

WILLIAM PORCHER MILES, PROGRESSIVE MAYOR OF  
CHARLESTON, 1855-1857

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In the fall of 1855, the conservatives of Charleston faced the rising tide of Know-Nothingism. Know-Nothing candidates had already been successful in local and state elections in parts of the South,<sup>1</sup> and in September one was reported elected Intendant of Greenville.<sup>2</sup> There were indications that this might become the case also in Charleston.<sup>3</sup>

Looking for a mayoral candidate unhampered by previous commitments who could swing doubtful votes, the Southern Rights Party selected William Porcher Miles.<sup>4</sup> Born at Walterboro and educated at the College of Charleston, he had returned in 1843, after a brief period of law study in the office of Edward McCrady, to teach mathematics at his alma mater. He was noted for his gentlemanly bearing, handsome appearance, brilliant intellect, moral courage, resolute independence, and genuine modesty. In addition, he won a reputation for unselfish heroism when he volunteered, along with other Charlestonians, in the late summer of 1855 to nurse in a yellow fever epidemic which swept away two-thirds of the white population of Norfolk.<sup>5</sup> Miles accepted the nomination reluctantly and returned from Norfolk in time to make one public address.<sup>6</sup> After an energetic campaign by his friends against the Know-Nothings, he was elected by a handsome majority.<sup>7</sup>

Miles, a young man of thirty-three familiar with the needs of the city, assumed his new duties with zest. Believing that the mayor

<sup>1</sup> Arthur C. Cole, *The Whig Party in the South* (Washington, 1913), pp. 315-320; *Charleston Courier*, Oct. 6, Nov. 12, 13, 1855.

<sup>2</sup> *Courier*, Sept. 13, 1855.

<sup>3</sup> William H. Trescot to Miles, Sept. 6, 1855, William Porcher Miles Manuscripts, University of North Carolina Library.

<sup>4</sup> W. D. Porter to Miles, Sept. 6, 1855; I. W. Hayne to *id.*, Sept. 7, 1855, Miles MSS.

<sup>5</sup> Francis B. Simkins, "William Porcher Miles," *Dictionary of American Biography*, 20 vols. (New York, 1928-1936), XII, 616-617; Miles to the Editor of the *Charleston Mercury*, Oct. 21, 1854; Charles H. Moise to Miles, Oct. 27, 1854; W. D. Porter to *id.*, Sept. 6, 1855; H. L. Pinckney, Jr. to [Richardson Miles], Sept. 12, 1855; Miles to L. L. Brickhouse, Oct. 7, 1855; William M. Lawton to Miles, Nov. 6, 1855, Miles MSS. See also *Cyclopedia of Eminent and Representative Men of the Carolinas of the Nineteenth Century*, 2 vols. (Madison, 1892), I, 659-660 and James H. Easterby, *A History of the College of Charleston* (Charleston, 1935), p. 101.

<sup>6</sup> W. D. Porter to Miles, Sept. 12, 1855; William H. Trescot to *id.*, Sept. 16, 1855; B. R. Carroll to *id.*, Nov. 6, 1855, Miles MSS; *Courier*, Nov. 6, 12, 1855.

<sup>7</sup> *Courier*, Sept. 18, 19, Oct. 9, 15, 16, 21, 26, Nov. 5-9, 1855.

"should be the eye that supervises and directs the whole municipal machinery," he devoted vigilant attention even to minor urban problems.<sup>8</sup> Apparently, he was determined "to sweep away the remains of old fogyism."<sup>9</sup> But the petty details of his office gave him a sense of frustration, and he longed for some constructive work.<sup>10</sup> He turned, therefore, to the solution of three major problems of the city: the preservation of law and order, the protection of the public health, and the restoration of the public credit.

