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AN OLD TIME JOURNALIST.

[From the American Newspaper Reporter.]

Among representative American journalists, the name of W. W. Seaton, although he has passed away, deserves mention, as being almost the last type of the conservative and conscientious journalist. For more than half a century he and his partner, Joseph Gales, conducted the Washington *National Intelligencer* with such signal ability that the paper was held second only to the Bible by the high-toned old Whig party, during the first half of the present century.

Somewhere about 1810 these young men left their native State of North Carolina and went to the then unpromising and uninviting town of Washington, D. C. The embryo city is thus described, By Hon. John Cotton Smith:

Our approach to the city was accompanied by sensations not easily described. One wing of the capital only had been erected, which, with the president's house, a mile distant from it, both built with white sandstone, were shining objects in dismal contrast with the scene around them. Pennsylvania avenue was a deep morass covered with alder bushes. The roads were muddy and unimproved. In short, it was a new settlement.

The wife of President Adams, in a letter to her daughter, complained bitterly of the want of fires "to keep off the daily agues," and adds, "we have indeed come into a new country."

They went there, however, with a determination to publish a newspaper which should exert a strong influence not only upon the Whig party, but also over the lives of its patrons, and there are many old men who can remember the beneficial impression made upon them by the stately dignity of the *Intelligencer*. Mr. Gales was chiefly distinguished by his skill as a reporter, being gifted with a wonderful memory. He was the first man who succeeded in making full reports of the debates in Congress, and so admirably was the work performed that Congress, in 1859 or 1860, made an appropriation for reprinting in permanent form all the reports of those early sessions. Of him there is little more to be said. the writer's knowledge of and personal intimacy with Mr. Seaton being much closer than with his partner, especially in the closing years of their lives, from 1856 until 1861. One fact, however, deserves to be recorded, as showing the personal friendship and the integrity of the two men; and that is, that during the half century of their business association they never had a financial settlement, each trusting to the honor of the other, and although Gales was much the more extravagant man of the two it is not believed that either ever misappropriated a single dollar of the common funds.

The limits of this sketch will not permit a detailed history of the *Intelligencer*. It is enough to say that it not only met with favor from the rank and file of the Whig party, but its editors—especially Mr. Seaton—were honored with the warm personal friendship of such men as Webster and Clay, and were respected by Jackson, Calhoun, Hayne and all the leading men of the opposition. Even the decline and final disruption of the Whig party did not send the paper out of existence, for—although during the last five years of its history it staggered under a heavy burden of financial troubles—it continued to live, as long as Mr. Seaton lived, on the reputation it had achieved for fairness, thoughtfulness, and respectability.

But evil days came at last. During the last three years of his life, Mr. Seaton suffered terribly from bodily infirmities; but his habits of industry which had grown to be instinctive, prevailed over pain, and every day he could be found in a back room of the old two-story building on the corner of Seventh and D streets, surrounded by a litter of exchanges, quietly but effectually warding off all attempts of axe-grinders and lobbyists to use his columns for the purpose of forwarding their schemes, and rigidly scrutinising every line before it was allowed to appear in the paper. The only recreation he allowed himself was the company and conversation of two or three friends at his house on F street, every evening. It was on these occasions that the writer, who was frequently permitted to be present as a listener, not only learned the depth and power of the old man's character, but gained more practical insight into the true office of journalism than could be obtained from all the "schools of journalism" that can ever be established. Mr. Welling, then literary editor of the *Intelligencer*, now President of Columbia college, and Hon. Henry Watterson—of whom an admirable sketch has recently appeared in the REPORTER—learned much of their skill and largely owe their subsequent success to the inspiration derived from these familiar evening talks.

It would have made a good study for an artist, to sketch the old-fashioned room and furniture, hallowed by the genius of Clay and Webster, who in their day spent many evenings there, and the stately man, with his gray hairs as a crown of glory, at his feet an old setter dog who, like his master had outlived his hunting days, and around him a group of younger men, with sometimes a senator or foreign ambassador—Baron Gerolt was a frequent visitor—all listening with rapt attention to the stream of reminiscence, anecdote and counsel that flowed from his lips like a soft-murmuring brook, of the music of which one could never tire.

