CHAPTER XIV

THE REIGN OF THE TENNESSEE RADICALS

Having defeated his old enemy, Andrew Johnson, Brownlow came out of the struggle elated and satisfied. But success is sometimes more difficult to endure than defeat, for it leads on to ambitions which must also be satisfied. The great stir the Parson had made in the world up to this time had been incited more through fear and vengeance than ambition. Now, the pleasure that comes from being an important man began to work its insidious influence, and Brownlow took on a new characteristic in Tennessee politics.

The regular election for all state officials and a new legislature was due in August, 1867. Having tasted of power Brownlow discovered that he liked it. Being governor for only two years seemed too short; though physically worn out, his mind was still strong and his hatreds were as keen as ever; he would accept two more years. Being a skillful politician, he outwardly assumed the attitude of a Caesar rejecting a crown. But there were many Radicals in Tennessee who knew that they would rise or fall with the Parson; they would be bolder than Anthony, they would force the crown upon the brow of the Parson. Preparing for the Radical convention which would meet on February 22 and nominate a governor, they began in January to promote a great number of county meetings throughout East Tennessee which called loudly for Brownlow. Their resolutions, being much alike in their wording, bespoke a central direction. The Radicals of Bledsoe County declared that whereas it had pleased God “to give us a Governor in the almost miraculously preserved person of William G. Brownlow, whom we have tried and found to be not wanting,” they were determined to work for his renomination.¹

¹Knoxville Whig, January 23, 1867. For other county meetings, see ibid., January 16, February 13.
The feeling was soon expressed and spread that only the Parson could properly punish the Rebels and save East Tennessee from the vengeance they would wreak if they should secure power. The Whig quoted with approval the discovery which the Press and Times, the chief Radical newspaper in Nashville, had made, that the clamor for Brownlow “grows more and more manifest” and that he “can stay at home and outrun any other nominee of the Republican party who can be put on the track.” Under the circumstances no Radical was so bold or ambitious as to oppose the Parson.

The convention met in Nashville on Washington’s Birthday eager to deify the Parson and damn the President. On the walls of the house of representatives chamber, where the delegates gathered, there were hanging in the gallery of notables the pictures of Lincoln and Johnson. The martyred President was decorated with flags, the living President was left bare. The contrast was soon noted, whereupon a delegate moved that thirty-six men be appointed to hold the United States flag in front of it “to keep his Accidency quiet during the session of the convention.” Another member moved that the President should be stood upon his head. Before the convention had scarcely come to order a letter from Brownlow was read in which he protested that he was not seeking the nomination, but he quickly added, “Even in my feeble state of health, if I were nominated by your Convention, I would not feel at liberty to decline the nomination.” He followed this hint with a characteristic abuse of Johnson.

The Convention immediately nominated the Parson unanimously and loudly called for him. Being near-by he quickly entered the hall, amidst a roar of applause, the waving of handkerchiefs, and the tossing of hats high in the air. Brownlow accepted the nomination with alacrity and predicted that he would be charged with “dictation, usurpation, a violation of the Constitution—with lying, perjury, stealing, forgery and counterfeiting!” He would be held to be the friend of the Negro, but

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1Ibid., February 13, 1867.
2Ibid., January 16.
3Ibid., February 27.
he would “sooner be elected by dark skinned loyalists, than to be elected by the votes of fair-skin traitors.” Though it would be more than two years before a new president of the United States would take his seat, the convention declared that General Thomas was its choice—“the man who never made a mistake and never lost a battle.”

Before adjourning, the Radicals thanked God for saving from traitors “the best government ever known to man” and for proving the “heretofore doubtful problem that man is capable of self-government.” It held as self-evident truths that those who saved the state and nation should govern them, that those who sought to destroy them should repent of their sins, that rebellion was a “treasonable expatriation,” that law should be made a “terror to evil-doers,” that the Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence should be “living truths and practical maxims in Tennessee,” that the Radicals in Congress had the sole right “to restore, preserve, and govern the country,” that “we honor the firmness, courage, and wisdom which have characterized the administration of our Chief Magistrate, the Hon. Wm. G. Brownlow, and while we sympathize with him in his bodily suffering, we admire the healthy mind, conscious to itself of rectitude, which bears with like equanimity the throes of pain and the perilous cares of State; and that we declare him the unanimous choice of the loyal people of Tennessee for our next Governor.” But as for Andrew Johnson, “we cover our faces with shame when we contemplate the disgrace brought upon our beloved State by the defection and degeneracy of her unprincipled adopted son, who by the bullet of an assassin has ascended to the Chief Magistracy of the nation; and we shall cordially endorse any action of Congress which shall legitimately deprive him of continued power to disturb the peace of the country.”

Brownlow received the congratulations of his fellow Radical, Salmon P. Chase, the Chief Justice of the nation.

