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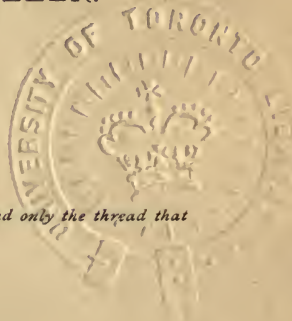
# DONN PIATT:

HIS WORK AND HIS WAYS.

BY

CHARLES GRANT MILLER.

*I have gathered a posie of other men's flowers, and only the thread that binds them is mine own.—MONTAIGNE.*



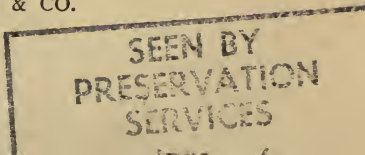
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DEDICATED

TO

MARTHA PIATT WORTHINGTON.



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## PREFACE

Below by some, Misunderstood by more,  
His birth a thunder, and all life a bon,  
He treads a great nation to the ends,  
Puzzling alike to enemy and friend;  
With heart as tender as the world in frown,  
He had the will to strike, the skill to wound,  
Longing for love the father of peace adorn,  
Fighting he found in battle and in storm;  
'Twas man to shun the weak, than seek the right,  
That found his heart to feel, his hand to smite,  
And gained the name, inglorious, of Schmarlitt.



# DONN PIATT.

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## INTRODUCTION.

### ANCESTRY.

Donn Piatt came of a family whose annals would be almost a history of the early settlement of the west. Colonel Jacob Piatt, his grandfather, after fighting his way up from the position of private to the rank of Colonel in the Revolutionary army, serving for a time on the staff of General Washington, and taking part in every important action from the storming of Quebec to the surrender at Yorktown, when peace was proclaimed, emigrated to the west and settled upon the banks of the Ohio, in Boone county, Kentucky. At that time, the only means of transportation on the western waters, were found in flat-boats and broad-horns, and, as the war-worn veteran floated down the fair Ohio with his little band, he saw on either side unbroken forests, the hunting grounds of Indians, anticipating whose attacks he had to watch, rifle in hand. Now, all this is changed. The wilderness has disappeared, and in its stead we

have the land densely populated with a great people, whose indomitable energy has changed the wilds into the busy homes of happy life. In bringing about such results the Piatt family have been conspicuous. No Indian fights were had in which they do not appear as taking a prominent part—no great political or commercial improvements effected in which they were not eminent.

The Piatts came from France, John, the first of whom there is any knowledge, being among the Huguenot fugitives of the province of Dauphine, who took refuge in Holland from the persecution which followed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. While in Holland he married Frances Wykoff, a widow of English and Dutch ancestry, whose maiden name was Van Vliet.

He soon after removed to the West Indies, and later emigrated to America, settling in New Jersey, at Six Mile Run, near the town of Brunswick. John Piatt left five sons, John, Abraham, William, Daniel and Jacob. Of these, Jacob is the ancestor from whom Donn Piatt descended.

When Colonel Jacob Piatt emigrated to Kentucky he had been married seventeen years. His wife was Hannah Cook McCullough, of Bloomsbury, N. J., a woman of great beauty, descended from the celebrated circumnavigator Cook, and distinguished

throughout her native province for her finished culture.

Jacob Piatt came down the Ohio before Cincinnati had an existence, and, going into the wilderness, cleared a farm and commenced the arduous life of a frontier settler. He pitched his tent on the river bank opposite the mouth of the Miami. The selection of the spot for his homestead exhibits the taste of the old soldier. The huge stone house, known as Federal Hall, with its white walls upon a bluff that overlooks forest, river, and a broad sweep of lowlands, and is an object of interest from its appearance to travelers on the Ohio, would of itself form the local of a story intensely attractive from the many strange events that have occurred in its vicinity. The view from the door in its extent and variety is truly magnificent. For many miles east and west the eye takes in the fair Ohio flowing dreamily along, now almost overshadowed by bluffs and again dividing fields of waving wheat or rustling corn, while to the north the spires of seven villages peeping up from dense forests in the dim distance glitter in the sun. The stone house the old warrior erected would have successfully resisted all the Indians west of the Alleghenies. The heavy walls make it look like a fortress. Above this waved the patriarch's vine and fig tree, and for many days he lived there, a stern, old

Presbyterian, in peace and prosperity. The portraits of him with the hooked nose, keen eyes, heavy, bushy, eyebrows and massive chin, give one some knowledge of the race which made the Huguenots.

Jacob Piatt had been a judge of common pleas in Essex county, New Jersey, and after his removal to Kentucky, held a like office for thirteen years. The immense tract of land on which he settled was granted him by the government in reward for his military services.

Many anecdotes are told of the stern veteran that illustrate his dauntless bravery and kindness of heart. One of these, often related by his grandson Donn, is not only interesting in its humor, but valuable as such illustration.

The old veteran of many wars had a confidential servant called Uncle Shack. This antiquated darkey, who had slept on many a battlefield in the darker period of our struggle for independence, recognized only two persons as distinguishable from the great mass, and these two were General Washington and his master. His respect for the last was only equaled by his love, and the pompous way in which he would follow the erect old officer about bordered on the ludicrous. Watching him at meal times, following him to meetings, attending to the various duties that long service had made familiar, Old Schack never forgot



himself or the respect due his master save once; once Uncle Shack did o'erstep the boundary line of obedience.

In one of the disastrous fights with the Indians, the old Colonel and Schack had to retreat with hundreds of savages yelling in their rear. Both were well mounted and made their fleet steeds fly through the forest. Shack was terribly frightened. He had often met the British without flinching, but the horrifying yells of the red men was a new feature of warfare to the poor fellow, and his eyes fairly started from their sockets, while the close curls upon his head straightened like quills upon the fretful porcupine. Yet, in spite of this fear, Shack would keep at a respectful distance behind his master. In vain, the Colonel looking round, would order him to ride faster. Shack knew his place too well. At length the Colonel drew up in their flight before what seemed an impassable swamp.

"Well, Shack," he said, turning to the alarmed servant, "what is to be done here?"

The negro twisted uneasily in his saddle, when at that moment, a dreadful wharwhoop came, borne down upon the wind, and, forgetting himself, he plunged into the swamp, shouting as he did so:

"Lor' bress you, Massa! *dis* no time to converse!"

The old Colonel was delayed so long in extricat-

ing Shack, now frantic in his fright, from the swamp, and getting him back upon his horse, that they were forced to pick their way to safer ground under a shower of bullets.

The venerable patriot died in 1834, leaving as his richest legacy to his children one of the most illustrious names in his state. A rude, gray stone near the dwelling, marks his grave and bears this simple epitaph:

### A SOLDIER OF THE REVOLUTION

AND

### A SOLDIER OF THE CROSS.

Benjamin M. Piatt, son of Jacob and father of Donn, was born in Bloomsbury, N. J., in 1779. He was the eldest of six children, the others being John H., Frances, William, Hannah C., and Abraham S. Benjamin was sixteen years of age when his father removed the family to Kentucky. The elder sons, Benjamin and John, assumed the responsibilities of manhood at an early age. They engaged in the river trade with New Orleans, a trade marked by distinctive features that the advent of steam transportation has long since obliterated. Loading that singular craft called a flat boat, with the produce of their own and neighboring farms, they drifted down the Ohio and Mississippi to New Orleans, where they sold their



boat and its contents and returned home, sometimes with a company of other traders and sometimes alone, through what was then in many parts a pathless wilderness. Before the genius of Jefferson had accomplished the Louisiana purchase, all of that vast and valuable southwestern territory was linked to the republic by bonds of trade and common interest through the enterprise of a class of men of whom Benjamin M. and John H. Piatt were excellent types. The one continued in business enterprise, becoming a leading financier of the west, while the other, devoting himself to a mastery of the law, became no less distinguished as a jurist.

John H. Piatt, the younger of the brothers, having amassed an immense fortune and gained recognition throughout the country as a giant in business enterprise, sacrificed his entire possessions and ruined his credit in supplying the American armies with provisions in the war of 1812. Bankrupted, pursued by creditors and neglected by the government he had given his all to save, he died in jail, in 1822, a prisoner for debt. As an instance of pure and unselfish patriotism it has few parallels in the history of our country. In 1875, the Supreme Court of the United States awarded the estate of Piatt the amount necessary to reimburse his enormous expenditures, but, be-

fore such judgment was rendered, Piatt had been dead nearly sixty years.

John H. Piatt was the founder of the first private bank west of the Alleghenies and builder of the first brick house in Cincinnati. In the valuable work, "Cincinnati Past and Present," the biographer, speaking of John H. Piatt, says: "He not only built up his own fortune, but those of his less successful friends and relatives, and he was to Cincinnati, then struggling in its earliest poverty, a good genius. . . . Under his inspiring influence great improvements were made, streets were planned, and the brick house, then a novelty, became common. Had John H. Piatt selfishly contented himself with these speculations at home, he would probably have lived to a good old age, and died, leaving a million or more to his heirs. The city, under his inspiration and stimulated by his enterprise, began to reward him for his efforts by the rise of real estate, and Cincinnati soon became known as an important place. How much we owe to this man can never be estimated, and to the people of this day is unknown. General Harrison, in his last speech to our citizens, before his departure to be inaugurated as president, delivered a warm eulogy on John H. Piatt, and said the city owed him a monument." He was called the "Girard of the West."

Benjamin M. Piatt married in 1799 Miss Eliza.

beth Barnett, daughter of a wealthy Virginia planter, whose ancestors, the Barnetts and Nevilles, came from England in colonial times with Lord Fairfax. The young bride had been reared in all the luxury that could be obtained at that early day, and every advantage in the cultivation of her intellect and character were freely bestowed upon her. Benjamin M. Piatt in the essential traits of honor and integrity resembled his father; was, like him, singularly simple in his habits and opposed to all show or parade. In his fondness for reading he made amends for the lack of educational advantages in his earlier youth.

Soon after his marriage young Piatt moved to Cincinnati with a determination to enter the legal profession. He studied law with Nicholas Longworth and in time became his partner. A few years later he was appointed United States attorney for the Southern District of Illinois. In 1812 he returned to Cincinnati and was made judge of the court of common pleas. In 1816 he was elected to the state legislature, and was among the first to advocate the common school system. Judge Piatt was prosperous and the increase in value of his investments in real estate brought him in time comparatively great wealth.

Judge Piatt was extremely fond of rural life, and as old age began to weigh upon him a desire to pass his remaining years in the retirement of the country,

induced him to purchase a farm of several hundred acres in Logan county, Ohio, one hundred miles north of Cincinnati. The place was in a very primitive condition. A small village called West Liberty had been laid out and partly built up, but the settlers were few and their dwellings far apart.

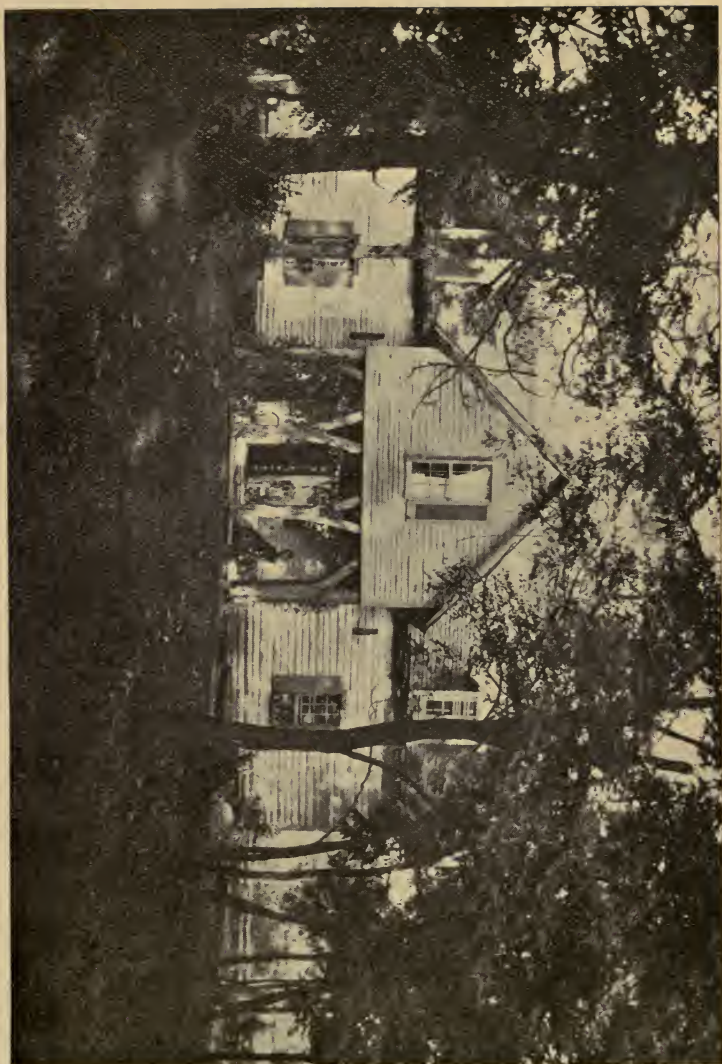
The spot chosen by Judge Piatt was a beautiful valley bounded by low hills that gave variety to the scenery and rendered the place picturesque in the extreme. A small creek runs through the valley from the springs above called the Mac-o-cheek,\* which empties into Mad River, a branch of the Little Miami. Judge Piatt named his farm Mac-o-cheek, and, having cleared away the forest from a plateau overlooking the prairie, he built a double log-cabin of hewed logs and in 1828 removed his family there.

Mrs. Piatt with untiring energy soon set all to work to render the simple house as comfortable as

\* The name comes from a tribe of Indians, a part of the Shawnee nation, that had occupied the region, and whose towns were destroyed and their chief, Moluntha, killed by the Logan expedition in 1786. The name has been variously pronounced, frequently Mac-a-cheek, sometimes Macachak or Mac-a-jack, while the careful historian, Dr. Henry Howe, in his *Historical Collections of Ohio* (latest edition, 1891) uniformly has it Mac-o-chee. The old Piatt homestead still bears the name Mac-o-cheek. General A. Sanders Piatt's residence is known as Mac-a-cheek, and Donn Piatt, dropping the final k, called his home Mac-o-chee.



MAC-O-CHEEK.







possible. She laid out the rough grounds in lawns, walks and mounds; planted hedges of the native hawthorne and arranged beds of flowers and borders of roses. She had visions of a deer park and lakes in addition to extensive grounds. She had for the entertainment of the children a fish pond with row boats and water lilies.

One instance of her many improvements of the estate admirably illustrates at once her tender devotional nature and dauntless spirit of determination. From the first she desired a place of worship at Mac-o-cheek. Judge Piatt postponed the building of it from time to time, his men being busily engaged on what he held to be more urgent work. He hastened the erection of a saw mill, which was followed by a grist mill, and had hauled and hewn logs for other buildings, when he was suddenly called to Cincinnati on legal business. He had no sooner gone than Mrs. Piatt ordered the men to suspend all other work and build her little church out of the unused logs. She remained with the workmen, urging them on, that all might be completed before her husband's return, and when the walls were up and the roof on she decorated the interior with her own hands. Judge Piatt, naturally enough, was surprised and somewhat indignant to find that such advantage had been taken of

his absence, but these emotions very soon changed to admiration of her pluck and perseverance.

This same great quality Mrs. Piatt was careful to inculcate in her children. She was equal to the responsibility of training and educating boys, and the principles instilled by this noble hearted woman were of the purest. Both Judge Piatt and his wife came of, and in turn made a part of, an ancestry embracing the highest advantages of heredity. The staunch, practical virtues of the Puritans on the one side and the chivalric temperament and cultured graces of the Virginia cavaliers on the other, were heightened and blended by the trials and impulses of the primitive civilization of the West.

It was during Judge Piatt's second residence in Cincinnati that his son Donn was born, 29th June, 1819. The brick house in which Judge Piatt lived at that time on Main street between Sixth and Seventh is still standing. Donn was the ninth in order of ten children, only four of whom, Jacob Wykoff, Hannah, Arabella and Martha survived until his birth. Abram Sanders, born three years latter, and Martha are the only ones now living.

Jacob Wykoff Piatt gained distinction as a lawyer and as the originator of the now almost universal system of paid fire departments for cities. This admirable guard against a dread element, now known to

great commercial centers the civilized world over, originated in Cincinnati not many years since, but long enough ago in the rapidly shifting population of the West to be forgotten by the many and distorted in the memory of the few. As a member of the city council Jacob Wykoff Piatt proposed in an ordinance to disband the volunteer fire companies and inaugurate a paid organization made up of men to be selected by a commission of councilmen aided by the mayor. He found but one member brave enough to second his measure and that was the able Timothy Walker, judge of the supreme court, whose work on American law was for many years a text-book in our colleges and rivaled Kent in its clear, condensed treatment of our statutes and common law. To appreciate the courage an advocacy of this measure called for, one must understand that the fierce opposition took the form of rioting, and Jacob Wykoff Piatt not only jeopardized his home and property, but took his life in his hands. The excitement that broke out among the firemen can not be put in words. On the night the measure came up for discussion the council chamber was invaded by the roughs comprising the volunteer companies with loud threats and yells, and in the uproar the proposed reform was voted down, Piatt and Walker alone favoring it. The two reformers were not to be defeated in this way. Session after session, for three

years, the ordinance was introduced and as often defeated. Piatt's bold and bitter denunciation—and no man of his day had such powers of invective and sarcasm—brought upon him the concentrated wrath of the roughs and he was saved from personal violence and probably death only by the organization of his followers into a body-guard that for weeks escorted him, day after day, from his home to his office and back again at night. His house was attacked by a howling mob that burned him in effigy before his door. But he never faltered for a moment in his purpose. Finally the invention of the Latta steam fire engine solved the problem and made his victory as easy as his previous efforts had been turbulent. He had encouraged and otherwise assisted Latta in completing his invention, and now secured the passage of a measure through the council adopting it. Being made chairman of a committee to organize a company for its working and control, he explained that to put such a delicate instrument in the hands of unskilled volunteers was to doom it to destruction. Besides, the committee received due notice that if this “new fangled concern” put in an appearance on the street it would be “smashed on sight.”

He proposed that a paid fire department should be organized under the control of Miles Greenwood, a skilled mechanic. The necessity, not to say economy,



of such course was so apparent that his proposition was accepted and the first paid fire department was duly organized.

The first fire that followed this new organization was vividly remembered for years by the citizens of Cincinnati. The general alarm brought the engines to the fire, on Sycamore street near Fourth, and among the rest came the new engine drawn by horses at a gallop and driven by Greenwood himself. He had about him the newly made firemen in splendid uniforms. He had in addition all the men of his great foundry and work shops; and hurrying to the front of this first and only engagement came Jacob Wykoff Piatt followed by two hundred and fifty bold Irishmen, armed with shillalahs. The volunteers were prompt to a redemption of their word. They attacked the new fire company. The fight was fierce, bloody and brief. A few cracked heads and damaged countenances, and the tumult ended in the volunteer companies striving to put the "sham squirt," as they called the steam engine, out of public favor through their superior management and work. In this, however, they failed, and the day after the fire nearly all the volunteer companies were eager to become paid organizations and have steam engines. Other cities followed the example, and soon over the civilized world the paid fire system prevailed, without memory of the one

brave hearted patriot who had made such improvement possible.

Jacob Wykoff Piatt was a zealous and eminent practitioner of the law for thirty years, and was renowned as an eloquent and forceful pleader, especially in criminal cases. To a keen sense of humor and a power of sarcasm that are characteristic traits of the family was added a gift of oratory that lifted him into prominence as a public speaker. He died in 1857 at the age of fifty-six.

Hannah, the elder of Donn Piatt's sisters, became at the age of twenty-five the wife of R. E. Runkle, of Logan county, Ohio, a wealthy land owner and banker. She was born in 1804 and died in 1839.

Arabella, the second sister, wedded in 1826 at eighteen her cousin, William Budd McCullough, of Asbury, N. J., a young graduate of Yale, who afterward became a successful physician. She survived her marriage but four years.

Martha, the youngest sister, was born in 1814, and through her vivacity of temperament became the pet of the household. When General La Fayette visited this country in 1824 and was escorted through the streets of Cincinnati past Judge Piatt's house, little Martha ran out to see the great man. He was attracted by her beauty, and, asking her name, lifted her in his arms and kissed her. At the age of sixteen



she married Nathaniel C. Read, at that time a law student and afterward judge of the Supreme Court of Ohio and one of the most eminent jurists the state has produced. After his death she was wooed and won by General James T. Worthington, son of Governor Thomas Worthington. She now resides, again widowed, at Adena, the Worthington homestead, near Chillicothe, Ohio.

Abram Sanders Piatt, youngest brother of Donn, was born in 1821, and the two were inseparable companions until, reaching the age of manhood, the duties of life called them apart. The mutual advantages derived from this association are incalculable. The high qualities of the younger brother have been demonstrated in distinguished services as soldier, politician, and writer, and he has the temperament that goes to make a successful leader of men. He was among the first to enlist for the war in response to President Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers, and he left the field only after being disabled by an attack of typhoid fever, from which he has never entirely recovered.

General Piatt was a born soldier, tall, erect, and well proportioned, and with great force of character. He solicited and received authority from the War Department to enlist a brigade for the war. Relying upon his own means, he selected a camp and organized the first Zouave regiment in Ohio. In his patriotic ef-

forts at his own expense, he brought on financial embarrassments from which he yet suffers, so that in body and fortune he carries scars that are decorations to one who is without fear and without reproach. He subsisted his regiment for one month and six days, and was then commissioned as colonel and ordered to Camp Dennison. The regiment was designated the 34th. He continued recruiting with permission from the state authorities, and a second regiment was subsequently organized as the 54th. This second regiment was being rapidly filled up when Colonel Piatt was ordered to report with the 34th to General Rosecrans, then commanding in West Virginia.

On his way to join Rosecrans, he met an organized band of rebels in a strongly fortified position near Chapmansville, W. Va. After making a reconnaissance, he attacked and drove the enemy in utter rout from the position, and wounded and captured the commander of the force, Colonel J. W. Davis. Colonel Piatt next attacked and defeated a rebel force at Hurricane, which was co-operating with General Floyd, then at Cotton Hill.

In March, 1862, he was obliged to return to Ohio on account of a serious attack of illness, and before his recovery he was commissioned brigadier-general.

In July of the same year he was assigned from General Sigel's command to a brigade in General Mc-

Clellan's army, and a month later took part in the battle of Manassas. Of his gallant conduct in this engagement, Whitelaw Reid says in "Ohio in the War:" "Here he halted his brigade, while the one in front marched on toward Washington. General Piatt remarked to General Sturgis that he had gone far enough in that direction in search of General Porter, and that with his permission he would march to the battle-field. He then ordered his men into the road, and guided by the sound of artillery, he arrived at the battle-ground of Bull Run at 2 P. M. The brigade went into action on the left, and acquitted itself with great courage. General Pope, in his official report, complimented General Piatt very highly for the "soldierly feeling which prompted him after being misled with the bad example of the other brigade before his eyes, to push forward with such zeal and alacrity to the field of battle."

General Piatt took a prominent part in the battle of Fredricksburg, occupying the exposed position on the right, and he had the assurance of his superior officer that his brigade had performed well the duty assigned to it. Before the battle, General Piatt had suggested to General Burnside a plan of attack through a division of the Union army, and a flank movement upon the rebel position. The suggestion was not accepted, however, until after the disastrous

engagement, and then General Burnside proposed to try this movement. But it was then too late. The army was demoralized, the officers had lost all confidence in the commanding general, no orders were executed, and Burnside was relieved of command.

Since his return from the army, General Piatt has lived the retired life of a farmer, enlivened by literary pursuits, and interrupted at intervals by active work in politics. All his life he has been a Democrat. The Greenback party, to which he gave allegiance for several years, and which he once led as a candidate for Governor of Ohio, he always regarded as the true Jeffersonian Democracy. When in 1872 the Democratic party of Ohio divided upon the question of monopoly, General Piatt was in the convention, a leader of the anti-monopolists, and was nominated by that faction as candidate for the Lieutenant-Governorship. His sturdy opposition to the encroachment of accumulated wealth upon the rights and liberties of the people has never weakened. When President Cleveland, through his great message to Congress, in 1887, placed the Democratic party firmly upon a platform of tariff reduction, General Piatt again became active in his support of that party, and has so continued.

General Piatt's clever pen has conducted almost as much to his reputation as has his sword. His contribu-

tions to the magazines, notably the "North American Review," mark him as a clear thinker, of a vigorous, incisive style. Not only as an essayist, but as a poet, he has given to literature work that will live to its permanent enrichment.



## CHAPTER I.

## BOYHOOD.

Donn Piatt was eight years old when his father moved the family to Mac-o-cheek. A Conestoga wagon, drawn by four stout horses, garnished with bells, slowly jingled along in the early autumn, pulling not only the household furniture but the family from Cincinnati to Logan county. The house Judge Piatt erected was a double log-cabin and yet remains, somewhat disfigured from its original appearance, for moldy old shingles take the place of clapboards for a roof and the logs are concealed by weather-boarding without and plaster and paper within. It is a picturesque old house to-day, with its front porch holding on posts cut from the woods with the bark upon them a quaint room above, and the dormer windows that tell of a half-story, all punctuated by brick chimneys built on the outside. For many years, before the advance of settlement called for the addition of the more pretentious weather-boarding, the logs were filled in between by chunks of wood well plastered with mortar. "At all seasons we children fell asleep," Donn Piatt has since said, "with the stars twinkling

upon us through the chinks in the clapboard roof, and many a time we wakened in winter with a thin sheet of snow upon our bed clothes that had drifted in between crevices in the logs. It was home all the same—dear, sacred home, made precious by loving tenderness and refined culture.”

The house of logs, however, was provided with all the comforts and many of the luxuries accustomed to in the previous life in Cincinnati. The first piano ever carried across the Alleghenies brought entertainment to the family and amazement to the settlers for miles around. There was a large and carefully selected library, the remnant of which, even to-day, form one of the most complete private collections of the literature of that period to be found in the state. Thus, while the surrounding forests and prairies were but sparsely settled, the pioneer home of the Piatts afforded advantages for highest moral and intellectual culture.

The boy Donn was of striking personal beauty; his head and face would have served as a sculptor's model, so perfectly were they shaped and defined. His hair, gold in the sunshine and brown in the shade, curled over a full, high forehead. He inherited from his father soft, bright brown eyes, and from both parents a strong, firm chin, while he had the aquiline nose common to his ancestry.



The boy exhibited, even at this early age, many of the marked traits of character that distinguished him in manhood. From his earliest youth it was noted that he was in an unusual degree pronounced in his likes and dislikes and had his firm friends and decided foes. Always of an extremely kind, jovial, and impulsive disposition, he was yet quick to resent a wrong or indignity to himself or his friends, and engagements with his companions at fisticuff were very frequent. It was said of him that he "always went into a fight with a smile and came out with a laugh," which evidence of amused complacency so disordered the nerves of his opponent that his victory was generally easy.

He entered with eagerness into the novel enjoyments of the new life, and the isolated existence in the wilderness became, through his ardent love of nature and adventure, a constant pleasure. He was passionately fond of the forest, and wandered aimlessly about, always with gun on shoulder, though he seldom sought to bring down any of the game that then abounded. It is related that in his first meeting with a wild turkey he forgot the gun in his hands, gazed at the huge fowl in a rapture of admiration, and ran swiftly home to give a glowing account of the grace of its movements and the beauty of its plumage.

General Simon Kenton, the noted backwoodsman and Indian fighter, frequented Mac-o-cheek at that time, and the boy found keen enjoyment in his company, being intensely interested in stories of adventure when known to be founded on fact. Kenton had twice been forced by savages to run the gauntlet and once tied to the stake to be tortured to death, almost within a stone's throw of the spot selected by Judge Piatt for his house, and naturally the romantic youth never wearied of going over the ground with the scarred old veteran and hearing him relate, again and again, his thrilling experiences.

The pioneer settlement contained a number of queer, quaint characters, that are the growth only of a primitive civilization. One of these, a stone mason, known as "Old Gettysburg," was famed throughout the countryside as a story-teller. He not only told, with solemn mien, the most improbable of yarns, but held in contempt any one who questioned his veracity. Our precocious youth was found much in his company, and soon not only learned all the best of these lies by heart, but, much to the old man's discomfiture, greatly improved on them. Another character of a type now long since extinct, existed in George Martin—half hunter, half carpenter—who put in the greater part of his time in an attempt to outlie "Old Gettysburg."

Under such influence, the susceptible boy's subtle sense of humor, inherited through generations, was hastened in its development, his appreciation of the ludicrous was quickened, and, what was of more value to him, he imbibed from these sturdy frontiersmen a spirit of independence and self-reliance that never failed him in after life. No incident could better serve to indicate the trend of his intellect and temperament in embryo, and at the same time illustrate the privations and dangers that helped strengthen his character, than the following, related by himself:

“George Martin, according to his own account, was a mighty hunter. He had scarce been set on end from his trough of a cradle before he began killing ‘injuns.’ His stories of deer stalking and bear killing made our unkempt locks stand on end. He was a great man in our youthful eyes. He so filled our young minds with the lofty ambition to be hunters, that one day the writer of this, aged ten, and his youthful brother, aged six, wended our way to Martin's cabin, and informed the mighty hunter that father had sent us to borrow his rifle, pouch, and powder-horn, as he wished to kill a hog. The unsuspecting master-mechanic of first-class chicken-coops, handed over the rifle and pouch and horn. We were scarcely out of sight of the cabin before we made for the woods and hid the precious weapon in a hollow

log. The next morning at daylight we were on the hunt. The discovery, however, was soon made that killing game called for something beside arms. We banged away at all in sight without bringing down even a chipmunk. This was simply disgusting. We caught glances of deer; we stumbled in on wild turkeys; we saw the track of a bear; at least, we took it to be such—it might have been that of a big dog—but never trophy came to our arm.

“This to us was mortifying in the extreme. We had slaughtered nothing, and while mournfully recognizing this fact, old man Burnside’s huge boar came to our vision. He was an immense animal, made up mainly of skin, bone and bristles. Saw-backed and long-snouted, he was calmly munching acorns, when we unanimously voted him a wild boar. Martin had told us of wild boars and what terrible beasts they were, so we dropped behind a fallen tree, and I brought the trusty rifle to bear in rest upon the log, under which we hid, determined to rid the wood of this enemy of man. It took some time to get a bead on the beast that came moving toward us, all unconscious of the peril impending. At last I touched the hair-trigger and the gun went off, and so did we. No two boys ever clambered up trees with more celerity. The haste was uncalled for. The philosophical old father of hogs looked up from under his huge ears



with his sagacious but not attractive eyes, when the whip-like report of the rifle rung out, and then went on with his dinner, evidently impressed with the belief that this noise had nothing to do with his pursuit. Suddenly, however, he gave a loud squeal and came toward us. My heart beat like a hammer, and seemed striving to get out at my mouth. The beast surged past us and disappeared in the brush. Old farmer Burnsides said afterward, in profound ignorance of what had been done to his paternal hog, 'that ere animal came home a squealin' an' then went cavortin' round a hull day's if he felt sorter ridicilus. Then he sorter pined down and died.'

"Of course, we never enlightened the old man as to that sporadic case of hog cholera.

"Descending from our perches, we hastily proceeded to re-load the rifle, as I suggested the wild boar might return. In our haste to secure a change of venue, we left, unawares, the ramrod in the barrel.

"It was late in the afternoon after the operation in pork that we sat under a log despondent and desperately hungry. We had left home with a half loaf of bread and a little salt, intending to feed upon what we killed. Half a loaf shared by two boys with such healthy appetites only made us the more hungry. We were about to drop the hunting business and steal ingloriously home, when a strange noise on the



other side of our log attracted our attention. Rising up and peering over, we saw a magnificent flock of wild turkeys grouped about and feeding on the crumbs of bread we had dropped. Fortunately for us, the foliage of the lately fallen tree hid our heads as I brought the gun to bear and banged away. The flock scattered, leaving two dead and one wounded, thanks to the ramrod that had evidently swung through like a chain shot.

“Dropping the rifle, we gave chase to the wounded turkey that could not fly, but made excellent time with its legs. How it fluttered along, and how we followed, is vividly remembered by me to-day. At times we were nearly upon it, and then it would make a spurt and almost leave us. At last it stuck between two sapplings, and, ere it could extricate itself, we tumbled bodily upon the bird. Decapitation with an old Barlow knife was immediate, and then dragging the dead specimen along, for we were nearly exhausted, we attempted to return to the gun and slaughtered game. After probably an hour’s work—it seemed five to us—we found ourselves lost, or, rather, the gun and turkeys lost. Then we made an effort to return home, and dropping our turkey, for it was too heavy to carry, we hurried off. Some time after, just as the last rays of the setting sun were lifted from the tree tops, we came upon something ly-

ing on the ground, and on close inspection found it our dead turkey. We were lost in the trackless forest, and in our efforts to escape had made a complete circuit.

“In the desperate effort that followed, night fell upon us. It may seem a light affair to others, but to us boys the situation was simply terrifying. Old Martin and others had filled our credulous minds with wild stories of bears, boars, ‘painters,’ and not only this, but ghost stories of headless horsemen that galloped through the woods. We sat down exhausted at the foot of a tree, and I incontinently confess that I wept copiously, which weeping was enlivened by individual howls. My younger brother wept also, but in a more quiet manner.

“In the midst of this, he said: ‘What’s the use bellerin’—let’s climb a tree like Martin did the night ten thousand wolves got after him; then bears and things can’t hurt us.’ We acted on the suggestion. I had observed an old tree that, in being uprooted by a storm, had lodged in falling upon another. We could yet in the gloaming see this refuge, and up the nearly prostrate trunk we climbed till we reached the point where the fork of the bent tree held its dead enemy, and there among the crushed limbs we found rather a comfortable nest.

“We acquired some little courage in this refuge,

but towns-folk and those unacquainted with forest, and suppose that after dark these woods are silent, had better pass, even now, a night among them. They will learn that it is at night more than in daylight the forests are alive. All sorts of unseen things come out for a little exercise in the open air. The great throng of game, it is true, have disappeared, but coons, minks, and 'possums emerge from their hiding places in search of food and have a cheerful intercourse of a gossipy and more or less belligerent nature. Great horned owls hoot at each other's chestnuts and laugh immoderately at their own. One hears at intervals the stealing tread or rather shuffling movement among the trees that ceases as mysteriously as it began. At the time of our terrified night sojourn, these sounds were multiplied and of an uglier nature. There were cries of animals piercing and fearful. But wearied nature came to our relief, and we fell fast asleep, to awaken in the broad daylight, stiff and sore from the cramped position the limbs forced upon us. Crawling down, we moved from the rising sun, and ere long found a road that was familiar to us. While tramping on, we heard horns blown at regular intervals to the right and left of us. Directly a man on horseback appeared along the road armed with a tin horn that he wound every few minutes. In this tooter we recognized George Martin.

“‘Sakes alive, you little minks, where on earth have you been?’ he cried; ‘here’s the hull country up a’ sarchin’ and blowin’ horns—and your mother nigh about dead with the scare.’

“He gave two short notes from his horn, and in a few minutes a crowd had gathered, among it my father. He tried to look severe and scold us, but the delight felt at finding us safe dissipated his wrath. Our dear mother passed from fear to pride at our adventure. George Martin lost his gun, but as my father had to purchase him another this was not so bad as the fact soon developed that I could match my master in recounting wild adventures. That day and night gave me foundation enough for stories that simply disgusted and silenced old George. What boars I killed, what bears I shot, while even Indians in war paint were put to flight. As for headless horsemen that galloped by at midnight, they not only grew in number at every narration, but were pursued by headless hounds and hoop snakes without number. I never could get my brother to indorse any of these delightful romances, but as I was much bigger and quite able to punch his head he prudently abstained from comment or contradiction.”

George Martin originated at this time a maxim that said, “All b’ys are born liars.” He did not know, of course, how that imaginative quality, prop-



erly trained and chastened down, makes the successful journalist, and how the magic touch of fancy turns into journals readable as fiction the dull commonplace of daily life.

Our youth received his first instructions from a governess at home and in due time started to the district school. His reading was confined almost entirely to poetry and the class of fiction that with the writers then prominent was not purely imagination, but a thin veil of romance weaved about historical events. Byron, Shelley, Shakespeare, and Scott were ever his favorite authors. Through Shelley especially the pencil marks are yet frequent in the old volumes, showing his power of selection at this early age of the most pointed parts of the versification. The drama was especially interesting to him all through life.

From this reading he sought relief in the debating society that with other youths he organized at the school-house. Here, having acquired from his reading a large fund of knowledge and anecdotes, he would elaborate largely upon the questions selected in a way to induce exceedingly warm debates that often resulted in physical contests.

About this time there came to West Liberty, the post town, an Atheist of considerable ability, who challenged the ministers of the village to a joint debate. The ministers declining to become involved in



such discussion, the Atheist announced that on a certain occasion he would lecture in the Methodist Church. At that day the village meeting-house was utilized for all manner of public gatherings and it was not considered extraordinary that an Atheist should voice his views in the pulpit dedicated to a dissemination of the gospel. On the evening appointed the Atheist received notice that if he was still desirous of debating he would be accommodated by a famous orator by the name of Piatt. Supposing himself challenged by Judge Piatt, whose reputation as a pleader at the bar was then at its height, the Atheist did not court the discussion, though he could not decline. He was greatly astonished when the debate was about to open to find himself confronted by a boy of thirteen, for instead of the judge it was his young hopeful who had thrown down the gauntlet and was present in all the glory of Sunday clothes and carefully combed hair, to maintain his reputation in debate. The youthful orator imposed but one condition upon his opponent; he demanded that some means be agreed on whereby one or the other should be declared victor, and suggested that the question should be decided by a vote of all present. The Atheist was willing that there should be a decision, but objected to the method proposed on the ground that nearly all present were believers, and no matter how much better his own arguments

might be the audience would vote with their convictions. He therefore proposed instead that three judges be selected to decide not upon their own judgment of the arguments advanced but, without the knowledge of the audience, upon the applause elicited, the one receiving the most applause to be declared the winner. This was agreed upon and three men were called aside and secretly given instructions.

The Atheist opened the debate and advanced his argument. The boy next mounted the pulpit, but finding that his head barely appeared above the high alter, he procured a candle-box and, climbing upon this, spread out his copious notes and bravely began his reply. In the midst of his eloquent opening sentence, however, the candle-box gave way and the orator suddenly disappeared from view. The applause that followed was tremendous. It came on round after round, and the clapping of hands, stamping of feet, laughter and yells made up a din that was fearful. The boy, confused and stammering, appealed to the judges for their decision, which was, of course, promptly given in his favor.

A few weeks later the boy went with several others to the county jail through curiosity to see a notorious criminal, Byron Cooley, who had lately been captured. Cooley had been for many years, a burglar, horse thief and finally a murderer, and young Piatt

prevailed upon him to give an account of his crimes. Piatt wrote it out soon afterward, and with the title of "The Career in Crime of Byron Cooley" sent it to Bishop Purcell. The bishop had long admired the boy's talent, but was long in being convinced that he had really written this sketch, it was so remarkably well done.

At the age of fourteen Donn received a valuable addition to his source of information in N. C. Read, who then for the first time came to Mac-o-cheek and kept up his visits until he became a part of the family by marriage. Read was then studying law. Having had a collegiate education in addition to his clear, quick perception, the vista he opened up to the boy was fascinating. The two were constantly together, and the younger with his incisive power of analysis, free fancy and wit, was met by the calm judicial mind that upon any question was seldom at fault.

A remarkable incident occurred at this time that clearly illustrates the boy's courage and firmness in sustaining his opinions. On a hunting excursion, he was accompanied by Read and his own younger brother Abram. The two friends, becoming absorbed in some question they were discussing, forgot all about game until the younger brother stopped them, calling their attention to a wild turkey in a tree just above them. Read quickly seized out of Piatt's



DONN PIATT AT FIFTEEN.

After Portrait by Frankenstein, 1834.





hands the only gun in the possession of the party, and taking hasty aim, fired, but the bird flew off unharmed. Piatt indignantly demanded to know why Read, who could not shoot better, had snatched the gun from him, who could. Read retorted that he was the better shot of the two, and a fierce dispute arose, in which Piatt ridiculed Read's marksmanship without restraint, ending with the assertion that Read, at the distance of one hundred yards, could not hit a barn. Read, thoroughly angered, replied that Piatt was afraid to stand up at that distance and be shot at. While he was reloading the rifle, Piatt quietly measured off the distance, and, taking his stand, invited Read to "blaze away." The exasperated youth deliberately took aim and fired.

"There," exclaimed Piatt, unhurt, "I told you that you couldn't shoot, and now let us hear no more of your contradiction."

Young Piatt remained in the district school until, it becoming necessary that he should have more advanced instruction, he was sent for a season to the public schools in Urbana. From here he was taken in charge by a Catholic priest, Rev. Father Collins, at Mac-o-cheek, who gave him instructions for the ensuing year. He then attended the Athenæum, now St. Xavier College, Cincinnati, for three years, when a difficulty with the faculty, that resulted in his pitch-

ing the professor of mathematics out of a window, precluded the possibility of his attending longer. He finished his studies under Alexander Kinmont, who was then celebrated in Cincinnati as a teacher.

It was a peculiarity of his in his school life that he was never seen upon the playground with the other boys. When he had leisure, he was found in the studios of artists and in company with literary characters and actors. Among his favorites was Hiram Powers, afterward an eminent sculptor, whom he visited almost daily on his way from school, sitting for hours watching him at his work. T. D. Jones, another sculptor well known at that time, and J. Q. A. Ward, now so eminent, were also among his intimate acquaintances early in life. Among the painters with whom he was intimately acquainted then were Beard, Frankenstein, Tucker, and Clevenger.

He was never what could be called a hard student. While fully mastering the chief merits of the lessons laid down, he avoided all laborious research. He was so constant in his application to his favorite class of literature that his father became extremely apprehensive lest it might have a deleterious effect, and cautioned Kinmont to confine him more closely to his studies. The old Scotchman, though a martinet of the strictest sort, had a warm affection for the self-willed boy, and reported to the father that his

promising son was possessed of a brilliant mind that was as clear in matters of fact as it was charming in matters of fiction. The skilled old pedagogue, recognizing the bent of the boy's mind, did not consider it wise to turn it from the direction in which it seemed most capable of development. His faithful training developed a talent not only of tracing any subject-matter under consideration with logic and care, but of further dressing it in sharpest criticism and sarcasm. The graduate was possessed of a well stored and evenly balanced intellect, and, what is far more rare, a brilliancy of conversational power and a facility and felicity of expression with the pen that amounted to genius. He had acquired a marvelous versatility that, in dividing the force of his genius, alone prevented his being one of the greatest characters of the century, yet made him, in the infinite diversity of his talents, a most remarkable one.

## CHAPTER II.

STUDY OF THE LAW—FIRST VENTURE AS EDITOR—VISIT  
TO WASHINGTON—PRACTICE OF LAW IN CINCINNATI.

The selection of a profession was by no means easy. As might have been expected, the youth desired to devote himself to literary work; but his father, considering such pursuit unprofitable, and recognizing the boy's exceptional adaptability to the legal profession, insisted upon his settling down to a study of Blackstone. This being regarded by the boy as especially distasteful, his father suggested that he remain upon the farm. Blackstone was finally accepted as the less obnoxious, and the study of law was begun under tutorage of the father. This course, though reluctantly agreed to, was followed out faithfully. A picturesque outbuilding was comfortably fitted up, and in this the boy, together with another young man, Thomas J. Gallagher, who had come up from Cincinnati to study law under Judge Piatt, spent the greater part of his time for nearly two years. While devoting his attention to his study industriously enough to gain praise from his exacting preceptor, he did not fail to follow out at the same time

to a considerable extent his inclination toward literary work. Young as he was, being then twenty, he wrote much that was published in leading newspapers of the state, among them being the *Catholic Telegraph*, of Cincinnati, and the *Ohio Statesman*, of Columbus, both very popular journals.

He observed, throughout the year 1840, the following self-imposed rules and regulations, written in his diary :

*“ Rules.*

1. Rise at 5 o'clock in winter, 4 in summer.
2. Drink no coffee, tea or other hot liquid.
3. Eat no meat in warm weather.
4. Never be idle one minute.”

*“ Regulations.*

1. Write to mother every Saturday.
2. Study law not less than six hours a day.
3. Practice music one hour a day.
4. Do my duty about the room and assist father.
5. Be punctual with my correspondents.
6. Write diary and go to bed at nine o'clock.”

He carefully kept a diary during the entire year, and the following selections, taken as fair samples of



all the entries, give some idea of the manner in which he occupied his time and found amusement :

“January 1. After breakfast rubbed down Robin. Spent forenoon in cleaning up. Dinner at George Martin’s. Wrote greater part of afternoon. Off to a country dance in evening. Wound up early in a fight. Home tired and sleepy. In bed at nine.

“January 3. Up at half-past 4. Studied Blackstone till breakfast. Chap. XI hard to understand. Neglected to water Robin. From nine till eleven, Blackstone, as usual. Dull and sleepy. Two till six, waded through chapters XI, XII, Blackstone. Supper, mush and milk. Wrote to Judge Read. In bed at nine.

“January 13. Rode Robin over to West Liberty. Talked politics with Glover and White till eleven. Home to dinner. Sat down to an article for the *Statesman*. Read Plutarch’s “Life of Pyrrhus.” Read it when twelve years old. Disappointed in second reading. Wrote till nine.

“January 21. Dipped into Moore’s “Life of Byron” to see what Byron says of Shelley. He don’t appreciate him, but his poetry will live longer than Byron’s. Blues all day.

“February 6. Tried to read Byron. Eyes hurt me. Spent morning in shooting rifle and pistols. Stood in the door, and after dinner my breast is worse.

Sent David to town for medicine. Pitch, plaster, and pills, and so to bed.

“‘To sleep, per chance to dream, aye there’s the rub.’

“February 22. Went to Urbana. Saw Young, and he asked me to go with him to Westville to a Democratic meeting. Said I would. Rained all day. After dinner made a speech. Was terribly applauded. Back to Urbana to Mrs. Ryan’s.

“March 2. Studied like a Dutchman till eleven o’clock, when Dr. Hurley came over. *Knickerbocker* up. Exercise. Jumped thirteen feet on level ground. Shot at mark.

“April 3 and 4. Off to an infair. Talked away the afternoon with a very pretty country girl: intelligent and modest. Drank brandy until half tipsy. Made love for three hours. Sang Barbara Allen and Bonny Doon, and wound up by offering my ‘heart, hand, and fortune,’ to the young lady. She laughed so merrily that I laughed too. Did not go to bed that night. Next day at a political meeting on King’s Creek. From that to Urbana.

“May 17. Recited Blackstone. Over to West Liberty. Dr. Fuller examined my eyes: said I must quit reading, or I should go blind. Will follow his advice. Father says I must not. Shut up Blackstone and spent the afternoon in sauntering about.

“June 25. Wrote editorials for *Democratic Club* all morning. Eyes very bad. Wrote during afternoon. Took a walk. Can take no pleasure in landscape now on account of my eyes.

“June 29. My birthday. Just 21 to-day. A good Democrat, infidel, and altogether, a rather intelligent, *modest* young fellow. Likely to become blind. Spent the day in walking and meditating.

“July 20. Up to Bellefontaine giving in evidence. Clark, editor of the *Gazette*, interrupted me. After the trial I attacked him. He ran off. Followed to his office and cowhided him. Fined \$10. Citizens made the money up, and paid it.

“August 11. Off to Urbana to big Democratic meeting. Thousands flocking in from all quarters. Introduced to Johnson, Shannon, and Allen. The last I like the best of all. Judge Read arrived. Speeches till five. Johnson, Shannon, and Allen home with me to father's.

“August 12. Drove Shannon, Johnson, and Allen to Bellefontaine. Immense gathering of the people. Lightning killed two horses very near me. Judge Read spoke with the rest.

