DIGNITY OF THE SENATE.

WALTER WELLMAN HOLDS IT TO BE A HOLLOW, HOLLOW SHAM.

He Gives His Reasons for the Faith That Is Within Him—A Restaurant Rule That Is Continually Broken—The Appalling Blunder of a Green New Senator.

[Special Correspondence.]

WASHINGTON, March 20.—We hear a great deal of late about senatorial dignity and the protection thereof. A most serious committee of this dignified body is now at work trying to ascertain the names of the unholy wretches of newspaper men who print facts which the senators think ought not to be printed. "The dignity of the senate must be maintained at all hazards," say these aristocrats of the national legislature, "even if we have to put in jail the whole newspaper outfit." As if the dignity of a great body like this depended upon the action of a few newspaper writers, and could be maintained by locking those writers behind iron bars for performance of their duty to their employers and the public. There is nothing new in all this. Ever since it was born the United States senate has been striving to keep up its dignity. It has paid more attention to dignity than to brains, and in consequence has constantly degenerated. There has not been a really brilliant senate since the days of the war. These old chaps who spend half their time thinking up new devices for maintaining their dignity are as a matter of fact a commonplace lot.

It is the judgment of every close observer in the national capital that if one were to swoop down on the house of representatives and take the first eighty men he came upon he would have a body of legislators of more learning, sincerity and ability than is contained in the United States senate at the present moment. The men of the house do not suffer from the dry rot of laziness and indifference to the popular opinion as do their compeers at the other end of the Capitol. They remain closer to the people, are more anxious to please and be right and useful. Their dignity is a thing that bothers them little. What they go in for is action and accomplishment. Any sort of an old stick who happens to break or buy his way into the senate can maintain a good status in that body. There is precious little brains in his old head, and the manners he has are of recent and forced growth, but he is, forsooth, a senator, and that is everything.

One of the traditions of this body is that every senator must help every other senator out in maintaining his dignity and status. So the weak carry the strong along with them, and thus help out the general average and delude the people who look on from a distance into believing that it is the wisest and most eloquent and most patriotic legislative body in the world. It is quite different over in the house. There no artificial standard is raised, and a man rises or falls by virtue of his own native force and the brains he carries about with him. The nincompoop in the house is quickly discovered and sized up He goes to the foot of the class. But in that body which has such anxiety about its dignity they decline to have a foot to the class. There, in their own traditions, if not in their own belief, they are all smart boys.

Unfortunately for itself the senate started in on this campaign of eternal dignity the day it came into the world. At first it was going to hold all its sessions in secret, and actually did so until it discovered that an election to the senate was like the burying of a man alive. There were newspapers in those days and sensible men running them, as now, and the old time newspaper men concluded that the dignified, secret and stupid senate was not worth bothering with. They published no reports, rarely mentioned the names of senators, and, after three or four years of that sort of experience, so much of the dignity of the body as was embodied in the secret proceedings was reluctantly abandoned.

Early in its career the senate sought to borrow a little dignity from the office of president of the United States; it construed the constitutional provision concerning appointments to mean that the president must personally confer with the great senate about the men whom he wished to appoint to places in the government service. Washington did for a time go to the senate chamber for the purpose of holding these consultations, but his good sense enabled him very quickly to perceive that such methods were beneath the dignity of his office, and he soon discontinued the practice; still, to this very day the senate keeps in its standing rules the clause, "When the president of the United States shall meet the senate in the senate chamber for the consideration of executive business, he shall have a seat on the right of the presiding officer."

The senate had no sooner been called into existence than it endeavored to lift itself upon a pedestal above the other branch of congress. This was strikingly shown in the effort which the first senate made to compel the house of representatives to bow the knee to senatorial dignity in the matter of transmitting messages between the two houses. The senate insisted that its communications to the house should be sent by the hand of one of its employes, the secretary, who was deemed a person of sufficient importance to wait upon the common members of congress. When the house had a communication to make to the august senate, however, a committee of members was to take the bill or resolution in their hands, and with uncovered heads and cautious tread approach the senate door. There they were to be announced by the doorkeeper, and, as salve for the wounds caused their pride by serving in the capacity of menials, were to be received by the senate standing. Luckily the house had no liking for such distinction between the dignity of the two bodies, and held its ground in favor of sending communications in both instances by the hand of employes till the senate was forced to yield.

