

INGALLS ON BLAINE

Masterly and Mordant Mental Measurement of the Man from Maine.

REASON FOR THE RUIN OF HIS HIGH HOPE

That Jest on Roscoe Conkling Responsible for Later Republican Reverses.

SECRET OF THE PLUMED KNIGHT'S POWER

'Not by Logic, But by the Persuasive Magic of His Personality.'

PARALLELED WITH THE ELDER PITT

Strong in His Affections, Intense and Unrelenting in His Antipathies, He Evoked Equally Adulation and Malediction—His Place in Political History.

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BLAINE APPEARED more prominently to the imagination of the American people than any other political leader of his time.

His individuality was the most interesting and impressive of his generation, and when this personal force is no longer felt or remembered it will be difficult for the historian of the future to detect the secret of his extraordinary and phenomenal influence over his contemporaries, by whose reason and judgment he was never wholly approved, but by many whom, justly or unjustly, he was suspected and distrusted, even when most admired and applauded.

He was the object of irrational idolatry and adulation, and of equally inexplicable malediction, but in both there was a singular reservation, for his political associates never gave him their full confidence, and his political enemies, even in their most ferocious indictments and lampoons, felt for him a sentiment of personal kindness. His place in history, therefore, cannot now be certainly predicted, but it seems probable that the historic Blaine will not have the proportions of the "Blaine of Maine," whose name, with its explosive detonating rhythm, was chanted by millions as they marched under his glittering standard and followed his falling fortunes with unceasing and constant devotion, through an unbroken succession of fatal disasters, culminating in defeat, that convulsed leaders and followers in irremediable havoc and destruction.

The world has never found the man on which its Caesars fed and grew so great. The shop at which this nutriment was sold Cassius could not discover, nor any envious, malin rival and competitor before nor since. The prescription for greatness has not been written. The laboratory in which this genius is compounded has not been disclosed. There is no receipt nor formula for making a great man, and of the two that are grinding at the same mill no prophet can foretell which one shall be taken and which be left. After our heroes have been gauged and scrutinized, after their cubic contents and specific gravity have been ascertained, after their capacity for speech, toil and accumulation has been measured, there is a subtle something that escapes analysis; that eludes the apothecary's scruple and defies detection—the unmeasurable attribute that makes them great and distinguishes them from the rest of mankind. This was pre-eminently the case with Blaine. He was one of a constellation of extraordinary men, differing in gifts, endowments, attainments and functions as one star from another in glory. His epoch was populous with great commanders, orators, politicians, statesmen, men of brains, and men of province; he was surpassed by some contemporary, but in what is called "popularity," the power to kindle enthusiasm among the masses, Blaine led and overtopped them all.

What is Fame? The passion for military glory is insatiable, the success of a general is a popular idol, and in civil war especially it is in the field he considered an indispensable condition of renown. But although Blaine had no part in the military, he was a soldier, and was often taunted with the prospect that he sent a substitute by his address, and in a dispassionate Grant and Sherman and Sherman and Sherman they could not more profoundly stir the deeps of public feeling than he, and that voluntarily took subordinate station in him in one of the most memorable political conflicts of modern times. As a constructive legislator his name is not inseparably associated with any of the great measures of finance and reconstruction during his career in the senate, but his capacity for items nor for plodding. His temperament was dramatic. His parliamentary oratory was meteoric rather than planetary. He shone with a light brilliant, dazzling and dazzling like the lightning's flash across a tempestuous and cloudy heaven, and not the changeless blaze of a steady sun burning upon the headland to warn and direct the mariner through the storm with beneficent and steady ray. There was a theatrical element in his character, a tendency toward sensationalism, surprises and spectacles, a disposition to capture position by sudden and impetuous assaults, rather than by elaborate investment and approach.

But the architects of these great statutes, the builders of that fabric of restoration rendered necessary by the convulsions of the rebellion, are already forgotten. They did tremendous and indispensable task, but they left no impress upon the public retina. The antiquarian will discover them and record their deeds, but no chord of love or pride vibrates at the repetition of their names. There are few who can recall the authors of the constitutional amendments, the legal tender enactments, the reconstruction measures, and to the present generation Stevens, Schenck, Spaulding and the earlier associates of Blaine in congress have scarcely even the distinction of tradition. They have gone glimmering through the dream of things that were, and are not even a schoolboy's tale, the wonder of an hour.