“August 15. Off to Bellefontaine to Congressional district nominations and other humbuggery. Home. Making preparations to go to Mt. Vernon to-morrow.

“August 19. Delegates crowding into Mt. Vernon. Rain. Johnson, Shannon, and Allen out to the stand at ten o'clock. 30,000 people on the grounds. Speaking all day. Splendid speech from Brough in evening.

“August 29. Off to Cherokee. Meeting of the Democracy. Our candidate for the legislature made a long bore of a speech; three hours. Followed him. Gallagher after me. Back home at nine o'clock.

“September 2. Reading and writing greater part of the morning. Finished reading Carlisle's “Chartism;” an immense book; not satisfying to my curiosity though. End great as beginning.

“September 5. Over to West Liberty to get horse shod. Getting ready to go to Athens tomorrow to great rally.”

In addition to his study of the law and work of a literary character, he took up the study of the political questions then being widely discussed, and, as these excerpts from his diary indicate, took a very active part in the campaign of Polk against Harrison. His father was a staunch Whig, but, through constant association with such men as Judge Read and General Lytle, the boy became devoted to the cause of Democracy. His vigorous work in the campaign of 1840 is exceptionably remarkable by reason of his extreme youth. He not only went about the state mak-

ing speeches, but during the heat of the campaign founded and edited a paper called the *Democratic Club*, that was all its name implied, being an incessant assault upon the Whigs so bitter that bodily chastisement was again and again threatened.

Fortunately, General John H. Young, of Urbana, has written some reminiscences relating to Donn Piatt's work in that campaign that are interesting and valuable. He says:

“I had known Donn Piatt prior to 1840—a memorable year distinguished for log-cabins, hard cider, and humbug—but it was not until that year that our acquaintance became intimate. He was scarcely of age; and he and Thomas J. Gallagher and myself, all quite young, entered into the political contest on the side of Jeffersonian Democracy with a will. To aid in our efforts, Piatt published a small paper called the *Democratic Club*, and in connection with that enterprise we took the stump, and Piatt and Gallagher distinguished themselves, Piatt by his wit and vigorous utterances, and Gallagher by his eloquence, while the *Club*, by its bright and cutting editorials and snatches of original poetry, helped the cause amazingly.

“Amongst the stump incidents, as I now recollect them, were the following:

“A large political meeting was held in Black's school-house grove, in Salem township, Champaign



county. Hon. Ben Stanton, Judge Newell, Judge Shelby, Donn Piatt, and Thos. J. Gallagher, from Logan county, and Judge Taylor, Dan. S. Bell, and John H. Young, of Champaign county, were there as orators representing the two great political parties. Donn Piatt reported the meeting in the next issue of the *Ohio Statesman*, a paper published by Colonel Sam Medary, at Columbus, Ohio, and, amongst other observations of the reporter, was the following:

“‘Next appeared Dan S. Bell, who discussed the doctrines of the Whig party in a somewhat heavy style. And after him came John H. Young, and the way he used up small potatoes was n’t slow.’

“Bell became furious, and threatened Donn as the reporter, and determined to sue Colonel Medary for libel, and nothing saved the future governor of Kansas, and the future diplomat, judge, and soldier, but that Bell suffered himself to be soothed.

“There was a Whig named David Hayes whose custom it was at all political meetings to turn his coat and make a demonstration of leaving the foul party, and that was done by taking off his coat and turning it inside out. This performance became very tiresome in its repetition. We were holding a meeting one evening at West Liberty. Judge Rogers, of Clark county, and old Hayes, represented the Whig party, and Piatt, Gallagher, and myself the Democratic

party. Hayes's turn came, and he began to pull off his coat, when Donn yelled: 'Oh! h—ll, don't go through that monkey business again—we've all seen it.' Hayes was nonplused, got mad, his Whig friends became furious, and the crowd laughed so at old Hayes's expense that he had to sit down."

The *Democratic Club*, printed at West Liberty, made its appearance 21st of May, 1840. This was Piatt's humble entrance into the profession of journalism that in time not only gave him the greater share of his fame, but received, in return, material benefit from the reforms he introduced into it.

In his zeal for his party, he induced a number of Democrats to contribute money to start the paper. The county was a Whig stronghold, and at that time had no Democratic organ in its limits; moreover, threats were freely made that if one were started its editor would be mobbed and his press destroyed. Sufficient capital was secured, in spite of this, and an agreement effected between Piatt and Robert B. Warden, a Cincinnati youth who had been a classmate and was then publishing a small paper in Cincinnati, whereby the latter was to furnish the type and press, and do the printing, while the former should supply all matter for publication and have entire control of the management. Warden was a young man of indomitable energy and much ability, as is shown in

the fact that he afterward rose to the position of judge of the common pleas in Cincinnati, and stood high among the jurists in the state.

The two began the undertaking with the determination that whether it brought them fortune or not it should at least attract to them public attention. Young Piatt's reputation in his own county as a writer even at that early age may be judged from the fact that the mere announcement that he proposed to start a paper caused the Whigs to place the *Logan Gazette*, their organ at Bellefontaine, in the hands of William Penn Clark, one of the ablest editors attainable, who promptly began an attack upon the new paper and its editor. Piatt's counter assault was in a style so original, epigrammatic and forceful that Clark hastily laid down his pen in despair and took up the horsewhip. In this mode of warfare he was as promptly met and as signally defeated as in the first. Piatt's unique style, characterized by keenest sarcasm and made fascinating by flashes of delicious humor, which he has since made familiar, was then so novel that the effect upon the public mind, already fired with excitement, was startling. The little paper created a profound sensation in its first issue and its weekly appearance in Urbana, Bellefontaine and other neighboring towns was the occasion of fierce discussion and very often of bloody fights. It was not necessary for the young

proprietors to use the mails to any great extent in distributing their editions, as the subscribers in the remote parts of the county sent in carriers of their own accord, and on the days of publication the little office was crowded with men waiting to get their papers fresh from the press. It was the budding of the genius that, in full bloom, thirty years later, brought "all Washington out of bed early on Sunday mornings to see what Donn Piatt was up to in the *Capital*."

Unfortunately, no copies of the *Club* are now in existence. Not a few, however, of the brilliant epigrams that characterized it still remain in the memory of men who knew it in its day. One of these, and the most peculiarly characteristic, was directed against Joshua Saxton, for many years editor of a Whig paper in Urbana:

Once on a time it came to pass  
 The de'il got mud to make an ass,  
     A thing there is no tax on;  
 But suddenly he changed his plan,  
 He turned the ass into a man  
     And called it Joshua Saxton.

It is impossible to conceive at this day of the roughness and brutality that characterized that fierce campaign in Logan county. The Whigs were in overwhelming majority in every township, and no Democratic speaker was permitted to address an audience



without being exposed to indignity and danger in the form of hisses, howls, rotten eggs and stones. Many of the meetings were entirely broken up and not a few of the orators badly injured. As a matter of course, the wrath concentrated upon the one Democratic editor in the county was terrific, and this was still further intensified by his exasperating fearlessness and his scathing taunts and ridicule. The office was several times attacked and once invaded in the absence of the proprietors and the cases of type thrown out at the window. The annoyances became so trying that it was found necessary to remove the establishment from West Liberty to Mac-o-cheek, where it might be under the protection at night of the family dogs. Piatt has thus told of these sore trials and their final remedy :

“ The Democratic party in Logan county had been reduced to the melancholy number of twelve. They were called sometimes the twelve apostles, at others, gentlemen of the jury. We gladdened their patriotic hearts with the appearance of the *Democratic Club*, a sheet that soon came to be known as the *Dirty Democrat*, for our ideas of editing were those that yet prevail in such journals as the *New York Herald*, *New York Sun* and *Cincinnati Commercial*. We were wont to find a man's sore spot, and calling him by name apply hot irons to it while executing a war-dance of the



most terrific sort. My experience of that day gave me a distaste for personalities that has clung to my journalistic life in the most marked and decided manner. My readers, if I have any, must have remarked this my distinguishing trait.

“Of course this sort of journalism, in so exciting a time, created some commotion. The illustrious publisher and editor were made familiar with eggs that could not, under any circumstances, be called fresh. The number of old boots that flew around after dark, with the quantity of Thomas-cats that were sent into the editorial sanctum with the compliments of their heirs and assigns, made up statistical facts far more startling than pleasant. We did not mind these somewhat unpleasant attentions much, for we were battling for the constitution and our rights, and that is always disagreeable and sometimes dirty business; but the renegade Democrats who had been seduced into the support of a party that seemed to have more drink than principles, were in the habit of winding up a mass-meeting by adjourning to our office and creating a confusion of ideas by punching the heads of the proprietors. And what was worse, they would knock our form—for we never had but one—into pi. Then they made several frantic efforts to throw Franklin’s sacred relic out at the window. In this they failed, of course, for it weighed a ton. But we were em-

barrassed considerably. We not only wrote our editorials, communications, poetry, and advertisements, but we set them up, worked them off, and I really believe my physical life was blighted by the labor I gave that infernal old—I beg pardon—that holy relic.

“This sort of thing continued until one day Jim Moore, one of the twelve apostles, walked into our office. Jim measured six feet from the crown of his bulbous termination called a head to the sole of his pedal extremity. He was broad-shouldered and a Guy Livingstone, and, as Ouida would say, slender in the flank, or as the natives expressed it, slab-sided. To his long arms nature had attached hands that resembled in size and color two hams. Jim was not a fighting character. On the contrary, through a wise provision of nature, he was amiable to a fault. When he kicked, and he kicked with the force of a horse, he would grin and say, ‘Oh, git!’ and the objective object would ‘git’ with more rapidity than grace, and it was observed, for weeks after, the subject of this playful attention would sit down with great care. He seldom struck any one with his fist, but giving a little back-handed hit would send his friend away without his hat, under the delusion that he had no head to put it on.

“Jim was not religious. He became concerned

about the condition of his soul once during a revival. It struck him at one time that if his immortal part was of the same size as his perishable body, it would have more than its share of the brimstone promised in the exhorter's 'Tidings o' damnation,' preached with so much fervor by the good pastors during the saving time. Unfortunately, our hero was at the meeting-house one night, and, unable to get a seat, stood near the door among the sinners. The preacher was strange to the congregation, and suddenly paused in his sermon, and looking over the crowd at Moore, cried out:

"'You ill-mannered sinner, git off that seat!"

"Jim stared at the man of God, not understanding, as he said subsequently, the 'b'aring of his discourse.'

"'You vile sinner, git off that bench and come to the anxious seat—come to the Lord!"

"To his utter astonishment, Jim did come. Striding to the front, he let loose his opinion to the extent of language that, not being molded into prayer and exhortation, was really profane. He left the church, never to return as a convert.

"One day, as I have stated, he stalked into our office.

"'I say, boys,' he exclaimed, 'this don't suit my democracy. You don't edit this organ worth a conti-

mental damn. Jist take me in as one of you, and see if I don't make 'em squat.'

"This proposition met with a hearty approval. Our publisher had two black eyes, the sinful editor a broken nose. The assistant had all these, besides being lame of a fractured shin. We took Jim in and run up his name at once as the responsible editor.

"Not long after, the natural orator known to that 'neck of the woods' as the Eloquent Blacksmith visited our town and addressed the Tip and Ty clubs. His voice was of such volume that he could be heard in the adjacent county distinctly if the wind set in that direction. Our notice of this little effort in the next issue was to the effect that we had been startled by a fearful sound Saturday night, and on repairing to the place from whence it issued, found a stray long-ears braying in the most offensive manner. We begged the owner of the imported jackass to claim, pay charges, and fence him up immediately.

"Our valuable family journal had scarcely been issued before the eloquent mechanic bounced into our office. He held in his hand a number. His persuasive countenance was corrugated like a galvanized iron roof, and his voice came out like thunder smothered in a hogshead.

"'Where's the editur uv this dirty paper?' he roared.

“Jim was seated at a table turning over the exchanges. As he could not read, the turning meant upside down. He eyed the enraged visitor with cool dignity.

“‘Do you want the ’sponsible ed’tur?’ he asked.

“‘I want the editur!’ reiterated indignation.

“‘And I want to know if you want to consult the ’sponsible ed’tur.’

“‘Damn it, Jim Moore, you can’t fool me; I want the feller that writ that.’

“‘See here, sir; I’ve asked you twice ef you wanted the ’sponsible ed’tur. Now that’s a civil question, and I’m goin’ to have a civil answer, and I don’t allow no profane swearin’ in this office.’

“‘Oh, you go to h—ll! I’m bound to see the feller that writ that I was a jackass in this paper.’

“Jim began getting up. It seemed as if he would never be done getting up. As he went through this process, he exclaimed:

“‘Ef you say I’m not the ’sponsible ed’tur, you’re a liar.’

“And then, as if fearing the visitor might not join issue with him on this proposition, he added:

“‘You’re a damned liar any how.’

“In two seconds a natural orator was stranded on the curbstone. Quite a crowd collected on the sidewalk, saw the man of sound come flying from



the office, and, like a streak of lightning, Jim's huge foot return to our sanctum. The publisher and editor also witnessed the scene from an interior apartment, and smiled an audible smile at the result. It is scarcely necessary to say that we never were molested again. We were called a 'scurrilous' sheet, but that was all, and that did not hurt much."

The publication was continued until the day of the state election, and, at the close of his labors, Donn Piatt was more widely known throughout Ohio than many other able editors who had served a lifetime. The incisive force with which he expressed his clean cut and often eccentric views had attracted the attention and won for him the warm friendship of the ablest leaders of his party.

After publication was suspended, Warden returned to Cincinnati and Piatt turned his whole attention to the law. The following letter, written on Warden's arrival at home, is of interest, so far as it serves to show the state of public feeling :

"CINCINNATI, Oct. 17, 1840.

"DEAR DONN :—After the fashion of Gregory Red Tail in the farce, I might commence this letter with 'I arriv-ed 'ere last nite in good 'ealth and spirits,' but this morning I would have to sing to a different air. My spirits are rather blue because I find every body

a great politician—and, oh! greater shame, a Whig! Flag staffs are upon every house, and every shop window is full of Whig decorations. . . . I shall be proscribed among my acquaintances, I find, but if I have wavered I feel more a Democrat now than ever, and feel still more strongly that the tendency of Whigery is to aristocratic institutions. . . .

“I write to put you on your guard about passing through Urbana. If you have any one with you, you need have no apprehension of even an attack; but alone you had best not venture. I caution you thus because I don’t think a brutal maltreating of your person is a thing to be sought.

“I intend to commence the study of law somewhere this winter. I find there is offered nothing better.

Your friend,

“ROBERT B. WARDEN.”

The young editor’s keen disappointment in the result of the election is expressed in an entry in his diary:

“October 16. Cleaning up the room and making new arrangements all morning. Over to West Liberty. Mail up. Political news worse and worse. Old Hamilton county gone against us. D—n the luck. State gone to the devil.”

In the winter of 1841, Donn Piatt went to Wash-

ington to cultivate a closer acquaintance with the statesmen then in control of the government, among whom he already had many friends. This was his first visit to the national capital, and the impressions he then received, preserved in his diary, of the city in which he afterward, as correspondent and editor, won a world wide reputation are of greatest interest. These extracts from his private diary, carelessly jotted down at the age of twenty-two years, show that his manner of criticism of public men and measures, that later in life placed him at the head of his profession, was perfectly natural to him, and could no more be restrained than he could cease to observe and think. These scraps from his journal show, moreover, a power of penetration, analysis, and logic with a felicity of expression almost phenomenal in one of his years.

“I arrived in Washington to-day, December 29, 1841, at noon. I was taken to Brown’s, took a room, arranged my baggage, had dinner, and then walked to the capitol. I am very much disappointed with Greenough’s Washington, a heavy, Hercules-looking character seated in an arm chair naked; no dignity or truthfulness whatever. The house of representatives is a beautiful room, but difficult to hear and understand there because of so much confusion—congressmen reading, writing, talking, and walking about without reference to what is going on in the way of

business. The senate chamber—whole affair gotten up in bad taste, much better however for hearing and seeing than the chamber of the house, as it is smaller, and better order is preserved. The lobbies are poor, inconvenient things; the sovereign people have to creep through dark passages, out at little pigeon-holes, and sit pressed into the smallest space, for the purpose of seeing what their servants are about. A debate sprang up on the President's curious scheme for a fiscal agent, Buchanan and Mangum rising at the same time. B. obtained the floor, and led off in a very eloquent and gentlemanly exposition of the proposed measure. His manner in speaking is pleasant, easy, and graceful, seldom excited or witty, voice well modulated, enunciation clear and distinct. He spoke from notes. Calhoun followed. He looks very much like brother Wykoff, but older; same stern, unyielding expression of countenance, hair iron gray, under jaw large and projecting, eyes rather full and piercing, mouth well formed, expressing great firmness, form tall and erect—in fact the whole man, realizing what has been remarked of him: 'He looks like a man that had never been born—a man of cast-iron.' He spoke without notes, in rather a harsh tone of voice. Rives and Talmadge followed in favor of the fiscal agent—one sick, the other stupid.

“Thursday. In the evening I went with Weller



and Medill to the President's house, to see Captain Tyler. We were introduced into a spacious chamber, well furnished with marble tables, large mirrors, crimson curtains, gilt chairs, etc., all in a rather shabby condition. Captain Tyler and daughter and several ladies were in the room. His daughter is a rather pleasant, modest-looking little lass. The captain is a regular old Virginian—very ugly—with a head of hair that looks as if a comb had never touched it. Tyler began talking of to-day's debate. I could see he felt sore. He remarked, among other things, 'You (the Democrats) cut my throat with a keen razor; the Whigs, damn them, do it with a meat ax. Or rather, I am between two millstones, and they grind horribly.' Weller and the captain soon got into a warm debate about the exchequer, and to keep from going to sleep, as the ladies would not talk, I interjected a remark once in a while. I told the captain, in the midst of an harangue, about the beauty of the system that the Whigs would make him veto his own project before they were done with it. He started around and said 'No, sir; I shall never use the veto power again, unless,' he added after a pause, 'unless there's constitutional objections.' He said he was the President of the people, independent of all party. 'I have no party. They do say, indeed (laughing) that I have a corporal's guard in Congress.'



We took our leave and called in on Blair. B. is a very gentlemanly man, thin; Mrs. B. amiable, fat; Miss B. intelligent, middling. We talked an hour or so, eating fruit and drinking wine.

“Saturday—New Year’s day. Beautiful, oh! beautiful morning, breaking upon this political and fashionable world of ambitious misery and poverty as if thy bright smiles might bring content and cheerfulness to all! . . . At noon I rode with William Allen and Savage Weller to the President’s levee. We found it a perfect jam, crowding around the door, and some ladies even pulled in at the windows. Mrs. Gen. Gaines was about to make her entrance in that manner, when her husband, the general, caught her dress, exclaiming: ‘No, I’ll never go into that house in that way,’ and off he went with his little wife in a huff. It was a greater crowd, Allen tells me, than has ever been seen since the days of Old Hickory. President Tyler, ‘good, easy man,’ was perfectly delighted, shaking hands with all, and taking this crowd as a tribute of admiration from the people for his political course. Poor man, he little dreams of the sneers of three-fourths of this political world and the curses of the other fourth. The walls of the presidential mansion are too thick for the sounds to penetrate to the dull hearing of His Accidency. But he relies upon his luck. Aye, put faith in thy fate,

thick-headed yet good-hearted mortal, it be'th a good thing, and you have nothing else to rest upon. I was presented to Miss Tyler, and she told me she was pleased to see Western men in the people's house at this time. 'Miss Tyler,' I replied, bowing, 'you do me proud.' She, laughing, said something, but it was lost in the crowd that came bowing on, as I bowed off.

"Sunday, January 2, 1842. Reading all morning 'Memoirs of Monk,' by Guizot, an interesting work of history well written. Take for instance, the following passage when, speaking of Monk, he says: 'He performed great things without becoming great; and retained among the fortunes of the man who changed the face of an empire, the habits of mind and heart which had been engendered by the obscure condition of a mercenary soldier.' What an admirable passage is this! How frequently, not only in history but in every-day life, are we called upon by some daring exploit to contemplate the character of the seeming hero, and turn away in disgust. We find them, but too frequently men with nerves steeled by trying adventures, who have thrown themselves into the arena of life and performed things the character of whose minds are as far below a correct standard as their actions are above the common class of events. They are the fitted tools in the hands of fate. Looking at men in this light, such as Mirabeau appears in

truth, the hour and the man. Bonaparte not only the man, but the man who shaped the hour. Perhaps Monk would be a more striking example than Mirabeau, as Mirabeau would have shaped the hour had life been spared him, but he died a year too soon.

“Monday. I visited this morning the library of Congress for the express purpose of seeing the marble head of Jefferson and Powers’ Marshall. The first is a square, resolute, intellectual-looking head, as I anticipated; the last a splendid work of art, as far superior to Greenough’s Washington as the Day God is to a satyr. How soon may I look for the genius of my friend to be recognized by all as it now is by the few who know him? With a specimen of his work placed thus in the proudest hall of our country, certainly the day is not far distant. It is a delightful thing thus to watch the progress of genius. Well do I remember the little, dusty, somber-looking workshop where, during long winter nights (I, a mere schoolboy and he unknown), we sat wasting the hours away, talking of the future, dreaming aspirations, things yet to come. And have they come? Partly, and of the rest time must tell.

“Friday. So soon! Time flies rapidly in this whirl of political and fashionable life. A dull place this house of representatives. But drop in when some noisy, abusive member has the floor; such cough-

ing, snorting, and sneezing, half a dozen interrupting, some amusing themselves by throwing paper wads across the hall, others calling out 'Order, order!' and all bursting into loud fits of laughter—and for this we pay each one eight dollars a day! 'Oh, Rome! Oh, my country!' These congressmen, men generally of very common intellect, meet in Washington in hotels and boarding-houses, giving as high as ten to twenty dollars a week for board, spending three hours each day in appearing to do public business, living upon the best dinners at half-past three and two hours in eating them, every night at balls and parties, and drinking all the time. All this soon tells. Our patriotic (God save us!) active men become lazy, puffed up dolts, leaving all their business and reputation in the hands of a few sickly, nervous fellows who dare not indulge, and these nervous, sickly ones become the famed afar off.

"Saturday. By the by, what an ugly set of women they have here—yellow faces, scraggy necks, worn out by late hours, ice creams, wines, hot rooms, and night air. Very few pretty ones, such as Miss Woodbury, Miss Spencer, Miss Hill, and one or two others. One can see all the beauty in Washington in half an hour, though they live miles apart. I made several calls, among the rest one upon Mrs. Daniel Webster, who, the Court Journal informs us, 'is at



home between the hours of twelve and three P. M.' In answer to my pull at the bell, 'Name, sa?' said the servant, jerking the door open and pointing to the reception-room. 'Donn Piatt,' I replied. 'Donn Piatt,' shouted he, with accent heavy on the first syllable. 'Dom Pratt,' responded another, throwing open the reception-room door. 'Damned Pirate,' murmured a third, as he wrote it down; and thus I was ushered into the presence of Mrs. Webster and others, among whom I was happy in finding a few acquaintances. This—pretty proceeding for a bankrupt in a republican country—paugh! it makes me sick!

"Monday. I was in the senate all morning. The question of the Creole was brought up, and at the same time the report of a certain Abolition convention was laid upon the tables of the Southern and Western senators. A very exciting debate immediately sprung up between Southern men and Northern Abolitionists. I never listened to any discussion with more interest. After the most biting sarcasm and eloquent remarks sent from side to side, Henry Clay arose. I have frequently wondered at the admiration expressed by others for this man. The wonder passed away after hearing him fifteen minutes. Tall and erect, with an impressive manner, keen eyes, and deep-toned voice, he said the most common-place things in a way to attract and hold one's attention—



all the result of hard study and much practice. A great man—in manner. He said we must present an unbroken front to the world and ‘trust to the God of our fathers.’ Two hours after I heard him swearing like a trooper as he passed out. They talk of his retiring from public life. He will never do that so long as he has strength to take him to Washington. He will die in the senate. The second nature, habit, is stronger than the wise resolve. So much for the autocrat of Kentucky.”

Returning home, Donn Piatt continued the study of law under his father until, reaching the advanced stage where practical office experience was necessary, he went to Cincinnati and entered the office of his brother Wykoff and his brother-in-law, N. C. Read, with whom, when his diploma was secured, he went into partnership. The partnership, however, was not a fortunate one. It would be difficult to find two brothers more utterly unlike in all qualities save one than they, and this one quality was a natural turn for keenly sarcastic utterances. But this quality in the younger was relieved by his good nature and wit, while in the elder it was enhanced by his sternness of heart and cold dignity of manner. The experienced lawyer, absorbed in his profession himself, had no patience with the boy’s fervent zeal in politics and in

literary work that caused him to be inattentive to his duties about the office.

It was very soon demonstrated that the father had been unwise in forcing the boy to take to the law against his will. He not only had no taste for it, but it was positively unbearable to him. Instead of endeavoring to win a practice for himself as well as serve the heavy clientage of the other members of the firm, he devoted his whole thought and energy to the more agreeable pastime of writing for the papers and mingling with his old friends, the artists, actors, and writers. If, while engaged in any of these favorite diversions, he was interrupted by a client, such client was promptly disposed of. An amusing instance of this was often related by Judge Read. An Irishman came into the office with a case, which he related in all its details to young Piatt, and having concluded in true Irish style, he looked very hard at the lawyer, who had paid little attention to his tale, and inquired if he was the "rale Peeat." He said he wanted no mistake about the matter, that he and his family were about being put out of their house for not paying rent, and no one would suffice in so serious a case but the genuine Piatt. Donn, having given assurance that he was a "rale Peeat," went on to say that possession was nine good points in the law and that he had no doubt the other point could be easily gotten

over, provided the client handed over a fee of five dollars and had the back rent on hand on the day of trial. The Irishman stared for a moment in amazement, then jumped up and slapped his thighs, exclaiming: "Be jabers, it's the straightest law I iver heard in me loife!"

Turning to leave the office, he added: "But I'll have to try and find the rale Peeat, as it's beyand me capacity to find the rint."

In spite of Piatt's distaste for and inattention to his work, however, the large practice of his firm brought him, in time, a great many cases and a comfortable income.

## CHAPTER III.

MARRIAGE—TWO YEARS OF LITERARY WORK AT MAC-O-CHEEK—ACTIVE PART IN THE FREE SOIL MOVEMENT.

In August, 1847, Donn Piatt sought in marriage Louise Kirby, eldest daughter of Timothy Kirby, a wealthy business man and one of the leading citizens of Cincinnati. Mr. Kirby was a stern, uncompromising man of affairs, and he regarded the improvident young attorney's attentions to his daughter with decided disfavor that he did not hesitate to express. The result was a secret marriage, so shrewdly managed that the father of the bride did not learn of it until a month later.

The Kirby residence was at Cumminsville, then five miles out of town, and Louise had gone into the city to spend a few days with an intimate friend, Mary Harrison, daughter of Dr. John P. Harrison, of Fourth street. Here the young lawyer visited her and urged an immediate marriage. Miss Kirby, having long despaired of getting her father's consent, was willing, and going at once to the Catholic cathedral, they requested Rev. Father Edward Purcell, a most intimate friend, to make them man and wife. Under

much persuasion, he consented, and the ceremony was performed, after which the bride returned to Dr. Harrison's and in due time to her home, while Piatt went about his vocations in his usual way.

The weeks passed, and the young couple were as much in a quandary as to the most favorable mode of announcing to the father their marriage as they were before as to how best to defeat his objections. But the old gentleman's bitter opposition to what he considered the "briefless and brainless" young lawyer who sought his daughter's hand brought on the disclosure. He was speaking to her one night of Piatt in unusually severe terms, had even collected some bills against him to show her how impecunious he was. Her quick temper and decisive force of character asserting themselves, she arose from her chair and approaching him, said with intense spirit that the man he was abusing was her husband, and she would not listen to another word against him, that they had been married a month, and while she had feared his wrath she was now proud to make the announcement.

The father was so confounded with mingled amazement and rage that he could say nothing except to inquire the particulars of the wedding; and, learning these, he hastened to the cathedral, where he called for Father Purcell, and was fully assured that there was no mistake about the marriage. It took



some time for him to become reconciled to the new condition, but he finally forgave them freely, and, becoming better acquainted with his son-in-law, recognized him as not only agreeable but a most worthy and honorable man. He came to regard the relationship, long before he died, not with pleasure alone but with pride.

Louise Kirby Piatt was a woman of much beauty, ardent temperament, great force of character, most refined culture and rare literary talent. These high qualities clearly marked her brilliant, though brief, career as a writer, as a society leader in Paris, and as a faithful, loving and sympathetic companion to her husband in their home. She not only cheered and assisted him in every way possible in his literary efforts, but wrote herself much that attracted wide attention. Her spirited "Bell Smith" letters and other magazine articles, gave her high rank among the leading literary women of her time.

Immediately after the marriage became known, Donn Piatt gave up his law practice, and, taking his bride to Mac-o-cheek, resided there for three years, engaged in literary work and politics. A comfortable frame cottage near the old homestead was fitted up and furnished, and here the two passed in perfect peace and content, enlivened by love and congenial labor that made of this humble little home a paradise,



LOUISE KIRBY PIATT.



the happiest period in either of their lives. The relationship that existed between them was something more than that as husband and wife. Their fervent sympathy and tender spirit of helpfulness bound them closer even than affection. A child came at the end of the first year, making their happiness so complete and holy that the angels of heaven seem to have coveted it, for the delicate boy had scarce got strength to walk and learned to lisp the names of his two worshippers, when he died. The keen sorrow of his death, no less than the joy of his birth, brought them even closer to each other than before.

The beauty and charm of the little valley, with its wild traditions and wierd legends are gracefully given, in a graphic sketch, by the young bride:

“I can not imagine any one, looking over these sunny fields, with their groves grouped here and there—where wild flowers lift their gorgeous cups—where birds sing and waters sparkle, and not feel impressed with the wonderful beauty of this paradise. But when, in addition to what we feel of the quiet beauty the mind is laden with memories of the past—the happy past—of the little cottage where gathered in all the holier emotions of domestic life, where the young wife for three years saw, heard nothing beyond the warblings of birds in summer or the silent snow in winter, accompanied by kind words and smiles, or

the merry clapping of two little hands that now, alas, have made these wide plains sacred as heaven—I want the pen to express what is almost beyond utterance.

“We have here, too, our little histories, our bits of romance, some queer characters and plots, hopes, struggles and all which make the larger world so noisy. From the window at which I write I can see the spot where Simon Kenton was forced by the cruel foe to run the gauntlet, when between lake and river lay a vast, unbroken wilderness.

“It was near this where he and Girty, the renegade, recognized each other, and the hard heart of the murderer was touched at the sight of his old playfellow and friend, and saved a life at a time when it endangered his own. This, perhaps, was the one good deed among a thousand crimes, and as such should be recorded, although I must confess, from the character of the man, I am inclined to look for an interested motive for this apparent humanity.

“Beyond the meadow, so justly remarkable, on the side of the wood-covered hill, lies a large rock—brown, moss-clad, and lightning-scarred, and it, too, has a page of interest. An Indian woman lurking behind it, while the whites were burning the village and slaying her people, was seen by one of the invaders, who immediately leveled his rifle and shot the



poor creature dead, under the impression, it is said, that he was firing at one of the warriors. The Indian woman had a child in her arms, and the horror-stricken murderer, as some atonement for what he had done, after burying the mother at the foot of the rock, carried the child, so strangely baptized in blood, with him to the settlements.

“If this event were not well authenticated I should doubt its truthfulness. It is well known, from General Lytle’s narrative, that when the Mac-o-cheek villages were destroyed, the Indians received warning and fled. Now what was this poor woman doing with her boy so near the scene of disaster, while her protectors were far away? I could imagine causes for such strange, womanly conduct. I see her stealing back to her ruined home, in search, perhaps, of a missing husband, or old, bed-ridden father, or in heart-breaking search for a lost child, that she feared the cruel whites might find and bear away. Let the cause have been what it may, the poor sufferer sleeps quietly where the sassafras and elm wave above her their delicate and graceful limbs.

“The history of the Indian boy was as wild as his adopting was strange. He was taken into the family of the destroyer of his mother and treated as a member. He grew up a true Indian, scorning work, silent and wayward, but eminently handsome and

graceful. He had for playmate a younger daughter of his new parent, and they passed their childhood roaming over hill and dale, in search of flowers and fruit. They were sent to school, and, although he was seldom found inside the school room, as they generally parted when in sight of the log-house, he to hunt or fish all day, she to study, yet, when evening came, and the maiden wended her way home, in some wood or glen by the path she would see his tall, dark form standing erect in the gloom of the evening, waiting to guard her safely home. If a knowledge of his truant disposition reached his adopted father, it was not from her. She loved him too well to see him beaten.

“Reared thus, is it to be wondered at that the pretty girl and her Indian companion should love each other? The rosy-cheeked, large-eyed daughter of the old captain, in time, was much admired and had many suitors, but turned to her first love. But at last a wooer came, possessed of more wealth and higher standing, and a sad conflict began in the little heart between love and pride. This sounds strange, but in those days Indians were looked upon almost as we look on negroes, and to marry so much beneath her, to be gazed at as one degraded and outcast, startled the poor girl. I do not know whether nature’s own plead his cause or not—I like to think he did not—I see him gliding away through the still woods—past

the spot once made sacred by her presence—to commune, alone, leaving love to urge his suit. Pride proved the victor. The wealthy suitor was accepted. On the day of the wedding the Indian was absent. The younger portion of the company jested at his expense, for his secret had become known. The night passed, and in the morning the agonized parents were called upon to find their daughter and her husband murdered, and the Indian gone, none knew whither, nor was he ever heard of after. The slayer of a mother wept over his murdered child, for the disappointed lover, fate's avenger, had done his work and passed away—"fatal as the lightning, silent as the night."

The temptation to give further extracts from these beautiful descriptions and wild legends by this child of grace and genius is so great that another paragraph is added:

"Dear old Mac-o-cheek; I wish I could put on paper the feelings that spring into existence at the mention of its name! The pleasant associations that troop in, the kind friends, the brave hearts, the gifted minds that brought joy and cheer! The grand old forest, the smoothly rounded hills, the narrow little glen with the creek winding through, and the broad stretch of level plain! What more than this has paradise? The heavy rumble of the old red mill is

sweeter to me than any music—sweeter than all are the songs of birds, the droning of bees, the chirping of crickets, and the ceaseless babbling of the brook.”

The solitude of the isolated home was relieved not alone by congenial labors but by visits from men and women of genius whom the owner of a palace might be proud to entertain. Donn Piatt was not then thirty years of age, yet he had among his close friends the most eminent men of the nation. The humble little cottage sheltered as guests such notables as Tom Corwin, Edwin M. Stanton, William M. Corry, William Allen, Richard M. Johnson, Allen G. Thurman, and Wilson Shannon, while Captain Mayne Reid, the well known novelist, spent several months here after his gallant service in the Mexican War, and wrote here the greater part of his “Scalp-Hunters.” T. Buchanan Read, William W. Fosdick, Coates Kinney, John James Piatt, and the caricaturist, John McLenan, were frequent guests, while Healy, Frankenstein, Whitridge, Walcutt, and Beard have sought with their skilled fingers to put on canvas the mystic charm that made their stay so pleasant. The wit of the young host, and the grace of the young hostess, and the genius, kindness, and warm hospitality of both, gave their home such attraction that it was seldom without some talented visitor.



These were years of incessant literary labor on the part of both, for they had no other means of earning a subsistence than with their pens. They were constant contributors to the Cincinnati *Commercial*, the Louisville *Journal*, then edited by the brilliant George D. Prentice, and the *Home Journal* of New York, then newly founded by Nathaniel P. Willis. The *Home Journal* correspondence was continued by Mrs. Piatt for many years, and letters she wrote for it from Paris were republished in book form with the title "Bell Smith Abroad," which gave her not only a wide fame but very satisfactory profits. Both were enthusiastic contributors to the *National Era*, conducted at Washington by Dr. Gamaliel Bailey under the auspices of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.

Here, too, Donn Piatt's father gave him employment as an attorney in two very important land suits, and, strange to say, left to himself, he took a deep interest in the cases and was successful in both after a long and bitter contest. His father, with the discernment of an old practitioner, remarked to him after the decision was rendered that he could not understand his abandoning the practice in Cincinnati with the ability shown in his thorough and efficient manner of conducting these intricate cases that an older



head might well have failed in. The only reply given was that this had been done for his father's sake, and for no consideration would the labor have been performed for any one else. From that time on his father never mentioned the subject to him again.

In addition to this and his share in the literary work, Donn Piatt again gave much attention to politics, and took an active and important part in the Free Soil movement in 1848-50. While a staunch Democrat in all fundamental principles of government, he was from his youth opposed to slavery, and he fought it, as he did all that he considered injustice or oppression, with the full vigor and force of his strong character and high talents. His grandfather had at an early day liberated his slaves in Kentucky, and all members of the family were taught that slavery was a heinous crime, not only against the blacks, but the whites, for that it degraded the one while oppressing the other. Donn Piatt had been still further influenced in his anti-slavery views by an intimate acquaintance, while at school, with William G. Birney, the great Abolition editor, at that time conducting a paper in Cincinnati. A few years later, when this paper, the *Philanthropist*, had passed into the hands of Dr. Gamaliel Bailey, and was being sacked one night

by a mob, young Piatt hurried into the office and gallantly gave service in its defense.

His part in the Free Soil and subsequent movements that resulted in the formation of the Republican party is so succinctly related by Governor George Hoadly that it can not be given in better form than that in which he has written it:

“My first acquaintance with Donn Piatt was made when I was a clerk and student in the office of the late Chief-Justice Chase in 1847 or early in 1848. We were both Democrats with strong anti-slavery tendencies. In December, 1847, I had gone so far as to offer and procure the adoption by the Democratic convention of Hamilton county of a resolution complimenting Hon. James J. Faran, our representative in congress, on his vote in favor of the Wilmot proviso. After the nomination of Cass and Butler by the Democrats in 1848, I went into the Barnburner movement with all my heart and Donn Piatt did the same. We were both of us very actively enlisted in the campaign in favor of the election of Van Buren and Adams. The campaign in Ohio resulted in our getting some thirty-five thousand votes for our candidate.

“I recollect that during the campaign we had a mass-meeting at Urbana, near Donn Piatt’s home, that was largely attended and at which speeches were

made by Piatt, Isaac C. Collins, Eli Tappan, and myself, all four then young men, the eldest not much if any over thirty—alas, I am the only survivor of the four. Donn Piatt's speech of that day I remember well. It was characteristic of him, rich in wit and at the same time penetrating by reason of a remarkably clear perception of high moral principle and a very powerful advocacy of the same.

“In 1850, the alliance between the Democrats and Whigs, who had in 1848 left their respective parties to support the Free Soil independent movement, was rudely shattered by the nomination, at Cleveland, of Rev. Edward Smith, as governor, on a platform claiming power for the Federal government to abolish slavery in the states. I was in the convention and made as good a fight as a young man of twenty-four years of age might be expected to, but I was then Mr. Chase's partner and was looked upon in some sense as his representative. I certainly represented his principles in common with those of the young Democrats of the state who had gone into our movement, and which limited the sphere of our activities to opposition to the extension of slavery in the territories. The result of this unfortunate movement at Cleveland was the restoration or return to the Democratic party of all the Democrats who had enlisted in the Free Soil movement, and Donn Piatt,

Judge Collins, and myself, and I think Mr. Chase, for the matter of that, voted for Franklin Pierce for president in 1852.

“The nomination of Edward Smith, however, in one sense, but I do not mean an unfriendly sense, estranged Donn and myself. It led to activity on the part of both of us in the Democratic party in Hamilton county, which, however, was then torn in two by a factional fight in which he took one side and I the other. I co-operated with Timothy C. Day, Dr. George Fries, Charles Reemelin, M. W. Myers and others, then familiarly known as the ‘Executive Committee’ side of the party, while Donn cast his fortunes with Washington McLean, Stanley Matthews and others, who were then recognized by the name of the ‘Board of Public Works’ end of the party. These old differences and distinctions have now been forgotten, but they meant a great deal to us young fellows. The consequence was that from 1850 until the Kansas-Nebraska fraud, Donn and I saw little or nothing of each other. I was on the other side, inside the party, but my recollection is clear that Donn Piatt, almost alone of his crowd, stood by his old anti-slavery flag, and when the Kansas-Nebraska bill was passed came into the Republican party and was, like myself, a strong supporter of Fremont and Dayton and afterward of Mr. Lincoln.”

Piatt's lively participation in these movements and the state campaign of 1850, when the new constitution was the chief issue, and his warm friend, Reuben Wood, was re-elected governor, kept him much in Cincinnati, where his old clients sought him out for legal advice, and he began to realize that he again had a lucrative practice. Though he did not relish the work thus thrust upon him he needed the income it brought, and in the autumn of '51 removed from Mac-o-cheek and took up his residence in Cincinnati.



## CHAPTER IV.

## JURIST AND DIPLOMAT.

April 3, 1852, Donn Piatt was appointed by Governor Wood judge of the court of common pleas of Hamilton county. His popularity and well recognized ability caused the appointment to be received with general favor, though there was much criticism based on his youth and brief experience in the law practice. Piatt often said himself that his friends had secured his appointment that he might have an opportunity to learn something of the law. That this was an exaggeration, however, and that the criticisms were all unfounded was shown in his career upon the bench. He was eminently just in his decisions, and it is notable that not one of his verdicts was ever reversed by a superior court. His interpretation of the law was clear and concise, and he had a way of bringing common sense to bear upon a statute the meaning of which might be obscure that was inimitable, and, more than this, he gave evidence of a learning in the law that surprised his warmest admirers.

His service was without especial incident and differed from that of other judges only in his unrestrain-

able wit that often at the most serious point in a case threw the entire court into a roar of laughter. His grasp of grotesque situations was as quick here as elsewhere. The judge's relaxation from dignified solemnity was often accepted by attorneys and witnesses as a license to laugh the opposing side out of court. There was no commitment in this court for contempt. If any one could get the better of the judge in wit or sarcasm he was held worthy of the highest respect. This event did not occur often, but there was one instance that was famous in Cincinnati for many years. The judge who had immediately preceded Piatt on the bench was short in stature and had placed two law books upon his chair to bring him to a proper height. When Piatt succeeded to the seat he, being below medium height himself, let the books remain. An Irishman who had long been a warm friend brought a case into court that had little merit, but which he was confident of winning because of the personal friendship of the judge. When the verdict was given against him he was so astonished and enraged that he immediately broke out into a diatribe directed against Judge Piatt. He was interrupted in this and sternly ordered to keep silent. But, unable to restrain himself, he went on with more energy than before.

“Faith an’ is it me, who’s always befriended ye and signed ye’s petition for this job, Donn Peatt, that

ye trates me in this blaggard way? Begorra, if I'd knowd that instid of having the law in ye's head ye kept it at your other end, I'd never took my case to sich a coort!"

The judge led in the roar of laughter that followed, in the midst of which the indignant Irishman stalked out unmolested.

But while there was often rich fun in Judge Piatt's court, it was never at the cost of that decorum and dignity necessary to a calm consideration of the cases on trial. In his keenest merriment he was ever admirably self-possessed, and his heartiest laugh had no suggestion of boisterousness. While he could no more restrain his sense of humor than he could cease to breathe, he never jested for the mere sake of the jest. His witticisms and stories were always used to illustrate a point or emphasize an argument.

But the position of judge was no more to his liking than the practice had been, and after filling the place honorably to himself for the one term, he declined to accept another. In leaving the bench he retired from the law. Although all his life deeply interested in questions of jurisprudence, he seldom after appeared as an attorney, except in rare cases of his own or of close personal friends. The onerous labor and close application that success required were alike repugnant to his taste, and, moreover, fatally inter-

ferred with the literary work to which he was fondly devoted.

He had, however, another reason for quitting at that time his position and his practice, and that was the ill-health of his wife, which demanded a change of climate and the attention of specialists of greater skill than any that Cincinnati then afforded. Mrs. Piatt had spent the greater part of the winter of 52-53 at Washington in the hope that the climate there might bring relief. However, in her energetic disposition and fondness for society, she led so active a life that instead of benefit she received injury. Her letters written at that time possess an interest beyond that which attaches to a mere account of her means of amusement. They show that she, like her husband, found pleasure in a close observation of public affairs and frank and free criticism. From a letter written February 18, 1853, to her father, an extract is taken that admirably illustrates these qualities:

“ We have had, as you may notice in the papers, an animated discussion in the Senate upon our foreign relations. I have been quite a regular visitor at the chamber, some friend always calling to take me up. To tell the truth, I go more for the ride than the debate, as the last has proved at times exceedingly dull. Old Fogie Cass, as Donn calls him to me, got the whole thing up to cover the shame of his having voted



for the Clayton and Bulwer treaty. Douglas, who did not vote for the treaty, and is one of the most active, wide-awake little fellows you ever saw, made an effort to the point that comes nearer the true thing, I am told, than any thing else. He is a very small man with large head and deep, meaning eyes. But his delivery is bad and his abuse of English in the way of pronunciation dreadful. America he pronounces Ameriky, and so throughout. But his speech was strong and truly American, having much force and dignity. After he concluded, Mr. Cass, who replies, or rather adds an appendix, to every one's speech, took the floor and some little sparring came off between Old Fogie and Young America, which ended by Mr. Badger securing the floor and keeping the Senate in a roar by a serio-comic defense of old foggydom and his definition of the Monroe doctrine. 'Young America,' he said, 'should let us alone; we are trying to convince the country that in our old foggy bones there is yet life—that is all. These resolutions are intended for home consumption, not for the world at large. We don't want wars; we only want rumors of wars. We old fogies can't be expected to make fight with France and England; we don't intend to, and we won't. But we will announce the Monroe doctrine, swear terribly and make mouths, and that's enough.' ”



“The next day Hale spoke. What he said I do not know, for I was not there. I don’t like Hale, he is so snobbish. You know he was rebuked by Cass, for introducing buffoonery into the senate chamber; and, as Hale got angry and forgot to be funny, Cass had the better of it. Cass was not in the senate yesterday to hear Hale either. I saw him walking up one street and down another as if he, like myself, was in pursuit of oxygen or something quite as important.”

In a letter dated ten days later, an account is given of an interview with William M. Thackeray :

“I sat by the side of the eminent Thackeray on the way from his lecture to Dr. Bailey’s, and he had the kindness to tell me I was a *delightful* woman. I certainly was a *delighted* one. Yet he does not talk as he writes—not half so charming. He thought to encompass himself with the reserve of the true English, but I pitched over it and rattled on about Muggins and upholstery and snobbery till he gave up. Great, tall, fine looking, gray-bearded old Thackeray, he is so bored with being a lion. I told him I felt very small sitting so close to a real, live lion, and one from a royal domain at that. He held my hand for three minutes.”

Mrs. Piatt failed steadily in health, and at the expiration of her husband’s term as judge, in July, 1853, he took her, accompanied by her sister Ella, to

France, and settled down to literary work in Paris. A brief account of the voyage is given for the reason that an opportunity is thus afforded to introduce further extracts from Mrs. Piatt's charming private letters, that, in this instance, give the identity of a few of the characters in *Bell Smith Abroad*. On board the steamer *Franklin*, August 4, 1853, she wrote her mother:

“Here we are, bright and well (barring a little say sickness, as an Irishman would say) on the broad Atlantic, five days out. Ella takes the voyage very hard, constantly vibrating between an enormous appetite and awful seasickness. And Donn too. Ella and Donn followed father's advice, and upon the ship's commencing to roll, they ‘let go all hold’ and went with the vessel in its rollings. The consequence was that Ella was soon high and dry on her upper berth, and Donn hanging over the stern of the ship casting his bread upon the waters. It was very funny for me. First, the ancient Haines would rush to the railings, and Donn would shout, ‘Go it, Haines,’ but before his laugh was fairly out, he would pale himself, and, after a most miserable expression being left behind for me to dwell upon he would follow the afore-said Haines, and there they would both hang. As for your eldest daughter, she determined not to be sea-

sick, and consequently was not. Her place at table has never been vacant. \* \* \*

“There are not a dozen Americans on board; nearly all are Spanish and Germans. We have Mons. Levasseur, the French minister to Mexico, returning to visit his family. He is an old gentleman of military department, with very fine head and face. He speaks French and Spanish—very little English—though I judge that his intelligence, and more especially his conversational powers, must be wonderful, for I have known him to talk twelve hours without ceasing, except to vary his hearers, as each one’s strength can only last about four hours.