Convinced that the city had outgrown the old night watch, designed primarily to keep the slaves in check, Miles recommended "a thorough revision and reorganization" of the police system.<sup>11</sup> Charleston, a sea-port of about forty-three thousand,<sup>12</sup> had much property to be protected and many lawless white inhabitants to be controlled. Yet there was no adequate body of officers to enforce the ordinances during the day, and the night watch was inefficient, for it was composed of men who also worked at manual labor. Moreover, there was a feeling that Charleston lagged behind rival cities in her police system.<sup>13</sup>

A committee under the capable direction of Miles proceeded to a systematic collection of data concerning the systems of other cities. J. M. Harleston, the captain of the guard, went to Savannah and New Orleans to make a study of their reputedly efficient systems. Miles corresponded with the mayors of other cities to procure information, and the committee studied the systems of New York and certain English cities. After two months the committee made a report, in which they acknowledged indebtedness for ideas to Savannah. The council accepted their recommendations.<sup>14</sup>

The major change was from the old night watch to a permanent day and night police, composed of men who devoted their entire time to their duties. The new organization consisted of a chief; two captains, six lieutenants, twenty sergeants, one hundred fifty privates, and four detective agents. The chief was responsible for the control

<sup>8</sup> Proceedings of Council, *ibid.*, Dec. 22, 29, 1855, Jan. 10, Mar. 27, 1856. The journals of the Council were destroyed during the Civil War. The *Courier* was the official city paper.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*; William H. Trescot to Miles, Dec. 25, 1855, Miles MSS.

<sup>10</sup> *Courier*, Nov. 29, 1855.

<sup>11</sup> Trescot to Miles, Mar. 30, 1856, Miles MSS.

<sup>12</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Nov. 15, 1855.

<sup>13</sup> The population of Charleston was 42,985 in 1850. (*A Statistical View of the United States . . . Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census . . .*, by J. D. B. DeBow (Washington, 1854), p. 192.)

<sup>14</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Dec. 22, 29, 1855, Jan. 17, Mar. 6, 1856. See also *ibid.*, Nov. 26, Dec. 17, 1855, and Feb. 5, 1856.

<sup>15</sup> Proceedings of Council, *ibid.*, Dec. 14, 1855, Jan. 17, Feb. 21, 1856; *Ordinances of the City of Charleston, 1854-1859 . . .*, compiled by John R. Horsey (Charleston, 1859), pp. 21-23.

and management of the whole organization, and each officer in turn for his subordinates.<sup>16</sup>

The military character of the new system, which distinguished it from the police of northern cities, reflected local attitudes and problems. The committee thought that the slave population was "peculiarly susceptible to the influence of military display." In addition, since it was difficult to secure efficient privates for the wages paid, the higher-salaried officers, most of whom were Citadel Academy graduates, were expected to furnish the "will and intelligence." Furthermore, "in our community, peculiarly apt to chafe at the restraints of police regulations," the committee reported, "the officers are those to whom we must look and upon whom we must rely for quelling disturbances and preserving good order and quiet in the streets."<sup>17</sup>

Another important reform in the police system was in the method of appointing its personnel. The mayor continued to appoint the chief, the captains, and the lieutenants, but the chief was vested with the power of appointing and discharging the sergeants and the privates. This increased the chief's authority over his men, relieved the mayor of the time-consuming job of considering applications, and struck at the roots of the spoils system. Previously the usual claims of an applicant had been, not that he was capable, but that he had "voted on the right side" or was "very poor" and had "a large family." In Miles's new system, appointments were made on the basis of merit, "without reference to personal, political or charitable consideration."<sup>18</sup>

Other changes were made to increase the efficiency of the police. All except the detective agents were required to wear distinctive uniforms and individual numbers, to prevent the abuse of their authority and to enable those desiring their services to secure them readily. To prevent unjust arrests, both officers and men were deprived of any moiety of fines collected in the mayor's court. "Nothing has tended more to bring our City Guard into disrepute," the committee reported, "than the wide-spread impression, in many cases only too justly founded, that a love of gain and not a conscientious sense of duty, is the stimulus which actuates them."<sup>19</sup> As an aid in the detection and prevention of crime, records and daguerreotypes of all "rogues and suspected persons" were kept on file.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the most striking feature of the Savannah system, a large mounted patrol, was

<sup>16</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Jan. 17, Feb. 21, 1856; *Ordinances*, p. 21; Report of the Chief of Police, Appendix B, *Mayor's Report on City Affairs, 1857* (Charleston, 1857), p. 39.

