"Old Nick" Longworth

QUAINT HISTORY OF THE MAN WHO FOUNDED THE FORTUNE OF "YOUNG NICK" LONGWORTH WHO IS TO MARRY MISS ALICE ROOSEVELT

RECEPTION HALL, LONGWORTH HOMESTEAD

(FROM A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN THE '80 S)

KRUEGHOFF.

By William J. Lampton.

JUST now everybody is talking about Nicholas Longworth, of Cincinnati, who is to marry the daughter of the President of the United States. Fifty years ago there was another Nicholas Longworth, of Cincinnati, who had come to fame over a much more difficult path. He was "Old Nick" Longworth, as succeeding Nicholases have been "Young Nick" Longworth—as this one is to-day the third of his name, though in reality the fourth, for the grandfather of the Nicholas of this sketch was Nicholas, unknown to fame, albeit a man of parts and a Jersey Justice of the Peace—an office, by the way, similar to that of King's Justice in other colonies.

Squire Longworth had a son Thomas, who married Apphia Vanderpool, an early Dutch woman, and one of their four children was the Nicholas known later in Ohio as "Old Nick," born January 16, 1783, in Newark. Thomas was a Tory, and not being willing to subscribe to the Declaration of Independence, the American Eagle and the Constitution of the United States, made and provided by the success of the Revolution, his property was duly confiscated and he was told to go to England or elsewhere. Whether he obeyed or not the present writer cannot say, but he was left so poor that everybody had to work, including father, and young Nicholas, as he was then, rustled along the best he could until he was old enough to go to South Carolina and take a place in his brother's store. But he was ambitious to become a lawyer, and probably realizing that Ohio was to be a great State some day he went to Cincinnati in 1801 and entered the law office of Judge Jacob Burnet. Later he quit the law for real estate and became a millionnaire and the second largest taxpayer in the United States. In 1807 he married Susan Howell, daughter of Captain Silas Howell, of the New Jersey Continental line. One of his sons, Joseph, was the father of Nicholas, a judge on the Ohio Supreme Bench, who was the father of the present Nicholas, Representative in two Congresses from Cincinnati, and a republican, as his great grandfather was a whig.

Not as having any bearing on the case, but merely as a coincidence, it may be stated here that the old Longworth homestead in Pike street, Cincinnati, was bought some years ago by the late David Sinton, next after Mr. Longworth Cincinnati's richest citizen, and there to-day lives his son-in-law, the Hon. Charles P. Taft, one time representing the Longworth district in Congress, and a half brother of Secretary Taft, with whose party Miss Roosevelt and Mr. Longworth toured the Orient.

So much for introduction. Now for the chronicle of Nicholas Longworth. In a rare old book on Cincinnati, written by Charles Cist, the Queen City's local historian, entitled "Cincinnati in 1851," Mr. Cist, who was a quaint historian and a friendly man, fond of his city and its people, had this to say of that other Nicholas Longworth eighteen years before the present Nicholas was born:—

"Nicholas Longworth, the subject of this memoir, was born in Newark, N. J., on the sixteenth of January, 1783. He came to Cincinnati, which has been his residence ever since, in May, 1804. He engaged at once in reading and studying law in the office of Judge Burnet, then and always the first lawyer in the city in point of ability and standing, and after a briefer space than would now be allowed by the courts was admitted to the Bar. He followed his law practice until 1819, when he left the legal profession to newer or younger members. His earnings and savings had been, during the period alluded to, invested in lands and lots in and adjacent to Cincinnati, under the conviction that no other investment of his funds would prove so profitable. This may seem insufficient to account for the amount of property he has since accumulated from these investments, but it should be remembered that property here was held at low values in early days, many of his city lot purchases having been made for ten dollars or less each.

