

BROWNLOW WILLIAM GANNAWAY

PORTRAIT AND
BIOGRAPHY OF PARSON
BROWNLOW, THE
TENNESSEE PATRIOT

William Brownlow
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Portrait and Biography of Parson Brownlow, The Tennessee Patriot

INTRODUCTION

The biography of great men always has been, and always will be read with interest and profit. Great actions command admiration, and none of modern times excel those of the patriot exile, Parson Brownlow, of Tennessee.

In this work the spirit-stirring scenes of his late eventful life are vividly portrayed in his own characteristic and inimitable style. The descriptions of his trials and triumphs in the cause of the Union will send a thrill of admiration to every reader's heart; will strengthen the wavering loyalty of many a young man, and incite him to pursue with unquenchable ardor, the path which all true patriots have marked out, and whose beacon lights are justice, truth and right. To the truly loyal, whose steps "keep time to the music of the Union," the work will be its own recommendation, and we commend it to these, both of the North and South, with the confidence that it will meet with their cordial

approbation.

BIOGRAPHY

William G. Brownlow was born in Wythe County, Virginia, August 5, 1805. His parents were poor, and died when he was about ten years old. They were both Virginians, and his father was a school-mate of General Houston, in Rockbridge County. After the death of his parents he lived with his mother's relations, and was raised to hard labor until he was some eighteen years old, when he served a regular apprenticeship to the trade of a house-carpenter.

His education was imperfect and irregular, even in those branches taught in the common schools of the country. He entered the Traveling Ministry, in 1826, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and traveled ten years without intermission, and was a member of the General Conference held in Philadelphia. He was untiring in his energy, and availed himself of the advantages of the Methodist Itinerancy to study and improve his education, which he did in all the English branches.

Mr. Brownlow is about six feet high, and weighs about 175 pounds; has had as fine a constitution as any man ever had. He has no gray hairs in his head, and will pass for a man of thirty-five years. He has had the strongest voice of any man in East Tennessee, where he has resided for the last thirty years, and raised an interesting family. He has been speaking all that time, taking a part in all the controversies of the day.

He is the author of several books; but the one which has had the largest run is one of over four hundred pages, being a vindication of the Methodist Church against the attacks of Rev. J. R. Graves, in Nashville. Brownlow's work was published by the Southern Methodist Publishing House, and something like 100,000 copies have been circulated in the South and West. It is a work of great severity, but of marked ability.

In 1858 he was engaged in a debate upon the slavery question in Philadelphia, with the Rev. Mr. Prym, of New York, in which he defended the institution of slavery with marked ability, exhibiting a familiar acquaintance with the vexed question in all its bearings. The debate, a volume of some four hundred pages, is for sale by J. B. Lippincott & Co.

He is known throughout the length and breadth of this land as the "Fighting Parson;" but no man is more peaceable, or more highly esteemed by his neighbors. Few men are more charitable, and few, of his means – for he is not rich – give away as much in the course of a year.

He is quite a politician, though he has never been an office-seeker or an office-holder. He commenced his political career in Tennessee in 1828, by espousing the cause of John Quincy Adams as against Andrew Jackson. He has been all his life an ardent Whig, and Clay and Webster were his standards of political orthodoxy. His paper, the *Knoxville Whig*, which he has edited for twenty-two years, had the largest circulation of any political paper in Tennessee, and exerted a controlling influence

in the politics of the State.

THE LAST EDITORIAL OF THE KNOXVILLE WHIG

When Secession first raised its hydra-head our hero stood up manfully for the Union and the Constitution, and amid an almost overwhelming torrent of abuse heaped upon him by the Press throughout the State. Darker and darker grew the storm around him; fiercer and fiercer the denunciations hurled at him by the enemies of the Union; yet, with an iron will, and sustained by an inward consciousness that he was doing his duty, he continued to battle nobly for the cause of his country, and in each and every number of his paper poured down on the rebel crew his scathing sarcasm and scorching repartee.

At last the Confederate authorities determined on his arrest and punishment. In October, 1861, he was indicted by the Grand Jury, and his paper suppressed. We here give his farewell address, which will be read with mournful interest and high admiration. His words are those of a spirit not seeking martyrdom, but ready to confront it in all its terrors in the cause of truth and patriotism.

