

JOHN W. M'CUNE SOLDIER AND PIONEER OF UNION PACIFIC

Young Man Attracted by Uncle Sam's Great Wild West Show Joins Procession and Sticks for Forty-Two Years at the Unfolding of the Greatest Performance Ever Seen on Earth.

CONCERNING the great show opened by Uncle Sam little more than half a century ago between the Missouri river and the Pacific ocean, something has been written in this series before. No one can doubt for a moment that it was the most stupendous aggregation of Gargantuan greatness ever assembled upon the face of the earth, claims of other nations and of rival showmen to the contrary notwithstanding.

1,000,000 Buffaloes, 1,000,000.
4,000,000 Square Miles of Space, 4,000,000.
30,000,000 Homes, 30,000,000.
Highest Mountains, Highest.
Broadest Plains, Broadest.

In his advertisement Showman Uncle Sam did not need to resort to these distorted and hyperbolic statements so much affected by showmen today. His veracious showbills and his reliable posters exaggerated the wonders of his show not the least. In fact, he did not realize himself what a wonderful show he had inherited from France and what an astute financier and farsighted statesman was his agent, Thomas Jefferson, when he bought practically the whole stupendous aggregation for \$7,000,000 from that French spendthrift, Napoleon.

In the operation of this gigantic circus and the management of these combined and amalgamated shows and in caring for the great establishment many thousands of men were required in a thousand different departments. A few weeks ago an account was given of the labors of Court Carrier, who, as ticket agent at the main entrance, Omaha, took the tickets of the great crowd for many years.

Among the many other departments of the great show which great men were striving to build up was, of course, the stupendous street parade, a continuous parade given day and night throughout the east in the shape of advertisements, newspaper articles, posters. There were men to play the callopo. There were men to drive the wagons containing not only the usual array of wild beasts and birds, but gold and silver, wheat, corn, oats and a thousand other of the attractions to be found upon the inside of the circus by those who attended the great show.

Advertising Brings Crowds.

Arriving upon the inside, however, the visitor had to traverse many miles, not being able to walk as he can in the ordinary show (such as our rivals conduct). And it was for the accommodation of those who had paid their admission fee and who were waiting to see the wonders so extensively advertised in our veracious literature and our reliable posters that the Union Pacific railroad was built.

Soon after the close of the civil war, which occurred in the sideshow east of the Missouri river and which proved an attraction detracting temporarily from the big tent, the crowds began to surge to the main entrance, keeping the ticket agents very busy and causing the ticket wagon to be kept open day and night. Also just about this time the Union Pacific railway began to push out its two bands of steel westward. Steam engines and cars began to arrive for the equipment of the railroad to handle the crowds. And in Omaha was established a great repair shop for keeping the equipment of the road in condition.

John W. McCune became identified with the big show in 1866 and he continues with it today. He holds the record for employment in the Union Pacific shops, having been in continuous employment there for forty-two years. He was employed in a very active capacity in the sideshow to the east of the river before he joined the big circus, taking a prominent part in that famous representation of the civil war which is one of the greatest attractions ever given by the sideshow.

"Darkest Pennsylvania" was the birthplace of Mr. McCune. He was born on a farm in Allegheny county, which is in the heart of the region of coal mines, iron furnaces and coke ovens, where there is a continuous cloud of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night from furnaces and ovens. His father engaged in the coal mining business when John was still a child, the family moving to Buena Vista. The older McCune owned several coal barges and loaded coal at Buena Vista and floated it down the river to Louisville, Ky., where it was sold.

The oil fever took hold of the boy when he was still in his teens. With a companion he embarked in an enterprise which each, with the characteristic optimism which was a symptom of this particular ailment, believed would make a millionaire of him.

But there were clouds in the sky which eclipsed even the glories of hidden wealth which they were trying to dig from the ground. As the bits of their drill sank deeper into the ground, the clouds gathered thicker over the country. The storm burst at last. Sumter was fired upon and the country was split in twain and the two parts had gathered up arms each against the other.