To this day the senate endeavors to maintain an air of superiority to the house. This is shown in its claiming and taking the right of precedence on all ceremonial occasions, in the conduct of senatorial conference committees, in their dealings with similar committees from the house and in the relationships which exist between senators and members socially and otherwise. The theory of the senate and its members on all such occasions is that the house collectively and its members individually are inferior and unimportant. Oddly enough, the members of the house who succeed in winning elections to the senate become the most arrant sticklers for senatorial dignity. Several notable examples of this could be mentioned if it were pleasant or profitable to do so.

But what is this senatorial dignity we hear so much of? It is a hollow sham. The senate at best is a conglomerate mass of insincerity, and it is as insincere and affected in its dignity as in its patriotism. These old chaps, who are so eager to punish other people for violation of rules which they are not sworn to respect, themselves disregard the rules, which they are under oath to obey, whenever it suits their convenience to do so. A week or two ago the chairman of the very committee which is trying to run down the manner in which executive session secrets are given to the public, gave a salmon lunch in the senate restaurant. The senate was soon depopulated. There is a rule of the senate which declares that no senator shall leave the service of the senate without having been excused. On this occasion the sergeant-at-arms reported that there were twenty-two senators in the restaurant, and that when he informed them they were wanted upstairs to attend to the public business, said senators coolly told him they were too busy to move. One of the rules of the senate is that the restaurant must not sell intoxicating liquors, yet seven cases of champagne were opened at this lunch and several bottles of brandy and whisky. Every day grave and dignified senators may be seen drinking whisky in the senate restaurant, the rule to the contrary notwithstanding; and when they want whisky nowadays they say whisky, and do not call for cold tea. This is the only regular ceremonial in the senate which, so far as I have observed, does not savor of sham and prudery.

Exclusiveness is one of the first elements of dignity as defined by the senators. They are exclusive even in the violation of their own rules. When they go down stairs to drink whisky they like to do so in private, and so they provide in their rules that "the large private room of the restaurant shall be reserved exclusively for senators and their guests," while "the small private room shall be reserved exclusively for the use of senators and members of the house of representatives, and such use of the private rooms shall not be interfered with." In other words, the vulgar public must stay out altogether, while the members of the house may sit down and drink whisky only in the outer sanctum.

Politeness is another theory of dignity according to the senatorial interpretation. But this, also, is a bit of sham and delusion. Their politeness is often but a veneer for malice and sarcasm and irony. For instance, a western senator rises to introduce a bill which a citizen of a state adjoining his has sent him. "I introduce this bill by request," says the senator, with solemn politeness, "and add that I do not indorse the bill, that I do not know the man who sent it to me, and that I should have preferred to send him the name of one of the senators from his state." How deferential and sweet all this appears, but look for the sting in the insect's tail. It happens that the senator in question does not like either of the senators from the state he has mentioned, and also that the senators from that state are not as yet famous men, and hence, "I should have preferred sending my correspondent the name of one of his senators."

One of the unwritten laws of the senate, one of the traditions which have grown out of its efforts to maintain its own dignity, requires the senators in political sympathy with a new senator to sit and listen to his first or maiden speech, no matter how unanimously they may afterward absent themselves when he takes the floor. A week ago Senator Higgins made his maiden effort in the senate, and only five Republican senators were in their seats.

Under this thin coat of politeness all sorts of personal enmities and jealousies seethe. The senate has just one-fourth the number of members contained in the house, and three times as many cases of personal bad feeling. I suppose that comes from too much dignity, and the cultivation of that quality as some people cultivate mushrooms.

The new senator who presumes to take advantage of the superficial politeness and "we-apples-swim" tendency of the august body, will make a serious mistake. There was an instance of this a few weeks ago. A new senator from the west, who had been but a few weeks in his seat, wanted the senate to go into executive session, and made a motion to that effect. This seemed harmless enough, but the older senators were horrified. They coughed and hemmed and stared at the new man till the poor fellow imagined he had committed the crime of sedition or arson. The presiding officer, who chanced to be one of the older senators, preserved his presence of mind, and was for the nonce conveniently deaf. He didn't hear the motion, and the senate went on with some other business. Then two or three of the old fellows gathered around the new man and whispered in his ear:

"Didn't you know that it is one of the traditions of the senate that a senator must have been here two years before he can move to go into executive session?"