<sup>17</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Jan. 17, Mar. 27, 1856.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 17, 1856; *Ordinances*, pp. 21, 22; *Mayor's Report*, p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Jan. 17, 1856; *Ordinances*, pp. 22, 23.

<sup>20</sup> Report of Chief of Police, Appendix B, *loc. cit.*, p. 40.

adopted. This assisted in detecting and preventing crime, in keeping the foot sentinels alert, and in conveying information promptly to headquarters.<sup>21</sup>

One of the most progressive features about the new police system was the preventive principle upon which it was based. Miles's committee contended:

Every fire, every robbery, every act of wanton violence or outrage, which is prevented or made abortive by watchful guardians of the public peace and security, is a positive gain to the general good, although it may be impossible in every instance to assess the money value of the services rendered, or the pecuniary loss which would have ensued had they not been at command.<sup>22</sup>

The new system met almost immediate opposition,<sup>23</sup> and the policemen were dubbed "Paddy Miles's Bull Dogs."<sup>24</sup> This hostility came from disappointed political partisans not appointed as privates, from "habitual violators" of ordinances, who regarded their enforcement as "downright tyranny,"<sup>25</sup> and from those who disapproved the increased cost.<sup>26</sup> Miles believed, however, that the greater "quiet, good order and security of the city" justified the expenditure.<sup>27</sup>

Since Miles wished to prevent crime, he considered also the problem of juvenile delinquency, called to the public attention by the *Courier*.<sup>28</sup> Interested in young people as a former professor, he was disturbed by the city's want of suitable punishment for youthful offenders.<sup>29</sup> "Neither the Jail nor the Poor House is a fit place for them," he explained to the council. "The associations there are very often such as are likely to do them harm, rather than good."<sup>30</sup> The council accepted his recommendation for the establishment of a house of correction for their punishment.<sup>31</sup>

Miles also manifested a marked concern throughout his administration in improving the public health as a means of increasing the city's prosperity. His experiences during yellow fever epidemics in Norfolk and Charleston had convinced him of their baneful effect on trade and commerce. Since the medical profession advanced conflicting theories of the cause of the disease, Miles concluded that the

<sup>21</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Jan. 17, Feb. 21, 1856; *Ordinances*, p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Jan. 17, 1856.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, July 3, 10, 1856.

<sup>24</sup> Edward P. Cantwell, *A History of the Charleston Police Force, 1783-1908* (Charleston, 1908), p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> *Mayor's Report*, pp. 17, 18.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18; *Courier*, Feb. 5, 1856.

<sup>27</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Oct. 13, 1857.

<sup>28</sup> *Courier* editorial, Dec. 10, 1855.

<sup>29</sup> Charles H. Moise to Miles, Oct. 27, 1854; William H. Trescot to *id.*, Dec. 25, 1855, Miles MSS.

<sup>30</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Dec. 22, 1855, Jan. 10, Mar. 6, 1856.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, May 29, June 12, July 3, 1856; *Ordinances*, pp. 28, 29, 33, 34.

only practical solution was to take every precaution.<sup>32</sup> He advocated, therefore, local sanitary measures and a strict system of quarantine.