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5 Ibid., March 6, 1867.
The Conservatives met in April and nominated for the governorship Brownlow's bitter critic, Emerson Etheridge. They favored peace, order, and obedience to the laws, opposed the military domination of the state, and expressed their support of Andrew Johnson. 8

Brownlow had for the past few months been moving rapidly toward Negro suffrage, not because he had lost any of "those prejudices of caste, resulting from education and life-long habits," but because he saw he would need the Negro votes to maintain himself in power. Under the contagion of the Northern atmosphere at the Philadelphia Convention in September, 1866, he had shouted for Negro suffrage, and had declared that he "would sooner go to a Negro heaven than a white Rebel's Hell." 9 As has previously appeared, the Radicals in Tennessee had already given the Negro full civil rights, except to sit on juries. When the legislature had met in November, 1866, he had uncorked "his bottled thunder" and had delivered his message made up of a "mass of political crudities, unstatesmanlike dogmas and revolutionary doctrines, more radical and startling than have ever been propounded by any similar functionary in the Republic." 10 Remembering how strong was the race feeling among his East Tennessee supporters, he approached the subject of Negro suffrage cautiously. He had found that the Negroes had "shown greater aptitude for learning and intelligence than was expected" and the Rebels had, under Johnson's leadership, got worse. Despite the most strenuous suffrage laws, traitors in large numbers had been voting in Tennessee. Should the Negroes, then, not vote? Even Andrew Johnson had advocated since his accession to the presidency a scheme for Negro voting. But the Parson's most compelling argument was that it would keep the state out of the hands of the Rebels and greatly please the Radicals in Washington, who were undoubtedly moving toward Negro suffrage for the rest of the South. 11

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8 American Annual Cyclopaedia, 1867, p. 706.
9 Warmoth, op. cit., p. 50.
10 Nashville Union and American, quoted in Daily New Era, November 10, 1866.
was the only Radical state in the South; it should not disappoint Congress.

The Conservatives in the legislature, who had long favored the removal of the disabilities against the Confederates, immediately seized upon the Parson's recommendation and cleverly changing it, introduced a bill for universal suffrage and universal amnesty. This trick which they had tried once before, failed again. The Parson was now more than ever determined that the Negroes should have the vote and he believed that it would be calamitous if the Radicals should not be responsible for giving it to them. So on the day before Christmas, as if he were giving a Yuletide present to the Negroes, he sent a special message to the legislature in which he boldly came out for complete and immediate suffrage for the Negroes. "Onward is the watchword which shields and inspires two continents!" declared the Governor. "Now is the time for Tennessee to show to the world that she belongs to the advanced guard on the great question of equal suffrage! With the loyal men of the State allowed to vote, the Government thereof will remain in loyal hands. Without their votes, the state will pass into disloyal hands, and a reign of terror not so easily described as realized will result." The Parson was determined that the Conservatives should not have the credit of giving the Negro the vote, through their scheme of connecting Rebel voting with it.

During January and February (1867) Negro meetings, properly directed, began to spring up in various parts of the state, calling for the right to vote and for Brownlow's renomination for the governorship. In Knoxville they met and noisily cheered Brownlow's name every time it was mentioned. Negroes in Blount County met at Maryville and resolved for Brownlow and Negro suffrage. They had afforded soldiers who had "fought and vanquished on the battlefield the bloody minions of a slaveholders rebellion, and who are ready and willing to mete out justice to traitors at the ballot box." Such resolutions showed

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13 Ibid., 1866, p. 730.
14 Knoxville Whig, February 20, 1867.
15 Ibid., February 6.
that the Negroes knew how to vote. The McMinn County Negroes met at Athens, resolved for the ballot, and thanked for their present blessings Almighty God, the Radical Congress, and Brownlow.\textsuperscript{15}

Now that the Parson had set his heart on Negro suffrage, with the majority he could command in the legislature it was inevitable. Sensing that they were about to secure their "Place in the Sun" the Negroes filled the gallery of the house to look and applaud. The \textit{Whig} reported in early February, "The gathering clouds of dusky humanity which settled down in the galleries of the House early in the day, plainly portending a storm—some wordy encounter in which Sambo could not be otherwise than an interested spectator."\textsuperscript{16}

On the 20th the Negro suffrage law was passed, and the Parson thereby gave to Tennessee the distinction of being the only state in the South to permit the Negro to vote—an even greater accomplishment when it was remembered that the Congressional Radicals had not yet forced it upon their military districts now about to be set up in the former Confederacy. Thus were the Tennessee Conservatives forcefully reminded that the rule of their own native Radicals was more extreme than that of the Northern Radicals.\textsuperscript{17}

Brownlow occupied a proud pinnacle in the Southern States. Only Tennessee was a state in the eyes of the Congressional Radicals; the other divisions which Johnson had called states were dragging out through the sufferance of Congress a weak existence, which was soon to be terminated when they should lose their names, become military districts, and receive numbers. Naturally Brownlow looked upon these Johnson states with contempt. When Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia, at various times, had made requisitions upon him for the return of escaped criminals, he vigorously refused their requests. To the governor of Virginia he made "such an answer that no further correspondence took place between us on the subject."

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}, February 27, 1867. \textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, February 6. \textsuperscript{17} \textit{American Annual Cyclopaedia}, 1867, p. 706; \textit{Noted Men of the Solid South}, p. 193.
Brownlow declared he would “not surrender Union officers and soldiers to the horse-thieves and bush-whackers of the rebel states to be imprisoned and hung because of their Union sentiments.”