Prentice, of the *Louisville Journal*, in publishing this last editorial, made the following very truthful comment: "He may be consigned by trembling tyrants to a dungeon, but there will be more of God's sunshine in his soul than can ever visit the eye-balls of his own and his country's enemies. If a million prayers

can avail, the naked stones of his cell will be a softer and sweeter bed than his traitor foes will enjoy:"

[From the Knoxville Whig, October 26.]

This issue of the *Whig* must necessarily be the last for some time to come – I am unable to say how long. The Confederate authorities have determined upon my arrest, and I am to be indicted before the Grand Jury of the Confederate Court, which commenced its session in Nashville on Monday last. I would have awaited the indictment and arrest before announcing the remarkable event to the world, but, as I only publish a weekly paper, my hurried removal to Nashville would deprive me of the privilege of saying to my subscribers what is alike due to myself and them. I have the fact of my indictment and consequent arrest, having been agreed upon for this week, from distinguished citizens, legislators, and lawyers at Nashville of both parties. Gentlemen of high positions and members of the Secession party say that the indictment will be made because of "some treasonable articles in late numbers of the *Whig*." I have reproduced those two "treasonable articles" on the first page of this issue, that the unbiased people of the country may "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest" the treason. They relate to the culpable remissness of these Knoxville leaders in failing to volunteer in the cause of the Confederacy.

According to the usages of the Court, as heretofore

established, I presume I could go free by taking the oath these authorities are administering to other Union men, but my settled purpose is not to do any such thing. I can doubtless be allowed my personal liberty by entering into bonds to keep the peace, and to demean myself towards the leaders of secession in Knoxville, who have been seeking to have me assassinated all Summer and Fall, as they desire me to do, for this is really the import of the thing, and one of the leading objects sought to be attained. Although I could give a bond for my good behavior, for one hundred thousand dollars, signed by fifty as good men as the country affords, I shall obstinately refuse to do even that; and, if such a bond is drawn up and signed by others, I will render it null and void by refusing to sign it. In default of both, I expect to go to jail, and I am ready to start upon one moment's warning. Not only so, but there I am prepared to lie, in solitary confinement, until I waste away because of imprisonment, or die from old age. Stimulated by a consciousness of innocent uprightness, I will submit to imprisonment for life, or die at the end of a rope, before I will make any humiliating concession to any power on earth!

I have committed no offence – I have not shouldered arms against the Confederate Government, or the State, or encouraged others to do so – I have discouraged rebellion publicly and privately – I have not assumed a hostile attitude toward the civil or military authorities of this new Government. But I have committed grave, and I really fear unpardonable offences. I have refused to make war upon the Government of the United States;

I have refused to publish to the world false and exaggerated accounts of the several engagements had between the contending armies; I have refused to write out and publish false versions of the origin of this war, and of the breaking up of the best Government the world ever knew; and all this I will continue to do, if it cost me my life. Nay, when I agree to do such things, may a righteous God palsy my right arm, and may the earth open and close in upon me forever.

The real object of my arrest, and contemplated imprisonment, is, to dry up, break down, silence, and destroy the last and only Union paper left in the eleven seceded States, and thereby to keep from the people of East Tennessee the facts which are daily transpiring in the country. After the Hon. Jeff. Davis had stated in Richmond, in a conversation relative to my paper, that he would not live in a Government that did not tolerate the freedom of the press; after the judges, attorneys, jurors, and all others filling positions of honor and trust under the "Permanent Constitution," which guarantees freedom of the press; and after the entire press of the South had come down in their thunder tones upon the Federal Government for suppressing the *Louisville Courier*, and the *New York Day-Book*, and other secession journals, I did expect the utmost liberty to be allowed to one small sheet, whose errors could be combatted by the entire Southern press! It is not enough that my paper has been denied a circulation through the ordinary channels of conveyance in the country, but it must be discontinued altogether, or its Editor

must write and select only such articles as meet the approval of a pack of scoundrels in Knoxville, when their superiors in all qualities that adorn human nature are in the penitentiary of our State. And this is the boasted liberty of the press in the Southern Confederacy!

