover the farm, he was finally forced to agree to a compromise,

³⁹Warranty Book O, Vol. 3, pp. 437-38; Trust Book D, Vol. I, pp. 273-74, Knox County Courthouse, Knoxville, Tennessee; see Appendix III.

⁴⁰Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, August 19, October 4, 1866; September 20, 1867, January 14, 1868 [?], Ramsey Papers (UT).

whereby he would pay Meade \$300.00 for the land and also the court costs in his suit.⁴¹

In spite of his having signed the amnesty oath and received his pardon, and undoubtedly influenced by the hardships he had suffered, Ramsey maintained an unyielding attitude toward the Federal government during the Reconstruction period. Resuming his correspondence with Draper in February, 1870, he wrote: "Hopeful and true to the last, the surrender found me at Charlotte in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina--constant, loyal to the Southern Confederacy, and defiant to its enemies."⁴² He appended to his autobiography, as indicative of his sympathies, an anonymous poem entitled "Lines by an ex-Confederate," which concluded:

And I don't want no pardon
For what I was and am;
I won't be reconstructed
And I don't care a d____.⁴³

Not only was Ramsey an unreconstructed Confederate; his autobiography is mentioned as a work whose "whole tone" vividly illustrates "the extremes of post-war bitterness in East Tennessee."⁴⁴

⁴¹Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, January 19, June 24, 1867; Ramsey to T. R. Cornick, January 16, 1871; T. R. Cornick to Ramsey, April 15, 1871; Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, January 28, 1872, *ibid.*; Warranty Book K, Vol. 3, pp. 236-37, Knox County Courthouse, Knoxville Tennessee; case file of Ramsey *vs.* Jared Meade, case No. 183, Circuit Court, District of Tennessee, Federal Records Center, East Point, Georgia.

⁴²Ramsey to Draper, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence.

⁴³Hesseltine, *Ramsey*, 248n.

⁴⁴Allen J. Going, "A Shooting Affray in Knoxville with Interstate Repercussions: the Killing of James H. Clanton by David M. Nelson," *ETHS Publications*, No. 27 (1955), 39n.

It can safely be said that Ramsey's reaction to the war and Reconstruction reflected Jefferson Davis' "mourning the 'Lost Cause,'" rather than Robert E. Lee's "efforts to building a new society."⁴⁵ Although Crozier in 1865 had praised Andrew Johnson as "the best friend the South has and it becomes us all cordially to sustain him in order that he may be able to break down Black republicanism [sic],"⁴⁶ Ramsey seems not to have expressed any such confidence in him. Ten years later, while admitting to Draper that Johnson was "honest," Ramsey blamed him for the evils of Reconstruction, asserting that Johnson's "course on coercion measures caused more bloodshed and other mischief than Napoleon ever did."⁴⁷ As was pointed out earlier, he planned to stop his proposed Tennessee history textbook at 1860, lest he "tramp on somebody's toes, hurt the feelings of some modern Democrat such as A. Johnson."⁴⁸

In the first few years after the war, Ramsey expressed little confidence at all in the future of his country. Comparing the burning of Mecklenburg to what he considered the crumbling of the American political structure, he wrote in 1867:

All was lost at one fell stroke of the incendiary & the plunderer--The old mansion could not survive the political structure erected co-temporarily with [it]

⁴⁵Hesseltine and Smiley, South, 391.

⁴⁶Crozier Ramsey to Ramsey, September 15, 1865, Ramsey Papers (IT).

⁴⁷Ramsey to Draper, August 17, 1875, Draper Correspondence

⁴⁸Ramsey to Draper, November 10, 1875, ibid.

& with its own destruction by fire, the Constitution of 1789 was destroyed too. Each is a ruin & may never be reconstructed. One is as improbable as the other.⁴⁹

Pointing out to his brother the following year that his North Carolina neighbors had not "been Shermanized & scandalised [sic] as we Tennessee exiles have been," Ramsey defiantly asserted,

I don't allow the political ruins of the United States present & prospective to disturb me. . . . Our rulers are not only crazy but are far gone on the broad road to Hell & I can't help their rapid descent. Let them slide. Our (Southern) deliverance is only the more sure.⁵⁰

In 1870 he was still bitterly excoriating the North. Describing to Draper his losses sustained during the war, he declared,

But they were lost in a righteous cause though not a lost cause. Our rebellion was a success--is a success in this that it has disintegrated the union forever and forever. I do not believe that there is virtue enough left in the limited states ever to heal the wound inflicted by the coercive policy of the Lincoln dynasty.⁵¹

He went on to exaggerate, "I speak deliberately the sentiments of the whole South."⁵² Shortly afterward he reported to W. B. A., "All doing well but our beloved country. I see nothing hopeful in her future."⁵³

Although losing some of his bitterness by 1872, Ramsey still echoed past feelings as he commented to Draper that he was seventy-five

⁴⁹Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, October 21, 1867, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁵⁰Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, March 25, 1868, McIver Collection.

⁵¹Ramsey to Draper, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, March 31, 1870, McIver Collection.

years old and "buoyant, hopeful, trustful, resigned, submissive (not to despotism, I mean, but to God.)"⁵⁴ He almost certainly never resigned himself nor adjusted to the result of the war. Describing to Draper in 1877 a mysterious political philosophy (strangely resembling states' rights) which he called "reassociation," Ramsey wrote:

This is no Union now---only a fragmentary patchwork. Throw a brickbat or a sledge hammer into one of Stuart's largest and most brilliant mirrors on Broadway, New York and no power of Alchemy, no chemical skill, no artistic genius and no power of combination known to philosophers or statesmen can restore its . . . unity. Reconstruction, Johnson's Restoration---"my policy," as he called it,--have all failed alike to remodel us into one whole people. . . . There is but one and only one method to regenerate the republic into one homogeneous body out of the existing discordant and heterogeneous materials of which we now consist and that is this--Reassociation. That word will explain itself, implying the equality of all the activities and agencies of all the peoples making up our whole; holding out the old idea of state sovereignty and denying almost totally the idea of congressional supremacy. Wipe it out. It is the great source of our national danger. [I wish I had consented to go into the Senate with]⁵⁵ T. G. Harris and other old time Democrats. [We] could have put the ball in motion and possibly have saved the country from ruin. It is the only proper combination of the Federal and elective principles that can be framed. . . .⁵⁶

In 1878 he was still mourning the "Lost Cause," as he again commented to his Wisconsin correspondent, "There is nothing ever since 1860 which we [Tennessee and the South] need be unwilling for posterity to read; even the disaster and defeat of our lost-cause. 'In great

⁵⁴Ramsey to Draper, May 6, 1872, Draper Manuscripts.

⁵⁵Ramsey drew his pencil through the words in brackets. Hesseltine, Ramsey, 309n. There is no evidence to suggest that Ramsey was ever confronted with this choice, though the matter may have been mentioned in the course of conversation, since he was a good political friend of Harris.

⁵⁶Ramsey to Draper, January 14, 1877, Draper Correspondence.

events 'tis glorious e'en to fail.'"⁵⁷ In fact, after Ramsey's death his children continued to preserve a strong allegiance to the South. One finds in Elizabeth's scrapbook numerous articles and clippings concerning Lee, Davis, Morgan, Early, Stewart, and others,⁵⁸ materials that would be precious to the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

Feeling during the first few years after the war that there was no future for men with views like his, Ramsey claimed to have no interest in politics. Indeed, while he was in North Carolina, he was apparently inactive politically. For instance, one finds him writing in 1868 of the Southern Radical governor of North Carolina, "Holden is acting the tyrant in N. C. but we are not in the fight." Two years later, in referring to a recent election, he commented to his brother, "I eschew politics, said very little--felt no undue excitement."⁵⁹

While it is true that the days of his greatest political activity were past, a man as active and outspoken as Ramsey had always been would naturally take an interest in and express himself on such matters. Therefore, after his return to Knoxville he took a renewed interest in political struggles.⁶⁰ In the 1872 presidential race, he supported

⁵⁷Ramsey to Draper, December 21, 1878, ibid.

⁵⁸See Breck Scrapbook.

⁵⁹Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, July 29, 1868, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, December 7, 1870, McIver Collection; E. Merton Coulter, The South During Reconstruction (Vol. VIII in Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter, eds., A History of the South, 10 vols.; Louisiana University Press, 1947-), 124, 128.

⁶⁰Ramsey to Draper, January 14, 1877, Draper Correspondence.

Horace Greeley, against President Grant. Although Ramsey did not like all of Greeley's "political antecedents," and was only for him "in spots," he supported him because Greeley represented the press, which Ramsey called

the Third Estate in our government--the leader and manufacturer of enlightened public sentiments, the educator of our masses and in some considerable degree the instructor and evangelizer of our young people--a function of no small importance in the welfare of the country.⁶¹

Although Greeley lost the race, Ramsey considered that a majority of "the intelligence and virtue of the country" had voted for him, if one deducted "the Negro vote and the vote of the rabble North and South."⁶²

By 1876 Ramsey was manifesting some of his old enthusiasm in politics. He would have preferred William Allen of Ohio, with Zebulon Vance of North Carolina or Isham G. Harris of Tennessee for his running mate, as the Democratic standard-bearer in 1876 over Samuel J. Tilden, who was not too popular with Southerners. Ramsey, however, supported the convention's choice against Rutherford B. Hayes, whom he considered "a negative man" whose election would "constitute" Republican "mischief" and complete disaster."⁶³ Taking up his pen, he reported to the Knoxville Times in October that "everything looks favourable

⁶¹Ramsey to Draper, October 3, December 4, 1872, Draper Manuscripts.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ramsey to Draper, November 28, 1875, June 20, 1876, Draper Correspondence; Coulter, South During Reconstruction, 368.

for our cause. Every Democrat is at his post and active. . . . From Harris down to our young men at the hustings and on the stump . . . all our speakers are doing their full duty."⁶⁴

In the confusion of the contested election, which resulted from Republican claims of voting irregularities in South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana, Ramsey expressed "painful apprehensions of the immediate downfall of our republic."⁶⁵ Although Tilden polled a majority of the popular vote and needed only one electoral vote from the contested states to win the election, the electoral commission set up by Congress to decide the matter was destined to give every contested state to Hayes. In the face of threats by Northern Democrats to filibuster and prevent the counting of the electoral votes and the threat of possible revolution, Southern Democrats worked out a compromise with the Republicans, whereby Hayes was seated in exchange for concessions to the South, particularly the withdrawal of Federal troops.⁶⁶ Rejecting any compromise that would seat Hayes over Tilden, Ramsey asserted to Draper in January, 1877, "If Tilden is not inaugurated there will be further usurpation, tyranny and lawlessness, perhaps empire, another civil war." Far from believing that the

⁶⁴Knoxville Times, October 31, 1876.

