CHAPTER XVI

THE LIKE SHALL NOT BE SEEN AGAIN

Parson Brownlow was a political governor. He took no greater interest in the economic and social development of the state than was incidental to his political control, unless, indeed, the wasteful expenditures of state funds, and the exploitation of the Negroes and railroads may be considered more than incidental. But to say so is not to deny that toward the end of his governorship he announced a broad program for the state, which, if he had successfully carried it out, would have marked him as much more than a political governor. He talked much against sectional proscriptions which he felt would scare away Northern capital; as has appeared, he strongly favored the encouragement of immigration to the state, which in his mind would serve fully as much for political purposes as economic; he promoted a free school system by word rather than by act; he favored internal improvements through lending the aid of the state to the railroads; he would develop a middle class of small landholders and further punish the wealthy Rebels by breaking up large plantations; and he would encourage mining and manufacturing, especially in East Tennessee, where it seemed to him such activities could best thrive.\(^1\) He also believed that East Tennessee could be made into a great summer resort.

But the economic aspects of the Brownlow régime must be judged by its accomplishments rather than by any announced desires. Activities began first with the state's money and its borrowing power, and a record of extravagance and corruption was made which placed the state in a position rivaling the similar attainments of the most disreputable carpetbaggers and Negroes in the states farther south. It was not so much a reflec-

\(^1\) For example see Knoxville Whig, December 23, 1868.
tion on the Parson's honesty as on his financial ability and experience and his inability to see guile in a Radical, however disreputable he might be. A man who in private life had never possessed much wealth, and who largely through the kindness of his heart had lost most of the little he had had, would not likely show financial ability in dealing with the monies a state either had or could borrow in the pestilential times of Reconstruction—a period when it became the custom among the high and the low to plunder the public treasury. And to make worse the Parson's chances for an honest administration of the state's finances, he was aided by a legislature of inexperienced men, who for the most part had not the record of private honesty which had characterized his life.

As one of the inevitable results of the loss of the war by the Confederacy, Tennessee was relieved of her Confederate debt; so Brownlow succeeded only to the ante-bellum obligations of the state. Though the land had just passed through four years of the devastations of warfare and its ability to produce revenue had all but disappeared, the Parson proceeded as if he had an inexhaustible treasury. Salaries were increased and extravagant expenditures carried out which cost the state in money raised and used up $9,293,349.99, including a deficit of $269,166.29. The actual running expenses of the two Brownlow legislatures were more than $760,000. In addition, there was left a bonded indebtedness of $16,565,046.60. According to a committee which investigated the Brownlow régime shortly after it had passed on, the debt was increased in 1866 "unjustly and illegally" by $4,941,000, and in 1867 nearly $5,000,000 more "was corruptly and unjustly added." As was characteristic of the Reconstruction era, these bonds were sold for any price a speculator would pay, and quite often he bought them from 17 cents to 40 cents on the dollar.²

²Temple, op cit., pp. 319-21; American Annual Cyclopaedia, 1865, p. 780; ibid., 1868, p. 724; Ku Klux Conspiracy, I, 436; Noted Men of the Solid South, pp. 212-13. These figures take no note of the ante-bellum Tennessee debt, which Brownlow inherited.

Naturally these bonds began to depreciate on the market, and when they sold as high as 75, Brownlow considered it was time to rejoice at the sound financial condition of the state. And even when the state defaulted the interest, he took comfort in the gloomy observation that Tennessee occupied "a far more desirable condition than any of the states recently in rebellion." But his political enemies rejoiced at the financial discomfiture of the state as they saw him drag it down further and further, for they believed that sometime even the most fanatical Radical would see that a change in the government would be desirable.

By the summer of 1868, the bonds depreciated so low that there were rumors abroad of repudiation. To bolster up the waning credit of the state, a "Financial Board" of five men had recently been appointed, but it had broken up in confusion, and had left the state at a lower ebb than ever before. Believing that a Radical could do no wrong, the Parson blamed the state's low financial standing on a conspiracy hatched by the Conservatives and in his message of July 27, 1868, he called upon the legislature to investigate them and "proceed to sue them for damages in the name of the State." About this time he seemed to have lost faith in the honesty of his legislators or in their forbearance to keep their hands out of the public treasury, for he recommended an amendment to the constitution forbidding an increase of the state debt.4

The financial irregularities which beset Tennessee were aided by the Governor's physical condition. He was so afflicted with the palsy that he was unable to comply with the law which required him to place his signature upon each bond issued. He, therefore, commissioned his secretary, H. H. Thomas, to sign the required signature, and thereby, he greatly increased the chance of issuing fraudulent bonds; for when once the right to affix his signature passed beyond his own hand, there could be no certain limits to its extent. In 1866, he had been able to sign 200 bonds before he fell exhausted, whereupon he brought in his secretary of state as well as his private secretary to continue the process. In publicly reassuring bondholders that if his signa-

4 *Knoxville Whig*, June 3, July 8, 29, November 18, 1868.
ture did not appear to be genuine it was due to the lack of imitative skill in his secretaries, he invited political manipulators and counterfeiters to begin their work and destroy whatever financial standing the state had left. Soon the rumors were out that the Parson had millions of bonds stacked up in his office which might be signed by anyone who cared to enrich himself, and that such confusion already reigned as to make it impossible to determine how many bonds had actually been issued. It was directly charged that many of the bonds had been signed in New York City where they had been printed, and had never come into the possession of the state at all. Brownlow admitted that some of the bonds had been signed in New York, and that Thomas had done it, going there to begin the work early in order to save time.5

Tennessee in the hands of her native Unionists fared financially about as ill as did the other Southern States which were at the mercy of their Negroes and carpetbaggers. It seemed that Radical rule was as pestilential whether it be native or imported. And in either case the most gigantic thefts were being carried out through the manipulation of the railroads. The captains of troops, when peace came, would transfer their organizing ability to industrial pursuits, and the railroads offered easy entrance. But all railroad developments of this period were not actuated by the desire for plunder. There was an urgent need for rehabilitating the roads and constructing new ones, for upon the transportation establishment other economic developments largely rested. The former commanders of armies and the industrially inclined leaders entered upon the business, for the most part, with honest intentions; the native politicians and the carpetbaggers were the ones to play havoc with the state’s credit and good name.

