

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF COLONEL SOLOMON P. SHARP
PART 2: A TIME TO WEEP AND A TIME TO MOURN

J. W. Cooke

Helen: To strike with a knife has a certain touch of royalty, of heroism.

Euripides, *Helen*, 300-301

Helen: How shall we die so that our death brings us fame and honor?

Euripides, *Helen*, 927-928

Sharp began his tenure as attorney general at a momentous time in the commonwealth's history. So great were the strains that Arndt M. Stickles could write that, "No period in all Kentucky's first hundred years was more exasperating or laden with greater peril than the decade between 1819 and 1829; especially is this true of the years from 1822 to 1826 inclusive."¹

These perils and exasperations had their origins in several distinct but related events. There were land-grant problems. In 1821 and in 1823 the United States Supreme Court had decreed that a Kentucky statute of 1812 allowing Kentuckians who had settled and improved lands for seven years to purchase them when the value of improvements was greater than the value of the land was invalid. A later statute in 1820 was also a target for the Supreme Court. This

J.W. COOKE, PH.D., is professor emeritus of history at Tennessee State University in Nashville. He is the author of *The American Tradition of Liberty, 1800-1860: From Jefferson to Lincoln* and many journal articles.

1 Arndt M. Stickles, *The Critical Court Struggle in Kentucky 1819-1829* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1929), 5, 38, 68-69; *Argus of Western America*, 8 November 1821, p. 3. Sharp may not have been Governor Adair's first choice. George Robertson, a political opponent of the colonel and an anti-reliever, wrote that he was offered appointment as attorney general in the spring of 1821; see George Robertson, *An Outline of the Life of George Robertson* (Lexington, 1876), 57. For the Adair administration, see William Garrard Leger, "The Public Life of John Adair" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1953), 195-237; see also, Charles J. Bussey, "John Adair, 1750-1840" in Lowell Harrison, ed., *Kentucky's Governors, 1792-1985* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1985), 23-25 and Dale Royalty, "Banking, Politics, and the Commonwealth, Kentucky, 1800-1825" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1971), 253-325.

law had, as Sandra F. Van Burkleo explains, "virtually eliminated the possibility that absentee land claimants . . . would be able to use, enjoy, or sell Kentucky land claims." The Court also found this statute unconstitutional because it was a violation of the commonwealth's 1789 separation agreement with Virginia.²

Second, and more momentous for Sharp's career, was the continuing quarrel between the state's debtors and creditors concerning how and when the latter would collect their just debts. About \$11,000,000 was involved. The Adair administration consistently ranged itself on the side of the debtors; it represented the relief coalition in Kentucky politics. Creditors were usually characterized as anti-relievers.

The matter was enormously complicated by several factors. Bank notes issued by the Bank of Kentucky, chartered in 1806, the forty-six "independent banks," authorized in 1818, and the two branches of the Bank of the United States, located in Lexington and Louisville, circulated freely. Many Kentuckians, however, distrusted all or some of this paper currency, and its value in relation to specie fluctuated constantly. The Panic of 1819, which stuck Kentucky with as much force as any state in the union, added to the misery and uncertainty of debtor and creditor alike.

Many Kentuckians blamed the Bank of the United States for their woes. In 1817 the legislature passed a law assessing a tax of \$8,000 on each of its branches. This was raised to \$60,000 at the next session, and the sergeant at arms was instructed to collect the monies by force if necessary. The Court of Appeals also attacked it, declaring it unconstitutional and subject to taxation in December 1819, *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819) notwithstanding. However, no attempt to collect the tax was made.

2 Sandra F. Van Burkleo, "Green v. Biddle" in John E. Kleber, ed., *The Kentucky Encyclopedia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 390; see also, *Argus*, 6 December 1821, p. 3; 13 December 1821, p. 3; 31 January 1822, p. 3; 10 September 1823, p. 3; 17 September 1823, p. 3; 24 September 1823, p. 3; 1 October 1823, p. 3; 15 October 1823, p. 3; Stickle, *Critical Court Struggle*, 9, 13-15, 34; Alfred H. Kelly and Winfred A. Harbison, *The American Constitution: Its Origins and Development* (5th ed.; New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), 264-65.

Financial distress intensified. So precarious was the condition of the state banks that only sixteen of them remained in operation by the end of 1819. The Bank of Kentucky cut its currency in circulation by one half that same year. The charters of the state banks were finally revoked in 1821; the Bank of Kentucky's charter was repealed the next year. It would require years of litigation and wrangling to wind up the affairs of these institutions.

Meanwhile, the legislature in its infinite wisdom had created yet another fiscal institution; the Bank of the Commonwealth was brought into existence in November 1820. Chartered for twenty years with a capital of \$3,000,000 (the state would be responsible for \$2,000,000), its president and directors were to be chosen by the legislature. The bank would receive all proceeds from land sales west of the Tennessee River, state deposits, and the state's stock in the Bank of Kentucky after its charter expired. Its notes would be legal tender for all debts, and there was no requirement that they be redeemed in specie.³

The legislature also moved to relieve the burden of debt carried by Kentuckians. A law in 1819 suspended sales of mortgaged property for sixty days under certain conditions. The next year a replevin law was passed extending the grace period from three to twelve months. If the plaintiff in such actions refused payment in Bank of Kentucky notes, the defendant might replevy for two years. After ending imprisonment for debt, the legislature tried its hand at fiscal

3 Stickles, *Critical Court Struggle*, 17, 8-12, 19, 22, 23-25, 27. Stickles noted that a paper dollar was worth only fifty cents in specie by October 1822. Samuel M. Wilson, "The Old Court and New Court Controversy in Kentucky," *Proceedings of the Kentucky Bar Association* (Louisville, 1915), 44; Lewis Collins, *Historical Sketches of Kentucky* (Maysville, Kentucky and Cincinnati, Ohio, 1847), 89; Carolyn Donnell Beauchamp, "Banking in Kentucky Part I," *Kentucky Banker*, December 1986, pp. 15-20; for the Bank of Kentucky, see Gen. Basil W. Duke, *History of the Bank of Kentucky* (Louisville, 1895), 14-20; Royalty, "Banking, Politics and the Commonwealth," 286, notes that the Bank of Kentucky was identified with creditors and the Bank of the Commonwealth with debtors. Amos Kendall wrote a long, detailed, and subtle critique of *McCulloch v. Maryland* that appeared originally in the *Argus*. It is reprinted in William Stickney, ed., *The Autobiography of Amos Kendall* (Boston and New York, 1872), 207-222; Dale Royalty, "Banking and the Commonwealth Ideal in Kentucky, 1806-1822," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 77 (1979): 91-107, is a brief, lucid account of the state's financial woes in all their complexity.

manipulation for a third time in 1821. This new legislation prohibited the sale of any property for less than three-fourths of its value as assessed by neighbors of the defendant unless the plaintiff would agree to accept Bank of Kentucky or Bank of the Commonwealth notes as payment. Should the plaintiff so agree, the property would be sold without any formal appraisal.⁴

It was the Replevin Act of 1820 that brought matters to a head. In May 1822 Circuit Judge James Clark in *Blair v. Williams* declared the act unconstitutional and, it seemed to many, also implied that the Bank of the Commonwealth was unconstitutional. Angered, the legislature invited Judge Clark to appear before it and defend himself. He did so with evident skill. Those who disliked the decision were not converted by his reasoning or his eloquence, but, lacking a majority, they could do nothing to overturn the verdict; besides, the decision was already under appeal to the Court of Appeals. Until the court made known its determination or until those supporting relief could attain a majority, they must bide their time.

In October 1823 Court of Appeals justices John Boyle, William Owsey, and Benjamin Mills declared all replevin laws unconstitutional. Less than a month later those legislators who had favored relief and replevin reacted. John Rowan, one of their principal spokesmen, introduced his "Preamble and Resolutions," a lengthy document denouncing the court and proclaiming legislative supremacy. Governor John Adair urged resistance to judicial tyranny. Both Rowan and the governor received eloquent support from such pro-relief newspapers as the *Argus of Western America* and the *Kentucky Gazette*. Early the next year the legislature repealed all replevin legislation and enacted a new law providing "that all property taken by executions from courts should bring at least three-fourths of its value in gold and silver"; this was a thinly disguised attempt to extend further aid to debtors in retaining their property.⁵

4 Stickles, *Critical Court Struggle*, 22-26; Royalty, "Banking, Politics and the Commonwealth," 257-73, 277-88; Kendall, *Autobiography*, 201-206.