"It must also be remembered that Mr. L. was a regular lot and land dealer, selling as well as buying, and his profits constantly furnished the means of extending his investments. Nor should it be forgotten that dealing in property in a rising market, which Cincinnati has always afforded, is a business in which all is gain and nothing loss; differing in this respect from ordinary trade, both in the certainty of profit as well as security of its debts, which are always protected by mortgages. As an example of the facility with which small amounts, comparatively, secured what has since become of enormous value, it may be stated that Mr. L. once received as a legal fee from a fellow accused of horse stealing, and who had nothing else to give, two second hand copper stills. These were in charge of Joel Williams, who kept a tavern adjacent to the river, and who was a large property holder here in early days. On presenting his order, Mr. Williams told Mr. Longworth he could not let the stills go, as he was just building a distillery in Butler county, but he would give him a lot of thirty-three acres on Western Row in lieu of the articles. Mr. L., whose view of the value of property here was always in advance of public opinion, gladly closed with the proposal. These thirty-three acres occupied a front on Western Row, from Sixth to Seventh street, running west for quantity, and this transaction alone, taking into view the prodigious advance in real estate here, would of itself have furnished the basis for an immense fortune, the naked ground being now worth nearly two million dollars."

Its Value Grew.

[Note by present writer:—As Mr. Longworth did not die until February 10, 1863, twelve years after Mr. Cist's sketch, he saw his property increase still further in value. Western Row is now Central avenue, but yet some little distance west of the heart of the city. Another little real estate transaction of Mr. Longworth's, which Mr. Cist has overlooked, is worth mentioning. Judge Burnet owned a lot which he called his cow pasture. The young man in his office wanted it so much that he offered to pay $5,000 for it—on time. The Judge, being a fair minded man, tried to dissuade the proposed purchaser from throwing his money, or credit, away on worthless land, but Longworth insisted until he got it. He lived to see the cow pasture worth $1,500,000, considerably more than Judge Burnet ever accumulated.]

"Mr. Longworth went on adding lot to lot, acre to acre, in this mode until, although he has sold more lands and lots than any man in Cincinnati, he is still the largest landholder in the city.

"What Mr. Longworth's property is worth is rather difficult to determine, but as his taxes for 1850 were upward of $17,000, the highest sum paid by any individual in the United States, William W. Astor excepted, whose taxes for the same year were $23,116, the presumption is that there are few individuals of higher reputed wealth in the United States. If, however, he were a man of wealth and nothing more, this notice would not have appeared in these pages.

"Longworth is a problem and a riddle; a problem worthy of the study of those who delight in exploring that labyrinth of all man heart, and a riddle to himself and others. He is a wit and a humorist of a high order; of keen sagacity and shrewdness in many other respects than in money matters; one who can be exact to a dollar and liberal, when he chooses, with thousands; of marked peculiarity and tenacity in his own opinions, and yet of abundant tolerance to the opinions, however, extravagant, of others—a man of great public spirit and sound general judgment. All these things rarely accompany the acquisition and the accumulation of riches.

"In addition to all this, it would be difficult to find an individual of his position and standing so perfectly free from pride—in the ordinary sense. He has absolutely none, unless it be the pride of eccentricity. It is no uncommon thing for men to become rich by the concentration of time and labor and attention to some one object of profitable employment. This is the ordinary phase of money getting, as closing the ear and pocket to applications for aid is that of money saving. Longworth has become a rich man on a different principle. He appears to have started upon the calculation that if he could put any individual in the way of making a dollar for Longworth and a dollar for himself at the same time, by aiding him with ground for a lot, or in building him a house on it—and if, moreover, he could multiply cases of the kind by hundreds, or perhaps thousands, he could promote his own interests just in the same measure as he was advancing others. At the same time he could not be unconscious that while their half was subdivided into small possessions owned by a thousand or more individuals, his half was a vast, a boundless aggregate, since it was the property of one man alone. The event has done justice to his sagacity. Hundreds, if not thousands, in and adjacent to Cincinnati now own houses and lots and many have become wealthy who would in all probability have lived and died tenants under a different state of case. Had not Mr. Longworth adopted this course he would have occupied that relation to society which many wealthy men now sustain—to wit, that of getting all they can and keeping all they get. There are men, even in Cincinnati, who do not deserve the very ground which forms their resting place.