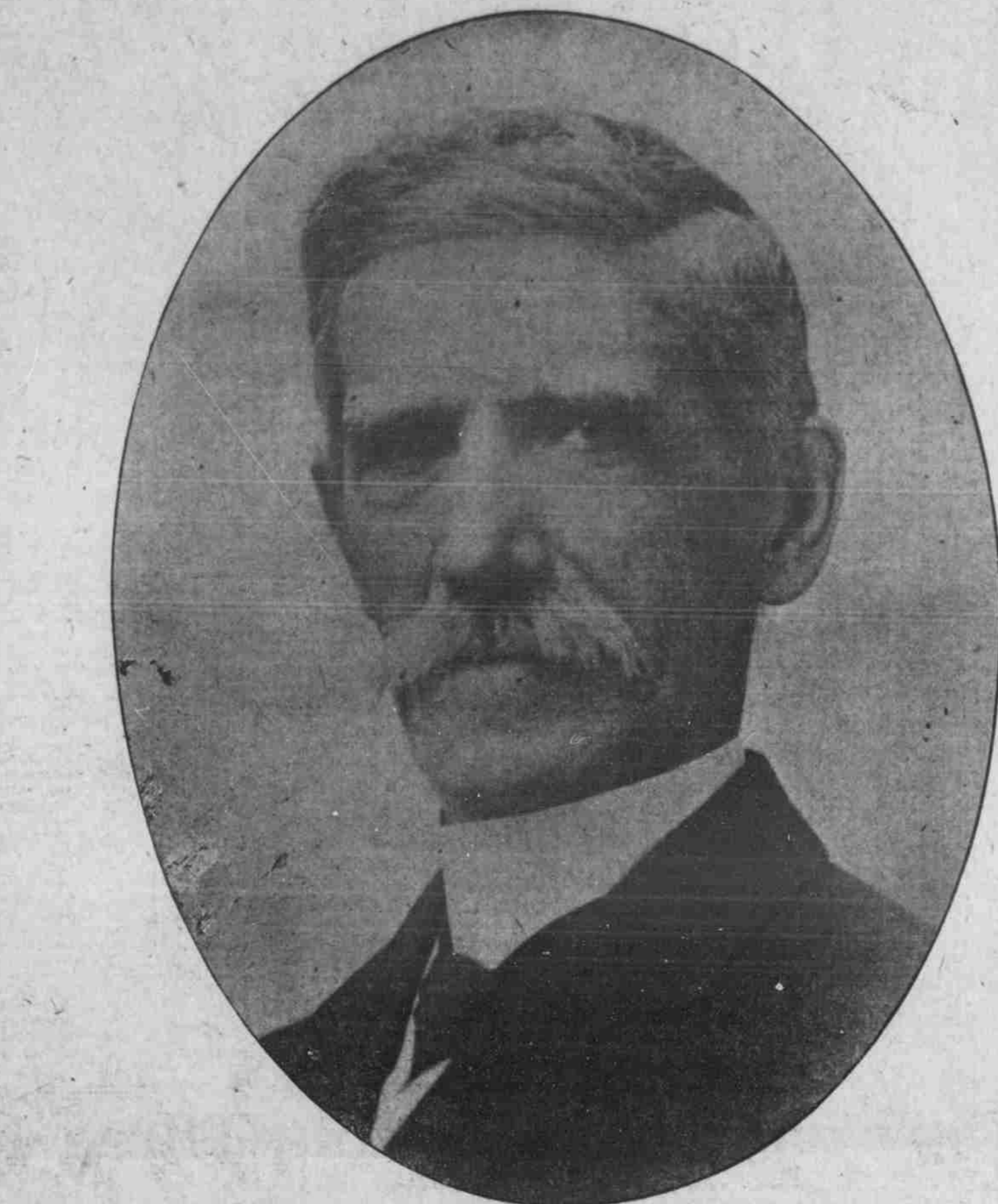
Glory Outweighs Wealth

Visions of glory took the place of visions of wealth in the mind of the young man. The oil well was abandoned and he went to West Newton, Pa., where he enlisted in a company being formed. This later was designated Company E, Captain Mungo Dick. It went from the place of enlistment to Pittsburg, where it was incorporated in the 105th Pennsylvania volunteers, Colonel W. A. McKnight. It was hurried on to Washington and crossed from there over the river into the very theater of war. The winter of 1861 was spent in a camp of instruction at Alexandria, Va. This was the place where the tragic killing of Colonel Elmer E. Ellsworth of the union army took place. Colonel Ellsworth saw the confederate flag floating above the Jackson house, the leading hotel of the place, and calmly entered the place, ascended to the roof and tore the emblem down. As he was coming down he was met by Jackson, who owned the house, and shot and instantly killed. A sergeant in Colonel Ellsworth's command returned the compliment immediately by shooting Jackson through the heart.