5 Stickles, *Critical Court Struggle*, 30-40; William Garrard Leger wrote that, "The state may be said to have been born in debt and nurtured on replevin"; see Leger,

The battle was joined in earnest. Those who adhered to "sound business practice," as Dale Royalty puts it, those who believed that "immutable laws of social and business intercourse were beyond the power of the public to change," cheered the decisions of judges Boyle, Owsley, and Mills. They were identified as the anti-relief faction and had generally been supporters of the Bank of Kentucky. Those who believed that it was within the legislature's prerogative to determine when and how settlements between debtor and creditor were to be reached attacked the decisions reached in *Blair v. Williams* and *Lapsley v. Brashear*. Those who had supported establishment of the Bank of the Commonwealth, who believed that the legislature was the voice of the people and "supreme in all matters," regarded the court's decisions as an unconstitutional assumption of legislative authority. They seem to have identified with the thousands of Kentuckians who were debtors. These men constituted the relief faction.⁶

Sharp was one of its spokesmen. He had sponsored legislation to tax the Bank of the United States and to extract a fee of \$60,000 from it. He had voted to accept the notes of independent banks as "revenue tax and county levy" on a par with Bank of Kentucky notes. He had also favored the establishment of several independent banks in the state. Since returning from Washington, Sharp had been a consistent supporter of states' rights. Whether as a matter of sympathy or as a matter of calculation, or both, Sharp had identified himself with those thousands of Kentuckians who were in debt and who needed time and, perhaps, a bit of luck if they were to retain their property. His ability as a vote-getter coupled with his legal skills gave Sharp formidable political force. This force he used on behalf of the debtors and those who sought to protect them from bankruptcy.⁷

"Adair," 207; Wilson, "Old Court and New Court," 47-48; Van Burkleo, "Old Court-New Court Controversy" in Kleber, ed., *Kentucky Encyclopedia*, 693-94 and Thomas D. Clark, "Blair v. Williams," *ibid.*, 86.

6 Royalty, "Banking, Politics and the Commonwealth," 285-86, 314-25; Leger, "Adair," 231; Stickles, *Critical Court Struggle*, 51-57; *Argus*, 18, 29 October 1823; 4, 11, 18 February 1824.

7 *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Kentucky* (Frankfort, 1818), 120, 164-65, 167, 195. In a letter to M. D. Hardin, 8 August 1819, Sharp's congressional mentor, John C. Calhoun, deplored the colonel's attacks on the

Sharp also staked out a political position in the 1824 presidential campaign that put him in clear opposition to Henry Clay and his supporters. An early Calhoun partisan, he shifted his allegiance to Andrew Jackson when it became apparent that the former stood no chance of being elected. Sharp attended a gathering of Jackson partisans at Frankfort on 2 October where he was elected secretary of the meeting. Later that month, he signed an address, "To the People of Kentucky," arguing that Clay could not be elected and urging support for Jackson and Calhoun as his vice-presidential running mate. Sharp was becoming, whether he knew it or not, a "high risk" politician.⁸

These risks were being compounded in another quarter as well. After leaving Bowling Green, Anna, accompanied by her mother and a few slaves, had moved to a "romantic little farm" on the middle fork of Drake's Creek about six miles east of Franklin in Simpson County. Thomas Beauchamp's farm was nearby. Thomas had been a small-time land speculator and farmer in Barren county and had served as a private in Colonel Young Ewing's Regiment Kentucky Mounted Militia during General Samuel Hopkins's ill-fated expedition against the Shawnee in 1812. Sometime between 1812 and 1820 he and his family moved to Simpson County.

Jereboam Orville Beauchamp, Thomas's second son, was born on 6 September 1802 and named for one of his father's older brothers. Jereboam was educated in Barren County at Dr. Benjamin Thurston's academy where he claimed he had acquired "a good English

Bank of the United States. See W. Edwin Hemphill, ed., *The Papers of John C. Calhoun* (14 vols. to date; Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1969), IV, 217; Leander Sharp, *Vindication of the Character of the Late Col. Solomon P. Sharp from the Calumnies Published Against Him Since His Murder by Patrick Darby and Jereboam Beauchamp* (Frankfort, 1827), 40-49; *Argus*, 30 November 1825, p. 3; Frank F. Mathias, "The Relief and Court Struggle: Half-Way House to Populism," *Register* 71 (1973): 154-76.

⁸ *Kentucky Gazette*, 2 September 1824, p. 2; 9 September 1824, p. 1; 14 October 1824, p. 2; 28 October 1824, pp. 2-3. Sharp also made his will in September; see Ethel Collins Crager, comp., *Franklin County Ky. Wills and Inventories: Will Book Two*, p. 6; James C. Klotter, *William Goebel: The Politics of Wrath* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1977), 126, 127.

education, a knowledge of the Latin language, and a respectable acquaintance with the Sciences" by the time he was sixteen. He undertook teaching on his own for a short period but soon returned to Dr. Thurston's establishment to assist him. At eighteen Jereboam considered his preparation for the study of law complete.

He had observed the lawyers practicing at the bar in Glasgow and Bowling Green and was impressed particularly by the eloquence and penetration of Colonel Sharp. At one time, indeed, Jereboam had thought of studying law with him, but the story of his seduction and abandonment of Anna Cooke outraged his sense of honor, and he turned against him.

Before beginning the study of law in Bowling Green, Jereboam sought rest and recuperation by a visit to his father's farm. Since Anna lived within a mile, he determined to meet her, although he was given to understand that she "sternly refused to make any acquaintances" and even declined visits from former friends. Beauchamp, however, was able to insinuate himself into her confidence by degrees. He solicited both her friendship for his sisters and books from her library. Anna declined the former but acquiesced in the latter. Later she relented and accepted a visit from Jereboam's sisters but otherwise remained reclusive. Jereboam persisted in his visits, ostensibly to borrow books. Gradually he and Anna became friends. Within three months he was in love, "that sweetest of all passions, which reciprocated, happily turns Earth into a Heaven." Anna seemed susceptible to Jereboam's suit but continued "to decline hearing any thing of love from me." This, too, changed in time, and eventually he proposed marriage.

The relationship then took a bizarre twist. Anna told Jereboam that if they were to marry he must kill Sharp—"the hand which should receive hers, would have to revenge the injury a villian [*sic*] had done her." While Sharp lived, Anna told him, "she would feel unworthy of my love." Jereboam assured her that he had always thought Sharp's death was a "necessary consequence." He explained that, "I never for a moment could feel that I could suffer a villian [*sic*] to live, who had been the seducer of one I pressed to my bosom as a wife." Upon these

terms Anna consented to the union. Their courtship occurred during the summer of 1821. Jereboam had not yet celebrated his nineteenth birthday; Anna was at least thirty-four.⁹

The lovers then discussed how best to dispatch Sharp. Beauchamp wanted to kill him immediately. Anna warned her fiancé that Sharp was a coward and would not fight a duel; she advised waiting until he visited Bowling Green. Her friends there, Anna told Jereboam, "would support me in any revenge I chose to take upon him."