Governor Brownlow believed he could well serve his state in giving some attention to the railroads, and especially did he believe that East Tennessee should now receive the aid denied it when Middle and West Tennessee controlled the state. He had much to say on the subject in his official capacity and he

spread additional observations over the pages of his *Whig.* East Tennessee had long felt the disadvantage of her isolation; ante-bellum railroad conventions had always been welcomed in Knoxville; and now the northern link of the long projected Charleston and Cincinnati Railroad, under the name of the Knoxville and Kentucky Railroad, engaged much of his enthusiasm.

Not restricting himself, however, to East Tennessee, Brownlow immediately upon becoming governor took up the question of the railroads, now being turned back to their owners by the Federal Government, so far as Nathan Bedford Forrest, John Morgan, and other raiders had left anything to be restored. As the state itself through its ante-bellum aid had important interests in the roads, there was additional reason for the state to take some action to safeguard its investments. The state now came to the rescue through a method which was logical and wise enough, had the men in charge honestly carried it out. Bonds were issued for the purpose of rehabilitating the war-worn roads and for meeting the interest requirements. Thus would the state be relieved of the necessity of attempting to secure funds through the doubtful expediency of taxation. Bonds were issued at various times and in such a haphazard fashion, as has already appeared, that the exact amount involved has never been definitely agreed upon; but there can be no doubt that it aggregated $16,000,000. To aid East Tennessee, about $5,000,000 was issued which produced in actual money about $350,000, so poor was the credit of the state and so dishonest were those in charge. For the rest of the state the record was little better. Carpetbaggers with a Union record came in and with it blinded Brownlow to their utter dishonesty and disrepute, and when they had seized all the spoils which they thought could be had, they withdrew from the scene. After the Brownlow pestilence had spent itself, a legislative committee which had been appointed to view the ruin, declared that for the immense debt saddled upon the state the people had to show only the Hermitage and the capitol. Any other values received had disappeared,

* April 4, 1866, November 18, 1868 may be noted as examples.
while the state had nothing but the debt and the obloquy resulting from her inability to pay it.\(^7\)

By 1867, some of the railroads were defaulting in the interest due on their bonds, and certainly no one who knew the condition of the roads and their finances should have been surprised. Brownlow threatened the roads with seizure by the state if they did not pay their debts, and before the end of the year various roads were taken over. But the attempt of the state to run the roads was a great burden on the weak treasury, and before the end of 1868 Brownlow declared that he would recommend the sale of all roads which did not meet their interest promptly.\(^8\)

The story of the methods used by the dishonest railroad plunderers in promoting bond issues in the legislature is an amazing one. Bribery was, of course, common, but the shapes it took and the atmosphere under which it thrived were most outlandishly uncommon. The old methods of wine and women were freely used, and so was money, but a somewhat new departure was taken when new suits of clothes were dangled before the eyes of the hesitant legislator. General J. A. Mabry, the president of the Knoxville and Kentucky Railroad, admitted that he had spent from $2,000 to $5,000 in clothing the Tennessee legislature and that he had an agreement with a Nashville clothier to furnish the goods. The legislators for sale, who found themselves well provided with clothes, could generally be satisfied with $500 apiece. It undoubtedly remained for the Tennessee conspirators to discover the use that could be made of ministers of the church in promoting fraudulent legislation. Knowing the high position that religion and its ministers held in Tennessee politics, and realizing how amenable politicians were to such influences, these conspirators hired preachers to pray bills through the legislature.\(^9\)

But the most amazing method of control, which was, however,


\(^8\) Knoxville Whig, February 27, September 4, 1867, June 3, November 18, 1868.

not peculiar to Tennessee at this time, was the use made of mesmerism and spiritualism. These highly scientific, if not occult, schemes were reserved for controlling Governor Brownlow and other important men. In the summer of 1868, the Parson became involved in a transaction which in connection with any other person would take on the ugly aspects unmistakable of a bribe, and which in the case of the Parson can be charitably explained only on the grounds that he was as usual, ill and did not know what had really happened. General Mabry together with C. M. McGhee, John R. Branner, and Thomas Calloway came into the Parson’s presence bringing with them five $1,000 bills, most of which amount they had won speculating on Wall Street. According to the evidence sifted out by the investigating committee a few years later, Brownlow, who was lying on a couch ordered the Greeks bearing gifts to give the money to his wife, who accepted it. Gentle Mrs. Brownlow undoubtedly had no knowledge of the meaning of the money and therefore no sense of guilt, and likely the Parson considered it nothing more than a financial act of friendship on the part of a well-wisher who was more blessed with worldly goods than was Brownlow. But not so innocent were the intentions of the bribers, for they had been consulting the spiritualist Madame Mansfield on the easiest approach to the capture of the Parson, and she had informed the General that the best method for controlling the “old scratch” would be through the use of money. And as for the easiest way to obtain it, she advised them to speculate on Wall Street on Brownlow’s account, but without his knowledge. Since the spiritualist’s advice in speculating for the money had been so successful, the General and his conspirators believed that the gift would miraculously bring the Parson under their hypnotic influence.¹⁰

The same sort of corruption that crept into the handling of the railroads also destroyed any fair prospects of a free school