The slight elevation of Charleston complicated the problem of sanitation. Low, muddy places in the streets and lots either had been left to collect stagnant water or had been filled with offal and other waste matter. At Miles's suggestion, the council began a drive to have these places filled with sand, delivered weekly under contract in quantities of three or four hundred tons. Having prohibited the use of offal for this purpose, they provided for its removal from the city.<sup>33</sup> Miles also hired additional street sweepers and rigorously enforced existing ordinances requiring citizens to keep their lots and adjacent streets clear of filth and their cow stalls floored or paved.<sup>34</sup> When the council, under his prodding, provided that hogs, cattle, and other animals should be slaughtered only at the new abattoir in the extreme northwest portion of the city, the butchers protested so violently that those having pens washed twice daily by the tide were permitted to remain in the city, under strict supervision and regulation, until January 1, 1860.<sup>35</sup>

The effective drainage of low-lying Charleston presented more formidable difficulties. Early in his administration, Miles suggested to the council:

The subject of Drainage is one which, in our climate, ought to engage the earnest attention of every municipal government. We cannot too highly estimate the importance of a thorough system of sewers. It is time that something systematic should be done. We have expended millions on great enterprises which are to advance the prosperity of the city. But it can never be truly prosperous unless it be healthy, and this cannot be unless the drainage is thorough and efficient.<sup>36</sup>

When the council authorized him to appoint a committee of health and drainage to consider the problem, he selected James M. Eason and two physicians, William Wragg and William Hume.<sup>37</sup>

For three months the committee studied a report on the tidal system of drainage prepared for the previous administration by

<sup>32</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Dec. 29, 1855, Feb. 7, 1856, Oct. 13, 1857. See also Thomas J. Wertenbaker, *Norfolk: Historic Southern Port* (Durham, 1931), pp. 210-216.

<sup>33</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Dec. 22, 1855, Feb. 7, Mar. 5, May 14, 21, 29, July 30, Aug. 6, 22, 1857; *Ordinances*, pp. 47, 48.

<sup>34</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Dec. 22, 1855, Feb. 7, Mar. 13, 27, Apr. 5, 1856; *City Advertisements*, *ibid.*, Dec. 19, 1855, Apr. 10, 1856.

<sup>35</sup> Proceedings of Council, *ibid.*, Dec. 22, 1855, May 2, July 10, 24, Sept. 18, Oct. 2, 1856; Jan. 8, Feb. 26, Apr. 18, June 18, 1857; *Ordinances*, pp. 49-51.

<sup>36</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Dec. 22, 1855.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, Dec. 22, 1855; [Leonard] Mears and [James] Turnbull, *The Charleston Directory Containing the Names of the Inhabitants . . .* (Charleston, 1859), pp. 101, 229.

Major Charles Parker and a report on the drainage of English cities prepared in 1850 for the British parliament. They also investigated the system of drainage in use in the older part of the city. Then they recommended to the council for that part of the city north of Calhoun street a system of drainage which, in their opinion, combined the best features of the Parker and English plans and corrected the errors found in the drains of the lower wards. The distinctive feature was the proposal to construct all the drains on a dead level only twenty inches above the low water mark and to fit their outlets with valves which were to be closed at high tide to retain the salt water and opened at low tide to permit it to flow out rapidly. The tides would thus flush the drains of all filth twice daily.<sup>38</sup>

The plan of the committee was not put into immediate operation because Major Parker, of the previous administration, took issue with the modification of his plan and aroused public opposition to the change. Further delay occurred when the contractors refused to complete the drains for the estimated cost. Though some members of the council sided with Parker, a majority voted to continue the work under the supervision of the committee. Near the end of Miles's administration, the drains in Calhoun, Meeting, and Spring streets were nearing completion.<sup>39</sup>

The old drains in the lower wards had not been cleaned for a number of years. They were so clogged with filth that Miles believed them to be endangering the health of the city. At his recommendation, therefore, the council had them cleaned and repaired during the winter of 1857.<sup>40</sup>

Acting on the assumption that yellow fever was introduced by ships from infected ports, Miles recommended changes in the system of quarantine. At his instigation, the legislature of the state appointed a commission to consider the practicability of removing the quarantine ground further from the city, the lazaretto nearer to the quarantine ground, and the Marine Hospital out of the city, and of erecting suitable warehouses for the cargoes of quarantined vessels. Meanwhile, he provided for the strict enforcement of quarantine regulations established by previous administrations.<sup>41</sup>

After a mild epidemic of yellow fever in the fall of 1856, believed to have been introduced by an infected ship from the West Indies,

<sup>38</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Feb. 23, Mar. 20, 1856. See also Robert N. Gourdin to Miles, Aug. 29, 1856, Miles MSS, and *Final Report of the Committee on Health and Drainage, on . . . the Sewers Recently Built in the Upper Wards* (Charleston, 1857).