The young lover was not persuaded. He went to Frankfort and gained an interview with Sharp. According to Beauchamp's account, he bullied and humiliated Sharp, forcing him to beg for his life. The interview ended with Beauchamp warning Sharp that he would horsewhip him daily until he consented to a duel. After patrolling the streets armed with pistols and cowhide for the next two days, Beauchamp discovered that Sharp had left town, allegedly for Bowling Green. Acting upon this rumor Beauchamp rode to Bowling Green only to discover that Sharp was not there and that he was not expected. "I was much enraged, it is true," Jereboam confessed, "but

9 Jereboam O. Beauchamp, *The Confession of Jereboam O. Beauchamp*, ed. Robert Bamberg (Philadelphia: The Matthew Carey Library of English and American Literature, 1966), 24-30. Jereboam described his father as "not wealthy, though his enterprise and industry, had made him comfortably independent for the country life"; see *ibid.*, 23. The Barren County Federal Census of 1810 and the Simpson County Federal Census of 1820 suggest, at best, a modest affluence. See also Franklin Gorin, *The Time of Long Ago, Barren County* (Louisville, 1929), 23, 136, 137, 138; [Author unknown], *Life of Jereboam Beauchamp* (Frankfort, 1850), 5; Leander Sharp, *Vindication*, 27-32, described Beauchamp as violent, avaricious, and dishonest. He charged that Beauchamp had fathered several illegitimate children and that eight days before Sharp's murder a bastardy warrant was sworn out against him. "This," he concluded, "is the practice of a man who pretends to teach morality with a dagger!" (*Vindication*, 27-32). See also, J. G. Dana and R. S. Thomas, eds., *Beauchamp's Trial: Report of the Trial of Jereboam O. Beauchamp Before the Franklin Circuit Court in May 1826 for the Murder of Col. Solomon Sharp* (Frankfort, 1826), 11, 12, 87, 88, 139-40, 148-49. The Filson Club Historical Society's department of special collections holds some of Beauchamp's papers, including his purported confession, letters, and some poetry. Interested readers may also want to consult Fred Johnson, "New Light on Beauchamp's Confession?" *Border States* 9 (1993): 13-22.

really I could not help being somewhat diverted at the trick which had been played on me." Thus ended the first attempt on Sharp's life.¹⁰

Anna and Jereboam then devised a second scheme. Anna demanded an opportunity to kill Sharp herself, a "womanish whim" to which Beauchamp acquiesced; Anna practiced assiduously with a pistol. After learning that Sharp was in Bowling Green on business, she wrote him a conciliatory letter inviting a visit and an exchange of letters before she left Kentucky. Anna depreciated Beauchamp's behavior in Frankfort and assured Sharp that she had broken off all contact with him. Sharp questioned the servant who brought this missive astutely and apparently concluded that it was bait for a trap. He nevertheless responded with a message expressing his delight at the prospect of seeing her again "and concluded," wrote Jereboam, "that death alone would prevent his certain attendance at her house, on the hour appointed." Sharp then took horse for Frankfort.

The lovers waited impatiently for Sharp's arrival. Beauchamp finally rode to Bowling Green where he learned that Sharp had left for Frankfort two days before, leaving much unfinished business. Beauchamp concluded that Sharp would be forced to return to Bowling Green soon. He therefore settled down there and pursued his legal studies "with ardour," all the while anticipating Sharp's return. He remained in Bowling Green throughout 1822 and 1823 except for a brief visit to Tennessee, but Sharp did not appear. Thus ended the second attempt.¹¹

Anna and Beauchamp were married in June 1824. A third attempt was then initiated. Beauchamp wrote Sharp a series of letters requesting legal help in settling land claims and inquiring when he would be in the Green River country to give counsel. Each was signed with a different pseudonym and mailed from various post offices over

10 Beauchamp, *Confession*, 30-36.

11 Ibid., 34-36. A letter purporting to be a copy of Anna's epistle to Sharp is printed in [Author unknown], *Life of Jereboam Beauchamp*, 12-13. According to Dr. Sharp, his brother visited Bowling Green both years. Dr. Sharp also claimed that Beauchamp served as Sharp's agent in Simpson County in 1823 and 1824; see Sharp, *Vindication*, 24, 25; Dana and Thomas, eds., *Beauchamp's Trial*, 12, 90, 94, 126.

a period of months, the last in June 1825. Sharp finally answered but set no date for his appearance in Bowling Green.

Sharp's tardiness in answering Beauchamp's letters may not have been mere evasion. During the summer of 1824 the relievers continued their quarrel with the judges. They found themselves unable to remove Boyle, Owsley, and Mills or to persuade them to resign. An effort to call a constitutional convention that would improve the debtors' lot also failed.

In August 1824 the pro-relief administration of John Adair was succeeded by the equally pro-relief administration of Joseph Desha, a man with whom Sharp had served in Congress. Those favoring relief also gained a solid majority in the House although not in the Senate. Sharp accepted appointment as Desha's attorney general.¹²

The Desha administration then moved to demonstrate its fidelity to the principle of legislative supremacy. On Christmas Eve 1824, legislation abolishing the old Court of Appeals and creating a new, four-judge court was passed and signed by Governor Desha. Judges Boyle, Owsley, and Mills were to be replaced by William T. Barry, James Haggin, John Trimble, and Benjamin W. Patton. The legislation also outlined the new court's duties, authorized a new oath of office, and ordered Achilles Sneed, the clerk of the old court, to surrender his records by January 1825.

Sharp's role in devising and supporting this extraordinary exercise in legislative dominance must be inferred, although it is

12 Beauchamp, *Confession*, 37, 38, 40; Sharp, *Vindication*, 28, 41, 44, 45, 55-56; [Author unknown], *Life of Jereboam Beauchamp*, 14. The last of Beauchamp's communications was signed with the incredible pseudonym of Zebulon X. Yantis. In 1824 Beauchamp became a landowner; Kentucky land office warrant #13362 gave him 167 acres in Simpson County; see Simpson County, Kentucky, County Records, Goodnight Public Library, Franklin, Kentucky. For Joseph Desha, see Charles J. Bussey, "Joseph Desha 1768-1842" in Lowell Harrison, ed., *Kentucky's Governors*, 26-28; Stickles, *Critical Court Struggle*, 39-47, 82; H. Levin, ed., *The Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky* (Chicago, 1897), 111; [The Author of the Thirty Years' View] *Abridgement of the Debates of Congress From 1789 to 1856* (New York, 1861), 16, 480. For an overview of the 1824 election, see Billie J. Harbin, "Amos Kendall and the 1824 Relief Controversy," *Register* 64 (1966): 196-208 and Paul E. Doutrich, III, "A Pivotal Decision: The 1824 Gubernatorial Election in Kentucky," *Filson Club History Quarterly*, 56 (1982): 14-29.

plausible to assume that it was important. As a prominent relief advocate and as a pro-relief administration's chief legal officer, Sharp could be expected to play a major role in devising and sustaining the New Court, as the Desha administration's creation was called. He had, according to Amos Kendall, opposed relief legislation but defended its constitutionality. Dr. Leander Sharp asserted that his brother also opposed removal of the Old Court judges but nevertheless thought the New Court constitutional. Sharp would help confer legitimacy upon the latter by practicing before it as attorney general.

Sharp appears most distinctly as a firm supporter of Desha administration policies through his role in directing the confiscation of the legal records of the Old Court in the possession of Achilles Sneed after the latter had declined to turn them over to Francis Preston Blair, clerk of the new court. Sneed had held his position as clerk of the court for twenty-three years, and he was bitter about his treatment. In his address much of his wrath was vented against Sharp as agent for the New Court. Describing Sharp as "a man with qualities which render him useful to such a Court, but wanting all those which should belong to an officer of a constitutional government," Sneed damned the Desha administration's action as an unconscionable attack upon judicial independence and warned of threats to the freedom of Kentuckians if Sharp and his supporters had their way.¹³

Sharp's defense of relief and replevin had earned him a third formidable foe. Patrick Henry Darby, a quarrelsome and aggressive man of uncertain origin, was another lawyer and land speculator who found that Sharp's words and actions threatened his well-being.

Born in either Ireland or western Pennsylvania (he claimed the latter), Darby's early life and education are obscure. He was living in Hopkinsville by 1811 and probably practicing law. Behavior that Dr.

13 Stickles, *Critical Court Struggle*, 60-61, 78; Van Burkleo, "Old Court-New Court Controversy," in Kleber, ed., *Kentucky Encyclopedia*, 693-94; *Argus*, 6 July 1825, p. 3; Sharp, *Vindication*, 40-45; Achilles Sneed, "Address to the People of Kentucky" (Frankfort, 1825), 24, 25; William Ernest Smith, *The Francis Preston Blair Family in Politics* (2 vols.; New York, 1933), I, 22-28, 31-42. Both Blair and Kendall were in debt when they attacked the Old Court; see *ibid.*, 27; see also, *Argus*, 9 February 1825, p. 3.

