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Born a Country Lad—He Left College to Teach School—His First Legislative Honors—Congress Appalled by His Sweeping Charges—Bitter Contest With Major Black—Crusade Against Pinkerton.

Thomas E. Watson, the Populist nominee for the vice presidency, is another instance of the young man in politics. He is not yet 40 years of age, having been born in Columbia county, Ga., Sept. 5, 1856. He received a common school education and was then sent to Mercer university, Macon, Ga. At the end of his sophomore year he left college, probably because of lack of funds, and for two years engaged in school teaching. Afterward he read law in the office of Judge W. R. McLaws of Augusta, Ga., and was admitted to the bar, commencing the practice of the profession in November, 1876.

In 1878 he was married to Miss Georgia Durham, and several children were the result of the union.

Mr. Watson's political career commenced in 1882, when he was elected to the Georgia legislature on the Demo-

Stephens, as they were trying to disgrace him, and exalted himself.

Watson attempted several dramatic effects, at one time saying that he would talk if he was killed for it and at another denouncing as a "reckless and infamous liar" any one who declared that he leaned toward Harrison.

He bounded over the platform, swung his arms and exclaimed:

"I have stood this abuse as long as I am going to, and my friends have stood it as long as they are going to. We have been called the rag, tag and bobtail long enough. Here, where I am exposed to every man who chooses to make me his target, I, who have been denounced as a traitor, a Judas Iscariot—I say the man who says I have betrayed anybody is a willful and deliberate liar."

As he said this the high stand, which had become crowded, gave way in the rear, throwing a score of people to the ground, but the front on which the speakers stood remained intact.

The crowd had become very noisy, and soon many of them crowded upon what remained of the platform. With a great crash it gave way and precipitated everybody on it to the ground, six feet below, amid the broken planks. No one was injured, and Watson, who is agile as a cat, lit upon his feet. Quickly he pulled a table from the wreck, jumped upon it and cried out:

"This was an old, weak Democratic platform, but I will now speak to you from a People's Party platform, and it will stand like a stone wall."

Then he went on intimating that unless he had followers at all the ballot boxes in November the Democrats might attempt to count him out.

Major Black spoke for an hour and a half. Mr. Watson, he said, had arraigned the Democratic party. He would defend the party by impeaching the witness. "I would not," said he, "consider myself honest to denounce a party whose commission I held in my pocket."

Then turning and pointing his finger in Watson's face he said:

"Whatever crime or iniquity the Democratic party is responsible for you were a part of it."

"Watson," said he, "calls himself a

tion and the greatest volume of belligerency emanated from himself. Some of his tirades against fellow members of the house were particularly violent, and one charge against congressmen in general, contained in a campaign pamphlet written by Mr. Watson, aroused such general indignation that the expulsion of the Georgia member was said to have been seriously considered.

His Charges Against Members of Congress.

It was Watson who gave currency to the phrase "Where am I at?" he having attributed it to Congressman Cobb of Alabama, who, he alleged, used the expression while under the influence of liquor and while addressing the chair on the floor of the house. The congressional investigation which followed the charge and the result showing that the representative from Alabama did sip stimulants during a speech are well remembered by those who watch the process of events at Washington.

In a stump speech made during his canvass in 1892 Mr. Watson made the following reference to these proceedings:

"Now let's go to this drunkenness. While I was there and these absentees were away, why, I wrote a book. I intended that book to hurt, and it has hurt. I intended to expose what I saw going on there detrimental to the best interests of the people. The man who sees legislative abuses growing up under his eyes and does not denounce them to the people is not true to the best interests of the people. Here is the paragraph that made the lion roar:

"The congress now sitting is one illustration pledged to reform. They have not reformed. I have shown you why they did not dispute it. Pledged to economy, they have not economized. No man will deny it. Pledged to legislate, they have not legislated. And no one denies it. Absenteeism was never so pronounced. Drunken speakers—speakers on the floor—in the midst of maudlin ramblings, have been heard to inquire, "Mr. Speaker, where was I at?"