The objective toward which all eyes in Tennessee were now turned was the August election. The movement for Negro suffrage had been developed largely with this point in view, and now that the Negro would vote in the next election both parties sought his support. Naturally the Radicals had captured the colored man’s affections, but the Conservatives did, none the less, attempt to garner what dusky votes they could. In their April convention they had agreed to full political and civil rights for Negroes. Each party was able to organize supporting Negro conventions.

But even with the Negroes voting, Brownlow was somewhat fearful of the outcome of the election, for the Conservatives were organizing with a determination to capture the state. It was therefore necessary for the franchise laws to be further dealt with, and on February 25 (1867), the old law of May 3, 1866, was amended and reënacted. The chief purpose of the new law was to place the machinery of elections more completely in Brownlow’s hands. By giving him authority to set aside registrations in any county, it made him supreme dictator, and really made elections an unnecessary farce.

Since Brownlow’s government was based on force and fear, it was highly important that these elements be not allowed to deteriorate. The sheriffs’ “County Guards” which had been provided for in 1865 had never worked effectively, and Brownlow had been forced to depend much on the Federal troops. But as Johnson was president and still had some authority left in dealing with the army, he made no greater use of the troops in aiding Brownlow than the national exigencies demanded. Fully sensing this situation, Brownlow had gone out among the governors of the Northern States and had got the promise of all necessary arms and ammunition. A trained and enthusiastic

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18 Knoxville Whig, January 23, 1867.
19 Noted Men of the Solid South, pp. 190-91.
army always at his command Brownlow felt he must have. So on February 20, 1867, Tennessee passed a new army law providing for the raising of a force to be called the Tennessee State Guard, and to be composed of one or more regiments from each Congressional district. Brownlow was their commander-in-chief and in order to make of them modern “Ironsides,” no person might enlist who could not pass a test on loyalty, which included taking the franchise oath. 20 Now that Tennessee was about to have an army of her own, she called upon the United States for arms and the gift of a fort or two in the vicinity of Nashville where the equipment could be kept when not in use. 21 To translate his army from paper to living flesh and blood required effort and expense which the Governor and Commander-in-Chief would not undergo immediately, if he could use the threat of it as a club to brandish over the heads of Tennesseans. So, a few days after the law had been passed, he issued on February 25, a rousing proclamation, reciting the terrible crimes that were taking place in the state, quoting the law which would make possible his army, and threatening proper punishment if the people did not become law-abiding immediately. “Atrocious murders and numerous outrages” had been committed by “violent and disloyal men,” and since “these bad men are banding themselves together” he proclaimed that he intended “to put a stop to all such outrages.” He had “no concessions to make to traitors; no compromises to offer assassins and robbers; and if, in the sweep of coming events, retributive justice shall overtake the lawless and violent, their own temerity will have called it forth.” The Brownlow Government would be sustained “despite all the efforts of disappointed traitors and disloyal newspapers.” The Rebels were “giving forth their vile utterances in railway cars, in public hotels, on the streets, and through the newspapers” and were doing great damage to the good name of the state. He closed with the threat, “I mean what I say.” 22 This proclamation actually called out no troops, for his army was

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20 Ibid., p. 192.
21 Ibid.
22 McPherson, History of Reconstruction, p. 208.
yet unorganized. The Parson hoped to subdue the people with fear.

Still his Tennesseans did not subside in their restlessness and in their preparations for the coming election; so, on March 1, the legislature requested the United States Government through General Thomas to afford Tennessee, Federal troops sufficient to preserve order. The General replied that as the rebellion had been declared at an end in Tennessee, the Federal army had no right to assume one of the principal duties of the civil government. Federal troops could be sent only in answer to a specific request of the governor reciting the nature of the disorder and the authorities to whom the troops should report. Finding that he could not secure the United States army to aid him in governing the state, Brownlow set about organizing his own army.

He issued Order Number 1 on March 6, calling for volunteers for three years unless sooner discharged. Captains whom he had commissioned were to raise companies of 100 men, of whom should be mounted to act as scouts. To restrain the vengeance of his picked “Ironsides,” he warned them against trespassing and pillaging. General Joseph A. Cooper was placed in direct command. Negroes, now being able to take the franchise oath, could be enlisted especially for Middle and West Tennessee, and to facilitate their volunteering, it was reported that at least one Negro captain was among those commissioned. The first company was organized in Jonesboro in the early part of May, where they received their guns and paraded through the streets.

With the Negroes voting and his army organized Brownlow was now ready for the campaign and election. Henry Ward Beecher, who had in the beginning supported Johnson but who was now the religious overlord of the Radicals, had been looking on Brownlow’s work and had pronounced it good. He

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24 Ibid., pp. 195-96; American Annual Cyclopaedia, 1867, p. 706.
25 Daily New Era, March 27, 1867.
26 Knoxville Whig, May 8, 1867.
extended his blessings and wished him godspeed. In January he had written him, "I hope God will be gracious to you and invigorate your frame. He has made your life precious to those who wish well to the country. Into the struggle of the next campaign you will carry not only the fate of Tennessee, but of the whole South, and so of the nation. May God go with you and bless you and bring you victorious; then if you wish to depart we will rejoice with you in the inheritance of that rest, which remaineth for the people of God."