Sharp believed to be both unethical and illegal forced him to leave Hopkinsville hurriedly and relocate in nearby Clarksville, Tennessee. Darby was again accused of illegal behavior: land fraud, theft of a will, and selling a free black girl into slavery. He then left Montgomery County and migrated to Nashville where he not only continued to practice law but also ventured into journalism.¹⁴

Darby soon built an extensive practice in Nashville. He was of sufficient reputation to handle Andrew Jackson's legal affairs while he was governor of the Florida Territory; their association would continue intermittently until 1827. Other prominent Tennesseans claimed his acquaintance, sometime to their chagrin. As editor of the *Constitutional Advocate*, Darby turned his considerable talent for invective into what Robert V. Remini has termed "a slashing attack on speculators and bankers." He received the warm support of Jackson in these assaults as well as his backing when he ran for the legislature. Darby, however, had overreached himself and went down to defeat.

His combativeness unabated, Darby turned his attention to the judges of the Court of Appeals and the federal court. Charging them with "inconsistency, fraud and corruption," he insulted the judges and attempted to browbeat them. In the ensuing imbroglio he was barred from both courts. Accusations of land fraud, theft, forgery, and perjury were once again leveled against him. By late 1823 or early 1824 Darby decided to return to Kentucky. He returned to Kentucky, settling in either Elizabethtown or Frankfort. Involving himself in land speculation and politics, he soon became a vehement Old Court partisan. By early 1825 Darby also entered into a legal partnership with John S. Chapman.

There are three descriptions of Darby as he appeared that year. Amos Kendall, who detested him, printed a reference to him made during a session of the Tennessee legislature. The speaker referred to Darby sarcastically as "the noble exile in Kentucky" and expressed the fervent hope that he would remain in there, for he had "rather see

14 Sharp, *Vindication*, 33-40. Readers should remember that Dr. Sharp believed Darby had collaborated in his brother's murder.

earthquakes, famine and pestilence visit the land, than for that man again to come among us."

A more judicious assessment was offered by Joseph R. Underwood, a leading Old Court spokesman from the Green River country. Writing in his journal a little more than a month after Sharp's death, he observed that though Darby had "an ugly face," he possessed "a sparkling mind" and that he "speaks and writes with point and some elegance." He has, Underwood added in notable understatement, "a propensity to indulge in sarcasm and seems to delight in the agitations of a storm."

The third assessment was by W. P. Titus, a resident of Clarksville who was educated at Transylvania. Describing Darby as a lawyer of "fine talents," Titus nevertheless noted that he became "odious as a land shark and jobber in land titles." Darby told Titus, when they chanced to meet in Lexington, that he had been "legislated out of Tennessee" through the malice of those who envied his talents. "He was," concluded Titus, "a rough, bad man, but was endowed with wonderful perseverance and capacity for mischief."¹⁵

Sharp, meanwhile, continued to serve the Desha administration as its legal counsel. This prominence was underlined when he was

15 John Spencer Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (7 vols.: Washington, D.C., 1969; originally published in 1928), 3: 194, 197-198, 409, 410; Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom, 1822-1832* (2 vols.: New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 2: 47; Sharp, *Vindication*, 37-38; Beauchamp, *Confession*, 68-69; *Argus*, 10 November 1824, p. 4; Sharp *Vindication*, 38; *Lexington Reporter*, 1 August 1825, p. 1; *Argus*, 2 February 1825, p. 2; L. F. Johnson, *The History of Franklin County* (Frankfort, 1912), 72, claims that Darby was admitted to practice law in Kentucky in 1822; *Argus*, 7 December 1825, p. 17; Journal of Joseph Rogers Underwood, November 2, 1825 to September 27, 1832, p. 7, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky; see also *Argus*, 23, 30 November 1825, p. 1; L. F. Johnson, *Tragedies and Trials*, 45-46; W. W. Clayton, *History of Davidson County, Tennessee, with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (Nashville, 1971; originally published in 1880), 109; W. P. Titus, *Picturesque Clarksville, Past and Present* (Clarksville, Tennessee, 1973, originally published in 1887), 17-18. For a portrait of Darby, see William Barrow Floyd, *Matthew Harris Jouett, Portraitist of the Ante-Bellum South* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980), 74; see, also, Orval W. Baylor, *John Pope Kentuckian: His Life and Times 1770-1845* (Cynthiana, Kentucky, 1943), 230-32.

chosen to represent the administration in greeting the Marquis de Lafayette, Washington's companion and Revolutionary War hero. Beginning his triumphal tour of the United States in January 1825, Lafayette arrived in Louisville on 11 May. As was the case in every city, town, and hamlet he visited, Lafayette was greeted with a salvo of patriotic effusions. The first was by the attorney general. Speaking for the commonwealth, Sharp welcomed Lafayette and expressed the gratitude of all Kentuckians for his assistance in gaining independence for the United States. He praised Lafayette's patriotism, his virtue, and his courage, and he thanked God for his safe arrival in the state. His message ended with the usual assurances of admiration and respect. Lafayette soon journeyed on to Shelbyville and Frankfort, where he was received with appropriate ceremonies on 14 May. A dinner for Lafayette was given in the Public Square, and numerous toasts were drunk in his honor and in honor of what he symbolized. Sharp's toast was the twenty-fourth: "The People: Liberty will always be safe in their holy keeping."¹⁶

Soon afterward Sharp left the Desha administration, probably at the urging of New Court leaders who thought his formidable talents might be of greater use to the cause in the legislature. On 29 June the *Argus* announced Sharp's candidacy for a seat in the House of Representatives from Franklin County. Significantly, the newspaper also warned its readers that they might expect attacks upon Sharp's character.

His opponent in this contest was John J. Crittenden, a firm but moderate supporter of the Old Court. Both men were nationally prominent. Crittenden had served in the War of 1812, the legislature, and the U.S. Senate. Sharp, too, had served, however briefly, in the War of 1812, the legislature, and the House of Representatives. "It was

16 Edgar Erskine Hume, *Lafayette in Kentucky* (Frankfort, 1937), 35. In his remarks Sharp resurrected some lines he had first used on the floor of Congress ten years before: "a people, with banner unfurled, resolved for freedom to die."; see [The Author of the Thirty Years View], *Abridgment of the Debates of Congress*, 430; Hume, *Lafayette*, 54; see also, *Argus*, 20 April 1825, p. 2 and 18 May 1825, pp. 2, 3. Kendall reported Sharp's toast with special emphasis on the first two words.

thought," wrote L. F. Johnson of Sharp, "that he was the only man in the county who had a chance to defeat Mr. Crittenden."

The race soon became intense and bitter. "Every method known to modern politics," Johnson noted, "seems to have been used in that day." Patrick H. Darby and John U. Waring, "the most desperate and dangerous man who ever became prominent in the politics of the State," were ardent and vocal supporters of Crittenden. It was widely reported that both men had threatened Sharp's life and that Darby had warned that if Sharp were elected, he was "as good as a dead man."¹⁷

It was inevitable that Sharp's alleged seduction of Anna Cooke Beauchamp should be brought to the attention of Franklin County voters. There is no way of determining what Sharp actually said about the affair or if he spoke of it at all. Beauchamp believed until the day of his death that the Sharps had asserted during the contest that Anna's baby was a mulatto. Dr. Sharp wrote with equal conviction (and with an equal claim to confirming evidence) that his brother had never asserted any such thing. He had, however, consistently denied paternity.

The election was held in early August. Sharp narrowly triumphed, receiving 900 votes to 831 for Crittenden. Both sides immediately charged fraud and vote-buying. There were even reports that convicts from the state penitentiary were released, dressed in civilian clothes, and marched to the polls to vote for Sharp. As Amos Kendall noted, perhaps with tongue in cheek, "the county contains about 1,400 votes, and near 1,600 persons voted! Where they came from or who brought them here, we cannot tell."¹⁸

17 *Argus*, 29 June 1825, p. 3; 6 July 1825, p. 3; 10 August 1825, p. 3; Albert D. Kirwan, *John J. Crittenden: The Struggle for the Union* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1962), 17, 20-24, 30-36; Johnson, *Franklin County*, 78. Johnson claimed that Sharp resigned as attorney general in order to make the race; see Johnson, *Tragedies and Trials*, 45, 46, 56. Beauchamp agreed; see *Confession*, 40.

