EDWARD COLES

SECOND GOVERNOR OF ILLINOIS

BY

THE HONORABLE W. T. NORTON

1786–1868

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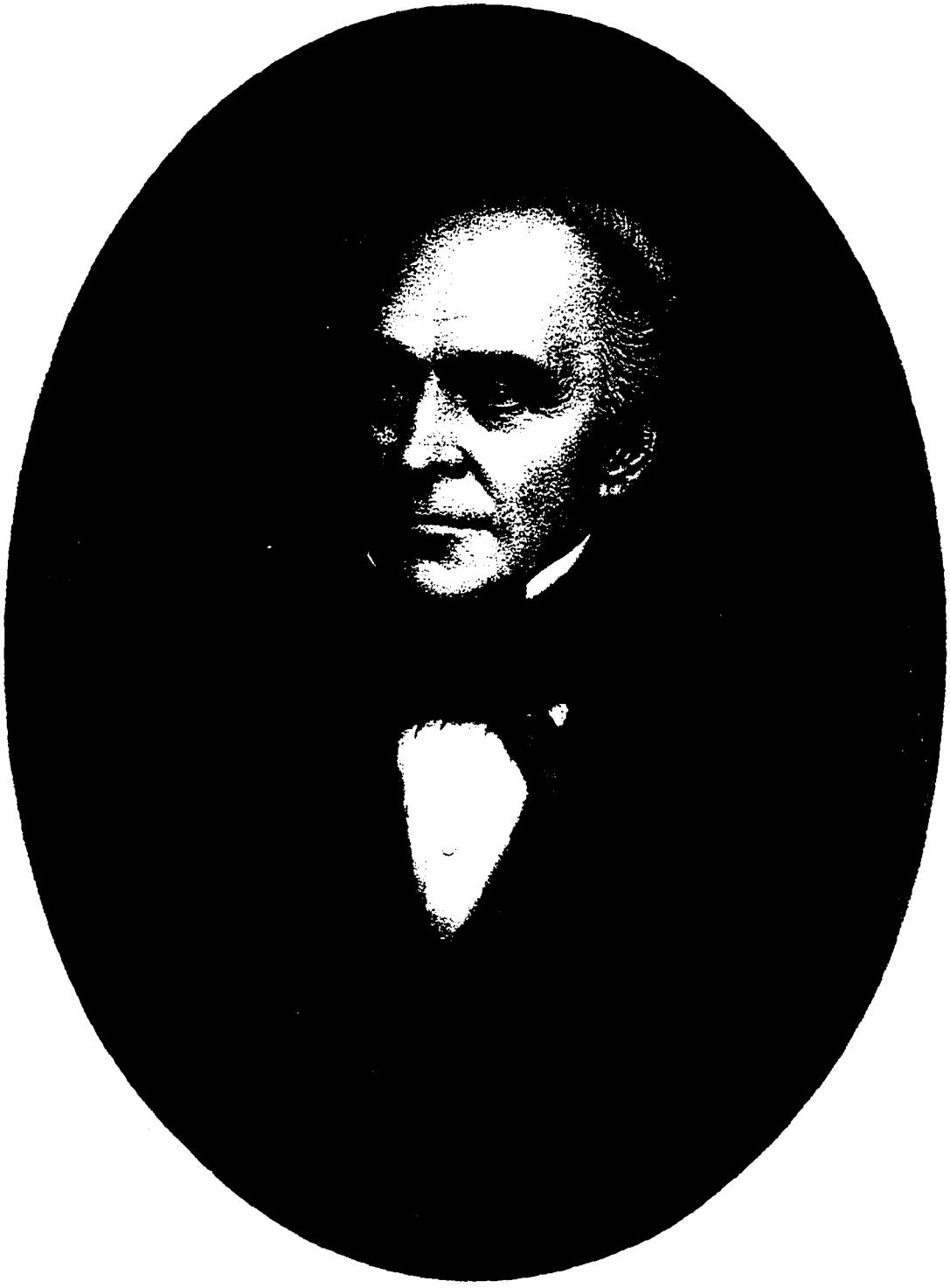