Now, for the first time in American history, the Negroes would play a major part in an election. It was a solemn experiment in government to turn over voluntarily the power of a state heretofore exercised by a people with a background of a thousand years of political training, to a mass of ignorant people a year or two removed from a line of bondage and servility reaching back to the beginning of written records. Even the most extreme Radicals saw the possibility of criminal disaster that might follow, if the Negroes were not properly directed in their political activities. To avert this calamity and to make secure their own control of the offices, they organized the black voters into Union Leagues. Northern and Southern Radicals directed their activities. By using a ritual consisting of robes, sashes, pass words, secrecy, and a few military maneuvers they found the easiest road to the Negroes' heart and affections. Lodge meetings sprang up all over the state, and these drew the Negroes into the Union League as irresistibly as the candle attracts the candle fly. According to General Forrest, who was himself disfranchised but whose former slaves could vote, "The Negroes were holding night meetings; were going about; were becoming very insolent; and the Southern people all over the State were very much alarmed." Through the Union Leagues the Negroes received their registration and their ballots; and those who did not join found the greatest difficulty in voting.

These newly-enfranchised people were greatly aroused; they

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27 Ibid., January 16, 1867.
28 Ku Klux Conspiracy, XIII, 7. See also Knoxville Whig, August 14, 1867; Noted Men of the Solid South, p. 191.
believed that the Millenium was near at hand. They held their meetings all over the state and were addressed by both white and black speakers. Brownlow’s Whig published the peregrinations of one black orator, “a gentleman of talent,” who announced his coming for 26 places. At Murfreesboro 1,500 of these groping children of Radicalism held a political picnic to cheer the name of Brownlow. In fact, the Parson became so great a hero in the minds of these simple people that they visualized him as a Black Napoleon. At Gallatin, a Negro preacher declared that Brownlow was “a colored man, and he meant to go for him, and wanted every colored man to do the same, at which the crowd cheered heartily.

It was maddening for the Rebels to see their former slaves marching and meeting, excited by their right to vote, while they, themselves, were disfranchised. Unable to restrain themselves, they attempted to break up Negro gatherings and thereby precipitated bloody collisions. In July, a marching column of Union Leaguers in Franklin led to a riot in which one person was killed and 40 wounded. At Brownsville a Radical meeting swayed by two Negro orators resulted in a collision in which 100 shots were fired.

The Conservatives were too intelligent to expect many Negro votes. Even if a Negro should want to vote their ticket, he would find it virtually impossible, as the road to the ballot box led through the Union League, which was under the complete control of the Radicals. Nevertheless, the Conservatives hoped to scare away from the Radical ticket many native white Unionists, by raising the race question and arousing their feeling against Negroes. With gleeful malice they dug up the Parson’s ante-bellum debate with Pryne and exposed some of his degrading remarks applied to the Negroes. Brownlow, twisting the facts a bit, answered by declaring that Pryne had challenged him to defend the South, “and I done so, with an ability credit-

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29 *Knoxville Whig*, May 29, 1867.
32 *Knoxville Whig*, May 22, 1867.
able to me, although I was on the wrong side of the subject.”\(^{33}\)

In preparing for a great Fourth of July celebration and political meeting to be held in Knoxville, three Negroes had been placed upon the committee of arrangements to hold their race true. In publishing the names of the committee the *Whig* omitted the Negroes. The Conservatives immediately very trouble-somely inquired why they had been slighted by the omission. The Parson declared the names had been left off without his knowledge, and angered by Conservative deviltry, he threw off his racial hesitancy and boldly stated that “if week-kneed Union men and time-serving partizans can’t stand this, let them stay at home on the 4th of July.”\(^{34}\)

The old custom in Tennessee required a joint campaign, in which the opponents would abuse each other and delight their partisans. As Brownlow’s health did not make it possible for him to take to the hustings, he contented himself by campaigning up and down the columns of the *Whig*, while Etheridge travelled around over the state. He called Etheridge a “vulgar blackguard, a professional gambler and political seditionist” and charged that he had received his nomination by “a treasonable conclave at Nashville.”\(^{35}\) As Tennessee revolved around the Parson, he became the object of bitter attacks and the subject of poetry and praise. A Radical poet wrote his “Brownlow and Tennessee,” in which this stanza appeared:

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\begin{align*}
\text{When midnight shrouds the sacred spot} \\
\text{Where traitors 'gainst their country plot,} \\
\text{What man is damned the first and most,} \\
\text{Damned while they tremble lest his ghost} \\
\text{Should haunt them with a hangman’s knot,} \\
\text{And visions grim of gallows-post?}
\end{align*}
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Brownlow.\(^{36}\)

The Conservatives turned to burning condemnation of the Radicals. The *Bolivar Bulletin* said:

\(^{33}\text{Ibid., May 8, 1867.}\)
\(^{34}\text{Ibid., June 5.}\)
\(^{35}\text{Ibid., May 8, June 5.}\)
\(^{36}\text{Ibid., February 13.}\)
The foul-mouth Radicals of this woe-befallen State are going to have a “powerful time” this coming summer. In order to win advocates to their lawless clan, they are going to import a dozen or more of the spoon-lifting, eel-skinning fraternity of the North, and have them stump every county in the State. Among them will be Fred. Douglass, the negro orator (?). Nigger Douglas and Beast Butler to stump Tennessee! Good Lord, deliver us.\(^7\)