“Then my *vis-a-vis* at the table is the Swedish Consul at Charleston. He is a perfect Falstaff. For his breakfast he drinks one bottle of ale, two cups of coffee; and three cups of green tea, with ham and eggs without limit. He makes us all laugh at his *gourmanderie*. A duck will be suddenly uncovered at table. Our Swedish friend sniffs the air and says, rubbing his stomach, “Effluvia bad, but it really look innocent—real innocent, madame, try one leetle bit,” and upon my declining he straightway attacks lady duck and devours it all.

“The only literary person I can find out is a grandson of John Jacob Astor named Charles Astor Bristed, the author of a most stupid book, ‘The Up-

per Ten Thousand,' in which he endeavors 'to 'show up' society. This Charles Astor walks on his toes, talks about the Rhine and tells stale college jokes.

"The rest of our mess table (you must know that we have seats of honor at the captain's table) is Mrs. Samuel Ward of New York, a lady so traveled as to be entirely foreign. Genevieve, her daughter, considers that the aim of all human existence is to acquire different languages and surprise Sontag in musical performances.

"Then there is Miss Cutting, a fashionable woman from New York, who has cut the Swedish consul since she found she has attracted the French ministry.

"This with the captain is our table. The captain, Captain Wotton, is a fine, intelligent, noble-hearted man; his frank, genial nature, and clear intellect keep us active. He is full of anecdote, and I am indebted to him for many real, genuine laughs."

Arrived in Paris they sought lodgings in the Student's Quarter and securing teachers devoted themselves industriously to studies. Mrs. Piatt was placed under treatment by Joubert, a celebrated specialist, assisted by Drs. Murphy and Judkins, American medical students, and received some benefit, though all her life she remained very much an invalid. A month after their arrival she began her series of let-



ters, "Bell Smith Abroad," and soon found herself famous. The many racy anecdotes that gave a peculiar charm to her correspondence were widely quoted, while the thoroughness with which she discussed topics of public moment excited praise on every hand and won for her a hearty welcome into the circle of American *literateurs* in Paris. One of her most popular stories was the following. A traveled man is spreading himself:

"I had a cook once, a capital fellow—indeed, a man of infinite genius; had he stooped to books I have little question but that he would have at once been recognized. I got him at a bargain. He cooked once as an experiment, impelled by his wonderful genius, the Empress Marie's favorite monkey and had to fly for his life; and this proves how nearly our affections are allied to our digestive organs. The empress was so delighted with the dish that she never rested until she discovered of what it was composed. The Bible, you know, speaks of men without bowels. Well, as I was saying, I was surprised at my house one day by a party of distinguished diners who came purposely to try my cuisine. There was not an article to speak of in the house. Barbetti looked puzzled for a second, but only a second. Hang me if I knew half the time what I was eating. We had a dinner—superb, wonderful dinner—and in the midst of our



raptures at its conclusion we begged Barbetti to give us the real bill of fare. My dear sir, a little wine, if you please. It consisted of a Cincinnati ham, my favorite pointer, a poll-parrot, six kittens and four rats, the last done up in sugared pastry as a dessert."

"What became of him?"

"Died. True to his character, died trying the effect on himself of an ordinary New York dinner—died in horrible agony."

In her wonderful versatility Louise Piatt closely resembled her husband, and there was a similarity in their tastes and talents and a like facility and winning style of expression that was most remarkable. She could turn from humor to pathos, and from that to biting sarcasm, and again to exquisite prose poetry without an effort, and in all be equally entertaining; or indeed unite all in a single sentence with an easy grace as rare as it is fascinating.

"There is something exceedingly pleasant," she wrote, "in contemplating the struggles of genius, more especially the artist. He has a local habitation while winning his name, and from his lone room he looks far beyond the real life that throbs and roars about him into the dim future—into the future dim only because a haze of glory covers all. From the real world he flies; his sensitive nature shrinks from the harsh contact, which treads hungry generations

down; he flies to his studio, adorned by his own hand, and there he lives with nature. Come up the solemn woods, the silent lakes, glens, fields, mountains, rocks, dashing waves and cloud-garnished skies—come they up and are his friends and confidantes. To be acquainted with such, to watch his earnest struggles and secret haunts, is like tracing some delicate work of animal nature into its secret dwelling-place, and being introduced into a new world.

“With the poet this is different. However much his head may brush the clouds, his sustenance is in the earth. Like the gorgeous clouds of morning, which have their birth in the stagnant pools of night, his inspiration is gathered in the crowded streets amid the shock of men. His utterances are those of the real present, sublimated by adversity. No one ever gained immortality by forgetting or not knowing the present. His name may be in the future, but he must struggle, suffer, and die in the present. However wise the poet may be, and far above the crowd who know him not, yet must he know them and be their spokesman. Through him shall they be known in ages to come.”

Into another little fragmentary word picture she puts all the power of a painting:

“I was awakened this morning by the glad shout of a boy and I said ‘Snow.’ Sure enough I arose to

see it silently falling, the first of the season. All day long the atmosphere has been darkened by the snow clouds; and umbrellas, cloaks, and muddy boots have been splashing by. How the boys delight in it! Around the corner over the way they are racing with their sledges and rosy cheeks, shouting, laughing, tumbling along, as the evening darkens, all regardless of home and supper. Find me a more perfect, whimsical, delightful being than a boy! Full of wild fancies about Robinson Crusoe, guns, birds, and bread and butter notions of good things. Generous as the day, yet unaccountably cruel at times. A cross man, probably a constable, attempts to stop the sliding. They look quite awe stricken at first, but now they rally and shout; they abuse the unfortunate official; snowballs hard as bricks knock him first right, then left, thrown with almost inconceivable rapidity. The officer retreats ingloriously and away go the sleds again—Comet, Reindeer, Ben Franklin, and Lady Washington all fly along on the first snow with an enthusiasm that defies all control.”

Donn Piatt also wrote constantly for the American and English press during that first year in France, and his work added much to his reputation at the time, but being for the most part comment upon current events, it of necessity soon passed from public notice.

Franklin Pierce, on his accession to the presidency, had tendered to Judge Piatt the position of Secretary of the American Legation at Paris. The appointment, however, did not come promptly, for the reason that Minister Mason's ignorance of the French language made it imperative that the secretary of legation should speak it fluently, which Piatt could not then do. In consequence, Mr. Sandford, secretary under the preceding administration, was retained until Piatt could thoroughly fit himself for the position.

He received his commission and entered upon his duties April 5, 1854. His force of character and clearness of opinion at once asserted themselves in his new position, and the question of court costume, then annoying the state department, was given a strange interest by the free expression of his Democratic opinions. To his mind, the Emperor of France was in no way entitled to greater respect than the citizens of America, and a coat that sufficed in a call upon our President was held by him to be quite good enough to wear in the presence of a Napoleon. His keenest sarcasm was brought to bear upon the proposition to adopt "a diplomatic coat with grape-vines running up the back and bombs in the tail, with knee breeches, which exhibit the painful fact that all there is of the diplomat of calf is in the head." The knee



breeches and wonderful coat were adopted, however, and, much to his discomfiture, he was compelled to don it. Many years later, he wrote of the incident in a humorous vein, though he regarded it as any thing but amusing at the time.

“The legation,” he has since said, “comes before me at this remote time as vividly as if it had performed but yesterday. We wore court costumes, and French at that. The court dress means generally that worn at home on ceremonial occasions when the diplomat approaches his own sovereign. As at our court, that of the Yankee Doodle, a court dress means a whole coat and a clean shirt, our diplomat must borrow a costume. We resembled prize beef adorned with ribbons from horns to tail. We had the vines of France worked in gold braid up our diplomatic backs, and the bomb-shells of Austerlitz done in the same manner on our coat tails. A dress sword, generally found between the legs, completed the outfit. The secretary resembled a scarecrow in gold, and his Excellency, with his full stomach and round shoulders, a Punch at a fair. We had nothing to do, and an industrious assistant to help us do it.”

Donn Piatt's sturdy spirit of Democracy did not find expression alone in his opposition to the gold braid with which he was forced to adorn himself while bowing low before an emperor. In his treatment of



the Americans resident in Paris, he disregarded former custom, and followed the impulses of his heart, according to the poor and humble the same attention and respect that he gave to the rich and influential. For the snobbery of the merely rich, he had at all times the profoundest and most openly expressed contempt. This class of Americans in Paris he designated as "retired soap boilers, who had not only abandoned their own land, but were ashamed of it, and lived abroad filled with an ambition to be mistaken for English nobility, and marry their daughters to broken-down counts." They disgusted him at an early day, and, having no social recognition from the French save what they secured through the legation, he closed that door, and told them to go away—they were disagreeable.

Although later in life possessed of much wealth himself, and holding among his warmest friends many men of immense wealth, he never altered his opinions or weakened his utterances concerning those who sought through money to cover up a lack of culture, and force themselves into the society of persons of intellect and refinement. Many hold this same view, but in few others has it been so prominent. The warmth with which his faithful wife, herself the daughter of a very wealthy man, concurred in his course is shown in a letter to her mother:



DONN PIATT AT THIRTY-FIVE.

Painted by Healy, Paris, 1854.



“Our life has much changed since Donn’s entrance into the bureau. We have been suddenly discovered to be extraordinary people. Where have we been all winter? is a question asked us a hundred times a day. The most unbearable of all the sycophants are certain wealthy Americans who have resided in Paris for eighteen or twenty years, and who have retained enough of their American origin to despise it. They seek by gold to conceal their democratic birth, and regard as their greatest misfortune that birth which prevents them from buying a title. There are about fifteen of such families, who live in the most unheard-of luxury and splendor. These are now *feting* Donn and myself, and upon the whole we are excessively amused. One thing is very annoying; Donn don’t drink, and both French and Americans stand aghast. Various mysterious rumors are afloat to the effect that the present secretary of legation was once a most dissipated character, but now reformed, and afraid to touch the wine cup for fear of relapsing. We have screamed with laughter over old, half tipsy gentlemen who have slapped him on the back and told him in the most fatherly way to ‘persevere in the good cause.’

“Donn is so thoroughly a Democrat, so utterly bored with show, high dinners and *dilettantism*, that among the hundreds of poorer travelers or students, who were formerly scarcely treated decently by the lega-

tion, he is a great favorite. By the least effort in getting them permits for various sights and treating them kindly he has made himself a great many friends. Two or three dinners have been given by the students since his appointment, and we heard that they drank his health, wished him greatest success and spoke of him in most complimentary terms."

His sympathy with the worthy, hard-working classes, and his utter impatience with snobbery and sham, made up the most pronounced trait in his character, and it was especially remarkable in his career as diplomat for the reason that it is so rarely found in that service. The high esteem with which he was rewarded by the students is shown by Dr. John A. Murphy, an eminent physician of Cincinnati, who was studying for his profession in Paris at that time, and has since written concisely and broadly upon the point.

"Donn Piatt was certainly popular with the medical student and all poor and unknown Americans. Through him, for the first time in history, I believe, the 'plain people' received the same attention and consideration as the rich resident Americans in Paris. He and his lamented wife visited the poor and sick students, as also all who were in distress. The students manifested their regard and gratitude by presenting to him and his wife a beautiful box of silver.



“A man of bubbling humor, great wit, and towering intellect, he was the welcome guest and companion of all. He never forgot or neglected one whom he regarded as a friend. The qualities of his heart equaled those of his head, and his instincts and sympathies were with the oppressed of all countries.”

When, in October, 1854, Minister Mason was called to Ostend to confer with Ministers Buchanan and Soulé upon the proposed acquisition of Cuba by the United States, he constituted Piatt *charge d'affaires* during the fourteen days of his absence. Refusal on the part of the French authorities to permit Pierre Soulé, the American minister to Spain, to pass through France on his way to and from this conference brought upon Piatt a responsibility that called for great dignity and discretion. Minister Mason graciously recognized his delicate services in a flattering letter to President Pierce, recommending him for promotion to a more responsible diplomatic position. In that letter he said :

“When it became necessary to transmit the dispatches to the State Department in the diplomatic complications that grew out of the refusal of the French government to permit Mr. Soulé to pass through France to his post in Spain, I determined to send Mr. Piatt in charge of them. This was in ac-

cordance, as I understood, with well established usage and was done after mature reflection, and I drew in his favor for the funds necessary to meet his expenses. Mr. Piatt did not ask nor suggest this employment. I thought the favor due him for the faithful discharge of his duties since he has been in office as secretary of legation. He has been closely confined to the arduous labors of his position, and I thought the relaxation such a trip would afford only his right. I understand that certain influential friends of Mr. Piatt have joined in a request for his promotion in the diplomatic service, and it gives me pleasure to add my indorsement to the application. He is a young man of talent, zeal and fidelity. During the late complication, now so happily terminated, he visited London frequently to confer with Mr. Soulé, and executed this important trust with intelligence and discretion."

In this connection it is pardonable to add, out of a number of such letters, a handsome tribute, prompted by that same service, from the pen of Mr. Pierre Soulé:

PARIS, *November 10, 1854.*

HON. FRANKLIN PIERCE:

*Mr. President:*—I have the honor to call your attention to the claims of Mr. Donn Piatt, Secretary of this Legation, as those of a gentleman eminently fitted

for a more responsible post than he now fills in the diplomatic service of the republic."

"Although young, Mr. Piatt has the force of genius that replaces experience, and in the earnest, I may say austere, character of his temperament, has a quality that insures success.

"I write from a great familiarity of events lately transpired, wherein Louis Napoleon for a moment forgot his usual caution in his hatred for me; and to Mr. Piatt's courage and patriotism the republic owes much. No government can afford to neglect such young men.

"I have the honor to be, sir, your most obedient  
servant, PIERRE SOULÉ."

Minister Mason was stricken with apoplexy, 26th December following, and wholly incapacitated from discharging the functions of his office from that time until the 1st of May, 1855. During this period of more than four months, and again during Mr. Mason's absence for eight days in September, Mr. Piatt had entire charge of the affairs of the mission, and conducted the business and complied with the social requirements in a manner that reflected great credit upon the government as well as upon himself. Clear evidence of the appreciation in which his services were held by statesmen at home is found in a bill

passed by Congress awarding him special compensation, it being the first instance in the history of our diplomatic service wherein a chargé d'affaires was granted extra pay on account of illness of the minister. Still further esteem is shown in an effort on the part of Senators Wade, Cass, Weller, Pugh, and others to procure for him allowance for his outfit as acting minister. In the debates upon these matters (Congressional Globe Vols. 32 and 33, pages 1016, 1040, 1085, and 1716), Senator Pugh said :

“ If there ever was a case where a diplomatic officer of the United States was called upon to perform extraordinary services, it was the Secretary of Legation at Paris in 1855. That fact is established by the report of the House Committee on foreign affairs in this very case.”

The report referred to said in part :

“ The committee are informed by several gentlemen, members of Congress, and others who visited Paris during the months of July and August, 1855, to witness the universal exposition of the products of the industry of all nations, that the duties of Mr. Piatt during that period were peculiarly onerous and expensive, on account of the great number of American citizens visiting Paris, to whom the rites of hospitality were liberally extended.

“ Although Minister Mason was at this time per-



sonally in charge of the affairs of the mission, yet his health was so feeble as to incapacitate him for the physical exertion required for the attention due to his countrymen.

“For these reasons your committee believe that no compensation warranted by precedent, or any safe principle, will reimburse him for the expenses he incurred, or compensate him for the services rendered.”

The bill granting the extra compensation was passed in committee of the whole with heavy majority.

In common with all diplomatic agents of our republican government, which, jealous of the power resting in the people, reserves the treaty making to the president and the senate, Mr. Piatt found that the far greater share of his duties were simply of a social sort. On this point he has written :

“I wounded our worthy chief by ridiculing our appearance at court in the only duty we had to perform, which consisted in getting an American citizen or citizeness presented to his Imperial Insignificance, the Emperor, without loss of life or involving the two countries in a war. This short-legged heavy-headed dutchman was playing at being an Emperor and a Napoleon, and we were playing at ‘come to see.’ He had the advantage, however, in being able to disturb the peace of Europe, for we only succeeded in keeping our diplomatic swords from between our diplo-



matic legs and getting laughed at. I had gone to Europe young and confiding, full of faith in the solid dignity of our diplomatic service. I was amazed to find it all a sham. I was born a Bohemian, with a detestation of shams and a sense of humor that broke over all bounds in the presence of a pretentious humbug. I did not believe in this business, and, therefore, was most unfit for the place, as I humbly acknowledged when I came to resign."

During the social season of the winter Donn Piatt was in charge of the mission, the duties devolving upon him and his gifted wife were exacting in the extreme. For this, however, few were more eminently fitted than they. Mrs. Piatt had, in a great degree, recovered her health and was exceedingly popular with all resident Americans and Parisians as well, while Donn Piatt's polished manner, toward all alike, and his brilliant powers of conversation made him one of the most favorably received representatives ever sent out by our government. The society season in Paris lasts three months, and gayeties come fast and furious. It was quite common for the *chargé* and his wife to attend three parties a night, while often being invited to seven. From a very entertaining letter written by Mrs. Piatt to her mother, 22d February, 1855, an extract is taken :

"We have seen every thing of Imperial life from

the Tuilleries down to the imitation saloons of Corbin & Co. (late Americans). It would amuse you to see Ella and I ascending the magnificent marble stairways of these old palaces with as much elegance and ease as if they belonged to us, and hear our names shouted at the doors with those of princes, dukes, and ambassadors without causing any more emotion in us than if we were being introduced to Mrs. Badgely. I must say, however, our presentation to the Princess Mathilde was rather trying, more especially on Donn and brother Byron. We were invited to appear there on a certain evening; we did so, and were ushered through long, silent halls into a silent apartment where the lady sat in state, a very fat woman, surrounded by very thin and very ugly princesses in waiting. No one appeared to introduce us, whereupon we marched up, bowing very low to the fat lady, who arose and responded in like manner, when one of the dames d'honneur, ugly enough, Donn says, to scare horses, invited us into the next room to take refreshments. We marched in, receiving a very little tea in very costly china, and, while discussing this, we informed her that we had some doubt as to whether the Princess Mathilde really knew who we were; whereupon her ugliness started off, and hunted up a fossil remain in the shape of a general of the first empire, who said, shaking himself through a variety of para-

lytic quivers, that he had been waiting in the ante-chamber for us, expecting to see Judge Mason at our head, as he know personally 'Le juge,' and did not know us, so that we had slipped by. We were then presented in due form, and invited to sit down, which we did in dead silence, the aforesaid illustrious piece of ugliness making a faint attempt at conversation, but which, between gaps, broke down disgracefully. Ella and I sat together, looking like mantle ornaments, while Donn and Byron stood near, each on one leg, convulsively crushing their hats and looking as if they wished they were dead. Having undergone this trial for the space of an hour, which seemed about six, we all suddenly made a rush at her imperial obesity, bowed ourselves down like mandarins, and then retreated to the house of our dear friend, Mrs. Woods, where we regained our equanimity on chicken salad and champagne."

While thus paying homage to the nobility, as was his duty, Mr. Piatt was recognized as a man of the people, ever intent upon advancing the interests of his own fellow-citizens. In illustration of this, during his service as acting minister, two of his friends, Chas. L. Fleischman and a Mr. Chase, were induced to start an American newspaper, called the *American*, the first of the kind ever attempted across the ocean.

It prospered very well, and continued to be published during Mr. Piatt's stay in Paris.

When, in September, 1855, Minister Mason was so far recovered as to resume his duties, and Mr. Piatt was called upon to return to his position as secretary of legation, the thought was so unpleasant, and the future appeared so irksome, that he determined to resign. In anticipation of this event, Mrs. Piatt and her sister had returned to America in June. Accordingly, on 3d October, Mr. Piatt tendered his resignation to the President, and, availing himself of a leave of absence granted him by Mr. Mason, started for home on the 16th of the same month, before his resignation had been accepted. His departure was so precipitate that it gave rise to some vague rumors reflecting upon the condition in which he had left the financial affairs of the legation, and to these rumors Mr. Mason, unfortunately for himself, in his feeble condition of body and mind, lent attention. The matter was so trivial, however, and entirely without foundation and support, that Congress, when the matter was brought to its notice, refused to even give it consideration. These false rumors, in Mr. Piatt's belief, originated in John B. Wilbor, Mr. Mason's private secretary, "who," he said, "sought to injure me, because, in the first place, I had done him a favor, and, in the

second, I had asked a favor of him. The favor I conferred was making him an *attache* of the legation because of his knowledge of French. The favor I asked was that he would accompany me to the Bois de Boulogne and have his vile head blown off. He cheated me out of the luxury by apologizing in the most humble manner."



CHAPTER V.

A RURAL JOURNALIST—AN ACTIVE POLITICIAN IN BEHALF OF FREMONT AND LINCOLN—ENLISTS FOR THE WAR AS A PRIVATE—GENERAL SCHENCK'S CHIEF OF STAFF—JUDGE ADVOCATE OF THE BUELL COMMISSION—FREES THE SLAVES OF MARYLAND—ORDERS MILROY TO EVACUATE WINCHESTER—RESIGNS FROM THE SERVICE—DEATH OF MRS. PIATT.

On Mr. Piatt's return from Europe in the autumn of '55, he resided at Mac-o-cheek until the following January, when he went to Washington and there occupied himself during the spring and summer in business affairs and general newspaper correspondence. He returned to Ohio in August and took an active part in the presidential campaign of that autumn in behalf of Fremont. He made many speeches throughout the state, and whenever possible used his pen in a vigorous advocacy of the principles of the then newly founded Republican party, into which his convictions regarding slavery had led him. At the close of the campaign, he removed to Cincinnati, where he remained all winter attending to some important law cases for his father and incidentally practicing law for

others. The summers of '57 and '58 he spent with his wife at Narragansett and remained in Cincinnati during the winters. In the spring of '59 he moved back to Mac-o-cheek, where he lived until the breaking out of the war.

From the unpleasant routine of rural life during these two years, he found congenial avocation in contributing to the *Mac-a-cheek Press*, established at West Liberty in 1858 by his brother, A. Sanders Piatt. The *Press* was a little weekly paper "devoted to politics, literature, agriculture, science, art, and general intelligence," and was really the same journal, under a different name, formerly conducted by Coates Kinney, the poet, and during his connection with which Kinney first made his wide reputation as author of "Rain on the Roof" and other classics that have gone into not only the libraries of the learned but the hearts of the people. Donn Piatt went upon the staff as an editor, and the little journal soon attracted wide attention.

Some months after, John James Piatt, a cousin, now a leading poet of America, was induced to come to Mac-o-cheek and assume editorship of the paper. John James Piatt was then only twenty-four years old, but had already attained much reputation through his contributions in verse and prose to the *Louisville Journal*. He had studied in Kenyon College, was introduced into journalism and literature

through the *Ohio State Journal*, and had become associated later with George D. Prentice, who was the first to recognize and praise, as a critical authority, his writings. He remained upon the staff of the *Press*, as the ostensible editor, from November, 1859, until the following April, when he returned to the *Louisville Journal*. Many of his better earlier poems, since spread broadcast in books, were first printed in this little paper.

In mid-winter of '59 the editorial force was still further increased by the addition of one of the most talented and eccentric men of that time, Richard Realf. Born in England, of mysterious origin, Realf had when a mere boy won the interest of Lady Byron through his precocious genius for verses, and owing to her patronage and a marked resemblance in feature and a fiery yet practical passion for liberty to Lord Byron, was generally regarded as an illegitimate son of the great poet. Some of the boy's poems being recited throughout England by a traveling phrenologist, as illustrations of ideality, several literary people in Brighton sought him out and encouraged him. A collection of his poems was published in 1852 entitled "Guesses at the Beautiful." A year later he came to America, explored the slums of New York, and became for a time a Five Points missionary. Equal with his devotion to poetry—for he was really a poet

of high order, as reference to the earlier numbers of *Scribner's* will show—was his curious attachment to the personality of the poet Poe, whose living face he continually regretted never to have seen. Ranking next to this infatuation was his political enthusiasm that, stimulated to the highest degree by a reading of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, led him to cast his fortunes with old Ossa-watamie Brown, and he was selected to be Secretary of State in the provisional government that Brown projected. The movement being deferred for two years, Realf made a visit to England and a tour of the southern states. When Brown made his attempt at Harper's Ferry, in October, 1859, Realf was in Texas where he was arrested and sent to Washington, being in imminent danger of lynching on the way. On being released, he made his way, penniless and on foot, to the west, and knowing of Donn Piatt as a zealous reformer, sought him out at Mac-o-cheek. On the way Realf had read a further use of his name in connection with Brown, and, fearing a new development, begged upon his arrival to be carefully concealed. To this end his long locks were clipped, his ragged garments were exchanged for neat, clean clothing, and thus greatly altered in appearance, he was introduced about the neighborhood as Ralph Richards, a distant relative of the family. In a brief time his name disappeared entirely from the press of



the country, and this neglect worried him even more than had the former danger. He not only resumed his own name, but gave it prominence by attaching it to his many contributions to the *Mac-a-cheek Press*. During his four months stay at the home of Donn Piatt, he did much work for the little paper, and was for a time the acting editor.

With these accessions of able talent the *Mac-a-cheek Press* became far more than was originally intended and more than the patronage, necessarily limited, would have justified but for the fact that the many gifted contributors were not dependent on an income from this source. Through the high excellence of its political and literary features it very soon became known beyond the borders of the state, the pages of its contemporaries were copiously sprinkled with quotations from its columns, and it was more talked about than many a more pretentious journal of the cities. Although Donn Piatt's name did not appear at the head of the editorial page, nor indeed in any way, his inimitable style had become so well known that he was readily recognized as the leading spirit. As, however, he was traveling about on pleasure or business a great part of the time, most of his contributions came in the form of correspondence over the *nom de plume*, "Fuz." It was generally of a humorous character, and so well was it done that



the *Press* was more than a rival in that line to the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* with its Artemus Ward. The following fragment of a sketch is given as a fair sample of his letters :

“A station house at midnight, with a newly arrived train, is a pleasing spectacle—especially, if the night is rather cool and the train behind time. What streams pour out from the ends of the cars, of men in linen dusters, and women in linen stuffs, and children in fits of indigestion and ill nature ; and how, in the glare of the gas, they wink and look miserable and hustle and push each other about ! There is always a woman, certain. She has lost her trunk. And an elderly gentleman loud in his denunciation of the imposition, with threats of prosecution. Then the snorting of the locomotive, filling the building with volumes of smoke, and the banging down of trunks and the shouts of sleepy hack-drivers, for a moment make a Babel of the concern. But this is only for a moment. In the next instant the locomotive is backed out, the crowd disperses, the hacks, omnibuses and express wagons rattle away, and the huge hall is left to the flickering gas lights and a dead silence.

“I was sitting on my trunk waiting for the rest of my baggage and a hack, when I was suddenly assaulted by some sharp-pointed instrument in the back, and starting up, I saw a stout, middle-aged lady, with

piercing black eyes, raven hair, and not ill-looking; although at that moment she looked quite ill—I mean angry, or rather excited. She flourished a sunshade of large dimensions—so large, indeed, that it might serve as an umbrella or, as now, an instrument of attack.

“‘My good fellow,’ exclaimed corpulence in petticoats to me, ‘will you just jump ’round a bit and get my things together? I am in a great hurry; I must get to New York to-night; I am invited by Mrs. Bennett to her Japan matinee, and must get through Philadelphia to meet the train. There, now, jump about, that’s a good fellow. You shall be amply rewarded.’

“This was uttered in one breath, so sharply and rapidly indeed I had no time to get indignant. But to have your much-respected correspondent mistaken for a porter was so very ridiculous I could not get angry. A spirit of mischief seized me. I knew the lady; we had met before. So I went in.

“‘Jest you watch this gent’s trunk, aunty,’ I exclaimed, ‘and I’ll get your plunder together in a minute.’

“So at work I went. I flatter myself I did it in good approved style. I seized the huge trunk at once, and with a jerk and fling sent it tumbling to the floor. Every effort of this sort was rewarded with a

fresh scream and sundry pokes from the sun-shade. I had the baggage together and asked what next.

“ ‘Get a hack; mind, don’t agree to pay a cent more than one dollar—I know this place. And he must drive very rapidly; I must get over Philadelphia in time for the train.’

“ ‘Plenty of time, madame,’ remarked the baggage-master; ‘the next train leaves at 7 o’clock.’

“ ‘How dare you tell me the train leaves at 7 o’clock?’

“ ‘Cause it’s true.’

“ ‘It’s not true; you know that it is not true. What’s the use of my going on the 7 o’clock train? I had better go back to Washington. I am invited to Mrs. Bennett’s matinee. You know you are an imposition.’

“ ‘Thank you, mam—I only spoke on your account. Ef you don’t believe me, there’s a director of the company. He can tell you.’

“Away flew my fair employer, over the trunks and through the passengers. She overhauled the director, and in a few moments returned looking as if Mrs. Bennett’s matinee had been quite taken out of her. It was even so, no train left before 7 o’clock A. M. Nothing could be done but to go to bed and dream of the Bennett matinee, after paying the amateur porter. This I hinted.

“‘How much do you want?’

“‘Well, it’s worth all of a dollar.’

“‘A dollar! Why, this is monstrous—a dollar! There, there’s a quarter, and that’s more than it’s worth, considering my disappointment.’

“This was shabby—and from her, too. I knew, after many years, my eyes had at least remained good enough for a recognition. I had the honor of presenting her to the Emperor, and assuring his Imperial Insignificance that she was all right; and here she was jobbing me off with twenty-five cents. I did wrong, I regret it; but I wiped the perspiration from my forehead, pocketed the quarter; and with my trunk drove away to the Continental Hotel.”

Preliminary to the political campaign of 1860, Donn Piatt was a warm advocate of the nomination, by the Republican party, of Abraham Lincoln. He would have preferred Salmon P. Chase, his intimate friend and associate in various political measures, had he considered Chase’s nomination possible. He went to the national convention, held at Chicago, as a delegate, but a contest arising between himself and Hon. William H. West, of Bellefontaine, that ended in West being given the seat, he had no part in the selection of the candidate. His entire satisfaction with the result, however, is shown in the following extract from a letter to the *Press*:



“CHICAGO, *May 19, 1860.*

“The telegraph has long since startled the country with the intelligence the slower mails can only detail and confirm. I tender you my congratulations. We have made a narrow escape from a quick yet painful political death. After the arrival of the New York crowd, a new and a popular element seemed to take possession of our convention. Where it came from and what it meant were hard to find out. But it seemed born of an hour. One moment we were dosing along *Seaward*, and the next a great commotion arose, disconcerting the politicians, and bothering all their calculations. It was like a storm that in two minutes unroofs houses, prostrates forests and carries away fences. The sunshine and quiet, the ordinary elements going to develop vegetable growth, give way to the violent. And what a charming uproar we have, to be sure. First, the dead wood wakens into unhappy life, and sways and creaks and then snaps and trembles. The old stand-bys go down, and the parasitical vines clinging to the old deadwood disappear, and heaven's light comes in to illuminate the dark places. New York was off in rooms, singing vulgar songs and using profane language, when suddenly a storm broke out, spreading wider and wider until the entire space was filled with strange voices. The people had arrived—the people were energetic, enthusi-



astic, vociferous. Many an old Democrat, now of the Republican organization, wandering about in a very lonely way, feeling very like a swine in a back parlor, recognized the well-known sound and pricked up his ears and snorted aloud. He felt at home again, and went in with the wild enthusiasm of a bursted beer barrel.

“I found infinite amusement in the various little scenes enacted before me. While a rough from New York was discussing the chances of the candidates and advocating the claims of Seward with a gentleman from New Jersey, whose round head seemed held up by a stiff collar, an uncouth specimen with a rail on his shoulder drew near.

“‘Can’t carry New Jersey with Seward,’ said collar. ‘Can’t do it; no use talking.’

“‘Can’t we?’ responded rough of New York. ‘Jest you let us strip and go in with old Billy, an’ if we don’t take that pile, you may ham-string this Christian, that’s all.’

“‘What’s the use going on in that way? What it’s from I wan’t to know. Yet you’re always going on in that track. I heard you two hours last night—up to twelve—and you said nothing but that. Why, New Jersey ain’t a bully, and you can’t punch a majority out of her in that style.’

“‘Who wants to—say? Who said punch—ain’t

we all friends? I know what you want for Jersey; Lord, don't I know Jersey? Jersey don't care a G—d— for Dayton and the constitution. What she wants is money.'

“‘It'd take a big pile to carry New Jersey for Seward.’

“‘What d'ye call a pile? Speak it out—say? Don't care what it is· see that, and go something better.’

“‘Why, mister, it'd take a hundred and fifty thousand dollars to carry New Jersey!’

“‘That's it; sing it out. You can have it, and twice that. Got a million with our backers.’

“‘Look here, stranger,’ said our friend with the rail, squirting a stream of tobacco juice with the accuracy of a rifle-shot between the disputants, and bringing his rail down with a bang on the marble floor of the Tremont Hall, ‘I'll take this 'ere rail into Jarsey that honest old Abe split thirty year ago, and I'll do more with it than you can with all Californy dug up an' counted out!’”

Immediately after the convention, Mr. Piatt went to New York, and there remained until August, assisting in the arrangements for an aggressive campaign. The rest of the summer was spent with his wife at Narragansett, from which place a correspondent of the *Press* wrote of him: “I found New York

rather warm at last, and ran over to Narragansett Pier, on the invitation of our old friend and neighbor, Mr. Donn Piatt, who, with his wife, is at this place indulging in sea bathing. I found him as usual surrounded by politicians, such as the Hon. Gideon Wells, Mr. Mack Howard, Hon. Robert C. Schenck, Edward Lilly Pierce, Mr. Joseph Glenn, and others of like political complexion. I never before lived in a house with such a quantity of politics. We ate, slept, walked, wrote, sat, drove, fished, and bathed in politics."

When the speaking campaign opened, Piatt accompanied Hon. Robert C. Schenck to Illinois at the request of Mr. Lincoln, and addressed meetings throughout that state, closing their labors in a great rally at Springfield a few nights before the election. Mr. Lincoln was present, though he took no part in the meeting, and listened with intense interest to Mr. Schenck's able argument. Piatt followed in a cheerful review of the situation that amused the crowd, and none more so than the candidate for the presidency. As a recognition of their services, both were invited to return to Springfield for the jubilee, should success make such rejoicing proper. They did return, and, on the day of their arrival, were invited to a supper at the house of the president-elect. This, Piatt's first opportunity of studying Mr. Lincoln's personal-

ity, is thus told of in his "Memories of the Men who Saved the Union:"

"After the supper, we sat far into the night, talking over the situation. Mr. Lincoln was the homeliest man I ever saw. His body seemed to me a huge skeleton in clothes. Tall as he was, his hands and feet looked out of proportion, so long and clumsy were they. Every movement was awkward in the extreme. He sat with one leg thrown over the other, and the pendant foot swung almost to the floor. And all the while two little boys, his sons, clambered over those legs, patted his cheeks, pulled his nose, and poked their fingers in his eyes, without causing reprimand or even notice. He had a face that defied artistic skill to soften or idealize. It was capable of few expressions, but those were extremely striking. When in repose, his face was dull, heavy, and repellant. It brightened like a lit lantern when animated. His dull eyes would fairly sparkle with fun, or express as kindly a look as I ever saw, when moved by some matter of human interest.

"I soon discovered that this strange and strangely gifted man, while not at all cynical, was a skeptic. His view of human nature was low, but good-natured. I could not call it suspicious, but he believed only what he saw. This low estimate of humanity blinded him to the South. He could not understand that men



would get up in their wrath and fight for an idea. He considered the movement South as a sort of political game of bluff, gotten up by politicians, and meant solely to frighten the North. He believed that when the leaders saw their efforts in that direction were unavailing, the tumult would subside. 'They won't give up the offices,' I remember he said, and added 'Were it believed that vacant places could be had at the North Pole, the road there would be lined with dead Virginians.' He unconsciously accepted for himself the same low line that he awarded the South. Expressing no sympathy for the slave, he laughed at the Abolitionists as a disturbing element easily controlled, and, without showing any dislike to the slaveholders, said only that their ambition was to be restrained.

"I gathered more of this from what Mrs. Lincoln said than from the utterances of our host. This good lady injected remarks into the conversation with more force than logic, and was treated by her husband with about the same good-natured indifference with which he regarded the troublesome boys. There was an amusing assumption of the coming administration in the wife's talk that struck me as very womanly, but somewhat ludicrous. For instance, she said, 'The country will find how we regard that Abolition sneak



Seward.' Mr. Lincoln put the remark aside very much as he did the hand of one of his boys when that hand invaded his capacious mouth.

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“I felt myself studying this strange, quaint, great man with keen interest. A newly-fashioned individuality had come within the circle of my observation. I saw a man of coarse, tough fiber, without culture, and yet of such force that every observation was original, incisive, and striking, while his illustrations were as quaint as *Æsop's* fables. He had little taste for, and less knowledge of, literature, and while well up in what we call history, limited his acquaintance with fiction to that somber poem known as ‘Why Should the Spirit of Mortal be Proud.’

“It was well for us that our president proved to be what I then recognized. He was equal to the awful strain put upon him in the four years of terrible strife that followed. A man of delicate mold and sympathizing nature, such as Chase or Seward, would have broken down, not from over-work, although that was terrible, but from the over-anxiety that kills. Lincoln had none of this. He faced and lived through the awful responsibility of the situation with the high courage and comfort that came of indifference. At the darkest period, for us, of the war, when the roar of the enemy's cannon was throbbing along

the walls of our capitol, I heard him say to General Schenck, 'I enjoy my rations, and sleep the sleep of the innocent.'"

"Mr. Lincoln did not believe, could not be made to believe, that the South meant secession and war. When I told him, subsequently to this conversation, at a dinner-table in Chicago, where the Hon. Hannibal Hamlin, General Schenck, and others were guests, that the Southern people were in dead earnest, meant war, and I doubted whether he would be inaugurated at Washington, he laughed and said the fall of pork at Cincinnati had affected me. I became somewhat irritated and told him that in ninety days the land would be whitened with tents. He said in reply :

" ' Well, we won't jump that ditch until we come to it,' and then after a pause he added, ' I must run the machine as I find it.'

"I take no credit to myself for this power of prophecy. I only said what every one acquainted with the Southern people knew, and the wonder is that Mr. Lincoln should have been so blind to the coming storm.

"The epigrammatic force of his expressions was remarkable for the singular purity of his words. What he said was so original that I reduced much of it to writing at the time. One of these was this on secession :

“‘If our Southern friends are right in their claim, the framers of the government carefully planned the rot that now threatens their work with destruction. If one state has the right, at will, to withdraw, certainly a majority have the right, and we have the result given us of the states being able to force out one state. That is logical.’

“We remained at Springfield several days, and then accompanied the President-elect on his invitation to Chicago. The invitation was so pressing that I believed Mr. Lincoln intended calling General Schenck to his cabinet. I am still of this opinion, and attribute the change to certain low intrigues hatched at Chicago by the newly created politicians of that locality, who saw in the coming administration opportunities for plunder that Robert C. Schenck’s known probity would have blasted.

“Subsequent to the supper we had gatherings at Mr. Lincoln’s old law office, and at the political headquarters, at which only men formed the company, and before those good, honest citizens who fairly worshiped their distinguished neighbor, Mr. Lincoln gave way to his natural bent for fun, and told very amusing stories, always in quaint illustration of the subject under discussion, no one of which will bear printing. They were coarse, and were saved from vulgarity only by being so strangely in point, and told not for the

sake of telling, as if he enjoyed the stories themselves, but that they were, as I have said, so quaintly illustrative.

“The man who could open a cabinet meeting called to discuss the emancipation proclamation by reading Artemus Ward, who called for a comic song on the bloody battle field, was the same man who could guide with clear mind and iron hand the diplomacy that kept off the fatal interference of Europe, while conducting at home the most horrible of civil wars that ever afflicted a people. He reached with ease the highest and the lowest level, and on the very field that he shamed with a ribald song, he left a record of eloquence never reached by human lips before.”

At the first call for volunteers on the opening of the war Donn Piatt offered his services, and in order to set as good an example as possible, he enlisted as a private. His name appears first on the roll of volunteers from Logan county. A company was soon formed at West Liberty, made up mostly of farmer's sons, who enlisted with the understanding that they were to become cavalrymen.

Donn Piatt was elected captain, and he immediately went to Columbus to procure the proper equipment for his company as cavalry, but was informed by Governor Dennison that there was no authority for



such formation. Not discouraged, he wrote to the War Department for the authority. Receiving no response from Washington, he returned home, saying nothing to his men, however, of his failure.

A few days later, in compliance with an order from the adjutant-general of the state to report with his company at Camp Jackson, he took them to Columbus and, assembling them in the state-house yard, informed them in a patriotic speech that their fond hopes of going off to the war on horseback would have to be for the time given up. The result was great confusion in the ranks. The men were much incensed at the government's failure to respond, and for some time it was impossible for Captain Piatt to get a further hearing. When finally permitted to speak, he said :

“Boys, you volunteered to fight for your country. When we left home gay banners were flying in our little town, an immense assemblage was gathered to see the heroes depart, and tears of loved ones were pressed back in pride at your bravery and self-sacrifice. They expect to see you come back covered with glory, perhaps with badges of honor in the shape of scars.

“You must not now disgrace yourselves by abandoning this organization because our sorely tried government can not at a moment's notice comply with our wish. There is nothing to keep you from dis-



banding if you so decide; you can go home, but after all you have professed can you live there in the society of your neighbors who are now regarding you as saviors of our country? You may face them with your dissatisfaction, explain to them, if you can, your desertion of the cause; but for my part I am going to the front, and I now ask for volunteers to go with me under whatever conditions the government requires assistance."

Ten men promptly stepped out and ranged themselves by his side, and as soon as the rest could fully comprehend the true situation they followed this brave example. They were mustered in as Company C in the 13th O. V. I., of which regiment Captain Piatt's younger brother, A. Sanders Piatt, was colonel.

A week afterward the following dispatch was received:

WASHINGTON, D. C., *May 2, 1861.*

HON. DONN PIATT:

In reply to your dispatch to Gov. Chase, I regret to be obliged to decline your patriotic offer of a company of cavalry.

SIMON CAMERON.

Captain Piatt was no less keenly disappointed than his men at this refusal to accept them as cavalry, though his desire to serve in that capacity came from a different motive. As a diplomat in Europe, during

the war of the Crimea, he had been afforded exceptional advantages for a close study of the art of war, so far as it is an art, and had clearly recognized what the statesmen at Washington did not at first, that cavalry was not only of necessity to feel the enemy, but, properly made up and disciplined, of incalculable assistance in battle.

He was quick to see that a cavalry force, to be of efficient service, must be composed of men who not only could ride but understood how to care for their horses. He knew that volunteers from the towns and cities who never had been astride of a horse would be fascinated with the idea of owning one, while the country bred, well knowing that not only was riding a labor but the care of a horse a heavy task, would fight shy of the service; and the consequence would be cavalymen helpless in the saddle, and horses starved and ridden to death in thirty days.

How nearly the actual condition came in line with his prediction is shown in the fact that for nearly two years, it was said of our cavalymen, wholly inefficient, that one was seldom killed save by a fall from his horse.

He would not give up hope of eventually having accepted in this arm of the service his hardy young men, who, born on farms, were bred to the daily use of horses; and he importuned Governor Dennison

until given a promise that the first cavalry equipment authorized in Ohio, should go to this company. Two months later, an order came from the war department, authorizing their equipment as desired.

In the meantime, however, Robert C. Schenck had been commissioned Brigadier-General of Volunteers, and from the day of his appointment urged Captain Piatt to accept a place on his staff. There being little probability that his company would re-enlist for the three years service, Piatt accepted the position tendered, and joined General Schenck at Camp Upton. He was soon after made Assistant-Adjutant General and Chief of Staff, his commission bearing date of 28th June, 1861, it being the first issued in the Ohio service.

General Schenck's appointment was vigorously denounced as a political one by those who held that the volunteer army should be officered by regulars. The press of the country covered the selection with ridicule and abuse. It was styled that of a "political general," which was then held to be the highest reach of epithet. This coarse abuse continued to follow every act of the new brigadier-general, whose only fault seems to have been that before the war he had been distinguished; and the unfortunate affair at Vienna, occurring soon after, was seized upon as an event to make such abuse effective.

Distorted representations of this affair were given to the greedy press by those who found it to their interest to maintain that none but West Pointers were fit to hold office in the army. The people were readily affected, for it was early in the war and lives had not yet been cheapened to the extent necessary to allow a general to slaughter thousands while learning the art of war, and a howl of wrath went up from press and people alike over the loss of ten men. A man of less nerve would have sunk under the abuse and thrown up his commission. General Schenck was a proud, sensitive man, but he had that indomitable will which defies fate, and, clamping his iron jaws together, he bided his time, and so won his spurs at last.

No one felt the injustice of this abuse of a brave and able soldier more keenly than his chief of staff, and none more promptly and vigorously resented it. Though he had no part in the affair at Vienna and the criticism did not touch him, Captain Piatt accepted the ridicule hurled upon his general and friend as an infamous insult from West Point to the entire volunteer service. He was quick to speak in defense. Having access to the columns of the leading newspapers of the country, he availed himself of this opportunity to put in print his radical views concerning the arrogant assumption of superiority on the part of West Pointers, who, as soldiers by profession,



sought to discourage, disparage, and even dishonor abler men who were soldiers through patriotism. He did not hold his hand nor measure the terrific weight of his blows. He dipped his pen in vitriol, and invective that cut to the quick passed into proverb. It was the beginning of a warfare, that lasted through the whole of his subsequent life, against the government school on the Hudson, that dull, plodding sons of rich or influential men entered with the high ambition to become great generals only to graduate into fitness for dress parade privates. The ability to command in the field, which, he contended, is a matter of temperament rather than training, depending chiefly upon a quick calculation of chances and a good eye for topography, is not taught in the tactics, nor is the self-reliant force of character that never hesitates and gives to others the confidence felt by its possessor, the product of schools. The road to military success is lit by flashes of lightning on scenes that shift as rapidly as the sea; and, while West Point may train the private that service turns into a soldier, God alone can create the capable commander.

These views, which he was among the first to promulgate, and which he advocated with a force and pertinacity that brought them into great prominence, precipitated upon himself the wrath of West Pointers, and their adverse influence in the War Depart-



ment seriously interfered with the promotions his subsequent services deserved.

Self-interest, however, did not restrain him either in this or any other acts of his military career. In his intensely earnest patriotism, he was not one to hesitate or hold back in uttering what he considered the truth, or in doing what he believed to be the right thing, although he was brought into conflict with the higher authorities and compelled to sacrifice hope of his own advancement.

At the first battle of Bull Run, 21st July, 1861, General Schenck commanded a brigade in General Tyler's division, embracing the 1st and 2d Ohio, the 2d New York, and a battery of six pounders. He was stationed on the Warrenton road near a stone bridge, defended against his advance by an abattis, and leading across the stream to a wide plateau, the scene of the conflict. About four o'clock in the afternoon, being left in command by General Tyler, he determined, on Piatt's suggestion, to clear the abattis from the bridge and go to the relief of the sorely pressed Union forces. He had scarcely succeeded in passing the bridge when the order came to retreat, and the command moved off in good order, not only being kept under perfect control, but covering the retreat of the routed and disorganized army so admirably that the rebel general, Beauregard, failed to give pur-

suit, for the reason, as stated in his official report, that he was convinced that large reinforcements held the Warrenton road. He had no evidence of this other than this brigade's determined approach and gallant demonstration.