¹⁰ “The State Debt,” pp. 31, 176-78. The Brownlow régime was investigated twice, once in 1869-1870 when a report was issued in about a thousand pages and published as an appendix to the senate journal of 1871-1872, and secondly, in 1879. I have depended for the most part on the findings of the last investigation.
system for the state. Brownlow remembering that a little learning instead of being a dangerous thing had been of vast importance in his making, in the first year of his rule called upon the state “to keep faith with the destitute and long-neglected school children.” The Federal armies had destroyed the Tennessee School for the Blind, near Nashville, and the Library of the East Tennessee University, in Knoxville, had also fallen before their onset. The ravages of war against education should now be repaired, for a good school system would have additional value in directing new immigrants to the state. The legislature seemed to have been too busy issuing railroad bonds and following the Parson’s advice on how best to harry the Rebels to pay much attention to his recommendations on education. In a message to the legislature in January, 1867, he referred to that body’s refusal to pass important school legislation as deeply to be regretted.¹¹

Toward the latter part of his gubernatorial career, the Parson saw some school bills pass his legislature, but by this time, corruption and stupidity had largely dissipated the school fund, so that now laws without money could little aid the school children. The state treasurer, R. L. Stanford, of East Tennessee, was prevailed upon to deposit the school fund, which was in the form of Federal bonds, in a Memphis bank and to receive it later in greenbacks. This action marked him as either stupid or corrupt, and the disaster that must inevitably hang over such a transaction soon came tumbling down upon it. He was not forced to await the repayment of money worth one hundred cents on the dollar, in greenbacks worth much less—the bank hastened the disaster by becoming insolvent and dissipating most of the school fund. Treasurer Stanford resigned, and Brownlow accepted his resignation, expressing much indignation that a public servant should be so faithless. Poor Stanford, who must have been more stupid than venal, and who had a keener conscience than many other men of his day, had the courage and politeness to do what the corrupt carpetbaggers

¹¹*American Annual Cyclopaedia, 1865*, p. 780; *Knoxville Whig*, January 30, 1867.
would never do—he got himself out of the way by drinking laudanum.¹²

Brownlow was only indirectly responsible for the sorry plight of the schools, but it was part of the régime which he headed. Other institutions in the state were in an equally low state. In looking into the State Hospital for the Insane, he found the relatives of many people from other Southern States, sent to Tennessee to be relieved of having them close at hand. The relatives at large were as crazy as the inmates, Brownlow thought, if they expected Tennessee to give this service free. He sent warning that if the bills were not soon paid, Tennessee would quarter these foreign inmates on their relatives back home.

Just as the state hospital was in need of money, so was the penitentiary. This institution was so terribly crowded that he suggested that a branch be built in East Tennessee. His opponents objected that this was merely an attempt to make it possible to mismanage two institutions instead of one. The state hospital and the penitentiary, the Parson knew, were necessary, but there was one institution which he believed to be a silly luxury. This was the Hermitage. Why should the state, of which he was the governor, keep up this expensive monument to his old imperious enemy, Andrew Jackson, especially since it had never been paid for. He advocated its sale in order to help satisfy the debt.¹³

Brownlow had neither a philosophy nor a program on financial and economic questions. Yet he had his likes and dislikes along these lines, whether he clearly saw why or not. He did not wait to be instructed by the national leaders of the Republican Party as to what he should think about the greenbacks. He knew that he liked the idea of such money, for it helped the debtors, and he believed that the bonds of the nation should be paid in greenbacks unless they specifically stated otherwise. This position he took in a letter to the Tennessee Radical convention in January, 1868. But when “Gentleman” George Pendleton of Ohio, led his Democrats into such doctrines in the presidential

¹²Ibid., December 19, 1866, January 30, 1867, August 29, 1868.
¹³Ibid., November 7, 1866, July 29, 1868.
Though Brownlow did not live in an industrial state he was beset with a railroad strike in 1868, on the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad. The strikers appointed a committee to explain their grievances to the Governor, but he was so sure that he already knew their purposes, that in answer to their request for a conference, he declared that they were "a mob to stop the trains and destroy the business of the roads" and he flatly charged them with being part of the Rebel warfare against his administration.

As a governor, Brownlow was neither constructive nor reconstructive; he was distinctly destructive. For four years he had threatened revenge upon a people who, he declared, had injured him and the Unionists; and when he became governor, he browbeat and intimidated a people who should have been helped back to a position in the state commensurate with their importance. He disfranchised most of the intelligent people and made voters out of 40,000 former slaves, and so exacting was he of Unionists that according to a Congressional committee "Everybody was loyal who voted for and maintained Brownlow and his friends, and everyone was disloyal who dared to oppose them."

As a result, his own party broke under his burden, and made it possible for his opponents to gain control of the state and forever abolish his control. The same Congressional committee declared that "No State was ever reduced to such humiliation and degradation as that unhappy commonwealth during the years Brownlow ruled over her."

A Tennessean forty years afterwards reflected that Brownlow's régime was "four years of misrule -more trying upon the brave men and women of Tennessee than the four years of terrible war." General Forrest, who was, himself, brave enough to stand his ground even against the Fighting

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14 Ibid., January 29, 1868.
15 Ibid., June 21.
18 The South in the Building of the Nation, II, 526 (Carey A. Folk, "Tennessee Since the War, 1865-1909").
Parson, testified that the name of Brownlow became a terror to the people generally. "They were very much frightened," he declared. A Tar Heel, up the French Broad, in Asheville, on the passing of the Parson out of the state to the Senate, expressed more eloquently the feelings many had toward him:

Innocent children will shrink from his polluting touch, and lonely women will shun him as they would a rattle snake. . . . His name will go down to posterity surrounded with a lurid halo of infamy, and will be spoken only in a whisper, on long winter nights, to send a thrill of terror to the hearts of timid listeners.

The feeling of relief that accompanied his departure was mixed with a sense of bitter outrage, mental if not material, suffered at his hands, which was long in dying down. A full-length portrait of the Parson, painted by Dury, to hang in the state capitol, today bears grimly devastating streaks from the waist down, made either according to tradition by the labial effusions of tobacco-chewing legislators, avenging the wrongs of their people, or according to a more charitable explanation, by the gentle drippings from heaven as they poured through an unfortunate leak in the capitol roof.

