

James M. Tarleton (- 23 Dec 1880)

The Evening Star, December 23, 1880

The Ups and Downs of Life

A Former U.S. Consul Dying in a Police Station House Poor and Friendless

An old man, 72 years old, named James Madison Tarleton, a native of New Hampshire, but who has been about this city for several years past, having a lodging room at Mr. Burke's corner of 13th and D streets, was taken sick at a lunch house, No. 419 10th street, yesterday, and was a few hours afterwards removed to the police station house, nearly opposite, and Dr. John Walter called in to attend him. The doctor found him in a very low condition from pneumonia, and advised that he be permitted to remain there, as he was too feeble to ride to the hospital, and could not probably survive many hours. Subsequently Father Walter, of St. Patrick's church, was called in by request of someone to offer religious consolation, but the old man was unconscious. He appeared to be destitute of proper clothing, and the care necessary for an invalid of his age. A mattress was spread on a table in the prisoner's room on which he was laid, the room being kept comfortably warm, and Mrs. Tonnelt, a lady residing in that neighborhood, kindly prepared some warm tea for him, but he could not swallow. Dr. Walter remained with him for some time, but at a late hour last night there was no favorable symptom. It was ascertained that he had been in much better circumstances once. He was United States consul at Melbourne, Australia, under Presidents Pierce and Fillmore and subsequently was a successful merchant at Mobile, Alabama, but the war broke up his business, and misfortunes following, reduced him to want and sickness. He was without friends or means. Mr. Burke has furnished him with a lodging room for the past four years without charge.

This morning, Mrs. Hannah McL. Shepherd, residing at No. 2326 G street northwest, who knew Mr. Tarleton at Melbourne on hearing of his condition sent to the station house and had him removed to the residence of her family for proper care and nursing. He was very low when taken away in the ambulance, and is not expected to recover.

This morning he was still breathing with great difficulty, but was in an unconscious condition, utterly unable to take medicine or nourishment.

The Evening Star, December 24, 1880

Death of James Madison Tarleton

His Checkered Career--Dying in Poverty After Many Years of Prosperity

James Madison Tarleton, of whom mention was made in yesterday's Star as having been taken to the Central Police Station in a dying condition, and subsequently removed by direction of Mrs. Shepherd to her residence, No. 2326 G street, for proper care, died there about 7:30 o'clock last evening. He was born in New Hampshire and educated at Concord, receiving a liberal education and afterwards entered the cotton trade at Mobile, Alabama, where he accumulated a large fortune, but was unfortunate, and failed in 1842, leaving him without a dollar. In 1850 he was appointed assistant postmaster at Concord, New Hampshire, by Gen. Lowe, postmaster, where he renewed his acquaintance with the leading politicians of that state, among them General Frank Pierce, who, after his election as President of the United States, appointed Mr. Tarleton as consul to Melbourne, which position he retained until near the close of President Buchanan's administration. On his return to this country he made his home in the south, and at the breaking out of the war he removed north, being a strong union man though a democrat, and thenceforth became a decided republican. Under President Johnson he was appointed

to the collectorship of Mobile, but was removed by Gen. Grant. Since that time he has been reduced to poverty, depending to a great extent on charity for his support. Mr. F.B. Burke, keeper of a restaurant corner 13 1/2 and D streets, gave him the use of a room, where he has been lodging for three or four years, taking his meals at Mr. Burke's most of the time. Among his private papers were found many of interest, some from his wife, and two friendly and confidential letters from President Pierce, one bearing date of Boston, July 15, 1846, and the second one from Concord, February 1, 1847. Papers showing his good standing in society at Melbourne were also found, among them cards of invitations to many fashionable gatherings. A resolution, adopted by the Victorian Convention council, at Melbourne, May 7, 1859, asking Consul Tarleton to furnish the council with some information as to the land system of the United States, led to Mr. Tarleton's delivery a lecture on the subject, for which he received a vote of thanks.