But this is not all of Schenck's and Piatt's illustrious services on that unfortunate day. Their orders contemplated a halt near Centreville, and consequently a stand was made and preparations begun for a proper disposition of the forces to hold the point. And here arose a most extraordinary emergency. The various colonels and other subordinate officers, some of West Point and the regular army, protested against the delay, and both Schenck and his chief of staff, sought to convince them that the danger was not so great as they seemed to apprehend, and that in any event the order to remain was positive. The subordinates declared their intention to proceed to Washington, and, in defiance to protests and threats of court-martial, they placed themselves at the head of their various commands, turned their backs upon the enemy, deserted their general, and fled. General Schenck was absolutely left upon the spot he was ordered to hold with a single orderly and his staff, and there they remained, helpless though they were, until orders came from General McDowell for their retreat.

Piatt has since written upon the causes of this

disastrous defeat, chief among which he pronounces to be the defective arms put in the hands of the poor fellows who so bravely marched out to a cruel slaughter. His charges of corruption are so serious and his criticism of the guilty men in authority so scathing that a part is given here, not only as an illustration of his hot patriotism and keen invective, but as a chapter in highly important but half-forgotten history.

“When the war burst so unexpectedly upon the government at Washington to arm and equip even 75,000 men made a problem difficult of solution. It takes time to manufacture guns, and this necessary time our authorities could not command. It was sought to purchase in Europe, and, as a consequence, we marched from camp at Centreville to find and whip the enemy armed mainly with muskets bought abroad. Our gallant men found locks breaking and barrels bursting with far greater danger to themselves than to the enemy we assailed. I remember that at the assault at Blackburn’s Ford, George Wilkes, and I believe, General Baird or General Fry, I forget which, assisted by others, rallied a number of stragglers from the fight as they poured along the road to the rear. One of the gallant West Pointers remonstrated with the retreating volunteers. ‘Well, give us guns we can shoot, and we’ll fight,’ said one of the men. An im-

promptu inspection followed, and out of twenty muskets only one was found in a serviceable condition. These were Belgian muskets, purchased, as it was said, through the agency of Weed and Sandford, *and were condemned guns* bought of the contractor, after condemnation, by our patriotic agents.

“Now I know, as the entire army knew, that these pot-metal semblances of guns were utterly worthless. Whether the story then told and generally believed, that they came through the agency of Weed and Sandford, is true, I do not know, but it is not too late to investigate. Weed is dead, but Simon Cameron, then Secretary of War, and Henry Sandford are yet alive. It behooves them at least to make denial.

“This is a serious charge, and I must not be considered its author. It was made on the field of battle by men with the worthless arms in their hands by the side of the dead and dying. It is hard to believe that in the hour of deadly peril to the nation the brave fellows who volunteered to fight were made the victims of a treachery that discounts treason in its greed for money stained with the heart's blood of the patriots called to the front. Camp followers rob the dead and, it is said, sometimes murder the wounded. These are fiends in human shape, but they are saints by the side of the cold-blooded, selfish scoundrels who, with the



roar of the deadly strife sounding in their ears, swindled the government through spoiled food, rotten shoddy, and useless arms for the men who tendered their lives in behalf of their flag and country."

General Schenck, with Piatt, was next assigned to service in Virginia under Rosecrans, and they were actively engaged in the several campaigns on the Kanawha and New rivers. It was in the nine months service here that Piatt came to know and appreciate the admirable material and superb organization of the Army of the Cumberland that he ever after delighted to praise. His high admiration for Rosecrans and his love of and devotion to the great Thomas came from close observation and careful study of them in field and camps.

General Schenck was transferred to Cumberland, Maryland, on the death of General F. W. Lander, in March, 1862, and there Captain Piatt joined him after a month's leave of absence spent with his wife at Washington. There was much work of a distressing sort done at Cumberland. The town was crowded with sick and wounded soldiers, and the troops in that vicinity were much disorganized. In restoring order and administering upon the perplexing affairs of the department, Captain Piatt was of very great assistance.

From Cumberland, late in March, they moved



with a little army up the South Branch of the Potomac and successfully occupied and held Moorefield, Petersburg, Franklin, and other important points on that line of operation. Soon after they were ordered to McDowell to the relief of General Milroy, who had penetrated with a small force that far in the enemy's country. They had but one brigade, and the expedition was hazardous in the extreme. They had mountains to climb and rivers to cross without the remotest information as to what might be before or on either side. They arrived at McDowell on the same evening that Stonewall Jackson did, he being then engaged in his campaign of victories that so disconcerted McClellan before Richmond and startled the government at Washington. Jackson had twice the number of the force made up of Schenck's and Milroy's brigade, and the necessity of retreat was at once apparent.

Milroy favored their getting out immediately. Schenck expressed the opinion that a bold front might benefit them, and, turning to Piatt, he said:

"And what do you think, Donn? Fight, of course."

"It would be a pity," responded Piatt, "to let slip this chance to show Old Stonewall that there is at least a part of the Union army that is not made up of seats of trousers. If we but demonstrate that we

have bellies and guns and can keep the one in the right direction and use the other, he won't press us so close in our retreat."

"Yes," added Schenck, "before we retreat, we must fight."

It was soon learned that the enemy were fortifying a strong position on what is called Bull Pasture mountain. Against this the little force moved out. Up the slope the gallant fellows went, firing as they advanced and under a continuous discharge from the breastworks above, until the mountain brow was reached and the Confederates driven from their position. That night the little Union army withdrew with all its effects without molestation or pursuit.

This was no important affair and had no great consequences, and it is given thus fully for the sole reason that it tells of Captain Piatt's participation in one of only two instances in the entire war in which a Union force outmaneuvered, outfought, and outmarched the greatest fighter on the Confederate side.

Captain Piatt was with his general under Fremont in the eight days' pursuit of Jackson that ended in the battle of Cross Keys, and in this closing engagement the brigade to which he was attached performed gallantly in the hottest part of the field, not only holding the right flank, but hard pressing the enemy.

In response to the severe comments upon General

Fremont's failure in this campaign, that resulted in his department being attached to the Army of Virginia, under Pope, and his consequent retirement from the service, Piatt has put forth some facts that not only demonstrate Fremont's genius as a general, but prove that such genius was recognized by the president, though not acknowledged.

“One day, at Fremont's headquarters, when General Schenck, Carl Schurz, and the writer of this were assembled, the talk turned on McClellan's operations before Richmond, and General Fremont said: ‘It appears to me all wrong, this moving on the enemy from the sea. If McClellan succeeds in taking Richmond, he only drives Lee back on his resources, and this prolongs the war until the European governments will interfere, and, recognizing the Confederacy, put an end to our conquest. Now, if the movements were made from the interior, and the Confederates defeated, they would be driven into the sea; and taking a map, he traced upon it the line our armies should follow.

“Not long after this I happened at Washington, and, meeting Edwin M. Stanton, was invited by him to tea. During the repast the secretary turned to me and asked:

“‘How do you get along with that fellow Fremont?’ I responded: ‘You speak very slightlyly’

of one of our brightest generals,' and I then proceeded to repeat Fremont's plan of advance on Richmond. The secretary made no comment that night, but the next day, at his office, he asked me what that was 'the fellow Fremont' had suggested, and, pulling down a map of Virginia, requested me to trace the line upon it. When I ended, he said, with some emphasis:

"I be hanged, if that is not good sense; I must talk to Lincoln about it."

"This became, with no thanks to its author, the one favorite route to Richmond, which first Hooker, then Burnside, and subsequently Grant was put upon and all failed from lack of capacity and the nature of the country they had to traverse, for Grant, after swearing that he would 'fight it out on that line if it took all summer,' was forced to swing round into the old beaten path from the sea made by McClellan. In his effort he lost more men killed and wounded than Lee had in command.

"The secretary of war, although a Jeffersonian democrat, had not read Jefferson to much purpose, or he would have seen what that great man said of Virginia's weakness and defense. He calls attention, in his notes, that all the main rivers emptying into the Potomac and Chesapeake, afford lines of easy invasion from that direction, while from north or south,



these very streams make lines of defense difficult, if not impossible, of capture.

“What Fremont said, however, was true, and it was from Chattanooga and not Washington that the advance was to be made, that if successful would drive the enemy into the sea or a surrender. The head and front, in popular estimation, of the Confederacy, said not long since that Chattanooga was the key to the situation, and its loss was fatal to the Confederacy. The Federal Government, however, seemed to be at a loss what to do with it when captured. Had the Army of the Cumberland been left in possession without even an attempt to penetrate the interior of Georgia, it would have been such a menace to the Confederacy that half of Lee's army would have been called on to continually threaten our forces. As it was, Longstreet and his entire command of unconquered veterans were hurried out to Bragg, for the purpose of retaking this important stronghold.”

Under General Pope Schenck's division was engaged in all the fatiguing marches along the Rappahannock, and upon it fell much of the heavy labor of watching, marching and fighting on the most exposed flank of the position.

On 5th July, Captain Piatt was ordered by General Franz Sigel, his corps commander, to proceed to



Washington and consult with Secretary Stanton and General Pope concerning movements of the division, and, having performed this duty and made his report, he procured a leave of absence and joined his wife at Cincinnati. He reached Washington on his return a few days before the second battle of Bull Run, but communication being cut off, he was unable to rejoin the army until the night of the second day of the battle.

General Schenck having been incapacitated for service by a severe wound, Captain Piatt returned to Washington to await appointment. On 23d September he was detailed by the secretary of war, as a member of the commission organized to investigate the surrender of the garrison at Harper's Ferry. The commission was composed, in addition to Piatt, of Judge Joseph Holt, Judge-Advocate-General of the Army, and Generals Hunter, Cadwalader and Auger. As a recognition of Piatt's legal and literary talents he was selected to write out the finding. This he did in so striking a manner that his eminent fitness for this character of work was much commented upon and did not escape the attention of the president and secretary of war. The latter complimented him upon his part in the inquiry, and rewarded him with a commission as major.

In the organization, a month after, of a special

commission to assist the president in an inquiry into the military conduct of General Don Carlos Buell, lately in command of the Army of the Ohio, Major Piatt was made the Judge-Advocate. When Major Piatt received his orders he repaired to the war department to learn, if possible, the line of inquiry from the charges preferred. He found no charges on file, and on making application to Secretary Stanton, found that no charges had been prepared. On stating that he was at a loss to know how to conduct so blind an investigation, he was told to apply to Andrew Johnson, governor of Tennessee, and Oliver P. Morton, governor of Indiana, who could furnish him with all the charges necessary to the investigation.

The court convened at Cincinnati, 27th November, and the night before its organization Major Piatt went to Indianapolis to consult Governor Morton. He informed the governor of his instructions from the secretary of war, and Governor Morton entered upon a recital of acts indicating that General Buell was in treasonable correspondence and even personal communication with General Bragg, that the entire movement from Murfreesboro to the Ohio, was planned and conducted for the purpose of giving both Tennessee and Kentucky to the rebels. When the Judge-Advocate, however, proposed to formulate these charges and place them before the court, the

governor demurred—"By no manner of means," he said, earnestly, "I give you these only for your own guidance. Johnson and I will furnish the witnesses, and we will appear ourselves at the proper time."

The Judge-Advocate returned to the court, which he swore to secrecy, an oath General Buell declined taking, and, upon that officer demanding to know the charges, he was informed that the court was one of inquiry only, to assist the president in a better knowledge of the recent campaign that had ended so disastrously to the government. General Buell protested to this course, and claimed that the tribunal had no legal sanction, and, having said so, proceeded quietly with the so-called investigation.

The court sat for six months. When the witnesses promised by the war governors appeared the better class of them absolutely knew nothing of the treasonable practices charged, while those who were voluble in their information the law officer of the court was ashamed to put on the stand. They nearly all belonged to that class of mercenary spies known as detectives, that one General Baker of the war department made so notorious and utterly unreliable. After a short sitting at Cincinnati the court adjourned to Louisville and again to Nashville.

The finding of the tribunal was of no conse-

quence. It was virtually an acquittal of General Buell and a mild censure of General Halleck. The eventual history of the records was as curious as the conduct of the court. Taken down by that accomplished stenographer, Mr. Benn Pitman, they were forwarded to the War Department in a box. Some years after, a delver in the dust of worthless things called for these records. They could not be found; box and all had disappeared. This very disappearance made them valuable. Congress resolved, and the press was about taking up the mystery, when Benn Pitman informed the Department that he could replace the records from the original copy in shorthand. This was done, and immediately all interest in them subsided.

But while the investigation was of no consequence, Major Piatt's manner of conducting it won for him great favor at the headquarters of the Army of the Cumberland, where the proceedings were watched with intense interest, and the following unsolicited letter was sent from Murfreesboro to the Secretary of War:

“Permit me respectfully to recommend Major Donn Piatt for the position of Assistant Judge-Advocate for the Bureau of Military Justice about to be created.



“I know he has the ability, and believe he has the ambition to distinguish himself in such a position.

“W. S. ROSECRANS,

“*Major-General Volunteers.*”

General Schenck had sufficiently recovered from his wound by December to return to duty, and, having been promoted to a major-generalship, he was appointed to the command of the Middle Department, Eighth Army Corps, with headquarters at Baltimore. On the first of January following, Major Piatt was made Assistant Inspector-General of the Eighth Corps, with rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, and ordered to report to his corps commander at Baltimore, as soon as the court martial duty he was then on was completed. The court finally adjourning in May, he hastened to rejoin his general.

The work devolving upon the Middle Department was of a highly important and extremely delicate character. The turbulent secession spirit of Maryland had to be controlled and the Union sentiment encouraged, while treating all citizens with uniform firmness and justice. Butler had failed, and it remained for Schenck to exert to the utmost his signal diplomatic abilities. General Schenck being forced to be absent from his post much of the time, the trying duties fell upon Colonel Piatt. The two, with the



intense loyalty that distinguished them always, shifted the military sympathy from the aristocracy of Maryland to the Union men, and made the eloquent Henry Winter Davis and the well known jurist, Judge Hugh S. Bond, their associates and advisers. These gentlemen could not understand why, having such entire command of Maryland, the government did not make it a free state, and so, taking the property from the disloyal, render them weak and harmless and bring the border of free states to the capitol of the Union. The fortifications about Baltimore used heretofore to threaten that city, now, under the influence of Davis, Bond, and others, had their guns turned outward for the protection of the place, and it seemed only necessary to inspire the negroes with faith in the Unionists as liberators to perfect the work. The first intimation received that this policy was distasteful to the administration came from Secretary Stanton. Piatt had told him what they hoped to accomplish, and received the dry response :

“You and Schenck had better attend to your own business.”

“What do you mean by our own business?” asked Piatt.

“Obeying orders, that’s all,” and the subject was dropped.

Soon after this, in June, Colonel William Birney

went into Maryland to recruit for a colored brigade, then first authorized. Colonel Piatt directed him to recruit slaves only. He replied that he would be glad to do so, but wanted authority in writing from General Schenck. Piatt tried his general, and he refused, saying that such authority could come only from the War Department, as Birney was acting directly under its instructions. Piatt could not move Schenck, and knowing that the latter had a leave of absence for a few days to transact some business in Boston, he waited patiently until he was fairly off, and then, as officer in command, issued the order to Colonel Birney. Taking an idle government steamer, Birney at once set off for that part of Maryland where the slaves did most abound.

Birney was scarcely out of sight before Colonel Piatt awakened to the opposition he had excited. The Hon. Reverdy Johnson appeared at headquarters, heading a delegation of solid citizens who wanted the Union and slavery saved one and inseparable. Piatt gave them scant comfort, and they left for Washington. That afternoon came a telegram from the War Department, asking who was in command at Baltimore. Piatt responded that General Schenck, being absent for a few days only, had left affairs in control of his Chief of Staff. Then came a curt summons ordering Colonel Piatt to appear at the War Depart-

ment. He obeyed, arriving at Washington in the evening; and being informed that the secretary was at the executive mansion he repaired there, and was shown into the presence, not of Mr. Stanton, but of the president. Mr. Lincoln was in a terrible rage, and not only expressed in most scathing terms his disapproval of Piatt's unauthorized action, but threatened him with shameful dismissal from the service.

Piatt was saved cashiering, however, through the influence of Stanton and Chase, and the further fact that a row over such a transaction at that time would have been extremely awkward.

But the deed was done, and the one act had made Maryland a free state. Of the effect of his order, Colonel Piatt says in his "Men who Saved the Union:"

"Word went out, and spread like wildfire, that 'Mr. Linkum was a callin' on de slaves to fight for freedom,' and the hoe-handle was dropped, never again to be taken up by unrequited toil. The poor creatures poured into Baltimore with their families, on foot, on horseback, on old wagons, and even on sleds stolen from their masters. The late masters became clamorous for compensation, and Mr. Lincoln ordered a commission to assess damages. Secretary Stanton put in a proviso that those cases only should be considered where the claimant could take the iron-

bound oath of allegiance. Of course no slaves were paid for."

The president never forgave him. Subsequently, when General Schenck resigned command to take his seat in Congress, the Union men of Maryland, headed by Judge Bond, waited on the president with a request that Colonel Piatt be promoted to Brigadier-General and put in command of the Middle Department. Mr. Lincoln heard them patiently, and then refused, saying:

"Schenck and Piatt are good fellows, and if there were any rotten apples in the barrel they'd be sure to hook 'em out. But they run their machine on too high a level for me. They never could understand that I was boss."

Edwin M. Stanton told Colonel Piatt long after the war was over, that when he sent a list of officers to the president, Piatt's name included, as worthy of promotion, Lincoln would quietly draw his pen through Piatt's name.

However, the disfavor of the president did not by any means intimidate Colonel Piatt into inaction. One morning after his unpleasant interview with the president he handed Colonel Birney a letter, with the suggestion that he read it and investigate the truth of its contents. It was addressed to President Lincoln, and read *verbatim et literatim*, as follows:



“BALTIMORE, *June 15, 1863.*

“HON. PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN. *Sir:* i would like to inquire from you sir that we slaves are entitle to Be confine in prison By our masters or not sir. We have been In Prison for two years and a half and some are Bin in here for seventeen months and so our masters are Rible General A. B. Steward and are now in the Rible Army and we are Bin here Ever sence and we are waitin' to Be enlisted in the army or navy sir to fite for the stars and stripes there is about 20 of slaves in the Balto city jail our masters says that they are going to keep we slaves in Prison untill the war is over or soon as he can get a chance to send us slaves Down South to the Ribilions and we all would like to have our Liberty sir and i sir wish you would do something For we poor Slaves we have no shoes or clothing to Put on only what we Beg from the soldiers and citizens that comes to the Prison i would like to have my liberty. Direct your letter to Captain James warden in the city jail then he will give the Slaves their Liberty from your humble servant.”

Colonel Birney made inquiries, and found that there were nearly a hundred slaves confined in pens in different parts of the city, placed there by their masters for safekeeping until the close of hostilities.



Colonel Birney reported what he had learned, and Colonel Piatt, again in sole charge of the department in General Schenck's absence, unhesitatingly took upon himself the risk of authorizing Colonel Birney to at once take a squad of soldiers and open the jails.

It would be impossible to describe the misery of the poor creatures, chained like wild beasts, half clad in filthy rags and almost starved, with little fresh air and wretched light, that, being reflected from the whitewashed walls of a small court-yard, had totally blinded many and seriously affected the eyes of all. A blacksmith was sent for, and in a few moments every chain was broken, and the captives were with difficulty made to comprehend that they were free. They were all marched to the barracks and examined by the surgeons. A few only were found available as soldiers. The others were sent to the Quartermaster's Department in Washington, and disposed of there. They had been confined since the beginning of the war, and would in all probability have remained in the vermin-infested pens until its close but for the fact that through accident a man was in charge who had no respect for red tape, and preferred the consciousness of duty well done to a general's commission.

During the desperate advance of Lee into Pennsylvania, in June, 1863, Colonel Piatt rendered excep-

tional service to the Union cause. The armed force in the Middle Department was stationed in detachments at various points away from headquarters, and his duties as Inspector-General in looking after the equipment and fortifications were extremely onerous and dangerous. When General Halleck issued his order advising preparation for the concentration at Harper's Ferry of the troops under Schenck's command, Colonel Piatt was sent as chief of staff to look into General R. H. Milroy's condition at Winchester and empowered to let him remain or order him back as he saw fit. Colonel Piatt was convinced that Winchester, as a fortified place, was a military blunder; it covered nothing, while a force there was in constant peril. Furthermore, he had learned enough to know that a subordinate should take no chances, and he issued to Milroy the following order:

“HARPER'S FERRY, *June 11, 1863.*

“*Major-General Milroy, U. S. V.:*

“GENERAL—In accordance with order from Major-General Halleck, received from headquarters at Baltimore to-day, you will immediately take steps to remove your command from Winchester to Harper's Ferry. You will, without delay, call in Colonel McReynolds and such other outposts not necessary for observation at the front. Send back your heavy

guns, surplus amunition, and subsistence, retaining only such force and arms as will constitute what Major-General Halleck designates as a lookout, which can readily and without inconvenience fall back to Harper's Ferry before a superior force.

“DONN PIATT,

*“Lt.-Col. and Chief of Staff.”*”

The wisdom of this order was subsequently demonstrated beyond question; but at the time Milroy received it that gallant officer felt able to hold his ground, and not only appealed to General Schenck to countermand the order, but telegraphed Colonel Piatt a spirited protest. Accepting Milroy's assurance that he could take care of himself, which was supported by his previous record, General Schenck countermanded the order in the following dispatch to General Milroy:

“You will make all required preparations for withdrawing, but hold your position in the meantime. Be ready for movement, but await further orders.  
\* \* \* .”

To Colonel Piatt General Schenck telegraphed:

“Just received copy of your dispatch to General Milroy. You have somewhat exceeded instructions. I directed steps to be taken for preparing to carry out the instructions of the General-in-Chief, and added,

‘be ready, but await further orders.’ I will communicate directly with General Milroy.”

To this Colonel Piatt responded :

“NEW CREEK, *June 12, 1863.*

“*Major-General Schenck, Headquarters, Baltimore:*

“GENERAL—Read instructions by light of Halleck’s. He says the Winchester troops should be withdrawn to Harper’s Ferry. The troops at Martinsburg should be got ready. His dispatch is a repetition of that of 30th April, and the meaning can not be mistaken. If Milroy gets ready and waits, it will be too late. He has not men or transportation to move in the face of the enemy that will be on him before he can know of their approach. I have been on the ground and gave the order advisedly.

“DONN PIATT.

“*Lt. Col. and Chief of Staff.*”

Milroy was permitted to remain, and three days later found himself surrounded by Lee’s entire army, and, in attempting to fight his way out, his gallant command was cut to pieces, losing 4,000 prisoners and all material.

Milroy was put under arrest by Secretary Stanton and court-martialed by Halleck. He shielded himself behind General Schenck’s order, so that the



court convened was really trying Schenck, and without the advantages given him as defendant of being heard in his defense.

General Schenck drew up a protest that he directed Colonel Piatt not only to take to the president but to read to him, fearing that it would be pigeon-holed for consideration, when consideration would be too late. The result of this mission, fortunately, can be given in Col. Piatt's own words:

“It was late in the afternoon, and, riding to the White House, I was told the president could be found at the war department. I met him coming out, and I delivered my message.

“‘Let me see the protest,’ said the president, as we walked toward the executive mansion.

“‘General Schenck ordered me, Mr. President, to read it to you.’

“‘Well, I can read,’ he responded sharply, and, as he was General Schenck's superior officer, I handed him the paper.

“He read, as he strode along. Arriving at the entrance to the White House, we found the carriage waiting to carry him to the Soldier's Home, where he was then spending the summer, and the guard detailed to escort him drawn up in front. The president sat down upon the steps of the porch, and continued his study of the protest. I have him photographed on



my mind, as he sat there, and a strange picture he presented. His long, slender legs were drawn up until his knees were level with his chin, while his long arms held the paper, which he studied, regardless of the crowd before him. He read to the end. Then looking up, he said :

““ Piatt, don't you think that you and Schenck are squealing like pigs, before you are hurt ?”

““ No, Mr. President.’

““ Why, I am the court of appeal,’ he continued, ‘and do you think I am going to have an injustice done Schenck ?’

““ Before the appeal can be heard, a soldier's reputation will be blasted by a packed court,’ I responded.

““ Come, now!’ he exclaimed, an ugly look shading his face, ‘you and I are lawyers, and know the meaning of the word packed. I don't want to hear it from your lips again. What's the matter with the court ?’

““ It is illegally organized by General Halleck.’

““ Halleck's act is mine.’

““ I beg your pardon, Mr. President, the rules and regulations direct that in cases of this sort you shall select the court; you can not delegate that to a subordinate any more than you can the pardoning

power,' and opening the book I pointed to the article.

“‘That is a point,’ he said, slowly rising. ‘Do you know, Colonel, I have been so busy with this war that I have never read the regulations? Give me that book, and I will study them to-night.’

“‘I beg your pardon, Mr. President,’ I said, giving him the book, ‘but in the meantime my General will be put under arrest for disobedience, and the mischief will be done.’

“‘That’s so,’ he replied. ‘Here, give me a pencil,’ and tearing off a corner of the paper General Schenck had sent him, he wrote :

“‘All proceedings before the court convened to try General Milroy are suspended until further orders.

“‘A. LINCOLN.’

“‘The next morning I clanked into the courtroom with my triangular order, and had the grim satisfaction of seeing the owls in epaulettes file out, never to be called again.’”

Colonel Piatt continued to serve as Assistant Inspector-General and Chief of Staff in the Middle Department until January, 1864, though without further special incident. General Schenck resigned his

position in December, 1863, and Colonel Piatt, not finding his relations so pleasant with the new general commanding, asked to be relieved from duty, and returned home. Though he constantly sought to be assigned to service in some other field, he received no further orders, and in April, his wife's health having become extremely precarious, he tendered his resignation, which was accepted in July.

In the few years following the close of the war, when the conferring of high titles by brevet was common, the Hon. William Lawrence proposed to secure for him the brevet of brigadier-general. This was a species of sham that Colonel Piatt especially detested; and the following correspondence illustrates his real character better than a volume of comment :

“HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
WASHINGTON, *May 10, 1866.* } .

“*Colonel Donn Piatt:*

“MY DEAR COLONEL—I have applied to the War Department for a brevet of brigadier-general for you. I hope I may succeed. It might be well for you to send me any facts you have to aid in it. I think I can get it.

Truly your friend,

“WM. LAWRENCE.”

“MAC-O-CHEEK, *May 17, 1866.*

“*Hon. Wm. Lawrence, M. C.:*

“MY DEAR JUDGE—I have received your two letters by yesterday’s mail and hasten to answer.

“I beg that you will not suggest the promotion you speak of, nor urge my ‘claims’ upon the War Department. I could have had, I presume, the brevet you propose, long since, had I desired it. The officers I served under having earnestly urged my promotion to that rank while in the field would now, I am proud to say, join in any attempt at a mere compliment, if I wished it. But I do not. On the contrary, I should feel shamed if such brevet were conferred at the instigation of political friends. The highest rank that I reached while in the service was that of lieutenant-colonel, and now, long after that service, to jump up by brevet to brigadier-general, is to make a farce and a mockery of what I hold sacred, the years of service I gave to my country in the field.

“That you should write to me for information as to that service is not pleasant. I had flattered myself that at least my friends and neighbors knew something of what I had attempted. But one learns in time that fame, as some clever fellow observed, is made up, like a kite, of newspapers, ‘and thereby hangs a tale.’ To carry out the figure, one must have

one's self vigorously puffed until the proper altitude (position) is attained, after which sailing is steady, easy, and pleasant. And then :

“ ‘The things, we know, are neither rich nor rare,  
But wonder how the devil they got there.’

“I ought not to complain, for I see that Colonels Hart and Frizell have been subjected to the same treatment. These are two of the best and bravest officers of our volunteer army. I served with Colonel Frizell, and we little dreamed in the long and dreary marches of perilous campaigns we should be at last beholden to the interference of a political friend for a recognition of our services, and that the public should be made aware through telegrams published and widely circulated, that to this friend, more than our record, we are to be thankful.

“Fearing that this may not reach you in time, I have written to Mr. Stanton, begging him not to confer upon me the brevet you solicit.

“Your second letter I will answer in a few days, and in the meantime I remain,

“Yours sincerely,

DONN PIATT.”

On his retirement from the service, Colonel Piatt turned his entire attention to the forlorn hope of



nursing his wife back to health. Her alarming illness she had bravely concealed from him until his return. The anxiety and distress occasioned by his absence and exposure to constant dangers had so grievously affected her nerves, already shattered by long illness, that she had gone to her father's home in almost a dying condition.

The best medical authorities they were in a position to consult decided that only in the absolute quiet of a country home was there hope of her life being prolonged. She longed for Mac-o-cheek again, with its pure air, clear sunshine, and the sweet associations she loved so well. But the cottage there had been torn down, and her removal from Cincinnati was necessarily delayed until a new one could be built.

She herself drew the plans and suggested the site, and Colonel Piatt hastened to find stonemasons and carpenters. The work was pushed with all speed, but Death moved more swiftly, and ere the little cottage was completed amid the wood-crowned hills and glassy glens with their music of birds and babbling brook, her sweet, patient spirit, released from care and pain, was beckoned into paradise.

On the brow of a hill facing the sunset in the old church-yard at Mac-o-cheek is her simple tomb.

A marble block bears her portrait bust in medallion,  
and on the reverse side this epitaph:

“To thy dear memory, darling, and my own,  
I build in grief this monumental stone;  
All that it tells of life in death is thine,  
All that it means of death in life is mine;  
For the great King who tore our lives apart  
Gave me the dead, to you the living part;  
You, dying, live to find a life divine,  
I, living, die till death shall make me thine.”

## CHAPTER VI.

MEMBER OF THE OHIO LEGISLATURE—MARRIAGE TO ELLA  
KIRBY.

In the Autumn of 1865, Donn Piatt was elected as a Republican, in Logan county, to the Ohio House of Representatives. His election, while it came with a heavy majority in his favor, was not won without a bitter struggle. He had accepted the nomination at the urgent request of Henry Winter Davis, Edwin M. Stanton, Gen. Robert C. Schenck and others in all parts of the country, that he might, in the legislature, lead the forces of the last named, in his contest for the United States senatorship. The Vallandigham spirit was then in its fullest degree of intensity in the Democratic party, and Colonel Piatt's earnest services in the field, no less than his radical views and clear, forceful utterances in the press and on the stump, made him an especial object of attack not only in his own county but throughout the entire state. Moreover, not being fully in accord with his party as to the relation of the seceded states to the Union, he was denied full and harmonious support by the organization he acted with. The *Mac-a-Cheek Press* was

revived at this time, however, and Colonel Piatt himself assumed editorship. With a widely read editorial page thus at his command, he was quite at home in a campaign that turned on personality and invective. Almost single-handed and alone, he met the fierce opposition undismayed, and gave a blow for every one he parried, while standing firmly on ground he believed consecrated by right and justice.

The campaign was especially remarkable because of the bitterness of feeling that called into play his brilliancy of wit and sarcasm. As an orator on the stump he had few equals, and in debate no superior. Underlying a readiness of utterance, that, in its directness and simplicity was truly eloquent, was a thorough mastery of the subject matters on which he was called upon to speak, and, added to this, heightening an effect that can not be described, were the lightning flashes of wit that illuminated all and the thunder of his denunciation. Few could be more entertaining to an audience than he, and none could leave behind a clearer recollection of the points made in the argument. In a speech made at Dayton, the home of Vallandigham, is found illustration of his ways on the stump. It was an immense meeting, and Mr. Vallandigham himself was present. In opening his speech, Colonel Piatt said :

“ My fellow-citizens, for three things is Dayton

remarkable, and no further. One is your wide streets, the other your Harries' ale, and the third your Vallandigham. As I am here merely to close proceedings after the eloquent and elaborate address of Colonel Burnett, I will imitate a certain clergyman, who said he would divide his sermon into three parts—"The Flesh, the World, and the Devil," and he would touch lightly on the Flesh, pass swiftly over the World, and go straight to the Devil. Well, my friends, I will not dwell on your wide streets, nor will I touch your ale, but go straight to Vallandigham.

"It seems strange to a looker-on that we should devote so much time to this solemn, dull, egotistical fellow. There is my friend, Colonel Burnett, who has been, for over an hour, roasting him, and now I come in to do the basting; and it would seem to a hasty observer as if we were either mistaken in the ability of the man, or that we were very foolish to expend so much wrath on his miserable head. But, my friends, as a scientist takes a filthy insect, and, putting it on the point of a needle, places it under the microscope, and, crowding down his disgust, proceeds to dissect and describe the nameless thing for the benefit of science, so we political philosophers take up your specimen copperhead and proceed to dissect him, for the good of political science."



In this same speech, touching upon the then leading question, negro equality, he said :

“I can’t make out how any one can be put up or down socially, except through his own act or consent. But there must be something in it, or all these old leaders, in and out of petticoats, would not be so frightened. Still I believe the alarm uncalled for. I believe that the law making, not a distinction, but a separation, between the white and black races, is a law of our nature, or in other words a law of God ; and we of the Union organization being Christians, and people of refinement, recognize this law, live up to it, and feel no apprehension whatever. But if our friends of the copperhead persuasion are of a different opinion—if they are so sunk in the scale of civilization as to require a law to keep them from associating with negroes, why, by Jove, we will pass such a law. We will prohibit the negroes, by heavy penalties, from mixing in or associating with the copperheads. I believe it hits their case, and I pledge myself to carry it out. I will be a member of the next legislature, and if this distress continues, I will introduce an act that I have prepared, and to allay their alarm I will read it now. It runs :

“AN ACT entitled an act to amend an act entitled the act of God, to further protect and preserve the copperhead party.

“Whereas, Certain persons in our midst, known

as persons of African descent, following the profession of bootblack, barber, etc., have shown, of late, by their cultivation and refinement, a likelihood of overtaking and associating with copperheads: Therefore be it enacted:

“1st. That if any person or persons of African descent shall be found hanging about corner groceries, drinking bad whisky and abusing the Government, thereby imitating copperheads, such person or persons, on conviction thereof, shall be called copperheads, and treated as such.

“2d. That if any female of African descent shall so far forget herself as to receive the attentions of and associate with any copperhead, such female of African descent, on conviction thereof, shall be condemned to marry said copperhead, and live with the same without divorce or benefit of clergy.

“3d. That if any person or persons of African descent shall be heard to say that Vallandigham is a blessed martyr and our Government a despotism, and that he or they will not support Andy Johnson in his reconstruction, thereby showing himself or themselves to be devoid of common sense, such person or persons, on conviction thereof, shall be condemned to subscribe, pay for, and read the *Dayton Empire*, and may the Almighty have mercy on their souls!”

These extracts are typical of the quality of his sarcasm growing out of a keen sense of humor, but in this speech occurs an instance of his eloquence that, while charming the ear, arouses the impulses as well as appeals to the intellect. In closing, he said :

“I have not, my fellow-citizens, attempted seriously to discuss the grave questions that are now pressing upon the ballot-box for solution. I have not done so, because, in the first place, I came before you on the heels of an able argumentative speech; and, secondly, because we are on the eve of an election; all has been said that could be said, and we can afford to enjoy a little laugh, before we separate, at the ridiculous figure our friends over the way are indulging in. Let me, however, say in conclusion, that the war has been transferred from bloody battle-fields to the political arena, and you are now the Army of the Union. The organization and discipline of the soldiers is as necessary to you as it was to our armies. Throw aside all discordant elements, touch elbows, and march on to victory. If you want to realize how potent is such discipline, look at the copperheads, and as a celebrated divine once said to his congregation, ‘Oh, my beloved children, if the beautiful precepts of our Savior will not move you, do take a lesson from the devil, imitate his vigilance, activity, and intelligence.’ So I say, take a lesson from these

devil copperheads. See them like blind horses in a bark-mill, with the nose of one to the tail of the other, going round and round, going it blind and going it strong, and not caring a curse whether they are grinding bark or brimstone, so that they get their oats. If, with such low order of intellect, our enemies by united and enthusiastic action can accomplish so much, what ought we do? Come out from the field and workshop, from office and counting-room, come singly, in groups, and in crowds. Give one day to your country, that your children's children may enjoy many in peace and prosperity. Let the highway echo with the multitudinous tramp of freemen, and the heavens ring with your shouts, until peace-snakes will run frightened into their holes and light their dark lanterns, never to return."

It was a favorite maxim of Donn Piatt's, all his life, that in politics one gains more through a power to hurt than through the amiability that is supposed to be popular. In this campaign he put his rule into practical operation, and gave expression to many a choice bit of ridicule, that is not only preserved in the memory of the people and in print, but has been made common property by newspaper writers and public speakers. His story of the parrot that "talked too d—d much," first used by him in ridicule of certain indiscreet utterances of his opponent, has been



accepted as more illustrative than any of Æsop's, and is still widely used without memory of the author. His fable of the bear and calf was much quoted at the time, and when he afterward used it again in the *Washington Capital*, in response to expressions of sympathy at his arrest by President Grant, it attained a world-wide popularity. In the midst of the campaign Piatt became seriously ill, the result of exposure, and a Democratic writer with whom he had waged the bitterest warfare, satirically expressed in his paper the warmest sympathy and a hope that he might recover. Piatt acknowledged the profession of sympathy in the now well-known fable:

“A bear once fell on his back in a narrow ditch, and being unable to turn over could not extricate himself. A calf observed his misfortune, and cautiously approaching the edge, looked down upon him, and, with loud lamentations, ventured to express sympathy. ‘You poor fool,’ growled the bear, ‘I had expected death by starvation, and had become reasonably resigned, but the pity of a calf is more than I can bear. It renders me ridiculous, where before I was only in despair, and makes me suffer a thousand deaths before being relieved by one.’”

The *Press* was of vast assistance to him in the canvass. More than half the entire space was devoted to editorial matter, and Colonel Piatt took care that it



should contain, each week, at least one editorial that would especially attract attention. How well he could do this is shown in his phenomenal success, later on, as a journalist. There was no issue of his paper but had something of especial interest, timely in topic, fresh in material, and original in manner. This usually came in the form of humor or sarcasm, or more frequently both, for with him these two elements were seldom separated. In this local campaign his writings were almost uniformly in the nature of good humored ridicule, that did not cut less deeply, however, because good humored. The following is a sample of the style in which, as editor, he paid his respects to his political opponents:

“We are told that Foos has been making an attack on us. We don't object. Foos is at liberty to attack us at all hours. It relieves Foos and does us no harm.

“But we object to Foos' attack on Lindley Murray. Grammar, like the Constitution, should be respected. The man who has no regard for either, is totally depraved, and will die a horrible death. Be admonished Foos. Purchase a copy of Kirkham and give your days and nights to a study of that venerable authority. It is a pleasing study, and full of profound truths, such as this: ‘A verb is a part of speech

which signifies to be, to do and to suffer, as a tailor, hatter, shoemaker.'

"Foos is as ignorant of orthography as he is of grammar. He can not spell his own name. It should begin with a g or end with an l. Good-bye, Foos."

While a member of the legislature, Colonel Piatt continued his contributions to the *Press*. He sent each week a letter from Columbus, signed T. Cutlette, and being often in Cincinnati, he carried on a weekly correspondence from that city over the name "Fuz." In addition to this he kept up a department called "Jones' Corner." His writings were confined almost entirely to politics and state affairs, and so sharply critical, that the *Press* again became one of the most popular journals in the state. The demand for it became such, that in October, 1866, it was found necessary to remove it to Columbus, that it might have better facilities for publication and distribution. It prospered there until Colonel Piatt left the legislature, when its publication was suspended, never to be resumed.

The lower house of the Ohio Legislature, at the time Colonel Piatt was a member—it has since sunk much lower, he often said later in life—was made up of an eminent body of men, among whom were General Thomas L. Young, General Henry B. Banning, Hon. S. S. Bloom, William Penn Nixon, Hon. John

F. Follett and General Benjamin F. LeFever. By such men, Colonel Piatt's rare ability was readily recognized, and he at once became the acknowledged leader of the radical wing of his party. He was helped to this recognition by his earnest efforts at the beginning of the first session, to secure the election of General Robert C. Schenck as United States senator, as against the Hon. John Sherman. Piatt had his forces well in hand, with a clear majority for the soldier, but three days before the caucus Sherman appeared on the ground, accompanied by his confidential agent, Rush Sloan, and Schenck's majority mysteriously disappeared. It is significant that Sloan said afterward, that their expenditures for the three days averaged \$10,000 a day, especially as Sherman had, at that time, little means of his own. But the \$30,000, together with the patronage given Sherman by President Andrew Johnson, decided the contest, and Sherman was returned to the senate. Colonel Piatt could hardly be expected to remain silent upon the methods through which his friend and gallant general was crowded out of an honor he more than deserved, and he repeatedly published these facts during his lifetime, and, so far as the one accused is concerned, the answer has been "a silent one, more eloquent than words."

Piatt was not only the most efficient man in the house in committee work, but very soon demonstrated

that he was the most eloquent and effective speaker on the floor. His remarks had razor edges and were ever directed against sham and hollow pretense. The *Ohio Statesman*, then the ablest Democratic paper in the state, printed the following paragraph, which, coming as praise from the opposition, is praise indeed :

“On the east side of the hall, not far from the speaker’s right, you will observe the leader of the Radical majority in the house. He has just returned to his seat after a severe illness of ten days, and has not yet regained his full vigor and strength. Pending the senatorial fight, in the early part of the session, he was in command of the Schenck forces. After Sherman’s renomination and re-election, circumstances conspired to place the representative from Logan in a leading position on the floor of the house, and enable him to crack the party lash over all Republicans who manifested symptoms of approving the president’s policy, which he bitterly and persistently denounces. We have heard Donn Piatt pronounce as fine passages of sarcastic eloquence as can be found in the language. His speech on ‘Legislative Benders,’ just before the general assembly went to Cincinnati, contained some eloquent specimens of his peculiar style. He is an excellent party tactician, a bold, bitter and effective politician, and has become an adept



in legislation. After party questions are disposed of, he is far oftener right than wrong."

Piatt's first important speech was made early in the session upon a bill authorizing the police of cities to arrest and detain on the commission of any crime, suspected persons who could give no account of themselves. Only extracts from his speech are given. He said :

"The Committee on the Judiciary, in amending the bill now before the house, has stricken out the words, 'known or reputed pickpockets, burglars, thieves,' etc., and left line eighth, which reads, 'and suspected persons who can give no reasonable account of themselves,' and I hold leaves the proposed law as objectionable as it was before going into its hands. I maintain that to authorize the arrest of one charged with being an imputed pickpocket or an imputed burglar, is unconstitutional and inhuman. It is no argument with me to say that such is the law on the statute books, and that this act only proposes to extend it to cities of the second class. Such laws are disgraceful and should be repealed. The gentleman from Hamilton (Wm. Penn Nixon) tells us that there is a large class of such characters collected about our cities, and that the police recognize and mark them, and when a crime, such as burglary, is committed, the police know at once where to find the offender. I



hold that the argument proves the law to be a wrong and his police inefficient. The sneak who picks pockets is not the bold criminal who commits burglary or highway robbery. He says what I believe to be true enough—at least such is my recollection of the police—when a crime takes place that startles society, instead of going to work with intelligence and industry, and tracking the criminal to his hiding place, the police dive into their receptacle of imputed thieves, and prosecute vigorously the poor devil who, of course, is as innocent of the crime as his persecutors. But this keeps up a healthy activity in the police court, and creates a popular belief that something immense is being done. A more wretched system under worse laws can not be conceived of. It leaves society without a safeguard, and actually cultivates what it sets out to destroy.

“What can be done in this line, the current literature of the day has made world-famous. The gentlemen read, I presume. It has come to be a fact in a few favored cities of Europe, that by employing intelligent and honest men, they have a police that is a terror to rogues and some sort of protection to society. We have gone on the old adage of ‘setting a thief to catch a thief,’ until the thieves have rather the best of it. Let any one go into the police court of Cincinnati and look at the stream of miserable humanity

poured through its prisons, listen to the charges of small offenses, and then turn to the daily press and read the columns of fearful crimes that go unpunished."

Mr. Nixon—"Will the gentleman permit me to interrupt him? Can he point to a single instance of inefficiency on the part of the police that would justify these strictures?"

Mr. Piatt—"Certainly; hundreds."

Mr. Nixon—"Within the last three or four years?"

Mr. Piatt—"Why, no. As I have said, when on the floor before, I know nothing of the police of Cincinnati within the past five years. I have been away. I only argue from what the gentleman himself tells us of the receptacle of imputed criminals that the police keep on hand and select from when a great crime occurs. It is the old system; and under it I verily believe Mr. Shoenburger's house could be broken into, all the furniture taken out, shipped to Dayton, and sold at auction, while the reputed police were trying their imputed pickpockets for the crime. It is a monstrous absurdity, and you can make nothing better out of it, for the system fostered by such legislation as this is radically wrong."

Mr. Gaddis—"Will the gentleman give us one instance?"

Mr. Piatt—"I can cite an instance that comes

under my observation and is to the point. One Jim Armor was taken out of the common receptacle and charged with highway robbery. He was convicted and sent to the penitentiary. Subsequently, it was proven that the fellow was off in Kentucky at the time the crime was committed, and he was pardoned."

Mr. Nixon—"Was not the gentleman from Logan county in that case?"

Mr. Piatt—"I was, as his attorney."

Mr. Nixon—"Does not the case prove the inefficiency of the counsel rather than that of the police?"  
[Laughter.]

Mr. Piatt—"I am quite willing to admit that it proves the inefficiency of both. As to my ability as a lawyer, there is grave doubt; there is none whatever as to the inefficiency of the police, and it is an inefficiency fostered by just such legislation as is now before us. Let us be done with imputed suspects, and employ talented and honest men to track down real criminals. We must not be above taking lessons from the experience of others, and, when we imitate the detective systems of London and Paris, society will have some protection, and not before."

Opportunity was afforded Piatt, while in the legislature, to utter a feeling and remarkably eloquent tribute to the friend of his early boyhood, Simon Ken-

ton—a tribute that deserves a place in the classic literature of the state. A bill appropriating \$5,000 for the erection of a monument above Kenton's grave, at Urbana, was under discussion, and opponents of the measure had vigorously denounced the hardy old pioneer as a horse-thief, who, through his depredations upon the Indians, incited them to incessant warfare upon the whites. When Mr. Piatt took the floor, near the close of the debate, he said:

“When the house took a recess, this morning, Mr. Speaker, we had under consideration the bill making an appropriation to commemorate the memory of Simon Kenton. This was earnestly opposed on the ground, first, that the bill, as now framed, is unconstitutional; secondly, that it is fitter for us to build monuments to the memory of the honored dead of Ohio who fell in the late rebellion; and, lastly, that Simon Kenton's memory is unworthy this effort in his behalf.

“I shall not occupy your time in discussing the first proposition, as it has already been demonstrated not to be tenable; nor will I devote much time to that other argument, which proposes a neglect of our earlier heroes for those of to-day. There is room in Ohio for all their monuments, as there is room in our hearts for their cherished memories. I trust the day is not distant when, here at our capital, a lofty shaft will



make record, in pure marble or enduring bronze, of our love for the heroes, our admiration for their deeds, and sorrow for their loss. I would not leave to private enterprise the cherished duty of a people. The state shall order a fitting tribute to a nation's dead. With imposing ceremonies we will gather the honored bones, and the inscription upon the base of our marble history shall be a section from the statute law of our great state.

“It is the duty of the commonwealth to care for her honored dead, and I ask that this monument shall be erected, not so much for the memory of this brave old pioneer, as for the dignity and honor of my own state. What! shall it be said, hereafter, that Ohio refused to do what Kentucky earnestly solicited the privilege of doing? Have we so little of the heroic in our composition that we are willing thus to be set aside and shamed by a sister state?

