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NEAREST TO WASHINGTON

Colonel Ebenezer Ball, Who Was a Cousin on Both Sides to George.

UNIQUE FIGURE JUST CALLED AWAY

His Life One of Struggle and His Last Days Spent Behind a Cigar and Souvenir Stand.

With the death of Colonel Ebenezer Burgess Ball, which occurred at Washington, Thursday, April 19, there passed away the nearest relative of George Washington, and one of the most familiar figures of the capital. Though the government which should have honored him and made him a pensioner of a grateful nation left him to earn his daily bread through the ordinary channels of life, it was his fate to spend many of his last years in one of the most beautiful spots belonging to the government. This wonderful old man, when drafted a position under the government instituted and designed by his illustrious kinsman, was allowed, through the courtesy of Commissioner of Pensions John C. Mack, to open a cigar stand in the grounds of the pension office, where the sale of cigars, tobacco and souvenirs he could earn enough to keep him from want.

The lofty dome of the pension office filled his stand with sunlight the whole day through. A fountain fills the place with restful music as it falls into a huge basin, where perfect models of two famous gunboats—the Merrimack and the Monitor—guide through its depths. A wide lens of great palms, some of them fifty years old, under which comfortable seats are arranged for the old soldiers, turns the scene into one of Arcadian loveliness. Here the old soldiers sit and visit, the blue smoke of their cigars and pipes floating up through the outspreading palms of the grove.

His Birth and Genealogy.

Colonel Ball was born at Ball's Bluff, Va., in 1817. His grandfather was Colonel Burgess Ball, who equipped and maintained a regiment at his own expense during the revolution and who was a lifelong friend and correspondent of his cousin, General Washington, whom he survived only eighty-three days.

Colonel Burgess Ball was a first cousin of Mary Ball, who was Washington's mother. His married name was Washington, the grandmother of the subject of this sketch and a niece of George Washington, making him twice related to his great kinsman, Judge Ball of Richmond, Va., whose widow was vice regent of the Mount Vernon association, was a brother to Colonel Ball. Since the death of Colonel Ebenezer Ball the nearest living relative to Washington is George Washington Ball of Georgetown, D. C., who was a cousin to the deceased.

Colonel Ball was one of the picturesque personalities of the national capital. His personal resemblance to George Washington was most marked, as may be seen from his portrait. The picture was taken in the uniform of the Continental Guards, of which organization Colonel Ball was an honorary member. It has been said the first president took his features from his mother's family. Colonel Ball was a descendant of that side of the Washington house, and undoubtedly derived his fine characteristic face from the same blood source.

Shortly before his death Colonel Ball told the history of his life in his characteristic way, in which he said: "I was born at Ball's Bluff, near Leesburg, Loudoun county, Va., and lived on a farm with my mother until I was 24 years old, at which time I came to Washington. I became a clerk in the dry goods store of

Bradley & Catlett on Market Space, remained here a short time and then went to Missouri, where I spent six of the happiest years of my life. After that I was seized with the 'gold fever' and fitted up five wagons, with five yokes of oxen to each wagon and taking several boys with me, who had been entrusted to my care by their parents, we started out for the gold fields.

Fighting with the Indians. "I never reached the gold land, but stopped in Oregon, then mostly peopled by Indians. I went with the first company into the Rogue river valley and pitched my tent on Jackson creek, where the town of Jackson now stands. The valley was swarming with hostile Indians and we had to fight every inch of our way. One night beacons were blazed upon every hilltop throughout that region. It was the signal for the Rogue river war to commence and the fighting covered over 1,000 miles of territory. That first night found us in a bad plight, for we had bartered away most of our guns and powder to the Indians. One of our companions volunteered, however, to run the blockade to the nearest town to bring relief. He secured aid and we were saved. I was in the war until it was closed and was employed in the 'Selkay reservation,' to which the Indians were removed.