Etheridge characterized the Tennessee Radicals as “the party paying no taxes, riding poor horses, wearing dirty shirts, and having no use for soap.”\(^8\)

The Conservatives early realized that they were fighting a lost battle; yet they continued to grasp at every straw of hope and prod the Radicals wherever possible. In May, in answer to a question from a Conservative as to whether his party would be permitted to make a canvass, Brownlow stated that there would be no interference with them unless they delivered “incendiary speeches” and advised “the overthrow of the State government by mob violence.” They tested the franchise law in the courts, only to be told that it was constitutional.\(^9\) The state supreme court heading them off from having the whole law declared void, they next planned to take advantage of a weakness in the law, which threw the Parson into a panic. The tenth section being badly worded seemed by an honest and logical construction to indicate that the county courts might appoint the election judges, and that only if they should not act, the Brownlow commissioners of registration should appoint them. If this interpretation had stood, it would have taken the control of the local election machinery out of the hands of Brownlow, and in many cases would have made it possible for the Conservatives to register. The State Central Committee of the Conservatives sent out a notice for the county courts to immediately appoint the judges. Brownlow quickly, on July 1, issued a remarkable proclamation in which he declared that the law

\(^7\) Quoted \textit{ibid.}, February 20, 1867.
\(^8\) \textit{Ibid.}, August 7.
\(^9\) McPherson, \textit{History of Reconstruction}, p. 257. The court later changed its mind and declared the law unconstitutional.
gave to the commissioners of registration the right to appoint the election judges, and that if any court attempted to exercise the right or any judge so appointed attempted to serve, collision with the state government would result. He announced that General Cooper would disperse his troops over the state to enforce the law despite the threats of seditionists, and if necessary Brownlow would call out all the troops at his command. Overpowered by the threat of soldiers the Conservatives gave up what they believed to be a legal right, and gradually lost interest in the campaign. Some of their candidates resigned their nominations and returned home.40

The Radicals, however, did not lessen their guards or remove their sentries from the watch-towers. In the early part of the year, in addition to giving the Negro the vote, they granted the franchise to all foreigners who had been in the United States one year and in Tennessee six months, and who had not participated in the rebellion.41 The poll books were the sacred registers of the loyal, and by properly guarding and purging them the election could be won before the voting was done. According to the law those who had voted in the elections of February and March of 1865 could automatically be registered; but in order to prevent the Conservatives from being able to offer proof of this qualification, the old poll books were in some places stolen or destroyed. One Union man who had been a captain in the United States army but who had become a Conservative was by Brownlow's direct orders prevented from registering, because he had married into an influential Rebel family.42 The registrations in some of the counties, made by the Governor's own appointees, he set aside.43 As the day of the election approached Brownlow's army was scattered widely over the state, the Negro companies being concentrated in Middle and West Tennessee. Their presence in some places provoked trouble which resulted

40 Knoxville Whig, July 24, 1867; American Annual Cyclopaedia, 1867, pp. 707-9.
41 McPherson, History of Reconstruction, p. 257.
42 Ku Klux Conspiracy, I, 462-63.
43 American Annual Cyclopaedia, 1867, p. 708.
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In Franklin County they dragged a man from his home and shot him. There was also a comical side to their activities, as the infantry rode around on the trains making a show of their strength and the horsemen parading through the country districts. In one of their engagements they rode a man out of town on a rail, in another they settled a family quarrel, it was said, by ordering a divorce. In all there were 19 companies distributed over the state, consisting of 1,500 men. The people of Tennessee were indebted to these troops to the extent of $93,822.36, for their efforts in seeing that Brownlow's party should win the election.

There were a few Federal troops stationed in Tennessee but they operated under strict orders from General Thomas' headquarters, which orders forbade them to engage in any activities which could be construed into managing elections. They should interfere only to prevent riots and bloodshed.

In the election Brownlow's forces made an almost complete sweep of the state. The Parson beat Etheridge by a vote of 74,848 to 22,548. All of the Congressmen were Radicals. The only successes the Conservatives secured were four members of the lower house of the legislature.

The experiment of Negro suffrage had been tried and it was a success for the Radicals, though it left in all others a feeling of melancholy and an anxiety for the future of a state at the mercy of such ignorance, some of it innocent and some vicious. A. A. Steele, a Union man who had been a member of Brownlow's first legislature, declared the Negroes as they voted reminded him "of a drove of sheep huddled to be driven into an inclosure, or a flock of partridges into a net." Few could read their ballots, which had been given them by their white managers. "The election," he said, "was not what I would consider...