⁶⁵Ramsey to Anson Nelson, November 24, 1876, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Coulter, South During Reconstruction, 370-72; Hesselstine and Smiley, South, 378-89.

⁶⁶C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 (Vol. IX in Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter, eds., A History of the South, 10 vols.; Louisiana State University Press, 1947-), 23-44; C. Vann Woodward, Reunion and Reaction (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1951).

Republicans would allow the South to redeem itself, Ramsey, in his sometime role as prophet of doom, when his view was not heeded, pessimistically declared that even if Tilden were seated, he could only "restore some of our lost features so as to last a term or two."⁶⁷

In spite of his gloomy outlook, however, he maintained an active interest in politics up to the time of his death. In fact, breaking with the party leaders in the state, he continued his loyalty to Tilden. When it became evident that the 1876 Democratic standard-bearer would not get his party's nomination in 1880, Ramsey registered his objection to Draper:

if the mad policy becomes a reality that Tilden is now to be cheated again out of the Democratic nomination our grand old party will be split asunder and go to pieces. We are and have been constantly a unit for Tilden in Tennessee. The masses and our statesmen are still for him, while our politicians are against him and will ruin the party.⁶⁸

As usual, however, he supported the party's nominee and expressed unbridled enthusiasm concerning Winfield Hancock's chances of victory.⁶⁹

To Draper he reported before the election of 1880, "Hancock booms.

Better and better than even Tilden or Seymour. God directed him in December 18, 1876 to write that letter to General Sherman."⁷⁰ I believe

⁶⁷Ramsey to Draper, January 14, 1877, Draper Correspondence.

⁶⁸Ramsey to Draper, January 30, 1880, ibid.

⁶⁹Ramsey to Draper, August 6, October 20, 1880, ibid.

⁷⁰In this letter to Sherman, Hancock had voiced his feeling that if the House of Representatives should be allowed to choose the president, as he believed it should under the circumstances, Tilden would be elected. Moreover, he expressed his disapproval of the military's interference in the elective process, particularly objecting

in the designs of God even about presidential elections. . . ."71

An indication of Ramsey's restored position as one of East Tennessee's Democratic leaders is Senator Isham G. Harris' request in 1877 that he advise him on East Tennessee patronage appointments. Harris confided to Ramsey, "I shall to a very great extent rely & act upon your recommendation." Moreover, since Ramsey had apparently sought the Federal pension agency here, Harris promised to aid him in securing it in the event of Tilden's inauguration.⁷²

As was emphasized earlier, however, Ramsey's major interest in his declining years was not politics. Picking up his pen after several years of relatively limited literary activity, he began to write again following the war. To a certain extent, the Reconstruction era was for Ramsey a return to history, his first love. When he had recovered from the initial brunt of his post-war difficulties and had finally returned to Knoxville in 1871, he was able to give more and more of his time to the gathering and writing of historical materials.

to the dispatching of troops to South Carolina when that state's governor's race was disputed in 1876. Winfield S. Hancock to William T. Sherman [n.d.], in Reminiscences of Winfield Scott Hancock, by his wife (New York: Charles L. Webster & Company, 1887), 151-57.

⁷¹Ramsey to Draper, August 2, 1880, Draper Correspondence.

⁷²Isham G. Harris to Ramsey, January 28, February 8, 1877, Ramsey Papers (UT).

CHAPTER XIII

VENERATED HISTORIAN

My health is good--perfect at 73; see as sharply, hear as acutely, sleep as soundly, eat as heartily and love my friends as ardently as ever before. I write history as earnestly though not as hopefully as in ante-bellum times. I write for the secular and religious journals. . . . Mnemorika is my general pseudonym, sometimes an Exile and sometimes a Tennessee Refugee and occasionally Agricola.¹

Thus Ramsey described to Draper in 1870 his return to the literary camp and the interest which was to absorb much of his time for the rest of his life.

While he was in "exile" in North Carolina, he contributed to the Knoxville Press and Messenger a series of articles entitled "Recollections of a Septegenarian," which embraced "the Bar the Bench--the pulpit--the clinique--the Press--the Internal Improvements of Knoxville." Other newspapers which sought and received his services as a writer were the Charlotte Times, which desired columns "on history, leading men, & natural resources in popular style" of Mecklenburg County, and the Charlotte Southern Home.² A magazine which paid Ramsey quite well and to which he was especially pleased to contribute articles was Daniel H. Hill's The Land We Love, begun in Charlotte in

¹Ramsey to Draper, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence.

²Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, March 25, 1868, McIver Collection; Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, February 29, April 3, 10, July 29, 1868; R. P. Waring to Ramsey, January [?], August 31, 1867; Ramsey to Waring, January 15, 1867, Ramsey Papers (HT).

May, 1866, and which E. Merton Coulter says, was "made into a sort of Confederate veterans' mouthpiece though he [Hill] also advocated a new day for the South brought on by a new kind of education."³ Writing such essays as "Sketch of Mecklenburg County," "Duel between Jackson and Dickerson," "The State of Franklin," and "Battle of King's Mountain," which one of Draper's correspondents called "the fullest and most graphic account of the battle of King's Mountain that I have seen," Ramsey also penned a "caustic article" comparing "the Reconstruction by N. C. in 1788 with that of the present Congress," a part of which he possibly "erased" because of fear that it might hurt his chances of winning court cases in which he was involved in East Tennessee.⁴ Also treating the religious history of his native region, he ran a series in the Richmond Christian Observer entitled "Sketches of Church History--The Early Churches of Tennessee," particularly dealing with biographies of well-known ministers and with early Presbyterianism. He became so active in his newspaper contributions that he was made an honorary member of the Tennessee Press Association in 1871.⁵

³Coulter, South During Reconstruction, 285.

⁴Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, April 12, 1867; Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, February 29, 1868, Ramsey Papers (UT); Thomas L. Preston to Draper, January 31, 1881, Draper Manuscripts. These articles in the Land We Love by Ramsey are: "Sketch of Mecklenburg County," by Mnemonika, II (December, 1866), 129-45; "Battle of King's Mountain," III (September, 1867), 381-400; "Duel Between Jackson and Dickerson [sic]," by A. Keosis of Tennessee, IV (December, 1867), 135-36; and "The State of Franklin," IV, 160-72, V, 13-22, 109-16, 216-29, which ran from April through July, 1868.

⁵Ramsey to R. P. Waring, January 15, 1867; Ramsey to Crozier Ramsey, February 29, 1868; A. Converse [editor of the Christian Observer]

The major literary work of Ramsey's North Carolina "exile" was his well-known autobiography. Having begun to write his life's story sometime before 1852, he completed it in July, 1870.⁶ Although Ramsey treats the history of his ancestors, his immediate family, and his own services to the community in which he lived, the autobiography is largely concerned with the Ramsey family's Civil War experiences, "their misfortunes and their bereavements," the father's "wanderings, and his emotions, his frantic haste to save the money" of the Confederate government and the Bank of the State of Tennessee. Hesseltine avers that "It was not alone a recounting of experiences: The experiences added up to a running exposition of the differences between Southern and Northern character."⁷ He might also have said that the exposition was heavily biased in favor of the Southern character. Throughout the work he bitterly denounced the "Yankee," and expressed his conviction that there could be no real union between the North and the South.

"Although Dr. Ramsey closed his Autobiography on a note of resignation and in the apparent belief that his days were drawing to an end," Hesseltine comments, "he had almost a decade and a half of life and

to Ramsey, April 25, 1866, February 1, April 15, 1867, June 8, 1869; F. B. Converse to Ramsey, June 14, 1867; certificate of honorary membership in the Tennessee Press Association, July 1, 1871, Miscellaneous Materials, Box 3-E, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Draper, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence; newspaper article, Scrapbook I, 12.

⁶Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey [n.d., probably 1852], March 31, 1870, McIver Collection; Alexander, *Recollections*, Ramsey Papers (NC); Charlotte Observer, March 8, 1931.