18 Beauchamp, *Confession*, 39-40, 102, 103-104; Sharp, *Vindication*, 75, 80, 81, 87; *Argus*, 10 August 1825, p. 3. During his campaign he was, wrote Kendall in Sharp's obituary, "called traitor, knave, inquisitor—every epithet calculated to degrade"; see *Argus*, 30 November 1825, p. 3.

Sometime before the election, Beauchamp received a letter from an unnamed person whom he described as "a man on whose word I would and have resigned my life." The communication informed him that during his campaign for the House Sharp had disclaimed paternity once again and had asserted that Anna's stillborn child was a mulatto. The writer further claimed to have had a personal interview with Sharp in which the latter reiterated his claim and avowed "that he had a certificate from the midwife to prove that fact." The author of this destructive message has never been identified. Whoever he may have been, his letter sealed Sharp's fate.

The Beauchamps' desire to kill Sharp revived and intensified. "With the fullest and most mature deliberation" Jereboam and Anna pondered how best to murder him. They concluded that it was most advantageous to dispatch Sharp privately and to cast suspicion, if that were possible, upon his political opponents. Sharp would be assassinated the night before the legislature was to convene, thus confirming the dour prediction of Patrick H. Darby and casting suspicion on supporters of the Old Court. A coat, a hat, and a mask intended to disguise Beauchamp as a black were procured, as well as a knife poisoned at the point by Anna. This was the murder weapon of choice.

Beauchamp further attempted to divert suspicion by announcing that he and Anna were emigrating to Missouri and wished to dispose of their Kentucky property. He also let it be known that he had business to conclude in Frankfort. He took horse for the capitol on Tuesday, 1 November. Stopping in Bowling Green and in Edmonson County before proceeding, he arrived in Frankfort on Sunday, 6 November.

After some difficulty Beauchamp secured lodging at the residence of Joel Scott, innkeeper and warden of the Kentucky State Penitentiary. He had already learned ("from a source which the offer of life would scarcely wring from me.") the location of Sharp's residence at 408 Madison. About two hours later he left Scott's in disguise, carrying his accustomed clothing with him. He buried the clothes on the banks of the Kentucky River and then walked toward

Sharp's home. Sharp was not at home, but Beauchamp soon spotted him at the Mansion House, a local hotel. His attention was momentarily diverted, and when he looked again for Sharp he was gone. Beauchamp then returned again to Sharp's home, but he had not yet returned. The would-be assassin posted himself nearby. In a short time he observed Sharp entering his dwelling. Beauchamp concluded that he would wait until all lights were out before seeking an interview.¹⁹

A wait ensued during which the assassin, according to his *Confession*, reflected upon the fortunate circumstance that saved the life of Dr. Leander Sharp. Beauchamp had initially concluded that both would have to be killed, since the doctor would immediately point the finger of suspicion at him if his brother were slain. Anna had finally persuaded him otherwise.

After a short interlude Beauchamp approached the alley door of Sharp's house, drew his dagger, and knocked three times, "loud and quick!" The fatal confrontation occurred:

Col. Sharp said, "who's there?" "Covington," I replied. Quickly Col. Sharp's foot was heard upon the floor. I saw under the door he approached without a light! I drew my mask from my face, and immediately Col. Sharp opened the door. I advanced into the room and with my left hand I grasped his right wrist, as with an iron hand. The violence of the grasp made Col. Sharp spring back and trying to disengage his wrist, he said, "what Covington is this?" I replied, "John A. Covington, sir." "I don't know you," said Col. Sharp. "I knew John W. Covington." "My name" said I "is John A. Covington," and about the time I said that, Mrs. Sharp, whom I had seen appear in the partition door as I entered the outer door, disappeared. She had become alarmed, I imagine, by the little scuffle Col. Sharp made when he sprang back to get his wrist loose from my grasp. Seeing her disappear, I said to Col. Sharp in a tone as though I was deeply mortified at his not knowing me: "And did you not know me sure enough." "Not with your handkerchief about your face," said Col. Sharp. For the handkerchief with which I had confined my mask upon my forehead was still round my forehead. I then replied in a soft conciliating persuasive tone of voice, "Come to the light Col. and you will know me." I stepped with one foot back upon the first step out at the door, and still holding his wrist with my left hand, I striped

19 Beauchamp, *Confession*, 39, 40-46; Dana and Thomas, eds., *Beauchamp's Trial*, 24.

my hat and handkerchief from over my forehead and head, and looked right up in Col. Sharp's face . . . He sprang back and exclaimed in the deepest tone of astonishment, dismay, and horror and despair I ever heard, "Great God!! It's him!!!" And as he said that he fell on his knees, after failing to jerk loose his wrist from my grasp. As he fell on his knees I let go his wrist and grasped him by the throat, and dashing him against the facing of the door, I choked him against it to keep him from hallowing, and muttered in his face, "die you villain." And as I said that, I plunged the dagger to his heart. Letting him go at the moment I stabbed him, he sprang up from his knees and endeavored to throw his arms round my neck, saying "pray Mr. Beauchamp," but as he said that I struck him in the face with my left hand, and knocked him his full length into the room.

Sharp died about two in the morning of 7 November. Beauchamp delivered the fatal wound with his right hand two inches below the breastbone. It was about one inch wide and at least six inches deep. The murderer's knife was described at the trial variously as a "broad dirk," a "butcher knife," and "a French knife." The blade had been driven through Sharp's nightshirt and a flannel waistcoat. Dead within a short time, the colonel expired without uttering a word.

Deliberately exposing himself to Mrs. Sharp in his disguise as a black, Beauchamp escaped pursuit and sought out the spot where he had concealed his other clothing. He then took the mask, coat, and hat that had constituted his disguise, tied them in a bundle weighed with a rock, and threw them into the Kentucky River. After burying his knife he dressed and walked back to Sharp's residence. All was silence there; Beauchamp then returned to his room at Scott's to rest. His mind was unperturbed by what he had done: "having accomplished my long settled purpose, . . . in five minutes after I laid down, I fell fast asleep and slept soundly, till the stirring of the family waked me the next morning."²⁰

20 Beauchamp, *Confession*, 45-50; Sharp, *Vindication*, 130; see also, *Commentator* [Frankfort], 10 June 1826, p. 2. The floor plan of Sharp's house is reproduced in Sharp, *Vindication*, opposite 62. Beauchamp also described the murder of Sharp in verse; see "The Death Scene" in Beauchamp, *Confession*, 118-19. Dana and Thomas, eds., *Beauchamp's Trial*, 10, 53, 6, 20, 61, 111, 106, 120, 9; see also, 45-52, 115, 142, 144; Sharp, *Vindication*, 136; *Commentator*, 12 November 1825, p. 3.

After engaging in some small talk with Joel Scott concerning his identity and the horrible events of early Monday morning, Beauchamp set out to transact his business. He had plotted and surveyed four parcels of land for which he sought a patent, and he carried with him an additional plot and certificate. The register's office, however, had no record of Beauchamp's earlier surveys. His father, by whom he had sent them sometime before, had not filed the documents. The ostensible business that had brought Beauchamp to Frankfort vanished, leaving him even more vulnerable.

Much concerned that he would soon be arrested (for Dr. Sharp had immediately voiced suspicions concerning the identity of the killer), Beauchamp returned to Scott's and ordered his horse readied for travel. The murder, he believed, might be attributed to Sharp's political enemies; this would give him time to escape capture. Another conversation with the suspicious Scott ensued, and then Beauchamp rode out of town for Bloomfield, the home of relatives.

