

SECOND LETTER.

FIRST APPEARANCE OF "OLD TIP"—THE MIDNIGHT SALUTE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES—MCCAULEY'S PRETTY DAUGHTER—PAP RUDY—LEWIS COLLINS—OTHER CITIZENS OF OLD MAYSVILLE—THE ATHANEUM AND LYCEUM—THE OLD THEATRE—HOME TALENT.

WASHINGTON, CITY, January 30, 1883.

Dr. John Phister—My Young Friend: Did you tell the editor of the NEW REPUBLICAN that you would like to trade lies with me? If you did you made a mistake. I am not a man of that kind. I was a sabbath school scholar in my youth and a teacher in my more mature years. I anticipate and accept your apology for the reason that the young are always prone to take the word recollection, when used by the aged, as a synonym for lie. Enough of that. Now that the old market house, with its associations and celebrities heretofore named, is now, or soon will be, thundering down the track of ages, I will direct your attention to a different type of celebrity and one that was a factor in fun, politics, liberty and charity, nearly fifty years ago in and about old Maysville.

Who is there in the new city who can tell the history of the six pounder cast iron gun, that used to make the welkin ring on all appropriate and I may say inappropriate occasions. I know something of its early history. In 1835 or 1836 two of the old Maysville boys, William H. McCordle and James U. Morrison were in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, as the guests of captain Sanders, of the engineer corps, U. S. A. They visited the U. S. armory at that place. Cannon and balls were piled up on all sides. A six pounder piece of ordinance at that day was called a heavy gun. One of the boys asked the price of this particular gun and was told that it was a condemned gun and would be sold for ninety dollars. The boys bought it and paid for it on the spot. It was brought to Maysville on the same boat on which they had taken passage. It arrived and was landed about midnight. It was the custom at that time for all the draymen and hotel porters in the city to be at the wharf when a steamboat landed. The gun was got on a dray with the muzzle towards the tail of the dray so that when the horse was taken out of the shafts the elevation would be about right. Word was sent around to the other boys, Dick Dobyns, Charley Ryan, Leroy Clarke, Jo Leach, Jim Riley and a few more fellows who knew what fun was, that there would be music in the air. I think that Jo Broderick was in the party, I will not be certain of that. I do know that he was a christian at that time. The party being made up, the line of march was taken up Sutton street to Third, out Third to the turnpike, past Jo Gilpin's residence where he joined the party, then

up the hill by the way of the pike until a point about fifty yards beyond the magazine was reached. The horse was taken from the shafts and the gun pointed to the Cabin Creek hills. The artilleryists were improvised from the boys, who had never before done duty in that line. They loaded her to the brim and rammed it until exhausted with the work. The slow match was applied, the artilleryists, powder monkeys and camp followers took refuge under the hill to await developments—a flash! Great heavens, since the foundation of the world no such music had ever been heard in that section as that gun gave forth. Its notes rolled through the Cabin Creek hills and took the surrounding country by storm. Old Maysville got up and put on her ascension robes, for lo, the imaginary day of judgment was at hand. The recoil of the gun started the dray down the pike. The explosion frightened the horse. We could hear the clatter of his feet and the jingle of his harness as he ran up the pike. He was found next day in Washington, having with great good judgment avoided all the toll-gates. The drayman, who was a slave and belonged to James Artus, broke for Canada, and was never heard of about Maysville afterwards. The music of that gun soothed him on his weary way to the land of freedom. The next morning was market and a full attendance was had. The country people ventured in and the city people were out; a full explanation was made of the arrival and successful test of the gun, which was ever afterward so far as I know, the pet of Maysville and Mason county. McCordle & Morrison, having bought and paid for the gun, together with its freightage to the city, the other boys chipped in to pay for a carriage. Some of the wagon makers of the city made the carriage, I think it was William Ballinger. The carriage was unpainted for some time, though the gun was very frequently used at barbecues, parades, etc.

At nearly every time it was used it did sad work. Some man's life or limb paid the forfeit. I need not tell the names of those who became victims of their own ignorance in handling it. As the campaign of 1848 approached, the carriage was painted and the name of "Old Tip" emblazoned on it. It did its work faithfully and well through that campaign, keeping up its early traditions of exacting a life or a limb. However it contributed its voice towards elevating the grand original "Old Tip" to the presidential chair.

I will not tell you now how that gun once formed a part of the sheriff's *posse* to Dover, Ky., to aid in the maintenance of law and order there. I have told you the fun we had at the test. How the drayman gained his liberty through fright. I will now tell you how it was an aid to charity.

