

PROMINENT MEN OF EARLY IOWA.

BY EDWARD H. STILES.

HENRY O'CONNOR AND DAVID C. CLOUD.

Both of these men were attorneys-general of the State. David C. Cloud was the first one after the creation of that office in 1853 and served for two terms. O'Connor served from his appointment, June 12, 1867, until he resigned in February, 1872.

Henry O'Connor was an Irishman, having been born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1820; he died at the Soldiers' Home, Marshalltown, Iowa, November 6th, 1900. He gained his early education at Tullow under private instructions from the monks, who kept a free school. He came to this country when twenty years of age and learned the tailors' trade in New York City, where he worked at it for several years. From there he went to Cincinnati where he studied law while still working at his trade. He was admitted to the bar there and in 1849 came to Muscatine.

His marked talents and great brilliancy as an orator soon made him known throughout the State. He was probably its most popular political orator, and the announcement that he was to speak always drew a crowd to hear him. He was alike eloquent at the bar and it was not long before he acquired an enviable general practice. He was originally an anti-slavery Whig and a Republican after the formation of that party. He was a presidential elector and supported General Winfield Scott for President in 1852. In 1856, he was again a candidate for presidential elector in the Fremont-Buchanan presidential campaign.

In 1858, he was elected district attorney for his district and officiated in that capacity until the commencement of the Civil war. He enlisted as a Private in Company A, First Iowa In-

fantry. He participated in the battle of Wilson's Creek, where General Lyon was killed. In many of the towns through which his regiment passed, receptions were given to it, and the duty of responding to speeches of welcome was always placed upon "Private O'Connor." Upon the return of his regiment, he was appointed by Governor Kirkwood Major of the 35th Regiment of Iowa Infantry, in which he served until the close of the war.

I knew Major O'Connor intimately. We were much together. He became attorney general of the State the year following that in which I became reporter to the Supreme Court. It was made our duty to attend its semi-annual sessions at Des Moines, Davenport and Dubuque. In this wise we became closely associated. We were always seated at the table with the judges. His presence was a perpetual source of good feeling. He brimmed with the playful wit of his native land. His pleasantries were constant, the genial rays of his humor perennial. If he failed to be present at a meal, it was a source of regret. He and Judges Wright and Dillon, especially, indulged in mutual sallies that were not always impersonal. He liked to rally Judge Beck, who though rare and companionable was not inclined to relish jokes on himself. Taken all in all, O'Connor was one of the choicest, most delightful men I have ever known. It was a pleasure to be in his company. He was a genius, a born orator and a born wit. His talents were various. He could soar with ease from the ridiculous to the sublime, from the serious to the comic, from severe castigations to the most pathetic appeals. He was brave as a knight, as sympathetic as a woman. He was fond of pets and especially so of horses. He had a fine Morgan mare that he petted like a child.

Had he lived at the time of and moved in the same circle with Curran and O'Connell, he would have been a worthy compeer; had he figured in the drama, he would have won renown by the variety of his genius. He was a prohibitionist in principle, but once in a great while fell from grace, thereby exemplifying the old saying that exceptions prove the rule. He and the distinguished William E. Leffingwell were parallels along this line.

People flocked to hear O'Connor in his political speeches for the readiness of his wit; and the aptness of his retorts to questions which he always gave his audience the liberty to ask. I was once present when he spoke to a crowded house at Ottumwa. It was during the hard times. One of the audience interrupted him by saying that he believed if the Democrats were placed in power money would not be so scarce and would be easier to borrow. Smilingly, Henry turned towards him and said, "Oh, you are mistaken, my friend! It is not the scarcity of money but the scarcity of collaterals. There is plenty of money and with the collaterals there is no difficulty in borrowing it. It is the collaterals we want. If you and I had the collaterals, we would not long be in the condition we are now both in."