⁷Hesseltine, Ramsey, xii.

usefulness left."⁸ Regularly reporting his physical condition to Draper, Ramsey remarked in 1871 that he was "now seventy-four years old, but still active, vivacious, buoyant," in 1872 that he was "eight pounds heavier (118) than my usual weight, have not been sick an hour since we left the malarian region of North Carolina," and in 1873 that he was "still vivacious and with some energy." In a similar vein he commented to his brother the same year: "The old Duke himself eats heartily--sleeps 8 or 9 hours every night--seeing & hearing very little impaired--needs & uses very little stimulants."⁹

After he had fallen from a porch in 1873 and been "much more seriously hurt than" he "knew or apprehended at first," he experienced the following year a fall from a horse, which left him a cripple for life. In bed for many weeks, he was unable to walk without crutches when he recovered. Moreover, his lameness not only curtailed his traveling and largely confined him indoors for the rest of his life; it also made writing somewhat uncomfortable.¹⁰ Although another fall from his crutches in 1878 aggravated the injury, he was able to report to Draper,

⁸Ibid., 256n.

⁹Ramsey to Draper, April 6, 1871, February 3, 1873, Draper Correspondence; Ramsey to Draper, May 6, 1872, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, February 17, 1873, McIver Collection.

¹⁰Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, August 17, 1873, ibid.; Mamie Ramsey McIver to Ramsey, July 20, 1874; W. A. Harrison to Ramsey, November 12, 1874, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Draper, September 20, November 1, 10, 1875, January 14, 1877, Draper Correspondence; Ramsey to Anson Nelson, May 1, 1875, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

I cannot sit upright against my table and do much of my writing with a pencil and on a board across my lap. You would be surprised at my power of endurance. On a recent occasion I wrote eight pages foolscap in one day. I am a wonder to myself. In my eighty-second year I sleep well (full eight hours in continuous sleep), eat heartily, retain my former avoirdupois 108 pounds and the use of all my external senses. . . .¹¹

Following his return to Knoxville Ramsey seems to have leaped into a renewed study of Tennessee history. Although he was not able to make the trip to Nashville, he asked for and received from Governor John C. Brown permission to research in the state archives.¹² His brother, probably fearing for his health, cautioned him "to be more sparing of . . . [his] pen," but Ramsey, far from curtailing his activity, responded, "I have still not a love only but a passion for Tennessee history . . . this passion I expect to indulge & cherish while I live."¹³ Anticipating prematurely his death, he exclaimed to Marcus J. Wright in 1789, "'Oh!' said Calhoun 30 minutes before he died 'for one more hour in the Senate of the U. S.!' I often think of this myself & exclaim 'Oh! for just one year more on the History of Tennessee.'"¹⁴

Among the articles and essays Ramsey wrote after his return to Tennessee were an address on the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, to be read at Charlotte for the centennial of that event; a paper

¹¹Ramsey to Draper, August 7, 1878, Draper Correspondence.

¹²Ramsey to Draper, May 6, October 28, 1872, Draper Manuscripts.

¹³Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, December 7, 1870, March 31, 1870, McIver Collection.

¹⁴Ramsey to Marcus J. Wright, October 18, 1879, Wright Papers.

vindicating Governor William Blount of the charges against him in the "Blount conspiracy" with the Spanish, to be read in Philadelphia at the centennial celebration of the American Revolution; an essay entitled "Tennessee in the Revolution," prepared for the centennial celebration at Nashville; and a series of articles prepared for the newspapers on Governors Joseph McMinn and Archibald Roane. Although Ramsey was asked and agreed to write a history of the Hugh Dunlap family, a prominent family in early East Tennessee, he apparently failed to complete this project.¹⁵

Ramsey's most ambitious historical project in his declining years was an abridgment of his Annals, with the addition of a "synopsis" of Tennessee history down to 1860, to be used as a common school textbook. The seven chapters of the projected volume were to deal with Tennessee's "discovery and exploration, Watauga, North Carolina in the Revolution, the state of Franklin, the Cumberland settlements, the territory South of the Ohio River, and the history of the state of Tennessee to 1860." After he proposed to do such a work, and sought the aid of Anson Nelson, a close Nashville friend, in publishing it, a movement was begun "at

¹⁵James D. Porter to Ramsey, March 1, 15, 1876, March 28, 1882; Marcus J. Wright to Ramsey, March 25, 1882; Ramsey, Biographical Sketch of the Dunlap Family in Tennessee (incomplete), 1880 [?]; Ramsey, Substance of My Address to be read at Charlotte, May 20, 1875; Ramsey, Tennessee in the Revolution: A Centennial Offering, Miscellaneous Materials, Box 3-E, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Draper, June 20, 1876, Draper Correspondence; Ramsey to Marcus J. Wright, November 14, 1879, Wright Papers; Ramsey to James D. Porter, February 14, 1876; Ramsey, Sketch of Archibald Roane, cabinet No. 2, drawer No. 4, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; William E. Beard, "Joseph McMinn, Tennessee's Fourth Governor," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, IV (June, 1945), 166; Nashville American, June 29, 1876; newspaper article, Scrapbook I, 36.

the insistence of many prominent educators of the State" to get Ramsey and Dr. J. Berrien Lindsley to collaborate on a "Manual of Tennessee History." After Ramsey agreed to the project, he began to work feverishly on his part of the work, thrilled at the prospects of his "little bantling," as he called it. A Nashville newspaper, announcing prematurely that the work would "soon be put to press," explained that Ramsey's Annals abridged would constitute one half of the book, and Dr. Lindsley would write the other half, from 1800 to 1860.¹⁶ Dr. Lindsley spent a week as Ramsey's guest in October, 1875, helping him with the project, and, after negotiating with the Methodist Publishing House and Eastman and Company, both of Nashville, he apparently made a temporary agreement with the latter company to publish the history. After Ramsey had worked on the abridgment of his Annals for two years, he turned his manuscript over to Dr. Lindsley with a marked copy of the Annals to be used in incorporating pages or sections of that work into the condensed version.¹⁷

In spite of such bright prospects, however, neither Ramsey's abridged volume nor the joint project was published. For one thing, Dr. Lindsley was apparently dilatory in carrying out his part of the joint effort, for Ramsey asked Nelson in 1876, "Is Dr. L. at home:

¹⁶Ramsey to Anson Nelson, March 23, 1874, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Ramsey to Draper, November 1, 28, 1875, Draper Correspondence; newspaper article, Scrapbook I, 1, 40; Hesseltine, Ramsey, 209n; Ramsey, Annals Abridged, 3.

¹⁷Ramsey to Draper, November 1, 10, 28, 1875, January 31, April 29, June 20, 1876, Draper Correspondence; Ramsey to Anson Nelson, February 24, 1879, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

I hear nothing from him about our contract with Publishers of our manual. It should be out soon."¹⁸ By 1878, he had become extremely pessimistic concerning the future of his history, writing to Draper, "Publishers ask too much payment in advance and there has been no positive contract yet made to publish either my abridgment or the entire work. It hangs fire but may go off some of these days."¹⁹ To make matters worse the publishing company with whom they had a tentative agreement failed that year.²⁰

Another reason for the venture's lack of success was that Ramsey never actually completed the compendium of his Tennessee history, although Hesselstine somewhat overstates the case when he says of Ramsey's manuscript, "The last chapter was not written, and the others consisted of introductory notes and references to passages in the Annals which were to be incorporated into the abridgement."²¹ Having finished five chapters of one hundred and nine type-written, double-spaced pages, possibly half the work, Ramsey was forced, probably because of his age, to stop any serious condensing at page 408 of the Annals. Thereafter, the remaining thirteen pages of typescript consist of introductory notes with references to pages or whole sections of the Annals to be inserted into the condensed version. For instance, on page 116 of the typescript

¹⁸Ramsey to Anson Nelson, November 24, 1876, ibid.

¹⁹Ramsey to Draper, August 7, 1878, Draper Correspondence.

²⁰Ramsey to Draper, December 21, 1878, March 11, 1880, ibid.

²¹Hesselstine, Ramsey, 290n.

he referred to a section in the Annals, adding, "Insert whole or none. It cannot be condensed."²² Moreover, Ramsey's statement: "Dr. Lindsley has had me off from my original purpose²³ & substituted for it his School History of Tennessee. I only write for grown men & the general public," would indicate that he had come to the conclusion that he could not reduce his Annals to the level of a school textbook.²⁴

In spite of these feelings on Ramsey's part, he was prodded by Anson Nelson to publish his abridged volume separately as a textbook. Becoming impatient with Dr. Lindsley, who was continuing to negotiate with publishers, Ramsey authorized Nelson in 1879 to get his manuscript and marked copy of the Annals from Dr. Lindsley and seek a publisher. He instructed his friend that he would be unable to "expend a dollar or incur any other responsibility" in publishing, and would agree to allow publication for a royalty of a few "cents for each copy." Agreeing to handle the sales, Nelson negotiated with Appleton and Company, which expressed an interest in the work. Since Ramsey was apparently physically unable to revise and complete the manuscript, Dr. E. L. Drake of Nashville, who had written a military history of Davidson County, agreed in 1880 to do this job. He also made contacts with the Tennessee superintendent of public instruction to use the book in

²²Ramsey, Annals Abridged, 116.

²³Ramsey's statement is difficult to understand in the light of the fact that his original purpose had been to condense his Annals into a school textbook.

²⁴Ramsey to Anson Nelson, October 7, 1879, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

Tennessee's common schools. It appears, however, that nothing ever came of this project, either, for the typescript extant today is surely a copy of Ramsey's original unfinished Abridged History of Tennessee for use in the Common Schools.²⁵

After his return to Tennessee Ramsey did not limit his historical contributions to secular history alone, but continued to treat religious history. Influenced by a renewed interest in the religious revivals of the early 1800's on the frontier, he wrote articles describing current revivals in East Tennessee and lamented the prevailing lack of evangelism among the Presbyterians. Possibly as a result of interest stimulated by his earlier articles in the Christian Observer, Ramsey wrote in 1875 a longer History of Lebanon Presbyterian Church, first published in 1918 by Larew Printing Company of Knoxville. At the request of members of the Hopewell Presbyterian Church back in North Carolina, he penned a history of that congregation, a work which seems to have been lost. In addition, Draper and others sought from him information on early church history, particularly Presbyterian, in the Southwest.²⁶

²⁵Ramsey to Anson Nelson, September 14, 1878, February 24, June 11, October 7, 1879, ibid.; Anson Nelson to Ramsey, April 5, May 7, 1879; E. L. Drake to Ramsey, April 17, 1880, Ramsey Papers (III).