If Brownlow suffered a regret at transferring himself to the Senate it undoubtedly came out of the necessity of deserting his Whig, which had accompanied him for thirty years, from Elizabethton to Knoxville, and which had helped to make his career. During the past few years his quivering frame had not permitted his hand to write, yet he appeared on the editorial page frequently, signing himself "Senior Editor." In explaining to his readers, whether they be doubting or congratulating him, how he managed to write his editorials, he said that he had a little office in his back yard and while he reclined there he kept handily a table with pen, ink, and paper, and when his friends came in he set them to work. He added that while he was "unable

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19 Ku Klux Conspicacy, XIII, 15.
20 Asheville News, quoted by Knoxville Whig, March 31, 1869.
21 Knoxville Whig, August 15, 1866. A letter to the author from Mrs. John Trotwood Moore, April 13, 1931, suggested the latter explanation.
A portrait of Governor William G. Brownlow, bought by the state in 1866 for $1,000. It now hangs in the Tennessee State Library, in the Capitol, at Nashville. Reproduced by permission of Mrs. John Trotwood Moore, Librarian and Archivist.
Knoxville as it appeared to the artist about 1875. The Holston River is shown in the foreground. From Edward King's *The Southern States of North America*. 
to write" he was "able to think upon a large scale." On January 6, 1869, he announced that T. Haws & Company were the sole owners and editors of the newspaper. The only souvenirs which he retained were the building in which the paper was printed, and the back files. Thomas H. Pearne, the elder of the Northern Methodists, who had so terribly beset the Southern Methodists for mixing politics with their religion, now became the "political, religious and general editor" of the Whig. In relinquishing his long control, Brownlow looked back upon his thirty years of journalism and declared it satisfactory in his eyes—"had I my life to live over, I would pursue the same course I have pursued, ONLY MORE SO." As "Brownlow" was lowered from the masthead, perhaps he and many of his readers felt that a solemn ceremony should have accompanied the act. On January 27, 1869, the last Brownlow's Knoxville Whig fell from the press; on February 3 it was the Weekly Knoxville Whig. Feeling that this new title did not say exactly what they had intended, the new editors on the tenth, rescrambled the words into the Knoxville Weekly Whig, which may have made their predicament even worse.

On March 8, 1869, Senator Patterson would leave his seat in the Senate for Brownlow to occupy. On the next day a new president of the United States would be inaugurated. The Parson, therefore, began in February to make preparations to resign his governorship of Tennessee and to take up his new duties as Senator. On the 10th he issued his farewell address to the legislature in which he announced that he would cease to be governor on the 25th. He was not as fiery as might have been expected. Without admitting failure, he declared that he had sought to build up Tennessee and would have done better had the Rebels let him. If it might appear that he was too weak to make speeches in the Senate, he would never allow his record to be open to the charge that he had not voted in the right way. As this legislature, too, was soon to pass into history, on the 27th,
it resolved that the members part in peace “and that the Great Eternal may bless us for all our good votes”; it hoped that their bad ones might lead to no harm; and to conclude, they resolved “That we will endorse the words of our great General, ‘Let us have peace.’”\textsuperscript{25} But, of course, as long as the majority of Tennesseans were disfranchised, spurned, and ruled over by the Radical minority there could be no peace. With the departure of the Parson, the governorship would devolve on D. W. C. Senter, the speaker of the senate and a Tennessean with much less vindictiveness than permeated Brownlow.

The fates had been kind to the new Senator. He was displacing a son-in-law of Andrew Johnson in the Senate, and General Grant was relegating Andrew Johnson, himself, back to private life. The Parson would set out early for Washington in order to participate in the glories that would surround the inauguration of a president to be controlled by the Radicals. And all of the glory would not be reflected by the new president; Brownlow was a man with a reputation about as widespread as Grant’s. Various Washington ward leaders had made preparations to welcome him no less than the General.\textsuperscript{26}

Gathering together a group of his friends he boarded a special car on the Virginia and East Tennessee Railroad. He was personally and keenly hated by more people along the way than, perhaps, any other person who ever made the trip to Washington. He was peered and peeped at by people at the railway stations as if he had been a wild animal in a cage. At Bristol, small boys clamored around his car to catch a glimpse of him, and a grown-up who got a better view declared that he looked “like a d—d old turkey buzzard.” The \textit{Lynchburg News} carefully noted and published the fact that the car in which the Parson rode was number 9, and recommended that thereafter every person should “avoid it as he would a leper.”\textsuperscript{27} When the

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Acts of the State of Tennessee passed at the Second Session of the Thirty-fifth General Assembly for the Year 1868-69}, p. 417.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Knoxville Weekly Whig}, February 17, 1869; \textit{Noted Men of the Solid South}, pp. 211-12.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Knoxville Weekly Whig}, March 10, 1869.
train stopped in Charlottesville, the seat of the University of Virginia, ten or fifteen young fellows, who were thought to be students of the University, invaded his car. One of them whipped out a pistol and pointed it at the Parson, who was asleep, with the remark that he "would rather shoot the d—d old skunk than to eat." The weapon was snatched from his hand. Those who best knew student ways believed that it was intended merely as a student prank; but the Knoxville Weekly Whig declared that it was an attempt to assassinate the Parson and that it was proof enough that "Virginia needs further reconstruction."28

Brownlow in the Senate became as great an object of interest and curiosity as he had been while making his trip to Washington. Almost everyone who came to the capitol wanted to see him; the Washington Chronicle observed that he was "an object of great interest during this session of Congress."29 He might well have been also an object of pity, for his frame quivered like a shaking aspen as he sat in his seat. He took the oath of office on March 5, sitting down, and so feeble was he that he not only could not stand up, but his "arm had to be supported while being sworn in." It seemed, indeed, that the Tennessee Radicals had sent him to the Senate for no other purpose than to compliment him. He took up living quarters about a hundred yards from the Senate chamber, so that an easier task might be imposed upon those who carried him back and forth. As his voice was also gone, his speeches were read by the clerk. On being asked whether he did not regret his inability to speak, he replied that it was likely best for himself and for the Senate for otherwise he "Would always be in a row."30