<sup>39</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Mar. 27, 31, Aug. 28, Oct. 2, 1856, Jan. 22, Feb. 5, July 30, Oct. 13, 1857.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 8, 22, Feb. 19, 1857.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 7, Nov. 27, 1856.

Miles's council adopted an even more stringent policy. All vessels which cleared from any port south of Savannah, whether yellow fever had been reported there or not, were required to remain at the quarantine grounds, between May 31 and October 1, for thirty days before coming up to the city. Their cargoes were stored at the old "London and Liverpool rice wharves" at the extreme western end of Calhoun street. In spite of vociferous and bitter opposition to this regulation by some of the leading importers and commission merchants, Miles and his supporters in council succeeded, sometimes by the slight majority of seven to five, in continuing what they thought a justifiable precautionary measure.<sup>48</sup>

To prevent the spread of contagious diseases introduced by land, the council erected a pest house in a remote part of the city and gave the mayor authority to commit to it, with the advice and assistance of the city register, persons afflicted with such diseases.<sup>49</sup>

Miles also devoted much attention to the financial condition of the city, recommending at his first council meeting "an early and thorough examination . . . into the state of the City Finances."<sup>50</sup> He was ably assisted by Robert N. Gourdin, chairman of the committee on ways and means.<sup>51</sup> When Miles was elected, the funded debt of the city, incurred by subscriptions to railroads and gas light companies and by the accumulation of obligations for current expenses, amounted to three and one-half million dollars; city bonds were selling at a discount of fifteen per cent; and the average annual expenditure of the city was \$507,000. Miles's reforms soon raised this sum to \$565,000.<sup>52</sup> The problem was further complicated by legislative enactments which exempted much city property from local taxation and retained the classification and assessment act of 1784 for state taxation. This act taxed country property on its 1784 value, while city property was taxed on its current value. As a result, the city was bearing almost a fourth of the total state tax burden.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, additional inequalities in taxation resulted from city ordinances which exempted from municipal taxation capital

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, Apr. 7, May 14, June 18, July 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, Aug. 6, 1857; *Ordinances*, p. 48.

<sup>49</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Dec. 22, 1855, Jan. 10, May 29, 1856; *Ordinances*, pp. 24, 25.

<sup>50</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Nov. 15, 1855.

<sup>51</sup> Miles to Alfred Huger, Nov. 19, 1857, Miles MSS.

<sup>52</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Dec. 29, 1855, May 2, 1856, Apr. 4, 18, Oct. 13, 1857; *The Disabilities of Charleston for Complete and Equal Taxation, and the Influence of State Taxation on Her Prosperity; Also, an Examination of the Measure of Mr. James G. Holmes, for the Liquidation of the Debt of the City . . . Being Reports of the Committee on Ways and Means . . .* (Charleston, 1857), p. 35.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-30; David Duncan Wallace, *The History of South Carolina*, 4 vols. (New York, 1934), II, 336, 481.

invested in shipping, and from the failure of many persons to make correct returns on stocks of goods, incomes, dividends, premiums, and commissions.<sup>54</sup>