"Then I started in the provision trade and made a great deal of money about the time of the civil war, but did not engage on either side. My mother needed my aid and protection. The war left me a ruined man, both the union and confederate armies making frequent raids upon my property, for which I received no compensation. Consequently I was ruined and came to Washington, engaged in the butter business, and failed. I tried to get the position of guardian of the Washington monument with the endorsement of General Fitzhugh Lee and seventeen members of congress, but failed. I next tried for a position as watchman in the pension office, but there was no vacancy. I had nothing to depend upon but the kindness of Commissioner Black authorized me to establish the cigar stand."

Colonel Ball died a bachelor and being asked why he never married justly told the following quaint tale: "In my young days, before I left Virginia, I was accustomed to travel over the hills to see a pretty damsel. I went often, and the oftener I went the more I became convinced that I needed a wife. I was exceedingly shy about announcing my intentions, and, in fact, decided to try a bird flying overhead at the time. By this means he taught the names of animals and objects, and at the same time learned the Indian language. Another story of which he was fond and that seemed more vivid to his mind than most of the others was his remembrance of seeing Lafayette when the great general made his last visit to this country.

There was no doubt about his genealogy, for the sons of the American Revolution made a thorough investigation of it, and being perfectly satisfied, made him a life member of their society, without payment of dues or other expense. This is the only time such a thing has been done by the society. In speaking of Colonel Ball an official of the pension office said: "He was a fine old gentleman of great dignity and reserve, and even those passing through the building for the first time would comment upon his striking likeness to George Washington. This compliment he always received with great pride. It was always said he should have been handsomely pensioned by the government, as being, with George Washington Ball of Georgetown, the nearest remaining relative of the great general, but we men about the office never heard him express any ill-feeling in the matter, and he always maintained a quiet dignity when others did so. "He took a pride in his pedigree and being denied the means of supporting it appropriately, he went about making the most of things in a sensible manner. His photograph was frequently asked for, so he conceived the idea of selling it along with other souvenirs, and to each picture he attached a printed family history and his autobiography."

WHO BROKE HIS NOSE?

Odd Case that is Reported by a New Orleans Surgeon.

"What was the strangest case I ever had" said one of the surgeons at the attendance at the late convention, repeating the question of a reporter with whom he was chatting, according to the New Orleans Times-Democrat. "Well, let me see. I believe the odddest incident of my career occurred in the Spanish West Indies, the Masonic order held, on second thought I don't care to give any names or dates. The facts, if you like, were these: I was called by messenger to a cheap boarding house one evening to attend a man who was said to have been hurt in a fight. I found a young fellow of 25 or thereabouts, half dazed, with a bloody contusion one of his cheeks and a badly broken nose. The bridge was smashed almost flat with the face, and I saw at once that the case would need very careful handling to prevent great disfigurement. Not to bother you with technical details, I confined myself that night to a superficial dressing and deferred further proceedings until the next day. When I called the following morning the man had gone home, but his senses, and although his clothes were washed and all his surroundings poor and mean it was evident from his hands, talk and bearing that he had never done any hard work and was a person of education and refinement. I took him for the black sheep of some good family, but made no comments, and explained briefly that I would try to restore his nose as far as possible by performing a slight operation and inserting an artificial support. To my astonishment he objected flatly, and insisted on letting it heal exactly as it was. "But you will be frightfully disfigured," I protested; "I doubt if your best friends would recognize you." Strange to say, that assurance seemed to render him only the firmer, and I was compelled to let him have his way. It was nearly three weeks before he was well, and, as I anticipated, he looked exactly like some battered bruiser of the prize ring. I never saw the man again, but six months later I was shown the photograph of a handsome young chap who was badly wanted for a big embezzlement. I put my finger over the nose and recognized my late patient. He had walked aboard ship right under the eyes of the detectives and sailed for the Argentine Republic. They had his photo, but never dreamed of connecting it with the cavendish countenance of that particular passenger. "Did he get somebody to break his nose on purpose?" asked the reporter. "I never ascertained," said the surgeon.

