Senator Cullom Says Uncle Sam Leads the Nations

(Copyright, 1904, by Frank G. Carpenter.)

CHICAGO, Sept. 8.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee)—It was in a big hotel on the shores of Lake Michigan that I chatted last night with Senator Shelby M. Cullom about Uncle Sam as an international quantity. Senator Cullom has had much to do with the growth of this country. Born in a log cabin in Kentucky, he came in a canvas-covered wagon to Illinois when its prairies were little more than a wilderness. He took part in the campaign which made Abraham Lincoln president, and had been elected to congress when Lincoln was assassinated. Since 1865 he has been in public life, and much of the time in the house of representatives and the United States senate, where he has been prominent in international affairs. He is today the chairman of the foreign relations committee of the senate, and as such is the head of the congressional branch of our treaty-making power.

"Uncle Sam is bigger as an international quantity than he has ever been," said Senator Cullom. "He has grown to be a giant within the past few years. The world powers now realize that he is their equal, and it may be said that he is at the head of the procession."

"When did this come about, senator?" I asked.

"Our big growth began during our war with Spain," said Senator Cullom. "Before that the great European nations rather looked down upon us as a secondary force in the world of politics. They considered us a nation of smart traders—fresh, green, and exceedingly boastful. They talked of us as worshippers of the dollar, and appeared to think we would not fight, and could not if we would. They disparaged our navy and laughed at our little army as compared with their gigantic military machines. The war showed them that our gunners knew how to shoot, that we understood how to handle our ships, and that our army was not restricted by the numbers in the ranks. They learned that every American citizen makes good soldier timber, and that the American national spirit is not affected by the American pocketbook. Our easy success in that war astounded them, and they began to respect Uncle Sam. They increased that respect when, with John Hay as secretary of state, we put ourselves at the front in settling the Chinese trouble which followed, and they now regard us as one of the biggest factors in every world problem. Our opinion is asked before any settled policy is promulgated—I might even say before it is formed."

"Did the United States really do much as to the Chinese settlement, senator?"

"It did everything," was the reply. "Had it not been for our government China would now be divided up among the great nations of Europe. Such a division was contemplated and Germany, England and Russia had each taken a foothold, when Secretary Hay said that the international policy should be the 'open door;' that is, that China should be independent and free to the trade of all nations. After that the other powers fell into line and advocated the same policy. The comparatively easy terms of peace which China secured were largely due to the United States, and today the fact that that country is not the fighting ground of the war between Japan and Russia is due to the masterly state papers of John Hay. We have also opened up China to trade as never before. By our new treaty the local taxes on goods from station to station throughout the empire have been abolished, new treaty ports have been thrown open and on the whole China has been made a free trading field for the world."