Edward Coles

"A painting upon one of the walls of the corridors of the State Capitol at Springfield, Illinois, represents two flatboats lashed together. Upon one of them stands Edward Coles, a man of commanding presence. He is surrounded by his slaves as they gently float down the Ohio River. It is a calm and lovely morning in May, the sun shining brightly, the heavens without a cloud, and the verdant foliage of spring just budding out on the picturesque banks. He, with his slaves and his property, has left the old home in Virginia, and is seeking in a new country a land of freedom. He is telling his slaves that he has thought much of his duty and their rights, and they were no longer slaves, but free, free as he was, and were at liberty to go ashore or continue the journey with him. The effect on them was electrical. In breathless silence they stood, unable to utter a word, but with countenances beaming with expression which no words can convey and no language describe. After a pause of intense and unutterable emotion, bathed in tears, they gave vent to their gratitude and implored the blessing of God upon their benefactor."

EDWARD COLES

THE long line of Illinois Governors, from the admission of the State into the Union in 1818 to the present time, is a galaxy of splendid names. Nearly all the State's executives have been men of exceptional talent, devoted to the service of the people, but there are two of the early Governors whose names shine with special lustre in the retrospect of history and whose works do follow them. They are Edward Coles, the second Governor, who saved the State from the blight of slavery, and Thomas Ford, the seventh Governor, who rescued it from the almost equally blighting curse of repudiation and dishonour. To both of them, men of opposing politics but of a common integrity, the State of Illinois owes a debt of perennial gratitude. Other men were linked with Coles and Ford in their great accomplishments, but they were the leaders, the self-sacrificing representatives of those issues whose triumph became the vindication of the glory of those who championed them in days of stress and turbulence.

The first of these, Edward Coles, after a brilliant career of thirteen years in Illinois, removed to Philadelphia, where he lies buried, far away from the sunlit

prairies he had rescued from the covetous clutches of the slave-driver. But before his eyelids closed in death another generation had come upon the stage, and he beheld the whole nation delivered from the dominion of slavery by another Illinoisan, just as he had saved the Prairie State from the same impending calamity.

It is of Governor Coles that I wish to write at this time, and a character more inspiring cannot be found in our Western annals. Easily the most knightly and notable figure in the early records of this great Commonwealth is that of its second Governor. The records of chivalry and philanthropy display nothing more daring or self-sacrificing than his career from early manhood to the culmination of his labors. He was born to the purple, reared in luxury and refinement in the most exclusive and aristocratic ranks of the Old Dominion. His father was Colonel John Coles, a soldier of the Revolution and a Virginia slave-owner whose wealth, for those days, was so great that, when his estate was divided among the ten children, the portion falling to his son Edward was twenty-five slaves and one thousand acres of land.

Edward Coles was born December 15, 1786, on the family estate, called "Enniscorthy," in Albemarle County, Virginia, which was also the native county of Thomas Jefferson. Young Coles received his boyhood education from private tutors, and later pursued his studies at William and Mary College. But more advantageous and inspiring, perhaps, than his college course was the intimacy he enjoyed with the great Vir-

ginia statesmen of that era. Such patriots as Patrick Henry, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and other distinguished men of the epoch succeeding the Revolution, were frequent visitors at the family mansion, and intercourse with such notables, at an impressionable age, doubtless had much to do with forming his character.

A year after young Coles had completed his college course, his father died, leaving him owner of a large plantation and a retinue of slaves. Nature had been kind in bestowing on him a handsome personality. To this were added the attractions of liberal culture, courtly address, and kindly characteristics. During his college days he had become imbued from his studies with the conception, or belief, that no man had a legal right to property in his fellow men, and that no such right existed morally. Such opinions, in the atmosphere in which he was brought up, were not only radical but revolutionary. He studied the question from an independent stand-point, and finally came to the decision that he would neither hold slaves nor live in a State which tolerated and protected involuntary servitude. To this conviction he remained steadfast through a storm of opposition from those of his own household and kin, and he never knew shadow of turning. But to carry his views into practice in a State where he could not legally free them (and he refused to sell them) was a problem impossible of elucidation in Virginia, but which he solved later in a dramatic manner.