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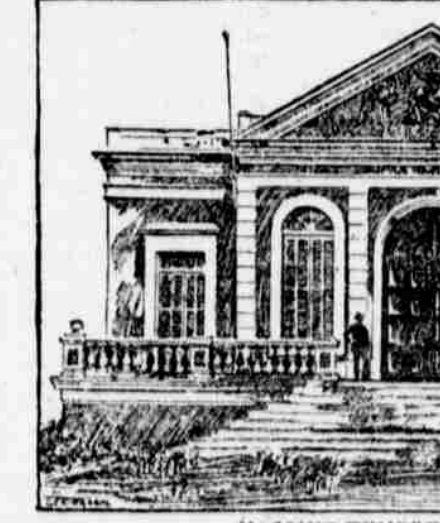
UNCLE SAM'S UNHAPPY ISLE

Some Features of Life in Porto Rico that Attract Attention.

MASONIC TEMPLE IN THE COFFEE BELT

Only Building of the Kind in West Indies—Richest Young Man on Island—Fair Students of English Language.

The Masonic temple at Yauco, Porto Rico, which stands alongside the road between the town and the railroad station, is the only structure ever built by the order in all Spanish America. Yauco is in the heart of the coffee belt, twenty miles from Ponce. The temple was begun in 1890 and finished in 1895. The ground plan is nearly square. It is built of brick and masonry in Porto Rico style, and has little to give it distinction save the Masonic emblems to be seen over the main entrance. It was never occupied as a Masonic meeting place prior



MASONIC TEMPLE, YAUCO, PORTO RICO.

to American occupation, however, because of the intense prejudice against Free Masonry on the part of the authorities. Indeed, in Porto Rico, as elsewhere in the Spanish West Indies, the Masonic order had a pretty hard time to get along at all before 1898. It was not only forbidden to the Masons to build, but their meetings were virtually proscribed. In consequence hardly a lodge, either in Porto Rico or Cuba, had a regular meeting place or was able to meet at regular intervals. In Havana lodge meetings were held in obscure, often deserted buildings, but rarely twice consecutively in the same place, and this was the procedure also in some of the other cities. In many cases, however, it was found necessary to hold the meetings outside the towns; not infrequently the Masons were obliged to find gathering places in the woods, and even then they were sometimes broken up, so thoroughly anti-Masonic were the sentiments of those in power.

How It Was Saved.

The building of the Yauco temple created much excitement in Porto Rico and there isn't the slightest doubt that it would have been destroyed either by order of the government or at least by its knowledge and acquiescence, had it not been for the efforts to preserve it put forth by the French and German consuls stationed at Ponce. They repeatedly made representations to the effect that the Masons were in high favor with their home governments, and that, while official toleration of the order would not be asked in the circumstances, they felt that they must protest against destruction

of the building. Several of the coffee planters of foreign birth joined in the protest and thus the building was preserved. Notwithstanding the difficulties with which Masonry was confronted under the Spanish regime, a pretty fair organization, including a grand lodge, was kept up in both Porto Rico and Cuba. The order is now reported to be in very flourishing condition in both islands.

An interesting feature of life in Porto Rico is furnished by the civil guard. It was organized immediately after the American occupation, and most of its members were drawn from the ranks of those who had formerly been in the service of Spain, in the volunteer force, in the insular police and in the army itself. Some of them were of nearly pure negro blood, others were of mixed descent, but some were Spaniards and of peninsular nativity. For a long time after the transfer they wore the same uniforms they had worn in the Spanish service, but United States army hats were supplied to them at the very first. They were organized by General Henry at the beginning of his Porto Rican service, with headquarters at San Juan under a general chief, and subheadquarters at other cities, each under a captain. Though they were thoroughly loyal to Spain while in the employ of its govern-

ment, they have been loyal to the United States since the occupation, and have done excellent service in the main. The squad shown in the picture was photographed for this article at Santa Ysabel, a town on the shore road between Ponce and Guayama.

A Man with a Pile.

The richest young man in all Porto Rico is Senator Para of Ponce. He is under 30, slender and unusually tall for a Porto Rican. Curiously enough, in personal appearance he resembles John Jacob Astor not a little. Senator Para, with his father, who is still living, is interested in many business enterprises in Ponce and elsewhere, the bulk of the family investments, like those of the Astors, being in city real estate. In fact, they are understood to be the most extensive landholders in Ponce. Naturally, the Para family, which includes several daughters, is prominent in Ponce society and the Para residence, a large and handsome structure, is familiar to many Americans of the army and otherwise.