I shall in no degree feel humbled by being cast into prison, whenever it is the will and pleasure of the august Government to put me there; but, on the contrary, I shall feel proud of my confinement. I shall go to jail as John Rogers went to the stake – for my *principles*. I shall go, because I have failed to recognize the hand of God in the work of breaking up the American Government, and the inauguration of the most wicked, cruel, unnatural and uncalled for war, ever recorded in history. I go, because I have refused to laud to the skies the acts of tyranny, usurpation, and oppression, inflicted upon the people of East Tennessee, because of their devotion to the Constitution and laws of the Government, handed down to them by their fathers, and the liberties secured to them by a war of seven long years of gloom, poverty and trial! I repeat, I am proud of my position, and of my principles, and shall leave them to my children as a legacy, far more valuable than a princely fortune, had I the latter to bestow!

With me, life has lost some of its energy – having passed six annual posts on the Western slope of half a century – something of the fire of youth is exhausted – but I stand forth with the eloquence and energy of right to sustain and stimulate

me in the maintenance of my principles. I am encouraged to firmness, when I look back to the fate of Him "whose power was righteousness," while the infuriated mob cried "crucify him, crucify him!"

I owe to my numerous list of subscribers the filling out of their respective terms for which they have made advance payments, and if circumstances ever place it in my power to discharge these obligations, I will do it most certainly. But if I am denied the liberty of doing so, they must regard their small losses as so many contributions to the cause in which I have fallen! I feel that I can, with confidence, rely upon the magnanimity and forbearance of my patrons, under this state of things. They will bear me witness that I have held out as long as I am allowed to, and that I have yielded to a military despotism that I could not avert the horrors of, or successfully oppose.

I will only say, in conclusion – for I am not allowed the privilege to write – that the people of this country are unaccustomed to such wrongs; they can yet scarcely realize them. They are astounded, for the time being, with the quick succession of outrages that have come upon them, and they stand horror-stricken, like men expecting ruin and annihilation. I may not live to see the day, but thousands of my readers will, when the people of this once prosperous country will see that they are marching, by "double-quick time," from freedom to bondage. They will then look these wanton outrages upon right and liberty full in the face, and my prediction is they will "stir

the stones of Rome to rise and mutiny." Wrongs less wanton and outrageous precipitated the French Revolution. Citizens cast into dungeons without charges of crime against them, and without the formalities of a trial by a jury, private property confiscated at the beck of those in power, the press humbled, muzzled, and suppressed, or prostituted to serve the ends of tyranny! The crimes of Louis XVI fell short of all this, and yet he lost his head! The people of this country, down-trodden and oppressed, still have the resolution of their illustrious forefathers, who asserted their rights at Lexington and Bunker Hill!

Exchanging, with proud satisfaction, the editorial chair and the sweet endearments of home for a cell in the prison, or the lot of an exile, I have the honor to be, &c.,

WILLIAM G. BROWNLOW,
Editor of the Knoxville Whig.

October 24, 1861.

BROWNLOW IN NASHVILLE

Soon after the Parson was compelled by his enemies to suspend the publication of the *Whig*, he was prevailed upon by his friends, who more than himself feared for his personal safety, to act upon an intimation of the readiness of the rebel authorities to grant him a safe conduct to the North, and, as stated below, communicated with the Secretary of War at Richmond, Va. The result was that in November last an order was sent to the military commander at Knoxville to take him to the nearest Federal lines. After completing his preparation to go North, notwithstanding his agreement with Secretary Benjamin, he was arrested and thrown into prison a second time.

The imprisonment soon told severely upon the health of the Parson, and after a month he was stricken down with typhoid fever. Permission being granted by the rebel prosecuting attorney, he was removed to his private residence. Here he was laid up for nearly eight weeks. Notwithstanding his prostration by sickness, the rebel surveillance over him did not stop. His house was surrounded day and night by guards. His friends were never allowed to visit him, and the members of his family were not permitted to leave the premises except under guard. Nor was this all. Open insults and threats were offered by the rebel soldiery whenever opportunity afforded. At one time a company of cavalry that had been in the battle of Fishing Creek, and

never stopped running until they got to Knoxville, and passing the house when the Parson's wife was looking out of the window, one of the troopers rode up to her, and insultingly asked, "Are you not ashamed to be the wife of that damned traitor and Lincolnite?" Whereupon the ready-witted woman at once replied: "I am glad that I am not the wife of a miserable coward that ran away from a battle-field."