Though physically more dead than alive, mentally he seemed as vigorous as ever. He took his duties seriously, arriving early each day and remaining late. He continued, miraculously, to exist throughout his six-year term and attended with great

28 Ibid., March 3, 10, 1869.
29 Quoted ibid., March 24, 1869.
30 Congressional Globe, 41st Cong., 1st sess., p. 8; Knoxville Weekly Whig, March 10, April 7, 14, 1869; Daily American, May 1, 1877; Temple, op. cit., p. 341; Knoxville Daily Chronicle, May 11, 1871.
regularity, though he missed on account of his illness the whole of the second session of the Forty-Third Congress, lasting from December 7, 1874, to March 3, 1875.\textsuperscript{31}

Though he took his position with becoming seriousness, he never became the mighty man of valor in the Senate which he had been back in Tennessee. The Radical Senators lionized him in the beginning, but they never went further, beyond doing him the doubtful honor of making him the chairman of the Committee on Revolutionary Claims. Not being a great man even among the species of giants who occupied the Senate in the Reconstruction days, he spent most of his time with what were considered small affairs, but which he considered important enough. He became a sort of claims agent for all the Unionists of Tennessee who felt that the United States owed them for their patriotic losses; and somewhat to his disgust at times, he was besieged by office-seekers. Though specializing on the Tennessee Unionists, he did not turn a deaf ear to all others who were in trouble or distress on matters of pensions and claims. His activities began with the Revolutionary War, which got him his chairmanship, and came on down through the French Spoliations prior to 1801, through the War of 1812, and on into his specialty, the Civil War. The widows did not fail to receive his attention, as was well shown in his successful efforts to secure an indemnity for Malinda Harmon, the widow of Jacob, who had been hanged by the Confederates in the early part of the war for his activities in bridge-burning.\textsuperscript{32}

The Parson wrote few speeches on the general policies up for discussion before the Senate. His first speech was on the question of the repeal of the Tenure of Office Act. Remembering how valuable it had been in getting Johnson into trouble, perhaps temporarily forgetful of who was president or perhaps thinking that it might be useful even against Grant, he opposed

\textsuperscript{31} Congressional Globe, 42nd Cong., 2nd sess., p. 1; Congressional Record, 43rd Cong., 2nd sess., p. xvi.

\textsuperscript{32} Congressional Globe, 41st Cong., 1st sess., pp. 231, 262; 2nd sess., I, 298, 377, 772, 808, 2976, 4286; 3rd sess., I, 1, 598; 42nd Cong., 1st sess., pp. 1, 231; 3rd sess., p. 1; Congressional Record, 43rd Cong., special session, I, 3; 1st sess., II, 1; Knoxville Weekly Whig, April 7, 1869.
its repeal. In this speech he gave the Senators a slight taste of his style of oratory, when in referring to certain ante-bellum conditions he said, "Amid the baying of the hounds that fed upon the flesh-pots of Egypt, the wisdom of Webster and the Genius of Clay went unheeded." All eyes had been glancing toward the Parson as this speech was read, and at its conclusion Carl Schurz, George F. Edmunds, Jacob M. Howard and other Senators went to his seat to congratulate him. Not being very close either in geography or in sentiment to the money interests of the East, in 1874 he opposed the resumption of specie payment as it appeared to him to be a measure directed toward the contraction of the currency, and he opposed the Civil Rights Bill as it seemed to him to make for the "co-education of the races." By this time he had somewhat reverted to his ante-bellum attitude toward the Negroes, especially as the Negroes in a convention in Nashville had recently denounced him for deserting them.

In whatever manner his attitude toward the Negroes might fluctuate, he never lost his complete detestation of the Rebel leaders. Early in his administration Grant had appointed to the surveyorship of customs in New Orleans, General James Longstreet, who had so lightly entrenched himself against the storm of Republican Reconstruction in the South that he soon capitulated and became a part of it. Grant might have forgotten what a terrible Rebel Longstreet had been, but the Parson did not have so short a memory. Especially did he remember that Longstreet had besieged Knoxville in the fall of 1863 and had forced the Parson and his family to subsist on half-rations, and that after abandoning the siege he had for the rest of the winter ravaged East Tennessee of what little food it had. In the mind of the Parson, one of the first qualifications for office was an unimpeachable Union record during the war.\footnote{Knoxville Weekly Whip, March 31, 1869. Yet Brownlow voted for the modification, which the Senate passed. \footnote{Congressional Record, 43rd Cong., 1st sess., II, 776-77; Claude G. Bowers, The Tragic Era, p. 420. \footnote{Knoxville Weekly Whip, April 21, 1869. \footnote{For instance see telegram to Jas. S. Stewart, January 27, 1869. In Charles Sumner MSS, in Harvard University Library.}}}}
Just as a Rebel could do no right, a Federal could do no wrong, and if anyone should attempt to do a wrong to a Federal no one was quicker in coming to his defense than was the Parson. In the course of a debate in 1869 Senator William Sprague, of Rhode Island, attacked General Burnside, who having been more successful in politics after the war than during it, had got himself elected governor of Rhode Island in 1866. Brownlow, figuratively speaking, was immediately upon the floor, to defend the soldier who had at last come to the rescue of Knoxville in 1863. But first, as had got to be a custom with him, he introduced his listeners to East Tennessee, one of the richest and most delightful regions on earth, and so large that it embraced thirty-one counties. Then he made the announcement that former Union men might sit in the United States Senate and listen to attacks on men like Burnside, but no one could make such attacks on him in Knoxville and escape bodily injury. “Indeed,” he declared, “there are patriotic women enough there who have named their children for Burnside to whale twenty such orators out of the State with broomsticks.” Laughter swept the Senate floor and the galleries at the sally of the women with their broomsticks, and the General whom they were defending said he enjoyed Brownlow’s speech more than any other one made.37