“We are now making up our own history. It is a fact, taught us by experience, that in these marble and bronze monuments are to be found the most striking and enduring memories. That which strikes the unlearned eye survives and lives in the popular heart, when the heroes recorded in books are forgotten. Go to France, for example, and you will find Henry IV rivaling, in popular estimation, the renown of Napoleon. And why? Because his image has been left in



so many public places. So it is in England, with Wellington and Nelson. In making up the history of a people, I would take the prominent men, the representative men, the types of their times, and carve and engrave in marble and on coin their image; and thus, in brief, would be given to popular consideration a perfect record of the past.

“Simon Kenton was a type of his time and generation. His name carries with it a picture and a history. They were unlike any other people and any other period. When that name is mentioned, what a scene presents itself to the mind’s eye, of rocky mountains, pathless forests, solitary lakes, and winding rivers, broken in their silent solitude only by the cry of the wild beast, or the war-whoop of the wilder Indian. . . .

“Simple, rude, uneducated, and, perhaps, uncouth, he was yet the magician that changed the song of the wild-bird into the hum of human life. He followed the trail of the buffalo, and civilization followed him. After his noiseless moccasins came the heavy tramp of busy thousands, before whose strong arms disappeared the savage wilderness, giving us all that makes our existence pleasant and our country prosperous.

“I am amazed at the absurdity of the statement made by the honorable gentleman from Portage (Colonel Stedman). We are told that history is only a

more unpleasant sort of fiction. It is said that Robert Walpole once, desiring a historical work, asked his secretary to fetch him his liar. Certainly we have in this debate an illustration of the fact. I don't know where the honorable gentleman got his information, but if correct, horse-stealing better prepares a man for the higher duties of life than the training given our youth to-day. I knew Kenton in his old age to be honest, honorable, and in his simple way kind and dignified. Through the crimes imputed to him he retained his self-respect and cultivated Christian qualities many a more pretending man might well imitate. It was not possible, with such a net result, that his life was criminal. The gentleman pictures him as going about with a halter in one hand and a bag of salt in the other, stirring up trouble by his depredations on the Indians. I will not take time to prove the absurdity of such a statement, but only say that if the halter and bag of salt are productive of such results as are shown in the character of Simon Kenton, it would be well if some of our friends would leave the legislature and take to horse-stealing. . . .

“Our fathers, in the earlier settlement of this country, were at war with the Indians. It had no cessation until the Indians were subdued, driven out, and, I may say, annihilated. Romance and poetry have combined to give a false and absurd character to

the Indians, and a mawkish feeling of sentiment tends to distort our judgment. He was cruel and treacherous, and the pioneer was, with him, from necessity, continually at war. Simon Kenton did not escape the penalty that followed invasion. He differed from others who followed him, in the fact that he stood alone, and carried on war in the offensive and not defensive style. From the broad waters of Lake Erie to the winding Ohio, wild tribes, hid in the recesses of the unbroken forest, heard his name in mingled fear and disgust. Of course Kenton considered it right to take their property, as he took their lives, and horses were the most valuable property they had. . . .

“Nor is this life of Kenton so obscure as gentlemen would intimate. As I have said, it was the familiar story of our youth, and from the wilds of the west it has gone out until it is world-famous. Byron wove his thrilling ride, when bound to the back of a wild horse, into the beautiful story of Mazeppa, that will remain a monument of genius so long as our language and race exist. The prophet lacks honor in his own land, and a stranger would listen in amazement to the debate this house has indulged in to-day.

“We should treasure the memories of the olden time, for in so doing we honor our fathers. And it would be well for us if we imitated more closely their

dignified simplicity, their courage, high sense of honor and kindness of heart. Let us at least rescue from oblivion the last resting-place of one whose name lent a luster to their times, and whose virtues should not be forgotten.”

Near the close of the session the members of the house of representatives were invited as a body, by the chamber of commerce of Cincinnati, to visit that city. The invitation was accepted; but, there being dissatisfaction expressed by a few members, it was moved that the matter be reconsidered. To this motion Mr. Piatt delivered a speech that is as characteristic as it is eloquent. He said, in part:

“I know how thankless is the task I have imposed upon myself, and I am well aware that it is hopeless. The city, with all her seductive blandishments, beckons, and the legislature yields. I do not, in this, claim superior wisdom, but I believe that, had this matter been calmly considered at first, instead of being hurried through with scarcely a quorum present, members would have taken the same view of the affair that I do, and the good people of Cincinnati would have been thanked for this generous outburst of hospitality, and told, crowded as we are at the close of the session with public business of grave importance, we could not accept their gushing tenderness.

“In this I have been consistent. I made no fight



over the visit to the ancient town of Worthington, for it lies so close to the corporation of Columbus that I believe the most bewildered representative, from the darkest corner of our state, where the wolves chase the mail in ahead of time and owls hoot at noon, could find his way back to his boarding-house. The mild dissipation of a trip to Newark I did oppose as a waste of time and a promoter of indigestion and bad temper. And now I beg of you to tender our regrets that a previous engagement prevents our acceptance of this invitation.

“I know, sir, the tempting fascinations that offer themselves to the excited imagination of the delegated wisdom of Ohio. I know that great efforts call for corresponding periods of repose, and that gigantic intellect must be restored by pleasant relaxation. I see the legislature packed in the special train, with polished extremities and immaculate paper collars, spreading into broad grins as the members jest with each other in that gay, graceful, witty manner so peculiar to our political circles. I hear a member suggest, as the boy with the water-can goes by, that water is good for navigable purposes; and I note the roar that breaks out when the member from Coshocton responds that water has had a bad taste ever since the human family were drowned in it. And so they beguile the time with



venerable jokes, all the better for their age, as we know precisely where the laugh comes in. . . .

“Then comes the supper. On that I will not dwell. We will have soup, flavored with old moccasin, boned turkey, and scalloped oysters. We will have whisky on hand, and champagne, and, oh! delicious reflection! all at somebody else’s expense. We who have lived down back alleys and blacked our own boots with a brush borrowed from the landlady, and not even a bottle of Jayne’s expectorant to aid in the polishing, will feel like that person of African descent who, when upon a wood-pile, could not compute eleven, but, put in a feather-bed, thought he was on the high-road to heaven, with a chorus. Then the speeches. What bursts of burning eloquence! How we will discourse and linger upon the beauties and power of the Queen City of the West; all of which the legislature has heard before, and the entertainers will earnestly pray they may never hear again. . . .

“We will be introduced to the lions of Cincinnati, from the cavernous depths of the lager beer excavations, where the huge casks rest, filled with Teutonic patriotism and eloquence, to Longworth wine-cellars, where is to be found a curious machine for inserting corks, and not one for their extraction. We will be pulled through grave-yards, and led through courts and halls, having, in a dim light, a punky smell; and

we will have the privilege of a look at a city prison that will take us back to the dark ages. But I will not detain the house by an attempted enumeration of the fascinating attractions of our great city. I could not exhaust the subject in three days.

“There is one fact I can not help referring to. This legislature will find itself in a different atmosphere from the one to which we are accustomed. We have been painfully afflicted with economy. We spend day after day deliberating over a proposition to increase the pay of a clerk, or to cut off an office; and we will come in contact with the council of a city that is burdened with debt and sorely troubled with fears, that, in one night, jumped up \$100,000 in an increased compensation to its officials. It was one of the gayest and most graceful transactions. These honorable members looked about, when about through, and not finding any other fortunate officer who could be benefited, they suddenly bethought themselves and presented their president with \$1,800. . . .

“Does it not strike you, gentlemen, as strange, that this generous burst of hospitality should so suddenly come upon us? Why should the railroads furnish special trains, and the insurance companies pay certain bills, and the chamber of commerce disburse great sums? We are not beautiful women, and, taking us individually, we are not attractive. I have

passed up and down the railroad, visiting Cincinnati, and I never yet had a special train. I never was formed into a procession or offered the freedom of the city. How does it come, then, that as the member from Logan, I have come to be so attractive? I will tell you. The gentlemen engaged in thus honoring us expect to be repaid. They make what is called a ring—and the fact leaked out on 'Change the other day, when one of the prime movers of this honor said they wished to get the legislature to the city to put the gas company through—and we will find, while being treated at the expense of others, we will be button-holed by gentlemen who have all sorts of schemes on hand for our legislation that will call for increased taxation and heavy expenditure on the part of the city that is made to honor us. Over the free wine and free suppers these schemes will be put temptingly forward. I serve due notice upon my brother members that the projects now unseen will come to the surface in the city, and I warn all hands, tempters and tempted, that the hour of adjournment draws rapidly to a close, and much important business remains unfinished.

“We may come back from this raid neither damaged in health nor reputation. I trust we may, but I have my doubts, and I know that it will worry us to explain this expenditure of time and money to our

constituents, as it will be difficult for us to retain our self-respect.”

But Donn Piatt's speeches were not all of sarcasm, humor and sentiment. He could be serious when occasion demanded, and no measures of moment came before the legislature that he did not give the closest study. Few men could reason so closely and correctly as he, and fewer yet put into the statement of an argument such force. His unique style of expression caught attention while his thought carried conviction. The Hon. George Hoadly, in writing of the impressions received by him of Colonel Piatt, on the floor, touches upon this point. Certainly, no one is better able to judge the power of an argument than this eminent jurist standing at the head of his profession. Governor Hoadly says:

“In the spring of 1866, the legislature being in session, I was attorney for a certain corporation, and was very solicitous of having postponed the passage of a bill, in which my client was deeply interested, for a single day. Donn Piatt was in the legislature at the time, and I knew he disapproved of the bill. I went to him and told him what I should like to accomplish. ‘I will fix it for you easily enough,’ he said, and added: ‘There is an old fellow in the legislature who has a bill, making the highest permissible rate of legal interest seven and three-tenths per cent.



If I can induce him to get it before the house (and I think I can, the members will do almost any thing for him) I will guarantee the postponement of your bill.'

"He went to work, and in a few moments the usury bill was before the house. After a while the debate lagged, and then Donn came to the front. The subject was a favorite one with him; he was opposed to all legal restrictions on the rate of interest. It was part of a political philosophy which made him hostile to usury laws and tariffs, and indeed to every interference by law with the liberties of man in his economical relations. Without any other notice than that which I have described, he poured upon the ears of that astonished legislature, for more than an hour, an address utterly unpremeditated in form but in substance the result of meditations and studies of a lifetime. A more cogent (I can not say eloquent, for the subject hardly admits of eloquence) but persuasive, deeply philosophical argument, based upon the facts of history and profoundly true, it was never my good fortune to hear from the lips of any man.

"From that moment I knew that whenever it was necessary to obtain a clear and forceful statement, without previous notice, on any subject that Donn Piatt was enough interested in to have mastered, all it was necessary to do was to ask him."

In addition to the measures Donn Piatt's interest



in which has been noted, many laws of highest importance to the welfare of the state gained a place in the statutes through his exertions. The first bill he introduced was one to provide for the incurable insane of Ohio. The second he offered was to provide for the appointment of railroad commissioners and secure the better regulation of the railroads of the state. This bill having failed to pass, he introduced the following resolution: "Resolved, that a committee of three be appointed to sit during the vacation and investigate and report to the adjourned session what laws are necessary for the better regulation of railroads, telegraph and express companies." Though even this resolution was rejected, it opened the way for national legislation on the same subject at a later day.

Among the other more important measures proposed by him, as recorded in the House Journal, volume LXII, are the following:

"H. B. 245—For the protection of sheep and to prevent dogs being kept or harbored illegally.

"H. B. 545—To arrest the social evil in cities of the first and second class.

"H. J. R. 82—Resolved by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio, that the practice that now is and has obtained of employing female teachers at a less compensation for the same service than that paid male

teachers is unjust, illiberal, and bad policy, and that the State School Commissioner be requested to use his influence to rectify the wrong."

Mr. Piatt retired from the legislature at the close of his first term. It was the first elective position he ever held and his last public office of any sort. Before the close of his term in the legislature, certain leaders in his party inaugurated a movement to secure his nomination for congress, but he discouraged the effort and it was given up.

He had no ambition to be one of a class that he held in contempt. "To an American," he said, "politics has all the fanaticism of religion and all the fascination of gambling; and there is nothing so fierce, unforgiving, and unreasonable as political partisanship in the United States." Of our highest legislative body, he said: "The senate of the United States has more dignity and less sense to the square inch than any other organized body on earth." He had been behind the scenes to discover only mediocrity and selfish knavery, with just enough ability to render all ridiculous in his eyes. He preferred the part of free critic to that of participant, and in his thankless work in the line he chose was a more effective enemy to fraud and injustice than he could possibly have been in any other.

He retired permanently from political office that he

might owe no allegiance to any political party. "Recognizing as I do," he said, "that the Democracy is the organized ignorance of the country, and the Republican party the organized greed, I could not belong to the one nor the other." Though acting at various times with each, he was of neither, and made his pen the most entirely independent one ever wielded in American politics.

Donn Piatt married in July, 1866, Ella Kirby, second daughter of Timothy Kirby, and sister of his first wife. Ella Kirby Piatt, like her sister, is possessed of a force and refinement that went far toward winning to her husband powerful friends, while he selected enemies. She was then, and still is, in spite of severe illness of paralysis for the past twenty-five years, a woman of much beauty and charming grace of manner and of temperament. Of a singularly retiring disposition, induced by her painful affliction, she yet has rare native talent, that, developed by an education in Paris, and intimate association through her whole life with the most brilliant men and women of her time, made her a most fitting companion for her husband.

Colonel Piatt and his wife removed to Mac-o-cheek immediately after their marriage, where the cottage was completed and occupied. The following winter, he still being in the legislature, was spent by



ELLA KIRBY PIATT.





both in Columbus. In the spring they returned to Mac-o-cheek. They resided here for a year, when Mrs. Piatt, in a railway accident, on her way to her dying mother's bedside, was suddenly stricken with paralysis, and for the second time Donn Piatt was destined for a term of many years to nurse an invalid wife. The only hope of Mrs. Piatt's recovery seemed to lie in the treatment of the skilled specialist, Dr. Fayette Taylor, of New York, and to that city Colonel Piatt took her and placed her in his care. To his own tender nursing, almost as much as to the skill of the specialist, was due the steady convalescence that at the end of half a year carried her beyond danger of death, though leaving her a hopeless invalid.

## CHAPTER VII.

SOME FUN WITH GREELEY—WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT—  
FOUNDATION OF A NEW SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM.

During the year 1867, spent in New York, Donn Piatt had little leisure for literary work, though he did contribute a letter occasionally to the *Cincinnati Commercial*. Horace Greeley had been his close friend for many years, and the great editor repeatedly offered him a place on the staff of the *Tribune*. Many amusing stories have been printed, from time to time, concerning these negotiations. One of these is to the effect that, when Piatt stated the compensation he would expect for work, Greeley quickly responded:

“Why, Donn, you don’t understand; I don’t ask you to become owner of the concern, but merely an editor.”

Another and widely different version is that Piatt applied for a place, saying to Greeley: “You have printed enough of my stuff to know I can do good work.”

“The trouble is,” replied Greeley, “good work is not what I want—at least, not what you would call good. A certain amount of dullness is necessary to

make a newspaper please the masses. The editor of a newspaper can less well afford to be brilliant than stupid."

"I had not looked at it in that light," was Piatt's response, "but, come to think of it, the success of your paper can be accounted for on no other ground. But you don't know me, Horace; you are not aware of the infinite reach of my versatility. I solemnly assure you that, if occasion requires, I can be as stupid as yourself."

"However," he added, as Mr. Greeley, without appreciating the joke, arose as an announcement that the interview was at an end, "this would require so severe an effort that I don't care to undertake it."

Still another story is told of his applying for work on the *Tribune*, and being offered, as a joke, the position of agricultural editor, with the information that he would be expected to write learnedly on pumpkins and squashes.

"I rather like that," said Piatt.

"Do you know any thing about pumpkins and squashes?"

"No; but I can soon learn all about them through a study of your editorial corps."

Whether these stories are true as to fact or not, they are true as to Piatt's characteristics. As to their further foundation, however, it must be repeated that

Colonel Piatt was not in a condition to have accepted a position on any paper at that time.

Early in the winter of 1868, his wife having received all the benefit her physician could give her, Donn Piatt was tendered, by Murat Halstead, then editor of the Cincinnati *Commercial*, the position of Washington news and editorial correspondent of that journal, then the leading newspaper of the West. Piatt accepted, saying he believed he had made a discovery.

“A discovery of what?” asked Halstead.

“Of what the pensive public wants. Let me try it on. If it fails to work, I will be willing to quit.”

This was agreed to, and Piatt repaired to Washington. He had, as has been shown, made a study of journalism, and had observed that the most attractive feature in it was personality, not only in the editor, but as applied to the men implicated in events that run from the doings of a president to the conduct of criminals. There was, before he began, something of this in a crude way, but in no instance reduced, as he reduced it, to a system. Vulgar abuse was common enough—too common—in the political arena. But personal comment, lightened by humor and made attractive by a tinge of nonchalant good-nature, was almost unknown. N. P. Willis had won all his popularity, and George D. Prentice had a national reputa-

tion, from the same source; but while the one was as savage as he was witty, the other confined his genius to literature.

Washington, at the close of the war, under the administration of Andrew Johnson, was in a chaotic condition. Always a Southern town, it was the property of the government, on which it lived and had its being. The only business of the city, and, therefore, source of revenue, was office-holding. One can readily appreciate the condition of a town thus switched off from the highway of human events. Though a Southern town, such was the sense of dependence, such the habit of obedience, that no Southern feeling found public expression there in all that bloody war of four years, although for much of that time the Confederate colors flaunted the horizon at Munson's Hill, and rebel artillery roared about the capital. Socially, politically, and financially the capital belonged to the government. To the people of that place a president was an awe-inspiring potentate. Next to him came the vice-president, then members of the cabinet. A senator was a gorgeous creature, carrying more dignity, without bursting, than any other human being. A justice, clad in his gown, created a sensation that can not be put into words. The people of Washington felt like prostrating themselves and bumping their skulls on the floor in the presence of these high officials.



It is not difficult to realize the effect produced by this condition on a man of Piatt's temperament and training. When he reached Washington, the press accorded only the greatest deference to officials, and lived on advertising patronage alone. The correspondent of that day, now almost extinct, was a pen-driver of humble ambitions, who received from ten to twenty-five dollars a week. There were not then, as now, bureaus, with noted journalists at their heads, and salaries from four thousand to ten thousand dollars a year.

One can readily appreciate the amazement, not to say consternation, of Washington's triangles, squares, and circles, and the delight of the public of the country, when a man appeared who pooh-poohed the entire awe-inspiring business, and went, as it were, with a double-barreled shotgun among the roost of solemn old buzzards, and fired in right and left.

Think of the audacity of calling the house of representatives the "Cave of the Winds," and the senate a "Fog Bank!" He took men for what they were worth, regardless of high position, and many a senator or justice of the supreme court was held up to ridicule as a "solemn old pump," while his weaknesses were exposed to the public and his wickedness bitterly denounced.

Such method created a new sensation. He had

not been in Washington six months before he was universally recognized as the leading correspondent of the country, and found himself editing almost every rural paper in the West, and widely quoted throughout the East.

It was not long before other correspondents caught the trick, and the system spread. It has continued to spread ever since. The journals of the widest circulation have made their success—a success reaching 350,000 circulation daily—upon the lines marked out and made popular by him from the day he entered Washington as a correspondent. This style of journalism has reached Europe, where *Truth*, built on the same idea, has an enormous success. It was the proper application of an old principle and the foundation of a new school, which made it possible for the American newspapers of to-day to stand in the forefront of the journalism of the world.

The school was not easily attained, but, sad to say, it is easily demoralized. To make it a worthy success, it is necessary to keep the advocacy of right always to the fore. This alone justifies and lifts it from the mire of billingsgate. Unless founded on principle, and ever the advocate of truth and justice, it has no claim to existence. And, again, the element of humor must leaven all. Without these two qualities personal journalism is a nuisance and a crime.

Weak and scurrilous imitations of his style have lowered the name of "personal journalism" into disrepute; however, there is a vast difference between the personal journalism of Donn Piatt and the stupid blackguardism now so commonly classed under the same name. The one is the skillful handling of the lancet that goes direct to the seat of disease, leaving scarcely a scar on the surface; the other is the haphazard swinging of a butcher's cleaver that hacks the exterior into an unsightly mass. The one aims good-natured ridicule at the faults and follies of men in public life; the other heaps the slime of scandal upon private character. The one wrought lasting reforms; the other is a blistering disgrace. Attempts at imitation fall far short, because Donn Piatt, in his way, was inimitable.

He had a closer insight into public affairs than most correspondents of his day; much closer than is needed in the present age of paragraphs. And while personality was the basis and foundation of his method, he never held a bad man up to ridicule or abuse unless it was to attack the system that made the man possible. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, he said, the wrong done is the mere product of what the public has created through its own ignorance. He was fond of referring, for example, to Tweed. Instead of attacking the miserable system

that made Tweed possible, the system was left and Tweed killed. To-day New York is sending in the shape of aldermen many little Tweeds to the penitentiary, while the system that makes them remains intact. It was Piatt's high sense of justice and unwavering advocacy of principle, even more than his nice selection of epithets, that gave him his power. He would have attracted attention and wielded a wide influence had he never attacked any man.

In May, 1871, Donn Piatt assumed, in addition to his then widely-famed *Commercial* correspondence, editorship of a humorous department in the *Galaxy*, known as the "Club Room." In this he superseded Mark Twain, who, for a year, had conducted the department under the name of "Memoranda." This, the only purely humorous work Piatt ever did, was received with flattering favor. His introduction, in the form of a story of a young man who ate thirty quails in as many consecutive days on a wager, was widely quoted, no less for the unique humor he worked into it than for its neat reflection upon Twain. So popular was Piatt's work that he was given more than double the compensation formerly paid for the same character of service. But he found the duties interfered seriously with his other work, and when his contract for three months' service expired, he gave up his department in the *Galaxy* and



again devoted his whole attention to newspaper correspondence.

A correct impression of Donn Piatt's personality is most felicitously conveyed in a brief sketch written at that time by Laura Ream, a woman of the highest order of literary taste and talent, whose powers of description and insight into character once induced Piatt to propose the joint production of a novel, which, however, was never completed. Miss Ream said :

“ Colonel Donn Piatt, who in his youth was ruddy and impulsive, is now calm-eyed and vigorous looking, but for colorless hands which he has a habit of passing frequently across his forehead.

“ In person he is scarcely of medium height, but he has a good figure and remarkably fine carriage, walking with a firm, even tread. His head is beautifully shaped, the intellectual organs strongly predominant, the forehead well developed and shaded by thick, brown hair, worn as carelessly as the short cut will admit. Indeed the hair, eyebrows, and eyes are all of the brown tint, designated hazel. The eyes are particularly large and clear, with an intensity of gaze peculiar to artists. If not an artist professionally accredited, he is much more than an amateur in his way, being well skilled in law, metaphysics, medicine, war, politics, diplomacy, and poetry, all of which ac-



complishments, brought to bear on his work, insured his anomalous success. He is more quoted, praised more, and more censured than any other man in Washington. It is worthy of remark that he is in daily receipt of letters from all parts of the country and from all classes of people, the good thanking him as a great moral instrumentality, the wicked indorsing his course, the young asking counsel, and the old saying, 'Bless you, my son.'

"A jovial companion and welcome guest, Colonel Piatt is exceedingly reserved on occasion. With a simplicity of manner bordering on indifference, he is rather an odd mixture of liberal sentiment and conventionality, holding himself aloof from the vulgar herd. Endowed with a keen sense of the ridiculous and infinite humor, his enemies say that he would lose a friend rather than a joke at that friend's expense; but even his enemies are forced to admit that he is kind-hearted withal and quick to forgive a personal injury and return good for evil.

"Unlike most writers, he has very remarkable conversational powers and is an eloquent speaker. His voice is sweet and full and is rounded with a melancholy cadence or 'dying fall,' which makes it very effective, and which may be said to belong to the Piatt family (I would know it in Asia).

"Born of parents, than whom there never were

nobler and purer, one can perceive in Colonel Piatt the constant development of talent and goodness. Thus, the face which has lost little of its youth and freshness is infinitely handsomer for the expression of repose, reminding one of his mother, who had the sweetest eyes and smile I ever beheld."

It was for Washington journalism, at this particular time, that Donn Piatt was born. In that reformative period when the government suffered more through corruption than it had from the armed conflict, when frauds, bare-faced and insolent, went unquestioned, and the tone of public morals became so depraved as to glory in its shame, the kid glove style of prosecution, then prevalent in the press, fell like mere paper pellets against the ramparts of rascality, the times called for heroic treatment, and it came. A man appeared, who, through his peculiar fitness to the condition, was a giant. Supported by a national reputation, a finished literary style, a thorough knowledge of the men and measures of the day, and courage that feared nothing, Donn Piatt opened his merciless batteries of invective, and one by one the ringsters and the thieves fell back, hurt to the death. There was no delicacy about his methods. He fought the devil with fire. He was the great master of vituperative aggression, and pursued an enemy into the grave and beyond it. His weapons were ever ready

and keen. No public man was so powerful, none so contemptible, but he unhesitatingly attacked his faults and frailties. Stopping at no obstacle, he followed fraud to the White House itself. Private piccadilloes served his purpose when public vices could not be found. The masks were torn from hypocritical tricksters, and their schemes of plunder laid open to the gaze of all men.

He was followed to his home by the son of a president bent on assassination; he was beaten to the floor in the chamber of the senate by a claimant for millions, and he was hunted in the streets by a senator armed with a revolver; but his terrific work went on without a moment's cessation. He never faltered and he never feared.

He fulfilled his mission. Organized robbery which flourished in the Pacific Mail bribes, the Credit Mobilier scandal, the DeGolyer pavement contracts, and the whole range of official rottenness that flourished at that chaotic period largely met its rout at the hands of Donn Piatt.

He was the man of the hour, and only when the hour passed away did his terrible power diminish. The times have changed, and the Washington of today has no need of a Donn Piatt.

## CHAPTER VIII.

EDITOR OF THE WASHINGTON CAPITAL.

The record of a journalist is hard to make up. Little of his work survives him except in tradition. He is essentially and necessarily a man of his own day. He must not look back with more than a glance, and he must not look ahead further than the tomb, where he lays down his burden to be taken up by fresher hands and his name erased from it. While he lives he molds public opinion after his own judgment; he marks out the destiny of nations; he stands as if with his hand on the pulse of the world, and measures the throb of every event in the universe; and when he dies, not a line that he has written lives longer than the conditions that called it forth and gave it meaning. And, too, he exerts a mighty influence without writing a word. By giving or suppressing information he trains the people into his own beliefs. Through it all his personality is concealed from the public in the editorial "we."

There is no profession to which the spreading enlightenment of the world is more deeply indebted than that of the newspaper man. He is the right



hand friend of intelligence; he is the world's medium of communication, and he brings all mankind together around the same genial fireside. He is the most influential of men while he lives and the smallest of great men when he dies.

Donn Piatt had not been long in Washington ere he came into close contact with George Alfred Townsend. The two were thrown much together in their professional relations, and their mutual respect developed into warmest friendship and resulted in a joint business enterprise. The *Washington Capital*, a Sunday newspaper, with Donn Piatt and George Alfred Townsend as editors, first appeared March 12, 1871. Piatt, wearying of the arduous, and at that time unprofitable, labors of a correspondent, had long desired a paper of his own. A few years before the *Capital* was founded, a company had been organized at Dayton, Ohio, which had made him a proposition to take charge of a daily Democratic paper to be established in that city. He did not care, however, to engage in partisan work, and declined it. Of the negotiations that led to the establishment of the *Capital* Mr. Townsend has said:

“I was doing writing from Washington to the Cincinnati *Commercial*, when, about '68, Halstead said to me rather abruptly, ‘Donn Piatt is going to do some writing from Washington for me.’ Under these



circumstances I was especially anxious to treat Piatt with courteous consideration. I never had met him, and it was after he had entered upon his duties that I was introduced to him on the steps of the capitol. The cordiality of his address pleased me, and I was at once attracted to him. We often talked together of our ideas of a literary paper for Washington. A daily newspaper seemed hazardous, but a weekly paper of a literary tone and conducted without acrimony, I told him, ought to be successful. It should, I contended, aim always to support and speak for the government, and might come to be utilized as a sort of government gazette through which the government's official announcements would be made. This was simply talk on a subject that was mutually interesting on account of our occupation. Our families became intimate, and we were much together. A short time afterward Piatt said: 'I have raised the money to start that paper we have been talking about.' This was a surprise to me. I was then under contract to the *Chicago Tribune* to write or publish nothing for any other paper. He talked with Horace White about the objections on the part of the *Tribune*. As these could not be adjusted, I threw over the other matters to go into the new paper.

"This was the way the *Capital* originated. A friend of mine in New York, a wood engraver, de-

signed the heading of the paper for us—the picture of the capitol, with the name of the paper standing out boldly in the foreground. It was after this that we began to discuss how to divide the work. Piatt suggested that we take month about in editing the paper. I took it for the first month. We wrote a great deal for all parts of the paper—stories of department life, poems concerning department clerks, and such matters to give the literary features a local tone and a local interest. I kept every thing of a personal character out of the paper. I could see that Donn was somewhat restive under this style of doing things. Finally he sent in an article making a violent attack on the regular army, which I refused to publish. It was an affront to part of the very element I proposed to look to for support of the paper.

“Soon after this I had an offer to go to California and write of that coast, and Donn said, ‘Go, by all means.’ So I went.”

Mr. Townsend was connected with the paper only a few weeks. He was a brilliant and prolific writer, but those who knew the two men predicted that the partnership would not last long, because there were certain characteristics that each had in common, and which would ultimately lead to a disagreement and separation. The two men, how-

ever, could hardly be compared at that time, for each had his own peculiar ideas, and his success had been made upon individual lines.

At the time the *Capital* was started there were published as Sunday newspapers in Washington the *Sunday Chronicle*, the *Sunday Herald*, and the *Sunday Gazette*. These three papers had been in existence for several years, each had a certain clientage, and each was fairly prosperous. Many conservative persons believed that these three papers covered the field of Sunday journalism in the District of Columbia, and that there was no room for any other newspaper. Colonel Piatt, however, was satisfied that he could run a Sunday newspaper upon a line that was occupied by neither of his contemporaries, and that he could write and print something that the people of Washington would readily read. The favorable reception given the first issue of the paper fully justified this prediction; the copies were eagerly bought, and before 10 o'clock the entire edition was exhausted.

Immediately upon taking entire charge, Donn Piatt gave the *Capital* the distinctive character that made it pronounced in its success and power. His own individuality was impressed upon every line. From a partisan support of the administration it swung to the furthest extreme of free-lance criticism. Whatever was considered bad was bitterly condemned

without fear or favor. It was a continuation in a field of wider influence of Piatt's course as correspondent. There was a sufficient support of this policy in the popular demand for a paper at once able and absolutely independent.

The literary features were of a high order of excellence. In almost every issue, Colonel Piatt, in addition to his other contributions, had a story or poem of his own. Mr. Townsend contributed a serial story, "Burned at the Stake," continuing it long after he had severed all other connection with the paper. Bret Harte wrote for the *Capital* his "Story of a Mine." General R. Brinkerhoff supplied for the first volume an able and interesting account of Andrew Jackson and the Hermitage, and other choice matter.

Among the women whose efforts graced the pages of the *Capital* was Harriet Prescott Spofford, whose excellence as a writer is acknowledged by the keenest literary critics. She wrote some short stories for Colonel Piatt's paper that for beauty of diction, fidelity to nature, and interest in plot, have rarely been equaled.

Mrs. S. M. B. Piatt, whose delicate verses have found recognition abroad, and who is one of the sweetest poets of this generation, contributed many beautiful stanzas to the columns of the *Capital*.

Miss Austine Snead, who, as "Miss Grundy," ac-



quired a reputation throughout the entire country, and was the pioneer of that class of writing which is now called social gossip, was a constant contributor almost from the very commencement until the paper was sold. Some of her best work was done upon the *Capital*. She was an indefatigable worker, a graceful writer, and probably numbered among her acquaintances a larger number of prominent men and women than any other woman engaged in newspaper work.

Celia Logan, who has since made a reputation as an essayist, a story writer, and a playwright, did some of her early work upon the *Capital*.

Mrs. Snead, the mother of Austine, whose brilliant letters to the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, over the *nom de plume* of "Fay," attracted a great deal of attention, also did a good deal of work for the *Capital*, principally when her daughter, whose health was not always good, was unable to fulfill her engagements.

Colonel Piatt was always anxious and eager to bring out undiscovered genius, and he made two or three happy hits in that direction while publishing the *Capital*. A series of letters known as the "Anna Letters" attracted widespread attention, and were extensively copied. They ostensibly told the story of the travels of a young girl, the daughter of an army officer, to a friend residing in Washington, and inci-



dentally gave piquant sketches of people of prominence whom she met during her journey. As a matter of fact they were written by a lady in Washington, the wife of a bookseller and a woman of remarkable literary ability. Her identity as the author of these letters was carefully concealed by Colonel Piatt, and there were few who knew absolutely that Mrs. Clare Mohun was "Anna."

Second only to Mrs. Wister to-day in the subtle and difficult art of translating stands Mary Safford. When the *Capital* was first started, a manuscript was sent in signed with the modest initials "M. S." Miss Safford was then a very young girl. The story was a translation from the German, entitled "The Uhlans." It was accepted as soon as read; other translations followed it, and so began the career which has rendered famous in this country the pen of "M. S."

Helen H. Gardener, whose genius is recognized in England as well as in America, was first discovered by the *Capital*. She, too, was then very young. She sent her first story to Colonel Piatt, and he responded by telegraph: "Your story is tip-top; send me another."

It is rarely, indeed, that men are found less selfish in regard to literary reputation than was Donn Piatt, or more ready and willing to recognize and acknowledge literary ability in others. Though a humorist of much ability himself, he was anxious always to add

to the attractions of his newspaper the productions of those who excelled himself in that line. He set apart a column headed "Graduated Grins," for humorous writings, and brought into it the most successful humorists of that day.

Frank H. Gassaway, who has since made a wide reputation as "Derrick Dodd," did some of his earliest and best work on the *Capital*, and indeed he was actively connected with the paper at its commencement, being at that time the private secretary of the late William S. Huntington, who was the president of the First National Bank of Washington, and who aided financially the paper. Mr. Gassaway was also a poet of excellent ability, and contributed to the columns of the *Capital* some beautiful bits of verse.

A. Minor Griswold, "The Fat Contributor," frequently appeared in the humorous department.

Charles F. Clark, who was at one time extensively known as "Max Adeler," was also, for quite a period, a contributor to the *Capital*, and some of his best humorous work was produced first in the columns of that paper. He was, at that time, connected with one of the Philadelphia papers, but later was appointed to a consulship abroad, and, after he crossed the Atlantic, very little funny matter came from his pen.

A man who had a rather singular combination, but who seemed to have a good deal of literary ability,

was James P. Irvine. He was, at that time, a clerk in one of the government departments, but in order to prevent his brain from entirely rusting out he occupied his leisure moments in writing a series of what he called "Lays of the sidewalk." These were funny ballads upon the most common street topics, and contained a good deal of humor. He was a positive worshiper of Colonel Piatt, and had he remained might undoubtedly have developed into a writer of far more than ordinary ability.

Almont Barnes, whose poetry has been commended by some of the most rigid critics in this country, was a regular contributor.

There was introduced into the capital a new feature in social chronicles which became wonderfully successful. Instead of a mere paragraphic announcement of social events, there was an amount of descriptive work and humorous incident injected into the accounts in this column that gave it a unique attraction.

Another feature of the *Capital* that proved extremely interesting, was the "Chronicles of Congress," in which the measures before the national law making body, and the men who supported or opposed them, were criticised unsparingly and with great vigor. One of the most brilliant young writers who

ever went to Washington from the West was James W. Knowlton. He was there as the correspondent of a Chicago paper, and was not only a keen news gatherer, but also a writer with a sharp sense of humor, a happy command of language, and the faculty of quickly grasping the ludicrous or absurd points of an item. Colonel Piatt found his own time too much occupied to keep alive the chronicles of congress by his own work, and he selected young Mr. Knowlton to do that work for him. He made no mistake in this selection, for the articles were nearly as incisive as those which Colonel Piatt had himself written, and were so closely an imitation of his style that he got the credit of continuing to write them; and those legislators who were held up to ridicule visited upon the editor's head all their resentment. Knowlton died an early death, and one of the brightest intellects that Washington journalism has ever known was hushed when he had scarcely reached his thirtieth year.

George M. Douglass, widely known as one of the most able newspaper writers of that time, was a member of the *Capital* staff for many years.

Best known among the regular correspondents, whose writings were widely quoted, were Mrs. Hallet Kilbourne, who discussed in spirited style the social and other events of Europe, and Esmeralda Boyle,



who each week contributed a letter upon society in America.

Piatt's old-time habit of doing novel things asserted itself in every department of the *Capital*. As a managing editor he was infinite in resource, and every number of the paper contained something either especially able or especially eccentric that attracted attention. Whether it was a ludicrous story on some eminent man, a parodied version of some great speech, a rhyming contest or an unusually vigorous editorial, the feature seldom failed of success.

The greater share of Colonel Piatt's own writing was, of course, confined to the editorial page. It was for keen comment upon the events of that day that he was best fitted. His varied experiences in both the military and civil service, his clear insight into questions then before the people, his contempt for pretenders, and his fearless, incisive style gave him a power as an editorial writer equaled by no other man then living. An eminent writer has said: "Without question there was a time, up to 1874, when Colonel Piatt was the best known man in Washington, next to President Grant and General Sherman. The days following the war, before the passions engendered by it had time to cool, were peculiarly favorable to the development of such a man. Every thing was chaotic.



The bottom rail was getting on top with success in the carpet-bag states and trying to do so every-where. There were wild and turbulent spirits, with whom only such a man as Piatt could hope to deal. And how he did revel in the task of dealing with them! He generally knew pretty well how to discriminate the man of parts and character from the adventurers and the pretenders. So that it may be said with truth that in spite of his love for personalities he did not make many mistakes. That such methods could not now obtain for a single year does not constitute any reflection upon the man who fitted into such a place then, and did his work with so much fearlessness, and in reality with such good results, so far as common honesty and good government were concerned."

Of this condition he felt called upon to boldly confront, Colonel Piatt said only a short time before his death: "While I found an easy conquest in the world of fun, that other objective point found in justice and truth was not so easy or pleasant. When the war broke upon us the brave men went to the front to fight and the thieves to the rear to plunder. The one army equaled the other as to numbers, and was the superior in ability. The war ended, and the thieves held Washington. They were contractors, carpet-baggers, railroad plunderers, and monopolists of all sorts, and they sought to use the government to

further their greed. It was of such the present Republican party was born. Be that as it may, it was a new party, with the vainest sort of presidents in General Grant; and about the corridors of the hotels, in the departments, on the street, and even invading the executive mansion, we had men with iniquity fairly enameled upon their countenances, who would have made Diogenes smash his lantern in despair. President Grant gave way to this crowd because of his ignorance of and utter indifference to the high duties of the office he was called upon to administer. To say that he was innocent of the frauds that began with the Black Friday and ended in the firm of Grant & Ward, through which millions on millions disappeared, is to defend his honesty at the expense of his brain. He must have been deficient in some respect not to know what every man, woman, and even child was aware of."

It is not strange that, holding these views, and fortified with a thorough knowledge of the affairs of the administration, he should strike terrific blows regardless of personal feeling. When he struck he generally produced a disfiguration that was permanent. It has been aptly said that the shades of private life are full of public men bearing the scars of his pen. To attempt an enumeration of the frauds he exposed and the shams he punctured would be to

attempt the impossible. Scarcely a single number of his paper came out without an attack, and an attack to the death, upon some insolent pretender. He knew that dishonesty and jobbery were widely prevalent; and although he often unjustly attacked innocent men, his apology and amend were frank, whole-souled, and he never turned aside until the guilty one had been nailed upon the barn door of public contempt. He saw that hundreds and thousands of imposters were trying to do things of which they knew nothing, and he had the easy task of exposing their ignorance and pretensions. It was not his way to do all this with finely-rounded periods. He could write exquisitely polished sentences when the use of an intellectual emery stone was necessary or fitting, but in general he employed a style that his victims could understand.

Of Colonel Piatt's methods, General Henry V. Boynton, who for many years has stood pre-eminent in journalism at the national capital, has written the following:

“Colonel Donn Piatt's appearance in Washington journalism was brilliant but not meteoric. It was not a brief flashing and an extinguishment, but a steady fire seen of all men for many years, and though he had reached the full measure of intellectual manhood before he came, and was then a ripe scholar and

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trained writer, he still grew in force throughout his whole career.

“We were rivals, so far as newspaper connections were concerned, but there rivalry ended, since Donn was a veteran and his competitor but a novice. He had been a writer of power and a journalist of wide note before his nominal rival had learned the difference between a newspaper and the Poor Man’s Almanac.

“Donn blazed out upon the politicians, the shams, and the frauds of the national capital with a vigor and a heat which made newspaper circles tropical. He cut and slashed and hammered till his welts and saber cuts and bruises were thickly distributed. Thus he made his presence known. In such a warfare some suffered who should have been spared, but in the main only the undeserving were scorched and blasted by his pen. But while he punctured pretense and insisted that mediocrity should keep its place and go without puffing, while no rank was safe from his shafts because of rank, he yet had a kindly side, and was as tender as a woman to those he deemed deserving and who were in need of help or sympathy:

“Some years after he had made himself known and felt by public men of all grades and readers in all parts of the land he established the *Capital*.

“Its first issues were like a new arrival of Donn.

Where he depended before upon the circulation of the one newspaper for which he wrote, and the wide copying of the exchanges for the impressions he made upon Washington, in the *Capital* he had abundant space, and every line he wrote flashed instantly in the face of the whole community. There was no waiting for the slow course of the mails and the haphazard chance of what he wrote falling into all the hands for which it was intended.

“The new weekly created a sensation at the start, and never ceased to make itself felt and feared. It was full of features, as managers would say. The central attraction for public men was Donn’s editorial page. For while even in that he had at times the help of such brilliant and incisive writers as Henry Reed, George Alfred Townsend, and A. C. Buell, still Donn’s part of the work was easily recognized, and carried with it a force and effect of its own.

“The community at large enjoyed it immensely. Those public men who drew its shafts writhed under it. Among the class who deserved criticism Donn was the best known, most feared, and most hated among Washington writers.

“But he also had troops of friends. These were of all ranks—those who needed sympathy, whom he helped, young writers whom he encouraged, public men of high station who rejoiced in his exposure of

the pretense with which the lower grades of men who wormed themselves into public places attempted to humbug the people, and those who rejoiced in the just criticism of party measures and administrations where they themselves did not feel free to denounce.

“The force with which his thrusts went home is well illustrated by the fact that he was indicted at the instance of an administration upon the pretense that he was inciting to the assassination of an incoming president. But he never ceased his blows for an instant even in the face of such portentous attack. He was irrepressible and could not be suppressed.

“There was not an issue of the *Capital* during the years he was connected with it which did not tell in some direction and contain a feature that excited universal attention and comment. Sometimes it was an administration impaled and so enraged as to seek the criminal court for indictment of the editor. Sometimes it was a senator so disturbed by truth driven home with ridicule as to bring him into the streets with pistol and bowie-knife searching for ‘Dion Pott.’ Sometimes it was the dowagers of shoddy receptions, who posed as leaders of the ‘Republican Court,’ who filled all social circles with their spiteful spitting at the lampooning which the *Capital* gave this side of sham aristocratic life.

“Whatever the anathemas hurled against it, none assailed it as dull. It kept Washington in a ferment for ten years. It forced other sheets to be lively and aggressive, but it kept itself in the lead. It will long be remembered as the brightest journal of its time at the national capital, and one of the most trenchant and sparkling in the land.

“To the public at large its editor was a warrior in mail, with visor always down and lance poised. To his friends Donn Piatt was a man with a heart full of tender emotions and sympathies, with a poet’s sensitiveness, and a soul alive to the beauties of nature. He was a philosopher as well as a gladiator, a writer of smooth and classical essays as well as the political rhetorician, dashing an opponent down with the torrents of his invective and the keen edge of his satire. In his long life he gave his attention by turns to many lines of effort, and was prominent in them all. He was a writer of power at an early age; he was influential on the stump while yet a youth; he was a jurist of high standing; he was a soldier of ability, and was trusted far beyond his rank; he was every-where and at all times a striking personality, and ever a patriotic and influential citizen. He stood always with his face to his enemies, and never turned his back upon his friends. Neither the one nor the other will ever forget him.”



Previous to Colonel Piatt's appearance in Washington excessive drinking among public men had passed almost entirely without comment or question. He at once assailed this fault. He did not question one's right to drink so long as the interests of others were not trespassed, but he demanded that public men in serving the people should retain their faculties unimpaired. He did not base his crusade on argument or moral suasion; he named his man, and held his habits up to public ridicule. President Grant, whose weakness was well known, Piatt promptly designated as "His Inebriated Excellency." He frequently affected to defend acts of the president, when criticised harshly, condoning them on the ground of this unfortunate habit that, he said, sometimes rendered him irresponsible. His most bitter and persistent attacks, however, on this score, were directed against Senator Zack Chandler, of Michigan. He never wearied of laughing to ridicule the "Great Michigander's" weakness. He once published a story of this solon's boarding a street-car "in his usual condition," and seating himself upon a sweetly sleeping babe. This story, admirably told, and often referred to after by Colonel Piatt, whether true or not, evidently seemed probable, for it was generally believed, and brought the victim's habit into such notoriety that he narrowly escaped being defeated for re-election. He seldom mentioned



Chandler's name but he brought this habit into prominence. It was for this that Chandler sought to shoot him. John A. Bingham was never spoken of by Piatt except as "the Hon. Demi-John Bingham." There were many others that he persistently attacked on the same ground. No public man appeared at his post intoxicated that Piatt did not render ridiculous. The effect was most wholesome, for not only has drunkenness come to be regarded as a fault that unfits men to hold grave trusts, but other newspaper writers have learned the lesson, and now criticise without hesitation what at that time Piatt alone dared touch upon.

His satire was not confined to the faults and follies of agents of the government, but penetrated to every phase of public life. Lawyers, physicians, merchants, ministers—all were caught by his camera, and the shadows in their characters shown.

A young artist, Vinnie Ream, who secured certain contracts for statuary from the government, owing, as Colonel Piatt believed, to her personal charms, came in for a large share of his choicest sarcasm. With delicious humor, he pictured her mounted upon a scaffold, in close-fitting gown and fascinating cap, working upon a Venus, while about her were gathered the enraptured committee of congressmen staring, with mouths agape, exclaiming: "What infinite grace! Divine waist! Ravishing lips!" leaving one in doubt

whether the remarks applied to the statuary or the artist.

There were two clergymen in Washington whom Colonel Piatt delighted to laugh at, and he never permitted to pass unimproved an opportunity to say something funny in regard to them. It was not that he sought to ridicule the religion that the eminent divines practiced and taught, but the pretentious methods that came so far from the simple teachings of Christ. One of these was the Rev. Dr. John P. Newman, now bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church, but who was at that time the pastor of the Metropolitan Methodist Church in Washington. Colonel Piatt had no complaint against Dr. Newman, except that he was pastor of the church General Grant attended, and he believed that the divine was working his relations with the president to advance his own personal interests. He was fond of calling Dr. Newman the "Custodian of the Executive Conscience," and speaking of him as the pastor of the Metropolitan M. E. Church, with the chimes attached. This last expression referred to the fact that there was a chime of bells upon this church, and they were played with a great deal of vigor by a little Englishman named Widdows. This man Piatt always referred to as "the fiend of the steeple." He said that his name was Widdows, and that he made them.