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44 Ku Klux Conspiracy, I, 421, 463.
45 American Annual Cyclopaedia, 1867, p. 708.
46 Noted Men of the Solid South, pp. 196-97.
47 Knoxville Whig, August 7, October 9, 1867.
48 American Annual Cyclopaedia, 1867, p. 708.
49 Ibid., p. 709; Noted Men of the Solid South, p. 198.
a free one; it was a burlesque on republican government, and conducted entirely in the interest of the dominant faction and its candidates.50

Raphael Semmes, the former Confederate raider, whom the Parson called "Pirate Semmes," now editor of the Memphis Bulletin, wrote down his reflections on the melancholy sight: "To our eyes, the long procession of dusky figures, making their way slowly to the judge's stand, bore the semblance of a funeral procession. Liberty was dead, we thought, and those were her pall-bearers. The white people, those unfortunate individuals who had been tabooed on account of their color, were looking on from a distance, pretty much as they would look upon the realization of some Eastern tale in the 'Arabian Knights.' We scanned the countenance of the dusky voters. Childish curiosity and simplicity, stolid indifference, blank ignorance, wretchedness and crime were the main characteristics.

"And these were the voters of America, the men who are to be the future guardians of the constitutional liberties of the States, the law-givers and judges of a land of white men. We turned away sick at heart." Semmes explained that he had been denied the right to vote on account of a "supposed defect in patriotism."51

Tennesseans had now the prospect of two more years of the Brownlow régime, some congratulating themselves on their good fortune, others consoling themselves as best they could. All the country was watching Tennessee, for she was a unique experiment in the art and science of government. The Philadelphia Press admitted that Brownlow was rough and violent, but just the sort of man Tennessee needed to bring her out "from the fiery furnace of slavery and vested wrong.... We would not willingly see him Governor of Pennsylvania, but we do want him for, and rejoice in seeing him Governor of Tennessee."52 As a scourge for Tennesseans the Philadelphians had high praise for the Parson.

50 Ku Klux Conspiracy, I, 461.
51 Quoted in Knoxville Whig, August 7, 1867.
52 Quoted ibid., August 14, 1867.
On October 10, Brownlow was inaugurated governor for a second time. The ceremonies took place in the hall of the house of representatives, where members of the house and of the senate were assembled. At the door his coming was announced, and immediately he entered the hall assisted by a senator and a representative. "He looked emaciated, pale and feeble, and moved slowly down the aisle," the members rising as he was assisted to the rostrum. Being too feeble and hoarse to deliver his inaugural address, he was given permission to have his secretary, H. H. Thomas, read it. It was short and fierce. He boasted of being elected by the biggest majority in the history of the state, and he ridiculed and condemned the Conservative party, whose record was so bad that "it only remains for it to advocate Poligamy, in order to have sounded every known depth of political infamy." Brownlow had scarcely got himself elected to office a second time before he was confronted with a complicated election situation in Nashville. As his régime rested mostly on the less intelligent people in the rural districts and small settlements, the larger cities appeared to him as danger spots to be feared unless he could curb their power. In May, 1866, Memphis had disgraced his state by rioting against the Negroes; Chattanooga had never been friendly; and Nashville had been sternly hostile. Only in Knoxville, of the larger cities, was he a hero.54 Soon metropolitan laws were passed for the special benefit of Memphis and of Chattanooga.55 Nashville had escaped, perhaps because it was the capital city, where the Governor would naturally be able to keep a close watch.

Brownlow had an inherent prejudice against Nashville, because it was not in his beloved East Tennessee. It was in a region infested with Rebels, who had precipitated the state into rebellion. He stayed there only when it was absolutely necessary; most of the time when the legislature was not in session he lived

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53 Ibid., October 16, 1867.
54 For an account of the Memphis riot see American Annual Cyclopaedia, 1866, pp. 730-31.
55 There was great excitement in Memphis; the Avalanche defied Brownlow. Daily New Era, March 8, 1867.
in Knoxville. In the latter place he always felt much better, for East Tennessee was "redolent with patriotism, refined as the finest gold. That of Nashville a deadly, treasonable exhalation." And, furthermore, the Nashville people consistently insulted Brownlow and his legislature. In the old days the Nashville papers and people would "flatter and praise and toast and feast the members with oyster and wine suppers," but now they blackguarded them without ceasing.

Therefore when Nashville prepared to hold its municipal elections in September, 1867, Brownlow determined that the city should be made to realize that it was in the state of Tennessee. The trouble arose when Mayor W. Matt Brown held that the franchise law did not apply to municipal elections, and hence the Board of Aldermen should appoint the election judges. Brownlow ruled otherwise and ordered General Cooper to occupy Nashville with his army and prevent the city authorities from holding the election. Cooper appeared with the troops at his command; and the city proceeded to recruit extra policemen. Civil war seemed certain. The city appealed to the President for protection against its Governor, and Grant wired General Thomas at Louisville to hurry to Nashville to confer with Brownlow and the city authorities. Thomas appeared but found the Governor conveniently absent in Knoxville. Thomas now had great difficulty in extracting from Grant the exact duties and powers he should assume. Grant informed Thomas that his troops should not interfere between the two sets of election officials but should "confine their actions to putting down hostile mobs." He should prevent a conflict. As the election machinery was in the hands of the city, this order seemed to indicate that Thomas should prevent Brownlow officials from interfering, for only in that manner could a conflict arise. Grant befuddled Thomas more in attempting to clear up the cloud by telegraphing another enigma: "Nothing is clearer than that the military cannot be made use of to defeat the Executive of a State in enforcing the laws of a State. You are not to prevent the legal