Feeling strong enough to travel, the Parson again wrote to Benjamin, complaining of the bad faith with which he had been treated, and reminding the Secretary of War of the promise of a safe conduct to the Federal lines. A week elapsed, when the post commander at Knoxville received a dispatch directing the Parson to be released from confinement, and to be taken to the nearest Federal outposts over the route most convenient to him, and under an escort of his own choice. In pursuance to this order the Parson left Knoxville accompanied by his doctor, and escorted by Lieutenant O'Brien, an officer in the army, and relative of his wife. The party proceeded by rail, *via* Chattanooga, to Shelbyville, in Bedford county, in the Southern part of this State. Here they were detained ten days by Morgan's Cavalry, who were engaged in removing a large quantity of bacon and beef stored in the town, and had orders from General Hardee not to allow any one to pass their lines until the whole of the meat had been got away. At last the party were permitted to proceed overland, under a flag of truce, to the pickets of General Wood's division. General Wood at once sent them, under escort, to the city.

Parson Brownlow proceeded immediately to the headquarters of General Buell, with whom he had a long interview; afterward repaired to the St. Cloud Hotel, in Nashville, and in the front of the same, on the evening of March 17th, he made the following remarks:

SPEECH

Gentlemen: – I am in a sad plight to say much of interest – too thoroughly incapacitated to do justice to you or myself. My throat has been disordered for the past three years, and I have been compelled to almost abandon public speaking. Last December I was thrust into an uncomfortable and disagreeable jail – for what? *Treason?* Treason to the bogus Confederacy; and the proofs of that treason were articles which appeared in the Knoxville *Whig* in May last, when the State of Tennessee was a member of the imperishable Union. At the expiration of four weeks, I became a victim to the typhoid fever, and was removed to a room in a decent dwelling, and a guard of seven men kept me company. I subsequently became so weak that I could not turn over in bed, and the guard was increased to twelve men, for fear I should suddenly recover and run away to Kentucky. Becoming convalescent, in a measure, I was removed to my former place of confinement. One day I was visited by some Confederate officers, who remarked, "Brownlow, you should not be here. Take the oath of allegiance to the Confederate Government,

which will not only entitle you to a speedy release, but insure your protection." "Sir!" said I, "before I would take the oath to support such a hell-forsaken institution, I would suffer myself to rot or die with old age."

Why, my friends, these demagogues actually boast that the Lord is upon their side, and declare that God Almighty is assisting them in the furtherance of their nefarious project. In Knoxville and surrounding localities, a short time since, daily prayer meetings were held, wherein the Almighty was beseeched to raise Lincoln's blockade, and to hurl destruction against the Burnside expedition. Their prayers were partly answered – the blockade at Roanoke Island was most effectually raised; a reciprocal of their sacrilege divinely tendered.

Gentlemen, I am no Abolitionist; I applaud no sectional doctrines; I am a Southern man; and all my relatives and interests are thoroughly identified with the South and Southern institutions. I was born in the Old Dominion, my parents were born in Virginia, and they and their antecedents were all slaveholders. Let me assure you that the South has suffered no infringement upon her institutions; the slavery question was actually *no* pretext for this unholy, unrighteous conflict. Twelve Senators from the Cotton States, who had sworn to preserve inviolate the Constitution framed by our forefathers, plotted treason at night – a fit time for such a crime – and telegraphed to their States despatches advising them to pass ordinances of secession. Yes, gentlemen, twelve Senators swore allegiance in

the day time, and unswore it at night.

A short time since I was called upon by a little Jew, who, I believe, is the Secretary of War of the bogus Confederacy. He threatened to hang me, and I expected no more mercy from him than was shown by his illustrious predecessors toward Jesus Christ. I entered into a long correspondence with this specimen of expiring humanity, but from mercy or forgetfulness, on their part, I was permitted to depart with all my documents in my little valise, which I hope to publish at no distant day.