In addition to disease, there came other troubles. Joseph Gales died, and Mr. Seaton—to use his own expression—"felt as if one-half of himself was dead, and the other half would soon follow." But no man ever looked forward to that event with greater placidity. His theological views were identified with Unitarianism, but his religious sympathies were of the broadest catholicity. Speaking on the subject of preaching, he once said that the sermon which made the greatest impression on him of all that he had heard, was delivered by a Methodist preacher who was utterly ignorant of the simplest rules of grammar. "He caused the tears to flow abundantly from my eyes, and when I analysed my emotions I was convinced that they were created by two causes: the man was thoroughly in earnest, and he believed every word he uttered, I wish we had more of such preaching, even with the absence of grammar."

He lived to see the apparent dissolution of the Union, which all his life he had struggled to maintain; but he did not live to see all the fratracidal carnage that followed. He lived also to see the appearance of a new growth of journalists—sharp, frothy and not overburdened with principle—who styled the old man "a fossil," and his utterances "tame." Of such a fossil and such tameness it may be said, with exact truth, that there was more conscience and more solid sense in any one week of their utterances than can usually be found in a year's product of modern, flippant newspaper scribbling which is not worthy to be called journalism. And then he died; and very soon the *Intelligencer* died also—for the heart, conscience and brains that had sustained it for half a century were wanting, and could not be furnished by the political wire pullers and lobby jobbers into whose hands it unfortunately fell. H.

Hot Springs has a thoroughbred Mayor by the name of Linde. The other night his honor imbibed too freely and was consequently somewhat uproarious. The following morning, upon opening his Court, he surprised everybody by calling the case of "City vs Mayor Linde." Then addressing himself in a reproachful tone, he spoke of the evils of intemperance, the demoralizing effects of liquor and the baleful influence exerted by a Mayor who abandons himself to even occasional sprees. "You are old enough, Linde," said he, "to know better. I am pained beyond expression that you have thus disgraced yourself and the city you, as its chief executive, represent. I must fine you $20. and see to it that hereafter you conduct yourself more properly." With these words, he stepped down from his desk, paid his fine to the clerk and then resumed the business of the day.

TOTTEN AGAINST SNOW.

[From the N. Y. Times.]

Æsop informs us that there was once a small boy who was accustomed to go out into the back yard and alarm the family by calling for assistance to rescue him from an imaginary wolf. His father ran to help him some three hundred times, and was always welcomed with the irriverent announcement that he was "sold." The monotony of the thing ultimately wearied the affectionate parent, and when the small boy for the three hundred and first time yelled "wolf," his father turned his newspaper inside out, in order to get at a powerful review of Sappho's last poem, and remarked that in course of half an hour he would take a club into the back yard and convince that boy of the impropriety of "selling" his own father. What was that parent's surprise and delight to find at the expiration of the half hour that a real wolf had actually eaten nearly the whole of this mendacious small boy, and was in the act of carrying away the remnants of the feast. This teaches, as Æsop remarks, that the boy who tells three hundred lies about a supposititious wolf may finally be devoured to the great joy of all who know him.

So many falsehoods have been told concerning imaginary girls who fancied themselves attacked by snakes, and after undergoing acute mental agony, discovered that the supposed snakes were merely bits of wire or sections of discarded crinolines that whenever a story of this general character appears in a rural newspaper it is received with as much incredulity as was the three hundred and first yell of Æsop's small boy. Undoubtedly, to story of Miss Totten, of Guilford, Ohio will be classed by most persons among apocryphal snake stories, but the fact that it led to a law suit—"Totten against Snow"—which is still pending, ought to be sufficient evidence of its truth. Moreover, aside from all question as to how the public will receive the story, there seems to be no doubt in the mind of the earnest journalist that it is of too great importance to be passed without comment. Wherefore, the Muse will please to come to order and relate the woes of Miss Totten without further dedelay.