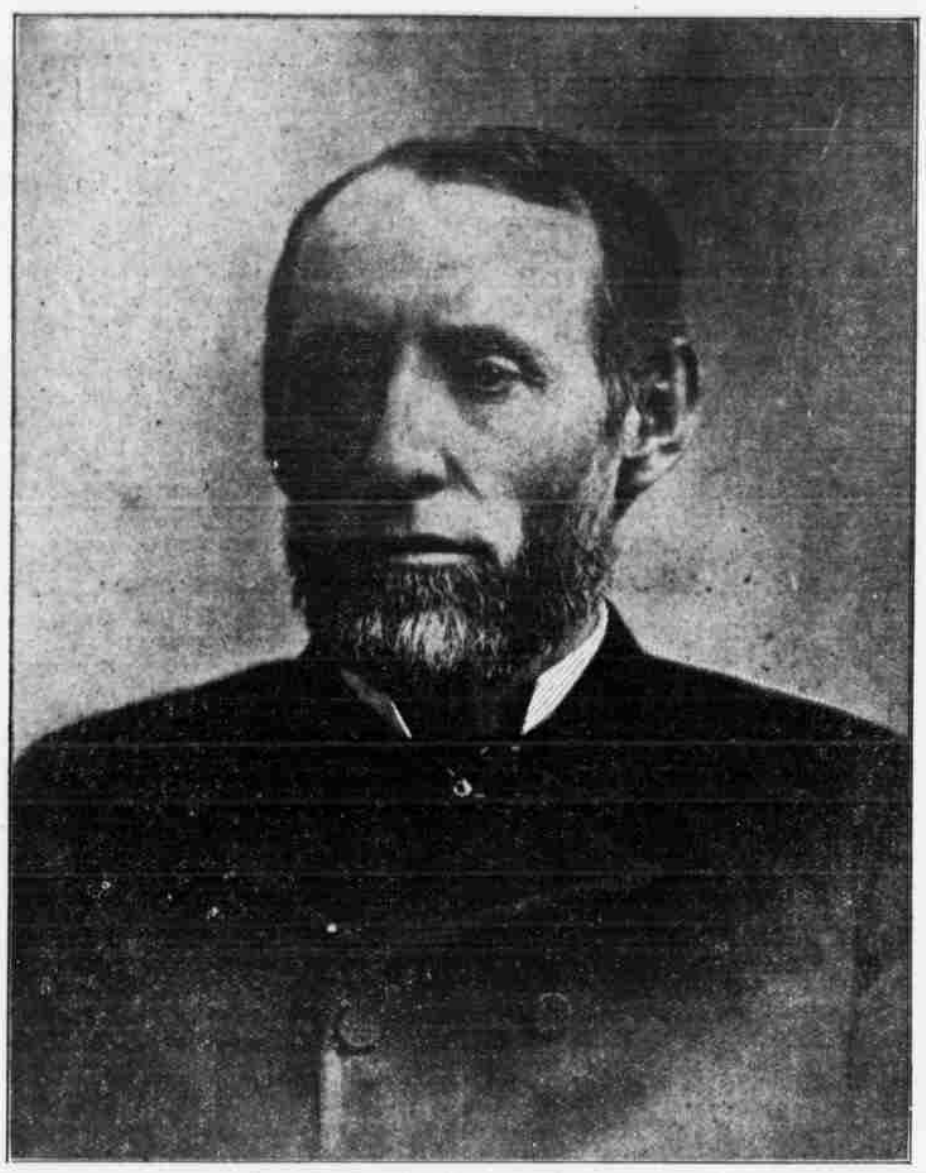
"You seem to give Secretary Hay all the credit for that work, senator."

"I do," replied Senator Cullom. "Others have helped carry out his ideas, but his is the master mind as far as our diplomatic relations and successes are concerned. I consider Mr. Hay a very great man. He is the greatest secretary of state this country has ever had. He has statesmanlike ability of the highest order allied to sterling courage and the genius of common sense. He is experienced in dealing with foreigners and with nations. He is a man of letters and speaks the foreign languages fluently. He is cool, conservative and at the same time bold and quick to act. No, I don't think we have ever had so great a secretary of state. The whole world acknowledges his ability."

"How long have you known Secretary Hay?"

"All his life," was the reply. "He comes from my state, having been born at Warsaw, in the western part, on the Mississippi river. His uncle, Milton Hay, was my law partner, and I knew his father very well. He was a doctor and a man of ability. I remember he once introduced me when I spoke in Warsaw. His introduction was longer than my speech, but it was good, nevertheless.

"My first close association with John Hay was when he entered my office in Springfield to study law. He had been to school at the Academy in Springfield and had then gone east to Brown university, where he graduated. Our firm was that of Hay & Cullom, and John came into the office largely on account of my partner, his uncle Milton Hay. This was just before the war when John was 18 or 19 years old."



SENATOR SHELBY M. CULLOM.

"What kind of a law student was he, senator?" I asked.

"He was very bright," said Senator Cullom. "He had not been in the office six weeks before we could tell him what we wanted in the way of papers, and he would go off and draw them up. He could draw up a bill in chancery, and, in fact, almost any kind of a paper. We had other students who could never learn."

