

Five Minute Chats on Our Presidents

By JAMES MORGAN

THE FIRST POLITICIAN

- 1782—Dec. 5, Martin Van Buren born at Kinderhook, N. Y.
- 1813-15—State senator.
- 1815-19—Attorney general of New York.
- 1821-29—United States senator.
- 1829—Governor of New York.
- Secretary of state of the United States.
- 1832—Nominated for vice president.
- 1833—Elected.

MARTIN VAN BUREN was the first machine made politician in the presidency, and he was more than that when put to the test; he was the first of the presidents to have been born under the American flag, rather than under the British, and he and Roosevelt are the only presidents not wholly descended from inhabitants of the United Kingdom.

Spring from Dutch families on both sides, Van Buren married into a Dutch family, and was able to speak the language of his ancestors. He was born and he died in a little Rip Van Winkle village on the east bank of the Hudson, where his father was a farmer and incidentally a tavern keeper. Leaving school and entering a law office in his native town at fourteen, after the manner of most American leaders from Jackson to Lincoln, he picked up as he went along such education as he gained. Yet not one of our many lawyer presidents has won a higher rank in his profession. While only a boy so small that he had to stand on a bench to address the jury, he scored his first success at the bar. At forty, he retired from practice with money enough for a man with a Dutch thrift, which was mistaken for stinginess by the less pru-



Angelina Van Buren.

dent Anglo-Americans who knew him.

Equally precocious in politics, Van Buren was chosen a delegate to a political convention before he was of age; was appointed a county surrogate at twenty-five; elected to the state senate at thirty; appointed attorney general of the state at thirty-two and at thirty-eight he was selected a senator of the United States. Already he was at the head of the "Albany Regency," which continued to run the Democratic machine in New York and to dominate the national councils of that party for sixty years to come. His skill in political manipulation made him known all over the country as the "Little Magician."

Playing the game of politics only as a New Yorker can and as all New Yorkers in public life do, Van Buren was the first to make his way into the White House in gunshoes. Perhaps his caution as a politician has lost him the credit due him for his statesmanship, which he displayed in more than one grave emergency. A popular story reflected the general impression of his artful dodging. Once while he was a passenger on a Hudson river boat an anti-Van Buren man said to Van Buren man:

"I'll bet you the price of the passage that you can't go to him now and get a straight answer to the simplest question that you can ask."

The challenged man, confidently taking the bet, went up to his favorite and inquired if he did not think the weather was fine.

"Well," was the careful measured reply, "that is a relative term and . . ."

"By thunder!" the Van Burenite broke in, as he turned to his challenger, "you've won!"

Van Buren became the pioneer national campaign manager when he made an extended electioneering tour for Jackson. Webster declared that he did more for the election of "Old Hickory" than any other 10 men.

In that fierce Jackson campaign, Van Buren took the party nomination for governor of New York. Being elected, he resigned from the senate, and then, after only two months in the governorship, he resigned again to be secretary of state in the new cabinet. Thus he held within 12 weeks three of the highest prizes in public life and at the same time was left apparent to the presidency itself.

SIAMESE RULER IS SUPREME

Rama VI Perhaps the Most Absolute Monarch That Is Left on This Old Earth.

You forget, when you are in London, that you are in the king's capital. You forget it in every king's capital in the world—except Bangkok, Siam. I had not been in my hotel for half an hour when I heard whistles blowing and bells ringing and trumpets sounding strange fanfares. I asked my "boy" (he came with my hotel room and was my shadow during my entire stay in Siam) what the noise signified. He knelt down and put his hands piously together, as custom decrees that a servant must do when addressing a superior, and made me understand in his queer, pidgin-English that the king was passing by.

Later, I came to know that the passing of the king was not a rare occurrence. Often the trumpets announced him two or three times a day, as he took the route to or from the golden-roofed royal palace in the center of the city and the audience hall two miles distant. Every time he passed, the highway was lined with a crowd eager to pay homage. For in Bangkok, a king is a reality, not the mere figurehead that has come to be in most other countries.

The hotel at which I stopped was owned by the king. So, I found, was everything else in Siam, including the inhabitants, body and soul. Rama VI—Oxford graduate, playwright, poet and keen administrator—is perhaps the most absolute of all the monarchs left on earth. (He does not appear in the Siamese archives as Rama VI. His real name, with his titles, is Somdet Phra Paramendr Maha Vajiravudh Phra Mongkol Klao. But for the sake of convenience, foreigners call him Rama VI.)

Rama VI is an autocrat, but his government, strangely enough, is more like an advanced state socialism than anything else. The state owns the main lines of the railways, the oil fields, the forests and the mines. The street cars and the water works and the lighting system of Bangkok are state property. Of course the state is the king. But the king draws a very firm, straight line between his rights as an individual and his rights as the head of the government, and governs for his people more truly than does many an elected executive. He is democratic in spirit. I know of just one act of his that might be called tyrannical—his recent order that the women of Siam must let their hair grow long—Florence Burgess Meehan in Asia Magazine.

Biblical Truths Revealed.

Work by archeologists has thrown a great flood of light and rich understanding on the Bible.

This point was emphasized by Josiah Pennington, acting provost of the University of Pennsylvania, in a recent address on the literary background of the Bible.

"Their discoveries of records do not confirm the Bible," he said, "for it needs no confirming, but they give us a clearer understanding of the Bible."