The committee on ways and means, believing that the credit of the city should be restored "to its former high standing" and that the reforms begun by Miles should be continued, faced the problem of raising additional money. It proposed the removal of exemptions and an increase on property incorrectly returned. Consequently a tax was placed on capital invested in shipping and the rates were raised on stocks of goods, incomes, commissions, interest, and dividends.<sup>55</sup> Although the council received some support in its policy of equalizing the tax burden, the shippers and merchants protested so vigorously that they succeeded in securing slight modifications.<sup>56</sup> For the most part, the vociferous opposition to the city tax bills arose not so much from the increase of taxes—for the belief was general that the credit of the city should be maintained—as from the shift of the tax burden, for each interest, feeling itself more essential to the general welfare than the other, believed that it should be taxed lightly or exempted altogether.<sup>57</sup>

Pursuing its policy still further, the committee on ways and means prepared a report which pointed out and explained the impolicy of the legislative exemptions and the inequality of the system of state taxation based upon the assessment act of 1784. After distributing this report in pamphlet form throughout the state, the council prepared a memorial to the legislature to make desirable changes. They were too late, however, to do more during the Miles administration than convince the public that the high city taxes were a result of the unequal state system.<sup>58</sup>

The problem of restoring and maintaining the credit of Charleston was fraught with difficulties. The city debt, already large, seemed destined to become larger, for Miles and Gourdin both believed that Charleston, to compete successfully in the western trade, for which it had already invested heavily in railroads, would have to be healthy. To make it so, Miles's reforms would have to be continued and expanded to include paving the streets and securing an adequate water supply. In addition, the old sinking fund had proved inadequate.

<sup>54</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Dec. 29, 1855, May 29, 1856.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, Dec. 29, 1855, May 2, 1856; *Ordinances*, pp. 29-32, 44-45.

<sup>56</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, May 10, 29, June 12, Aug. 7, 1856, Jan. 17, 1857; *Ordinances*, pp. 32, 44.

<sup>57</sup> *Courier*, May 9, 1856, Apr. 17, 21, 23, June 26, 1857; *Mayor's Report*, pp. 1-11.

<sup>58</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Apr. 18, Aug. 22, Sept. 3, 1857; *Memorial in Relation to the Inequalities of the Present System of State Taxation* (Charleston, 1857); Wallace, *op. cit.*, III, 238.

The legislation of different city administrations concerning it had been so inconsistent and contradictory that there was little prospect in 1856 for its ever providing for the payment of more than half the debt. Furthermore, city stocks and bonds had been issued at irregular intervals, so that payments due ranged from nothing in some years to over a million dollars in others.<sup>53</sup>

Seeking some practicable plan for the systematic reduction and ultimate liquidation of the public debt in order to restore the confidence of the city's creditors in its securities, Miles became impressed with a scheme which James G. Holmes, a well-known city broker, had devised originally for retiring the debt of the South Carolina railroad company. Having first intersted Gourdin and his committee in the plan, he recommended it to the council. After a year, during which the committee, the council, and the public considered the plan, the council authorized Miles to appoint Holmes to put it in operation.<sup>54</sup>

The plan resembled the serial bond issue which came into general use about fifty years later. The sinking fund was abolished and the limit to the city debt was set at five million dollars. Outstanding issues of stocks and bonds were to be called in to be exchanged for new issues payable semi-annually, according to the schedule, for thirty-five years. The annual appropriation for payment on principal and interest was to be \$343,360. As each semi-annual payment reduced the principal, the amount of interest thus saved was to be added to the succeeding payment on the principal. Consequently, the proportion of the annual appropriation to be paid to the interest would constantly decrease, permitting, thereby, the proportion to be paid to the principal to increase from \$21,680 for the first payment in October, 1857, to \$166,690 for the last payment in April, 1892.<sup>55</sup> This plan met "with general favor" in the city, and within a month after his appointment Holmes announced that he had already exchanged nearly half a million dollars worth of stock.<sup>56</sup>

In the fall of 1857, Miles neared the end of his administration. During the first part, he had enjoyed great popularity;<sup>57</sup> and in October, 1856, when a candidate for Congress, he had carried the city

<sup>53</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Apr. 4, 1857.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 7, 28, 1856, Mar. 5, Apr. 4, May 21, July 23, Aug. 22, 1857; *Ordinances*, pp. 52-54; *The Disabilities of Charleston for Complete and Equal Taxation . . .*, *passim*; *Charleston Directory*, 1859, p. 97.