He then referred to the testimony taken before the investigating committee and concluded with:

"And now what does this evidence show? It shows that a man made a speech on the floor of the house who was drunk. First, I charge a case of drunkenness during the debate on the river and harbor bill; another time, when the pension bill was up, and another time when a drunken man was trying to have a dialogue with another fellow who was drunk and his own question kicked him over to the floor. If that is not the truth, I am the blackest tongued liar that ever spoke."

This sort of invective seems to be a favorite form of speech with Mr. Watson, and he employs it with great effect, for he is a really brilliant man and an orator of first class ability.

Mr. Watson is essentially a fighter in a physical as well as a moral sense, and any one who watches his flashing eye and the emotions depicted in his thin, determined face knows well he will "back up" what he says.

One of his most famous crusades was made against the Pinkertons, and his determination to continue his warfare upon the huge detective agency was one of the claims for re-election which he put forward during his canvass in 1892.

He constantly arraigned the Pinkertons as outthroats and irresponsible blackguards. On one occasion he declared his belief that congress would pass a law which would render the obnoxious detectives outlawed.

"These Pinkertons," said he, "have claimed that in one day they could turn over to a big corporation 35,000 men, provided the place where they were to be congregated was near any of the large cities. My attention was first attracted to this great evil at the time of the Missouri Pacific railroad strike. During that period the Pinkertons advertised for men, and in the advertisement it was stated that only men who had courage and meant business need apply. This is the only qualification that the Pinkertons require from their men. They do not care what their character may be, and the chances are they would prefer a lot of ruffians and tough characters, many of them undoubtedly being ex-convicts."

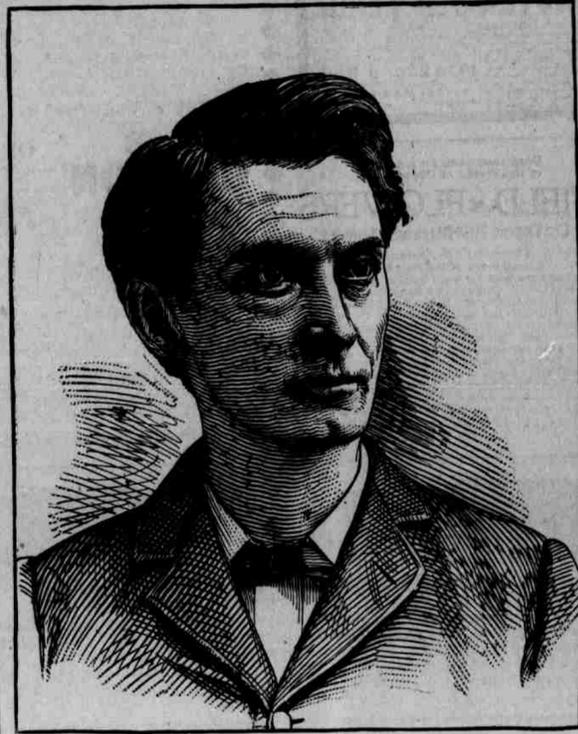
The eccentricities of Mr. Watson have long been a subject of comment in the south and at Washington. It was to him that bluff Tom Reed of Maine applied the uncomplimentary title "colt of the wild ass," and in his own state his oddities and his violence have caused not only adverse criticism but actual doubts as to his sanity.

On the 26th day of October, 1892, the following telegram was sent out from Atlanta and published far and wide throughout the land:

"Is Tom Watson's mind weakening under the strain and excitement of the campaign? That question is being asked all over Georgia today. Recent developments in the Tenth and Watson's wild utterances have caused many men who are the little congressman's friends to fear that something is wrong with him. His wild fake in summoning armed followers from far and near to protect him and his Republican henchman and following this his open efforts to induce his followers to declare a boycott against the merchants of his home town have seemed to cap the climax. There are grave fears that the campaign has been too much for Watson."