Ten minutes later a senator who had served the required two years made the executive session motion, and the gong sounded three times, the doors were closed, the vulgar public retired, and the senate went solemnly into secret session, the old chaps gossiping in the cloak rooms about the young senator's blunder like a parcel of old maids at a quilting. But the dignity of the senate must be preserved. WALTER WELLMAN.

OF UNCLE TOM'S CABIN.

GINCINNATI ORIGINALS OF SOME OF ITS CHARACTERS.

Pictures of Some of the Localities Made Famous in Mrs. Stowe's Wonderful Book. Some of the People Who Figured Therein Are Still Living.

[Special Correspondence.]

CINCINNATI, O., March 20.—Last summer, during an excursion with a camera, it was my pleasure, without premeditation, to come upon an old farmhouse about ten miles from this city that has an interesting history for being one of the stations on the Underground Railroad that passed through Cincinnati, as well as for having once sheltered from her pursuers a girl whose experience subsequently furnished Mrs. Stowe with many facts for her "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

RESIDENCE OF JOHN VAN ZANDT.

The house is situated on the crest of a hill, and from its weatherbeaten and somewhat dilapidated porch one can look away southward over one of the most charming and fertile valleys in southern Ohio, across which the rails of the Marietta and Cincinnati railroad glisten in parallels with the sluggish waters of the Miami canal. The man who selected this site must have had in his constitution more of the love for the picturesque than is usually attributed to the rigid sect to which he belonged. This man was John Van Zandt, a Quaker, born in Kentucky, who moved to Ohio long before the war and settled on a farm north of the city, near the present suburb of Glendale. He identified himself with the Underground Railroad work, and his services in the rescue of the young girl alluded to made him the subject of one of Mrs. Stowe's characters in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," where he figures as Van Tromp.

At the time Mrs. Stowe wrote "Uncle Tom's Cabin" she lived in the east, but the material was arranged during her residence in Cincinnati, and the house on Walnut Hills in which she lived still stands. While the facts upon which the story is built were gleaned from far and near, the originals of many of the characters figured in Mrs. Stowe's every day life. For instance, her own husband, Professor Stowe, figures as Senator Bird; the Simeon Halliday of the story was Levi Coffin, who died only a few years ago, and Rachel, his good wife, was none other than Catherine Coffin, wife of Levi; Eliza Harris was Eliza Cox, a seamstress in Mrs. Stowe's family; Richard Dillingham was a young Quaker from Morrow county, O., who came to Cincinnati to teach the colored people, and whose enthusiasm led him to Nashville in behalf of a slave, where he was arrested and imprisoned and died before his release; George Harris now lives at Oberlin, O., where he is known as George Clarke. Of course all of these characters represent the adventures of more than one person, whose identities have been lost in that of the principal person making the character. The adventures of Eliza Harris, for instance, are those of a number of slave

FIREPLACE WHERE ELIZA WAS HIDDEN.

girls, recorded as those of one person, a thing that was necessary to avoid cumbering the story with a confusion of characters.

The young girl who furnished the name of Eliza Harris to the character was a slave from Kentucky, the property of a man who lived a few miles back from the Ohio river, below Ripley, O. Her master and mistress were kind to her and she had a comfortable home. But financial embarassment forced the master to sell his slaves. When Eliza learned that she and her only living child were to be separated, she resolved to make her escape that night. When darkness settled and the family had retired, she started with her child in her arms for the Ohio river, expecting to be able to cross on the ice, but when she reached its banks, at daybreak, she was appalled to find the ice broken up and drifting in large cakes. She ventured to a house near by, where she was given permission to remain during the day, hoping to find some way to cross before night. But her absence had been quickly noted by her master, and before nightfall pursuers appeared at the house.

With the courage of desperation she seized her child and darted out through a back door, resolved to cross the river or perish in the attempt. The men followed in close pursuit, congratulating themselves that the chase was nearly ended. But they stood appalled when they saw their victim spring upon the ice and make for the Ohio shore, springing from cake to cake with marvelous agility. Sometimes the cake would sink beneath her weight, and she would slide her child on to the next cake and pull herself on with her hands, and thus continued her hazardous journey. She became wet to the waist with ice water and benumbed with cold when she reached the Ohio shore, and was so exhausted that she would have drowned on the border of liberty had not a man who had watched her daring feat assisted her up the bank. She was taken to the house of Rev. John Rankin, a Presbyterian minister, whose family still lives at Ripley, and cared for. Thence she was forwarded through Cincinnati to the house of Levi Coffin, then living at Newport, Ind., just over the Ohio line, and from there was sent to Canada.