The other clergyman whom he was pleased to poke fun at, was the Rev. Dr. White, pastor of St. Matthew's Catholic church. Colonel Piatt himself, recognized Dr. White as one of the purest men who ever lived, of exceptional ability as a doctrinal disputant, and a man greatly beloved by his congregation. The two were really very warm friends, but when the doctor would attempt to bring Piatt back into the church, the latter would rebel and tell some absurd story and fasten it upon the doctor. When it was first rumored that the Pope intended to make an American cardinal Piatt mentioned the news item in the *Capital*, and then added that when Dr. White read the dispatch he immediately wrote a letter to the pope, inclosing the measure of his head for the Red Hat.

Shams of whatever sort excited his contempt. In his criticism upon Washington society, it was the vulgar and *nouveau riche* that received the keenest ridicule. There was a certain family prominent in social circles whom he was so extremely bitter against that a private motive was plainly evident. He laughed at them whenever they appeared in public, and ridiculed all entertainments held at their house. Asked the reason for this, he said—and his reply admirably illustrates a prominent phase of his character: "One night I was sitting in a theater, and this man and his wife

came in. It was late when they arrived, and their seats were in the middle of the row in which I was sitting. Just beyond me was a young woman with a face like that of an angel, but which bore the stamp of keen and constant suffering. I saw she had a crutch beside her feet and knew that she was physically afflicted. As this man's wife, who was arrayed in all the gorgeousness of the latest Paris fashion, which could not, however, conceal the coarseness of her features, passed the young woman, I heard her say that 'people had no business to bring cripples to a theater.' The afflicted girl heard it, I knew, because her face became violently red and I could see the tears welling in her eyes. I didn't then know the woman who made the brutal remark, but I made it my business, before the evening was over, to ascertain her name. Afterward I hunted up her history and that of her ancestors. Then I found out what her husband had been, and how he made his money. I carefully stored these facts away, and whenever I met either of them in society, or knew of their being at any distinguished gathering, I brought out a fact in connection with their habits and social standing that made very unpleasant reading for them and those whose good opinion they cared to hold. I'm going to keep that up," he added, and there was a vicious look in his eye, "until I drive her husband from



power and make them both quit Washington." And he did.

Among many valuable reminiscences of Colonel Piatt's career as editor of the *Capital*, given by the eminent Washington journalist, Dr. Franklin T. Howe, at one time business manager of the paper, is the following, illustrative at once of Piatt's chivalry toward women and the motives that moved him :

"I remember that one day a young woman came into the office and told Piatt a story of treachery and deceit on the part of a man who was then coming into considerable political prominence, and who was seeking an election to the senate in a western state. The law had righted the young woman some time before, but the memory of her wrong convinced her that this man was not a proper person to be elected to the high position he sought. The colonel thanked her for the information she had given him, assured her that under no circumstances would he disclose its author, and declared that whatever he could do to prevent that man's election he would do. He published her story, related in his own inimitable way, of course suppressing the young woman's name, but boldly charging the man with the offense; and then he caused it to be republished in the state in which the election was to be held. He utilized all his extensive journalistic acquaintance in fighting this man, and he had the satis-



faction of knowing that at that time he was successful in preventing an unworthy man from entering the United States senate."

In his criticism upon dishonest and incapable agents of the government, he did not nicely measure out to each the condemnation that was due in proportion to the enormity of the offense. Whether his victim's capacity for evil was great or small, he fought him with all his power. He really had no proper conception of the weight of his blows. After furiously assailing one he was often amazed to find that his assault was resented. His sarcasm was so natural and so easy of production that much of his strongest work was inadequately appreciated by himself. He often laughingly said that his inkstand was bewitched, and that when he put his pen in it a devil leaped out. Here is picture that he once drew of himself and his devil of the inkstand:

"There is a devil, and a very devil, not enumerated in those tempting St. Anthony and the never-heard-of, to be known as the Ink Fiend, or Devil of the Inkstand. Generally, to dip a pen in an inkstand is to draw out that Devil. The mildest, most amiable sort of people, in this way get a character for ugliness that is amazing. I know a gentleman—indeed, I may say, in the language of the romantic young gardener, Claude Melnotte, whom the gentle Anna did not per-

sonate, owing, it is said, to brevity of the lower limbs, 'I and sorrow know the man,' who, in ordinary everyday life, is good natured; and would not hurt a fly, let it buzz ever so persistently about his prominent nose; and yet this good fellow never opens his inkstand that a most pestiferous and stinging Devil does not bounce out and spread himself abroad. This friend of mine, the writer referred to, has been knocked on the head on account of this Devil, and the blow was not more stunning than his astonishment at the motive for the assault. I confess that this is a poor plea in defense, but it is a fact all the same. And no one knows how resolutely this poor journalist has striven to keep down this Ink Fiend, and appear on paper as he is in person—a modest, amiable, Christian gentleman. He is not like unto (now the Devil of the ink looked out and suggested a name that I suppress), who, when smitten on the cheek, turns the other, well knowing that the knuckles of the smiter will be skinned and dislocated by the violent contact."

This picture is only in part true. The victims of his lampoons undoubtedly believed and believe it to have been wholly true, but it is overdrawn. One would, from this confession, suppose that all his writings were gall and wormwood. But out of that same inkstand have flowed betimes, benediction,

prayer, peace, charity, love of God and man, and trenchantly sublime defenses of the weak against the strong. Colonel Piatt was a man of powerful feelings. To his friend he was warmly attached, and would go to any length to serve him; to his enemies he was implacable, and a man who once incurred his hostility might never hope for mercy at his hands. Unfortunately those who felt his scathing criticism most, were the ones he pilloried in his paper, and as it is the tendency of humanity to believe ill rather than good of one, and, as the criticisms were widely copied, he got a reputation for having his hand against all mankind, and of being unable to say a good word for any one. This was not so, for he penned many words of praise, of commendation, and of kindly feeling for many people, both men and women.

No human hand ever drew from an inkstand any thing more beautiful, benignant, just and true, than the sketch, worthy of the greatest masters, of Father Edward Purcell, when he had ceased to be. There was no devil in the inkstand when Donn Piatt wrote that noble tribute to one of the best and most unfortunate of men. Underlying an ardent, impulsive temperament, was a deeply religious sentiment. He thought seriously and profoundly upon the relation of man with his Maker, and the series of Sunday

Meditations, which he wrote for the *Capital*, breathed as true a devotional feeling, as high a conception of the duties of man toward man as was ever found in any sermon delivered from a pulpit.

It can not be said that in work of this latter class he gave evidence of a better nature than that shown in his sarcastic writing, for in both the nature was the same. He condemned the wrong from precisely the same motive that he commended the good. In both he was actuated by a high sense of justice and of duty. He ridiculed and anathematized sham, hypocrisy and dishonesty, wherever found, because he detested those qualities, and he made his attacks personal, for the sole reason that this was the most effective method.

He had no patience with the bitter sectional feeling of that day between the North and South. To make of the union of blood a union of love he employed every resource of his versatile mind and studiously ignored the Mason and Dixon line. He accorded the representatives of the South the most courteous kindness, and denounced every appearance of the bloody shirt in the North as a contemptible trick of politicians to gain support through an issue that was settled. When Chandler, Lamar and Blaine had their famous triangular encounter in the Senate, upon the character of Jefferson Davis, in which hate



from the North was flung back from the South, and Chandler followed it up, a few weeks later, with another wanton, unprovoked diatribe against the Southern people, Piatt set the Devil of the Inkstand at work with this result :

“ Catching courage from the recent disastrous defeats of the British lion by the Zulus, the inebriated senator from Michigan, Zack Chandler, feels that he has not twisted the tail of the Albion beast in vain, and now dashes with still fiercer intent upon the South.

“ Being of a rather philanthropic turn of mind, we thank the genius of mercy—if such an entity exists, which we sometimes doubt as we read over the speeches of our congressmen—still we thank it that Zach Chandler never entered the Federal ranks as a soldier during the recent war. Had he done so, God only knows where the South would have been to-day ! With his great courage, his cannon-headed cane, his navy revolver, and his still more formidable jaw-bone—why, Samson with the jaw-bone of the other ass—half-brother to Zack, would n’t have been a caution to him.

“ So it is that we thank Divine Providence that our esteemed Zachariah stayed at home during the war. But, unfortunately, he is making up for lost time when peace is supposed to reign. He has been



fearful of late. His first speech upon Jeff. Davis, a month ago, shook the nation from its zenith to its nader, and the aged Jeff. has never been heard of since. He disappeared from public view like a brick building from exploded dynamite. And again does Zack lift up his mouth and howl wrathfully against the South. Another speech will destroy the solid South, elect Grant and shake down the Washington monument. When Zack starts out, heaven only knows where he will stop.

“Some of our esteemed contemporaries were mistaken in stating that Zack was drunk when he made that speech. He was not drunk but screaming. On the contrary, he was sober, and that fact accounts for the additional idiocy of his attempt. Zack drunk is merely a fool; Zack sober, is a voluminous-voiced, driveling idiot. He was sober when he delivered that speech. We never saw the old fellow so sober in his lifetime before, and never expect to see him so again.

“And now to a criticism of his speech. But stop! It is not worth criticising. A mere balderdash of stupidity, falsehood, hate and impotent ejaculations, it would n't be a proper hash for the mental diet of scullions of the devil's kitchen. It is like an offensive odor that disgusts without injuring.

“However, we hope Zachariah will continue his antics. They are like the bucking of the trick mule

in the circus—harmless and amusing. We must have our trick mule in the senate, and though Zack is rather heavy for the business, he is better than nothing.”

Such caustic reprimands as this, read and laughed over, re-read and again laughed over, by all Washington, and widely copied throughout the country, could not fail to be effective. So long as Piatt edited the *Capital* this was the sort of treatment to be expected by any man, who appealed for political effect to sectional prejudice.

No public wrong was too small to escape his serious attention. He would not assail an intoxicated or dishonest senator any more readily than he would an intoxicated or dishonest policeman. He fought fraud where he found it, and it made no difference at all to him if his victim was not known to a dozen readers of his paper. Here is a characteristic instance :

“One-horse Shea, J. P., was put to some practical use one day last week, by being kicked and cuffed and batted about generally by an officer of the court, whom he attempted to gouge. The officer of the court was, perhaps; hasty in thrashing the One-horse Shea; he had no more cause to apply his number eights to the One-horse Shea’s broadest part, to maul with his clenched hands or fists the aforesaid One-

horse Shea's face and cranium, than any and every one else who had ever had business relations with Shea as justice of the peace. He has gouged, or attempted to gouge, each and every unfortunate person that has fallen into his clutches. A gouger by profession, he scalps his victims in business of arbitration like a railroad ticket. And when we see the swelled appearance of that portion of the One-horse Shea's being, which is supposed to hold the brain but is monopolized by low dishonesty; when we see it battered and bruised, and know that the posterior which holds the majority of his intellect still aches from the sturdy application of the energetic officer's pedal extremities, we feel, in sympathy with scores of other defrauded ones, a little pleasure, a little satisfaction, that his rascally stock-jobbery has found a little boot-y mixed up with its swag."

These terrific methods were resorted to, however, only in extreme cases. In general, he employed a lighter sort of ridicule, that in a more quiet way answered his purpose. Of this sort, the following verses, suggested as a campaign song for the Grant followers, in their effort to secure his nomination for a third term as president, is an example:

CAMPAIGN SONG.

*Air—King of the Cannibal Islands.*

King Ulyssus is my name,  
From out Galena first I came,  
With ruby nose and eyes aflame,  
The King of the Yankee-doodles!

A bully boy I am, you see,  
Just home from o'er the salty sea,  
Where kings and queens have feasted me,  
As King of the Yankee-doodles.

In spite of Democratic flings,  
I'll have a court with lords and things,  
Indian, land and whisky rings,  
As King of the Yankee-doodles.

I'll have Lord Landaulet in state,  
Earl Capricornus grand and great,  
While lackeys on us all shall wait.  
I'm King of the Yankee-doodles.

I will recall Duke Delano;  
Prince Washburne shall help on the show  
As keeper of my seraglio.  
I'm King of the Yankee-doodles.

Lord Secor will command our ships,  
Lord Belknap the post-traderships,  
And Daddy Taft the demi-rips,  
For King of the Yankee-doodles.

I'm a high old King by right divine;  
I have a Queen, a Queen to shine;  
Prince Fred., you see, keeps up the line  
Of King of the Yankee-doodles.

Queen Vic. will come to visit me,  
 And royal ducks from o'er the sea,  
 To swell our royal majestee,  
     As King of the Yankee-doodles.

We will behead some Democrats—  
 Small loss were that to silly flats;  
 We'll serve them as we serve the rats—  
     I'm King of the Yankee-doodles.

Their loss of place they may bewail;  
 My royal grip, that they assail,  
 Holds up the country by the tail,  
     As King of the Yankee-doodles.

Then let us have a drinking bout,  
 And swill and sing and gladly shout;  
 The old Republic's all played out,  
 I'm King of the Yankee-doodles.

My summer palace, when all's done,  
 We will set up at Mount Vernon;  
 I'm a bigger man than Washington,  
     As King of the Yankee-doodles.

As an invaluable assistance in this lighter sort of ridicule he had a felicitous way of inventing phrases, words and nicknames that clung in the popular mind. He has probably done more in this line than all other journalists of the country. He once wrote a ludicrous story of a Washington man exchanging by mistake, at an inauguration ball, his own hat for that of Horace Greeley, and being possessed of the most wild and



unaccountable hallucinations, while it remained upon his head. Piatt quoted the victim's own account: "I had to ride quite a distance in the street car to my humble home, and all the way I was sadly discomposed and fretful. A passenger treading on my corn, I told him he was a hundred and fifty pounds of d—d idiot. Another, remarking that the ball was a grand success, I told him he was a liar. And I acted in such a manner that I escaped personal chastisement only through my aged appearance. Arriving at home I refused to retire, but called for pen, ink and paper, and went to writing. I wrote on, page after page, about protection, emancipation, amnesty, and at last fell asleep through utter exhaustion, and then I dreamed that the world was a coffee-mill, and I was grinding it with a crank." The story was widely quoted, and Colonel Piatt seldom after wrote of Greeley without some mention of the coffee-mill and crank. He once described him as going about with a coffee-mill grinding out hobbies with a crank. When desiring to emphasize, in a brief manner, the greatest editor's eccentricities, he called him a crank. The word used in this sense, became so popular in Washington, that when the police of that city sought a fitting term to apply to Guiteau upon the assassination of President Garfield, they pronounced him a crank, and the increased prominence thus given to the

word, in the meaning of a person with a hobby, brought it into common use and a prominent place in language.

George H. Pendleton owed his popular title of "Gentleman George," and William D. Kelley, his common nickname of "Old Pig Iron," to Colonel Piatt. These titles were at once caught up by the press, and have held their own ever since. Not long after "Pig-Iron" had become generally accepted as appropriate, Piatt and Kelley met at a dinner party in New York. They were personal friends, and Piatt expressed to Kelley his regret at having given him such a rub. "Do n't apologize Peeat," said Kelley, in his deep roar of a voice, "you paid me a high compliment. I want to be known through life as 'Pig-Iron,' and when I die I want that title engraved on my tomb."

"Twisting the British lion's tale" is a popular phrase derived from the same source. A senator had taken occasion to arraign the British government in unusually severe terms, when the British minister and his family were seated in the diplomatic gallery. The following number of the *Capital* contained a humorous report of the speech in which Piatt said that the thunderous effort that made the walls of the capitol vibrate as in an earthquake was made up mainly of twisting Her Gracious Majesty's imperial beast's tail,

and the disgust, astonishment and indignation that spread, like a batter cake over a griddle, on the countenance of the queen's diplomatic agent made a roaring farce of the performance. After that every attack on England in congress, in the press, or on the stump, was said by Piatt to be a twist of the British lion's tail.

Within three months of the time he entered Washington as a journalist, the House of Representatives was known, the country over, as the "Cave of the Winds," and the Senate as the "Fog Bank," as he had christened these halls. He called the senators "Dignity Dough-Heads," and the term was popular for many years. "The organized ignorance," meaning the Democracy, and "the organized greed," applied to the Republican party, are phrases also in common use; while "thievery by taxation," "robbery of the many to enrich the few," will, no doubt, long remain dear to the hearts of opponents of a high tariff.

As the *Capital* grew in importance and increased in circulation, Colonel Piatt found it necessary to have an assistant editor, and he associated with himself, a man whose reputation as a public writer had been years before recognized in Ohio, and who was known all through the newspaper profession as a man of exceptional ability, Henry Reed. Mr. Reed had

been a power in Ohio journalism, but had been for several years connected with Chicago papers. He went to Washington, and his able work in line with the *Capital's* established policy was immediately recognized as that of an artist in verbal castigation.

An extraordinary incident in Mr. Reed's eventful career, as associate editor of the *Capital*, was a vicious assault committed upon him by Judge Louis Dent, a brother-in-law of General Grant, who was then president. Mr. Reed had written a severe paragraph regarding Judge Dent, in connection with a rumor that he was utilizing his relationship with the president to put money into his own pocket. The same charge had been published in other newspapers, but had never been couched in such caustic terms as were used by the *Capital*. Judge Dent called at the editorial rooms during Colonel Piatt's absence in Cincinnati, and assailed Mr. Reed with a heavy cane. A lively fight followed. Printers in the composing-room adjoining, attracted by the disturbance, took a hand, and the "belligerent brother-in-law to the administration" was on the point of being thrown from an upstairs window, when Frank Howe, the business manager, appeared, ordered the printers to detain but not harm him, sent for the police and turned him over to the law. Dent was fined \$100 and costs. Reed's head was badly cut and bruised, but he was quite able



on the following Sunday to again present his charges, with some additional details and proofs, that made the second publication even more scathing than the first.

It seems almost incomprehensible that Donn Piatt himself was not more frequently attacked in the same manner. With the exception of being assailed in the waiting room of the Senate, by William McGarrahan, whom he had persistently denounced as a dishonest claimant for millions of other people's money, he was never attacked. Colonel Fred Grant and Judge Louis Dent invaded Piatt's house one afternoon, when only the servants were at home. This little affair has been grossly misrepresented. The whole truth may be gathered from the following note from Colonel Piatt to Judge Dent:

“ WASHINGTON, *Sept.* 5, 1872.

“ HON. LOUIS DENT—*Sir*: I learn from my servant Dan that you called at my house on last Monday, laboring under considerable excitement. It happened by the merest chance that both Mrs. Piatt and myself were away from home.

“ I wish to suggest to you that I can be found at my office, 428 Eleventh street, every day when in the city, from 1 to 5 P. M. Should you feel aggrieved at any thing I may say or do, I shall be glad to see any friend of yours at that place, and arrange with him to tender you such satisfaction as one gentleman is bound



to give another. Or should you appeal or wish to appeal to the law, I will turn out enough property to cover any judgment a court might allow.

“I make these suggestions, and scarcely need insist on them when I call your attention to the delicate health of my wife; and, by adopting that course we may avoid the unseemly excitement and notoriety that must be as distasteful to you as to

“Your most obedient servant,

“DONN PIATT.”

This was the last attempt by either Dent or young Grant to attack Piatt, though he never ceased to ridicule both at every opportunity.

His enemies resorted to every means in their power to crush him. They put into circulation the vilest slanders that newspaper men, jealous of his popularity, were glad to print. For several years he had the distinction of ranking a large majority of the members of Congress among his bitterest enemies. He was once accused on the floor of the House of Representatives of having a criminal connection with a fraudulent scheme for the preservation of army clothing, which he had induced the War Department to experiment with. Colonel Piatt promptly asked of Congress an investigation; but as it developed that he had not only severed his connection with the scheme

when he found it to be fraudulent, but had been the first to expose and denounce it, the investigation he demanded was not granted. Again, in the investigation of the Pacific Mail subsidy bribes, it was discovered in the books of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company's agent, that a sum of money had been paid to Donn Piatt at the same time large amounts were being distributed among public officials and lobbyists. The announcement created surprise, for Donn Piatt had vigorously opposed the subsidy from first to last, and questioned the integrity of many of the members who had voted for it. The congressional investigating committee, made up almost entirely of men whom Colonel Piatt had mercilessly lampooned, eagerly seized the opportunity and called him before them. He readily presented proof, however, that while he was bitterly opposed to the subsidy, he was personally a friend of the steamship company's agent, and had secured of him the money in question as a loan, and he submitted the canceled note as evidence that it had been repaid. The examination to which he was subjected he considered so insulting that, having explained the matter in which he had stood accused, he refused to answer any further questions, saying that he was "suffering from what Shakespeare called the 'insolence of office.'"

It is no mean tribute to his character for integ-

rity that, occupying a position where he might have secretly accepted thousands, he retired from Washington poorer than when he entered, that he borrowed money when, by ceasing to denounce a fraud he might have had ten times the amount as a gift, and that, while his enemies were his judges, he escaped all charges untouched and gained reputation and power with each accusation.

But the time came when his intense zeal rendered him amenable to legitimate censure. In the exciting days following the presidential election of 1876, and running up to the inauguration of R. B. Hayes, Donn Piatt was conspicuous for his terrific denunciation of what he considered the fraudulent work of a returning board, that, in counting in Hayes, defeated the will of the people and robbed them of the right of self-government. Week after week he continued his scathing assaults upon these conspirators, as he pronounced them, with constantly increasing bitterness and force. Finally, two weeks before the inauguration, when the Supreme Court indorsed the verdict of the returning board, he printed an editorial that was interpreted by President Grant and his cabinet as advocating resistance to the party in power, even to the extent of violence, and as such it was given official attention. It was a turbulent time. Henry Waterson had called for a hundred thousand unarmed

Democrats to come to Washington to witness the inauguration of Tilden. The New York *Herald*, St. Louis *Times*, and other journals of high standing, were appealing to the Democracy to not submit tamely to the usurpation. In the midst of this turmoil came Donn Piatt's ringing editorial. He went no further than others had gone, for that were impossible, but he was more open, bold, and unequivocal in his manner of expression. His article was headed, "The Beginning of the End," and it said :

"The sickening apprehension felt by the people, to which we referred last week, that the Supreme Court would be found as rotten as the other powers of our unhappy government, has been realized.

"The swift decay, that in the last ten years has made our self-government a sham and a mockery, and in the executive and legislative branches shamed us before the world, has been silently working its way through the judiciary, until now, in its first trial, it offends with its stench the nostrils of all honest citizens.

"The appeal made to the judges of the Supreme Court from all the people, sorely distressed and perplexed, was to save them from the wicked conspiracy of men they had repudiated at the polls. They saw their faithless agents, for years, robbing the treasury of their hard-earned taxes; they saw their highest



officials indicted for the meanest crimes; they saw a president, coarse, brutal and ignorant, appointing sycophantic pimps to the highest positions; they saw him the associate of roughs and the commissioner of thieves; they saw carpet-baggers sustained by bayonets manipulating the polls, that ignorance and rascality might tyrannize over the South; they saw rings organized in the lobby control their congress; they saw huge monopolies created by their government eating out their substance; they saw themselves reduced to want, trade paralyzed, and labor without employ, and they made a desperate effort to right their wrongs through the ballot.

“With a subsidized press against them, with an army of hungry office-holders, that, counting those of the general government with those of the states, make a horde of treasury-eaters greater than any standing army in Europe; with all the accumulated capital in the hands of monopolies arrayed on the side of their oppressors—they made one desperate effort, and came up from the polls with a majority of over half a million in their behalf. And of what avail?

“Through a dishonest returning board, made up of criminals who have escaped conviction and punishment under the protecting arm of a corrupt government, enough votes are thrown out to render all their efforts vain, and saddle upon them the old corruption



and old horde for another term of years—perhaps forever.

“From this an appeal was taken to five justices of the Supreme Court—for that, no more and no less, was the commission created. It was believed that by such process the question at issue, being a charge of conspiracy against certain corrupt men, could be lifted from the political arena to a tribunal of high-toned, impartial judges, who would decide in accordance with law and justice.

“To the amazement and disgust of all thoughtful minds, these justices divided, as the partisans had, on a political line, and three indecent old men joined with the enemies of the people in fixing corruption upon us, and destroying all confidence in the very foundation of our political structure, the ballot. They decide that fraud does not vitiate, and beyond this, that they have nothing to decide, and so send the question to the people.

“We have not the patience to argue what the people in their broad common sense will not consider; the fine spun legal technicalities under which these aged scoundrels seek to hide their shame. Their real brief is to be found in the utterance of one of their commission, James A. Garfield, who said, boastingly: ‘You’ll have to grin and bear it; we hold the cards, and intend to play them.’

“Poor political gambler. The stakes for which he plays are the rights of forty millions of people, the peace and prosperity of the only republic known to humanity. For all that freemen hold most dear these hands, stained with plunder, gamble, as the soldiers of Pilate severed in derision the garments of the crucified Christ.

“As we said a week since, this is not law, it is revolution, and if the people tamely submit we may bid a long farewell to constitutional government. Fraud no longer vitiates. A corrupt administration has only, by its bayonets, to hold a state usurpation long enough in power for a corrupt returning board to do its vile task, and the work is done.

“If a man thus returned to power can ride in safety from the executive mansion to the Capitol to be inaugurated, we are fitted for the slavery that will follow the inauguration.

“We do not believe the people of the United States are of this servile sort. We do not believe that they are prepared, without a blow, to part with their hard-earned, blood-stained possessions. Notice is now served on the citizens of Louisiana and South Carolina that they must care for themselves. How soon lamp-posts will bear fruit is for them to say. To the people of the north and west notice is given that all the toil to which they are subjected, that bond holders

and monopolists may fatten secure, is repaid by no security for their rights, and that a shrinkage of values is now in order. If there is law for fraud there is no reason for violence. And to that we make our last appeal."

It is hardly necessary to say that such a publication at such a time created a sensation not only in official circles, but in the press of the country and among the people, already in a state of intense excitement. Telegraphed to distant journals, the article was excitedly discussed. President Grant construed it into a threat to assassinate Hayes. He called a special meeting of the cabinet, and after a consultation and an examination of the statutes it was determined that Piatt should be arrested on a charge of "inciting rebellion, insurrection and riot." He was indicted and gave bond for his appearance when wanted.

In a telegram to a Cincinnati paper on the day of his arrest Colonel Piatt said: "In this matter of assassination, much depends as to who is to be assassinated. When the President's son and brother-in-law came to my house armed, to seek a fight, when, let it terminate as it might, an invalid wife would have been a victim, the whole affray was regarded by the administration press in the most cheerful manner. It was regarded, indeed, as a thing to jest about. It only meant invading the home of an editor and shooting

him down, or smashing in his impertinent skull in the presence of his family. That was all—the mere pastime of a prince. But, now to say that these men who have gobbled all save the Presidency shall be met with force in their attempt to deprive us of a free government and to strike down every vestige of self-government, is regarded as terrible. My language, however, bears no such construction as these fellows pretend to fix upon it.”

This accusation made in the press that he threatened or sought to incite assassination is clearly not sustained by his editorial itself, and in view of a knowledge of Donn Piatt's character is not worthy of consideration. He was open and fearless; the assassin is sneaking and cowardly. That he did seek, however, to arouse the people to an effective resistance, under arms, if necessary, to what he held to be a monstrous fraud there can be no doubt. In the *Capital*, on the Sunday following his arrest, he made plain what his purpose was. “Nothing was further from my thought in penning the editorial of last Sunday,” he said, “than the horrible crime of assassination. Open resistance to revolutionary wrong, for which there seems no other resistance, is one thing, assassination is another. In the sentence so strongly commented upon and denounced it will appear, when taken in connec-



tion with what precedes and follows, that my appeal is made to the people, and not to the assassin."

Though he did not say so publicly, he believed that the people would not have to go to the extent of bloodshed to accomplish the purpose. A demonstration of popular feeling that could not be misunderstood, he thought, would be sufficient to intimidate the conspirators and restore the right of a free ballot and an honest count.

Of course he did not stand alone. He each day received hundreds of letters commending his bold course. Among these, and a sample of all, is the following from General Hugh Ewing, an eminent representative of the thought and feeling of the west:

"LANCASTER, OHIO, *February 27, 1877.*

"*Colonel Donn Piatt, Washington, D. C.:*

"MY DEAR COLONEL—I am in receipt of your favor of the 23d. I had not seen the charge referred to when I addressed you the other day, but treated it with contempt when I saw it. It would be sustained only by persons ignorant of the force of language or blinded by partisan malignancy.

"If the fraudulent government is upheld by Hayes in Louisiana, or attempted to be upheld, Packard and his consorted crew should be dealt with by the people



in the streets wherever found—that is in obedience to the first law of nature.

“Your article throughout is just and well timed, and has touched the popular heart. You have done what few dare—in these days when the nation itself seems cowed—told the unvarnished truth. For this you must expect persecution.

“As to the personal matter, you have done the state too good service in the past for it to be treasured. - I have long since dismissed it and been your eulogist.

I am truly yours,

“HUGH EWING.”

Donn Piatt's brave effort availed nothing, however. It is history that the people did not respond to his impassioned appeal, and Hayes was inaugurated. Neither anarchy, treason, nor revolution followed the inauguration, and one of President Hayes's first acts was to have a *nolle pros.* entered in the case against Colonel Piatt.

The case that thus died out ignominiously, the last attempt on the part of the Grant administration to “get even,” instead of intimidating or weakening the influence of Piatt, had an opposite effect, and he became more popular than before. His conduct under the grave charge emphasized his courage and demonstrated his deadly earnestness, while a sense of

personal injustice sharpened his comments. He treated the entire proceeding with open contempt, and covered it with ridicule.

It is not to be supposed that in his criticisms upon men and measures Donn Piatt stood with a club and hit every head that appeared. He was as zealous in defending and promoting the right as in fighting frauds, and he could appreciate an honest and capable official quite as readily as he could detect and expose a rogue.

Few were more zealous than he in seeking to advance worthy men to public positions for which they were fitted, and few were more successful in this line. An instance of this is in the fact that he did more than all others combined toward securing the appointment of Stanley Matthews to the Supreme Court, and, again, years later, that of L. Q. C. Lamar to the same high office, for which both were so eminently fitted. He led in the defense and support of Alexander R. Shepherd, who, as Chairman of the District of Columbia Board of Public Works, and after as governor of the district, planned and executed the great public improvements that made the City of Washington the pride of the nation. That Shepherd was on every hand charged with corruption and covered with calumny only increased the vigor of Piatt's defense; and this defense was continued until not only was Wash-

ington made a new, beautiful and healthy city, but Shepherd's enemies were made to admire him and praise his work.

During Donn Piatt's editorship of the *Capital* there was no man in private life who had more influence with members of congress and in the various departments of the government, and that influence was ever used in behalf of men who were not only honest but capable. He was as much to be sought as a friend as he was to be shunned as an enemy. In further illustration of this an extract is taken from reminiscences written by William Neely Thompson, who was one of Piatt's most intimate friends in Washington and through his life after. Mr. Thompson says :

“An incident occurred while we were in Washington, that not only showed his kindly nature and sympathy with the wronged, but his great influence in Congress at that time (1877). The first year of the Hayes administration, General Diaz had been elected president of Mexico. He sent Señor M. W. Zamacona as his minister to Washington. With the latter I became acquainted, and so did Colonel Piatt. For some reason or other the administration became possessed with the idea that President Diaz was not the legitimate president of Mexico; that somehow he had jumped in at the cabin window, as sailors

would say; that his minister, Zamacona, was not minister, and refused to acknowledge or accept him. Señor Zamacona took it very hard; he was a sensitive, high-spirited, honest gentleman. As he said to Donn and to me: 'I am received in no gentleman's house. I am here in a false position, without a place in respectable society. Senator Matthews, who lives across the street from my house has never called upon me.'

"Stanley Matthews was then a United States senator, afterwards a judge of the United States Supreme Court. Donn Piatt had a most potent influence with him; and, sympathizing with Señor Zamacona, he exerted it, and immediately Senator Matthews called upon him and offered him his aid. General Banning, then the chairman of the military committee of the house—a Democratic house, by the way—said to me one day: 'Such evidence has come before the committee, that I don't see how we are going to avoid a war with Mexico, opposed as I am to this Republican administration, which wants war, for purposes of its own.' Said I, 'Have you seen Donn Piatt?' (who was his brother-in-law). He said 'No; 'then,' said I, 'see him.' The result was that he saw Donn, and met Señor Zamacona and Senator Matthews at Welcker's, at dinner. From that time on, the conclusion of the committee on military affairs was very



different than on a war basis, and within a month Señor Zamacona was the acknowledged representative of the legitimate government of Mexico.

“Now, the real party that worked for, and did the most to bring about the happy culmination of the above national result—was Colonel Donn Piatt. Mr. Gorham did much, but it was through Donn that the power of Senator Matthews, and General Banning, chairman of the military committee of an opposition, Democratic house was obtained. He had no interest whatever, except first, a kindly feeling toward Señor Zamacona, in whom he saw a gentleman who was in the right and needed sympathy, and afterward a patriotic feeling for his country, which he wanted to see in the right always.”

Though brilliant as a managing editor, Donn Piatt had no taste nor tact whatever as a business manager. He was glad to be relieved of all details in financial matters, and relied implicitly upon the actions and representations of subordinates. This was true, not only so far as the newspaper was concerned, but in all his affairs. A forcible illustration is found in the fact that when his handsome residence, on the corner of 18th and F. streets burned, he did not know, until informed by Frank Howe, formerly his business manager, that the loss was covered by insurance. He could hardly believe it until shown the



policy. Yet he was full of resources when he believed there was error or injustice in his business affairs. An anecdote that has been given a wide circulation by the press, is to the point. Colonel Piatt often dined at Welcker's restaurant, and had incurred an indebtedness of what he calculated was only a moderate amount. Greatly to his surprise the proprietor presented a bill one day for about one thousand dollars. There was no use in protesting that the greater part of this sum had been contracted by persons whose guest Piatt had been from time to time in various visits to the restaurant. Whatever other remonstrances were made availed not, and the claim was about to terminate in a law suit, when the quick-witted editor bethought him of a plan to end the difficulty. Welcker's was so popular a place that it was often mentioned in the newspapers. Piatt got the office boy to go over the files of the *Capital* for a year or two and mark every mention of Welcker's restaurant. The boy soon had several hundred paragraphs underscored for his employer, who thereupon made out a detailed bill, with items and dates, at the regular advertising rate of fifty cents a line, which was duly presented to Welcker's cashier for payment. The adamant effrontery of the preposterous claim was too much for the restaurateur. He was quite willing to settle on a basis that Colonel Piatt considered just.

Donn Piatt found relief from active labor while editor of the *Capital* in two trips to Europe. In the summer of 1873, accompanied by Mrs. Piatt and his sister, Mrs. Worthington, he traveled through Ireland, Scotland and England, and rested a few months at Weisbaden. Again, two years later, he went with Mrs. Piatt, Mrs. Worthington and Clara Morris to Paris and Mentone. His editorial correspondence while abroad, including letters from Londonderry, Portnish, Belfast, London, Weisbaden, Paris, Monaco and elsewhere, made up an interesting feature of his paper.

During his absence the paper was in charge of his able associate, A. C. Buell, who had won a national fame as a correspondent before going upon the *Capital*. Mr. Buell had succeeded Henry Reed as associate editor, and not only remained in that position throughout Colonel Piatt's editorship, but succeeded him when he retired. To his rare executive ability was due, in a very great measure, the paper's financial success. Mr. Buell has availed himself of his thorough knowledge of Washington journalism of that day and his intimate relation with his editor-in-chief, in writing a most interesting review of Donn Piatt's character and career as editor of the *Capital*. He says :

“My close relation with Donn Piatt gave me op-

portunity to survey him in all respects, to observe his mental processes, measure his impulses and gauge his feelings, with perhaps greater accuracy and keener insight than any of his surviving friends and comrades. I must confess at the outset, that no one who knew him as long and as well as I did could possibly be an impartial critic of his character or an unprejudiced reviewer of his career, because his ways were such that no one could be near to him without forming a deep, lasting affection for him as a man and an enthusiastic admiration for him as a scholar and writer.

“Donn Piatt, the man, at home or anywhere away from his sanctum, was a host, whose hospitality once enjoyed could never be forgotten; a companion, whose ordinary table-talk, or library-chat, was a liberal education; and a friend, whose pocket-book and bank account not only, but also whose credit, was at the whole service of any one he liked and trusted. Many times in the early days when I struggled with the vicissitudes usually incident to the effort to sustain the position of an all-round high-roller on the weekly stipend of a third-rate newsgatherer, and Donn himself was often sore perplexed by the printer's bills and paper accounts of the *Capital*, he has borrowed a hundred from his friends to loan me.

“It is no exaggeration to say that he was the most generous of men; and this trait extended be-

yond lavishness with money. His influence with public men, which was much greater than most people supposed, was constantly extended in behalf of poor and struggling men and women; and to this day you can not pass through any department of the government without finding clerks and employes who owe their places to Donn Piatt. His power in the literary and dramatic world was hardly less, and this, too, was continually applied to promote the aspirations and aid the enterprises of young people whose ambitions exceeded their resources.

“In view of his early career as a jurist, his long residence abroad in connection with our diplomacy during an interesting period, his experience as a staff officer in the most delicate and difficult branch—the bureau of military justice during the war, supplemented by his brilliant work as a Washington correspondent during the turbulent period of reconstruction, Donn Piatt brought to the *Capital* a variety of resources perhaps never equaled and certainly never surpassed. Most writers, no matter how wide their information or how catholic their culture, have some specialty. Donn Piatt was generic.

“His reading had taken the cream off the literatures of two languages, and it was hard to say in which he was the better versed, his own tongue or that of the French; and, moreover, he read



his French like a Frenchman, not as a mere renderer or translator. A memory as ready to give forth its stores as it was tenacious to retain them, kept this vast equipment constantly at his command. His fund of knowledge and learning was by no means a mere mass of mnemonic accumulation, but carefully digested, topicised and, I had almost said, indexed, in his mind. Thus equipped, with profound culture, arduous training in large affairs, and social, political, diplomatic and military experience covering a quarter of a century, and this equipment made available by a literary style than which none that I have ever seen was more striking, Donn's power as a journalist, at the political and social center of the nation, was a matter of course.

“Not the least charm about his quaint style was his total unconsciousness of it. People said I used to imitate him. I did so, but my imitation got no farther than the copying of a few of his phrases. His style, as a whole, in fact and in flavor, was inimitable. Being *sui generis*, it could not be appropriated, and it died with him. But he himself never realized how quaint and unique were the things he said. Back as far as his opinions on the common pleas bench in Cincinnati, and thence running like a thread through all his diplomatic and military correspondence, was that same subtle knack of dealing with words as a



magician deals with materials, which made the columns of the *Capital* such an unfailing source of surprises. This indicates that his peculiar literary style was an incident of his mental character, a natural sequence of his characteristic modes of thought, and not in any sense artificial or cultivated.

“He himself, when reference was made to his ‘peculiar style,’ would always say that he had none; that the peculiarity of his diction was the total absence of style! His unconsciousness of his own quaintness, however, was not so amusing as his frequent and sincere astonishment at its effects on others. Of course, he was a fighter, and when roused he realized his own vigor with sufficient prepense. Even in combat, his weapon was satire a hundred times to once of invective. In ordinary controversy with a contemporary, or criticism of a public character, he was master of a subtle persiflage, totally without malice so far as his motive was concerned, but his shafts, light as they were, often struck deeper than he dreamed they would, and when the victim winched, Donn’s astonishment would be almost ludicrous. I recall an instance of this: Among the objects of Donn’s admiration Matt. Carpenter held a high rank. One Saturday night I was looking over some of his proofs, and came across a paragraph about Matt., in which Donn, with a deftness of word-surgery that

would have puzzled a Frenchman, complimented Matt.'s eloquence at the expense of certain other traits which, indeed, were notorious enough. I said, 'Matt. won't relish this, Donn.' 'Why, my dear boy, he is just the fellow that will relish it. You don't know him. He will forgive the laugh for the sake of the joke,' was the reply. It was printed, and Matt. disliked it exceedingly, losing no time in conveying an intimation to that effect. Donn was simply amazed, and doubtless went to his grave wondering what there was in that paragraph to pierce the mail of such a man as Matt. Carpenter.

"The universal humor and wit that pervaded the columns of the *Capital* produced a general public impression that Donn was a professional humorist or posed as such. Those who knew him closely knew that that character was the last to which he would aspire. By the same token his perennial satire gave him the public reputation of a cynic. This he abhorred. He used to say that the only true cynics he had ever known were men under sentence of death, who had ceased to hope for executive clemency. All others, he said, were shams—either undergraduates of solitary habits or aged writers afflicted with dyspepsia or unable to find a publisher. The character to which Donn really aspired was that of a philosopher, somewhat of the Epicurean school, but tempered by a deep

sense of the truths of religion. He was not religious in the sectarian or denominational sense, and the wars of creeds formed a frequent mark for his satire. But he was filled with the philosophy of the Testaments, and accepted the precepts of the Bible as the code of supreme law.

“In his editorial capacity Donn was not a strict disciplinarian in the literary sense, and I do not think he would have succeeded in the management of a great daily requiring the handling of a numerous staff. This was not because he lacked either the industry to revise or the judgment to criticise, modify or correct matter submitted to him; but he was so good-natured that he often accepted and printed matter which did not meet his best judgment, rather than taking a chance of hurting his contributors *amour propre* by alteration of the text.

“His own matter was always edited in his brain before he put pen to paper. Printers who have handled his ‘copy,’ will tell you that his manuscript was the cleanest in journalism. Much of it as I have ‘given out,’ I hardly recollect an interlineation or an erasure.

“Like all men of keen humor combined with great kindness of nature, Donn had no conceit of self or arrogance of opinion, but was as keenly sensible of his own foibles as those of others, and spared him-

self in ridicule as little as he did the most inviting of his targets. The finest and keenest of his satires, in my judgment, were a couple of letters by 'D. P.,' the journalist, on Donn Piatt, the postmaster of Mac-ochee, and a similar critique by himself, in the *Capital*, upon himself, as a jurist.

"However, though he did not spare himself, he was keenly and sometimes painfully sensitive to the comments of others. The venerable Judge Jerry Black, who was one of his most devoted friends, once said that Donn in journalism, and Garfield in the forum, were much alike, that 'they had the horns of a bull with the skin of a rabbit.'

"During my association with Donn in the *Capital*, I was the correspondent of daily journals elsewhere—the *Missouri Republican*, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* and *New Orleans Democrat*, one time or another, and, in discharge of my journalistic duty to them, by frequent survey of the eminent *personnel* of public affairs, my pen occasionally ran across the even tenor of Donn's way. I was not reputed to be tender of touch, and often observed that Donn winced at what I was pleased to call my persiflage at his expense; and the most amazing part of it was that he always took the greatest offense at the things I thought would amuse him most, while many squibs, of whose effect I would



be myself apprehensive, he either laughed at or ignored.

“I have said that he was an easy-going editor with his contributors, but that must be understood to refer to the matter itself. He would tolerate no faults of manner. Dullness he despised and stupidity he hated. But a well-developed array of keen sentences, well-drilled, would always capture him for the sake of their literary merit, without much regard for the nature or character of their subject-matter.

“It was this intuitive sense of art in writing, and this almost instinctive abhorrence of literary fault that made him the terrible critic he was. As a reviewer he combined the analysis of Jeffrey with the erudition of Macaulay, while he escaped alike the egotism of the one and the ponderosity of the other. I have seen him review, in four columns, a book of as many hundred pages, and the reader of his review would know more of the subject than the reader of the book.

“In his views on public questions of polity and political economy, he often fell into the grooves of sophistry so common to purely meditative men of unique mental methods. His theories were always beautiful in thread and philanthropic in aim. But in their application to affairs he could never be induced to heed the restraints of environment or the con-

stantly varying effect of the diverse practical conditions under which men operate and societies exist. He was a free trader of the Scotch school. To him protection, in any form, or to any extent, was simply robbery of the many for the benefit of the few, and no argument or illustration could convince him that, in all great developments, as in great victories, some must suffer for the welfare of all. I speak of this particularly, because his last great public activity was in this line, and to that effort he brought the crowning powers of his career.

“However, I think that on this as on most other lines, Donn’s pen followed the drift of his feelings, and his philosophy formed simply the framework for his sympathy. He came in this way to view the poor hardworking farmer folk of our country under the protective system, as like unto the fellahin of Egypt, scourged to hopeless toil, that they might render tax to the pashas of our mills and factories. And that view of the case grew upon him until the possessor of a million dollars made up of profits on the labor of a thousand men at a dollar a day became, in his eyes, a common criminal, and the hereditary enemy of mankind. But at last, it is no mean tribute to his memory to say that the springs of his sophistries were his sympathies, and that his career, in every sense, social, literary and all, was a constant exhibit of that fierce

courage of conviction which springs from intense depths of tender feelings, rather than from cold reason or from the application of the principles of self to the world at large.”

As editor of the *Capital*, Donn Piatt, for the first time in his life, found a vocation fully to his liking. He continued in it for nine years, making his paper the most successful and influential weekly in the United States. He had no desire to leave his high position, and yet, when Dr. Garnett, his wife's physician, advised him that in a quiet country retreat her health might improve, he resolved to retire. He continued, however, to hold his stock in the paper until an offer came so advantageous, that he could not refuse, and in February, 1890, he signed over his entire interest to A. C. Buell.

## CHAPTER IX.

RETIREMENT AT MAC-O-CHEE—WORK AS A PLAYWRIGHT—  
PUBLICATION OF TWO BOOKS—EDITOR OF BELFORD'S MAG-  
AZINE—WRITES A NOVEL—ALMOST COMPLETES A LIFE  
OF GENERAL THOMAS—DEATH.

In a secluded nook, Donn Piatt, true to his eccentricity, sought retirement so close that half the world forgot him ere he died. But the spot he selected is a paradise, and he had a castle fit for a king.

From Bald Knob, whose bleak, stony summit is the highest point in Ohio, the winding little valley of the Mac-o-chee, hedged closely in by heavily wooded hills, follows the course of a sparkling, spring-fed stream, so very narrow that one may almost step across it, six miles to the southwest, where it joins the broad, rich fields of the valley of Mad river. On a hillside facing the south, a mile above the point where the smaller valley joins the larger one, stands the immense house built of native stone and fashioned in the style of a Flemish castle, with high towers, sharp-pointed gables, courts, terraces and fountains. All that nature has neglected art has supplied in



making of this spot an inspiration to poets and a study for painters.