Concerned that a handkerchief with blood upon it had been left behind, Beauchamp almost turned back to Frankfort. The murderer concluded, however, that his best course was to return home expeditiously. Near sunset on 10 November Beauchamp arrived at Retirement. He hoisted the red "flag of victory," a signal Sharp had been killed. Anna ran to meet him, "burst into tears and lifted her voice in gratitude to Heaven." She hugged his knees and "called upon the spirits of her father, her brother's and her sister to bless me and to intercede with a just Providence, to protect me from all harm for the righteous deed I had done." The two discussed the assassination with what Beauchamp believed to be unalloyed joy.²¹

In Frankfort, however, the hours following Sharp's death were filled with grief, consternation, and confusion. Mrs. Sharp, who had come upon her husband's body almost immediately, was prostrate. Her brother, Dr. William Henry Harrison Scott, and Dr. Leander Sharp, along with neighbors, conducted a fruitless, confused search for the murderer. Footprints were found, as was a handkerchief. The

21 Beauchamp, *Confession*, 50-59; Dana and Thomas, eds., *Beauchamp's Trial*, 22, 63, 128-30.

area around Sharp's house was trampled. A second person was seen—was he an accomplice?

Despite the intense suffering of the family, plans were made for Sharp's funeral. His remains were first placed in House of Representatives Hall where his body was viewed by a great throng. After a suitable period, a funeral oration (which Joseph R. Underwood thought a miserable performance) was preached by the Reverend Jacob Creath, a local Baptist minister. The body was then interred in the old Frankfort cemetery, "on the back part of A. C. Henry's place at Thorn Hill" where it would remain until about 1850.

Once news of the crime had spread, the trustees of Frankfort and the legislature acted swiftly to apprehend the person or persons responsible. Rewards of \$1,000 and \$3,000 respectively were offered for capture. Another \$2,000 was raised from private sources.

Attestations to Sharp's excellent character were both frequent and florid. One of the most complimentary was signed by John Rowan, John Adair, Richard M. Johnson, and William T. Barry. It praised Sharp's patriotism and his statesmanship and dwelt at length upon his abilities as a lawyer. He was, his colleagues wrote, possessed of a "vigorous mind," a capacity for eloquence, and strong "investigating and argumentative powers." His "ardor for information was almost quenchless," and his powers of concentration remarkable. His private disposition was unassuming and amiable. Sharp's death, they lamented, was both a private and a public calamity. Once the political passions of the day have subsided, they predicted, he would be remembered by Kentuckians as "one of their most distinguished citizens."

Although the murderer's identity was not yet known, suspicion immediately centered on three men: John U. Waring, Patrick Henry Darby, and Jereboam O. Beauchamp.

Waring's enmity with Sharp was long-standing. He had quarreled with him in Bowling Green and had published a handbill charging him with seduction, adultery, and land fraud in what he called the "Chickasaw town project." Apparently he continued his vendetta by bringing these same accusations before a legislative committee

considering Sharp's nomination for attorney general. As an Old Court man he had opposed Sharp's candidacy for the legislature. Waring had a reputation as a killer and as a desperate man, second to none in the state.

Darby's animosity was more recent. It was based in part upon Sharp's leadership of the New Court faction and all that this implied for creditors. Like Waring he had also opposed Sharp in the courts. Mrs. Sharp wrote in March 1826 that Darby and a Dr. Bleight had been engaged in a land speculation that had brought them into legal conflict with her husband. Darby had made a number of threats against Sharp's life during his 1825 canvass, and he had laid himself open to suspicion by visiting Sharp's home the day before the murder, ostensibly out of concern for a Mr. Bass who was lying ill there. The real reason for the visit, Sharp believed, was "to spy out what he [Sharp] was preparing for the legislature."

Jereboam's hatred for Sharp was inspired by his wife. Cleverly manipulating his infatuation for her and his keen sense of honor, she had made killing Sharp a condition of marriage. Anna wanted revenge for her disgrace, and Jereboam was her chosen instrument. Subsequent to their engagement, three attempts on Sharp's life were made before 7 November. Furthermore, it was known that Beauchamp was in Frankfort at the time of Sharp's assassination, and that he had left town early on the same day. Thus Beauchamp, like Waring and Darby, appeared to have motive, means, and opportunity.

Waring was quickly cleared; he had been shot through both hips on the Saturday preceding the assassination and was incapacitated. Darby had no such alibi and remained under intense suspicion for months.²²

²² Ibid., 57, 61-62, 74-76, 107, 110-11, 114-15, 144-45, 18; Sharp, *Vindication*, 95, 96, 130, 133, 136. In order to disguise his footprints, Beauchamp had worn long socks over his shoes; see *Confession*, 73; Sharp, *Vindication*, 67; *Argus*, 16 November 1825, p. 3; Journal of Joseph Rogers Underwood, September 27, 1825 to September 27, 1832, pp. 4-6; Johnson, *History of Franklin County*, 285.

Amos Kendall's obituary of 30 November was simultaneously a biographical sketch (with moral lessons), a eulogy for a departed friend (and perhaps a protege), and a lament for the fate of the relief faction deprived of Sharp's leadership. Kendall dwelt upon the poverty of Sharp's childhood and the meager opportunities it offered him for education. The young man's intelligence and ambition, however, enabled him to rise above the humble circumstances of his birth and achieve professional status by the time he was nineteen. This remarkable achievement had been accomplished without the aid of wealth and influential friends. Sharp had lifted himself by his own bootstraps.

Sharp's success brought him respect; inevitably, it also earned him envy. Men who were his rivals were not slow to find fault. "He always felt the want of literary acquisitions," Kendall explained, "and was for a time jeered by envious rivals for his provincial pronunciation and grammatical inaccuracies." Yet Sharp had triumphed. His mastery of the law was profound. "No man," Kendall claimed, "ever pervaded with a keener eye, the obscurities of the profession he pursued, or was more entirely skilled in its practice." But Sharp was no mere pettifogger. He possessed a logical mind undisturbed by violent passions, imagination, wit, and a fine speaking voice. Further, "no man was ever more profoundly skilled in [judging] human character." This happy combination of qualities had brought him the largest legal practice in the state.

Sharp managed his private affairs with the same "industry and judicious conduct" which he brought to his legal practice. His farms and his residence were well kept and his hospitality "profuse." Sharp's marriage to Eliza Scott "brought the union of the most ardent manly love, with the purest, the soundest, the most undefiled affection that ever blessed the female bosom."

In Kendall's eyes Sharp was an exemplar of "undeviating republican" virtue. He championed those forms of equality (equality of opportunity, equality before the law) that had enabled him to rise from obscurity. He had affirmed the right of legislators to discipline the judiciary. Uniformly on the side of "popular power and states

rights," he had supported "claimant laws in their origin" and the right of the legislature to pass them despite opposition from the judges. The state, Sharp had asserted, possessed the power to tax branches of the Bank of the United States within its limits, and he defended the constitutionality of the legislature's relief laws.

Despite this array of sterling merits, however, Sharp had incurred the wrath of many and the hatred of at least one. Kendall noted that his support for the New Court and his altercation with Achilles Sneed induced many to despise him. His election to the legislature intensified their aversion. "It was his worth, his great value to the party with whom he stood connected, that made him obnoxious." And it was this same party that was in disarray at his death. Sharp had been their hope, their spokesman, their leader, and now he was no more. "A sense of destitution" pervaded the ranks of the relievers. There was no one to take Sharp's place. The cause, Kendall lamented, appeared lost.²³

The joy of the Beauchamps did not last long, however. A four-man posse was organized at Frankfort and departed for Simpson County between ten and eleven on the evening of 8 November. Three days