In 1809, when young Coles was a man of twenty-three, President Madison, who was an intimate friend

of the family, appointed him his private secretary, which position he accepted and filled with great credit for six years, during which period occurred the war of 1812. It is interesting to note in this connection that his elder brother, Colonel Isaac Coles, filled the same office, a few years previously, as private secretary to President Jefferson, and was known as " the most perfect gentleman in America." His position at Washington brought young Coles in contact with the great men of the nation. He acquired there the knowledge of public affairs, the tact and diplomacy which so greatly distinguished his later career. But the subject of slavery was ever uppermost in his thoughts, and in 1814 he opened the correspondence with Ex-President Jefferson, on that topic, which became famous in history, Jefferson, though a slave-owner himself by force of circumstances, being a bitter enemy of the institution. In his first letter Mr. Coles urged the " Sage of Monticello " to take the lead in the cause of emancipation, but Jefferson in his reply, which expressed the fullest sympathy with his correspondent's views and recounted his own early efforts in behalf of the abolition of slavery, argued that his advanced years (he was then seventy-one) prevented his undertaking the task, but urged his young friend to assume the leadership as one fitted therefor by his talents, his position, and his enthusiasm. This put Jefferson on record as a conscientious abolitionist—not of the anarchistic, revolutionary brand, but an advocate of abolition by peaceful and educational means, just such an abolitionist as Lincoln was at the date of deliver-

ing his second inaugural message, in which he advocated compensated emancipation. Jefferson had, in fact, been an anti-slavery man throughout his public career, as was to be expected of the author of the "Declaration of Independence." After the cession of the so-called Northwest Territory by Virginia to the National Government in 1784, Jefferson, then a delegate in Congress, introduced a bill providing for the organization and government of the new territory. One of its provisions was that neither slavery nor involuntary servitude should exist in the territory after 1800, except in punishment for crime. This bill did not become a law until 1787, and then in a modified form. The anti-slavery provision, however, was not only retained, but made effective on the passage of the bill, instead of in 1800, in exchange for which concession it was provided that fugitive slaves escaping into the new territory should be returned to their masters. The anti-slavery provision in the "Ordinance of 1787" marked Jefferson's formal enrolment in the ranks of the opponents of human slavery. No more notable letters than those which passed between Jefferson and Coles exist in the archives of anti-slavery literature. They revealed the mutual adherence of the writers to principles which, even at that time, had forced Coles to exile himself, for conscience's sake, from his native State, and sever the ties of home and kindred.

During his stay in Washington Coles formed a close friendship with Nicholas Biddle, of Philadelphia, afterwards President of the famous United States National

Bank, and their correspondence on the subject of slavery, then begun, continued during the former's subsequent career as Governor of Illinois.

After the conclusion of the war of 1812, Mr. Coles thought he saw his way clear to sell his plantation and liberate his slaves by removing them from the State. Accordingly, he determined to make a tour of the new Northwest Territory, which under the "Ordinance of 1787" had been dedicated to freedom, for the purpose of finding a suitable location. He resigned his position in Washington and travelled through Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, reaching St. Louis by way of Kaskaskia and Shawneetown, thence by river to New Orleans, thence by sea to Savannah and back to Virginia.

Immediately subsequent to the close of the war with Great Britain, grave diplomatic differences arose between this country and Russia which made it necessary to send a special envoy with dispatches to St. Petersburg, and President Madison induced his young secretary to undertake the delicate mission. To give emphasis to the mission and dignity to the official envoy, Coles was dispatched on a man-of-war, the "Prometheus," which thus became the first American war-ship to sail up the Baltic Sea. After various delays Mr. Coles concluded his negotiations with the Czar in a manner which proved highly satisfactory to President Madison and the State Department. Leaving St. Petersburg, he visited many of the leading capitals of Europe. In Paris he was received with special distinction, and was the guest at times of the Marquis de La

Fayette, little dreaming that, a few years later, as Governor of a sovereign State, he would have the honour of welcoming the renowned soldier to the soil of Illinois. After a stay of three months in Paris, he visited Great Britain and Ireland, thence returning home.