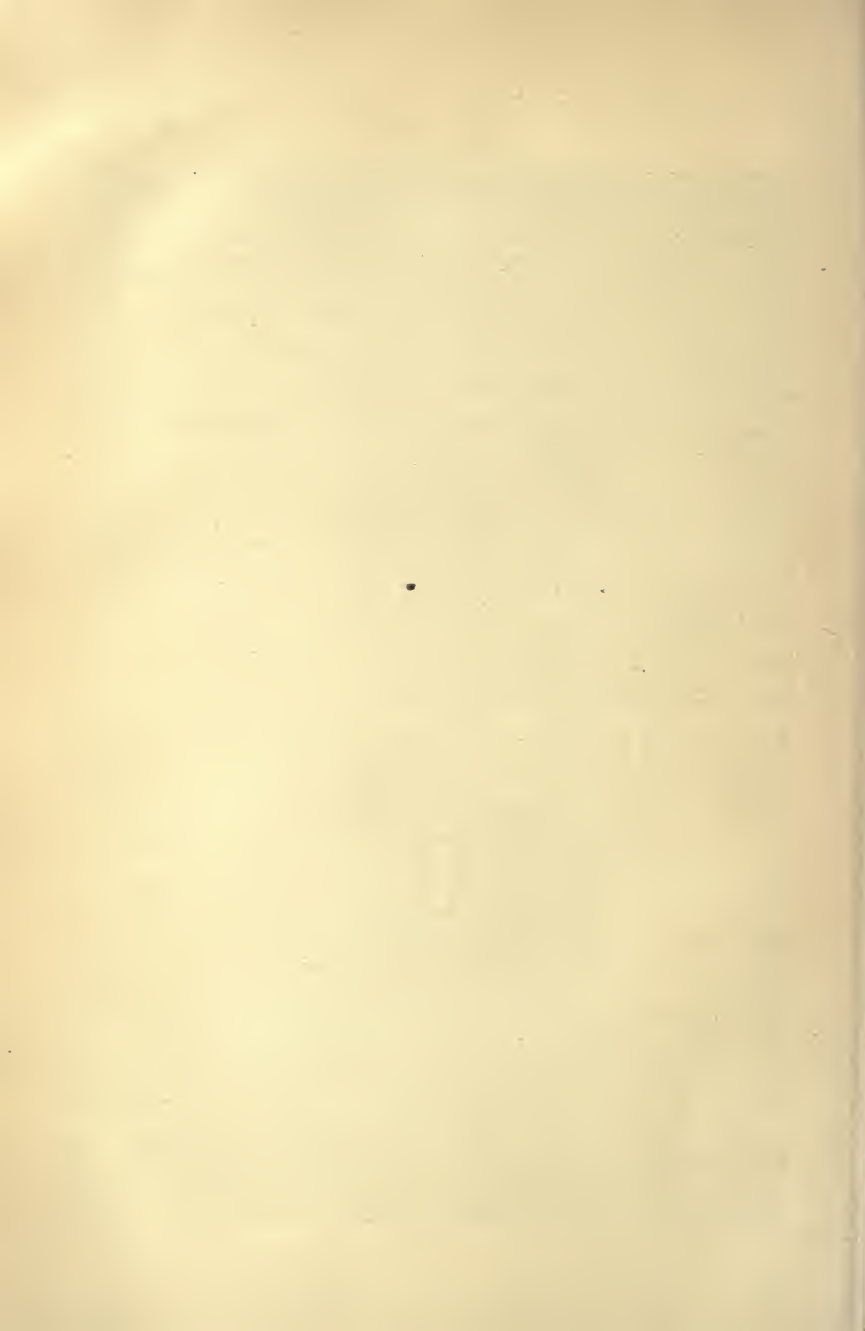
From the terraces at the east are given enchanting glimpses of rows of rugged wood-crowned hills, miniature lakes and waterfalls, while at the west the valley widens, and the stream glistens through fertile fields, and, cutting its way between the hills below, opens upon a magnificent vista into the broad plain beyond, where the vision extends over an undulating expanse of fields and groves and meadow-lands until the far off green blends into the blue of heaven.

“If there is a line,” exclaimed Tom Corwin, as he gazed entranced, “where Mac-o-chee ends and heaven begins, it is imperceptible. The easiest place to live and die in I ever saw.”

It is the glen in which Donn Piatt passed his youth, then a wilderness, now an Eden; and its beauty won him back after his life battles had been fought, here to round out his old age and die. For many years he had owned here a broad estate, and, upon his retirement, the picturesque cottage that adorned it was extended into a luxurious mansion surrounded by wide lawns with smooth drives, shaded walks and a profusion of flowers. The massive architecture was designed by Smithmeyer, in perfect harmony with the wild scenery about it, and the peculiar effect of the whole catches attention and invites study not alone by



MAC-O-CHIEF.



reason of its rare magnificence. In the close union of nature, rugged strength and cultivated taste, there is a striking and clearly defined resemblance to Donn Piatt himself. In every detail it is emblematic of his mind and character. The unyielding strength of the solid walls suggests his firmness and decisive force no more readily than the exquisite carvings, artistic frescoes and rich furnishings indicate the high refinement of his taste and the practical turn of his poetic fancy. The stately pile contains, in every feature, some marked eccentricity. The two main entrances are through massive towers, the highest reaching an elevation of eighty feet. The central figures of the main hall and dining-room are immense antlers of elk and that of his "dén," a great horned owl. The lower floors are parquetted with oak and walnut in intricate design by Hauer, and the ceiling, done in ancient Greek and Roman patterns, are the result of the cultivated genius and patient labor of the late French artist, Oliver Frey.

It was an appropriate retreat for Donn Piatt to seek retirement in. Little wonder that he should write:

My days among these wilds are spent  
In restful, calm repose ;  
No carking cares or discontent  
Disturb life's fitter close.



Beyond these wooded hills I hear  
 The world's unceasing roar,  
 As breaks upon an inland ear  
 The tumult of a shore.

To me these are no solitudes,  
 For all by memory tinged,  
 From somber shadows of the woods  
 To meadows willow fringed,  
 Are peopled with the forms I lost  
 And loved so long ago,  
 Ere on life's ocean, tempest tossed,  
 I tasted of its woe.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ah! what to me the ceaseless din,  
 This fevered state called life—  
 What fools may fail, what knaves may win  
 In their ignoble strife?  
 This world so wide is cold and bare  
 And tempts me not to roam,  
 For heartless greed and gaunt-eyed care  
 Will drive the weary home.

The trees I trim, the flowers I tend,  
 Have but one sunny mood;  
 My honest dog, my trusty friend,  
 Has no ingratitude.  
 And oh! the crowning joy of life,  
 Where'er that life may be,  
 Is one true heart that through all strife  
 Still, loving, trusts in me.

To the world in general, Donn Piatt presented a strangely complex character. Through his marvelous

versatility he appeared in many roles. In each heart that knew him thus he has left a monument different in design. But in his private home life all this was different. Here he was always the same, ever kind, jovial and considerate of others. Yet the characteristics that marked him here were as pronounced as those in which he appeared before the public, and the two sides of his character were so unlike as to almost seem antagonistic and irreconcilable. None of the bitter cynicism that so often distinguished him in print was carried into his home; on the contrary, the tenderness and devotion he gave to his invalid wife, and his sympathy and kindness for all with whom he came into personal contact, rendered him unrecognizable as the man commonly viewed through his writings.

His deep-founded affection for his wife—his “Pet,” as he always addressed her—emphasized the most pronounced trait of his character. It was for her sake he let go his hold upon public affairs, renounced all upon which his genius and ambition seemed to be centered, and shut himself up in this little valley, away from man, that he might turn his whole attention, aided by pure air and clear sunshine, to nursing her back to health. His solicitude for her comfort kept him constantly on guard against any annoyances that might chance to disarrange the domestic routine, and few emergencies arose, whether trivial or serious,

but his practical mind was prompt in suggesting relief.

There was not a nook or knoll, from the peak of Bald Knob to the level plain of Mad river, that Donn Piatt in his rambles as boy and man had not learned to know and love. There was scarce a rock or aged tree upon the hills or in the glens but was famed throughout the countryside in legends told by him. Even when the weight of years had weakened his limbs, he still sought the silence of the woods and fields for recreation and reverie. A poet of nature, he saw beauty everywhere, and a true philosopher, he found interest in the most trivial incidents. He was an ardent lover of the lower creation, and always kept about him a half dozen dogs that he trained to almost phenomenal intelligence, cats, birds, thoroughbred horses and cows, and, in a queer-shaped stone in a gable of the house, an owl for many years made his abode, his solemn hoot at evening adding to the wild, wierd grandeur.

Among his pets was a gray parrot, which really possessed such remarkable intelligence, that the following story of it, told and made famous by Colonel Piatt, does not seem wildly improbable: Gray Poll, on her perch in a rear court, had observed that whenever any one cried "Sic 'em," the dogs rushed from their kennels in a pack and tore off barking furiously.

This proceeding gave Poll delight, and she never failed to take up the cry, screaming, "Sic 'em, sic 'em," in her shrillest tone. She had also learned to know as well as did the dogs the meaning of "Get out!" It occurred to Gray Poll, one day, that she might have a little harmless fun with the dogs lying in the sun, and she suddenly set up a cry of "Sic 'em!" The dogs were up in an instant dashing about the lawn, and Poll laughed in high glee at the poor brutes' vain effort to find something to attack. Poll kept up the sport until one of the dogs discovered her trick, and pulling her from her perch the whole pack set upon her and would soon have ended her life but for a sudden inspiration that came upon the poor bird to cry "Get out, get out. D— you, get out!" The dogs made off, and poor poll, hopping painfully back upon her perch, disconsolately surveyed her torn plumage, sought an easier position for her broken bones and solemnly observed to herself: "Gray Poll talks too d— much."

Among the dogs allowed the freedom of the house was a diminutive black and tan that, though utterly devoid of affection, was possessed with such remarkable intellectual traits that he became one of the most important members of the household, and, at his death, was honored with sepulture in the family tomb. One of Frank's many accomplishments, in



which he was self-taught, was his ability to note the hours and recognize the bells, especially the first and second bell of a morning, and his activity in getting the members of the family out of bed was as phenomenal as it was comical. He took upon himself the duty of barking in every member of the family to their meals. He would visit each one and bark until he was understood and obeyed. Sometimes, when calling upon Colonel Piatt for that purpose, he found him so busy that no attention was given to the barking. Observing this, the dog would dart out and soon return with Tiny, another black and tan, and Nibbs, a Scotch terrier, and all three would bark until their summons was obeyed.

Almost diagonally across the little valley from the residence of Donn Piatt is that of General A. Sanders Piatt, his brother. The affection existing between them was most tender and loyal. Hardly a day passed that they were not together in the library of one or the other. Each sought the other's counsel in all grave matters and opinions on all public questions. Their views often widely differed, and this divergence frequently brought the two forceful minds into spirited controversy, but they never failed, in the end, to come to an agreement and part with their mutual respect increased and their love strengthened. Their fervent attachment grew with their years from

earliest boyhood, and in all their long lives not a single cloud ever cast a shadow between them.

Donn Piatt's famous qualities as host were never known to such advantage as at Mac-o-chee. The traditions of his memorable dinners at Willard's, Chamberlin's and Welcker's are forced into second place by the more glowing accounts, given by those fortunate enough to have visited him in his rural retreat, of the charming heartiness with which he here welcomed and entertained. Here he was visited by the first men of his time, and eminent statesmen, writers, actors and artists of all lands have left behind many tokens of appreciation of this host, companion and friend. A single, but sufficient illustration of this is given in the following verses, by James Whitcomb Riley:

## I.

Donn Piatt of Mac-o-chee—  
Not the one of history,  
Who with flaming tongue and pen  
Scathes the vanities of men;  
Not the one whose biting wit  
Cuts pretense and etches it  
On the brazen brow that dares  
Filch the laurel that it wears;  
Not the Donn Piatt whose praise  
Echoes in the noisy ways  
Of the faction onward led  
By the statesman—but instead

Give the simple man to me,  
Donn Piatt of Mac-o-chee.

## II.

Donn Piatt of Mac-o-chee!  
Branches of the old oak tree  
Drape him royally in fine  
Purple shade and golden shine  
Emerald plush of sloping lawn  
Be the throne he sits upon;  
And oh! summer sunset, thou  
Be his crown and gild a brow  
Softly smoothed and soothed and calmed  
By the breezes mellow-palmed,  
As Erata's white hand agleam  
On the forehead of a dream;  
So forever, rule o'er me,  
Donn Piatt of Mac-o-chee.

## III.

Donn Piatt of Mac-o-chee,  
Through a liliated memory  
Plays the wayward little creek  
Round your home at hide and seek;  
And I see and hear it still,  
Romping round the wooded hill,  
Till its laugh and babble blends  
With the silence, while it sends  
Glances back to kiss the sight  
In its babyish delight,  
Ere it strays amid the gloom  
Of the glens that burst in bloom  
Of the rarest rhyme for thee,  
Donn Piatt of Mac-o-chee.

## IV.

Donn Piatt of Mac-o-chee!  
What a darling destiny  
Has been mine! To meet him there—  
Lolling in an easy chair  
On the terrace while he told  
Reminiscences of old—  
Letting my cigar die out,  
Hearing poems talked about,  
And entranced to hear him say  
Gentle things of Thackeray,  
Dickens, Hawthorne and the rest,  
Known to him as host and guest—  
Known to him as he to me,  
Donn Piatt of Mac-o-chee.

Donn Piatt had one of the most complete, comfortable, and tastefully arranged workshops that a writer ever possessed. The large library on the lower floor contains a vast collection of standard works covering an infinite variety of subjects. The study, or "Den," is on the second floor immediately back of the higher tower, and a large bay window not only admits the proper light but affords a magnificent view of the broad stretch of country lying below. The walls here are lined with richly carved book-cases holding carefully selected works of reference, and from a high perch between the marble busts of Shelley and Byron



an enormous stuffed owl looks solemnly down upon the desk.

In the summer months, Colonel Piatt, that he might be nearer to nature's heart, worked in a little stone lodge among the cliffs and cedars on the hillside, where birds sang all day long in the vines clinging to the walls, and squirrels peeped in at the windows, and, growing more bold, gamboled upon the floor, heedless of his presence. By a strange coincidence, this little lodge in which he wrote much of the best work of his life stands upon the spot formerly occupied by the pioneer district school-house, in which he received his first public instruction.

On his retirement from active newspaper work, he at first devoted himself to the drama. He turned out in rapid succession three plays: *Lost and Won*, *A Hunt for an Heiress*, and *Jane Shore, a King's Love*. Of these the last only has been tried on the stage, it having been played in New York by Clara Morris, supported by a superb company, but without success. The failure of this did not in the least discourage him, and he at once wrote another, basing it upon the tragic incident in American history found in the conspiracy between Burr and Blennerhassett. This was quickly completed, but never published in his lifetime.

Colonel Piatt's tastes and abilities, however, were more in the line of comedy. He wrote a large num-

ber of comedies and farces, the manuscripts of only two of which, *A Hunt for an Heiress* and *Emotional Insanity* have been preserved. That he attached little value to them is shown clearly in the fact that he took no care of them and allowed them to be lost or destroyed.

His last work in this line was *Keno*, a comic opera in two acts, with a rich vein of political satire running through it, of which he furnished the libretto to music supplied by Bruno Oscar Klein, a German composer of wide reputation. Mr. Klein remained at Mac-o-chee during the preparation of the opera, and immediately upon completion it was given a private rehearsal at Cincinnati. It was considered a success, and Colonel Piatt and Mr. Klein repaired to New York, intending to have it brought out there. It was not accepted by any New York manager, however, and Colonel Piatt never again attempted a dramatic venture.

He turned his attention to work in which he knew he could succeed, and readers of leading magazines and the daily press once more became familiar with his views upon public questions.

In 1882, Donn Piatt was invited by the faculty of the University of Notre Dame of South Bend, Indiana, to address the graduating class of that institution. He complied and availed himself of this oppor-

tunity to give forceful expression to his theories upon the subject of education. The faculty conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Laws.

He gave material assistance in the establishment, in the winter of 1883, of the *Washington Hatchet*, a weekly journal devoted to comment and criticism, and designed to fill the field formerly occupied by his own *Capital*. His connection with the new paper extended through only the first few numbers, and was prompted solely by a spirit of helpfulness.

Ever deeply interested in the labor question, Colonel Piatt went into the Hocking Valley mining districts during the riots of 1884, and made a careful study of the unhappy miners' condition. The result of his thorough investigations was given in a series of letters to the leading papers.

He took an active part in the national campaign of 1884, in the beginning, but early in October, he was rendered incapable of further service by a fracture of his left arm, the result of a fall upon the stairway of a hotel in Toledo, Ohio, where he had gone to assist Frank Hurd in his effort to secure a re-election to Congress.

Soon after the first inauguration of President Cleveland, a post-office was established at Colonel Piatt's house, and himself appointed postmaster, for which he enjoyed the munificent salary of forty dol-

lars a year. The cause of this move on the part of the administration is still a mystery. Colonel Piatt had so earnestly proclaimed for years that he was not an office-seeker that the greatness thus thrust upon him was disconcerting. The newspapers were not slow to take the matter up, and this fourth-class post-office became one of the leading topics of the day. General H. V. Boynton's story of the mail carrier being chased by the dogs and forced to take to a tree in order to save his life and Colonel Fred D. Mussey's account of a horn hung at the outer gate with the placarded warning "Any one having business at this office will please blow the horn and give the postmaster time to chain his dog," and many other stories of like sort found echo in the rural press in the form of serious paragraphs that said: "Donn Piatt, once the most vigorous and aggressive newspaper writer in the country, is now living quietly in a little Ohio town called Mac-o-chee, of which he is the postmaster, with the beggarly pittance of \$40 a year."

Colonel Piatt had the rare faculty of appreciating a joke at his own expense, and he wrote to a friend: "My forty dollar postoffice bids fair to come in as classic fun with the mother-in-law, stove-pipe and banana peel."

Holding Postmaster-General Vilas responsible for his appointment, he hastened to get even by writing



that busy official long letters of advice as to the proper management of the Postoffice Department. Mr. Vilas met him in the same spirit, protesting against these suggestions on the ground that to decipher the handwriting required so much of the time of himself and full force of clerks that none was left to put the suggestions into practice or even to attend to the ordinary business of the department. To this Piatt responded that the government was entitled to his entire time and services, and he could not, without doing his full duty, conscientiously draw his salary.

He next proposed that as the patrons of the office were afraid of his dogs and did not call for their mail, causing an overflow of dead letters, the office ought to have a general delivery system. This petition he further based on the economical proposition that as there were few patrons, the expense of such system would be slight. His petition receiving no official recognition, he resigned.

In February, 1887, Colonel Piatt collected a series of his magazine articles upon President Lincoln, Secretaries Seward, Stanton and Chase, and General George H. Thomas, and had them issued through Belford, Clarke & Co., in book form, under the title: *Memories of the Men who Saved the Union*. It was very much to his surprise that the work attracted such attention that a second edition was called for in



less than three months. In its sharply critical nature it naturally enough excited much adverse criticism. That he expected this is shown in an extract from one of his private letters where he says: "My book is out at last and I expect no end of abuse. Of course, when a man loads his sentences with dynamite and drops them about the stuffed legs of popular idols he must expect something unpleasant." A few weeks later he wrote: "The mosquitoes of the press are stinging me right and left. Now and then a leading journal gives me a lift. All the Chicago papers have been dignified and fair, also the Boston journals."

In the more studied reviews of the magazines the treatment accorded the work was almost uniformly kind. *The North American Review*, while not agreeing with Colonel Piatt in his low estimate of Grant and Sherman, readily conceded that, "in spite of his prejudice, Donn Piatt's work is always brilliant and captivating. In his present book Lincoln stands before us in all his homeliness and in all his grandeur, the man of the hour, to whom the preservation of the Union was the one great object to which every other object, including slavery, were secondary. Stanton, Chase and Seward appear natural and life-like on the canvass, each filling his peculiar sphere and each indispensable, the first two occupied with the heavy responsibilities of domestic administration, and the last

managing with infinite tact the nation's difficult foreign affairs. Of General Thomas, whose sketch is the longest, the American people are well proud, and it may possibly be true that his not coming to the front as commander-in-chief was a national calamity. . . .” The *Westminister Review*, of London, in an exhaustive criticism welcomed the sketches to Europe with the following complimentary comments: “They are the interesting recollections of one who was personally acquainted with the illustrious men of whom he has written, and who had, as well officially as socially, opportunities of studying the characters of each, of which he has availed himself in writing one of the ablest books we have had the pleasure to welcome from America. The article on Stanton, when it was published in the *North American Review*, attracted much attention and criticism. It is not more remarkable than the other articles, for each is a powerful study of character, sparkling with epigram and charged with moving incidents told in most felicitous language. The object of the book is said to be ‘to rescue the true from the false,’ and it has been accomplished in a manner which must make some living celebrities very unhappy. The writer has, to use his own words when describing Seward, ‘a way of tearing off the outside and exposing the bran-stuffing of an idol.’ Sometimes his merciless demolition of a

popular fallacy concerning some famous man startles the reader, but he invariably finds it couched in such calm and forceful language, and supported by such potent arguments, that he is fain to confess with a sigh that the deed is but an act of justice. . . . The biography of Major-General G. H. Thomas is a brilliant eulogy of that taintless hero, and will effectually rescue his name from the obscurity into which rivals for fame and the flatterers of unworthy inferiors have tried to relegate it. Whether all that is therein said of him is correct we are unable to decide; whether he was 'greater than Napoleon' we may doubt, but we can not doubt that it is fortunate for his fame that he has had so loving and able a biographer, whose work is 'the work of genius commemorating genius.'"

It is significant that the critics of Europe, necessarily less prejudiced than our own in a matter affecting ourselves, pronounced Colonel Piatt's conclusions fair and his criticism just. The concensus of opinion of American critics was, however, that he had underrated Grant, Sherman, and McClellan. In reply to these criticisms, through the New York *Herald*, he said:

" . . . We are so unused to war that we are provincial in our estimate of it, its consequences and actors. We are like children at a circus or a country

fellow at a militia muster. The one mistakes the drum-major for the major-general, while the others are lost in admiration of the ring-master. The really great men who bore the burden of that perilous time, and with eminent success held our country to its heroic course—the statesmen at Washington—we are hastening to forget, while building monuments to the mere subordinates in the field, and not to the best of them at that. We are getting laughed at in Europe for our bumptiousness as fighting characters, claiming victories where we suffered only defeats, and setting up as great captains the few who happened to be in command when the Confederacy fell from exhaustion. We owe it to ourselves, as well as to the memories of our eminent dead, to remedy this wrong. Whatever the critics may say of my book, I claim for myself the credit of accomplishing much in the right direction. This, not because of any claimed ability on my part, but for that of the heroic people of our country who fought that fight out themselves, no thanks to generals whose blunders slaughtered enough men to have conquered the South had they been ably handled—these masses, I say, have so high a sense of fair play and a sensitiveness to the fame of those they really recognize as heroes, that a mere statement of the fact is sufficient to arouse them to action. I entered my poor protest, and it did not fall unheeded. I wrote a sketch



of Lincoln, as I remembered him, some two years since, and it gave birth to a huge volume of Lincoln literature; and on each page was the assertion that I had underrated the great man. Up to that period dust was gathering on his tomb and his memory fading before the vociferous acclaim over political favorites."

Again, in his preface to the second edition, he refers to these criticisms. He says:

"The author has been charged by the critics of the daily press with having belittled prominent men of the war to enhance the claims of the heroes he has selected. This is both unjust and untrue. These partisans fail to distinguish the difference between the belittling that comes from distorted facts and that shrinkage of fictitious greatness which accompanies the light of truth. The crime of the author is to be found, really, in his praise of Thomas. He could be forgiven all that he said of Lincoln, Stanton, Chase, and Seward, for these statesmen had claims that did not conflict with the political idols of the war. When Thomas appears, however, he fills the stage. He seems so grand, from contrast alone, that, like a great actor on the mimic stage, he holds entranced the eyes and hearts of the audience, and all others are merely foils and supports to the one grand central heroic figure.

"For thus exalting the great performer of a na-



tion's fateful drama the author is indicted. As said elsewhere, politics to an American has all the fascination of gambling and all the fanaticism of religion, and he has mortally offended the Republicans, to whom Grant is an idol, and the Democrats, who worship the memory of McClellan.

“However, the struggle is in vain. The Rock of Chickamauga, the hero of Nashville, is here, and he is here to stay. His soldiers, who alone for nearly a quarter of a century have made his monument in their hearts, now tenderly pass it to the people—an heroic people who rallied to the cry of disaster more promptly than to the trumpet-call of victory, and who have that in them which lifts the warrior above political factions when a hero's memory is to be rescued from neglect. And, after all, so far as the armed conflict was concerned, they, the men under the muskets, fought the fight and saved the Union. The dead of the volunteers, they who, as President Lincoln said, gave their lives that we might live as a nation, have their sacred memories woven in with that of their beloved leader, who never suffered defeat nor lost a man needlessly, who shared their hardships in the march and stood with them at the front when ‘the long line came gleaming on’ sheeted in flames of musketry and moving swiftly to the mounding roar of cannon. He who was slow, oh, so slow to leave the field, as

one of his Ohio soldiers so eloquently expressed it, will be equally slow in disappearing from the memories of a people.

“Belittling others! the misery of it is that his very presence does that, and he is here to stay.”

The immediate effect of the book, in spite of the opposition it aroused and the wrath of politicians, was the awakening of love and admiration for General Thomas. The most significant proof of the force felt was contained in an article from the pen of General W. T. Sherman, in the *North American Review*, two months after the work was issued. It was a reply to the English general, Lord Wolsley, who had claimed for Robert E. Lee the high position of being the greatest general on either side. General Sherman at first put forward Grant as superior to the Confederate leader; but, as if feeling the insecurity of his ground, hastened, much to the astonishment of all, to point to the record of Thomas. This is all the more significant from the fact that up to that time Sherman had ignored the high claims of Thomas, according him only the perfunctory praise due a subordinate.

Colonel Piatt's aggressive criticism of men then living and popularly accepted as great heroes, was firmly based on proofs gathered in a zealous study of the men and movements of the war, and he not only challenged contradiction but defied it.

In the following year a volume was issued by the same publishing house, containing Donn Piatt's better short stories, with the title: *The Lone Grave of the Shenandoah and other Tales*. Though none of the stories were new at the time of the publication in book form, all having been printed and reprinted in magazines and newspapers, the volume was well received and widely sold. The treatment accorded it by the press was, without exception, kind. The *Chicago News* pronounced the stories "quaint, delicate, humorous, fanciful, examples of the art of short story writing in its perfection," while the *Washington Post* commended them as "eminently original and delightful to read. So extraordinary a compound of poetry and practicality as our author, if sought through the world, could not, probably, be found."

Late in the summer of 1887, Colonel Piatt's publishers proposed to him the publication of a monthly magazine, with himself as editor, embracing a liberal political policy in addition to literary features of the highest excellence. Donn Piatt's reputation as a tariff reformer, together with the prominence given the tariff question by President Cleveland's famous message of that year, were believed by the publishers to be sufficient of themselves to insure success, and Colonel Piatt did not doubt that a monthly review, well conducted upon a free trade basis, would exert a wide

influence in the national campaign then approaching, and be of permanent usefulness. Accordingly Robert J. Belford visited Colonel Piatt at Mac-o-chee, and a policy was definitely decided upon and an agreement effected.

The first number of *Belford's Magazine* appeared in June, 1888, at the very beginning of the presidential canvass. In his introductory address, Colonel Piatt took high ground in his position upon the great question at that time agitating the politics of the country. A few characteristic extracts serve to show its nature:

“The president of the United States has thrown the political arena in a tumult that is as novel as it is important. For nearly a quarter of a century the elections have been controlled by what we are pleased to call the issues of the late civil war and the personal praise and abuse of the candidates. In these the contests have resolved themselves into a mere struggle for power to be found in the possession of the offices. No measures founded on antagonistic principles of administration have been suggested or discussed. The country, divided into two hostile camps, has rallied to one or the other side on a mere difference of names. The platforms solemnly promulgated by Republican and Democratic conventions nominating candidates for the presidency are so adroitly worded, that to the keenest investigation they afford no material difference. The



contests that follow are a shame to our manhood as a nation of civilized people.

“President Grover Cleveland, in his sturdy self-reliance, independent and clear-sighted statesmanship, recognizing this condition of the country, has thrown himself and his political fortune into the arena with an appeal to reason that makes of his message a startling platform of principle. The business relations of the country are as much disturbed, and its dealers are as much stupefied and astonished as were the money changers of the temple when our Savior ordered them out.

“To comprehend clearly all that is before us, we are forced to remember that our government some twenty-five years since passed under the control of a so-called political party that had no claim to such a title, because it is held together under property privileges—and these privileges have so shown themselves in our business relations, that to disturb them is to revolutionize both political and business conditions. They are so unnatural and unjust, that if left to themselves, they must inevitably break down the government and bankrupt the country. The tariff, for example, passed from one of a purely revenue character to one of high protection, at a time when the government was in a death struggle, under the pretext of raising a heavy income on which to prosecute the

war. The war came to a successful close, and for twenty-three years after the government has been kept on a war footing until the accumulated treasure threatens capital and oppresses labor, and all healthy enterprises are paralyzed.

“It is hard to realize that the government, with its horrible weight, is in the field of private enterprise, crushing out the weak and lifting the powerful into a class that belittles the strongest aristocracy of Europe. With a vile lobby made up of fast men and loose women, crowding the corridors of the capital, whose sole purpose is to suggest and carry through measures that will insure a profit to certain interests, the great masses of the people, mainly the agriculturalists, have no voice in this unconstitutional plunder at their expense. This is but one illustration of evils that have come to us through the degradation of our government in passing the political fabric erected by the fathers to a commercial machine that enriches the few to the utter ruin of the many.

“This issue is on us. It can not be ignored. Even were the startled Democracy, robbed through long defeats of its traditional courage, to meet in convention and nominate some other candidate, the issue would remain. The Cæsar assassinated in the first page of Shakespeare's play holds the boards until the last scene of that immortal tragedy. The great pub-

lic is being aroused. It will not content itself with killing a fly. Unrequited toil hungers in desperation in mines and manufactures. The farmers stand dismayed in exhausted fields for whose products they have no paying markets. Alien flags alone float over the vessels that on the high seas convey American products. Millionaires multiply from government-sanctioned monopolies, while the masses see the gulf between a bare sustenance and a competence widen and deepen from year to year. Even the business interests are startled by the augmentations of capital in the government treasury, which threatens bankruptcy to business while it depresses labor.

“*Belford's Magazine*, thus introduced to the public, will be devoted to a fair discussion of the crime thus put upon the people. We are promised the aid of the ablest pens in the United States; and relying on the intelligence of the people, we count upon success in our earnest endeavor.”

Among the contributors of the first number were Thomas G. Shearman, Arthur W. Grundy, Edward Shaw, J. S. Moore (the Parsee merchant), Julian Hawthorne, Coates Kinney, Henry George, Edgar Saltus, Frank Hurd, Ella Wheeler Wilcox and Elizabeth W. Bellamy. Succeeding numbers were enriched by the best efforts of William G. Sumner, T. E. Willson, Hamlin Garland, W. J. Flagg, George Parsons La-

throp, Roger Q. Mills, John G. Carlisle, Helen H. Gardener, John James Piatt, Appleton Morgan, Gertrude Garrison, Joel Smith, Edgar Fawcett, Helen Grace Smith, Sarah M. B. Piatt, William J. Florence, William H. Hayne, James Whitcomb Riley, and many more whose names alone were sufficient guaranty to the public of work of the very best quality. In accordance with Donn Piatt's usual custom, a number of unknown writers were admitted to his galaxy, and their genius brought into prominence.

The admirable political policy assumed and consistently adhered to by the editor, at a time when tariff reform doctrine was in great demand, gave the magazine a high rank at the very start, and maintained it upon a popular and paying basis throughout his connection with it. Donn Piatt remained with Belford's only a year. The presidential election having passed, and the "campaign of education" being suspended for the time, the publishers decided upon a change of policy. The course resolved upon was such that an editor of Donn Piatt's ability became a luxury instead of a necessity. He was not averse to the change; but in July, 1889, gladly accepted his release and again retired to Mac-o-chee. As editor of Belford's he did the most conservative writing of his life, but his opinions were always original and his expressions vigorous.

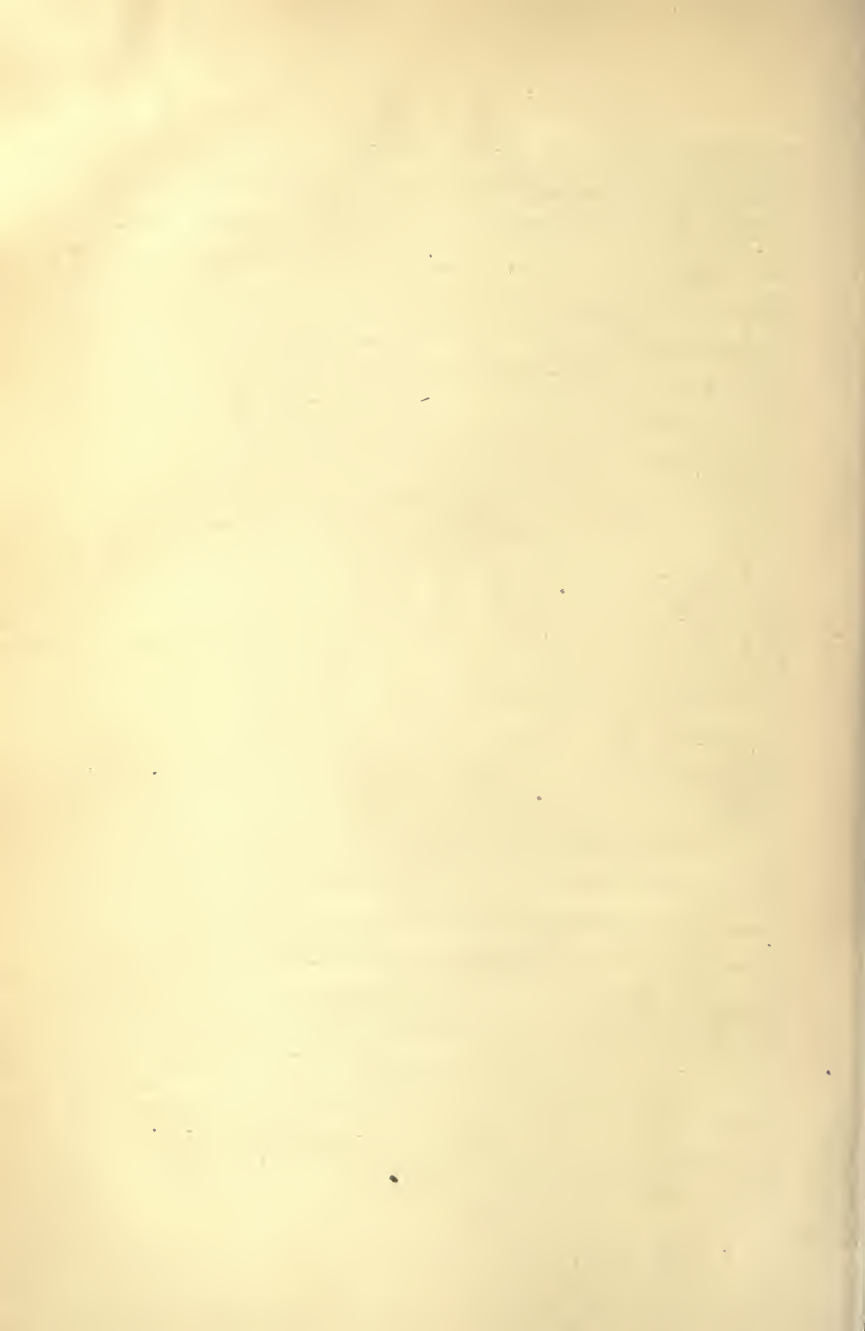


Upon his retirement from the Magazine Donn Piatt devoted himself to the completion of a novel, the plot of which he had been many years making up. In a private journal kept up by him in 1854 in Paris is found an outline of the characters and incidents of this story. While editor of the *Capital* he wrote out and published it with the title : A Minister's Wooing. In his then overworked condition, however, he was unable to give such attention to detail and to literary finish as he desired. Accordingly, in 1889, he rewrote the whole, improving the plot, delineating the characters more clearly, and giving the work a more perfect polish. In this revised form it was published very recently by Robert J. Belford, Chicago, under the title : The Rev. Melancthon Poundex.

Immediately upon the completion of this novel he began a long contemplated life of Gen. George H. Thomas. For this great work he was particularly well prepared. His own active part in the war, his long and intimate association with the prominent leaders of both sides, and his critical study of all writings upon each of the various campaigns gave him an accurate knowledge which his propensity to expose false pretense and humbug made a power. His *Memories of the Men who Saved the Union*, and a vast amount of other writing upon the subject had given him a wide reputation as a writer in that line. He



MAC-O-CHEE LIBRARY.



was an active member of the Society of the Army of the Cumberland, and thoroughly familiar and in full sympathy with the spirit and traditions of that organization. He differed from the members of that great body in general only in his own superior ability to give forceful utterance to views held by all alike.

He realized that we are yet so near the late war that it is extremely difficult to sift the facts and adjust the fame to which that struggle gave birth. But he realized also that at the age of three score and ten the tide of his own life was ebbing fast, and he hastened to put to record his protest against the injustice being done the memory of a great hero. He clearly recognized, moreover, that the trouble of nearness can be remedied only in part by time, for while that settles the passions that distort, it in turn dims and diminishes the events themselves, and leaves for history only what Napoleon said it was, "the facts agreed on."

The outline of his work embraced not only a narrative of General Thomas' services, but bold and exhaustive criticism of campaigns and commanders in all parts of the field. He had the assistance, as joint author, of General Henry M. Cist, of Cincinnati, an aide upon General Thomas' staff and a writer on war topics of reputation. The manuscript, however, is entirely of Colonel Piatt's composition and in his inimitable style.



No other work in his life was given such close study and painstaking care. He was constantly in receipt of assurances that it was being looked for by surviving veterans of the armies of the west and their more numerous admirers as among the most important works written or to be written upon the war. But he was not permitted to finish it. Death asserted a higher claim upon him. He had, however, brought the narrative of Thomas' operations and the review of all movements up to the triumphant occupation of Chattanooga, that was regarded alike by the author and his hero as the gateway to the South and the great objection point of the war.\*

While busily engaged upon his novel and biography of General Thomas he did not cease to contribute occasionally to the magazines and daily papers. Notable among his later work of this sort were a number of letters for the American Press Association, biographical sketches of General Robert C. Schenck, General John C. Frémont, and Washington McLean for *Belford's Magazine*, and a series of letters for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* on the candidates and issues of the

\* A year after Donn Piatt's death Mrs. Piatt purchased of General Cist his interest in the *Life of Thomas*, collected the manuscript, and induced General H. V. Boynton to supply, in his own name, three chapters, covering the Atlanta and Nashville campaigns, with a general summary, necessary to make the work complete.

Ohio gubernatorial contest between McKinley and Campbell.

On the 31st of October, 1891, he attended a reunion of the Cincinnati Literary Club, of which he had long been a member, and on his return home, the railway coach being insufficiently warmed, he caught a severe cold that resulted, a few days later, in pneumonia and death. It is remarkable that in a speech at this reunion, his last appearance in public, he predicted his early death. "When your next anniversary comes," he said, "I will not be here. My doctor forbade my coming this time, but here I am. When, next year, your 42d anniversary is commemorated, Donn Piatt, though not in his life time, will have joined the majority."

A few months before while in New York, he was invited to take dinner with a friend, and, appearing late, apologized by saying that he had started out to walk from his hotel, but had found it slow work owing to a disease with which he was afflicted, and which had defied medical skill for the last six thousand years. In reply to anxious inquiry as to its nature, he said, "It is called old age. But," he added his spirit reviving, "we will have the dinner together, anyway."

Upon his return home from Cincinnati, after the Literary Club meeting, he complained of having been

chilled in the car. He felt better the following day, however, and went out driving. The next day he became worse and was soon forced to take to his bed, his illness increasing until Wednesday, 11th November, when his physicians gave up all hope of recovery, and Rev. Father William Conway administered the rites of the last sacrament of the Catholic Church. He then lingered, his loving wife constantly at his side, his sister and other devoted relatives near, until the next afternoon, when about 3 o'clock the vital spark expired.

## CHAPTER X.

## REVIEW OF CHARACTER AND SUMMARY OF OPINIONS.

There was little that Donn Piatt attempted in which he did not become conspicuous. A man of many parts, his versatility was marvelous. He was poet, politician, humorist, historian, lawyer, judge, diplomat, theologian, soldier, orator, statesman, journalist—

“ Who ran  
Through each mode of the lyre, and was master of all.”

No two men looked at him alike. One was captivated by his sparkling wit, another interested in his bold thought, another touched by his tender sentiment, and another shocked at his keen, remorseless sarcasm. Different to every one, he was ever the same to each. A composite of the stearnest, coldest Puritanism and the most ardent Southern chivalry, the ceaseless conflict between the two elements made him an enigma to his friends, a wonder to his enemies and a mystery to himself.

Next to the unrivaled power of denunciation that made him the most dreaded satirist of his time, his



most clearly marked quality was the exact opposite of this. His truly dual nature embraced the furthest extremes, and his devotion to his friends was as tender and unwavering as his assaults upon his enemies were fierce and unrelenting. So very pronounced were these two antagonistic qualities that the man as commonly viewed through his writings would hardly be recognized in the man in private. There was the same wit, the same epigrammatic utterance and the same force of opinion, but the kindly eyes, the warm smile and the whole appearance of his handsome, mobile face indicating ardent affection, often led to the delusion that his harshest sayings were the result of a love of mischief rather than malice. Yet in his lightest jest there was an earnestness of feeling and purpose that inspired confidence and commanded respect, if it did not win conviction.

It has often been said that he would not hesitate to sacrifice a friend for the sake of a point or witticism. Nothing could at the same time come nearer the truth and be more unjust. It is true he held principles higher than any personal considerations, and in laying his ax to the root of an evil he took little heed where the chips might fall. When he saw a fault in a public man it mattered not to him whether the man was personal friend or personal foe in his attack upon the fault.

A notable instance of this is found in his exposure of Garfield's treachery to General Rosecrans. Piatt and Garfield had been for many years before the war, during the war, and after, in the political arena, intimate as brothers. Piatt had stood faithfully by him in the Credit Mobilier affair, and defended him, believing him innocent, in the De Golyer contract, had sympathized with him, and sorrowed over his struggle for life after being shot down by a maniac, and cried like a child at the news of his cruel death. Yet, when engaged on the Life of General George H. Thomas, some years later, he came upon a letter written to Secretary Chase by Garfield when Rosecrans' chief of staff, denouncing Rosecrans as incompetent, and turning against the soldier his one friend in the cabinet, he did not hesitate to pronounce the act one of grossest treachery, and lay upon Garfield's garlanded head the blame for the resultant failure of the government to supply the reinforcements needed and the consequent disaster at Chickamauga. Colonel Piatt has been accused of a treachery in this as infamous as that which he charges upon the dead President. Such accusers forget that the relationship between Piatt and Garfield differed from that between Garfield and Rosecrans in being a private one. Piatt owed no allegiance to Garfield. He had received no favors at his hands and had asked none. The obligations were all on the other

side. Piatt had gratuitously defended Garfield against charges of which he knew him to be innocent at a time when such defense involved his own reputation, and he was equally quick to attack where he knew him guilty. That he considered the last no less his duty than the first can not be doubted, and that the pain of the attack did not deter him any more than the danger of the defense is proof of the most noble trait of his character.

He was so far from making jest of the faults of his friends that he suffered his worst injuries all through life from his total blindness to such imperfections. Of those he loved he could not see or be made to believe any thing ill. A close and remarkably shrewd observer of human nature, he could delineate character with startling accuracy, marking the lights and shadows as distinctly as does the camera, provided the object appeared in the proper perspective; yet where he loved his kind heart took the place of his clear head, and he was ever finding excuses for faults that in his eyes made them virtues. Great-hearted, whole-souled, compassionate, impulsive, and tender, he reserved nothing in his affection. In his acts of kindness he always went beyond what could reasonably have been hoped for, and in his modest way was constantly bestowing favors where wholly unexpected.

He never forgot a favor, nor failed to return it

ten-fold. A happy instance of this is given by General H.V. Boynton, in an incident that occurred when Piatt represented at Washington the *Cincinnati Commercial* and Boynton the *Cincinnati Gazette*. The relationship between the two correspondents as rivals could hardly have been expected to bring them into close personal friendship. But it chanced that Boynton did Piatt some favor. Months after Boynton became involved in a controversy in which heavy odds were against him, and suddenly Piatt took a hand and not only came out vigorously on Boynton's side, but placed in that gentleman's possession facts that enabled him to silence the opposition. When Boynton afterward called upon Colonel Piatt with expressions of gratitude Piatt stopped him and mentioned the former kindness that Boynton had forgotten. "My favor was so slight and entirely unimportant," said Boynton, in relating the incident, "that I had not remembered it an hour. Not one in a million would have thought it worthy of gratitude, and none but Donn Piatt would have returned it so bountifully and gracefully. I know hundreds of such incidents. He could not forget a favor, however little."

This spirit of grateful appreciation and thoughtful helpfulness bound his friends close to him with sweet tendrils strong as steel. And in a social way he was in the highest degree lovable. The great



warmth of his disposition found expression in polished speech and a refinement of manner that came through temperament, and was heightened almost to courtliness by training and association.

It is remarkable that he seldom asked a favor for himself. He was constantly urging upon his friends in political power the advancement of some deserving person, a relative, or friend, or very often a mere acquaintance; but for himself he asked nothing. So plainly was this the fact that on one occasion, when Mrs. Lincoln heard him pressing upon the President the claims of a friend, she pertinently asked: "Mr. Piatt, why don't you ask for something for yourself?" She recognized the quality of unselfish effort for others, but did not realize, perhaps, that Piatt had no desire or need to seek advancement for himself in that way.

But while many whom he thus helped were little more than strangers to him he was careful to know they were worthy, and no one betrayed his trust but such one was made to regret that the two had ever come into contact. While a member of the Harper's Ferry Court of Inquiry he was sought out in Washington by the son of an old friend and asked for his assistance in securing the young man's promotion to the army. Piatt immediately called upon Secretary Stanton, and without difficulty secured the desired

commission. Walking to his boarding-house he met the young man on horseback.

“What does Stanton say?” asked the eager aspirant.

“He was quite willing to give you the rank you seek.”

“Then you can get it for me? Captain Piatt, you see this horse? He is worth \$500, if a cent; this saddle and bridle are worth a hundred more. If you get me that commission this horse is yours, just as he stands.”

Piatt, on seeing the young man approach, had drawn the commission from his pocket. He now replaced it there and said: “My boy, I find I was wrong in believing you to be a worthy son of your father. I have befriended you, and in return you offer me insult. That you do not yourself recognize it as an insult does not speak well for your sense of honor. I can not assist you any further.” He returned to Secretary Stanton and had the commission canceled.\*

Colonel Piatt could not tolerate a sense of obligation, and seldom accepted gifts unless the giving was prompted by a pure feeling of friendship. He would

There is a sequel to this incident. A few days later the young man secured the promotion he sought, and this valuable horse at the same time passed into the possession of the daughter of a member of the cabinet, who made no secret of the fact that it had been presented to her as a reward for kindness.

never take a gift of value in money as a reward for a service, either public or private. In the giving of presents himself he was ruinously generous. The wife of a close friend desired to purchase of him a favorite horse that he most highly prized, for he was a magnificent animal, thoroughbred and gentle, and he quite astonished her by saying :

“I think too much of that beautiful fellow to compute his value in money, but if you will take him as a token of my esteem he would seem to me only too insignificant.”

Walking on the road near his home at Mac-o-chee with a young man who was much attached to him they passed a picturesque wooded hill standing sentinel at the entrance to the little valley with the “babbling Mac-o-chee” winding about its base.

“The first thousand dollars I can lay up,” said Colonel Piatt’s young companion, “I will use in buying that piece of ground. Then when I get \$5,000 more I will build a house there.”

“My dear boy,” was the reply, “as a general thing the first thousand is the hardest to get. But I will save you that trouble by buying the ground for you myself.”

The young man knew, however, that in spite of a large property and good income Colonel Piatt con-

stantly suffered a lack of means through such impulsive generosity, and he declined to permit the purchase.

But Donn Piatt's acts of kind helpfulness were not confined to the giving of presents and securing of political preferment. A volume could be made up of instances of his aid and encouragement to writers. Willing to help all such in any way possible, he yet never advised any one, however gifted, to take to writing as a means of subsistence: "There is nothing pays so poorly," he said, "as the pen in this country; and for one to undertake to make a living at it is to break one's heart before dying of starvation. European literature is open to our publishers, and a thousand and one infatuated individuals are willing to write for nothing for the sake of seeing their names in print, so a poor market is glutted." A sympathetic regard for his less fortunate fellow toilers with the pen, almost as much as his high sense of justice, prompted him to earnestly strive, through long years, to secure an international copyright law that would protect authors. The unjust condition from which they suffered he stated as follows: "A number of earnest fanatics were hanged at Chicago, for holding that all property is theft, and resisting with bombs a police with pistols that joined issue with them on this proposition. The majesty of the law was maintained under the gallows, and the axiom established that all prop-



erty is held a sacred right, sanctioned by God and sustained by common law and written constitutions, save and except that form of human industry called a book. A man may work his idea into a sewing machine, for example, and the courts will punish by imprisonment any anarchist or communist who dares appropriate the machine. But, if he works his idea into a book, it is a common possession, and may be appropriated by any anarchist, disguised as publisher, and enjoyed by the public, without compensation. If a misguided son of man approach the sewing machine for the purpose of taking and carrying off the same, the proprietor may use bombs in its defense, and public opinion, that is, law, will approve of the defense. This, however, does not extend to the author of a book, and as such he must submit patiently to the spoliation."