"The papers of the state are full of this inquiry. Watson's physical strength has given way under the ordeal through which he is passing, and his advice to his followers to shoot down the Democrats if there is any trouble and other like talk is taken as evidence of mental weakening as well."

That this report was ill founded, if not, indeed, a gratuitous provocation on the part of his enemies, is fully proved by his subsequent success both as a lawyer and as a farmer. Just what effect his most recent political elevation will have upon this remarkable man of the big brain, the weak body and the vehement spirit remains to be seen.



THOMAS E. WATSON.

cratic ticket. In 1888 he again took a prominent part in politics as a Cleveland presidential elector for the state at large.

He was elected to the Fifty-second congress as a Democrat, receiving 5,456 votes as against 597 votes cast for Anthony E. Williams, the Republican nominee. He served only one term in congress, being succeeded by James C. Black, who was elected as a Democrat, Watson having identified himself with the People's Party. He also ran as a Populist for the Fifty-fourth congress, but was again defeated by Mr. Black.

The various controversies and forensic wars that were waged by Watson and Black in the course of their campaigning form an interesting page in Georgia politics. Both of these contestants for congressional honors are hot blooded and bellicose, and both are possessed by that variously defined quality supposed to be essential to a fight—"nerve."

A newspaper account of one of the many Watson-Black encounters so fully sets forth the politics and character of Tom Watson, as he is familiarly called, that the insertion of it here is not inappropriate. The article was a bit of correspondence, dated at Crawfordsville, Ga., Sept. 3, 1892. Here it is:

The joint debate between Tom Watson and Major Black, the candidates for congress from the Tenth Georgia district, opened here today. People came from all sections of the state. Special trains were run. Farmers drove to town from 50 miles around, some of them making a three days' journey to get here.

The debate was held under the great oaks in the yard of Liberty Hall, the home of the late Alexander H. Stephens. A stand had been erected under the spreading boughs of one of the largest trees, and a crowd of 10,000 enthusiastic Democrats and third partyites crowded around.

His Campaign Methods. Mr. Watson opened the debate and spoke for an hour. He pitched into the Democratic and Republican parties and their candidates, declared that the Democrats had tried to disgrace Alexander

Democrat—a Jeffersonian Democrat. You represent a policy that is totally at war with everything that Jefferson has ever said."

As the audience grew boisterous Major Black urged it to keep quiet.

"I am not going into any theatrical performance," he said. "Nobody is going to kill anybody. If I thought anybody was going to shoot at me, I would not be up here. I think my friend Watson knew he was safe, else he would not have done the theatrical act. But in November somebody is going to get killed politically."

Talking to the third party men, Major Black said:

"Four years ago your leader went out of the district with the flag of Democracy. Where is it now? I call upon him—we want our flag. What have you done with it?"

A Voice—Mrs. Lease took it from him!

"I tell you what he did with it. He should have held it aloft in the face of the enemy. Instead of planting it on the battlements of the enemy, he laid it down, trampled it underfoot and came back with the sword of the enemy crimson to the hilt with the blood of the party that had made him. He not only turned his back upon the party, but he denounced it."

"Even the dead haven't been spared. He has gone into the grave of Samuel J. Tilden and declared that he obtained his wealth by piratical methods and did not have sense enough to write his own will. Shame!"

At this moment some one cried, "Oh, Watson has been bribed to do this!"

Watson heard the cry, jumped to his feet and made for his accuser through the crowd. Had it not been for his friends, who held him and hustled the other fellow out of the crowd, there would have been a fight which would have resulted in a general riot, for the crowd was aroused to an intense pitch of excitement.

Mr. Watson's career in congress was hardly less stormy than were the periods of his previous and subsequent candidacy, the difference being that the conflicts were largely of his own crea-

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D. E. B. LOWRY, 117 North 11th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

CHARLES A. MUNN, Attorney-at-Law, Ord, Nebraska.

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