

## The New Governor, Thomas J. Durant.

The appointment of this gentleman as the successor of Gov. Wells, is regarded by many with favor. Aside from his political ultraisms Mr. Durant has always been esteemed by those who know him well as a fair and just man, somewhat sour and ascetical in his manners, but honest, punctual, truthful and able. A native of New York, he emigrated to this city thirty years ago, a poor and friendless youth, but well educated and with a strong love for learning, of indefatigable industry, systematic and even stoical habits, and a high ambition. When we first knew him, he was a clerk in the postoffice. Always a close student, he soon manifested a talent for writing, and became an essayist and political controversialist in the papers of the city. Finally, he associated himself with the late Judge John C. Larue, a man of remarkable gifts, in the conduct of a daily paper, which was edited with marked ability, but with very extreme views. At that time Mr. Durant was an ultra Democrat, of the French revolution school, embracing the doctrines of free trade, equal rights, universal suffrage, with a strong tendency to socialism and Fourierism. These views and tendencies have always marked the political character of Mr. Durant. On the subject of Southern slavery, though in his identification with the Democratic party it became necessary to keep his opinions in the back ground, it was always known to his intimate friends that he disliked and condemned the institution and would embrace the first favorable opportunity of proclaiming himself an emancipationist.

On coming to the bar Mr. Durant devoted himself with great assiduity to his profession, and though filling the offices of State Senator and United States District Attorney with fidelity and ability, eschewed political affairs and agitations and engrossed himself in the steady and earnest pursuit of independence and wealth. In this sphere he achieved great success,—which was due to his wonderful perseverance,—great punctuality, systematic habits and fine abilities. When the secession excitement arose he took an active and earnest part against that measure, and was a candidate for the Senatorial representation of this city in the Convention of 1861 with Mr. Soule and Randell Hunt and was defeated. During the war he withdrew from public affairs and was entirely engaged in professional duties, but was known to be, and always proclaimed himself a Union man. On the arrival of Gen. Butler here, Mr. Durant withheld himself from any intercourse with that officer, and only appeared before him or his subordinates in a professional capacity, and generally in defence of citizens who were prosecuted before military courts. He was the counsel of Mumford and also of the prisoners of Fort Jackson who were charged with violating their paroles, and it was in deference to the joint application of himself and Mr. Rozier that the sentence of death was not executed on the latter parties.

When the emancipation proclamation was issued Mr. Durant embarked warily in politics, placing himself boldly on the platform of universal suffrage and equality. Appointed Attorney General of the State, his extreme views on the subject of suffrage and the equal rights of negroes, and his vigorous opposition to Banks's scheme of reconstruction under military orders, brought him into conflict with the Banks-Hahn-Cutler party. With this party he waged a fierce and unrelenting but unsuccessful war, denouncing the Convention of 1864 as a bogus affair, and protesting against the admission into Congress of the men who were elected under it. When that Convention failed to declare universal suffrage Mr. Durant had an additional ground for his fierce hostility to it and its members, of whom he never failed to declare that they were utterly unworthy of trust or confidence, politically, socially and in every other respect. A stern moralist, studiously observant of all the proprieties of life, firm and truthful, he entertained for Banks and his vulture pack a most cordial hate. When the convention riot of last July occurred, Mr. Durant, to the great surprise and mortification of his friends, left the city under an apprehension that he would be exposed to violence. Some silly, nervous or mischievous persons must have originated this story. It was utterly unfounded, as Mr. Durant was too much respected for his sincerity and personal integrity, and was too well known to be opposed to the Convention of 1864, which was the object of mob violence, to justify any such apprehension. The most censurable act of his political life was the use which he made of this groundless old woman's story in his speeches at the North. This was a grave error, and one quite inconsistent with the general character and course of Mr. Durant. When Mr. Durant left this State it was understood that the leading features of his political programme were universal suffrage and universal amnesty. His nature and principles must incline him against the vindictive and proscriptive policy advocated by many of his party toward our best citizens, a policy which is doing more to prejudice the cause of a full recognition of the civil equality of the negroes than any other.

As a Governor, we have a strong belief that Mr. Durant would be an honest and able Chief Executive of this State. He would, indeed, be far below any man who ever filled an office in the State if he could not give us some improvement on the administration of Gov. Wells, who has managed to secure a larger share of odium and general contempt than were ever before earned by a public officer in this or in any other State.