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GEORGE WHITTEN JACKSON.

GEORGE WHITTEN JACKSON, a prominent citizen of Pittsburgh, and for nearly half a century identified with the business interests of that city, was born in Ireland in the year 1801, and died in the city of Pittsburgh, in the month of September, 1862. His father was John Jackson, a manufacturer of soap and candles, who came to America with his family in 1806, and in the same year settled in Pittsburgh, which even at that early day was a thriving and busy place, already practically controlling the trade of the vast region west and southwest. Though not as yet a centre of population, its inhabitants numbering scarcely more than four thousand, Pittsburgh was growing rapidly, and intelligent traders and mechanics readily found within its precincts cheap homes and abundant employment for their energy and skill. John Jackson was probably not troubled to any great extent by competition, as statistics show that down to 1808 there was but one other person of his calling in the place. He prospered in his useful occupation, brought up his family in comfort, and gave his children all the educational advantages the custom of the day demanded. George, the subject of this sketch, finished his studies under the skillful tutorship of a Mr. Moody, who was generally recognized as the most thorough and accomplished instructor in the town. Beyond the usual English branches, he appears to have studied the French language, if not the classic tongues of Greece and Rome, and to have mastered the accomplishment of dancing. His father witnessed his improvement with a parent's satisfaction, and looked forward to the time when his manly and intelligent son would assist him in his business. But it happened that George detested this branch of manufacture, and to avoid being compelled to work at it ran away from home, going to Wheeling. Yielding to the importunities of his mother, conveyed in a fond letter brought to him by Mr. John Albree, a friend of the family, who followed him for the purpose of delivering it, and affected also by the persuasion of that gentleman, he returned to Pittsburgh and was immediately provided with a situation in a grocery store owned by Mr. Albree, at the corner of Market street and "the Diamond." In this concern, in which he became partner, he remained until 1826, when his father died and left him the business he had founded and successfully carried on for many years. To protect the interests of the estate for his mother he assumed the management of the business, but as his talents were not in that direction, he disposed of it at the first opportunity. He

then embarked his little fortune in the pork packing business in Pittsburgh, and speedily extended his operations to Cincinnati and Columbus. In this business he remained until his death—a period of thirty-five years—having as partner in the latter years of his life, his nephew, Mr. George Jackson Townsend. As his wealth increased, Mr. Jackson broadened his field of enterprise. In 1845 he associated himself with Mr. R. W. Cunningham of New Castle, Penn., with whom he remained connected until 1852. New Castle was a place of considerable importance at that time through its canal interests—railroads not having then been introduced—and the point was an excellent one for the sale of all kinds of heavy goods. Messrs. Cunningham and Jackson did an extensive business as dealers in grain, iron, steel and glass. They also acted as general forwarders of merchandise, and in addition to their other enterprises, carried on a foundry. The business relations between the two gentlemen were founded in mutual respect and esteem. Among the earlier manufactures of Pittsburgh that of cotton spinning was quite generally regarded with high favor, and as affording a most promising outlook for investment. Mr. Jackson shared this belief in common with other wealthy citizens of Pittsburgh, and in 1849 he bought a fourth interest in the Anchor Cotton Mills. Great improvements were subsequently made in this mill, much valuable machinery was added, and for a score of years it prospered and paid satisfactory dividends. At length the competition of the mills in other parts of the country, notably in New England, diverted and diminished the trade to such an extent that this property greatly depreciated in value, and in 1872 it was sold as it stood for \$100,000, about its original total cost. It was then dismantled, and is now used as the machine shop of the Westinghouse Air Brake Company. In the financial circles of Pittsburgh Mr. Jackson was well known as a gentleman whose sense of duty and honesty was of the most uncompromising character. He was associated in important monetary trusts with the ablest and best of his fellow citizens, and his judgment was held in the profoundest esteem by his colleagues. As far back as the great financial crisis of 1837 he was a member of the Board of Directors of the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Bank. Although the institution was an exceptionally strong one and perfectly prepared to redeem its circulation, the majority of the Board voted to suspend. This step led Mr. Jackson to resign his directorship, he holding that it was wrong for the bank to evade the fulfillment of its promises when able to keep them. With the Bank of Pitts-