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56 Knoxville Whig, April 11, 1866.
57 Ibid., April 22, 1868.
State force from the execution of its orders." But Thomas wanted to know whether he should aid in executing them. Thomas finally sensed that he should support Brownlow if he called for aid. On September 27, the Governor proclaimed Nashville in a state of insurrection and called upon the United States Army to put it down. Mayor Brown, now seeing that it would be foolish to expect his policemen to defend the city against Brownlow's army reënforced by United States troops, withdrew from the contest, protesting "against this most unjust, illegal, and high-handed course."\(^58\)

The Radicals now carried the city of Nashville by the same means they had used in securing the state. They elected mayor a disreputable stranger by the name of A. E. Alden, whom Brownlow had appointed commissioner of registration, and thereby they handed the city over to a "band of freebooters," who set up the "Alden Ring," which within less than two years stole $700,000 from the city. Brown determined to remain in possession of the office and thereby force the courts to pass upon the legality of the election. But Brownlow would not be so easily defeated. He ordered General Cooper to march his army against the Mayor and dispossess him. Seeing the inevitable, Brown departed.\(^59\)

Brownlow did not use all his waking moments bedeviling the cities and people of Tennessee. Soon after the Nashville troubles he exhibited a side of his nature not generally evident in his public dealings with his Tennessean enemies; he made it easy for Isham G. Harris, the governor who had led Tennessee into the rebellion, to return. His motives were mixed in this show of forgiveness to a former antagonist. The fact that Andrew Johnson was a bitter enemy of Harris' may have caused the Parson to relent; certainly since Johnson had assumed a soft attitude toward Jefferson Davis and the other traitors, "and

\(^{58}\) *American Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1867, pp. 709-10; *Knoxville Whig*, September 18, October 2, 1867. The text of Brownlow's proclamation of September 27 is in the Brownlow MSS, in the Division of Library and Archives in the Capitol at Nashville.

\(^{59}\) *American Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1867, p. 710; *Noted Men of the Solid South*, pp. 198-200.
the pro-rebel policy of the President warrants the conclusion that none will be punished," the Parson saw no reason why he should continue the pursuit of Harris; there had been worse traitors on the stump in the recent Tennessee election than he; also the ex-Governor's family needed him; and the economy of Tennessee was involved. The last element that entered into the Parson's mixed motives concerned a reward of $5,000 which the legislature on May 1, 1865, had offered for Harris. In his proclamation offering this reward, the Parson proceeded as if Harris had been a low criminal unknown to the people of Tennessee and never seen by them. After giving the weight, age, and complexion of Harris, he further described him by saying, "The study of mischief and the practice of crime, have brought upon him premature baldness and a gray beard. . . . He chews tobacco rapidly and is inordinately fond of liquors."60

At the end of the war Harris with other prominent Confederates had gone to Mexico there to develop under Maximilian a New South. On the fall of the Mexican Emperor, Harris had gone to England, but by 1867 he was tired of foreign lands and longed to return to Tennessee. Knowing how bitterly Brownlow hated him, he dared not put himself in the Parson's hands. But the Tennessee governor had now relented, and in his message to the legislature in October, 1867, he had requested the legislature to repeal the reward as the state might be called upon any day to pay it, "and in return, she would have nothing to show for the outlay." The Parson could be as belittling in his message as in his proclamation. The legislature repealed the reward on November 11, and soon thereafter Harris came to Nashville and called on Brownlow, who was said to have exclaimed as he greeted him, "While the lamp holds out to burn, the vilest sinner may return." The Governor and the ex-Governor then for a few minutes held pleasant converse, after which the

Parson paroled him to appear before the Federal Court the next spring.  

About this time Brownlow's health became a subject of wide interest and of particular concern to certain Tennesseans. His health had been a favorite topic for discussion both by himself and by the public since he had lost his voice on the eve of his debate with Pryne in Philadelphia and especially since he had lain out in the Great Smokies to escape the Confederates. When he became governor in 1865 he was very weak and to facilitate his correspondence he had printed on his official stationery the explanation: "As I shall gradually recover from my nervous prostration, I hope to be able to write better and more at length." But he did not seem to improve, and as a result his secretary, H. H. Thomas, assumed many of the duties of the governorship, including the signing of Brownlow's name. In answer to the charges made now and then that he was too sick to exercise his duties as governor and that he was controlled by others, he declared that he did his own ruling, for had not the "whole Confederacy failed to regulate me five years ago!" For the first year of his term, he scarcely ever made a speech without referring to the poor state of his health as a reason for not speaking at greater length. He seemed at all times to be so feeble both by admission and by appearance that rumors more than once were spread that he had died. A great sensation was created in Knoxville in early October, 1866, when it was reported that the Parson had passed away. There were sighs of relief as the rumor reached the passengers on the trains passing through, and according to the Whig, "The large number of traitors from Georgia and other rebel States gave manifestations of great joy." But the Whig knew who had spread the report and why—"to witness an exhibition of joy by malignant traitors."
Nothing better illustrated the hatred of the Parson throughout the South than the eager expectancy with which they awaited the announcement of his death. According to the Nashville *Press and Times*, "They wish him dead. He never ventures on a railroad train but they hope for a disaster that may bring him to an untimely end. They rejoiced when they heard he had died of cholera in Cincinnati, and sorrowed when they heard that he was alive." People even attempted to give him loathsome diseases—at least, he supposed it to be so. In the latter part of 1866, he received from Adairsville, Georgia, by express with fifty cents charges, a package containing material which he believed to be innoculated with disease germs.