²⁶Ramsey to Elizabeth Breck, January 28, 1872; W. S. Doak to Ramsey, October 8, 1872; David Wills to Ramsey, March 1, 1873; editor of Christian Observer to Ramsey, November 5, 1879; Ramsey to James Park, August 3 [?], 1875 [?]; Draper to Ramsey, August 3, 1875, ibid.; Ramsey to Draper, October 28, 1872, Draper Manuscripts; Ramsey to Draper, May 23, November 1, 1875, April 29, 1876, Draper Correspondence.

Ramsey, always a deeply religious man, became even more so in his declining years. His home became the center of religious gatherings on Saturday evenings and other special occasions. Although a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Knoxville, he was very sympathetic toward the establishing of the Second Presbyterian Church, which he called "our mission church." Perhaps one of the ties that bound Draper and Ramsey were their religious convictions, which they constantly shared in correspondence with each other.²⁷

In Ramsey's writings during his declining years he maintained most of the same traits which had characterized him during his prime, only to an exaggerated degree. He was more than ever "an enthusiastic admirer of the lofty spirit of freedom & Independence which--glowed in the bosom animated the heart & nerved the arms"²⁸ of his Scotch-Irish ancestors. Being "of good mental culture and devotion to principle" and cherishing "loyalty to no one--king, prince, or chief--not even to majorities or king numbers," they had "made the watauga Association the state of Franklin, and the state of Tennessee."²⁹ He continued to call for biographies to be written of these early prominent Tennesseans.³⁰

²⁷W. A. Harrison to Ramsey, November 25, 1873, Draper to Ramsey, passim, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, February 17, 19, 1873, McIver Collection; Ramsey to Anson Nelson, December 16, 1879, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Ramsey to Draper, passim, Draper Manuscripts and Draper Correspondence.

²⁸Ramsey to R. P. Waring, January 15, 1867, Ramsey Papers (UT).

²⁹Ramsey to Draper, May 23, 1875, Draper Correspondence; Ramsey to O. P. Temple, December 19, 1879, Temple Papers; Hasseltine, "Ramsey," 8.

³⁰Ramsey, Annals Abridged, 2; Ramsey to John Lea, April 22, 1875, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

Earlier Ramsey had

sought for the roots of history in the region. He saw the region as self-contained, developing its own integrity, possessing its own distinctive characteristics. Out of this concept came his devotion to the region, to his state, and to his section.³¹

In later life his historical efforts reflected, if anything, a stronger sectionalism than had his earlier works. In phrases strangely resembling those later used by Frederick Jackson Turner, Ramsey described the early stages of Tennessee's history in his presidential address prepared to be read before a called meeting of the Tennessee Historical Society in Knoxville in 1874.

The History of Tennessee is in some of its aspects unique, peculiar & anomalous. The germ of its civilization was planted in the wilderness. . . . The pioneers who planted & first cultivated that germ were there as trespassers. . . . The great war paths of [the] Aborigines . . . became afterwards the channels of a gainful commerce--carried on by hunters trappers & herdsmen. . . . Being thus without any regular government the frontier people in 1772 exercised the "divine right" of self government by entering into articles of the watauga Association. . . . But the primitive simplicity of patriarchal life as exhibited by a small settlement in a secluded wilderness, uncontaminated by contact with the artificial society of older communities, was forced to yield to the stern commands of progress & improvement. The hunter & pastoral state of society were to be merged into the agricultural & commercial, the civil & political. . . . These several phases of civilized life or government through which the frontiersmen of Tennessee were destined to pass show that her history is as before stated unique & peculiar. . . . As we have seen, Tennessee has passed through every period of her growth to the present time through so many forms & phases of political organization as to make her annals not

³¹Hesseltine, "Ramsey," 8.

only remarkable but exceedingly interesting to the philosophic student of history.³²

Ramsey almost became obsessed with the idea that historians, including Bancroft, had not given to his state the "conspicuous place in the magnificent picture of American Independence" which it deserved. He often chose to treat this theme, especially overemphasizing his conclusion that the Revolutionary battle in which Tennesseans played a significant role, the Battle of King's Mountain, was "the most brilliant campaign & Tennessee valor achieved the most signal & decisive victory of the American Revolution." Going even beyond the above affirmation, he avowed that this "battle decided the Revolutionary war & secured American Independence."³³ Moreover, during the last years of his life he carried on correspondence and made a study of the Battle of Cowpens in an almost desperate attempt to place more Tennesseans there than evidence had indicated.³⁴

By far the most significant historical effort Ramsey made following the war was his service as president of the Tennessee Historical Society. First established in 1849 and reorganized in 1857 after a

³²Ramsey, Inaugural Address before the Tennessee Historical Society, June 16, 1874, Miscellaneous Materials, Box 3-E, Ramsey Papers (UT).

³³Ramsey to Marcus J. Wright, November 14, 1879, Wright Papers; Ramsey, Inaugural Address, June 16, 1874; Ramsey, Tennessee in the Revolution, July 4, 1876, Miscellaneous Materials, Box 3-E, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey, Annals Abridged, 1.

³⁴W. A. Courtney to Ramsey, August 4, 1880, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; John Lea to Ramsey, August 12, 24, 1880, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Draper, July 16, August 2, 1880, Draper Correspondence.

"hiatus" of about five years of relative inactivity, the society finally foundered during the Civil War. In 1874 Anson Nelson, a prominent Nashvillian, sent out a circular requesting former members to meet in the state library "to initiate proceedings to a reorganization of the old Tennessee Historical Society." At the subsequent meeting in March of that year, "the principal feature" was the reading of a letter from Ramsey pronouncing his blessings on the endeavor and expressing his regret at not being able to be present. In this letter he suggested that the state society become an auxiliary to the Southern Historical Society, an unheeded proposal he would make several times in the future. At this initial meeting Ramsey was elected president. In the following years he would come to have a warm feeling for the newly elected recording secretary, Anson Nelson, and Judge John M. Lea, a guiding light in the reorganized group. In June, 1874, a called meeting was held in Knoxville in connection with a meeting of the State Teachers' Association and the commencement of East Tennessee University, at which time Ramsey prepared an inaugural address to be read before the society. He was president until his death, ten years later, but this meeting was the only one he ever attended.³⁵

Although he was seventy-seven at the time, Ramsey, feeling that Tennessee was behind her "sister states" (particularly Wisconsin) in

³⁵Ramsey to Anson Nelson, March 21, 23, 1874, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Clayton, Davidson County, 300-301; John Trotwood Moore, "The Tennessee Historical Society, 1849-1918," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, III (September, 1944), 207-208; "A History of the Tennessee Historical Society," American Historical Magazine, VI (October, 1901), 357-58; Knoxville Sentinel, February 4, 1905.

the "preserving of historical materials," with his usual enthusiasm, sought, as president of the society, to remedy the situation. Determining to imitate the Wisconsin society, Ramsey sent for and received a copy of a "circular," which Draper had sent out requesting historical materials. Using this circular as a pattern, Ramsey penned one of his own, which included the purposes of the society, its constitution and by-laws, descriptions of the kinds of relics and historical papers the organization desired, and a suggestion that local "lyceums" be established as auxiliaries to the state organization. The society printed this circular for distribution. This idea of local societies or "lyceums" in each county connected to the parent group was a brain-child of Ramsey's which he refused to relinquish, although it had relatively little success. Another of his unsuccessful projects was the establishing of a "central organ" of the society under the editorship of Dr. Lindsley. Moreover, although Ramsey did not expect an early legislative appropriation, he was soon planning for a proposed volume of the "transactions" of the group. Still retaining some of his flair for advertising, he constantly suggested to his Nashville correspondents that more be done in the newspapers, including editorials, to publicize the organization.³⁶

Although Ramsey was encouraged, probably by his own enthusiasm,

³⁶ Ramsey to Anson Nelson, May 1, July 1, 15, October 6, November 2, 1874; John Lea to Ramsey, June 12, 1874, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; John Lea to Ramsey, May 6, June 16, 1874, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Draper, May 15, 1874, Draper Correspondence.

and by the "tone & spirit of responses" to his initial efforts, during the first year of his presidency, in subsequent years he intermittently became discouraged and depressed at the accomplishments and future prospects of the society. When other historical associations, such as the one in Wisconsin, received legislative appropriations, his received none. They were publishing their "transactions"; his society was unable to do so. And appeals from him and the other officers that wealthy individuals be contacted to contribute received no response.³⁷ In 1880 he reported to Draper,

I have an excellent cabinet--my field is broad and long and all but two of us officers are poor, broken down by the war. We have never received a single donation, devise, bequest, legacy,--little state aid and little more hoped for as the state treasury is impoverished indeed.³⁸

No official organ to publicize the society had been established; not even the newspapers were being used enough to keep the matter before the people. Affirming that "this defect is radical," Ramsey emphasized that more than mere "fragmentary notices of an occasional meeting--not seen or appreciated by the general reader" was necessary if the organization hoped to succeed. He would have settled for a newspaper to represent the society officially, perhaps the "Chattanooga Times or a Nashville paper," if editorial space would be given. No agent had been found (Ramsey wanted Dr. Lindsley) to travel throughout

³⁷Ramsey to Anson Nelson, August 31, October 6, November 2, 1874, January 28, May 1, 1875, December 22, 1876, November 1, 1880, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Hesseltine, Draper, 248.

