

THE GAZETTE.

SATURDAY, - - APRIL 15, 1893

HENRY CLAY.

Mr. Thomas S. Kennedy, of
This County, Contributes
An Interesting

And Hitherto Unwritten Chap-
ter In the Life of the Great
Commoner.

How His Surety Debt of \$25,
000 Was Paid Off By New
Orleans Merchants.

The Names of the Latter Made
Public For the First Time.

MISREPRESENTATIONS CORRECTED.

[Courier Journal]

The similarity between the paying off of a heavy indorsement debt by the friends of Gov. McKinley, "without his knowledge and consent," and a similar event that occurred with Henry Clay, to which the Lexington GAZETTE refers, is well stated by that newspaper. I suppose I am the only person now living who is cognizant of all the facts in regard to the payment of the debt due by Mr. Clay; and as all the parties to the transaction have passed away to another world, it is but just to their memory to make their good deeds known.

About the year 1846 Mr. Clay assumed the payment of a debt for nearly \$25,000, for which he was surety. The debt was carried by the Northern Bank at Lexington. As the GAZETTE says, this debt worried him and "was a heavy burden." At that time, and for several years before and after, Mr. Clay sought refuge from the severe cold in Kentucky during the winter months in the genial climate of New Orleans. When in New Orleans Mr. Clay was always the guest of his friend Mr.

Dr. W. Newton Mercer, who resided in an elegant mansion on Canal street, nearly opposite Christ church, where the eloquent Dr. Hawks preached. Dr. Mercer and Mr. Clay attended regularly that church. Mr. Rezin D. Shepherd was likewise a member of the congregation. Mr. Judah Touro owned the building, and edifice in Grecian Temple style, where Christ church congregation worshiped. The gentlemen, viz: Mr. Rezin D. Shepherd, Mr. Judah Touro and Dr. W. Newton Mercer, having heard of Mr. Clay's pecuniary embarrassment made each and equal contributions to pay off the debt. Knowing Mr. Clay's extreme sensitiveness in regard to accepting favors from any one and his punctiliousness in reference to his debts, they proceeded with great caution and secrecy.

They made their intention known to Mr. Alex. S. Trotter, the local agent in New Orleans for the Northern Bank. They pledged him to secrecy and through him they ascertained from the bank the amount of Mr. Clay's indebtedness. This sum they gave to Mr. Trotter to invest in a New York check and send to the Northern Bank at Lexington, with instructions to pay Mr. Clay's debt and hand to him the notes receipted and cancelled. This is the transaction to which the Lexington GAZETTE refers, and so well has the secret been kept as to the names of the contributors to the fund they are now for the first time made known to the public.

Lest my authority for this statement may be questioned, I will state that all these parties were well known to me and I was informed of the facts by Mr. Trotter at the time of their occurrence. My uncles, Col. Thomas Smith, of the Lexington Observer and Reporter, and William W. Worsley, Esq., and my father were all citizens of Lexington in early times and were among Mr. Clay's most intimate friends. I went to college with Mr. Clay's younger sons, James and John, and was always a welcome guest at Ashland. After leaving college I came to Louisville and served as Assistant Cashier and Specie Teller in the branch of the Northern Bank for three years under William Richardson, Esq., Cashier, and Alexander S. Trotter, Teller. After this service in the bank I engaged in commercial pursuits and went to Rio de Janeiro, where I shipped to New Orleans and Louisville cargoes of coffee. Returning to the United States I located in New Orleans, and in 1844 became the junior partner in the firm of Worsley, Forman & Kennedy, commission merchants, in selling bagging and rope to cotton factors. Our warehouse and office were No. 75 Tchoupitoulas street, in a splendid block of buildings owned by Mr. Rezin D. Shepherd.

It was at this time that Mr. Trotter came to New Orleans and remained to represent