23 Sharp, *Vindication*, 66; *Argus*, 30 November 1825, p. 3; Dana and Thomas, eds., *Beauchamp's Trial*, 140; *Argus*, 7 December 1825, p. 2; A.D. Hamilton of Barren City, Barren County, published a notice denying any complicity in Sharp's murder. He cited numerous witnesses who would testify to his presence at his mother's bedside on the night Sharp was killed. He further warned the anonymous perpetrator of this canard that "if the scoundrel dare exhibit himself, I hold myself in readiness to pay him his just due, and that which he justly deserves." See *Argus*, 7 December 1825, p. 3. In all likelihood A.D. Hamilton was a relative of John C. Hamilton, a horse trader, convicted of the murder of Dr. Alexander Sanderson in March 1818 and hanged two months later. Sharp had been employed to assist in John C. Hamilton's prosecution; see Gorin, *Barren County*, 69, 75, 85, 106, and Cecil E. Goode, *Heart of the Barrens: Historical Sketches of Barren County, Kentucky* (Glasgow, 1986), 189. This was the first murder and the first hanging in Barren County; Johnson, *History of Franklin County*, 81; Sharp, *Vindication*, 62, 74, 20; *Argus*, 22 March 1826, p. 3; Levin, ed., *Lawyers and Lawmakers*, 113-14; see also, *Commentator*, 12 November 1825, p. 3, for a memorial resolution written by John J. Crittenden and passed by the House of Representatives; *Argus* 16 November 1825, p. 3. Waring's violent career is discussed in Johnson, *Tragedies and Trials*, 65-67. In a conversation with Captain John F. Lowe, Anna assured him that Jereboam would be as good as his word. When Lowe mildly demurred, she responded that, "He would for she knew the inside of him"; see Dana and Thomas, eds., *Beauchamp's Trial*, 149; see also *Reporter* [Lexington], 1 August 1825, p. 1; Sharp, *Vindication*, 20, 21, 47; Beauchamp, *Confession*, 103-104.

later the men arrived at Beauchamp's gate and informed Jereboam that he was suspected of killing Sharp, and they "requested" that he accompany them back to Frankfort. The murderer feigned surprise, agreed to their request, and then invited the men into his home while he prepared to accompany them. While there members of the posse examined his dirk and measured his shoe with inconclusive results. The five men then rode off to the capitol.

Beauchamp was committed to jail in Frankfort where he would remain until his execution. An examining trial, held in the House chambers, was convened the next day, but Charles S. Bibb, the commonwealth's attorney, confessed that he had not yet accumulated enough evidence to hold the prisoner. The examining trial was then postponed. Beauchamp agreed to the delay. The prisoner ("Young Jerry") sought assistance. He wrote two letters to John J. Crittenden and one to George M. Bibb shortly after his incarceration. None were answered. Meanwhile, his uncle, Senator Jereboam Beauchamp ("Old Jerry") obtained the services of John Pope and Thomas J. Lacy of Springfield to defend his nephew. Later Samuel Q. Richardson would also be employed to assist the defense. J. W. Denney, attorney general, and Daniel Mayes would assist Bibb. Judge Henry Davidge presided.

Beauchamp was indicted in March. His trial began 8 May and lasted thirteen days. Over thirty witnesses were called by the prosecution and over twenty by the defense. Beauchamp was not one of the latter; he spoke not a public word at his own trial. After hours of summation by the prosecution and the defense, the jury began its deliberations about five in the afternoon Friday, 19 May. In about one hour it returned a verdict of guilty. Beauchamp's demeanor throughout the ordeal was "firm and composed, sometimes cheerful."

Anna, meanwhile, had been busy on her husband's behalf. She appealed to John U. Waring for help and attempted to suborn Captain John F. Lowe, a neighbor, to give false testimony on Jereboam's behalf. She was unsuccessful in both endeavors.

Anna was brought to Frankfort and examined on 20 May as an accessory by two justices of the peace. Subsequent to the interview the magistrates confessed that they "felt some difficulty in the case,

but all things considered, they were disposed to discharge her." She was then freed, rejoining her husband in his subterranean cell.

Pope's attempt to have the verdict overturned failed. Beauchamp was sentenced to die by hanging on 16 June, but he succeeded in gaining a postponement, explaining that he needed "time to write something for the benefit of those nearer and dearer than life itself." His request was honored, and the day of execution was reset for 7 July between twelve noon and 3:00 p.m.

The murderer used much of his remaining time to write two confessions. The first no longer exists. References to its contents, however, were frequent in Dr. Sharp's *Vindication* and formed the basis for his intense suspicion of Darby. The second, which Dr. Sharp thought a fraud, was published after the death of the Beauchamps. It is plausible to assume that the doctor could take no comfort from the characterization of his brother in either version.

Jereboam and Anna also engaged in intrigue. Jereboam wrote that he was given reason to believe a pardon could be obtained if he would implicate Achilles Sneed and John U. Waring as accessories. He declined, but he did agree to involve Darby who had perjured himself at the trial. "All my hope," Jereboam explained, "was to join with the new court faction, against Darby; but so to turn the evidence as to make Darby guilty without me." Anna and Jereboam were also accused of trying to bribe one of the guards, Benjamin Edrington, to allow an escape and of seeking to have a letter requesting help in escaping passed to Senator Beauchamp.

The two prisoners received much sympathy. Dr. Sharp complained bitterly that "wine, cakes, fruits and every species of luxury and delicacy, were showered upon them in profusion, and these blood-stained felons ate and drank like a King and a Queen." One of Anna's poems, "Lines Addressed to Mrs. Frances R. Hawkins," reflects gratitude for the many kindnesses bestowed upon the prisoners.

On 5 July Beauchamp again petitioned for a stay of execution, this time for thirty days. Governor Desha declined. The desperate pair then decided to kill themselves. On the night of 5 July Anna and

Jereboam took laudanum. Jereboam left a note describing the scene and professed an ardent belief that both he and Anna would receive forgiveness from God, not for killing Sharp (which they believed perfectly justified) but for committing suicide. The attempt failed. The knife was their next resort. Anna may have brought the weapon with her when she came to Frankfort or the fatal instrument may have been stolen from the cutlery accompanying their meals. About half past eleven in the morning of 7 July Jereboam took the knife and drove it into his stomach. Anna then wrestled the weapon from his grasp and thrust it into her right side. She died about twelve thirty.

Anna's suffering was intense, and Jereboam, although seriously wounded, hovered over her with affectionate concern. Just before being taken from his cell, he bade her an emotional farewell, assuring her "For you I have lived; for you I die." He then told the guards he was ready to be taken to the gallows.

Witnessed by a crowd of thousands, Jereboam was carried through the streets of Frankfort in a "covered dearborn," accompanied by jailer John M'Intosh. Seeing Darby along the way, he smiled and offered his hand. Darby declined. Jereboam then exonerated him of all complicity in the murder but left him accused of perjury. The dearborn proceeded to the gallows, located at the intersection of the Glen's Creek and Versailles roads. He held a brief conversation with the assembled clergy, assuring them he had been saved on Thursday morning, 6 July. Jereboam requested that the military band present play "Bonaparte's Retreat," drank a glass of water, and then told the hangman he was ready to go. He died about 1:30 p.m. without a struggle.²⁴

24 *Argus*, 30 November 1825, p. 3; Humphrey Marshall was quoted by Dr. Sharp as labeling Solomon Kendall's "protege"; see *Vindication*, 47; on equality see J. R. Pole, *The Pursuit of Equality in American History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). Beauchamp conceded that Sharp was "a man of the greatest penetration"; see *Confession*, 25; see also, Sharp, *Vindication*, 45; Dana and Thomas, eds., *Beauchamp's Trial*, 91, 144; Beauchamp, *Confession*, 60; *Commentator*, 19 November 1825, p. 3; Baylor, *John Pope*, 220-47; for Anna's role, see J. W. Cooke, "Portrait of a Murderess: Anna Cook(e) Beauchamp," *Quarterly* 65 (1991): 209-230; Dana and Thomas, eds., *Beauchamp's Trial*, 85-87, 93-100; Beauchamp, *Confession*, 122-23, 135-146; Dana and Thomas, eds., *Beauchamp's Trial*, 151, 152; see also,

Of the principal suspects Darby was the next to go. He instigated a quarrel with Mrs. Sharp and Dr. Sharp; both of them believed that he had collaborated in murdering the colonel. He fought back through the newspapers and in the courts, where he instituted an action for libel against the Sharps. Numerous delays and a change of venue kept the suit from ever coming to trial. His proceeding against Senator Beauchamp met a similar fate. Patrick Henry Darby finally died in December 1829.