But his prolonged absence in foreign lands had not shaken his purpose to liberate his slaves. In furtherance of this object, he made the exploration trip to the Western country spoken of heretofore, and decided upon Illinois as his future home and Edwardsville as the place where he would locate with his slaves. Returning to Virginia, he made the necessary preparations for removal, and in the spring of 1819, gathering all his slaves together, he started on the long journey. The trip was made from Albemarle County in emigrant wagons to the Ohio River. There he purchased two flatboats and loaded the whole party thereon. The slaves knew nothing of their master's intention—only that they were removing to a new country; but when the boats were below Pittsburg, Mr. Coles called all the company together and made them a short address, in which he announced his sentiments in regard to slavery and his intentions in regard to them, and then declared them all unconditionally free—at liberty to proceed with him or go ashore as they pleased. The scene which followed was indescribable. The slaves from whom the shackles had thus suddenly fallen were hysterical in their happiness, and their expressions of gratitude were so heartfelt and profuse that no portrayal thereof would be adequate. With tearful eyes

and tremulous voices they implored Heaven's blessings on their benefactor. All elected to stay with their old master until he was settled in his new abode. But this Mr. Coles would not agree to; they were free to work for themselves and make the most out of their lives. Still, he assured them, they would always remain under his friendly care and protection. Arrived below Louisville, the emigrants disembarked and proceeded overland in wagons to Edwardsville. Arrived at their destination, Mr. Coles purchased a large tract of land and deeded to each head of a family, or adult of twenty-four years, one hundred and sixty acres of land, and saw that others obtained employment suited to their capacities. This seemingly Utopian experiment succeeded, the negroes developing into industrious citizens. In addition to the general certificate of freedom given them before reaching Illinois, Mr. Coles, on arriving at Edwardsville, found that, in order to make them secure in their freedom, it would be necessary to comply with certain provisions of the barbarous black laws of the State. This he did, and issued a certificate of emancipation to each individual and had it recorded. These freedom papers were issued July 4, 1819. The instrument recited in preamble that his father had bequeathed to him certain negro slaves, and added that, " not believing that man can have of right property in his fellow man, but that, on the contrary, all mankind are endowed by nature with equal rights, I do therefore, by these presents, restore to (naming the party) that inalienable liberty of which he (or she) has been deprived."

The greatness of this chivalric act on the part of Mr. Coles, in that age, can hardly be fittingly appreciated. For the sake of the principle above enunciated he deliberately stripped himself of wealth, and violated all the traditions of his family and the society in which he had been brought up. He gave up his ancestral home, as dear to him as to any one; severed the ties of kinship; gave up a life of luxury and the assurance of a brilliant career in his native State; and, in brief, sacrificed to his conscience all that a young man looks forward to as represented by ambition, wealth, or position. Mr. Coles abolished slavery, as far as he was concerned, at his own material expense and at the sacrifice of all he held dear.

Mr. Coles had been appointed by his friend, President Monroe, Registrar of the Government Land Office at Edwardsville, a position at that time of importance, which, in connection with his previous public career, brought him at once into prominence in his adopted State. He had also, on his previous visit in 1818, borne letters of introduction from the President to Governor Ninian Edwards, then United States Senator, which opened to him the doors of private and official hospitality. All these influences combined to give him, almost at once, a wide acquaintance, not only with the prominent people of the State, but with the humblest settlers in search of a new home by the entry of government lands. All who met the new registrar felt the charm of his rare personality. So rapid was the popularity he acquired that in 1822, three years after his arrival in

the State, he was brought forward by those sympathizing with his views as a candidate for Governor. The opposing candidates were Chief Justice Joseph Phillips, Judge Thomas C. Browne, and General James B. Moore. While the slavery question did not figure as a direct issue in the campaign, the sentiments of the candidates were well known. Phillips and Browne were strongly pro-slavery, while Coles's record was as strongly anti-slavery. Moore was also classed as mildly opposed to slavery.