The Secret of His Power. In the large sense Blaine was not an orator like Webster or Sumner or Winter Davis or Conkling. His action, his formal speeches, and those were not remarkable by effective, but he was a debater of unrivaled force, alertness and power. In the sharp hand-to-hand contests of the senate he was never had a superior. He often contrasted in conversation the dull, deliberate methods of the senate with the more force colloquial five-minute debates of the house, and contended that the shock and collision of the latter were immensely more effective in elucidating truth, overthrowing error and reaching great results than the studied and laborious orations which emptied the chamber and put the galleries to sleep. On the platform of the "stump" he was irresistible. He carried his audiences not by logic or highly wrought rhetorical periods, but by the masterly and persuasive magic of his personality. His triumphs were more like those of a great singer, or a popular actor, due to his own attributes and faculties, and the responsive sensibilities of his hearers, more than to his sense or his treatment. These cannot be transmitted to posterity. The types cannot

record them. They perish and disappear with the fading of their orator.

Changed the Course of History. We read the orations of Webster and an understand why he is great. The verbiage of mankind is intelligible, but we follow the reported speeches of Pitt and Clay with disappointment. They do not account for the infatuation of their worshippers. They seem commonplace in sentiment and construction. The discrepancy is irreconcilable. The spell is absent. The charm has vanished. The wand of the enchanter is broken. And so the reported utterances of Blaine will not convey to posterity an adequate impression. They will not explain his relations to the constituencies he represented, the avocations he pursued, the convictions he controlled, and to the party of which he was so long the uncorrupted king.

In common estimation he was a boyish, exuberant, unsophisticated enthusiast; but in fact his nature was calculating and cautious. He had a shrewd eye for the main chance. He looked farther into a grin than most men. His affections were strong and ardent, but his antipathies were bitter, intense and unrelenting. They changed the course of history, and were the predominant factors in bringing about the final catastrophe of the republican party.

The Blaine-Conkling Duel. History, the actual account of men and events, is never written. Results are narrated, but the causes are concealed. The duel in the house between Blaine and Conkling will have no place in our annals except as a picturesque and entertaining incident, but it was the head waters of the Mississippi of our woes. Blaine could not resist the temptation to satirize the turkey gobbler strut and the Hyperion curl of Conkling. It was a amusing thrust, but it was never forgotten nor forgiven. It aroused the inexorable resentment of a haughty, sensitive and implacable spirit.

After his temporary retirement he occupied his leisure in the composition of his "Twenty Years of Congress," the inconspicuous monument of his genius, on which his fame will largely rest. It is a remarkable tribute to his versatile powers that the chief victims of his critical review have had no opportunity to retaliate. He said: "I have considered with prudence to wait for his death before they ventured to reply."

The Beginning of the End. Every ambition was thwarted. Every hope was dashed. "Thrice defeated as a candidate for the presidency, once nominated, once nominated and unsuccessful at the polls, his health steadily declined, and a succession of afflictions followed such as have befallen few of the nation's leaders. He bore them with composure and dignity. One pathetic and indignant protest broke the silence of his retirement, and he complained, at the wanton violation of the deceptions of private life; but if the disappointments of his public career gave him grief he made no mention of it. He received the bulletins of the convention in 1880 in the senate chamber, and read them with a little apparent concern as though he were a spectator, but betrayed no feeling as his vote declined, and after the thirty-fourth ballot predicted the nomination of Garfield. When the final announcement came he said: "I have accomplished the one thing that I desired, and that is the destruction of the third term idea in this country. It will never be heard of again."

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Blaine's Americanism was a passion. His sympathies were American and American interests. He was a believer in the continental policy and claimed the western hemisphere as the arena for the development of American genius and American destiny. But he made no original contributions to the stock of American ideas, perhaps because none are possible and our program is complete. He is a popular exponent of the theory of protection to American labor, but Hamilton and Clay were his predecessors in this. He is the dream of Douglas and many others of our statesmen before and since. The congress of American republicans was a logical fore-runner of the American republic. He organized the congress of Panama with the same purpose fifty years before. But it was reserved for Blaine to re-echo the principles from the past and emphasize their importance to his own epoch.

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