The young girl who was rescued through the daring of Professor Stowe and the sacrifice of John Van Zandt was Eliza Cox, who also came from Kentucky, and was for some time in the service of Mrs. Stowe as seamstress. She came into Ohio by consent of her mistress, with the understanding that her brother was to stand as hostage for her return. Slaves in Kentucky were treated with much humanity, and visits to friends across the river were frequent indulgences. Mrs. Stowe met the young girl and her sympathies were excited. Having come into the state by consent of her mistress she was, by the laws of Ohio, entitled to her freedom, and she resolved not to return to slavery, a resolution in which she was encouraged by Mrs. Stowe. Professor Stowe went before the proper authorities, secured papers attesting her freedom, and all danger of pursuit was supposed to be over.

But after some time word was sent to Professor Stowe from various sources that the girl's master was in Cincinnati looking for her. Under the laws she was secure, but there were in the city some justices of the peace who would issue a warrant for the arrest of any colored person designated, and with this process the object of their search could be arrested and taken across the river before anything could be done in her behalf. Once in Kentucky the master was easy victor. Professor Stowe determined to carry the girl to some place of security till the inquiry for her was over. At night Professor Stowe secured a horse and wagon and performed the part of Senator Bird. After a drive of ten miles from the Walnut Hills residence, along a solitary road, and crossing a creek at a very dangerous fording, they arrived at the home of John Van Zandt. After some

LEWIS G. CLARK.

rapping Van Zandt appeared, candle in hand, and, as has been narrated, the following conversation took place:

"Are you the man that would save a poor colored girl from kidnapers?"

"Guess I am; where is she?"

"She is in the wagon."

"But what way did you come?"

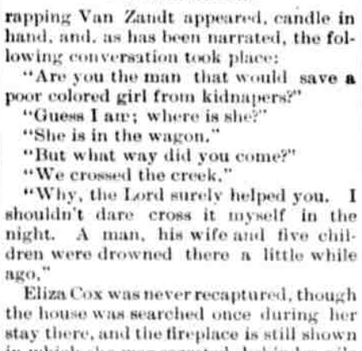
"We crossed the creek."

"Why, the Lord surely helped you. I shouldn't dare cross it myself in the night. A man, his wife and five children were drowned there a little while ago."

Eliza Cox was never recaptured, though the house was searched once during her stay there, and the fireplace is still shown in which she was secreted behind a pile of wood arranged as for burning. This fireplace, which I photographed, is at least three feet deep and six wide, and afforded ample room for hiding. Subsequently Eliza returned to Mrs. Stowe, and afterward married and lived in Cincinnati and raised a family.

For many years John Van Zandt continued his services for the fugitive slaves, and then laid down the burden of life. He was buried in a country graveyard in the valley, and from the old house in which he lived so long one can see the glistening stone that marks the spot where the body of Van Tromp moldered back to dust. Only one grave now remains of the hundreds once there. The greed of the husbandman has encroached upon the territory of the dead. The place is abandoned, and the graves of those whose ashes have not been removed are leveled by the plow, except this one, and that will soon follow, for those ashes are to be removed.

Levi Coffin, in whose house at Newport, Ky., so many slaves found refuge, moved to Cincinnati soon after the rescue of Eliza Harris. Here he continued his service, and died a few years ago at a venerable age. He and his wife both exemplified in their lives the characters attributed to them by Mrs. Stowe under the names of Simeon and Rachael Halliday. Levi Coffin was for thirty years



LEVI COFFIN. MRS. COFFIN.

president of the Underground Railroad in Cincinnati, and presided at the last meeting ever held, soon after the ratification of the Fifteenth amendment, when it was resolved that the object for which the organization had been effected had been accomplished. Mr. Coffin was a native of North Carolina.

Professor Stowe was one of the instructors in Lane seminary, and one of the ablest ministers of the Presbyterian church. His earnest labors in behalf of the slaves were far beyond what is credited to the character of Senator Bird.

GEORGE S. MCDOWELL.