³⁸Ramsey to Draper, April 20, 1880, Draper Correspondence.

the state establishing the county auxiliary societies, which he considered vital to the parent organization. Even his circular, which he hoped to see placed "in every newspaper in the state" and "on the table of each member of the Legislature," though doing some good, had "failed to awaken public attention to the objects & designs of the Association." In short, inadequate financial support and what Ramsey considered general apathy on the part of the public were the problems the society faced.³⁹

It should be pointed out, however, that Ramsey's disappointment was spasmodic. On the one hand he would write to Nelson in 1876, "Here I have no such cheering anticipation of the growth & usefulness of our bantling. It continues to need nursing & encouragement";⁴⁰ to Draper in 1878, "Our Society has the same date (1849) with yours and yet it has done nothing, literally nothing. . . . I am discouraged, wholly so. I see no fruits, no harvest, no growth";⁴¹ and again in 1879, "Our Tennessee Historical Society is hardly alive. It needs some Galvani like yourself to galvanize it into life. I have done what I could."⁴² On the other hand, he wrote during the same years to Nelson in 1877,

³⁹Ramsey to Anson Nelson, November 2, 1874, April 22, 1875, September 26, November 24, 1876, July 14, 1877, February 14, 1880, January 20, 1881, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; John Lea to Ramsey, March 15, 1876, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁴⁰Ramsey to Anson Nelson, November 24, 1876, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

⁴¹Ramsey to Draper, December 21, 1878, Draper Correspondence.

⁴²Ramsey to Draper, April 30, 1879, ibid.

"I am glad to believe that our Society is beginning to increase in public estimation & that it will become a success";⁴³ to Draper in 1878, "My society is doing better and we are more encouraged & hopeful";⁴⁴ and again to Nelson in 1880, "I begin to feel that our Society is now a fixed establishment of the state & that hereafter our progress must be onward."⁴⁵

Ramsey's paradoxical attitude toward the accomplishments and future prospects of the association can be explained in part on the basis of the correspondents to whom he wrote. Although there are exceptions, generally when corresponding with Draper, he was pessimistic, for, by his own admission, he held "up Wisconsin as our model for imitation."⁴⁶ Thus when he asked his friend for a volume of the Wisconsin society's Collections in 1878, almost in the same breath he said, "This one will increase my self reproach--not exactly that either, but it will make me more dissatisfied at the apathy of Tennessee and our South."⁴⁷ Marveling at what he considered that "something of magic about"⁴⁸ Draper, he confided to his Wisconsin

⁴³Ramsey to Anson Nelson, July 14, 1877, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

⁴⁴Ramsey to Draper, August 7, 1878, Draper Correspondence.

⁴⁵Ramsey to Anson Nelson, May 29, 1880, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

⁴⁶Ramsey to Draper, July 8, 1874, Draper Correspondence.

⁴⁷Ramsey to Draper, December 21, 1878, ibid.

⁴⁸To id.

correspondent in 1880 that he was "mortified at the comparison between the results of my efforts in the Tennessee Historical Society and your progress in that of Wisconsin."⁴⁹

When he was depressed, however, Ramsey would receive from either Judge Lea or Anson Nelson an encouraging letter which often contained a newspaper article reporting on a recent meeting of the society. Nelson's letters, particularly, Ramsey compared to "the bright sunshine & the general warmth which gladden" the morning. Any reader of their correspondence is forced to admit that both Lea and Nelson manifested a feeling of genuine respect and admiration for the old historian, a respect which Dr. and Mrs. Ramsey recognized and deeply appreciated. Nelson contributed immeasurably to the easing of Ramsey's responsibilities by doing much correspondence in behalf of the society.⁵⁰ There is little reason to doubt the truth of the account in Ramsey's obituary that "Relations between him and them [Tennessee Historical Society] were most cordial and sincere."⁵¹

Because of the distance from Knoxville to Nashville and because of the restrictions his lameness placed on his activity, Ramsey made repeated attempts from 1875 until his death to resign as president of

⁴⁹Ramsey to Draper, April 20, 1880, ibid.

⁵⁰Ramsey to Anson Nelson, March 9, 1877, January 15, 1879; Mrs. Ramsey to John Lea, January 4, 1884, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, May 16, 1873, McIver Collection; Anson Nelson to Ramsey, May 11, 1882, Ramsey Papers (UT).

⁵¹Knoxville Daily Chronicle, April 15, 1884.

the society;⁵² not because of "lack of love for" it, but, as he said, because "I have thought & still believe that a younger & more active member of the society could render you a more efficient service & a more extended usefulness than I have been able to render to our great enterprise."⁵³ Finally, in 1882, to satisfy him, the members unofficially designated him "honorary" president, although the office he held was still that of president, since the by-laws did not allow for an honorary presidency.⁵⁴

As president of the society for ten years, Ramsey very definitely made contributions to Tennessee's historical heritage. For one thing, he was an inspiration to the members of the association. Although he attended only a single meeting, the one called in Knoxville in 1874, he was, as Judge Lea observed, "one of the most active and enthusiastic members of the society, who at almost every meeting sends to us a valuable communication or contribution."⁵⁵ Newspaper articles containing news of the meetings attest to the truth of Lea's assertion. Probably an overstatement of the case, however, was Lea's comment to Mrs. Ramsey in 1833, "The Tennessee Historical Society owes its existence to his protracted efforts to rescue from oblivion the deeds

⁵²Ramsey to Anson Nelson, May 1, 1875, November 1, 1880, April 26, 1882, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

⁵³Portion of an undated and unaddressed Ramsey letter, Box RL.--No. 9.--R., ibid.

⁵⁴Nashville Morning World, May 10, 1882.

⁵⁵Newspaper article, in folder of newspaper clippings, Box 3-D, Ramsey Papers (UT).

of our ancestors."⁵⁶

Not only did Ramsey give to the society most of his historical papers salvaged or collected since the war, but, carrying on a correspondence with interested individuals inside and outside the state, he was responsible for securing other materials. Among them were some Sevier papers, some Franklin papers, rare books, old maps, collections of newspapers, and the proceedings and acts of the Territorial Government South of the River Ohio. He made an earnest, though partially unsuccessful, effort to gain for the society the papers of James K. Polk. He emphasized constantly the necessity of gathering and preserving for future generations any records or papers of the Civil War.⁵⁷

"Eureka! Eureka!" was a common exclamation he used upon uncovering some "lode" in Tennessee's "historical treasure."⁵⁸ "With the active cooperation of our friends," Ramsey believed, "a mine of historical wealth could soon be in our possession for the future annalist &

⁵⁶ John Lea to Mrs. Ramsey, April 29, 1883, ibid.

⁵⁷ Ramsey to Anson Nelson, passim; Ramsey to Mrs. Polk, December 28, 1874; William Garrett to Ramsey, December 1, 16, 1874; William Rankin to Ramsey, January 29, June 16, 1876; M. E. B. Mason to Ramsey, April 28, 1877; William M. F. Helm to Ramsey, April 28, 1878; Ramsey to John Lea, December 12, 17, 30, 1878, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Mammie R. McIver to Ramsey, July 20, 1874; William Garrett to Ramsey, January 12, 1874; Anson Nelson to Ramsey, August 15, November 11, 1874, April 17, 1880; Sallie Kirkpatrick to Ramsey, September 4, 1876; John Lea to Ramsey, January 8, 1879, April 22, 1880, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Marcus J. Wright, October 18, November 14, 1879, Wright Papers; "A Protest," American Historical Magazine, II (October, 1897), 336-37; "The Provisional Constitution of Frankland," ibid., I (January, 1896), 48-63; newspaper article, Scrapbook I, 15.

⁵⁸ Ramsey to J. S. Currick, December 7, 1878, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

historian of Tennessee,"⁵⁹ and in his last years he never seemed happier than when he was receiving some documents for the society. Writing to Draper of recent contributions which he was organizing to be sent to Nashville, he emphasized that "no one else would have the patience to do it right but myself. Labor ipsi voluptas. I can transfer it to no other and undertake it cheerfully."⁶⁰

Of less value to the historian were Ramsey's attempts to collect for the society old relics. Having had a "museum" (containing "five hundred articles") in his home before the war, Ramsey had an even greater antiquarian interest afterward. In fact, Judge Lea cautioned him on occasion that historical papers were of more value than relics. For the society Ramsey either secured or gave such items as the cane his grandfather used at the Battle of Trenton in the Revolutionary war, the desk used by his father as the secretary of the Franklin Convention which met at Jonesboro, the last flag pulled down at the Battle of Cerro Gordo in the Mexican War, a military coat which had been tailored by Andrew Johnson, autographs of famous Americans, old currency, and other relics of that sort. Realizing the importance which her husband placed in such museum pieces, Mrs. Ramsey perpetuated his memory following his death by continuing to present similar objects to the society.⁶¹

⁵⁹Ramsey to Anson Nelson, March 29, 1875, ibid.

⁶⁰Ramsey to Draper, January 31, 1876, Draper Correspondence.

⁶¹Ramsey to Nelson, July 20, 1875, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Ramsey to Draper, September 25, 1875, Draper Correspondence; J. A. Cartwright to Mrs. Ramsey, January 13, 1886; Anson Nelson to Mrs. Ramsey, January 20, 1886; John Lea to Mrs. Ramsey, February 2, 1886, Ramsey Papers (UT); newspaper article, Scrapbook I, 53, 63.