The 105th Pennsylvania seemed always to be just in time to be too late for the most interesting events. The regiment passed through Baltimore just the day after the big riots there. It arrived at Fortress Monroe, Va., a few hours after the Monitor and Merrimac had fought their celebrated aquatic duel. It was in the spring of 1862 that the regiment went down the Chesapeake bay on a transport to Fortress Monroe, Va. The rebel ram, Merrimac, clad in its iron coat of mail, had been bullying the union boats and crushing many of them with impunity. Just the day before the 105th arrived at the fortress a new champion had arrived in the bay, a champion which looked as ridiculous before the big Merrimac as David did before Goliath, as Ulysses before the Cyclops. The champion was the union boat, the Monitor, small, agile, lying low and protected in the water. The mighty Merrimac had laughed at the little boat which offered to give it battle and hurled its mighty mass upon the little boat, intending to crush it without further ceremony. But the Monitor stepped lightly to one side and allowed its ponderous opponent's mass to glide harmlessly by, pouring a heavy fire into its big sides. The Merrimac tried again and again, seeking to ram the little boat and trying to smash it with its mighty mass. But the Monitor wasn't there when the big boat tried to ram it and the cannon balls rolled harmlessly from the Monitor's low-lying, smooth decks. The fate of Goliath, of the Cyclops and of the Merrimac were the same. Mr. McCune often had the pleasure of seeing the famous little Monitor at practice, though he never saw it in actual battle.

Episodes in Ballooning

The 105th sailed forth from its fortress when the Army of the Potomac needed it in the campaign against Yorktown, marched up the peninsula and helped in that famous siege. One of the incidents which cling to Mr. McCune's memory most tenaciously connected with the siege has not to do with tragedy, reeks not of blood, is not brilliant with the firing of heavy artillery, does not resound with martial sounds of ordnance discharging. It partakes rather of the ludicrous than of the tragic, illustrating how close akin the two really



JOHN W. M'CUNE.

are. It was no less than the kidnaping of General Fitzjohn Porter. Who was the base criminal? It was a balloon.

"The balloon was used for observing what was going on within the beleaguered city," says Mr. McCune. "To it was fastened a long rope which, when it was desired to let the balloon rise, we played out through a block attached to a stump. On the occasion in question General Porter entered the balloon with his charts and pencils and all the paraphernalia for observing the operations of the enemy in the town and gave orders to let the balloon go up. We obeyed, playing out the rope carefully. General Porter was some 200 feet in the air and the balloon was tugging hard on the rope. Suddenly the tugging ceased and, looking up, we saw the balloon shooting skyward at a rate it was never intended to travel. General Porter was adrift in the balloon and we held in our hands only a piece of useless rope. The air current was sweeping the balloon right over the town. Fortunately, it was so high that bullets could not touch it, and fortunately, also, the balloon entered a current of air when it reached a

little greater height, which swept it back to our camp and then, by letting out some of the gas, the general regained the ground in safety."

The regiment followed the fleeing rebels from Yorktown following the evacuation and was engaged in the battle of Williamsburg. Then it marched on toward Richmond and on May 31 was engaged in the fierce battle of Fair Oaks. In this battle young McCune sustained a serious wound, the bullet entering the left shoulder and passing through the body a distance of more than two feet before coming out on the right thigh. He lay on the battlefield until evening, when he was gathered up with the wounded and eventually found his way to a hospital transport, which took him, with 200 other wounded, to Philadelphia, where he was cared for in St. Joseph's hospital. At the end of two months he was well enough to go to his home on a furlough. He remained at home until the spring of 1863, when he returned to Philadelphia and, his term of enlist-

ment having expired, he was discharged from the regiment. He returned home and later went to Madison, Ind.

He was in Madison when the third call came for troops to serve in the union army for a period of one year. He raised part of a company himself and this was consolidated with another part raised in Indianapolis and made a part of the 145th Indiana volunteers, which was mustered in at Indianapolis. Mr. McCune became second lieutenant of his company, which was sent south at once and stationed at Dalton, Ga., where there was little to be done at that time except conserve the peace and administer the police duties in a territory already practically in a state of peace. After the war had actually and formally been ended Lieutenant McCune was detailed with fifty men for provost duty at Cuthbert, county seat of Webster county. With headquarters in the court house, he sat as a sort of military governor of his little province until order had been restored thoroughly and civil officers had again taken their seats.

To Civil Life and Omaha

Then the 145th went back to Indianapolis, where it was mustered out in February, 1866. The young lieutenant took off his soldier clothes, went back to visit his home and then began to look about for something to do.