Like the sons of most wealthy Porto Ricans, the younger Para was educated largely in the United States and has spent much time in New York. Thus he has acquired many American tastes and might readily pass for a citizen of this country, though he would doubtless be thought of foreign descent. He speaks English fluently, with just the slightest accent; he is democratic in his friendships and he is devoted to many sports, especially racing and shooting. He is very fond of dogs and he owns the best stocked kennel on the island. He would be considered a well dressed man in any

American city. Senator Para and all his friends were very friendly to the Americans at the beginning of the occupation and were prominent in the movement for the general study of the English language which was speedily inaugurated.



RICHEST MAN IN PORTO RICO.

urated. The first class organized for that purpose in Ponce was made up of the young society women shown in the group picture accompanying this article. It is made from a photograph taken at one of the earlier meetings of the class.

MATHEMATICAL PRODIGY.

Solves Difficult Problems with Ease. Just Can't Tell How.

Though not yet 15 years of age Master James E. Fox of New York before a committee of four proved himself a wonderful mathematical prodigy. The skill he displayed in his answers, says the New York Herald, shows him to possess a faculty for solving difficult problems in mathematics under the most trying circumstances. His answers came without the least hesitation and aroused the curiosity of the witnesses, who tried in every way to catch and puzzle him. Born in Fair Haven, Vt., he is one of seven children, five girls and two boys. At the age of 5 he displayed a marked degree of ability and his father sent him to school. While the boy was at home one day with a crowd of small children his father asked him to multiply two sums of three figures each. To their surprise he gave the correct answer without the use of pencil and paper. This led his father to encourage him in other mental feats in mathematics. Before long he became very proficient. Now, when a long column of three figures is repeated to him he will give the total sum in two or three seconds. When in his eleventh year he was asked by the Teachers' Institute in Fair Haven to stand such tests as might be prepared for him to the wonder and surprise of the teachers he answered oft-hand problems in mathematics that took many of them a long time to solve on paper. Young Fox says he cannot exactly explain how he performs these feats. It is second nature to him. Several of the witnesses on Tuesday wanted to know if he employed

a system. He knew of no such thing. The first problem given to him was "12-100 divided by 1/2 multiplied by 15 equals?" This was read to him from a slip of paper while he stood on the other side of the room. He answered 14-25 in the very next instant without the least sign of hesitating. The next was to divide 3.24 by 12. The answer came as promptly as before. Then one of the gentlemen present tried to mix him up by asking him to subtract 1,927 from 2,578 and add 5,762. The last figure had hardly been spoken when he replied, 7,411.

Still thinking they could catch him, he was sent out in the hall while fourteen sums of three figures each were put down on paper and added. A mistake was purposefully made in the addition. He was then called in and the amounts called off to him. It took him about four seconds to give the correct answer. They told him he was wrong and showed him the total they had placed at the foot of the column. To their surprise he calmly remarked: "Gentlemen, I guess you have made the mistake. Just go over it once more and see." For over an hour they tried to give him a problem that would puzzle him, but without any success. At last they gave it up. The prodigy attended school up to last year, and had he continued he would have been graduated this term. He is an ambitious little chap, and he persuaded his father to let him come to New York. Last August, through some friends, he obtained a place as office boy in a steamship office. Wall street bankers have met him and wondered at his remarkable demonstrations.

Farm Stocks of Grain.

The consolidation of local returns to the American Agriculturist makes it appear that the amount of wheat still remaining on farms in the United States March 1 equals 29 per cent of the crop of 1899, or an aggregate of 164,000,000 bushels, compared with 204,000,000 bushels similarly reported last year; but with that exception is the largest since March 1, 1894. The present distributive demand exceeds 2,000,000,000 bushels per annum, including domestic consumption and exports. The March 1 farm stocks of oats, following the excellent crop of 1899, are the largest ever reported, except in 1896, but the excess over the stocks thus held last year is only about 10 per cent. These farm reserves are estimated at 832,000,000 bushels, or 37 per cent of the crop.

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