An avid enthusiast for centennials, which he believed not only produced "poetry & prose, paragraphs & pamphlets, pageantry & panegyria [sic] . . . oratory & elegance, enthusiasm & ecstasy," but also "patient historic research & painstaking scrutiny, in adding to the volumes of our still unwritten history,"⁶² he strongly urged that Tennessee and the society be represented at the centennials of the Mecklenburg Convention in 1875, the Revolutionary War in Philadelphia in 1876, and the battle of King's Mountain in 1880. Although not able to attend, he played a significant role in prompting, inspiring, and advertising the Jonesboro Centennial in 1879 and the one in Nashville in 1881. In this strong interest in centennial celebrations, one sees Ramsey's continuing "desire to remind the nation that the Volunteer State shared in the American tradition."⁶³

While it is true that he experienced much discouragement as president of the Tennessee Historical Society, it is equally true that in his declining years the society gave Ramsey a purpose and channel in which to direct his activity. It was, as he himself said, "the pet and idol of my old age," and he considered it at the time "the highest literary civility of my old age."⁶⁴

⁶²Ramsey to John Lea, December 12, 1878, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

⁶³Ramsey to Anson Nelson, September 23, 1879, March 11, 1880; Ramsey to John Lea, January 17, 1879; R. H. Dungan to Ramsey, September 22, 1879, *ibid.*; John Lea to Ramsey, December 25, 1878, March 24, April 2, 1879, Ramsey Papers (UT); Hasseltine, *Draper*, 272.

⁶⁴Ramsey to Marcus J. Wright, October 18, 1879, Wright Papers; Ramsey to Anson Nelson, August 16, 1880, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

"Venerable Old Historian" is a term that was constantly applied to him in his last years. Although he had lost most of his fortune, he gained renewed prestige, and, as Anson Nelson said, he was "honored more than most men." To a man of Ramsey's sensitivity it was very gratifying to be requested to write an account of the Mecklenburg Declaration, to help prepare a sketch of the lives of prominent men at the Battle of King's Mountain, and to allow the publisher to include his "Tennessee in the Revolution" in Our National Jubilee for the centennial celebrations of those respective events.⁶⁵ Receiving inquiries from people in many states who sought information on the early history of the old Southwest,⁶⁶ Ramsey finally confided to Nelson in 1880, "I have been overburdened . . . with official correspondence. Everybody is writing me from Tenn. . . . Virginia the Carolinas & every where else as if I had been a contemporary of Methusalem [sic] or at least Noah."⁶⁷

Among those seeking Ramsey's aid, the man whom he prized the

⁶⁵D. H. Hill to Ramsey, December 23, 1873; Ramsey to D. H. Hill, December 27, 1873; Anson Nelson to Ramsey, November 11, 1874, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Anson Nelson, November 24, 1880, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; Ramsey to Draper, March 11, 1880, Draper Correspondence; newspaper article, Scrapbook I, 56.

⁶⁶Mrs. Polk to Ramsey, October 24, November 2, 23, 1872; A. V. Goodpasture to Ramsey, July 24, 1880; Abraham Stagg to Ramsey, August 25, 1883, Ramsey Papers (UT); J. C. Pilling to Ramsey, November 15, 1879; E. S. Chesbrough to Ramsey, July 17, September 23, October 8, November 19, 27, 1880, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.; McAdoo, Diary, January 10, 1877; Temple, East Tennessee, 23n.

⁶⁷Ramsey to Anson Nelson, August 16, 1880, Tennessee Historical Society's Misc. Mss.

most highly was Lyman C. Draper. After the latter first met Ramsey in 1844, they carried on an intermittent correspondence until Ramsey's death. Before the war this correspondence was most voluminous in 1852-53, when Draper needed his assistance in gathering biographical materials on the pioneers of the Revolutionary period, and Ramsey sought Draper's help in the writing and publishing of his Annals. At that time Ramsey responded by sending his Wisconsin friend materials and information on "Daniel Boone, John Sevier, the Shelbys . . . the men of Watauga," and others, while Draper gave him the help and advice which has already been noted earlier.⁶⁸

Following the war, Draper renewed the correspondence, and from 1870 until 1884 he wrote Ramsey asking about numerous questions concerning this history of the old Southwest.⁶⁹ Ramsey "clearly admired Draper," lavishly praising his historical accomplishments as greater "than any that has preceeded [sic] you from Herodotus down."⁷⁰ And although Ramsey had lost most of his manuscript materials, in lengthy letters he shared with his Wisconsin friend his memories, discussed "critical points of fact on the men of Watauga, the signers of the

⁶⁸ Ramsey to Draper, 1852-1853, Draper Manuscripts and Draper Correspondence; Hesselstine, Ramsey, xii.

⁶⁹ Ramsey to Draper, 1870-1881, Draper Correspondence and Draper Manuscripts; Draper to Ramsey, passim, Ramsey Papers (UT). Any student of Draper will be interested to know that although Hesselstine's "search for Draper's letters to Dr. Ramsey proved futile" when he was preparing his biography of the Wisconsin historian, many, perhaps most, of the letters Draper wrote to Ramsey following the war are now in the Ramsey Papers at the University of Tennessee Library, Knoxville. The earlier letters were probably burned with Ramsey's house. Hesselstine, Ramsey, xiv.

⁷⁰ Hesselstine, Draper, 272; Ramsey to Draper, February 3, 1873, Draper Correspondence.

Mecklenburg Resolves, the battles of the Revolution," and, interviewing old residents of Knoxville, "sent their family traditions."⁷¹ Comparing Ramsey to Bancroft in their responses to Draper's queries, Hesseltine points out that, whereas the Massachusetts historian would refer Draper to documents and sources where the answers might be found, Ramsey would respond with "details, careful consideration of conflicting accounts, and the willing loan of materials."⁷² Obviously desiring that Draper live closer to him (he said that he would "live a year longer" if he could see Draper), Ramsey suggested in 1871 that his friend, who was possibly suffering from "chronic catarrh and diseased throat," move to Florida. Although Draper considered the suggestion, the matter went no further, and even when he traveled south in 1872 gathering materials on Thomas Sumter, he missed Ramsey by passing through Charlotte after the latter had already returned to Knoxville.⁷³

Not only was Ramsey constantly sending Draper suggestions and information and "praising him for his historical work"; he was also continually "urging him to write."⁷⁴ In fact, Hesseltine says that to Ramsey goes "the credit for getting Draper to write" King's Mountain and its Heroes, the "one book which" he "wrote out of his vast collections."⁷⁵ When Draper, notoriously dilatory about his writing, would have gone off on one of his many tangents in collecting materials but

⁷¹Hesseltine, Ramsey, xiii.

⁷²Hesseltine, "Ramsey," 13.

⁷³Ramsey to Draper, February 6, 1871, Draper Correspondence; Draper to Ramsey, April 22, 1871, April 15, 1872, Ramsey Papers (OF).

⁷⁴Hesseltine, Draper, 272.

⁷⁵Hesseltine, "Ramsey," 12.

seldom publishing, Ramsey intervened and suggested that he write a history of the Battle of King's Mountain in connection with the centennial of that event on October 7, 1880. Draper's Tennessee friend further aided him by "assuring" his publisher, Peter Thomson, of the value of the venture, by prodding the procrastinating Draper when he was inclined to lay aside his pen, and by writing recommendations and favorable reviews of the book in the newspapers of the South.⁷⁶

when he first returned to Knoxville following the war, Ramsey was disappointed at the lack of attention he received, remarking to Elizabeth, "No visiting seems to be the new order of things," and writing to Draper of "some very few and appreciative friends" and "a small circle of learned, educated and Christian friends near and around me."⁷⁷ Matters soon changed, however, and Ramsey became a local celebrity in town. There were those Knoxville citizens, like C. W. Charlton, new editor of the Knoxville Whig, whose "respect" for Ramsey almost amounted "to veneration."⁷⁸ William Gibbs McAdoo, a professor at East Tennessee University (renamed in 1879 the University

⁷⁶Hesseltine, Draper, 270-74, 284; Draper to Ramsey, April 14, 1879, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Draper, May 19, 1880, October 26, 1881; Ramsey's commendation of Draper's King's Mountain, May 19, 1880 [15 DD₁₃₃]; article in Knoxville Tribune [17 DD₂₆ (68)], in Draper Manuscripts. Apparently not noticing the above letter which Ramsey wrote to Draper in October, 1881, and not able to find later letters which Draper wrote to Ramsey (now in the Ramsey Papers (UT)), Hesseltine erroneously concluded that the Ramsey-Draper correspondence ended in March, 1881. Hesseltine, Ramsey, 244n.

⁷⁷Ramsey to Elizabeth Brack, January 7, 1872, Ramsey Papers (UT); Ramsey to Draper, May 6, October 3, 1872, Draper Manuscripts.

⁷⁸C. W. Charlton to Ramsey, November 2, 1869, Ramsey Papers (UT).

of Tennessee), visited Ramsey with regularity during the last eight or ten years of the historian's life, discussing with him matters of local interest, politics, literary and historical subjects, and listening to Dr. and Mrs. Ramsey reminisce. He further dedicated a sonnet to Ramsey on each of his last few birthdays. Confined to his room much of the time because of his age and his crippled condition, Ramsey could hardly fail to appreciate such attention.⁷⁹

One runs across numerous references in Knoxville newspapers to receptions held on the occasions of his birthday, to his "receiving numerous friends and admirers socially" on the anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans, which it was "the custom of our venerable and distinguished townsman" to observe, and to visitors to Knoxville's being taken to call upon the "noted old historian of Tennessee . . . who is now an octogenarian."⁸⁰ Thus it was natural for him to report to Draper in April, 1879,

But my friends in every part of the South never pass through town without paying me a call. The chairman of some public committee called the other day and on coming in remarked that I was recognized everywhere as one of the institutions of the country and that he had concluded not to return home without offering me his respects. Scarcely a day passes without a similar civility.⁸¹

⁷⁹McAdoo, Diary, December 9, 1876, October 13, November 10, 1878, November 16, December 28, 1879, January 3, 4, March 6, 14, 20, 27, April 5, May 18, 23, 1880, December 25, 1881, March 25, September 24, 1882, January 1, 1883, January 4, 21, February 10, March 23, 24, 25, 1884.

