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HONORS TO JOURNALISM.

SKETCH OF MURAT HALSTEAD, POSSIBLE MINISTER TO GERMANY.

His Qualifications Undoubted - His Early Career - "The Red Haired Maiden of the Blue Miami" - Whitelaw Reid May Be English Minister.

There are strong indications that American journalism is about to lose - temporarily, at least - one of its most striking ornaments; for Murat Halstead is urged for a foreign mission, the choice lying between Germany and Russia. It seems to those who know him most intimately that France would suit him best, for he could give the French points in versatility and yet preserve all the shrewd self possession of the Yankee of Ohio. Mr. Halstead, however, confesses to a strong admiration for Germany and the German character, and he enjoyed the intimacy, if not the friendship, of Emperor William. Von Moltke and others during the most interesting and bloody episode of the Franco-Prussian war. The numerous parties and still more numerous factions in the German reichsrath, which puzzle so many readers, would be plain as a game of checkers to him, for he has had a unique experience with many parties and factions.

It would be difficult to select another man who knows as much about the different phases of American character, the different grades in life and politics, and all from actual experience. A farm boy to the age of 19, an ambitious student and amateur novelist for three years more, then a writer of miscellany, a local reporter and finally a many sided journalist and successful business and editorial manager, he has been through it all a hard worker, forcible writer and intense patriot. To quote his own words, he "believes in the United States of America," and many of his mistakes - certainly his most sensational ones - have arisen from his impatience with men whom he judged to be neglecting great opportunities and not doing enough for their country.

Murat Halstead was born Sept. 2, 1829, at Ross, Butler county, O., and spent his minority on a farm. At 18 he began writing for newspapers, and it is now somewhat amusing to note that his first successes were gained in the lightest kind of fiction and most "gushing sentiment," and that when he abandoned that for miscellany on social topics and descriptive writing, his friends regarded it as an immense advance towards "solid writing." It should be noted, however, that a great deal of what now seems like rant and ruction and "gush," was in pretty close accord with the popular taste of that time (1845-55) as one may see even in the old speeches of Abraham Lincoln and other eminent men.

The style of much of Mr. Halstead's early writing was such that critics have since found much food for fun in it, and one of his early fictions is burlesqued by his rivals under the title of "The Red Haired Maiden of the Blue Miami." It is scarcely an exaggeration. The first fruits of literature in the west, like premature growths generally, contained more brilliant husk than solid substance; and a healthy country youth of 18, who is moved to write, is very apt to fall to "souling" and "youthing" and "eternal truthing" to a melodiously absurd degree.

In 1851 Mr. Halstead finished his schooling at Farmers' college, near Cincinnati, decided to study law and got tired of it very soon; then started a Sunday paper, of which only two numbers were issued, and turned to whatever local or general work he could get to do on The Enquirer, The Columbian and Great West and other papers. He was knocking around pretty lively for two or three years and getting the use of himself; but early in 1853 he found his fitting place as manager of a department in The Cincinnati Commercial. In 1854 he acquired a small interest in the paper and its columns soon began to show that young blood was at work. During the next twelve years the "good will" of the paper increased more than fourfold in value, and in 1866 it was ranked as one of the most influential papers in the west. Thereafter he had practical control of the paper, and its advance was still more rapid for a few years. As a manager Mr. Halstead was conspicuous for his encouragement of the young; he was always on the lookout for beginners who had shown some talent on the country press. He completely reorganized the collection of news, always had some ambitious amateur "on tap" in every country town in Ohio and Indiana, watching for some item important enough to be "written up for Halstead," and inspired by the feeling that if he did well, promotion was sure. Many a journalist who has now some recognition, admits his early indebtedness to some encouragement from Mr. Halstead.

With all this, however, he was not exactly a lovable personality in those busy years. Many an aspiring youth from some remote county, delighted by an encouraging letter and anxious for a personal interview with the "genial friend of beginners," precipitated himself upon Mr. Halstead when he was busy at his desk and engaged in about two minutes, feeling that there had been an awful mistake of some kind, and breathing as if he had escaped from an ogre's den. He was, indeed, abrupt to the verge of rudeness when too suddenly approached, but when his work was done for the time he was genial enough with those he liked. Like the most successful newspaper managers, generally, he did not admit that there was any necessary connection between literary and personal or social relations. The Cincinnati Commercial's boss was one person; Murat Halstead was quite another. For aught he knew the distant correspondent, whose letters delighted the patrons, might be the outcast of his locality, and for aught he presumed cared the author of delicate sentiments on paper might be the rudest boor in the state. Nor was he at all anxious to test the matter by closer personal contact.

There came a time, however, when the rapid rise of the man and the paper was checked. "Independent journalism" became a sort of fad in 1870 or thereabouts, and for a few years The Commercial - well, you might draw it mild and say it "fluctuated." Mr. Halstead's enmity and such a positive character is sure to have plenty of them certainly "got even with him" then. He was restored and restored his paper to its high standing in the Republican party by the same element which caused some of his blunders - his intense Americanism. The rivalry inside the party between The Commercial and The Gazette ceased, and the two were combined in one great journal. Mr. Halstead then seemed to develop new traits of character and enter on a new career. He grew far more genial, as most true men do when they have fought and won the battle of middle life. He traveled abroad and enjoyed more society at

home, spoke and wrote with more charity of his rivals, and seldom disagreed with anybody except Democrats. Towards them there are, as yet, no signs of softening.