At the election Coles received 2854 votes, Phillips 2687, Browne 2443, and Moore 662, Coles thus receiving a bare plurality of 167, a close margin, but upon which hung events of transcendent moment. The result was a surprise, it being supposed that the election lay between Phillips and Browne. But while Coles was elected by a small plurality, the pro-slavery men, as represented by Phillips and Browne, cast 5130 votes, while the opposition, as represented by Coles and Moore, cast only 3476 votes, a pro-slavery plurality of 1654. The legislature elected at the same time returned a pro-slavery majority, a premonition at once of trouble for the new Governor.

As regards the right to hold slaves in Illinois, there was room for difference of opinion. Slavery already existed to a limited extent among the old French residents. In 1720 Philip Renault, manager of " the company of St. Phillips," holding a grant from the King of France to the mines of gold and silver in Illinois

country, brought to Illinois five hundred African slaves, bought in St. Domingo, with which to work the mines supposed to exist in Illinois. He founded the village of St. Phillips, in what is now Monroe County, and proceeded to develop the country. After a long and desperate struggle, his schemes of exploitation collapsed, and he returned to France in 1744, after selling his slaves to the French residents. When the Illinois country was ceded by France to England in 1763, the French inhabitants were confirmed in their property rights by treaty. In 1784 the Northwest Territory (which had been a county of Virginia since its conquest by General George Rogers Clark in 1778) was ceded by Virginia to the national government under a similar guarantee of the rights of property. In 1787, when Congress adopted the ordinance for the government of the territory, the 6th article, heretofore referred to, read: "There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in said territory otherwise than in punishment for crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted."

Illinois was admitted to the Union in 1818 as a free State, under the provisions of the ordinance of 1787, but there was a strong element in the State which contended that said ordinance could not abrogate the rights of property guaranteed by the treaty of 1763 and by the cession by Virginia in 1784, and that "property" included the slaves. Of course this contention put the power of the State above that of the National Government, and the claim was ignored by Congress when the

State was admitted. The pro-slavery adherents being thus balked now changed their tactics, and contended that while the constitution of 1818 did not permit slavery, still it was within the province of the people to adopt a new constitution and admit slavery. Their scheme, therefore, was to have the legislature provide for submitting to the electors, at the next election for members of the general assembly, a proposition for or against a convention to revise the constitution.

This was the situation which confronted Governor Coles on his inauguration December 5, 1822. He found himself opposed by a strong and bitter majority of the legislature, which took emphatic exception to his appeal, in his inaugural address, for the abolition of the "black laws" passed by the first legislature, and for wiping out the remnants of slavery which still existed in the State in defiance of the "ordinance of 1787." This address marked the line of demarcation between the executive and the pro-slavery element, and thereafter, to the end of his term, the war waged against him was fierce and unrelenting. But the man who had sacrificed all he held dear for the sake of principle was not to be intimidated by threats. And "the irrepressible conflict" was on in Illinois.

The resolution introduced in the legislature providing for submitting the question of calling a constitutional convention to a vote of the people, required a two-thirds vote of the assembly, and, upon lining up their forces, the pro-slavery men found that, while they had the requisite two-thirds vote in the Senate, they

lacked one vote of two-thirds in the House. How to obtain the additional vote was the question. The anti-slavery minority was firm and determined, there was not a break in the ranks; but it happened that there was a contested election case at the opening of the session, and it was discovered that the contestant, who had been seated, General N. Hansen, of Pike County, was opposed to the convention. The pro-slavery majority thereupon conceived a scheme to obtain an additional member by reconsidering their previous action in seating Hansen, and passed a resolution declaring the other contestant, John Shaw, who was known to favor a convention, to be entitled to the seat. By thus unseating Hansen and admitting Shaw, in violation of their own record, they obtained the necessary two-thirds majority, and the resolution submitting the question of a convention to a popular vote was passed.