"It must have been then that Hay became acquainted with Lincoln?" said I.

"Yes, although I suppose Lincoln must have known Hay's father and may have known him as a boy. Lincoln was a great friend of Milton Hay, and he was frequently in our office. When Lincoln was elected president he made John Hay one of his secretaries, and he then began that diplomatic training which is so valuable to him today."

"Did you have anything to do with the appointment of Colonel Hay as minister to England?"

"I have always had a high opinion of Hay's diplomatic ability," replied Senator Cullom, "and when McKinley was elected I wrote a letter, without solicitation on the part of Hay or any one else, advising the president to give Hay the mission to England. He got the appointment, but I cannot say that my letter was the cause of that. When John Sherman had left the State department and Secretary Day was about to be elevated to the supreme court I again wrote McKinley, advising him to call John Hay home and make him secretary of state. In my letter I put forth his peculiar fitness for the position, saying that he could handle the foreign powers better than any other man living, and could fill the place as well as one man in the country. McKinley was then considering both Hay and Whitelaw Reid. There were many influences at work, but Hay was chosen, and I don't think that McKinley regretted it."

The conversation here took a foreign turn and I asked the senator whether he was satisfied as to what had been done as to Cuba. He replied:

"I think that island is being greatly benefited by its association with us and that the United States should be congratulated on its connection with it. We have through our treaties secured its independence and at the same time made it practically a dependency of the United States. By those treaties Cuba cannot enter into any questionable or entangling alliances with foreign powers; it cannot go into debt beyond its ability to easily pay, and its situation is such that sooner or later it must become even more closely associated with the United States than it is now. It may be that it will one day ask to be annexed to the union."

"How does Cuba get along governing itself?"

"Very well, so far," replied Senator Cullom. "Estrada Palma, the president, is an able man and he can control the people. He is a strong friend of the United States, having lived for some time in this country. I can't say what will be the status of the island when he passes away."

"How is the country prospering?"

"It is growing very rapidly, as far as new industries and the development of its resources are concerned. Many Americans are investing in Cuban lands and in other properties of all sorts. Sir William Van Horne, the head of the Canadian Pacific railroad, who got his railroad education in the United States, is now building a railroad from one end of the island to the other. This will open up much country which has heretofore been inaccessible."

"What is the condition of Porto Rico?"

"I think it steadily grows better," replied Senator Cullom. "Porto Rico is a valuable island, although by no means so rich as Cuba. Cuba is one of the most fertile spots on the globe. The Porto Ricans are easily governed. We have established schools everywhere there, and I believe that the island will eventually be one of our most desirable possessions."

"How about Santo Domingo, senator? Will we not have to take that island to keep the people in order?"

"I hope not," replied the senator. "At least not until they have had enough wars to wipe out the turbulent elements among the islanders. I think we have our hands full as it is."

"Are you satisfied with the conditions of the Philippines?"

"Yes; the Philippines are doing very well now and they will become much more valuable as time goes on. The people are fast recovering from the war, and we may expect a continued peace."

"Do you think Canada will ever be a part of the United States, Senator Cullom?" I asked.

"I used to hope so, and that the time would come soon. It may still come, but it seems to me that it is farther away now than it was twenty years ago. The British provinces north of us have become united since then, and a greater love for the mother country and the king has sprung up."

"How about the great northwest, where so many Americans are emigrating? Will those American settlers not create a proannexation sentiment?"

"It may be so, and I should like it so. I should like to see the United States extend northward in one great block to the Arctic ocean."

"Yes, and southward to the Panama canal?" said I.