At another time I was with him when he addressed a large meeting at Clinton. It was just after the close of the war, but the feeling it had engendered had not altogether died out. In the course of his speech, he was rudely interrupted by a man to whose questions he replied with deference; but the man grew offensive and finally so angry that he started forward to make an assault upon Mr. O'Connor. Others rushed to interfere, but Henry said, "Do not stop him; let him come on. I think I have shot better men than he is."

In 1872, he was warmly supported for the Republican gubernatorial nomination, which finally went to Governor Carpenter. In the same year he was appointed by President Grant Solicitor of the State Department at Washington and served with distinction in that capacity for some fourteen years under successive Secretaries of State, William M. Evarts, Hamilton Fish, Frelinghuysen, and James G. Blaine, with all of whom he was a personal favorite. He loved the people and the people loved him. He deserved all that Charles Aldrich thus said of him: "He was a typical Irishman, impulsive, genial, courteous, warm-hearted, a man of many friends, with few or no enemies, a brave, self-sacrificing soldier in the nation's time of need, a lawyer of ability and learning."*

*Annals of Iowa, Third Series, Vol. 4, p. 637.

David C. Cloud was born in Champaign County, Ohio, in 1817; he died at Chicago in 1903, at the ripe old age of eighty-six years. He was of French-German extraction. His early advantages were very limited. From six to twelve years of age, he attended the public schools three months, during the winter season. Later he attended school for six weeks; this was the extent of his schooling. When fifteen years of age he commenced the trade of book binder, but after six months' experience at this, went to learn the trade of a carpenter, in which he perfected himself. He came to Muscatine soon after the organization of Iowa Territory, when Muscatine was known as Bloomington. There he worked at his trade some eight years, reading law during his spare time, and in December, 1846, he was admitted to the bar. He became one of the best known lawyers in the State. He was originally a Democrat, but subsequently joined the Republicans because of his opposition to the extension of slavery into the Territories. He was a member of the convention that nominated Abraham Lincoln for the Presidency, and during the war was a staunch supporter of the Government.

He was not only distinguished as a lawyer but as an author and political economist. During the progress of the Civil war, he wrote a book entitled, "The War Powers of the President." This volume was extensively circulated, demonstrated deep research, a high order of talents on the part of the author, and was received with general approbation throughout the north. He also wrote a book entitled, "Monopolies and the People," which was well received.

His progress from the carpenter's bench to the position of one of the first lawyers and publicists was remarkable. He was twice elected prosecuting attorney for Muscatine county, and upon the creation of the office of attorney general, he was the first one elected to that office, in August, 1853, and upon the expiration of that term, he was re-elected to the same office and performed its duties with distinguished ability. In 1856, he was elected to the State Legislature, and took there a leading and influential position. He was made chairman of the committee of ways and means, and of railroads in that body.

He exercised a potent influence during his career as attorney general and legislator in framing and moulding the early legislation of the State.

From any and every point of view, he was a very able and skillful lawyer. In criminal and damage cases, he was particularly eminent. He was regarded as one of the best criminal lawyers in the West, and it was said that he had tried more cases and recovered a greater total of damages against railroad companies than any lawyer in the State.

In 1872, he supported Horace Greeley for President, and was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. After that he continued to act with the Democratic party to the end of his life. He was an active and useful man in his time and one of the most widely known men in the State.

APPOINTMENTS BY THE PRESIDENT.

By and with the advice and consent of the Senate.

Joseph Williams, of Pennsylvania, to be Associate Judge, and Francis Gehon, of Iowa, to be Marshal in the Territory of Iowa, from and after the third day of July.

Albert M. Lea, to be Commissioner "for running, marking, and ascertaining the southern boundary line of Iowa, west of the Mississippi river, which divides said Territory from the State of Missouri."—Albany, N. Y., *The Jeffersonian*, July 14, 1838.

By and with the advice and consent of the Senate.

Robert Lucas, of Ohio, to be Governor of the Territory of Iowa, in the place of Henry Atkinson, resigned.—Albany, N. Y., *The Jeffersonian*, July 21, 1838.

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