Gentlemen, when I started on my perilous journey, I was sore distressed in mind, and exceedingly so in body. But the moment my eyes encountered the pickets of the Federal army my depression decreased, and returning health seemed suddenly to invigorate my physical constitution.

Gentlemen, Secession is played out – the dog is dead – the child is born, and his name is Jeff. Davis, jr.

My throat distresses me to such an extent that I must decline further remarks this evening, but shall make myself heard upon the next convenient occasion, which will probably be ere the termination of the present week.

BROWNLOW IN CINCINNATI

Remaining here a few days to recuperate his almost worn-out energies, and receiving many invitations from different cities to lay before the sympathizing public the story of his wrongs, he determined to make a tour through several Northern States. Accordingly on the fourth day of April he was welcomed to the city of Cincinnati, Ohio, in a manner which was worthy of his unswerving patriotism and illustrious fidelity. It was very much doubted whether the Opera House, since it was first opened to the public, ever contained a larger or more refined assemblage than on that evening.

Before the doors were opened, the crowd had commenced to gather on Fourth street, and before half-past seven o'clock, not a vacant seat was to be found in the house, and the aisles and every available spot occupied. Many were unable to obtain even standing room, and left the house. The turnout, considering that the admission fee was fifty cents, must have been very gratifying to the Parson.

The stage was decorated with a number of American flags, and across the front part of it were two rows of chairs, on which were seated the Vice Presidents. Immediately in the rear was a raised platform, on which were seated three hundred and seventy-two boys and girls from the district, intermediate and high schools of the city, who, under the direction of Mr. L. W.

Mason, sang the following:

SONG OF WELCOME

All hail! all hail! the here unflinching!
The pure patriot we sing, unwavering and bold,
Who foul treason denounced, and with deeds was still
clinging
His strong speech, when vile traitors in numbers untold
Howled hatred demoniac, and madly were clamoring,
His life should be forfeit! triumphantly sing,
And utter the welcome with the tongue's feeble stammering,
The welcome, the warm welcome, our hearts to him bring!
Safe! safe in our midst, we shall hear the man's voice,
That had cowed all his foes, and made us rejoice;
Then hail him again, and forever and aye!
His country he loves, and for it he would die!

Rejoice! rejoice! for freedom is marching
With her power resistless, to punish and crush;
And the Iris of Union will soon be o'erarching
Again our loved country, when its brave children rush
To rescue its life from the demons now seeking
To blot out its name from the nations of earth.
But rather than this, let their black blood be reeking,
Unpitied by earth, so disgraced by their birth.
Thus speaks he, the hero! Then sing with one voice:

We love and revere him, in his presence rejoice!
Then hail him again, and forever and aye!
His country he loves, and for it he would die!

Shortly after eight o'clock Parson Brownlow came upon the stage, leaning upon the arm of Joseph C. Butler, Esq., the President of the Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Butler, in introducing Mr. Brownlow, said:

Ladies and Gentlemen: – I have been honored with the pleasing duty of inaugurating the ceremonies of this occasion, in introducing a renowned and loyal citizen of our sister State of Tennessee. A State forced by usurpation, fraud and violence into rebellion against a Government that her sons in bygone times have done so much to maintain and establish, and now suffers in being the field of conflict in a desolating civil war. A State recently baptized again into the fold of the Union by the martyr patriots' blood shed upon her soil, and will be confirmed in that fold by continued deeds of heroic daring; within whose limits has been exhibited by her loyal sons as unfaltering devotion and love of country as has ever been displayed in the history of any people. Surrounded by the armed band of desperate and cruel military despots, given up to the mercy of ignorant and vicious mobs, cut off from all communication with and support from a Government they were sacrificing themselves to maintain, these patriots of Tennessee were driven from their homes, suffered in jails, and sealed, when called on, with their

lives on the scaffold their devotion to the Union and Constitution established by their fathers. Through a long and weary summer, through the dreary fall and winter, with hearts sickened by many disappointed hopes, they suffered and faithfully endured. And now that the armies of the Union have entered their State, and the flag of freedom once more floats over its capital, may we not hope that the hour of their deliverance is at hand. God grant it may be speedy.

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