"I don't know about that," replied the chairman of the foreign relations committee, "although our destiny now seems to point that way. Americans by hundreds are investing in Mexico. They own mines, railroads and lands. They have property in Central America, and now we have acquired that ten-mile strip across the Isthmus of Panama and are to build a great canal through it costing hundreds of millions of dollars. All that indicates the Americanization of this continent, and I don't know that I like it. I don't want to see our country grow so big that it will be unwieldy, nor to overload it with races different from ours. As to the Canadians, we could easily assimilate them, for they are Anglo-Saxons, as we are, but the races to the south are Latins, and the Latin races do not mix with ours so well. Indeed I doubt if it would be wise to acquire those countries with the idea of their eventually becoming states of this union."

"What do you think of the Panama canal, senator?"

"There is only one way to look at it, and that is as one of the most important undertakings of the century. It is now a fixed fact, and within eight years it may be completed. We shall have about 20,000 men at work there within a few weeks."

"Do you apprehend more trouble as to the Monroe doctrine?"

"I do not. The Germans and the English both acknowledge it, and it will become more firmly established as time goes on."

"What do you think of the Perdicaris incident, senator? I mean the American citizen that the Moroccan brigands recently captured and held until he was ransomed."

"I don't like it and I do not approve of our method of yielding to such matters. The great powers ought not to be at the mercy of the forty thieves who act as brigand chiefs in the Mohammedan regions of Africa and Asia. If their governments cannot restrain them, if they cannot protect their own citizens and their foreign residents, they ought to be wiped out. Such things are an outrage in these days of the twentieth century civilization. It may be that our action as to Miss Stone gave us the reputation of being easy to work, and that the stealing of Perdicaris was a repetition of it. I don't know. I am sure, however, that such actions should be prevented and that their perpetrators should be made examples for the world to see."

"I should like to see Morocco cleaned up," continued Senator Cullom. "That whole North African country was for years a den of pirates which preyed upon the commerce of Europe. We had a war with them as far back as 1801 because we would not pay the tribute they wanted, and in 1815 Commodore Decatur brought the Dey of Algiers to his knees by threatening to blow his city to ruins if he made any further demands on American vessels. Indeed, the United States was the first to bring the robbers in North Africa to time."

I here referred to Senator Cullom's early law practice when John Hay was one of his students, and asked him if he had ever regretted leaving the law for politics. He replied:

"I can't say that I have. My political career has brought me into the swim of public affairs and I have been a part, greater or less, of our history for the past forty years. I have liked the life and its struggles—the ability to do things and to be a part of things. I have been able to accomplish something for my friends, and a little, I hope, for my country. And still I have had to pay well for this, in that I am a poor man today! Had I stuck to the law I should probably be rich. The year before I came to congress Milton Hay and I each made $30,000 out of our practice; and the money came so easily that I never thought it would not always be so. When I gave up the law, however, I dropped my practice, and I have been engaged in politics from that time until now."

"How did you come to enter politics, Senator Cullom?"

"It was largely through Abraham Lincoln. He was my ideal hero and the friend of my boyhood. When he was elected as president I had a desire to go into congress, and the night before he left Springfield to be inaugurated, I told him: 'Mr. President, I want to come to Washington before you leave.' Lincoln's eyes laughed as I used the words 'Mr. President.' I was then the young speaker of the Illinois legislature, and he replied, emphasizing the formal mode of address: 'Mr. Speaker, I hope you will.'

"It was then that I began to scheme to go to Washington, and soon after that I was elected to congress. Lincoln, however, warned me not to make politics my life work, telling me that it would not pay. I disregarded his warning, and I soon got in so deep that I could not get out."

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Up Against It

Six weeks had elapsed since the American heiress invested in a title.

"Lord Algernon," she said as they sat at the breakfast table, "you're a brick."

"Haw!" exclaimed his lordship. "Is that one of your beastly American jokes?"

"Not on your I O U's," replied Mrs. Lord Algernon; "you are not only a brick, but a gold one at that."—Chicago News.

Away from the Past

"In my plans for your new home," says the architect, "I have provided for a large, ornate frieze in the wall."

"Don't want it," asserts Mr. Conjeeled.

"What?"

"Not a bit of it. Can't take any chances on having someone being reminded that I used to drive an ice wagon."—Judge.