He did not believe that congress could be expected to give any adequate relief. "Congress," he said, "as a political body, is moved by votes and the money used to procure votes. Our authors have very few of the first and little of the second. When the one or the other can be brought to bear, congress will not only listen but act, and not before."

The only effective remedy that appeared possible to him was a recognition by publishers and authors of the fact that a book has a commercial as well as a

scientific or literary value, and so is entitled to a trademark that will give it the same protection enjoyed by other merchandise. This view of the subject has secured the sanction of the ablest lawyers. Jeremiah S. Black pronounced it a solution to the trouble that has oppressed the literature of our land. "A race of shopkeepers makes a nation of thieves," said the great Napoleon. "But," added Piatt, "even a nation of thieves respect the trademark."

Donn Piatt's efforts in behalf of literary workers, as a class, are no more worthy of note than is his kindly interest in and helpfulness to individual writers. Ever ready to help a deserving one to recognition, he was unstinted in his praise of merits while pointing out faults in so true a spirit of sympathy that his most adverse criticisms were an encouragement. Though he was known throughout two continents for his severe and often savage condemnation of literary work he did not approve, no young professional writer struggling for a reputation and a competence ever felt the weight of his hand except in aid. As editor and reviewer he had the ability to appreciate what was good and the courage to indorse it, though coming from a writer wholly unknown. He judged writings as he judged men, and was not effected by the glamour that attaches to a mighty name. In the literary department of his paper, the *Capital*, and in *Belford's*,

under his editorial management, the work of unknown writers was freely admitted to a place beside that of the most eminent. One of the most successful of American story writers has expressed all this most gracefully by saying: "Donn Piatt always gave each new nugget its own individual chance to show up eighteen karat."

That the kindness of heart which prompted Colonel Piatt to thus help all who appealed to him, and many more who did not expect his assistance, should often meet with ingratitude is not surprising, perhaps; but it is somewhat remarkable that he suffered the keenest sorrows of his life not from ingratitude alone, but betrayal at the hands of those for whom he had done most. For the assault of an enemy he was ever prepared, but against a stab in the back from a trusted friend there can be no defense.

The truest of friends, he was a cynic on the subject of friendship. Cynicism is not necessarily confined to a cold nature. The kindly disposed feel more keenly the pain of ingratitude, and so are disposed to set a lower estimate upon human nature. Again, the cold nature in granting a kindness regards the act as a thing extraordinary, and takes care to convey the same feeling to the beneficiary. The favor is received as a matter of grave importance. But he of the warm heart gives so gladly and with such hearty assurance

of greater pleasure in the giving than in the receiving that his kindness is apt to be taken at his own estimate and lightly valued.

Donn Piatt became cynical regarding friendship through observation and experience. "There is nothing so intolerable to a proud, or so irritating to a mean, nature," he said, "as a sense of obligation," and from this he very logically deduced his well known maxim: "Promise a man a favor, and he will not forget you; grant it, and he will never forgive you." Again, he said: "A man selects his enemies, his friends make themselves; and from the last he is most apt to suffer."

Yet, while the experience of his lifetime proved to him the truth of these epigrams, it is equally true that he was, in an unusual degree, attached to his friends. He remained steadfast in his friendship so long as the friend remained worthy.

There is no more common error concerning Colonel Piatt than that found in attributing his bitter attacks upon public men to personal hatred. To one not knowing him well it would seem almost incredible that Hayes, "His Fraudulency," as he called him, whom he castigated in such scathing manner that he brought on his own arrest for seditious utterances, was from his youth till his death one of his warmest



friends. As young men they were lawyers practicing before the same bar and members of the same literary club, and the attachment then formed, based on the high respect each had for the other's character and attainments, was never strained, though they were long regarded by the public as the bitterest enemies. Another illustration of this is found in the personal relationship between Piatt and Ben Butler. Perhaps no one ever assailed Butler so sharply as did Piatt. He had scarcely entered Washington as a correspondent ere he began irritating Butler's sore spots. Yet the two, while never intimate, were always good friends, and through the sense of humor possessed by both in an eminent degree, they once enacted an impromptu but most laughable farce for the benefit of a large dinner party at the house of a prominent senator. The host, knowing them as friends, seated them side by side. The rest of the company, knowing them only as assailant and assailed, expected an unfortunate result, and all eyes were turned upon the two. The objects of the general interest were not long in taking in the ludicrous situation. They realized that they were expected either to fiercely scowl at each other or publicly declare a truce. Butler looked at Piatt as if suddenly discovering his presence, and exclaimed: "Hello, hello!" and Piatt looked at Butler with a start, and said: "Well, well;

bad mess, isn't it?" "Rather bad," said Butler; "shall it be peace or war?" "I pass," said Piatt; "you make it." "Then it is a truce," responded Butler, and it was a relief to the dinner party to see that the two were having a better time than any others. They were never enemies in private, and when Colonel Piatt retired from journalism after years of abuse of Butler he carried with him Butler's esteem and esteem for Butler. In denouncing the picturesque statesman's faults and foibles he had not lost sight of his many virtues; nor indeed had he failed to praise the good qualities, but praise will pass unnoted while censure becomes famous.

Donn Piatt never attacked any man or measure for the mere sake of the attacking; he found too much in public life to ridicule and condemn that really demanded his extraordinary powers. While the fervor of his attachment and the intensity of his hatred blinded him, perhaps, at times, to the real facts, it is certain that feelings either of like or dislike never controlled his expression of opinions once formed. He held the somewhat peculiar view that it is not so much the qualities, good or bad, that predominate in one's nature that make one odious or admirable in the eyes of the public, but those that through impulse and circumstance become prominent. Hence his uncompromising enmity to the revealed faults of a public

man is readily reconciled with his admiration for the man in all else. He made a careful study of his man, and so knew not only what to attack, but how to make the attack most effective. His sharp words cut to the bone, but the truth they conveyed cut on to the marrow. He was so far from ignoring merit that his favorite, and, indeed, common, method was to enumerate and praise a man's virtues while condemning his faults, and by a touch of genius make the faults appear all the more odious through contrast.

Donn Piatt's greatest work illustrates the truth of his own maxim that genius is to the mind what the pearl is to the oyster, disease, but a pearl all the same. In his extreme views and intolerance of dissenting opinions was his success as a satirist founded. His great work would have been impossible without this fault. The man of flexibility of thought who gives deference to the opinions of others would have stopped, discouraged and dismayed, at the storm of opposition he aroused. The more thoughtful man would have hesitated, and in hesitating lost his opportunity. The more judicial mind would have qualified its charges, and in qualifying weakened them. One more learned would have had less influence upon the common intellect.

Strangely enough, this fault of setness in ideas, that in effect became a virtue, came of a life-long

habit of controversy, which is commonly supposed to broaden and develop the mind, but in fact narrows it and intrenches one all the more firmly in his prejudices. Nothing so thoroughly establishes one in a belief as a support of it in discussion, and nothing so contracts the intellect as the habit of looking upon questions from one side only while controverting arguments from the other. Even the interchange of thought is of no advantage for one does not value and profit by ideas antagonistic to his own. The effect is to give one increased confidence in one's own beliefs and a corresponding contempt for those of others, while cultivating one's spirit of pugnacity and dogmatic assertion.

As has been seen, in the formative period of his youth, Donn Piatt's fondness for debate had all the force of a passion. Discussion in any form was gladly welcomed by him all through life. Always original and often eccentric in his opinions, he was never at a loss for disputants. And so thoroughly was he equipped for such contests, with wit that rendered his opponents' points ridiculous or turned them to his own use, quaint illustrations of far more force than ordinary argument and learning that enabled him to carry a subject to depths where few could follow him, that it is not strange that, whatever might be the effect



upon the opponent, he should convince himself without a doubt.

Thus was this man, naturally determined and belligerent, helped to a spirit of self-confidence and aggression that not only defied opposition but laughed at it. The more unpopular his utterances were, the more vigorously he maintained them; obstacles that others of his class shrank from he surmounted by sheer force of will; attacks that would have made others recoil in despair he met with amused complacency. When the storms raged fiercest about him he was serene. When all America laughed at him in his arrest by President Grant, he laughed at all America until America caught his spirit and laughed at itself. Though arrayed against him were the most powerful and corrupt combines that the world has ever known, he could not be crushed nor subdued nor silenced.

That he was often in error is a matter of course, and through his extreme views and clear, unqualified expression of them, the errors he made became conspicuous. But he was always intensely in earnest and always believed he was right, and so fought it out, asking no quarter and giving none.

Much of Donn Piatt's power in print came from a strict observance of his favorite maxim that the substance of what one says is of less consequence than

the style in which one says it. It is an application of the Chesterfieldian idea that manner is of more importance than matter, and while all esteem solid worth far above showy pretension, there is more truth in the maxim than is generally recognized. As the difference between the best actor and the worst actor lies merely in the manner of going through the same part, so a widely different effect will be produced by two men expressing the same idea. One will evoke roars of laughter, and another appeal to an entirely different emotion. It is the magic of manner. Whether we trouble ourselves to note the substance of what one may have to say or not, we form an opinion of his style involuntarily. This because we instinctively realize that while there can be substance without style there can be no good style without substance. Manner implies matter. It indicates the degree and force of one's impressions; it emanates directly from one's feelings, and gives life and character to one's utterances. To speak profoundly we must think profoundly, and to speak strongly we must feel strongly. However, to be effective one's utterances must have more than profundity and strength, they must have force, and that depends upon their being made acceptable. Style creates a bond of sympathy between the writer and the reader by bringing the subject into an atmosphere that is congenial to both. The first

must ascend or descend to the level of the latter's understanding, prejudices and impulses. However honest and sincere one may strive to be at all times, he is forced at every turn to train his thought and trim his utterance to fit into conditions that are fixed and which he seeks through instinct to turn to his own advantage. Hence, true style is more than mere diction; it is the selection and proper presentation of such phases of a subject as will find acceptance in the mind that is to be stimulated or won over. This calls for a close knowledge of human nature, the impulses and passions that move humanity, and so is difficult of attainment.

Donn Piatt possessed in an eminent degree this necessary knowledge of human nature. Of an extremely companionable disposition, he had in his strange Bohemian career come into intimate contact with men in all grades of life. In the wilderness, before the bar, on the bench, in the political arena, in the diplomatic service, in field and camp, and in the press galleries of congress he was afforded varied opportunities that his habit of close observation turned to fullest advantage; and, more than this, he studied his own instincts and feelings. He had cultivated and stored his mind with classic poetry and prose, and was full of historic, legal, and other resources. He had an exhaustless fund of anecdotes which he could draw

upon in an appeal to any emotion. A master of several languages, his diction was pure and his phraseology choice and finished. His pugnacity did not detract from his polish. His sparkling humor and pungent wit gave life while lightening his sentences.

Through the greater part of his life Donn Piatt was an unbeliever in the tenets of any church. He was not, in the common sense, however, antagonistic to the Christian religion. His mother being a devout Catholic, the whole influence of his early life gave his thought a trend in that direction. He was never, except perhaps in his very youth, an infidel. He believed God to be beyond human comprehension—His infinite goodness above the reach of our poor intellectual processes, and he rejected the accepted Deity as one of man's own creation and a caricature. The Church had made God human that He might be loved, and inhuman that He might be feared, and the antagonistic qualities he could not accept. Who is God? What is God? How can any thing be without a beginning? these are questions which he thought it futile to seek to solve. To know God in the heart, to feel that He is love, to have faith that all things will be made plain in due time—this was his theology. He made no attempt to know of the hereafter, recognizing his ignorance of the heretofore. To appreciate and improve the present, as was his opportunity and



duty, left him no time to bother about the past or future—and no need to.

He was for a time one of a coterie of Cincinnati literary men who were investigating spiritualism. These investigations he kept up for several years with such earnestness that his friends thought he had embraced that belief. Though he never did become a confirmed spiritualist he was profoundly impressed with the phenomena, and was ever ready to defend spiritualism against attacks from scoffers. "That the learned scientists see in it inconsistencies and even impossibilities proves nothing," he said. "The religion founded by Christ has always met and is meeting today the same opposition. Christ was not only ridiculed and despised, but crucified. We are slow to realize that learning is a more potent enemy to progress than is ignorance. We may be assured, however, that so long as men are moved by a desire to grow better, they will not reject any means to that end for the mere reason that such means do not conform to the measurements of the little pack thread of science."

At another period he regularly occupied a seat in a Methodist meeting-house. But his more serious attention all through life was given to the form of worship that had been taught him by his mother. In this matter there is a singular strain of contradiction in the Piatt blood. The ancestors left France because

they would not be Catholics, and yet, left at liberty to choose for themselves, have nearly all returned to the Catholic church. Donn Piatt did not become a communicant until late in life. He had resolved his thought into a creed of his own that found expression in his Sunday Meditations long before he became a member of the church. During the last six years of his life he was a Catholic, zealous in promoting the interest of the church and of a faith deep, earnest, and simple.

“In looking back,” writes Laura Ream, “over a life-long acquaintance with Donn Piatt, there was no virtue in his character which stands out so prominently as filial devotion. It was second to no other principle of conduct, and was supplemented by unusual steadfastness of affection for his family and friends. Indeed, my first knowledge of him was through a niece—my schoolmate, Arabella McCullough, whose regard for him approached idolatry.

“As I recall him to mind,” continues the same writer, “Donn Piatt was then a model of youthful strength and grace. Of medium height, he was built in a stalwart mold, the strong, straight limbs supporting a form so compact that it seemed massive. The throat was round and white, like the hands, which were strikingly white, almost pallid in comparison with the face, inclined to flush easily, and never without

that suffusion of color denoting great activity of brain and excessive sensibility of emotion. The head was large and covered with a redundance of soft brown hair. With years it did not change color, except to take on a darker hue, and even in death retained the softness of youth. The forehead was broad, high, and full, and the eyes brown like the hair; eyebrows and lashes were large and clear, and animated by a depth of sentiment which found expression in a passionate or tender glow and in the sparkle of mirth and humor. Rippling laughter, infectious in its gladness, made music to the sallies of his wit.

“How admirably Donn Piatt wrote at that date (1847) can be gathered from the following extract from one of his letters :

“Let us be merry and strong. There are few difficulties that hold out against real attacks; they fly, like the visible horizon, before those who advance. A passionate desire and an unwearied will can perform impossibilities, or what seem to be such to the cold and feeble. If we do but go on, some unseen path will open among the hills. We must not allow ourselves to be discouraged by the apparent disproportion between the results of single efforts and the magnitude of the objects to be surmounted. Nothing good or great can be accomplished without courage and industry; but they must have sunk into despair, and the

world remained unornamented, unimproved, if men had nicely compared the effect of a single stroke of the chisel with the pyramid to be raised, or a single impression of the spade with the mountain to be leveled. All exertion, too, is in itself delightful. Active amusements seldom tire us. The chase, we know, has always been the favorite pursuit of nobles and kings.'

"In a somewhat desultory correspondence with Colonel Piatt, it was enlivened during the war by a photograph of himself. In the picture of the soldier, patriotic, poetic, looking at me from the carte, it was difficult to recognize the gay, handsome youth, with glowing lips and eyes ablaze, I had known at Mac-o-cheek, but the reader will perceive the old ring in the words of the letter which accompanied the photograph, as follows :

"This war wakens in me something like the old enthusiasm I felt when young. The questions at issue are grand, and the contest over them worthy a great people. We have come up from the lust of gold to something like the heroic, and hereafter will have a right to our page in history. I felt uneasy for awhile, fearing that we had not soul enough to be worthy a great destiny. But the result of the late elections satisfy me that we are all right, and the people for the republic will march through defeat and disaster to the end.'



“So confident was he that there could be but one end to the struggle that he did not name it ‘Victory.’

“At an age much past the prime, when men usually retire from business, Donn Piatt entered upon an active literary career, as brilliant as it was exhaustive, that ended only with his death. It could well be said of him that he had no age, for in the fierce competition for success of that period no birth-date was put against his name on the list.

“Withal, he had the strongest personality of any one I ever knew. The varied experiences, trials and joys of life had not changed his nature a particle. Even his tastes had not changed. He never had any ‘lost youth.’ The man was literally father to the child. As a writer and as a man, however, he had two distinct characters. While the pen had seemingly been dipped in gall, the daily acts and conversation were marked by singular disregard of self, genuine kindness, and the utmost good humor. An omniverous reader and a voluminous writer, the mind had not been dissipated by reading, and he was as ready with the pen as a boy to mischief. Here the intense personality came in. The mind was never off duty. The writing mind, I mean. No matter what the diversion, time, or place, the ink flowed from his pen without break, in the precise order or line of thought in which it left off. As may be supposed, this continuous pro-

cess of thought was very wearing. There must be a vacation of the mind as well as recreation of the body. No wonder he wrote that he went to bed weary and got up tired, and in a burst of despondency, which had its source in tireless industry, exclaimed: 'I have been trying to find out for weeks past whether I was dead or not. Do you know many men are killed without knowing it? Their friends hesitate about saying to one such: "My dear fellow, you are killed, and it is such damned nonsense for you to prance about in this way." Then again, others jump to the conclusion that they are killed when nothing is the matter. I want to avoid both absurdities if I can.'

"Again he wrote: 'By the Lord, this ill-health wipes life out. I am dragging on the bottom where life's sea gets shallow.'

"And later, after speaking of rapidly-failing health, he excused himself with his old delicious humor, as follows: 'This is all rather egotistical, but then one's self is so much more interesting than other topics. I often think of the French orator in the *Corps Legislatif*, who, being requested to give way while speaking to an adjournment, said: "No, I can not; I am making a speech I am deeply interested in."'

"As I can not recall a period of our correspondence when Colonel Piatt did not dwell on the subject of death, I was slow to perceive its shadows deep-

ing. Even when he wrote in such phrase as follows it was impossible to realize his failing health: 'We have built a monument and a vault, and I removed to it the remains of my dear ones, and it seems a goodly thing to sleep in one of those narrow cells, unmindful of the fevered state called life. I amused myself while shut up in my room in the firm belief that when taken out I would be carried in a box to the monument I had built.'

"The last letter I received from him bearing date 16th September, 1891, was in the nature of a sob and a moan, and conveyed a startling sense of the inevitable change which soon followed. 'I suppose,' he wrote, 'ere long we shall all be in the silent land. . . . I am getting very tired. I doubt whether I live to finish this Life of Thomas.'

"Strangely enough that letter rounded the circle of devotion to his sister, which had been a prominent feature of his life. He wrote: 'My sister came over to spend a week with us. She was so feeble she had to be carried from the carriage to her bed, and there she has been ever since. We are very anxious about her. She often speaks of you. It was but now she mentioned your name, which set me to writing.'

"An only surviving brother, General Abram Sanders Piatt, shared in his affection, but the heritage of devotion to his mother fell to the lot of his wife, to

whom he gave his last thought, the last feeble pressure of his hand, and his last breath in blessing. My pen falters in the vain effort to describe her gracious, winning presence, and the more substantial charms of her life and character. The kindly beautiful face, glowing with animation, poorly expresses the virtues of tenderness and generosity, which make her home the center of elegant and helpful hospitality, while her heart is as open as the day to the sweet influences of the hour. The husband she mourns and seeks to honor in death as in life expressed it better when he wrote:

“’Tis said that angels watch o’er men commissioned from above;  
My angel walked with me on earth and gave to me her love.

“Ah! dearest wife, my heart is stirred, my eyes are dim with  
tears;

I think upon the loving faith of all these by-gone years,  
For now we stand upon this spot, as in that dewy morn,  
With the bloom upon the alder and the tassel on the corn.

“Alas! for the desolation of the places that shall  
know him no more. Alas! for the loved and loving  
who only—

“In fading mem’ry find in time a calm,

And fail to realize that

“Light in night has but a hushed eclipse.”



## DONN PIATT'S MAXIMS, OPINIONS, REFLECTIONS AND SENTIMENTS.

One virtue makes a man; the loss of one ruins a woman.

A man's greatness can be measured by his enemy. We are all born to have a giant to kill, and as a man selects his giant, he instinctively takes one giving him some chance of success.

Monuments are more to gratify the vanity of the living than to honor the dead.

We begin life with the discovery that all good things are dull; we are apt to end in believing all dull things good.

We lose more in life through our suspicions than from our credulity. Every man is so taken up with his own troubles that he has no time nor inclination to harm others.

Idleness is so unnatural that men can accomplish it only through stimulants. The rich find this in sherry and champagne, the poor in beer and whisky. To benefit humanity find out how to keep all at work.

Labor is health. It develops, strengthens and contents the toiler, while it sweetens life.

That man is great who rises to the emergencies of the occasion and becomes master of the situation.

We are so the subjects of impulse and so depend-

ent on circumstances over which we have no control that the cool, calculating selfishness wrought in literature for dramatic effect has no existence in life. Friends become enemies and enemies friends without malice aforethought or a consideration of gain.

History is the crystallization of popular beliefs. As a plausible fiction is more attractive to the many than a naked fact, truth has a poor show in history.

Life is a campaign, not a battle, and has its defeats as well as its victories.

The only disinterested affection a man has is for his hat, his one great economy is in his suspenders. This last because he can practice that prudence without affecting his social position.

The modesty found in clothes is a modesty one hangs on hooks or throws over the backs of chairs on going to bed. The shame of nature is born of skinny milliners and that ninth part of man called a tailor.

Pure hero worship is healthy. It stimulates the young to deeds of heroism, stirs the old to unselfish efforts, and gives the masses models of manhood that tend to lift humanity above the commonplace meanness of ordinary life.

It takes one woman and several men to make a celebrity. The great man must be born and then boomed. The less he says the more awe-inspiring he becomes. Let the idol be ever so mean and insignificant, the high priests, through vociferation and a beating of gongs, can fetch the multitude to its knees and insure a profound worship of bran and brass.

A nation's greatness can be measured by the men it elevates for love and admiration, as it may be known by its gods.

There is a popular delusion to the effect that fanaticism is evidence of belief. It is precisely the reverse. Fanaticism means a frenzied assertion of what one wants to believe, but is conscious that it can not be sustained by reason. One is calm and self-possessed over a belief that calls for no argument or assertion to establish it.

Most men are great through their defects, as the pearl of the oyster is from a diseased secretion; so great traits in great men are mostly the evidence of an unbalanced force bad in itself.

Fraud degrades, and the same fact lies in the worship of the charlatan and that of the real hero, as in the worship of the false and true gods.

A woman will carry a dead lover in her heart for twenty years, when she is sure to quarrel with a live one within six months.

What is it in gold that the bloodstain does not tarnish, and why is it that what God shuts out from Heaven as accursed should be our god on earth?

A man's penalties—yes, woman's likewise—come more from follies than sin, and humanity is so strangely constituted that generous impulses are fatal to the one who indulges in them. The true significance of Christ's conception is found in that He went about doing good, and He went to His death in consequence.

Public men are like kites—made up of newspapers.

A blackmailer, like a bee, loses his sting in the act of stinging.

Intellectual training makes men timid, for the more we know the less satisfied we are with our knowledge. Culture is cowardly.

A good-natured way covers a selfish more generally than a generous disposition.

We are, or ought to be, an even mixture of the sexes. When the woman predominates in a man he hides the miscreant under the garb of a saint. When man predominates in a woman she is apt to be a devil.

Success in love is not due to either persuasion or magnetism, but to an excess of passion that gives a man audacity.

The interest that attaches to human endeavor is based on the sympathy we feel in the struggle against odds of one who fights not only adverse outside influences, but weaknesses within, for something higher and better than his lot. The perfect man has nothing of this. He is the God-protected Achilles in the epoch where the unprotected Hector is the hero.

American politics has crystallized into two hostile camps that differ from each other only in name and the possession of the offices.

The equality of political rights secured by the Fathers is rendered of no avail by the inequality of property that, hedged in by law, strengthened by mo-



nopoly, and made perpetual through corporations, gives us the same woes that for ages have held labor to a condition of unrequited toil in Europe, where one class that produces all enjoys nothing, while another class that produces nothing enjoys all.

Nearly all reformers are men who believe that when the argument is made the cause is won. They do not know, first, that the masses are moved by impulses born of ignorance, wants, prejudices, and other passions that have no intellectual origin; and, secondly, that out of fifty millions five only read at all, and not more than one million read intelligently.

Two-thirds the wrongs inflicted on humanity are done in the name of humanity. How often have we heard a Solon rise in his place and say: "Mr. Speaker, in the name of God, amen! let us rob somebody!"

History is an epic poem in prose in which the elements that move mankind are considered too low and vulgar to be noticed. In lieu thereof we have heroes and heroines who go to make up a duller sort of fiction.

The class that has to be flattered into reform is hopeless. Hannibal melted his rocks with vinegar, not honey. All the prophets the world cares to bear in mind were prophets of woe. We may not heed the Cassandras, but we have cause to remember them.

It is not the power to abuse, but the abuse of power, from which humanity suffers most.

The man who buys to gratify his own taste is the

man who will be his own only customer when it comes to selling again.

The man who has no enemies has no following.

The accumulation of property is an instinct. As all we get to live on is dug with painful labor from the earth this instinct is natural and powerful. As a squirrel doubling its hoard of nuts in the fall indicates a long, cold winter; as a hog gathers its bed before the approach of an unseen storm, so the man, from the same instinct, accumulates wealth. He seizes all he can get and holds on to all he has with the selfish impulse of the brute. As culture destroys instinct, the educated man loses not only his greed, but the process through which the greed is made available. An educated mind may accomplish through thought the same result. A wild goose will fly due north five hundred miles. Man after a deal of labor makes the compass and rivals the goose. But culture destroys not only the means, but the inclination; so brain is denied wealth. Hence Christ said the rich man had small hope of heaven, not that he was wicked, but because he had no soul to either bless or ban. Are you sure, oh! my brother-accumulator of wealth, howling idiot that you are, that you are to be saved upon your instincts, because you have lost your tail and walk upon your hind legs?

Taxation reaches down to the base, but the base is labor, and labor pays all.

To be great, one must be positive and gain strength through foes.

We can get more in proportion to its value for a

dime than we can for the dollar. The dime suggests an unpretentious return, the dollar much show. On this account the late Sam Ward said one gets more for a shilling and less for a pound in London. This is the price John Bull pays for being a snob.

One should never utter a truth that has not yet been thoroughly worn, even to a platitude, without shielding one's self behind a potent name. There is something awe-inspiring in the obscure, when uttered by authority that commands respect.

A man's tyranny is measured only by his power to abuse.

Next to setting up a fool in public estimation, the greatest labor is to pull him down again. Parties in this way grow obstacles to their own progress. They lose in the leader the measures he was made prominent to carry out.

That man is great who can use the brains of others to carry on his work.

The cave-dwellers of the pre-historic age, whose stone hammers are found that broke human bones so the cannibal might feed on the marrow, yet live among us. But they have gilded their caves with the brain and bones of millions, and hence are called not cannibals but millionaires. The hugest beast possessed of the biggest stone hammer was then feared as a god, as the cunning possessor of stolen millions is now looked up to as a superior being.

With us when a great man dies all the good

people go to lying about him, and from the monument that covers his remains to the last echo of the rural press, in speeches, sermons, eulogies, and reminiscences, we have naught but pious lies.

Popular beliefs, in time, come to be superstitions, and create gods and devils.

We are told that, with the multitude, nothing is so successful as success; yet there is often more heroism in failure than in triumph.

Washington taught the world to know us, Lincoln taught us to know ourselves. The first won for us our independence, the last wrought out our manhood and self respect.

We are quick to forget the facts and slow to recognize the truths that knock from under us our pretentious claims to a high philanthropy.

The more we know the less we seem to ourselves to know; and while the leader acts with the promptness necessary to success, the thoughtful mind hesitates, making obstacles impossibilities.

It matters little how much a man may be warped by the rough usage of the world, or how molded into another form by contact with adverse circumstances, there yet remains hidden in him the youth that, as a poet tell us, is the father of the man.

A man in a high place who devotes himself to a small object and ignores the weightier responsibilities of his position may retain his composure and improve his health.



Reform is not reputable. Intrenched wrong finds its most powerful defense in its respectability.

Many a statesman honored in his grave owed his success in life to the length of his legs and the solemnity of his countenance.

We are given to the strange belief that back of every man's act lies a selfish motive, and this, although we are taught by a study of ourselves that nearly all our actions originate in impulses or from circumstances over which we have no control, or from both, and seldom, if ever, from a cold, calculating consideration of how we may use both to our own advantage.

When one woman sees another, she says: I love or hate. When one man looks at another, which is seldom, he says: What can I make out of this fellow?

To have hero worship healthy it must be true. The false heroes, like false gods, degrade their worshippers; for let the fraud be ever so well constructed, there is a general instinctive consciousness that the thing is false.

Knowledge, looked at from a worldly standpoint, is not power. It is precisely the reverse.

The better instincts of the human race have, through all the ages, recognized and elevated its heroes into something like objects of religious worship. When gods were created by men their deities began as heroes, and it was what they did on earth that gave them existence and sovereignty in heaven.

It is the system of our great Republic to develop

mediocrity in office, to say nothing of dishonesty, by its economy in the way of compensation for services.

Politics to an American citizen has all the fascination of gambling and all the fanaticism of religion.

There is no tyranny so despotic as that of public opinion among a free people.

Women owe more to the cowardice of men than to their own virtue.

Idleness is possible only to the sick and imbecile. It is in itself an evidence of disease. When Adam and Eve, after their unfortunate fruit speculation, were turned out of Eden and told to make their living as the rest of humanity were doing, by the sweat of the brow, the curse given in the loss of Paradise was compensated by the blessing of labor.

There is no healthy return from the elevation of the unworthy. The young are not inspired to high deeds, the old grow more cynical and selfish, and the common mind learns to place an unjust value on the cunning that takes to itself the niche in the temple of fame intended for the truly great.

There are two sorts of nature that survive the severe strain of high responsibility. One is a dull, coarse temperament that does not know and feel the responsibility. The other is a strong mental and physical nature that accepts the trust with full confidence in itself. It is not the work that kills but the worry.

The indomitable will that overrides all obstacles, strong in its high purpose, has little regard for the

weak, and the pathway of such is strewn with wrecks that a kind heart would waste its powers in attempts to alleviate.

Groups of men are busy, with much noise, in building each a monument to some one savior of the country.

In our anxiety to protect female chastity by law we have not only relieved parents of their responsibility, and the church of its duty, but we have made it a peril for a decent man to speak to, let alone associate with, a woman. One oath is enough to rob the victim or ruin his character. When the unprotected female of England enters a door of a railway carriage, John Bull, in terror, seizes his gripsack, umbrella, and laprobe and tumbles out at the other. Be-it-enacted has made blackmail a safe pursuit.

In all cases of oppression the down-trodden laborers grow strong and rise, while the idle aristocracy weaken and sink. How long is it since our noble ancestors wore iron rings about their necks and were sold with the land they cultivated? And where now are the children of their masters?

Success in the art of war is made up of two-thirds accident and one-third intellectual effort.

I don't know, after all my observation and experience, that one lot in life is much worse or better than another, so far as happiness goes, but there are some things that seem very necessary to us, and that little corner in God's creation we call home is one of them.

The greatest evil of war comes after the war. It leaves an army of cripples, an army of thieves, and an army of prostitutes.

Our land is prolific of politicians, and strangely barren of statesmen. The difference between the two classes is strongly marked. The politician follows; the statesman leads.

Work on; there is time enough for repose in the grave.

We have a great world before us—very little time and much to do. Let us do it with all our hearts, and we must succeed. However smooth and steep the precipice may appear in the distance, as we approach, fissures that we may form into steps stand out, and nothing is wanting but courage to mount.

As stands the pyramid, a mystery,  
Cleaving wedge-like the misty realm of time,  
And hides within its depths the unknown king  
'Twas built to memorize; so common fame  
Covers with cloudy fiction all the real man,  
And leaves a shadow to the worshipers.

What strange creatures we are—set on end for some unknown purpose between graves and the stars!

We should never do nothing. It is better to wear out than to rust out.

Of all the people on earth we are the most voracious phrase eaters. The fruit from the tree of knowledge has all been canned and duly labeled. Our native wisdom has resolved itself into a collection of axioms,



and we comfort ourselves in repeating them, very much as the unlettered sinner of Kentucky had the Lord's prayer written above the head-board of his bed, and went through his devotion on retiring by a rap to call attention, and saying, solemnly: "O! Lord, them's my sentiments."

In embalming a body it is necessary to remove the viscera and brain, and in the popular mind something of the same process has to be gone through with to make a hero.

Look over the brief list of men whom we regard as great, and note the positive character of each, and how little any of them was possessed of the weak amiability that is supposed to be popular.

A man selects his enemies, his friends make themselves; and from the last he is most apt to suffer.

It is common for the popular mind to accept a good-natured, easy manner for kindness. The fact is, such manner is proof of the reverse; for a knowledge of and a sympathy for those who suffer arouse a just indignation against the wrong-doer and make the true philanthropist irritable and combative.

A man's courage is like his stomach; when in sound health he does not know of its possession. This is what marks the braggart a craven, and people instinctively doubt when a bully boasts of his pluck, as they do of a woman who makes parade of her purity.

If the beautiful precepts of Holy Writ will not move us, if the examples of pious men are thrown

away, if the purity of our Savior is in vain, let us at least take a lesson from the devil, observe his intelligence, and emulate his activity.

Next to doing a man a favor, so as to bring him under obligation, you can not make him a bitterer enemy than by getting the laugh on him. You may borrow his money, run off with his wife, kick his dog, and he may forgive you; but raise a laugh at his expense, and he will follow you to the death.

The Agnostic is an ape that goes solemnly about trying to measure the universe with his tail.

As no burglar breaks into an unknown house, so no crime of any sort is committed by one unprepared for such wrong-doing. The soul goes half way to meet the sin in all cases, and the appearance of carrion crows on the horizon is not better evidence of decay than is the commission of a crime proof of a previous debasement that made the crime possible.

While an eminent man wins our admiration through his great qualities, he can hold our love only by his human weaknesses that make him one of ourselves.

Second nature, habit, is often stronger than the first, resolve.

This life of humanity on earth would not be accepted, or endured, were it not for two things that hold us willingly to our fate. One is the sexual passion, and the other hunger.

Recognizing, as I do, that the Democracy is the

organized ignorance of the country, and the Republican party the organized greed, I could not belong to one or the other.

Tariff for revenue is taxation; tariff for protection is extortion.

A commander can make or mar an army. McClellan, for instance, organized and trained his forces for defeat.

There is nothing pays so poorly as the pen in this country, and for one to undertake to make a living by it is to break one's heart before dying of starvation.

It frequently happens that there is too little affection on the part of the wife and far too much on that of the husband. These ingredients, when well mixed, make a lively stew of jealousy.

The popular superstition which tells us that teaching a child from books elevates its nature, and is all that is called for in the way of training, is curing itself through the most costly of learning, that of experience.

The private in our regular army is considered a dog, possessed of no rights an officer is bound to respect. Indeed, it is thought detrimental to good discipline to regard the common soldier as having manhood in common with his officer. We plunged our people in a civil war, in which we sacrificed a million of lives and bankrupted our government, in giving the negro the rights we deny the men who did the fighting.

Men have gone to drink and cards and ruined themselves, but never from love.

National traits, in their popular acceptance, are national superstitions. Humanity is about the same the world over.

The Fourth of July is a day set apart by the citizens of this blessed country on which to glorify themselves and mutilate their offspring.

All boys are born liars, because lying is the consequent result of weakness—the diplomatic refuge of helplessness.

There is no moral training in the development of the intellect. We have got far enough along to realize that the majority of criminals inflicting humanity are educated.

How little science and literature move and affect humanity one may learn from a few facts. These facts teach us that all the great discoveries and inventions that subvert the law of the material world to man's use were made mainly by ignorant men who stumbled upon them.

There is nothing exasperates a statesman so much as to have his time occupied by a consideration of the merits of a measure, unless the measure is political and directly or indirectly affects his return to office.

I suppose a rich man is as necessary to our existence as any other objectionable creature, the necessity for the existence of which is a mystery.



It is the tendency of human nature to lose in an organization the object which the sect or organization was organized to maintain. Thus a Catholic will persecute a Protestant, and a Protestant a Catholic, without either knowing or caring for the dogmas that originated the difference. Ask a Democrat to-day why he is a Democrat, and he will tell you it is because he is not a Republican, and a Republican asked the same question will give you the same answer reversed. The ludicrous part of this lies in the fact that neither party dare avow opinions, because such avowal may lose them votes. Thus it becomes impossible to call a new party into healthy existence. The new party must avow a policy. The few faithful stand alone and go down as martyrs. The average man has no taste for martyrdom. "You must not vote for what you believe right individually," cried Senator Evarts, "for in that case you fire in the air." It is better, therefore, to fire aimlessly into a crowd nowise differing from your own, save in name, than to fire in the air.

In the hurry of human events that make our modern wars, mere fighting qualities, even of the best, have little to do in bringing about great results.

Labor is not a curse, on the contrary, it is a blessing. It means the developed working of mind and muscle, without which we would stagnate and die.

The world has no use for artists, poets, philosophers and scientists, except to build monuments above them after they are starved to death.

West Point teaches every thing but patriotism and the art of war. In its adhesion to the doctrine of blind obedience to orders, the cadet ceases to be a citizen, without becoming a soldier.

I make no pretension to an extraordinary knowledge of human nature. Having discovered, at an early day, that I did not know myself, I dropped all pretensions to an intuitive knowledge of other men.

A man of culture seldom fairly appreciates the mind, however strong, that has not passed through the ripening process of educational training.

Had Christ made his appeal to women, instead of men, they would inevitably have stoned the woman taken in adultery to death, and endangered the life of Christ himself.

A man never gets into trouble with one woman that he does not rush off and get in trouble with another.

The globe is not to be circumnavigated by one wind.

Lying back of congress, and not by any means concealed, is a power that prompts legislation and passes laws. This third house, and master of both houses, is the lobby.

While the thoughtful mind sees obstacles, and is apt to construe them into impossibilities, and misses opportunity through thoughtful weighing of them, ignorant conceit sneers and triumphs.

History grows more difficult as the world goes on. The art of printing, that is regarded as an aid, is its chief hindrance; for history is putting to record popular beliefs. The daily journals photograph, through their instantaneous process, these beliefs as facts; and while this process seems to throw a piercing glare on all events, it only confuses the mind of the impartial investigator. It is an electric light that deepens the shadows, while it distorts all that it shines upon.

Capital is not only sensitive to danger, but from that very fact is selfish, and with no touch whatever of patriotism. We read of noble women contributing their jewelry to a cause, of pious men of God melting their bells into cannon, but we never read of money-getters fetching out their hidden bags under patriotic impulse in aid of a forlorn hope.

Efforts, it must not be forgotten, are as indispensable as desires.

It is hard for us to realize that the men who took up arms against our government were not only earnest but honest.

Not only fame and fortune but pleasures are to be earned.

The ancient chestnut which tells of the machine that takes in swine and turns out sausage has its parallel in what is believed of West Point.

As fools rush in where angels fear to tread, and generally rush in triumphantly, so the man possessed beyond control of animal passion breaks down the

feeble barriers nature set up only to make the female the more attractive, and of course meant to be broken down.

In desertion in marriage there is cruelty, treachery, and contempt. It is a death that has shame and wrong in it.

Amid luxury the surroundings are not so near to us; they grow remote in their glitter and abundance. But in the lowly home every table and chair seem to have tongue, and looks reminding one of something lost, where, God help the sufferer! there is so little to lose.

A husband's jealousy does not tend to increase a wife's love. If she has any it mars it with contempt. If she is without affection it develops a cruelty so exquisite in its refinement, so bitter in its exercise, that one is tempted to believe a beast and a demon have been set on end in human shape.

When birthday presents get to be mile stones, reminding an old fellow of the short remaining time between the now and the never, they are bound to be melancholy. Yet they come like strains of once loved but now half forgotten music, filled with sweet associations that make the heart beat quick. It tells how lives have been run into each other, and of the dear familiar faces of the loved ones long passed away.

We can not make ourselves over and be young and enthusiastic again. I wish to God we could. We must fold our arms and go over our Niagara with dignity.



A jealous husband is at once pitiable and disgusting. Shakespeare gave the weakness dignity through murder.

What a strange thing it is, from the heights of age, to look upon the golden glory of one's youth and wonder at its wild romance and headlong impulses! We are made in this way to live our lives. Well, it is a comfort that the later life is as brief as the pleasures of the first were fleeting—

My eyes are dim, but not with tears,  
 . My hearing dulls apace;  
 The glory of the earlier years  
 Leaves neither warmth nor grace.

By the Lord, this ill-health wipes life out! I am dragging on the bottom where life's sea gets shallow.—  
 [1887.

The amiable man, who has no views with which to offend, no positive characteristics with which to antagonize others, no high ambition for which to sacrifice his support, may be an official in times of profound peace, but he can not be a leader in the hour of peril.

What a farce life is, after all; and a farce that has no laugh in it!

I am not skeptical these latter days. Having weakened to the fact that there is something outside our poor life here, I am inclined to hear God in every wind and see him in the clouds.

A man jealous of his wife who does not love him will not long be without cause.

Learning means only to give what we think a fact, a name, and pigeon-hole it.

The romance of sin is very attractive to a woman, who has so much of the martyr in her nature that she never truly loves a husband till he beats her.

The love of wicked men is very charming to the female sex, for it is such a compliment to them in their implied superiority.

Political parties may be as necessary as noise is to a wagon, and leaders as ornamental as the little dog after the wheels, but one does not build a wagon to make a noise, nor to furnish a vehicle for a dog to follow.

Men are like animals—they rush into holes for shelter. Home is such against the world, and the church is such against the blinding radiance of eternity.

When a great man's weaknesses have not affected his public work, we may shut our eyes to them; but when they have, the attempt at concealment is not only pitiable but hopeless.

Legalized wrong is our great enemy, for we suffer more from the power to abuse than in the abuse of power. A wrong once recognized by law destroys the foundation of the very power to which we must appeal for a remedy.

That big-hearted animal, Bob Ingersoll, said a

good thing when he announced that "an honest God is the noblest work of man."

What a crude work we have made of it.

We first made God human that we might comprehend Him.

We then made Him inhuman that He might accord with the cruel Deity of the Hebrews.

We ended by making Him incomprehensible in an attempt to fit Him to the sweet teachings of Christ.

We are brought to love Him through Christ and fear Him through Moses and hate Him through Calvin.

This is the trinity of the Christian religion, as taught by the orthodox, and its result makes selfishness divine. Save your own soul, and in vulgar parlance, "Let the devil take the hindmost," although it may be the loss of your father, mother, brother, or child. Get into heaven, and be happy, although those nearest and dearest to you may be howling in everlasting anguish!

Our gain in matrimonial boon  
Is a malarial strife;  
The fever lasts for one short moon,  
The chill runs on through life.

In God's good time  
Does retribution track the steps of crime.

When one is born the world begins; when one dies the world ends.

To ourselves be true,  
And do the evil we were born to do.

We are told by moral philosophers that to be good one must have a good heart. This is a delusion. To

be truly good one must have a good stomach. Give the devil a foothold in the stomach, and he laughs to scorn all moral influences.

It may be that we shed our tails and came up to man's estate from monkeys, but it is not likely that through the same system we shall pass on up to be angels.

We have been compared to children on a sea-shore, gathering shells and pebbles cast up by the restless deep. The picture is presumptuous. To me we appear as so many apes, gray-bearded and spectacled, gravely picking petrified maggots from the worm-holes of time.

The last year's nest is full of snow,  
Or rots in April's rain;  
And love that once the heart did know  
It never knows again.

To be kind to each other is to be kind to ourselves, for the evil passions that make earthly misery begin their work of destruction on their possessor. Hate, envy, jealousy, revenge, and the evils flesh is heir to, corrode, destroy and render wretched first the heart in which they originate.

Let one turn over a flat stone in a meadow on a sunlit day and note how the insects will flee and worms writhe, to realize the pitiable plight of humanity when the vaunted reason of man pulls down the shelter of a creed.

If we count out the two exceptions found in Julius Cæsar and Napoleon, history teaches us that to be



a successful captain calls for less intellect than any other path to distinction. Military glory is to fame what its drum is to music—a discordant sound made by vacancy hid under a sheep-skin. It is a dried sheep-skin at that, and illustrates the vulgar saying of “much cry and little wool.”

The trouble is not in the excessive length of daily toil, but in the excessive length of unrequited toil, and it is too long if it lasts a second. We want full, fair compensation for the work done, and work for all. We don't get these—and why? Because one idle fellow—not a scoundrel, because he only uses a system inherited by him from a barbarous past—absorbs the just compensation of thousands. The earth owes every man a living, and the earth has it for all, but every millionaire absorbs in himself the living of a million.

Rogues generally betray themselves by their anxious endeavor to cover their tracks. This is what the French mean by their clever saying that they who excuse themselves accuse. Could the dishonest be content to let circumstances care for themselves, and appear indifferent, murder would seldom out.

The lack of amusement in the country dulls the intellect as the isolation lowers the moral standard. Public opinion has more to do in promoting morality than has conscience. To test this, let one think for a moment how much worse he is in his own estimation than in that of his neighbors. Remove this restraint and see how one's evil nature finds play. The most frightful crimes originate in the rural regions. The Satyr of the ancients was born of solitude and sheep.

There is nothing so fierce, unforgiving, and unreasonable as political partisanship in the United States; but this very partisanship renders short-lived the falsehood it seeks to make permanent.

The religion of the intellect is sunlight on ice. It blinds one while it chills the heart.

It is not the thought that kills or even tires; it is the worry of the heart, and this writes wrinkles on the brow of care, and sickens, if it does not shorten, life.

In Italy I have not only seen temples to false gods despoiled to erect churches to the true God, but I have looked on great monuments of art despoiled to build hideous lodging-houses for shopkeepers. It remains for us to mutilate the tombs of the deserving in order to set up memorials to others whose right to praiseworthy recognition is more than doubtful.

It is the motive not the act that sanctifies reform.

The purest cause God ever gave to man turns to wrong.

The politician gains power more through his ability to hurt than to help.

It does not matter so much what one says as the manner in which one says it.

Promise a man a favor, and he will not forget you. Grant it, and he will never forgive you. There is nothing so intolerable to a proud or so irritating to a mean nature as a sense of obligation.

When in the evil heart the evil deed alone is sought earth carries midnight in the heart of day.

The pen is mightier than the sword, especially if it is a pig-pen.

There is nothing that so deadens the soul and destroys the humanity as the abject pursuit of gold—the greed that accumulates for the sake of the accumulation.

The Senate of the United States has more dignity and less intelligence than any other organized body on earth.

The American politician may practice crime with applause if he only meets his financial obligations promptly.

“Give me the truth,” said the great Napoleon to his marshals, when they went out to fight without his immediate supervision, and the truth is what we want if we seek to be benefitted by history.

Sorrow gives birth to sympathies, and as we have suffered we feel for others. The clouds that darken the landscape call into existence its beautiful flowers, and thankful should we be if our clouds of adversity leave such lovely tokens behind.

There is very little reformation, at least so far as we know in the last six thousand years. Men’s passions burn out, and the shell exhibits a cold, dead appearance, which we are pleased to call reformation; but the change of the individual in his nature is rare indeed. Man will be to-morrow what he is to-day and was many days before.

Misery is our common lot. If death could relieve

us we would be a nation of suicides. It does not; therefore let us make the most of life, laying our unhappiness at the door of our pride, ambition, and other sins.

Health, youth, and beauty are great things in this world of ours. They are the real bullion deposits, and all the rest are only trashy notes based on their credit.









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