The monster parade of the gigantic circus which was just opening its doors west of the Missouri river, was doing good work. The cages, filled with wild animals and birds and with gold and silver and wheat, corn, oats and many other things, were attracting great attention. The posters and advertisements of the monster aggregation had attracted widespread attention. The side show, since the great representation of the civil war had been done away with, was waning in popularity. The crowds were beginning to apply at the main entrance of the big tent in Omaha for tickets to the big show. Among these crowds was John W. McCune. He left his home determined to go into the big circus and he had his eye particularly on Denver. He traveled by rail as far as Des Moines. From there to Omaha the journey was made by stage.

He had a letter of introduction to one of the big circus men. He wasn't owner, but he was boss of a gang, and a very big gang. The letter of introduction was to no less a person than General Grenville M. Dodge, chief engineer of the Union Pacific railroad. General Dodge happened to be making a westward trip on the same coach and the two rode together from Des Moines to Omaha. On the way General Dodge talked very strongly in favor of Omaha and by the time the stage arrived in Council Bluffs the young man had decided to settle in Omaha, the gateway of the west, the eastern base of the great Union Pacific railroad. General Dodge, himself, went with the young man down to the little plant which was the nucleus of the present big shops and said to the boss there:

"Put this boy to work."

Job a Steady One.

The boy went to work and the job has lasted him forty-two years. On June 20 of this year he will celebrate the forty-second anniversary of that day when General Dodge told them to put him to work. For twenty-one years Mr. McCune was foreman of the planing mill at the shops. Now he has charge of the supplies for the big establishment.

"I have observed a remarkable growth in the shops, in the city and in the west," says Mr. McCune. "I have seen the shops grow to a hundred times the size they were when I went to work there. The city has grown almost that many fold and the great country west of the Missouri river has multiplied its population and wealth so tremendously that it is almost incalculable. It is a fine thing to have lived in such an era."

Mr. McCune met a young woman soon after his arrival in Omaha who suited him and on June 13, 1867, they were married. His wife was Miss Anne Dorsey of Indianapolis, Ind. She was visiting in Omaha at the time they met. Mr. and Mrs. McCune has four children. William S. McCune, for twenty-three years in the employ of the Union Pacific shops here and chief clerk in the motive power department at the time he resigned, has been since January chief auditor of the Copper River Railroad and Mining company, Cordova, Alaska. The second son, Frank C. McCune, is a second lieutenant in the Sixteenth United States Infantry, now located at Fort Crook, and has seen service in the Philippines and other parts of the world. Mrs. Will Browne lives in Salt Lake City and Miss Juliet Wyman McCune lives at home.

Mr. McCune is still a vigorous man and apparently much younger than his experience and pioneering in Nebraska would indicate. He lives with his wife and daughter in a handsome home, 1813 Binney street, where they enjoy the comforts and pleasures which have been vouchsafed to those who cast in their fortunes with Nebraska in the state's young days and cling by her through prosperity and misfortune alike.

President as an Attendant at Devotional Services

WASHINGTON, April 25.—The president is not only a good churchgoer himself, but deserves the thanks of at least two Washington preachers for his aid in boosting the size of their congregations.

With his predilection for having everything in sight reformed, it is no more than natural, perhaps, that his church, also, should bear the magic label. It is Grace Reformed, a rather small, graystone building on Fifteenth street, not quite a mile from the White House.

Grace Reformed is not a fashionable church. The congregation is unassuming in appearance and would be decidedly modest in size if it were not for the president. He fills certainly two-thirds of the pews. So far as audiences go the preacher may have to look for lean years after March 4, 1909.

While the president fills dozens of the pews by the mere fact of his expected presence, he occupies his own seat in solitary grandeur. Once in a while he goes with his wife and family to St. John's, but they don't seem inclined to reciprocate the attention. St. John's rejoices in the local title of "the church of state," and always reserves a pew for the president of the United States, though it had not been in demand for a good many years when Mrs. Roosevelt became the lady of the White House.

Whether he goes to his own church or not, no one but Theodore Roosevelt, unless it is some friend or guest accompanying him, which rarely happens, is ever seated in the president's pew at Grace Reformed. Two secret service men always accompany him to church, but they do not sit with him.

Every Sunday morning as early as 10 o'clock the sightseers begin to gather in front of the gray building in Fifteenth street. Most of them are tourists whose only chance to see the president is to catch him at church and who are willing to wait an hour outside if need be and to spend another hour and more inside for the possible privilege of a glimpse of the man they call "Teddy" when they're back home.

The sexton is posted on the steps and forms

the crowd into a double line which often reaches to the flattering length of 100 yards or more before the doors are opened. It is lucky for the multitude that the president's church is not an otherwise popular one. If it were crowded by its own members outsiders would have to that period of painful suspense and waiting "until after the singing of the first hymn," that regulation familiar to the church tramp.