One August afternoon, when the sun was about to take off his golden garments and strew them along the Western horizon, preparatory to diving into the Pacific,—in short, just before sunset,—Miss Totten and Mr. Snow, a theological student whom she had promised to marry, were walking sweetly through a new-mown meadow, exchanging vows of affection and discussing the comparative merits of different patterns of cook-stoves. All at once Miss Totten shrieked loudly and began to dance in a way that filled Mr. Snow's mind with the conviction that she had suddenly gone mad and with regret that he had not a tract in his pocket on the sin of dancing. Her conduct was, however, soon explained by her frenzied shriek, "There's a snake! O! Take it off! Take it off!" an entreaty which instantly brought a cold perspiration out upon the expansive brow of her theological lover.

Mr. Snow was well aware that the neighborhood was not entirely free from rattlesnakes, and he had often heard that in the construction of feminine garments nature has placed opportunities within the reach of lurking serpents, of which rattlesnakes may occasionally be bold enough to avail themselves. While he would, in a good cause, have fearlessly faced the deadliest snake in existence, the peculiar circumstance of the case filled him with horror. Either he must leave the object of his affections in the folds of a rattlesnake while he ran to summon female aid, or he must himself endeavor to capture the snake and drag it from its hiding place. Appalling as the alternative necessarily was to a conscientious theological student, he nerved himself to beg Miss Totten to pause in her wild dance and permit him to help her. But to all his offers of assistance she cried, "Go away," and in the same breath added, without the slightest apparent perception of her inconsistency, "Don't stand there grinning, but do help me." It need hardly be said that nothing was further from Mr. Snow's thoughts than "grinning," but he could not see his way clear to help Miss Totten and at the same time to go away. From this painful state of mind he was finally relieved by the ingenuity of the young lady herself, who implored him to get a club and strike the invisible snake, no matter how heavily the blow might fall upon her.

The only available substitute for a club was a fence-rail which lay near at hand. This Mr. Snow instantly seized and poised with both hands, while he awaited further instructions. "Aim here," cried the suffering but cool-headed girl, pointing to the region of the pocket, and Mr. Snow, with a strength born of his great excitement, swung the fence-rail and hit the snake with the accuracy of an accomplished army mule.

The effect of the blow was startling. Miss Totten was whirled before it, and landed in a confused lump at some distance from the striker. For a moment he fancied that the snake was a boa-constrictor ornamented with transverse red and white stripes, but the sight of a dead snake of the agile though harmless species known as the black racer convinced him of his error. Mr. Snow's attention was speedily withdrawn from the snake by a feeble announcement on the part of Miss Totten that he had killed her This was an exaggeration. His mighty blow had broken her leg and otherwise impaired her efficiency; but she was still alive, and is to appear at an early day in court to accuse Mr. Snow of assault and battery, and to exact from him such damages as an intelligent jury may assess.

While the practice of knocking down young ladies with fence-rails cannot be indiscriminantly advocated it must be conceded that Mr. Snow is entitled to sympathy. His situation was one of exceptional difficulty and before the jurymen decide to give a verdict against him they should ask themselves whether, had they been in his place they would have acquitted themselves with as much delicacy and consideration for Miss Totten's feelings as Mr Snow displayed.

MISTAKEN IN HIS HAND.

What Happened at a Game of Draw Poker—A Confidential Clerk Ruined.

[From the Chicago Times.]

The occurence to which I refer happened, during the latter part of the war of the rebellion, in New York, where I was stopping at the time, the guest of a local politician of some note. We left my friend's house at about 10 P. M., and taking a car got off at one of the uptown cross streets—Twenty third, I think—and ascended the steps of a fine marble front dwelling on that street. Upon ringing the bell, a colored man came to the door, and, after exchanging certain cabalistics signs and passwords with my friend, ushered us up stairs into a spacious, elegantly furnished room.

Four gentlemen were at the table playing the fascinating and illusive game of poker. Three of them nodded to my friend, who returned their salutations, and explained to me, *sotto voce*, that they were respectively a Wall street operator, a cotton broker, and a junior parner in a wholesale dry goods house. the fourth party being a stranger to him. This latter was a young fellow of about 22, well dressed, handsome, and evidently a comparative novice at the game.