The East Tennessee hills had so stunted Brownlow’s sense of propriety that it never fully developed, even in the United States Senate, yet his record for petulance was not much worse than that of some Senators whose health was far better than his. He seemed never to be able to learn that the Senators might not be as much interested in his personal and political antagonisms as he was. In the latter part of 1869 he was having some internal dissensions in his Republican Party in Tennessee, and to him the floor of the Senate was as proper an arena in which to carry on the fight as was Tennessee. He began an attack upon

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37 Knoxville Weekly Whig, April 28, 1869. The statement concerning Burnside’s comment was written by John B. Brownlow on the margin of the office files, for this date.
some of the Tennessee Representatives in the other end of the capitol and was fast approaching the full vigor of East Tennessee tactics when the vice president halted the reading of his speech with the statement that it was unparliamentary for a Senator to attack a Representative. John Sherman, who perhaps, more for the reason of seeing how far the Parson would go than for any other, insisted that the Parson be allowed to continue—and so the storm swept on and spent its force.\textsuperscript{38}

At another time Brownlow came forth to defend himself against an "unwarranted insult and attack" made by James M. Beck, a Representative from Kentucky. Beck in painting the villanies and corruptions of Reconstruction, by way of completeness referred to "Brownlow, while in Tennessee, making a pandemonium of that State." This speech enraged the Parson uncommonly; he immediately wrote out his reply and asked permission under the rule of personal privilege to have it read. The vice president objected that the rules of the Senate did not permit one of its members to attack a member of the other House, but as no Senator objected, the clerk was allowed to proceed with Brownlow’s speech. When the hour arrived for a new order of business the vice president halted the reading, but such an unusual treat was it that the Senators decided to hear it all. The Parson began by calling Beck a slave-driver and a coward. If the Parson were not so old and decrepit, he declared he would snatch the Kentuckian’s slave-whip and cowhide him with it. Brownlow now became personal unto himself and explained that the Rebels had made the physical wreck out of him that he was. They had driven him into the Great Smokies, had put him into jail, and had tried to poison him. Then they banished him from his beloved East Tennessee. Near the end of the war he had come back, become governor of the state, and because he had given the Rebels justice, he was now attacked. After the speech had been read, Brownlow felt that even more might have been said. He, therefore, had the speech reprinted from the \textit{Congressional Globe}, \textit{41st Cong., 2nd sess.}, I, 137-40.
sional Globe, and included further comments on the Kentuckian.  

As a Senator, Brownlow did not attract much attention beyond his idiosyncrasies and picturesque and violent language. Therefore, with his departure from Tennessee for the Senate there was a gradual subsidence of him as a force to be reckoned with in the world. When he left, he decided that he had nursed the Republican Party in Tennessee into strength sufficient to take care of itself; he would, therefore, not take an active part in its affairs. But before the end of the year, he found himself mixed up in a political contest which was destined to demolish the party on which he had spent so many efforts. D. W. C. Senter, who had succeeded to the governorship on Brownlow's departure, decided that he would enter the gubernatorial election which was to be held in the fall. William B. Stokes, who had been cheated out of the senatorship by Brownlow in 1867, decided that now his turn for the governorship had come. Both Senter and Stokes now sought the blessing of the Parson, and instead of playing a neutral, which was, of course, foreign to his nature, he did the apparently enigmatical and unexpected thing of supporting Senter. His espousal of Senter seemed strange, for Stokes was running on the extreme Radical doctrines which Brownlow had long advocated, while Senter had made an agreement with the Conservatives, who were really Democrats or Democrats in the making, that if they would support him, he would advocate the removal of the disabilities of the former Confederates.

His party now split wide open with the two parts savagely fighting each other. Brownlow was soon charged with having joined the Rebels and deserted the Negroes. Protesting that each charge was untrue, he sought to mollify the angry Negroes by recalling how much he had done for them, and to satisfy the extreme Radicals by declaring that he favored removing the

\[\textit{Ibid.}, \text{42nd Cong., 2nd sess., II, 1036-40; Personal Explanation. Speech of Hon. William G. Brownlow of Tennessee in the Senate of the United States, February 15, 1872.}\]
THE LIKE SHALL NOT BE SEEN AGAIN

disabilities only of the Rebel masses; he would disfranchise for
life, if he could, the Rebel leaders. A complete break with Stokes
resulted, who bitterly assailed the Parson on every stump. Un-
doubtedly a certain change had come over Brownlow, tempo-
rarily at least, and Stokes was among the first to sense it. The
Parson’s style of language was greatly toned down, so much
so that Stokes declared that Brownlow no longer wrote his let-
ters and speeches, and that when they were read to him he was
too deaf to hear them. Stokes was badly beaten in the election,
which took place in August.40

Perhaps the Parson was temporarily tired of fighting; he
would rest a bit. But it was indeed a remarkable lapse on his
part when he should find himself on the same side of any question
with Andrew Johnson. But such was the case, for the ex-Presi-
dent was supporting Senter, too. Johnson had returned to Ten-
nessee after completing his term as President, with the distinct
feeling that he was not a defeated statesman, certainly not in
Tennessee. He would return to the Senate to vindicate himself
before the very body which had lacked only one vote of removing
him from the presidency. He would seek the vacancy which
would soon come and which would be filled in the fall, and it was
rumored that he had bargained with Etheridge for his support
with the understanding that Etheridge should then have the
vacancy which Brownlow would soon make by dying. But Brown-
low was to live, to continue to harry Andrew Johnson if for no
other reason. Soon these two Kilkenny cats were at it again
with all their old-time savagery. Brownlow played his part in
the defeat of Johnson, and refused to accept any olive branches
that the latter might attempt to hand him. In his desire to pla-
cate the Parson and his followers he had been spreading the
news of the gift he had made the Parson in 1863 for the purpose
of aiding in the establishment of the Whig. It was the handsome
sum of $1,500. Brownlow quickly denied that it had been John-
son’s gift; it had merely passed through his hands from the