At Grace Reformed the doors are opened long before 10:30 and people are admitted with the admonition: "Just go up to the gallery. They're the best seats." Of course that means the best seats for getting a view of the president.

It is calmly accepted that the multitude is not standing in line because of a consuming desire to hear the gospel as it is expounded in Grace Reformed church. Even the preacher can cherish no illusions on that point when people who have fought the crowd and wheeled the ushers into giving them a front seat calmly and conspicuously get up and walk out when the service having proceeded for fifteen minutes, it becomes evident that the president won't be there.

They make a mistake to wait so long. The president does not straggle in fifteen minutes late. On the other hand, he doesn't waste a quarter of an hour by getting there fifteen minutes too soon.

In fact, the gallery, tired of craning its neck at every person who goes up the aisle below, has already begun openly and mournfully to declare that he isn't coming at all, when there is a sudden shock of expectancy. Even before the rapid strides of the four men who have just entered have brought them into view of the gallery, those upstairs have whispered: "Here he is."

The four men are the usher, the president and the two secret service men. It is a question whether the usher could keep up that gait very long, but he does nobly in the short distance between the door and the second left-hand pew from the front, that being the Roosevelt seat.

One of the secret service men quietly slips into the end of a pew across the aisle and about five rows back of the president. The other one takes an end seat across the aisle several rows still further back.

The first thing the president does is to bow his head briefly in an attitude of prayer. Then he leans forward and speaks to a middle-aged woman and a young boy who generally occupy the seat in front of him. He talks with them two or three minutes while he pulls off his gloves and stows them away in his silk hat.

Then he gets his big gilt-edged prayer book from the rack and finds the place. He is ready for business; and so accurately does he time his arrival that the service is by this time beginning. Probably during the ninety minutes which follow he gives the nearest imitation of absolute repose of which he is capable in his waking hours. He does pretty well, considering his temperament and the fact that several hundred human beings are concentrating their attention on the back of his head.

If he makes a move it is followed with the keenest interest by scores of eyes. If he scratches the back of his head, if he smooths his hair, if he adjusts his eyeglasses, there is a rustle of attention. It is enough to make a stone image wriggle. Somewhat to the disappointed surprise of the observers, the president does not wriggle. He's not absolutely quiet, but he's quiet for him!

When he sings—oh, he sings! he doesn't look at the book ten notes in succession. So far as his glance and the page are concerned, it's a chronic case of "on again, off again."

When it comes to the sermon, he is a model of attention. If he doesn't listen he at least looks as if he were doing so. The desk is at the right of the platform, so that the president has to turn his head somewhat to face the preacher. Apparently he does not miss a word of the discourse. The service concludes with singing, followed by the benediction. Before the singing is over the president has put his hymn book in the rack and has picked up his hat and gloves.

During the benediction he gets one foot into the aisle and his hand on the end of the seat ready for a quick start. Back of him the secret service men also have got half way into the aisle and are on the alert.

The instant the amen is pronounced the president has started. Before people have raised their

heads he has swiftly but quietly passed the secret service men, who at once close in behind him.

They are at the door before anyone but the vigilant gallery knows it. Down the steps they go and out to the walk lined with another curious throng which has wanted a glimpse of him, but hasn't wanted it badly enough to go to church itself to get it.

By this time the gallery has precipitated itself down the narrow stairways and with the other agitated sightseers is debouching upon the street. The president has reached the corner. Behind him are, first, his coat tails flapping furiously; next the secret service men looking as if they were praying not for length of days, but for length of legs; next the populace, men, women and children, black, white and middle, striding, running, making up lost ground with spasmodic rushes, skirts billowing, feathers flying, more coat tails flapping.

At the corner the president cuts diagonally across without regard for crossings and takes a short down Rhode Island avenue to Sixteenth street, whence it is a straight run to the White House gleaming in the distance. Remember this itinerary if you meditate meeting the president on his way to or from church. He always takes the same route.

The wide street, which some want to be called the Avenue of the Presidents, dips away below the circle, and one can stand and watch the funny procession stream down the grade, the president forging always at its head, his gait close to six miles an hour. The philosophic policeman at the circle smiles pityingly.

"They'll follow him clean to the White House—then as can keep up in sight," says he.

At the gate he is going the president will get home as early as if he went with his wife to St. John's. That he does occasionally go there is what makes many sightseers consent to push and be pushed in its little vestibule for an hour on end waiting for a chance to get in.

Of course they want to see Mrs. Roosevelt and the family, not to mention other celebrities who go there to church. But the busy prospect of seeing the president is a big card even here.