First you must know that the boys of old Maysville were fun loving, and in their seeming deviltry they were working to good ends. I cite you one or two cases where the gun had to play its part. On one occasion where two hundred dollars was required for a strictly benevolent purpose, the usual means were resorted to to raise the amount. All efforts in that direction failed. A council of the boys was held and it was decided that the money should be raised at the cannon's mouth. Accordingly one night at twelve o'clock, the gun was brought down to the corner of Front and Main Cross and fired off, the gun pointing a little to the west corner,

by accident of course. The consequence was that nearly all the windows in the house were broken by the concussion. William Mackey, the owner, complained to some of the boys, who frankly told him the thing should not occur again if he would give a check for a hundred dollars for the benevolent object. He did so promptly and the contract was never violated. At other times some of the boys would quietly and confidentially inform John Armstrong that it was barely possible that the gun might be found in front of his premises. I don't think he ever required the second admonition. On another occasion the boys were so conscientious that they would not bring out the gun to advise Mr. Mackey that charity was needed. Their word was pledged as to the gun—they therefore pried up the large stone step at the door of his residence on Main Cross just above Front street. It is needless to say he helped the boys for sweet charity's sake. As before stated the gun was a factor in the political campaign of 1840. After the close of that campaign I had no personal knowledge of the gun. I have heard however, that it held a place in the hearts and memory of the boys for years after. You, as one of the boys of new Maysville may know something of its subsequent destiny.

When war was abroad in the land I used to think of that old gun. I never saw that gun fired nor did I ever hear its hoarse bellowing reverberating through the hills that I did not have a feeling of delight. I have looked forward to its death dealings. That work was always accidental and always deplored. But I declare to you that I never saw a gun sighted in war, and the cannoneer stand with lanyard in hand that I did not offer a prayer for the souls of those who might stand in the way of shot and shell. The great big guns of war gave forth no such sweet sounds as did "Old Tip" in the time of profound peace and happiness. Who of the confederates that lay in the field of Shiloh after the first day's fight will ever forget the four minute guns fired from the U. S. gunboats lying in the Tennessee river. Such awful sounds had never before reached the ears of those who sought sleep after a day of desperate work. The knowledge that the leader, general Albert Sidney Johnson, a Mason county man, too, was dead—that Buell had made the connection, was enough of itself to sadden the stoutest heart; the pitiless rain was falling in torrents on the living, dead and dying. The belching of those great guns every four minutes and the frightful screeching of the shells as they shot up into the heavens and dropped into the camps was the essence of despair. I know how it was and knowing it can draw the line between "Old Tip" and the murderous guns of war.

I have wandered a little from the subject; the story of Shiloh don't belong to old Maysville and I am not the one to tell it. It will never be told with accuracy. The beginning and ending of it was wholly unexpected by one or the other sides, possibly by both. It was the hardest fought battle that ever took place on this continent and was in fact the turning point of the war. May the boys of new Maysville be content with the music of holiday guns, and may they be forever saved from war's alarms.

Now, getting back to the old council chamber, what an exciting can-

vass we used to have for councilmen. For weeks in advance of the election the city was torn up on the subject of councilmen. I used to wonder if there was any more important office under heaven than that of councilman. I am in doubt on that subject now and have had an honest trepidation in corresponding with a councilman. I am getting over it a little. You need not mind it if I should become somewhat garrulous; as I said before the councilmen of old Maysville, and I mean by old Maysville that period prior to 1840, commanded my highest respect and admiration. They were to me a class of men who walked in an inner circle and held converse with higher powers. I need not give you their names because they are stamped on the records of your municipal government. They were men of great astuteness, keen perception, and filled with an appreciation of the wants of the people regardless of the burden of taxation. After all I don't know but what the taxes were reasonable. I never paid any because of my poverty and disinclination to be conspicuous in the community. I sometimes thought that if I could be a councilman, and with councilmen sit, I would see and know something of the great hereafter. You must remember that my ideas of a councilman were based on a Maysville councilman. Maysville was a city then—a great city—Washington, its competitor, was not a city; Germantown was not a city; Aberdeen was not a city; Murphy's Mills was not a city, and neither was Cabin Creek. In the absence of municipal greatness in these places, the board of common council in Maysville was ponderous.

In my days a war of grades was precipitated on the citizens, the upper and lower grades. I don't mean the castes of society but the landing places for steamboats. They were in the first and third wards of the city I think. The lower grade fellows rather got the bulge. The upper grade was a failure in my day. But the first ward fellows trained up to their ideas of internal improvement; that was always a political hobby in old Maysville, beginning with the turnpike case referred to in a previous letter. Well, the internal improvement fever broke out violently in the first ward and culminated in changing the bed of Limestone creek near its mouth. In early days the creek emptied into the Ohio just at the foot of Limestone street, and there was a roadway started out from Limestone street, about midway between Front and Second streets, and crossed the creek on a rude bridge, thence through the bottom and up the hill to the house of Reuben Case and so along through New Town as East Maysville was then called. I never quite understood why the bed of the creek was changed. I think maybe it was done to give a practical idea of internal improvement by furnishing a pretext for contracts for filling up the old and digging out the new creek and building a stone bridge further up the stream. I am inclined to that opinion because the new bridge fell down two or three times (and has kept falling J. P. P.) and the contractors had a good time. This venture may have been a county affair, I doubt whether the council would have felt justified in going into the improvement business on so large a scale unaided.