He'd Soon Be Poor

"Every man of extensive means who does not give freely to every object to which that disinterested individual, the public, thinks he ought to contribute, is, of course, branded as penurious, or at least destitute of liberality of spirit. It would be impossible for Nicholas Longworth to form an exception to this rule, since it is one of the very few general rules that have no exceptions. If Mr. Longworth were to contribute to every application made here it would leave him as poor a man as the most necessitous applicant at his door. Mr. Longworth has his own views and his own ways as regards relief of and assistance to the necessitous. That he is governed by conscientious motives no one ought to doubt who learns, as he easily may, that Mr. Longworth is a supernumerary township trustee whose office is crowded at regular hours with twenty, thirty, forty or fifty miserable objects, whose cases he examines into and disposes of at a cost of time and patience which most men would ordinarily not submit to. Relief is then provided for on a system which protects itself from being made a means of fostering idleness or mendicity. All this is done obviously on principle, since he must be a loser pecuniarly as well as in precious time by such a course.

"Many instances might be cited to show that Mr. Longworth is, for a rich man, an uncommonly liberal one. I shall refer to the observatory case alone. Mr. Longworth, on application to him to know whether he would part with the Mount Adams property for an observatory and on what terms, promptly made a donation of the ground, four acres in extent, for that purpose. After the building had been erected an assertion was made in one of our city papers—as Mr. Longworth believed and charged in his reply by an individual who had property equally suitable for the purpose—that Longworth was governed by interested motives, the value of Mr. Longworth's property contiguous being enhanced by that improvement. Every intelligent person who read the article must have felt that an imputation of the kind in this case was supremely ridiculous, but Mr. Longworth was piqued, and in his own caustic language retorted with an offer that, if the individual who wrote that piece would deed the same quantity of ground for an observatory, he would himself put up a building equal to that which had been erected on Mount Adams, and appropriate the spot thus vacated for promenade grounds for the benefit forever of the citizens of Cincinnati. In this way he suggested to the writer that he might appropriate to himself all the benefits which such an improvement would secure to his adjacent property and at the same time be the means of conferring a lasting benefit on the citizens of Cincinnati. No reply was made, and perhaps had not been expected.

"If the fact that a community has been made the better or worse by an individual having lived in it be, as a standard writer considers it, an unerring test of the general character of that individual, there is no hazard in saying that Cincinnati is the better off for Nicholas Longworth having been an influential citizen of this community, and that, putting him to the test, he has fulfilled his mission upon earth—not, indeed, as fully as he might have done, but perhaps as fully as any one would have done who might have stood in his shoes.

Work for the Grape.

"Nor ought it to be forgotten that by Mr. Longworth's labors in the introduction of the grape and improved cultivation of the strawberry, on which objects he has spent thousands of dollars, he has made these fruits accessible to the means of purchase of every man, even the humblest among us. How much more manly and spirited is this than tempting the poor man with the sight of luxuries he may look at, but can never expect to taste.

[Note.—Mr. Longworth was an agricultural enthusiast, and as soon as he quit the active practice of the law he went into grape growing. He began on two hundred acres of ground with foreign varieties and lost money right along until 1828, when he tried the Catawba, a grape discovered on the Catawba River, North Carolina, in 1801. This, with the Isabella grape, changed his luck, and for many years the Longworth wines had almost international popularity and consumption and the Longworth wine cellars were one of Cincinnati's sights. The strawberry called forth a book on their culture, and the "Longworth Prolific" was at one time the crack berry of the markets. The strawberry crop around Cincinnati in 1851 was about 9,000 bushels, and Mr. Cist says, "No year is known in which strawberries have averaged as high as ten cents a quart—when abundant they bring 5 to 6¼ cents and occasionally fall to from 3 to 4 cents." Certainly this is not tempting the poor man with luxuries he may look at but never taste.]

"Mr. Longworth is a ready and racy writer, whose vein of thinking and expression is always rich and who blends pleasantry with grave arguments and earnest purpose. His writings on the strawberry and the grape and his various contributions to the press abound with examples of this kind, recognizable here as his at a single glance. His bon-mots and his quizzicalities are like his own sparkling champagne, brilliant and evanescent. Few of these can be referred to on the spur of this occasion; two or three, however, may suffice as a sample, even if inferior to the average. They are taken from 'Cist's Advertiser,' the editor of which relates them upon his own knowledge.