⁸⁰Knoxville Daily Chronicle, March 27, 1877; Anson Nelson to Ramsey, April 5, 1879, Ramsey Papers (UT); Alexander, Recollections, Ramsey Papers (NC); newspaper articles, Breck Scrapbook, between pages 60 and 61, 72.

⁸¹Ramsey to Draper, April 30, 1879, Draper Correspondence.

So far as Ramsey was concerned one of the highest honors paid him in later life was the placing of his portrait in the state library in Nashville. Governor James D. Porter started about 1876 a drive to secure for the state gallery portraits of all the notable Tennesseans. After Porter had suggested that Ramsey be included, Colonel C. M. McGhee of Knoxville "generously paid" the Knoxville artist, Lloyd Branson, to paint the historian's portrait. At Ramsey's request his portrait was placed beside the one of President Polk.⁸²

As was mentioned earlier, Ramsey had already deeded much of his property to his children in the 1850's. He subsequently made new wills or added codicils to old ones in 1869, 1871, 1874, 1881, 1882, and 1884. Although in earlier wills he had indicated that at his wife's death he wanted Sue to receive a share of his property "equal to that which the other children had received," and McKnitt and Elizabeth, who lived with their parents and cared for them in their last years, to receive larger shares than the other children, there is no record of these instructions in his final will recorded in the Knox County Courthouse. All of his property and "monies" went to his wife, and the manuscripts of his autobiography and the history of Lebanon Church went to Elizabeth. He had already given the rights to his abridgment of the Annals to McKnitt. The rest of the will

⁸² Knoxville Times, June 7, 1877; James D. Porter to Ramsey, March 15, 1876; Ramsey to C. M. McGhee, March 22, 1877; C. M. McGhee to Ramsey, April 3, 1877, in Scrapbook I, between pages 7 and 9, and between pages 28 and 29; Anson Nelson to Ramsey, July 4, 1877; James D. Porter to Elizabeth Breck, January 16, 1905, Ramsey Papers (UT); newspaper article, Scrapbook I, 1.

dealt with personal effects.⁸³

Ramsey died April 11, 1884, at the age of eighty-seven years and seventeen days. According to the Knoxville Daily Chronicle, the cause of his death was "advanced age, together with injuries he received by being thrown from a horse some ten years ago." On the day following his death Anson Nelson wrote Mrs. Ramsey that the flag at the capitol had been lowered to half mast in honor of her husband. Although Ramsey said that he desired a "modest and inexpensive funderal," and McAdoo noted in his diary that Ramsey was buried "without any extraordinary display," the Knoxville Daily Chronicle reported that the funeral procession was the largest ever witnessed in Knoxville. Among the pallbearers were R. E. Reynolds, former Governor James D. Porter, William G. McAdoo, and other prominent Tennesseans. At least a dozen members of the Tennessee Historical Society came over from Nashville, and Ramsey's grandson later said that "a special train was run from Nashville to bring friends to his funeral." Ramsey's wife, who, because of his failing health, had become his "amanuensis" during the last few years of his life, survived her husband by five years.⁸⁴

⁸³Ramsey Wills, February 26, 1869, January 24, 1871, May 18, 23, 1874, March 25, 1882, Box 3-F, Ramsey Papers (UT); Wills of 1874-1887, Knox County Records, No. 1, pp. 228-29, Knox County Courthouse, Knoxville.

⁸⁴Ibid.; John Lea to Mrs. Ramsey, April 29, 1883; John Lea to Ramsey, May 8, 1883, March 19, 1884; Anson Nelson to Mrs. Ramsey, April 30, 1883; James D. Porter to Ramsey, February 2, 1884; James D. Porter to Elizabeth Breck, January 16, 1905, Ramsey Papers (UT); Moore, "Tennessee Historical Society," 213-14; McAdoo, Diary, April 13, 1884; Alexander, Recollections, Ramsey Papers (NC); Knoxville Daily Chronicle, April 12, 15, 1884; Knoxville Daily Tribune, April 12, 1884; Nashville American, April 14, 1884; newspaper article, Scrapbook II, 8-9; newspaper article, Breck Scrapbook, 72.

CONCLUSION

The focus of this biography has been on the active aspects of Ramsey's career. Thus his characteristics as a person have been implicitly rather than explicitly displayed. Since, however, numerous examples of his intimate correspondence with family and friends have been inserted, the reader has been able to sense many of Ramsey's traits. This biographer feels obligated to mention at least one of Ramsey's characteristics: his boastful vanity. No one can deny that he had a strong desire to receive credit and praise for services rendered. He "was" the East Tennessee Historical and Antiquarian Society. He "galvanized" the dead Hiwassee Railroad into the East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad. In his office (he said) Andrew Jackson was "first" suggested for the presidency. He was the "first" to offer Polk's name as a candidate for the same office. He was one of the two (his brother was the other) "most prudent honest & patriotic men in Tennessee or any where else."¹ After the Civil War he believed there were "few . . . Ramseys in the world."² Realizing that such language could be so interpreted, he would apologetically interject into his correspondence: with Draper, "Do not suppose me egotistic,"³ or to his brother, "Excuse my egotism."⁴

¹Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, April 16, 1869, McIver Collection.

²Ramsey to Draper, July, 1880 [15 DD₇₁], Draper Manuscripts.

³Ramsey to Draper, February 1, 1870, Draper Correspondence.

⁴Ramsey to W. B. A. Ramsey, March 31, 1871, McIver Collection.

This trait can, however, be over-emphasized. Although some of his contemporaries reacted to it--Brownlow called him that "vain old historian"--it does not appear to have been a distinctive facet of Ramsey's public image. One possible explanation is that he was even more adept at praising and eulogizing others than himself. He would have been perfectly willing to have worked in Draper's historical shadow if the latter had agreed to move to Tennessee. Moreover, Ramsey seems to have been able publicly to cover many of his personal feelings. For instance, although he could bitterly denounce certain individuals and policies in private correspondence and in newspaper articles under pseudonyms, he appears not to have been hypercritical in public. His most extreme views on slavery which are to be found in the letters he wrote to L. W. Spratt of South Carolina in 1858 and which strike the modern reader as narrow and bigoted, according to Ramsey's express instructions, were not to be published. It should, however, be noted that he kept copies of them with his autobiography. Finally, his extreme earnestness in whatever he undertook compelled people to respect him.

To a limited degree, a study of Ramsey is a study of life in mid-nineteenth century America, for he was a man of varied interests, and his life spanned most of the century. Through his many-faceted career the student of American history gains more than a mere glimpse of nineteenth century banking, medicine, and railroad building. A biography of a man like Ramsey, an educated member of the community, reveals some of the ramifications of education in his day. As a

historian, Ramsey displays the characteristics and approaches that were typical of the study and writing of that subject in America during the middle decades of the century. Since he was a dedicated Southerner, his problems of readjustment following the Civil War display some of the trials of East Tennessee Confederates during Reconstruction.

Although Ramsey was not brilliant, he was able; if not of great prominence, he was certainly not obscure. Perhaps not as well known as he thought or hoped to be, he was much better known than future generations have recognized. As Hesseltine points out,

Although later generations remembered him only for his historical writing, his contemporaries knew him as a man of exceptional versatility whose varied activities extended from the practice of medicine to the financing of railroads. He was a canal commissioner and a school commissioner, the president of banks and a farmer, a Presbyterian elder and a poet, a register of deeds, a contributor to magazines, a Confederate treasury agent, a postmaster, an operator of a ferry, a trustee of colleges, and a philosopher who thought deeply upon the problems of the South and the nature of the Southern people.⁵

⁵Hesseltine, Ramsey, vii.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

GENEALOGY OF RAMSEY FAMILY

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1. William Ramsey
(died young) | 1. William Baine Alexander Ramsey
(died young) | 1. Robert M. Ramsey
married
----- Rutledge |
| 2. Francis Ramsey
married -----
Peggy Alexander
and
Mrs. Anne Agnes
Flemming
and
Mrs. Margaret Humes | 2. John McNitt Alexander Ramsey
(died young) | 2. Margaret Jane Ramsey
married
Howard Dickson |
| Reynolds Ramsey
married
Naomi Alexander | 3. Samuel Reynolds Ramsey
(died young) | 3. Wilberforce Ramsey
(died young) |
| 3. John Ramsey
(died young) | 4. James G. M. Ramsey
married -----
Margaret Crozier | 4. Henrietta Ramsey
married
Dr. B. B. Lenoir |
| 4. Samuel Ramsey
married
Mrs. Elizabeth
Christian | 5. William Baine Alexander Ramsey
married
Mrs. Eliza C. White
Mrs. Susan Washington
Miss Charlotte P.
Williams | 5. Crozier Ramsey |
| 5. Naomi Ramsey
married
James King | 6. Eliza Naomi Jane Baine Alexander Ramsey
married
James Scott | 6. Arthur Ramsey
(died young) |
| | 7. Francis Alexander Ramsey
(died young) | 7. Elizabeth Ramsey
married
Daniel Breck |
| | | 8. James G. McKnitt Ramsey |
| | | 9. Charlotte Ramsey
(died young) |
| | | 10. Francis Alexander Ramsey
married
Nancy Rebecca Presley |
| | | 11. Sue Ramsey
married
William D. Alexander |