The story of the prodigal son was cited by Doctor Pennington as one example. When it is known that the laws at that time made it possible for a young man to ask for and receive his inheritance and to go "into a far country," the story is more clearly understood.

Records have been unearthed which show that the selling of Joseph to the caravan of merchants bound for Egypt was one of many similar transactions that happened along this road.

The greatest literary background of the New Testament is the Old Testament, said the speaker, but there are a number of books, among them the "Wisdom of Solomon" and the "Last Days of David," which throw a profound light on the parables and incidents recorded in the New Testament.

Smugglers in Clover.

Smuggling over the Dutch and Danish frontiers, which the German government had gone to great efforts to suppress, again is flourishing "on a colossal scale," and at some points with the full knowledge and connivance of many government officials, according to reports.

Smugglers are declared to be outbidding the government for the aid of dishonest officials, and the "veritable army of customs officers on the border have permitted millions of marks' worth of tobacco, cigarettes, coffee and sugar to cross the border duty free within the last few months."

Flying squadrons of customs officers have been organized by the government "to catch the smugglers," who are said to have so thoroughly systematized their operations that "business receipts are rapidly falling back to nothing, for custom control is again in a paper."

Women Rat Catchers.

The latest sphere of women's activities is rat catching!

Two women at Red Shanks, Forest, caught 28 rats in one morning. Wearing suitable clothing and accompanied by two dogs, the woman rat catchers attend at farms where threshing is in progress. It is said that the women enjoy their job and that the farmers are enthusiastic in their praise.—London Times.

Living.

"The cost of living is coming down." "So I've heard," said Farmer Corcoran, "but cheaper food won't solve the expense problem for folks who don't believe they are living unless they attend all the parties and see all the motion pictures."

WENT UP IN RECORD TIME

Comfortable House That Was Begun and Practically Completed in a Single Day.

A farmer in one of the Middle Western states bought material for a house and then discovered that for lack of means he could not go on with it. The stuff lay on the ground for months, when one day a generous thought came into the mind of a contracting builder. He called his men around him and asked for volunteers to build the farmer's cottage, telling them he would undertake to do it within one day if they would contribute their work. Twenty-six carpenters, masons and painters agreed, on the condition that the farmer would furnish a chicken dinner, and a time was fixed for all to report at the site of the proposed building.

Every man appeared on time and all went at once to work. Each worker was assigned to a particular part, and the house began to go up with a rush. When noon came the framework was all up and the chimney was started.

Then came dinner. The wife of the farmer had fried two dozen chickens. There were ten loaves of bread, four dozen ears of corn and neatly a bushel of mashed potatoes. The dessert consisted of cherry cobbler and various kinds of pie. The contractor had to call off his men for fear they would eat so much they would not be able to finish the job.

The hurry began again. Before the roof was on the plasterers were at work, and at exactly six o'clock the cottage was finished, all but the second coat of paint and the skim plaster, neither of which could be put on before the first coat dried. Everything else, even to putting on the locks and hinges, was done before the men were called off, and done well.

The contractor complimented his men when the job was complete. He said that although he had done "hurry" work, before, he had never known a house to be begun and completed in a day.

Unidentified Sea Monster.

A sea monster believed to have come up from the depths of the Gulf stream to die and drifted into the shallow water north of the Key, where it was discovered by E. E. Garretson is a subject for much inquiry by scientists. A fragment of the skull, weighing three tons and measuring 10 feet in length and 7 feet across, was taken to Miami in tow of the yacht Corsair. Thousands of curious persons visited the dock, but none could name the creature, and Mr. Garretson was uncertain as to the species to which it belongs. He is inclined to the opinion, however, it is a giant squid, for the only bone he could salvage was the skull. Mr. Garretson declared that when he first saw the monster it was surrounded by sharks which were devouring the flesh. He did not know how long it was, as he saw only 80 or 90 feet of it, with the head protruding 6 or 8 feet above the water. Mr. Garretson, with the aid of the yacht, pulled the head from the body and in doing so broke the skull. He is confident there is another piece of the skull there as large, or larger, than the fragment he took to Miami.

MT. GALLAGHER NEWS

Mr. Gallagher, May 23.—Gardens are looking fine in this section, but cotton is not doing so well.

Mrs. Della Trussel spent last week with her cousin, Mrs. Corinne Davenport.

We sympathize with the many friends of Mr. John Manly, who died last Saturday and was buried Sunday at Poplar Spring church. Rev. Leonard Simpson preached his funeral to a large crowd. Mr. Manly was 89 years, 11 months and 21 days old at the time of his death.

Mr. and Mrs. Julius Passmore spent Sunday with their sister, Mrs. Tom Ackworth.

Miss Bernice Davenport spent the day with Miss Lucille Hill, Sunday.

Mrs. Polly Davenport of Greenwood, visited her daughter, Mrs. J. R. Brown, Sunday afternoon.

Mr. Bob Scott spent Sunday with Christopher Davenport.

The friends of Mr. John Brown will be pleased to hear he is some better at this writing.

Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Olive played base ball last Saturday. The score was 8 to 11 in favor of Mr. Gallagher.

Bastions Invented by Italians. Bastions were invented by the Italian engineers of the sixteenth century to prevent the enemy from collecting in the ditch round a fortified town.



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