The contest in the legislature was prolonged; excitement rose to fever heat throughout the State. After the agreement for the expulsion of Hansen had been made, but the night before the final passage of the resolution, the wildest demonstrations of delight were indulged in by the pro-slavery element. A riotous procession paraded the streets of Vandalia, then the capital, and halted before the residences of Governor Coles and other anti-slavery leaders, and heaped upon them vituperation and insults. Governor Reynolds, a pro-slavery man, in his history, "My Own Times," holds that the illegal unseating of Hansen was an outrage, and that "the saturnalia of indecent rejoic-

ing which followed gave the death-blow to the convention." No doubt they weakened the pro-slavery cause in the minds of conscientious men.

The heavy combined majority cast for the two pro-slavery candidates for Governor at the State election and the subsequent action of the legislature cast a gloom over the anti-slavery element in the State. Their cause seemed hopeless and the adoption of the pro-slavery constitution a foregone conclusion; yet Governor Coles neither quailed nor faltered, but faced the issue with wisdom and courage, determined—although he represented a minority of the voters—to convert that minority into a majority and defeat the proposed convention. It will naturally be asked why the Governor did not interpose his veto to the action of the legislature, and the answer is that he had no such power, the existing constitution providing that a new convention, to revise the constitution, could be called at any time that two-thirds of the legislature decided to submit the question to a vote of the people. In this matter, then, the Governor had no veto power.

The campaign that followed was the most bitter and vituperative in the history of the State. Families were separated, brothers opposed brothers, churches were divided, the opposing leaders went armed on the hustings. Personal encounters were frequent. The intensity of feeling developed came perilously near civil war. Three-fourths of the inhabitants of Illinois at that time were from slave States—Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and the Carolinas. Some had moved to Illinois

because opposed to slavery on moral grounds, some because, not being able to own slaves, they could not compete with slave labor, on its own ground, in the struggle for a livelihood; but the majority were pro-slavery by heredity and choice, and dreamed of ease and luxury for themselves while negroes tilled the rich soil of Illinois and enriched their masters with the fruits of unrequited toil.

Although the convention men were arrogant and confident of victory, and included nearly all the leading statesmen, they were opposed by a band of heroic men without fear, headed by Governor Coles, who conducted a campaign of education.

Honorable E. B. Washburne, in his "Life of Governor Coles," says:

"As soon as the legislature adjourned, Governor Coles invited all the principal anti-convention men of the State to meet with him in Vandalia, to consult upon the course to be adopted in view of the action of the legislature. Fully appreciating the supreme importance of the question thrust upon them, they determined upon an immediate organization and to resist at the very threshold the conspiracy to make Illinois a slave State. The first thing was to have the members of the legislature who voted against the convention issue an address to the people. This address, undoubtedly drawn by Governor Coles, unmasked the purpose of the conspirators to make a slave constitution, and exposed all the nefarious means employed to accomplish the purpose."

It was an impassioned appeal to the people to rise up in their might and save the State from threatened shame and disaster. Speaking of slavery, it says: "What a strange spectacle would be presented to the civilized world, to see the people of Illinois, yet innocent of this great national sin, and in full enjoyment of all the blessings of free government, sitting down in solemn convention, to determine whether they should enslave among them a portion of their fellow beings, to be cut off from those blessings, to be loaded with the chains of bondage, and unable to leave any other legacy to their posterity than the inheritance of their own servitude. The wise and good of all nations would blush at our depravity. Our professions of republicanism and equal freedom would incur the derision of despots and the scorn of tyrants. We should write the epitaph of free government upon its tombstone."

After dwelling on the moral aspects of slavery, the address argues against its introduction on the grounds of economic expediency, and closes with this eloquent appeal: "In the name of unborn millions who will rise up after us and call us blessed or accursed according to our deeds, in the name of the injured sons of Africa, whose claims to equal rights with their fellow men will plead their own cause against these usurpers before the tribunal of eternal justice, we conjure you, fellow citizens, to ponder upon these things."

There were fifteen members of the legislature, brave and noble men, who signed this eloquent appeal to the people. The convention men likewise called a meeting

at Vandalia and issued an address to the people prepared by some of their ablest men. This address, in advocacy of a convention to alter the constitution, was weak and sophistical, unworthy of men of their ability.