"During the war with Mexico one of our city dailies stated that Mr. Longworth had offered a contribution of $10,000 as advance pay and equipment of the Ohio volunteers, a large number of whom were from Cincinnati—a difficulty having arisen as to the State of Ohio furnishing the necessary advances. I was somewhat surprised at this, believing Mr. Longworth no friend to the war with Mexico, and when I next met him congratulated him on his public spirit, referring at the same time to the statement in the journals. 'Not a word of it true; not a word of it true,' observed Mr. Longworth. 'I might have said, and I believe I did say, that I would give $10,000 as a contribution to a regiment of volunteers, but it was on one condition—on the express contingency that I should have the picking out who among our citizens should go, and I believe I would make money by the offer yet, but recollect, I am to have the say who are to go.'

"While the Presidential struggle of 1844 was raging Mr. Longworth was applied to for a contribution of $100 for campaign expenses. 'Don't know whether I shall give a cent,' he said. 'I never give something for nothing. We might fail to elect Clay, as we did before, and I should fling away the hundred dollars.' The applicant, a president of one of our banks, assured him there was no doubt of Mr. Clay's election—there could be none. 'Well,' said Longworth, 'I can tell you what I will do. I will give you the hundred dollars; but mind, you shall be personally responsible to me for its return if Clay is not elected.' The politician, finding he could make no better bargain, and never dreaming of defeat, acceded to these terms. The funds all went into the common purse, and when the hundred dollars had to be made good the banker had to pay the amount out of his own pocket—multa gemens.

"The other day I had occasion to make up a contribution to relieve the wants of a destitute but deserving widow residing in the Sixth ward. Among other persons I applied to Longworth. 'Who is she? Do you know her? Is she a deserving object?' I assured him that she was. I had good reason, I said, to believe that she bore an excellent character and was doing all in her power to support a large family of small children. 'Very well, then,' said Mr. Longworth, 'I shan't give a cent. Such persons will always find plenty to relieve them. I shall assist none but the idle, drunken, worthless vagabonds that nobody else will help. If you meet with such cases call upon me.' That this was not a mere pretence I find in the success of an application made here in behalf of the Mormons after they had been driven from Illinois. A committee of that people visited Cincinnati and applied to a friend of mine, who said he had no money to give, but wrote a note to Mr. Longworth, in which he stated that he had sent them to him as having a claim on him, they not being Christians. Mr. Longworth gave them accordingly $10." [Note—"The devil's poor" Mr. Longworth called the kind he helped.]

Thus endeth the Cist chronicle of fifty-four years ago, and twelve years later ended the subject of it. He left a fortune estimated at $15,000,000, and nobody ever said any of it was tainted money, although there were good and pious Cincinnatians who said if "Old Nick" hadn't gone to meet his namesake the harmony of the hereafter would be out of tune.

THE LONGWORTH HOMESTEAD IN CINCINNATI.

MRS SUSAN LONGWORTH

OBSERVATORY FOR WHICH MR. LONGWORTH SR. DONATED FOUR ACRES OF GROUND.

Romance of the Ring in History.

RINGS are perhaps the oldest form of personal adornment, coming next to beads in antiquity. Originally they were used not only to adorn the hand but to call attention to the shape of the nostrils by hanging from the nose. Though the Egyptian princesses have lain in their tombs adorned with rings for thousands of years, in a time previous to this the ring was not an article of decoration but was used in the place of money. After the ancient days of barter, the Egyptians saw that some form of money would be convenient and chose the ring—a bar of metal bent into the form of a circle, but not quite joined, so that it could be easily formed into a chain which would lengthen or shorten as the owner paid out or received his ring money. Soon these rings of gold and silver were used for personal adornment.

Ring money is still used in parts of Africa, having descended from the time of the Pharaohs. Other countries also used this form of money, and the gold torques worn around the necks of the Gallic warriors must have been highly valuable, for they sometimes weighed four pounds. The names and titles were engraved upon the earliest Egyptian rings, and poor people often wore rings of glass or pottery if they could afford no better. The Etruscans were great admirers of the ring and often decorated it with the sacred scarabaeus. The Egyptian ladies were fond of the decoration of the cat, emblem of the Goddess Bast, the Egyptian Diana. Besides being worn on the hand or in the nose, the ring has been an adornment for ears, legs, neck, toes and arms. The book of Genesis tells us that a ring was placed upon the hand of Joseph as a sign of rank.