John U. Waring was the last to die. He continued his violent ways and was finally shot through the head by an unknown hand on 7 March 1845 at Versailles. He died within an hour.²⁵

Neither Anna nor Jereboam ever expressed a word of remorse at Sharp's demise. His death, they thought, would teach a salutary lesson to would-be seducers of innocent females. Sharp got exactly what he deserved. Both Anna and Jereboam acted in accordance with what they believed to be the claims of honor. This code, predating Christianity and never entirely reconciled with it, required that womenfolk be protected from the wiles of seducers; should a woman's chastity be violated, the violator must be punished. That was exactly what Beauchamp believed himself to be doing when he plunged his knife into Sharp's heart.

Commentator, 27 May 1826, p. 3. In writing to his nephew, Senator Beauchamp referred to Darby as a "damned scoundrel" and expressed strong suspicion of the lawyer. This letter was the basis for a later legal action brought by Darby against the senator; see Baylor, *John Pope*, 230; Johnson, *Tragedies and Trials*, 49. I have used a copy of Anna's letter to Waring made for me by Dr. Robert D. Bamberg, the editor of Beauchamp's *Confession*. My thanks for his kindness.

25 Dana and Thomas, eds., *Beauchamp's Trial*, 152-53; Beauchamp, *Confession*, 104-105, 96. Darby's confused testimony at Beauchamp's trial had been a clumsy attempt to avert suspicion from himself; see Dana and Thomas, eds., *Beauchamp's Trial*, 29-38; Baylor, *John Pope*, 230-33; Sharp, *Vindication*, 100, 101, 104; Beauchamp, *Confession*, 108-111, 130-134; *The Spirit of '76* [Frankfort], 14 July 1826, p. 300; Johnson in *Tragedies and Trials*, 53-55 claims they died about the same time. A dearborn is a light, four-wheeled carriage. The *Vindication* and an article by Mrs. Sharp in *Argus*, 22 March 1826, p. 3 were the bases for the legal proceedings against the Sharps; G. Glenn Clift, ed., "Kentucky Marriages and Obituaries," *Register* 39 (1941): 250. Darby conducted his defense in the pages of *Spirit of '76*; see especially the issues of 2, 20 June and 15 July 1826; Johnson, *Tragedies and Trials*, 65-67.

Sharp's offense was doubly heinous because he was thought to have asserted that Anna's stillborn child was a mulatto. Such an allegation, adding insult to injury, was the ultimate affront that could be offered a white woman, particularly a woman of Anna's education and social standing. Anna's hatred of Sharp was intense, her desire for revenge implacable. Initially she may have been inclined to accept her disgrace in silence and solitude. Conventional morality required of women who had been shamed that they submit to society's scorn with meekness and contrition.

But when Beauchamp appeared on the scene, she changed her mind if, indeed, she had ever accepted the passive role assigned her. Anna's sense of honor assumed a masculine cast, quite at odds with what was expected of her by society. She would have her revenge with the infatuated Beauchamp as her instrument. Her most ardent desire, she told her paramour, was to kill Sharp herself; she insisted that he teach her to shoot. If Sharp could not be lured within pistol range, the next best solution was to send her quite willing husband on a mission to avenge her injured honor. And this was done.

If the *Confession* and the appended poetry of Anna and Jereboam accurately reflect the thinking of this bloodthirsty pair, they were obsessed with the obligations of honor. Certainly Sharp's political and legal past and the fear of what he might do in the future made him a man with many enemies. He was a "high-risk" politician, courting popular favor in such a way as to threaten the power and prerogatives of other power-hungry men. But it was his past, his alleged affair with Anna, and his alleged accusation of miscegenation that proved his undoing. The report that he was again declaring publicly that Anna's child was not his but a black man's incited the Beauchamps to a fourth, and successful, attempt on his life. Jereboam may, indeed, have been used by Sharp's political enemies to eliminate him. It is important to remember, however, that he and his wife had never repudiated their intention of killing Sharp. It only required a second-hand report to rekindle their hatred. The imperatives of honor are often dark, bloody, and fatal.²⁶

What follows is no more than conjectural reconstruction.

At the time of his death, Sharp's career had not yet reached its apogee. He was only thirty-eight; surely greater triumphs still remained in store for this talented politician and lawyer. Service in Congress, the Kentucky legislature, the executive departments of the Adair and Desha administrations, and before the bench gave him varied experience and wide fame. His political record inspired hope and admiration; given the egalitarian direction in which American politics was trending, it is reasonable to assume that Sharp would have gained national prominence within a few years. He was, after all, firmly identified with the politically emerging "common man," the man on the make, the budding entrepreneur. Was not Sharp one of them? Of humble birth and limited education, he had raised himself by his ambition, industry, and talents to realms of power.

Along the way he had received considerable help from three people: Anna Cooke, John C. Calhoun, and Amos Kendall. Anna was first. She had been of inestimable assistance to the young, gauche lawyer just beginning his career in Bowling Green. Her superior education, her comparative sophistication, her urbanity were essential in polishing Sharp, in correcting his "provincial pronunciation and grammatical inaccuracies," in enlarging his knowledge of the world beyond Logan County. This education may have lasted several years. It ended when Sharp left Bowling Green for Washington, although it is possible that Anna wrote the doggerel that Sharp quoted on the floor of Congress to embellish his patriotic perorations. It is probable that they corresponded.

In the nation's capitol Sharp chose John C. Calhoun as his mentor. During his two terms in Congress he customarily followed Calhoun's lead in voting, although he displayed more skepticism toward the Second Bank of the United States than did Calhoun. In the end, however, he gave the institution his support. Sharp's support

26 Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Dickman D. Bruce, Jr., *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979); Jan Lewis, *The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).

for Calhoun during the 1824 presidential campaign is further evidence of Calhoun's continuing influence.

When he returned to Bowling Green, he returned to his first mentor, Anna. By this time Anna may have believed that she had a certain proprietary interest in Sharp's rising star. Had she not helped make him what he was? Sharp, however, had other ideas. Marriage to Eliza Scott broke off his relationship with Anna decisively. Given her pride, she must have been cut to the quick by the rejection implied in his choice of another. Eliza, not yet twenty, was a mere cipher compared to her, notable only for memorizing a record number of Bible verses. How insipid! Anna's seduction of Sharp (or Sharp's seduction of Anna, or their mutual coupling) was perhaps an act of revenge, an act that pointed up Sharp's weakness, her continuing power, and Eliza's frail hold upon his affections. She could not have assumed that Sharp would end the marriage to Eliza and return to her. She may have hoped, however, to make Solomon and Eliza miserable together, to destroy the inner core of their marriage. Her love for Sharp had turned to hate, a hatred that would intensify when she learned that she was pregnant and would gain a terrifying force when Sharp denied paternity. Nor did the marriage fall apart. The last blow to Anna's pride came when the stillborn baby was rumored to be a mulatto. Her humiliation was complete. Sharp had triumphed.

Sharp's third mentor was Amos Kendall. Significantly, like Anna and John C. Calhoun, Kendall was a wordsmith, a talented, ambitious journalist. Like Anna and Calhoun, he was a person of intellect. Kendall, too, could instruct Sharp in the felicities of the English language, helping him refine and articulate his ideas. Kendall served a second function—to serve as a publicist for Sharp's political aspirations and as a promoter of his principles and personality.

As a kind of nineteenth-century Colonel Edward House, Kendall looked about for a politician who would serve as a vehicle to promote his political ideas and, at the same time, remain susceptible to his influence. He found this combination in Sharp. Sharp, in his turn, must have seen how Kendall could be of real assistance to his career.

They also became friends; Kendall's obituary is that of a man genuinely grieved at the loss of a comrade.

Kendall lamented his loss and that of those who loved and respected Sharp. Anna, however, celebrated his bloody end before making a bloody end to herself, employing, as had Sharp's killer, the knife. Her husband, grievously wounded by that same blade, lived long enough to hang. Pascal's "depths of . . . pride . . . and concupiscence" had finally claimed them all.²⁷

27 Harriet Martineau, quoted in Margaret L. Coit, *John C. Calhoun: American Portrait* (Boston, 1950), 462; Sharp, *Vindication*, 13; Johnson, *Tragedies and Trials*, 75; Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, trans. H. F. Stewart (New York: Modern Library College Edition, n.d.), section 371.