burgh, the oldest banking institution in Pennsylvania, Mr. Jackson was also connected for many years, serving at different times as a member of its Board of Directors. His judgment early convinced him of the feasibility of constructing a railroad through the valley of the Allegheny, to connect Pittsburgh with the East, thus avoiding the steep grades of the mountains. He was one of the original party to examine the route, and upon the organization of the road, the "Allegheny Valley R.R." in 1852, he was elected a director, and as such took a prominent part in the management of its affairs until 1859, when, owing to failing health, he was obliged to decline re-election. In 1836 Mr. Jackson became a member of the Smithfield Street Bridge Board, and remained connected with it until his death, consequently during the building of the suspension bridge which replaced the barn bridge destroyed by the fire of 1845, and which in turn has given place to the present handsome structure. He was an intimate friend of Mr. John A. Roebling, the engineer in charge, who afterwards became so widely known by the building of the railroad bridge over the Niagara River, and the Brooklyn Bridge. When the disastrous lesson of the fire of 1845 stimulated renewed interest in insurance, Mr. Jackson took a prominent part in organizing the Western Insurance Company, the original capital of which, \$225,000, has since been increased to \$300,000. He was an incorporator of this company, and was always zealous in promoting its interests. He was public-spirited to the last degree, and all his life entered heart and soul into whatever promised helpfulness or usefulness to the city of Pittsburgh or its people. When the best class of citizens looked upon it as a sacred duty to man the fire engines of the town he was a member of the "Eagle," now known as "Engine No. 1," and for a time was captain of the company. When a young man he took considerable interest in local politics, and represented the Fourth Ward in the Council. In 1845, the year in which a fearful conflagration "destroyed the best half of the city of Pittsburgh," he was President of the Select branch of the Council; and after the fire he was one of a committee of three in whose hands was placed the pecuniary aid, amounting to more than \$160,000, which was contributed from all sources for the relief of the suffering people of the desolated city. A Democrat in early life, Mr. Jackson passed in time from that party into the ranks of the Republicans. Previous to the election of Buchanan, he had identified himself prominently with the colonization movement, taking an active part in sending settlers to Kansas and giving freely of his time, influence

and means to promote the cause. In 1856 he was sent as a delegate to the convention held in Buffalo at which John C. Fremont was nominated for the Presidency. "His loyalty to the Union and the Constitution was unswerving and unqualified" to the time of his death. He was an uncompromising foe to jobbery and utterly incapable of descending to meanness or trickery to increase his fortune. His kindness of heart was not the least distinguishing of his many excellent characteristics, and was well exemplified by his active interest in the House of Refuge of Western Pennsylvania, the Western Pennsylvania Hospital, and other eleemosynary institutions. The care of the insane was a subject near his heart, and he was one of the most outspoken advocates of the erection of the hospital for the insane now known as "Dixmont," and a firm supporter of the late Dr. Reed. His religious connections attached him to the Episcopal Church, and in early life he attended "Trinity" and afterwards "St. Andrews." He was married in 1836, to Mary, daughter of the late Peter Beard, who is described as a tall, handsome woman, noted for her natural goodness and kindness of heart. Mr. Jackson was not in good health during the last years of his life. He died at the comparatively early age of sixty-one, being taken in the midst of his activities and usefulness. His death was widely regarded as a public loss. In a lengthy and admirably conceived obituary notice in the columns of the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, under date September 23, (1862), this worthy man's character and deeds are exhaustively reviewed. The notice concludes with the following summary: "He was in the truest sense a good citizen. Possessing large means, he employed them with judicious enterprise and liberality to advance the material prosperity of the community. We have often heard him spoken of as a kind landlord, suffering many losses from the dishonest and unworthy rather than cause distress to unfortunate tenants. He was indeed in all his relations to his fellow men not merely just, but merciful and charitable. He conducted an extensive private business successfully and always honorably. * * * * In short, George W. Jackson was an unassuming, humane, fearless, enterprising, sincerely honest man, and his death is a most serious calamity."