Governor Coles, as the leader of the anti-convention forces, threw himself into the contest heart and soul. There were eighteen months before the election, time enough, the Governor thought, to effect a revolution. Necessarily it must be a campaign of information and enlightenment, and that was what he inaugurated. His chief lieutenant on the stump was Honorable Daniel P. Cook, son-in-law of Senator Ninian Edwards, who in Congress voted against the admission of Missouri as a slave State, while his father-in-law, Senator Edwards, voted for it. In the literary field his chief of staff was Morris Birbeck, an English scholar and philanthropist, residing in Edwards County, whose economic pamphlets and newspaper articles, signed "Jonathan Freeman," exerted a powerful influence.

In the ecclesiastical field the greatest good was accomplished by Reverend John M. Peck, the famous Baptist preacher and author, who organized the religious element of all denominations against the convention with all the skill of an adroit politician.

There were five newspapers published in the State at that time: The *Illinois Intelligencer,* at Vandalia, of which Governor Coles obtained control; the *Spectator,* at Edwardsville, edited by Hooper Warren, both anti-convention; the *Republican Advocate,* at Kaskaskia; the *Illinois Gazette,* at Shawneetown, and the *Republi-*

can, at Edwardsville, were strongly pro-slavery and favored the convention.

Under Governor Coles's inspiring direction, all elements of opposition to slavery, political, moral, social, and economic, were combined throughout the State into a solid phalanx of opposition to the convention. The Governor not only gave himself unreservedly to the cause, but devoted to its extension his entire salary for the four years and much of his private fortune. The Governor's energy and zeal were untiring. In speeches, messages, pamphlets, and newspaper articles, he was unceasingly busy in educating the public mind. Not content with the help he was receiving at home, he enlisted the sympathy of such friends as Roberts Vaux and Nicholas Biddle, of Philadelphia, who, either from their own pens or those of prominent writers, supplied the Governor with tracts, pamphlets, addresses, etc., which he scattered broadcast over the State. As the canvass progressed, it was evident that the anti-convention party was gaining ground; but the pro-conventionites were not idle, for, outside of Governor Coles and Congressman Cook, the ablest politicians in the State championed the convention cause. Among them were six leaders who afterwards became United States Senators, two Justices of the Supreme Court, and one a Governor. Thus the campaign developed until the election on the first Monday of August, 1824. The election passed off with unexpected quietness, but the vote polled was twice as large as at the election of 1822. The vote stood: Against

convention, 6822; for convention, 4950; majority against convention, 1872. Thus Governor Coles and the cause of freedom triumphed over what, two years previous, seemed insurmountable obstacles. The voters on that day "builded better than they knew." But while the anti-slavery advocates were victorious on the one great issue of freedom or slavery for Illinois, they were unsuccessful in carrying the legislature. It was a presidential year, and, while the anti-convention men were divided between Adams, Clay, and Crawford, the convention men were solid for Jackson. And the latter element obtained a majority in the legislature which elected two pro-slavery United States Senators, Kane and McLean, and two Justices of the Supreme Court. Thus Governor Coles found himself again confronted by a hostile legislature and, in addition, an unfriendly judiciary and adverse representatives at Washington. His success in carrying the State against the convention had embittered all opposing elements against him. He stood alone; but, while many of his projects for the improvement of the State's financial condition, for internal improvements, such as the canal from Lake Michigan to the Illinois River, and other economic and upbuilding projects were blocked by a hostile legislature, still his wise, humane, and far-sighted suggestions profoundly impressed and directed public sentiment, and bore fruit in the subsequent development of the State.

But the malice of the enemies of Governor Coles knew no bounds. The persecutions and insults to

which he was subjected were innumerable. He was even sued by his opponents for $2000 damages for emancipating his slaves in the State without giving bond that they should not become a public charge. The suit was brought under a law which had not been published when he came into the State and of which he had not been informed. This malicious suit caused him great expense and annoyance. He was made the victim of the prejudices of knavish judges, and it was not until his case reached the Supreme Court that he was vindicated. Other malevolent suits on similar grounds were brought against him, but he rose superior to his enemies.