But the ill-health which the Parson had been considering an asset in his political aspirations, was soon to develop into a liability; and now instead of telling how sick he was, he almost invariably declared that he was in as good or better health than he had been for the past twelve months. The first signs of a change came when the clever campaign was started for his renomination to the governorship. Not even the most extreme Radicals would want to renominate him if he were on the point of death, so to head off the reports that he was too sick to be considered for a second term, he declared that the "vindictive rebels and their apostate Union co-workers, are advertising from one end of the State to the other than I am dying or will die." He affirmed that he had never felt better during the past twelve months.

The Radicals accepted the Parson's word; they renominated and re-elected him, as has appeared. Now that he was to be governor for two more years, some of the other aspiring Radical leaders began to develop logical ambitions for the senatorship which would be vacated by Patterson, the President's son-in-law, on March 4, 1869. Soon Horace Maynard, Andrew J. Fletcher, General Joseph Cooper, and William B. Stokes entered the race for this attractive honor. No one had thought

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64 Quoted *ibid.*, November 21, 1866.
of Brownlow, who had just been reëlected to a second term as governor, for those who had watched the feeble old man as he had been helped into the hall to be inaugurated, could not help feeling that he would soon "transfer his citizenship to heaven." In fact, it was reported that he could not live longer than six more weeks. But the Parson startled the Radicals and the whole state by announcing on October 15 his desire to be elected to the Senate. He was quick to say that he was stronger than he had been for a whole year, and unable to conceal the growing ambition that had seized him, he plainly stated that he wanted to be the United States Senator because it was the "highest honor which the State can confer upon a citizen." He also felt that he might be useful in securing for Tennessee that justice, in the form of the payment of Civil War claims, which the United States was "so tardy in bestowing."

Brownlow seemed to have hypnotic powers in addition to his ability as a clever politician. The mere fact that he wanted something was reason enough for most of his fellow-Radicals. Immediately all of those Radicals who had had visions of living in Washington for six years in the capacity of a Tennessee senator, effaced themselves and sorrowfully buried their ambitions—all except Stokes. General Stokes, for he had been a soldier in the Civil War, was a man of courage and tenacity, and besides he was ambitious. He believed Brownlow was too feeble to be of any value to Tennessee in the Senate; and therefore, it would be doing the state a patriotic service to oppose him. He fought it out with the Parson in the election, which was held on October 22, but lost by a vote of 39 to 63. Brownlow's hold on the Radicals was thus proved invincible. Stokes sulked secretly and never forgot the "dog-in-the-manger" characteristic which the Parson had so forcefully exhibited. The Radicals generally were jubilant, almost as much for the effect they supposed it would have on Johnson as for the joy it would give the Parson. The Nashville Press and Times imagined that when Johnson heard of the election "Doubtless the air around him was filled

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67 Knoxville Whig, October 30, 1867.
68 Ibid., October 23.
with curses as thick as a cloud of Nashville mosquitoes and the
visits to the consoling demijohn were frequent and long." Possibly the Parson's ambition for the place was whetted when
he remembered that he would be discomfiting the President
again, by succeeding his son-in-law.

The Tennessee Conservatives reflected that "Old Man Ter­rible" had now secured for himself six more years of office hold­
ing, and that likely he fearing that the days of the Radicals in
Tennessee were numbered, had sought a place beyond the reach
of his enemies. The Nashville Banner took his election philo­sopherically: "He is the Radical King Bee, and we prefer him to
any of the gallinippers and horseflies that buzzed after senatori­al honors. We will keep him in the Senate as a model of Radical­ism and a warning voice! As we had to have a Radical, we pre­ferred him." It hoped that this good fortune might "have a
soothing effect, may make him, in fact, as amiable and kindly
disposed in his public dealings as he is in his private disposition
and personal conduct." To maintain himself in the supreme leadership of a group of
Radicals, able and ambitious, and to secure every honor his
fancy should dictate and the people could bestow, marked the
Parson as an unusual man. On his return to his home in Knox­ville, he was given an enthusiastic reception enlivened by speech­making, ringing bells, and brass bands.

He was now about to draw up a new lease on life. He would
live and grow strong in spite of all his enemies and rivals, and
he would prove it to them by going on a deer hunt in the rough
Chilhowee Mountains in Blount County among the Great
Smokies, which he knew so well from Confederate days. He also
would improve his physical frame by resting occasionally at
the fashionable Montvale Springs. Was there a new Parson in
the making?

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69 Quoted ibid., October 30, 1867.
70 Quoted ibid.
71 Ibid., December 4, 1867.
72 Ibid., July 1, 1868.
73 Ibid., July 14, 1869.