The stakes were high; portentous stacks of chips and bank notes were piled before each player, and the set faces of the gamblers betokened that an unusually stiff game was in progress.

Presently, as a hand was dealt, and before the players had seen the hands the young stranger said, with a smile and wave of the hand, "Excuse me, gentlemen, but allow me to ask if we are playing with the sequence flush; it is customary, is it not, to settle that matter, and we have not done so."

"Why," said the cotton broker. "you have not got one there, have you Harry?"

"That remains to be seen," said the boy.

It was agreed that the sequence flush should be counted in, and the players took up their hands. I saw a startled expression flash across harry's face as he looked intently at his cards. He did not draw, and when his opportunity came raised the Wall street operator $100. The dry goods man dropped out. The cotton broker raised Harry $200. The Wall street party, a large boned, yellow skined individual, with no more expression in his sickly countennnce than there is in a brick wall, came in again and raised, and the thing began to get interesting. The betting grew heavy. Finally the cotton broker weakened and loid down, but Wall street, who I fancy thought Harry was bluffing, took the chances. There was over $12,000 on the table when Harry pushed back his chair and reaching down drew from under his feet a small black bag, from which he took a package of crisp greenbacks.

Carefully he counted out $5,000, mostly in bills of large denomination, and pushed them forward. The Wall street sphinx saw Harry and raised him an equal amount.

The boy, pale as a ghost, his lips and fingers twitching with nervous excitement. threw down the remainder of a package of money and said, prefacing the words with a wild oath:

"Five more; I call you. What have you got?"

"Four Kings," said Wall street, without a tremor, as he laid down his hand.

"A sequence flush, gentlemen, by all gods!" said the excited boy as he threw his cards on the table and reached for the spoils. A slight, almost imperceptible, flush came upon the cheeks of impassive Wall street; then one eye twitched a little; then suddenly he leaned forward, examined Harry's hand. and said quickly; "Not so fast, not so fast, my young friend; look at your cards."

One look was enough. Never in my life have I heard a more horrible groan than came from young Harry's lips. and then the words, "Oh, God! what will mother say?" seemed to burst out of his mouth, and then he fell upon the floor in a fit.

The poor youth had been betting on a sequence flush that was not a sequence flush, for, by some temporary hallucination, he had mistaken the seven of diamonds for an eight, and. although he had examined his cards time and time again, as I had observed, had not been undeceived as to his error. The Wall street man. as he gathered in the money, glanced at the writhing form upon the floor, and said, as he pouched the spoils, with a gambler's pity, "Poor devil," and then took his hat and walked out, while we were endeavoring to revive the poor boy.

I have since heard that Harry was the trusted confidential clerk of a large New York contracting firm, and had intended starting for Washington on a late train that unlucky evening. to transact some important business.

I have always had a prejudice against sequence flushes since that evening in New York.

"Well my son you have got into grammar, have you?" said a proud sire to his thickest chip the other night. "Let me hear you compare some adjective."

Chip.—All right. Little, less least; big, bigger. beast; mow. more, most.—"

Proud sir.—"Hold on sir that's not right, you—"

Chip.—"Toe, tore, toast; snow, snore snort; go, gore, gout; row, roar, rout;—"

Proud Sire.—"Stop, I say; those adjectives—"

Chip.—Drink, drank, drunk; chink, chank, chunk; wink, wank, wunk; think, thank, thunk—"

Proud Sire.—"You infernal little fool! What in thunder—"

Chip.—"Good, better, best; wood, water, west; bad, wusser, wust; bile, biler, burst; sew, sewer, soup; pew, poor, pup. O—o—h! oh, geminently dad Ohso-o!"

The outraged parent broke into the recitation with a boot-jack.

The other day a father gently said, "Don't stuff victuals in your mouth that way my son; Oliver Cromwell didn't eat after that fashion." the boy after pondering a while, remarked to himself "And I don't believe Oliver Cromwell wolloped his boy for finding a bottle of whiskey in the shed when he was hunting for a horseshoe, either!"