One amazing incident was the attempt of Lieutenant-Governor Hubbard to usurp the office of Governor at a time when Governor Coles was temporarily absent from the State on a visit to his mother in Virginia. The attempt—which, of course, did not succeed—was made on the claim that the Governor had left the State, and that the office of chief executive was vacant.

Governor Coles's closing message to the legislature ranks as the most masterly, statesmanlike, and far-seeing paper ever issued by an Illinois executive. It has never been surpassed.

One pleasant episode breaks the monotonous turbulence of his stormy career as Governor, and that was the visit of his old friend, General La Fayette, to Illinois. As chief executive of the State, Governor Coles welcomed the distinguished guest of the nation at Kaskaskia, in an admirable address, and the reunion of the two great men was to them a delightful incident, both personally and officially.

After the expiration of his term as Governor, in which office he was succeeded by Senator Ninian Edwards, Governor Coles retired to his farm near Edwardsville, although spending much time in Eastern cities, and engaged in agricultural pursuits. He organized the first State Agricultural Society in Illinois. In 1831 he made his last appearance in politics in the State, being induced to become a candidate for Congress in opposition to Sidney Breese and Joseph Duncan. But the Jackson sentiment was overwhelmingly strong in the State and Duncan was elected. The victory being won, the interest in the anti-slavery cause declined. Men who had voted against introducing slavery in Illinois became indifferent to its existence elsewhere, and ceased aggressive opposition. The Governor was aware of this change, and after his unsuccessful campaign for Congress, seems to have concluded that his work in Illinois was done. It had been glorious and successful —perhaps beyond his hopes—and had saved Illinois to freedom, but in that attainment had reached its culmination. In the fall of 1832 he closed up his affairs and took his departure for the East. He was a bachelor and then forty-seven years of age, having resided in Illinois thirteen years. In November of the year 1833, he was married to Miss Sally Logan Roberts, of Philadelphia, and made that city his future home, never returning to Illinois to reside. In Philadelphia he had many friends also, and was near to his kindred, and could almost look over the border into his native State. Of his life in Philadelphia little is known in Illinois.

He was an invalid the last eight or ten years of his life, suffering from chronic neuralgia, but lived until 1868, when he passed away at the age of eighty-two years. Of his immediate family, a daughter, Miss Mary Coles, and two grand-daughters, are still living in Philadelphia. He lost one son, some years before his own death. His remaining son, Edward Coles, died in 1906.

In 1856 Governor Coles read an elaborate paper on the "History of the Ordinance of 1787" before the Pennsylvania Historical Society, in which occurred this pregnant retrospection:

"I trust I shall meet with indulgence, from the zeal I have always felt in the cause, for adding that it has ever since afforded me the most delightful and consoling reflections that the abuse I endured, the labor I performed, the anxiety I felt, were not without their reward; and to have it conceded, by opponents as well as supporters, that I was chiefly instrumental in preventing a call of a convention, and in making Illinois a non-slave-holding State."

I find among my papers a copy of a letter to Mr. Washburne from the late Honorable Joseph Gillespie of Edwardsville, which I evidently copied for its local interest. Judge Gillespie was a friend and associate of Governor Coles in his early manhood, and of Abraham Lincoln throughout the latter's public career, and this mutual association links, through him, the lives of the two great emancipators together in local annals. This letter was published in the Honorable E. B. Wash-

burne's sketch under date of February 28, 1881. It reads:

"I knew Governor Coles well. He lived in this place (Edwardsville) while a citizen of Illinois. He was a remarkable man, and devoted himself to the propagation of the sentiments of freedom. He was the most unrelenting foe of slavery I ever knew. His time, money, everything belonging to him, was expended in the cause so dear to his heart. He brought his slaves here from Virginia and liberated them, and gave to each head of family a tract of land within four miles of this place, where they settled and lived for many years. He was unmarried while he lived in Illinois, and when in Edwardsville boarded in the family of James Mason. His character was without spot or blemish in all the walks of life."

With this tribute from Judge Gillespie, I close this inadequate sketch of one of Illinois's greatest statesmen and noblest philanthropists.