The people of Italy were the first to use the ring as a sign for betrothal, as it is the stone of concord and signifies faith and purity. The early rings were "gimmel," or twin rings, and when used for an engagement were separated, each of the lovers wearing one of the hoops. The rings used by Luther when he wed the nun Catherine von Bora are still in existence. They are of silver, with Luther and his wife's names and the date engraved on the inside in Latin. The design represents Christ's passion, a cross, rope, ladder, leaf of hyssop, spears, &c. The Duke of Hamilton, being in great haste, was married to his bride with a curtain ring. The tiniest wedding ring ever used was that handed by Cardinal Wolsey upon the marriage of Henry VIII.'s daughter Mary, aged two, to the Dauphin of France, aged eight months. The Doge of Venice had a curious use for the ring. Every Ascension Day he stood on the deck of the ship Becantur and cast a ring into the sea to show that as a wife is subject to her husband so the Adriatic was subject to the Venetian Republic.

Rings have great importance in various religions. The Pope has two rings which descend from one Pope to another. One is used for sealing decrees and the others is for state occasions, being a beautiful cameo of the head of Christ. The Greek Church was the first to decree the use of the ring on the third finger of the right hand in the marriage ceremony. Later this was changed to the finger where it is now worn because a nerve from that finger leads directly to the heart.

A gruesome ornament was the mourning ring of a hundred years ago. It was no uncommon thing for persons to leave sums of money which were to be expended in such rings for their bereaved friends. Washington left several to women relatives and friends as "mementos of esteem." At one time it was the fashion to set a human tooth in a ring in place of a jewel. A French scholar wore a tooth of Voltaire's in such a setting for a long time.

The Romans took kindly to the wearing of rings, and have left behind some very beautiful specimens of these ornaments. Probably the fashion became known to them at the time they stole the Sabine women, for the hands of these ladies were ornamented with them, and the new decoration pleased their captors. Their signet rings, like those of the Lacedemonians, were made of iron. The early ambassadors of Rome wore gold rings as a part of their official dress. Sometimes portraits of their friends or ancestors were engraved upon them, sometimes mythological or religious characters. These were exceedingly beautiful, for the engraving both on gold and stones was much more exquisitely done than it is at the present day.

During the ages when all kinds of superstitions were credited, various rings were thought to have magic power. Some were blessed by the sovereign at high mass and were given to those afflicted with disease as a cure. The bachelor's ring was given to those afflicted with St. Vitus' dance, a disease which was considered an affliction of the devil and not a physical trouble. The ring was made from six crooked sixpences, each of which was donated by a bachelor and welded together by a blacksmith. We have all heard of the poisoned ring, with its hollow needle beneath the bezel, which was operated by a hidden spring when shaking hands with the victim. These are still in use in remote parts of India.

The custom of using a ring for marriage and betrothal was practised by the Jews and was in vogue long before the time of Christ. A very old Norse saga describes the imposing of an oath or pledge. He by whom it was pledged passed his hand through a silver ring. In Iceland the betrothal custom consisted of the man's putting his thumb and four fingers through a large ring and thus clasping the hand of the bride to be. In Orkney the man and woman used to plight their troth by clasping hands through the perforated stone of Odin.

Importation of Chinese Hair Into the United States

HAIR from the queues of Chinamen is often unconsciously worn as switches by some of fashion's fair devotees. This statement comes from wholesale dealers in hair.

It is startling to realize that in such cases the now fetching Marcel waves once formed the straight plaits worn by certain natives of the Flowery Kingdom. Of course the hair is not transferred from one set of heads to the other in its natural state, for the difference in texture is strongly noticeable. It, however, goes through a process of refining that disguises it it such a manner that its former owners would never recognize it. Its new possessors, if they give a thought to its origin, satisfy themselves that some of the picturesque peasants toiling among the vine clad hills of sunny France, or those in neighboring countries, sacrificed their beautiful locks for love of gain.

At least 13,000 pounds of hair were imported to the United States during October. Most of this came from China.