40Knoxville Weekly Whig, July 21, September 1, 1869; Noted Men of the
Federal Government. There could be no implications of ingratitude to Andrew Johnson in the whole affair.\textsuperscript{41}

Senter's legislature was soon running away with him. It began to demolish all of the Brownlow structure that it dared; and by removing the disabilities against the former Confederates paved the way for the Democrats to seize the state soon thereafter. A constitutional convention met in 1870, cut loose from Brownlowism, and tied the state back to its old moorings as far as new conditions made it possible. The supreme court, composed of Brownlow's appointees, carried away more Brownlow rubbish.\textsuperscript{42}

The Parson might well have recalled how wise old Aesop was when he recounted the fable of the farmer and the vipers. The Rebels had now done what he always knew they would do if they got the chance; they had seized the state. Men whom he had warmed into political life had stuck their fangs into his party. He declared that "so many in Tennessee who were at one time the most outspoken Union men, have proved untrue and have turned back to the 'flesh pots of Egypt,' betraying the too generous friends who had warmed them into life, that I can only ask that the Republicans of the nation will trust Tennessee politicians as far as they prove themselves trustworthy and no further."\textsuperscript{43} There was left only one chance of restoring the state to the old order; it should be thrown into reconstruction and thereby have its existence as a state terminated. A movement was started which the Parson was not alone in promoting. Radicals in Tennessee joined with the national Radicals and set out upon a hunt for evidence to be used in demolishing the state. Benjamin F. Butler, always ready for any stratagem or spoil, became the chairman of a Congressional committee of investigation. Only by the quick work of conservative elements everywhere was the disaster averted.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{41} Daily New Era, April 16, October 15, 1869; Knoxville Weekly Whig, April 14, 1869; Milton, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 657; Winston, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 496.

\textsuperscript{42} "Digest of Election Cases," p. 921; \textit{The South in the Building of the Nation}, II, 539-41.

\textsuperscript{43} Knoxville Weekly Whig, September 15, 1869.

\textsuperscript{44} "The State Debt," pp. 18, 96; \textit{The South in the Building of the Nation}, II, 537-38.
It was a marvel how Brownlow continued to exist; perhaps, Death was only mocking him by letting him live to see his handiwork crumble. The Ku Klux Klan, it seemed, continued to thrive in the land of its birth, long after Grand Wizard Forrest had officially declared it dead. In 1871, Brownlow was longing for a chance to vote in the Senate to put the state under the Federal army.45 If he had had a lapse when he supported Senter, he was soon to grow strong in the old faith again. He had no sympathy for the Liberal Republicans in 1872; and in 1876 he called upon the country to support Rutherford B. Hayes. If Hayes were not elected, all that had been accomplished since the war would be lost. The Rebels were "deaf to the lessons of the terrible past"; they were "determined to carry out their purposes, and render their past treason respectable."46

On March 3, 1875, he ended his full term as Senator, and such a clown was Fate that it decreed that Andrew Johnson should succeed him.

He returned to Knoxville, not to muse over the scenes of his former battles but to follow the advice of his late friend Thaddeus Stevens—to "die hurrahing." The two objects he loved most in this world were his wife and his Whig. His wife he fortunately still had, but his Whig he had cruelly sold into bondage. He soon formed a partnership with William Rule and secured a half interest in a newspaper which must have Whig in its title, however much out of date the term might be. So, it was the Weekly Whig and Chronicle, with a daily edition known as the Knoxville Daily Chronicle. Unable to write, he could still think vigorously and he enjoyed as much as ever the aroma of printers' ink.47

As the Parson had been ready for Death for a half century, had confidently expected it on many occasions, and had miraculously escaped it on many more, he made no preparations for it in Knoxville, feeling likely that he should live as long

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45 Knoxville Daily Chronicle, October 20, 1871.
46 Republican Banner, April 23, 1872; New York Daily Tribune, November 2, 1876.
47 Atlanta Constitution, May 1, 1877; Heiskell, op. cit., III, 204-5; Price, op. cit., III, 333.
as Methuselah. Yet every day that he continued to live appeared a marvel, for he had for the past ten years been a helpless paralytic, who could not speak above a whisper—a physical wreck. On April 28, 1877, he was as active about his home as a person in his condition could be. With no thought of ever dying he had workmen patching up his porches and fixing his fences. That night he was suddenly stricken down—the last tense cord that held him to this world snapped. He sank rapidly and on Sunday, the 29th, surrounded by his family, at 2:05 o’clock in the afternoon he died of “paralysis of the bowels.”48 So long had his countrymen been expecting his death, that when it came they were shocked. As a Georgia editor said, “The expected event of years has been unexpectedly announced. . . .”49 His health vied with his political record in attracting the comments incident to his departure. A Memphis newspaper said, “For several years past he has not been able to speak above a whisper, and he has been physically little more than a dead man. His candle burned down through the very socket.”50 His high-strung nature which had led to his vociferous use of himself for half a century, had made of him a living miracle. Few people ever got more out of their physical frame.