<sup>55</sup> Proceedings of Council, *Courier*, Aug. 28, 1856, Apr. 4, 1857.

<sup>56</sup> *Courier*, Apr. 9, Sept. 9, 1857. See also James G. Holmes, *Commissioner of the City Debt to the Stockholders of the Debt*, October 1, 1857 (Charleston, 1857).

<sup>57</sup> *Courier*, Nov. 29, Dec. 8, 24, 1855, Jan. 12, 23, 1856; Committee of the Mechanic Society to Miles, Jan. 26, 1856, Miles MSS.

to win the election by a sizeable majority.<sup>58</sup> As he moved steadily along the path of reform, however, opposition arose. With the approach of the next city election, F. D. Richardson, the defeated candidate of 1855, launched against his so-called extravagance a bitter attack, made the more formidable by the increased city taxes and the depression of 1857. Ultimately the mayoral campaign of that year resolved itself into a test of the administration. It was generally understood that the defeat of Charles Macbeth by Richardson would result in a reversal of Miles's progressive policies.<sup>59</sup>

The returns of the votes showed that his administration was by no means universally approved, for Macbeth won by only a slight majority. The upper wards, formerly known as the Neck, voted against him almost two to one, but the lower wards, the older and wealthier part of the city, supported him with a sizeable majority.<sup>60</sup>

As Miles left the mayor's office to assume his new duties in the Congress, his council adopted the following resolutions, which attest his success as a mayor:

. . . at a moment when our official relations are about to be dissolved, our hearts spontaneously turn, in the fulness of our feelings, to that distinguished and inestimable gentleman, our Mayor and Chief. He is the centre of whatever is reputable, excellent and wise in this administration, for he has been to us a leader, both by precept and example. Always at his post, persevering, patient and cheerful in labor, calm, prudent and sagacious in council, urbane, conciliatory and impartial in the chair, inflexible and fearless in the discharge of duty; and, above all, frank, sincere, and transparent as the day, and sternly just between all men, at all times, and in all circumstances, *he possesses our abiding confidence, our profound respect, and our highest regard.* William Porcher Miles has administered the government of this city in the Council Chamber, and in all its departments, with ability, fidelity, and integrity.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>58</sup> *Courier*, Sept. 2, 4, Oct. 9, 11, 13, 16, 1856. Miles's "friends and supporters in town" felt that he should not resign the mayoralty, for he was "pledged to them," (Trescott to Miles, Dec. 29, 1856, Miles MSS.). He continued to serve until the end of his term. From Manchester, England, Gourdin wrote: "The condition of our municipal affairs renders it essential that our chief shall be a man who will wield the influence of his office with a view, exclusively, to the public interests, and not to the maintenance of his own. . . . I think that you have been the man for the times and the requirements of our city, and should a politician or a placeman be your successor the reforms already commenced and those contemplated we may be compelled to abandon." (Gourdin to Miles, Nov. 7, 1856, Miles MSS.).

<sup>59</sup> *Courier*, Aug. 22, Sept. 26, Oct. 15, 23, 26, 28, 30, 31, Nov. 2-4, 1857.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 6, 1857.

<sup>61</sup> Proceedings of Council, *ibid.*, Nov. 7, 1857. Alfred Huger wrote to Miles: "I bring you my poor offering in a manner, which is at variance with courtly parlance! for my congratulations are *not* on your promotion to high-places! but on the termination and results of your *late* brilliant administration!! Your efforts have been triumphant from beginning to end!" (Nov. 9, 1857, Miles MSS.); see Harleston to Miles, Nov. 6, 1857, Miles to Harleston, Nov. 7, 1857, Miles MSS.