APPENDIX II

TABLE I

SERIES ONE--DIRECT GENERAL INDEX TO REAL ESTATE CONVEYANCES - R -
FROM BEGINNING TO DECEMBER 31, 1931, KNOX COUNTY, TENNESSEE¹

Grantors (Ramsey)	Grantees	Date Filed	Date of Deed	Brief Description
James G. (Adm.) & William B. (Adm.) for Francis A. Ramsey (estate)	William B. Morris	August 15, 1821	August 13, 1820	222 1/2 acres, Black Oak Ridge
James G. M. (Adm.) & W. B. A. (Adm.) for Francis A. Ramsey (estate)	Eliza N. J. & B. A. Ramsey	November 8, 1824	April 30, 1822	slaves
James G. M. (Adm.) & W. B. A. (Adm.) for Francis A. Ramsey (estate)	J. G. M. Ramsey	November 8, 1824	April 13, 1822	slaves
James G. M. (Adm.) & W. B. A. (Adm.) for Francis A. Ramsey (estate)	W. B. A. Ramsey	November 8, 1824	April 13, 1822	slaves
James G., William B. A. & John M. A.	Grizzle Davis	December 8, 1829	October 5, 1829	150 acres, French Broad River
J. G. M.	Drury P. Armstrong	September 3, 1834	August 7, 1834	slave
J. G. M. & M. B. C.	E. J. Deaderick	November 10, 1839	October 2, 1839	48 acres

TABLE I (Continued)

Grantors (Ramsey)	Grantees	Date Filed	Date of Deed	Brief Description
J. G. M. & Margaret B.	Joseph L. King	November 4, 1840	September 23, 1840	222 acres
J. G. M.	W. B. A. Ramsey	November 10, 1840	November 6, 1840	38 acres
James O.	William Ramsey	November 13, 1845	October 18, 1845	2 tracts, 48 1/4 & 50 acres, French Broad
J. G. M.	William H. Sneed	May 12, 1857	May 9, 1857	lot, Gay & Cumberland
J. G. M.	John J. Craig	May 15, 1857	May 2, 1857	133 acres, District 2
J. G.	John J. Craig	August 1, 1857	June 15, 1857	tract, Williamsburg
J. G. M.	William H. Sneed	August 19, 1857	May 9, 1957	Lamar House, Cumberland Street
J. C. M.	Francis A. Ramsey	December 4, 1857	December 4, 1857	225 acres Swan Pond Place
J. G. M.	Joseph A. Mabry	March 17, 1858	August 21, 1857	360 acres, District 12
J. G. M.	Robert J. McKinney	March 20, 1858	March 30, 1857	1 acre, Hill St.
J. G. M. (Tr.)	John Baxter	April 7, 1858	October 15, 1857	lot, Cumberland Street
J. G. M. (Assignee)	Joseph Davenport	September 23, 1858	September 8, 1858	house and lot, Newman's Ad.

TABLE I (Continued)

Grantors (Ramsey)	Grantees	Date Filed	Date of Deed	Brief Description
J. G. M.	Margaret J. Dickson	January 13, 1859	December 30, 1853	Buildings & 120 acres, N. S. Holston River
J. G. M.	Robert M. Ramsey	April 25, 1859	December 6, 1858	tract, J. Bank Holston River
J. G. M.	Martha E. & William M. Churchwell	July 5, 1859	July 17, 1858	tract, District 12
J. G. M.	H. J. A. R. Breck	April 25, 1860	October 8, 1859	223 acres, Swan Pond Plan.
J. G. M.	J. G. M. [McKitt] Ramsey	May 31, 1860	June 13, 1859	95 1/2 acres, N. S. Holston River
J. G. M.	Mrs. Henrietta R. Lenoir	December 27, 1860	November 1, 1860	lot, Cumberland
J. G. M.	George Woods	September 16, 1861	September 13, 1859	15 acres, Swan Pond Creek
J. G. M. (Assignee)	M. F. Wagner & Son	January 17, 1862	July 9, 1857	lot, Gay & Vine Streets, lot, Main Street
J. G. M.	George Woods	October 11, 1862	October 4, 1862	15 acres
J. G. M.	S. Vail	August 2, 1865	June 10, 1865	lot, Gay Street
J. S. M.	Adam Drakehill	March 2, 1870	February 10, 1870	225 acres, Hol- ston & French Broad Rivers

TABLE I (Continued)

Grantors (Ramsey)	Grantees	Date Filed	Date of Deed	Brief Description
J. G. M.	Hannah Breck U. S. Marshall	December 16, 1870	December 16, 1870	H. & L. E. S., Gay Street
J. G. M.	C. A. Weigle, <u>et al.</u>	November 23, 1871	May 4, 1869	tract, French Broad-Holston Rivers
J. G. M.	C. A. Weigle, <u>et al.</u>	November 23, 1871	May 4, 1869	165 acres, French Broad-Holston Rivers
J. G. M.	Hannah W. Swan	September 11, 1872	June 6, 1872	lot, Cumberland and Church Sts.
J. G. M. & M. B. C.	Mel H. Dixon	January 20, 1879	September 20, 1878	lot bwt. Cumber- land & Church Sts.
J. G. M. & Margaret B.	Lillie A. Ramsey	February 19, 1880	December 10, 1879	lots, Ramsey Add.
J. G. M. & Margaret B.	Mary L. McIver	March 8, 1880	February 25, 1880	lots
J. G. M. & Margaret B.	Fannie M. Hall, <u>et al.</u>	March 8, 1880	February 25, 1880	lots
J. G. M.	H. L. Love	September 13, 1881	September 10, 1881	4 acres, 2 District
Margaret B. & J. G. M.	W. L. Ledgerwood	January 31, 1884	January 31, 1884	3 lots, Bonview Street

¹ Knox County Courthouse, Knoxville, Tennessee.

APPENDIX III

TABLE II

SERIES ONE--REVERSE--GENERAL INDEX TO REAL ESTATE CONVEYANCES - R -
KNOX COUNTY, TENNESSEE, FROM BEGINNING TO DECEMBER 31, 1831¹

Grantees (Ramsey)	Grantors	Date Filed	Date of Deed	Brief Description
J. G. M.	J. G. M. (Adm.) et al.	November 8, 1821	April 13, 1822	slaves
J. G.	State of Tennessee	April 21, 1827	August 7, 1826	158 acres, Forks of French Broad & Holston Rivers, Grant No. 13973
J. G.	Jonathan Pickle	June 26, 1827	January 31, 1827	6 1/2 acres, Forks of French Broad & Holston Rivers
J. G. & William	Julius Blackwell	September 27, 1827	April 26, 1827	personal
James G. M.	Joseph Love	February 25, 1830	February 6, 1830	215 1/2 acres N. S. Holston River
J. G. M.	George Bond	May 20, 1830	April 3, 1830	slave
J. G. M.	Charles McClung	May 6, 1832	February 1, 1832	100 acres, Forks of French Broad & Holston Rivers
J. G. M.	Robert Jack	September 7, 1833	July 29, 1833	6 acres, French Broad & Holston Rivers
James G. M.	Brady P. Armstrong	September 8, 1834	August 7, 1834	190 acres, Holston River

TABLE II (Continued)

Grantees (Ramsey)	Grantors	Date Filed	Date of Deed	Brief Description
James G. M.	Jonathan Pickle	February 20, 1837	February 13, 1837	100 acres
J. G. M.	Samuel Pickell	March 7, 1837	February 21, 1837	150 acres, Holston & French Broad Rivers
J. G. M.	John Crozier	July 27, 1838	June 23, 1838	lots 25-26, Gay Street
J. G. M.	C. W. Crozier	January 18, 1839	October 31, 1838	lot, Cumberland Street
J. G. M.	Joseph L. King	November 10, 1840	November 4, 1840	38 acres
James G. M.	William B. A. Ramsey	January 15, 1841	November 6, 1840	465 acres, Forks of French Broad & Holston Rivers
J. G. M. & W. B. A.	Margaret Ramsey <u>et al.</u>	July 6, 1841	January 15, 1821	tract & personal
James G.	W. B. (C. & M.) Ramsey	November 13, 1845	October 17, 1845	48 1/4 acres, 50 acres, French Broad River
J. G. M.	A. R. Crozier	August 7, 1854	July 15, 1854	lot, Cumberland Street
James G. M.	Bank of East Tennessee	December 10, 1856	December 10, 1856	personal

TABLE II (Continued)

Grantees (Ramsey)	Grantors	Date Filed	Date of Deed	Brief Description
James G. M.	William Churchwell	December 11, 1856	December 11, 1856	tracts
J. G. M.	Bank of East Tennessee	March 28, 1857	December 10, 1856	personal
J. G. M.	Jared Meads	September 11, 1872	February 27, 1872	95 acres
M. B. C. & J. G. M.	Mannah A. R. Breck	April 22, 1876	April 15, 1876	lot, Gay Street
J. G. M.	John Crozier	December 22, 1877	December 11, 1877	lot, Gay Street
J. G. M.	John H. & C. W. Crozier	December 22, 1877	December 21, 1877	lot, Gay Street
M. B. C.	M. J. McNutt	October 2, 1882	October 2, 1882	lot, Main & Cumberland Streets

¹ Knox County Courthouse, Knoxville, Tennessee.