Mr. Whitelaw Reid, who has been spoken of for the mission to the Court of St. James, is the editor and manager of The New York Tribune. He may be found any day in his editorial sanctum on the ninth floor of the talk Tribune building, reading innumerable letters, receiving scores of visitors from all parts of the country and superintending in person the management of his paper. For a long time it has been rumored on Park row that The Tribune has no managing editor. The gentleman who nominally occupies that position is not invested with the authority usually granted. In everything he acts under the immediate supervision of Mr. Reid. This, of course, renders the chief of The Tribune a very busy man. From the moment he enters his office until he leaves, it several hours later he is pressed for time. Consequently he keeps himself closely guarded in his private office, and there is no other editor in New York so difficult to reach.

Whitelaw Reid was born fifty years ago in the town of Xenia, O. Although an American by birth, he is a Scotchman by direct descent. His paternal grandfather emigrated to this country from the south of Scotland and settled in Kentucky as one of the earliest pioneers. In 1800 he crossed the Ohio river and purchased several hundred acres of land upon the present site of Cincinnati. He was a stern old covenanter, and found his conscience uneasy, owing to the condition of the deed, which required him to run a ferry across the river every day of the week. Sooner than violate the Sabbath he parted with his new property and removed to Greene county, where he became one of the founders of the town of Xenia. On his mother's side Reid is descended from the ancient "Clan Ronalds" of the highlands.

After being graduated from the Miami university he was appointed principal of the graded schools in South Charleston, O., teaching French, Latin and the higher mathematics to a large number of pupils. At the age of 20 he bought The Xenia News, and for two years led the life of a country editor. During this time he mixed considerably in politics, advocating the nomination of Abraham Lincoln for the presidency in 1860, and subsequently "stamping" effectively in his own region in his behalf.

Shortly after this he went to Columbus, the state capital, as legislative correspondent for The Cincinnati Times, The Cleveland Herald and The Cincinnati Gazette. He was expected to write three distinct letters each day for these journals, and it was here that he gained the experience which soon after rendered him such a rapid and effective war correspondent.

When the war broke out Reid was city editor of The Cincinnati Gazette. He left his position and proceeded to front, where, over the signature "Agate," he contributed a series of army letters to his paper, which were read with interest throughout the west. On his return, in 1862, he was offered the management of a St. Louis paper. The proprietors of The Gazette, however, rather than lose his services, offered him a considerable interest in their paper. This laid the foundation of his fortune. He was expected to continue writing, and was appointed Washington correspondent. In this capacity he came in contact with all of the eminent men of the day, and with characteristic shrewdness succeeded in making several invaluable friends. Foremost among them were Secretary Chase and Horace Greeley.

From the first Mr. Greeley was impressed with the executive ability of the young journalist and offered him a position on his paper. This Mr. Reid refused, but he subsequently consented to take charge of the Washington branch of The Tribune. In this manner he became associated with the journal he was destined in future years to control. Shortly after the close of the war he accompanied Mr. Chase on the tour which the latter took along the coast at the request of President Johnson, to make observations upon the condition and interests of the white and black races in the southern states. A result of this journey was Reid's first contribution to literature, a small volume entitled "After the War; a Southern Tour." Subsequently he became a cotton planter, but met with so many misfortunes, that he gave up the idea of cotton growing after two years' experience. About twenty years ago Mr. Reid finally resolved to accede to the solicitations of his friend Mr. Greeley and connect himself with the staff of The Tribune. He was given the post of first editorial writer. He remained in this position, writing most of the political leaders until the resignation of John Russell Young, the managing editor. Mr. Reid was then installed in the position and immediately proceeded to run the paper upon strict business principles. Whatever may have been his shortcomings under his control, it has certainly been held in esteem for the groups of literary men and professional authors who have aided in its composition. Ripley, Taylor, Smalley, Winter, Col. Hay, Noah Brooks, and a host of others have at different times been regular or occasional contributors to its columns.

When Mr. Greeley gave way to presidential aspirations and finally secured the nomination he coveted, it was represented to him that it would be necessary to his political success to sever all connection with The Tribune. This brought Mr. Reid to the front as manager. When the battle was over and the cost of Mr. Greeley's disastrous defeat had been counted, it was found that The Tribune was on the verge of ruin. Then when it seemed that the paper must either pass out of existence or into the hands of those who were strangers to its past management, Whitelaw Reid took hold and effected its reorganization.

It has been said that after Mr. Greeley had failed in the presidential contest and went to The Tribune office to find that he no longer had a place there, it broke his heart. By some Mr. Reid's course was looked upon as an evidence of ingratitude, but the men who carry tottering enterprises through successfully are often obliged to appear to deal harshly, though what is considered harshness may be only necessary firmness. Mr. Greeley's usefulness to his paper seemed to have passed; The Tribune was embarrassed, and the question was whether it should pass into the hands of strangers or Mr. Greeley's managing editor.

Mr. Reid combines two faculties which are not generally found together; he is a good business man and a good writer. He lives in one of the palatial Villard houses on Madison avenue, just opposite St. Patrick's cathedral. His wife, a daughter of the California millionaire, D. O. Mills, has an ample fortune of her own, and is a leader in society. They have no children. In personal appearance Mr. Reid is tall and spare. His face is somewhat lacking in power, but is refined and intelligent. Altogether he has more the look of a successful business man than of one engaged in literary pursuits.

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