It is a fact remarked upon by dealers in this material that lately there has been a large increase of its importation from China. It is of interest to note in connection with this statement that Prince Pu Lun, Chinese Commissioner to the last world's fair, is quoted as having said that upon his return to his native land he intended trying to institute a reform tending to the abolishing of the queue.

The hair brought from China, which also includes combings, is refined by first being given an acid bath. This reduces the texture to a much finer state. Then comes the bleaching, produced by the use of peroxide of hydrogen. Ammonia is afterward used to neutralize the action of the acid. The hair is then dyed in the required shades.

The longest hairs, usually averaging from 30 to 40 inches, are not utilized for switches, but are employed in the making of the so called invisible nets that serve to keep contrary locks in place.

It is well known that white hair is costly. Though the Chinese hair never reaches the whiteness necessary—its extreme bleached shade being a dingy hue—a certain species of goat in Thibet furnishes what cannot be obtained by any chemical process from the human Chinese hair. This consists of a long, snowy hirsute material, at least thirty inches in length, sufficiently beautiful after preparation to grace the daintiest white coiffure in existence. Such a switch cannot be purchased for less than $120.

There is no duty required on raw hair brought to the United States. That from China, which comes in cases weighing about a hundred and ninety-five pounds, arrives in New York in a roundabout way. This lies via the Isthmus of Panama. The goods are delivered here by the Pacific Steamship line. If these cases came the shortest route, with San Francisco as an intermediary step, the freight would consume much of the forthcoming profits.

In direct comparison with the Chinese hair, which requires such strenuous treatment before it is ready for use by the women in this country, is the hair imported from Europe, where it is obtained from the peasant women. It is raw hair when it arrives here, to prevent duty, but the process of getting it into suitable shape for the coiffures of the ladies is usually completed after a thorough but simple cleansing process. It is generally magnificent hair, even in its raw state, and the sight of it inspires many wonderings in the mind of the imaginative looker-on.

There was a time when the French peasant women and others of their class would trade their entire tresses with seemingly no regret. Even the inherent love of admiration and the desire to provoke it did not weigh in the balance when there was a temptation of varicolored shawls and other enticing gewgaws, for the peasants will not barter their hair for money. But the time came when the husbands, sweethearts or brothers, as it may have been, gave voice to their displeasure if upon returning from their labors they found any one of their feminine loved ones less attractive in their eyes because she had consented to have her hair clipped in garçon fashion, though she proudly flaunted the trifle that had taken the place of her crown of womanhood. There were tears and pleadings in many cases and the promise never again to err in the same way. But these peasant women are shrewd though tactful. They had no desire to relinquish the opportunity of adding to their meagre wardrobe; yet their desire was equally strong to conciliate the stern sex.

The result of this minute household warfare has been that the women still make bargains with the pedler and come forth victorious, in their minds, with their varicolored adornments, while the crafty pedler goes away delighted with the luxuriant hair which he has carefully clipped here and there from each willing head in such a manner that the remaining quantity is sufficient to arrange in the usual coiffure without the loss being detected. The peasant women who wear caps are indifferent about the loss of their hair. Their dainty headgear conceals the want of it. When this is the case the freedom derived from tedious moments spent in the former arranging of it is hailed with delight.

Most of the hair imported from Europe is gathered from France, Italy, Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, Sweden and Norway. There is little, if any, direct importation from Spain, though the maidens' tresses there have long been praised in song and story.

TO PRESERVE PLASTER ORNAMENTS.

STATUARY and other ornaments in plaster are greatly improved and prevented from discoloration by the following, which should be applied when new, instead of waiting for the yellow spots to appear, which are caused by iron in the gypsum and are so difficult to clean off.

We, therefore, take our new plaster statuette or bas relief and harden the surface by this simple process. Make a hot saturated solution of borax and apply to the ornament with a brush. Two or three applications will generally be sufficient, yet sometimes five and six may be necessary. Next apply hot a saturated solution of chloride of barium (two coats), after this two or three applications of soap and water. Rinse off thoroughly in clean water, or until the water forms heads upon the surface of the ornament. To further whiten apply flake white, rubbed up in gum water, using a wide camel's hair