In Brownlow the elements were mixed. He combined opposites so successfully that he made himself a monster to many of his contemporaries, and an enigma for future generations. Without knowing how it could be, his intimates knew that he was a Dr. Jekyl and a Mr. Hyde. Publicly he could be a raging, irresponsible terrorist; privately he could be as gentle as the Good Samaritan. The Memphis Public Ledger said, “His private life was an utter contradiction of the nature he exhibited in public. Socially he was genial and sympathetic, in his family almost idealized, and among his immediate neighbors, especially the poor, he was held in the highest esteem.” Privately, he was kind and charitable; he loaned money and never pressed for its return, and he went on many surety bonds and lost; he was

48 New York Daily Tribune, April 30, 1877; Daily American, May 1, 1877; Public Ledger, May 1, 1877.
49 Atlanta Constitution, May 1, 1877.
50 Public Ledger, May 1, 1877.
easy to approach, the most humble man or woman might get an audience with him at any time; he was jovial and smooth talking, and he made friends easily. He was accused of many crimes, but never of personal dishonesty, drunkenness, or licentiousness. He never tasted liquor, never used tobacco, never saw a play at a theatre, never dealt a pack of cards, and never courted but one woman—and married her.\textsuperscript{51} Such was the Parson privately; publicly he was another man.

One of his contemporaries declared:

He could express more vituperation and scorching hate than any half a dozen men that ever appeared in American politics. . . . The man was a strange compound, and there are no more like him. The style of journalism by which he brought himself into notice and became so terrible to his enemies happily passed away before its author and is no longer tolerated by an intelligent public.\textsuperscript{52}

Borne on by the heat of battle, he forewent no trick of language or procedure, however low and unfair, to beat down his enemy. Nothing that his enemy possessed or was related to could be sacred to him; it made little difference whether he attacked his enemies or their wives and children, and whether the slanders which he discovered or invented had any relation to the discussion. An annalist, observing without malice, said, "He has wronged many individuals, he has dropped the bitterness of gall into many a cup of happiness, he has caused many a wreck of hopes and ambitions, and has counted many a mile-stone of hate and contumely upon his downward journey to the Dark Valley."\textsuperscript{53} He had high moral and intellectual qualities, but he had no sense of taste or fitness. His language could be indescribably coarse both in direct expression and in insinuations, but on account of his rare ability at picturesqueness, extravagance, and uncommon similes he could succeed in smothering with laughter the blushes surging upwards. Theodore Tilton,\textsuperscript{54}

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{51} For comments on his character see Price, \textit{op. cit.}, III, 351, 352; \textit{Public Ledger}, May 1, 1877; \textit{Knoxville Whig}, November 6, 1867; Temple, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 274-86.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Price, \textit{op. cit.}, III, 353.
\item \textsuperscript{53} \textit{Atlanta Constitution}, May 1, 1877.
\end{footnotes}
who made much of the Parson, had to admit that he had "an almost unaccountable deficiency of that sense of fitness of things which we call good-taste." In him the coarseness and roughness of the frontier was never polished by his contacts with more polite conditions, as was true in the cases of Abraham Lincoln, Davy Crockett, and Sam Houston. Perhaps the Parson instinctively thought it would be hypocrisy to change; he would be himself. In introducing one of his compositions he said, "Extreme fastidiousness of taste may, perhaps, shrink with oversensitiveness from some of the language I have employed."

Brownlow was utterly fearless; he was reckless. The miracle of how he could continue to survive his ill health was no greater than of his escapes a thousand times from assassination by his outraged enemies. He declared that he feared nothing but the reproaches of his own conscience; and he was blessed with a conscience not celebrated for vigilance.

He had neither the well-rounded sentences of an orator, nor the voice of one. Rather, he depended on the uncommon use of language to draw and hold the attention of his listeners.

As a statesman he had little to recommend him. He had neither the training nor the temperament that should characterize such a leader. As a politician, he was eminently successful. He had a perfect comprehension of the methods of manufacturing and controlling the feelings and passions of the people on whom he depended for his support. It was undoubtedly true that one should lay "his bitterness and vituperation to a diseased style rather than to a real wickedness and unmanly malice." And it is equally true that he developed this style as one of his most effective weapons in securing attention and a following and in holding them. He would never have harried the South, as he so often threatened, if he had ever found it within his power to do so. In Tennessee where he was in complete control, he threatened a reign of terror and worse, but he was never guilty of actual barbarities. He always hoped to kill the soul of his

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56 Editorial in Atlanta Constitution, May 1, 1877.
enemies with fear, rather than kill people physically. He whipped the Tennesseans with terrorism for four years and almost made of them a nervous wreck, but he was a bad judge of human nature in thinking that he could permanently subdue people by such methods. After his departure for the Senate, the state in an incredibly short time regained its shattered soul and demolished his handiwork.

The people on whom the Parson could practice his peculiar methods of control were the lower classes, intermixed with the more intelligent citizens brought in by their background, their ambitions for promotion, and their prejudices, social, religious, and political. Ignorance and prejudice played a big part in making a hero out of Brownlow and in keeping him in power. But Tennessee was no more beset with these curses than other states of the times, which fared much better. There were other causes, therefore, which operated and by them was the complete but temporary success of the Parson guaranteed. He was temperamentally fitted and wise enough to embrace Radical Reconstruction and secure the backing of the Congressional oligarchy in maintaining his régime in Tennessee. Without the power of outside authority he could never have existed.

Not having the instincts of a statesman he built his structure on the sand instead of on the proverbial rock. Instead of treating the state to orderly development he fed it upon a program of vengeance. In carrying it out he was guilty of excesses unequalled in some instances by the imported carpetbaggers who beset some of the other Southern States. Also, in thinking that he could build up a permanent party on a small ignorant minority, he was again unwise and a poor judge. Therefore, his work was temporary and so was his fame. When he departed this life, his name went with him except as it should be recalled by those whom he had injured and terrorized, to be damned and cursed. Not only in statecraft did he leave nothing permanent, but also in religion and journalism it was likewise true. Yet at one time he was as well known in politics as his contemporary Abraham Lincoln, in journalism as his rival George D. Prentice, and in religion as Bishop Asbury. But as a figure in the
development of a peculiar side of America he was unique and important, and to forget him would be to neglect an amazing side of the national portrait, distorted and disagreeable, yet entrancing and true. He was a product of his times, but his times produced none other like him.