In 1828 I lived in a frame house on the northeast corner of Second and Fish streets. Fish street was then an insignificant street. When the

grade contest came on several years after it brightened up and took the name of Wall street. In the house just above where I lived on Second street there lived a man named Robinson, Tom. Robinson, I think. He used to go to New Orleans in the winter and come home and play the fiddle all summer. As a musician I thought as highly of him as I did of Charley Tudor and his son Edward. I wish I could think of the name of the Tudor boy who beat the snare drum. I can't. I will say for him, however, that he did his work well. Just above Robinson's house was Griffith's tavern, with wagon yard attached. The ground extended up to those of general Richard Collins, whose house was on the corner of Grave alley. I used to go to school in Grave alley to a man named McCauley, who had a pretty daughter, and if I am old I will say that I thought well of her and to this day I have a kindly remembrance of her. I will say that her name was Mary Ann. Is there any one now living in new Maysville who remembers that girl?

I want to tell you all about the old time people. I knew your grandfather, Conrad Phister; maybe he was not your grandfather; if he was you have no occasion to be ashamed of him. He was a quiet, unobtrusive man, whose name was above reproach. I think he was a Jackson man, and that was rather against him in my estimation. Be that as it may, men were not being weighed in my political balances at that time. He is always associated in my mind with father Rudy, as the older members of the Methodist church used to call him. The younger used the more endearing name of pap. You must remember him. As long as there is an amen corner in a Methodist church I will have that christian man before me and his earnest supplications to the throne of grace will be remembered.

Speaking of churches brings to my mind Lewis Collins, who was editor of the Maysville *Eagle* and superintendent of the Presbyterian sabbath school. I used to help him conduct the services of the school. He was a worthy, good man, of small stature and a deep bass voice. I don't think that bass singing in that day found such a lodgment in the hearts of the people as it has since the introduction of opera music. I respected Lewis Collins because of his piety, and loved him because he ably defended whig principles.

Basil D. Crookshanks, Robert K. Lurty, Hiram Bassett, Richard Weirick, George Pemberton, we used to call him Pem, Sullivan Duvall and Matthew Stanley were among the boys of old Maysville. Sullivan Duvall and Jacob Wormald were staff officers of the city council, and as such received the honors due their rank. I hope to tell you all about these men and many more, including Thomas Donovan, who lived up on the turnpike near the head of the fill, and who used to ride in a gig through the gates without paying. I thought him a great man and maybe he was in his way. Some time I will tell you of David Clark's saw mill and the adjacent ship yard at the lower end of the city, and Robert J. Langhorn's foundry and engine shop at the upper end of town, that your children and your children's children may know something of the former greatness of the city in which they live. You may want to know

something of Phillips & Mooklar's iron house, on the southwest corner of Second and Wall streets. It was a large frame building used for the storage of hemp, but was transferred into a temple for the drama. The boys of new Maysville will witness no better acting than was done on the stage in that old warehouse. The elder Booth, Keen, Parsons, Ellen Tree, and all the dramatic lights of that day appeared there. Old Logan led the list of comedians there. I will not forget John O. Powling, who, on the opposite corner, kept a hostelry and a theatre attached. Hiram Bassett appeared at that theatre in the character of Alfred Evelyn in the comedy of "Money." Think of that you men of the new city, we had native talent. I hope to tell you about Cummings' coffee house. It was kept on Front street, at the corner of Cox's alley. The Baptist church on the pike nearly opposite Nathaniel Poyntz will receive some attention. Ebenezer Jenkins, the painter, split off from that church and established another one away down on Third street. I never knew how that church succeeded. It was established about the time I said *au revoir* to the scenes of my youthful days.

You shall hear of the mayors, the clergymen, the lawyers, the physicians, the editors and lecturers of old Maysville, as they appeared to me. D'Oyley and Lamonosky, the Pole, held the lecture platform there for awhile in the olden times. The Lyceum and the Athaneum, the rival literary societies may be incidentally attended to. I remember that a joint debate was precipitated on these societies. The question was "Would it be Politic to Reduce the Price of Public Lands," and a pretty mess was made of the discussion. It might be well for me to speak of Evan and Shelby Campbell and the old ferryboat, *Helen Mar*. It was on that boat the cannon was taken to Dover, Ky., with which to assert the law's demands.

I will say to you that I do not live here. I am here by reason of the misfortunes of my son-in law. He got elected to congress. I am sure he is sorry for it now. He lowered himself in my estimation by the performances which eventuated in his election. I don't think his morals or learning will be improved by associating with congressmen. I know that such associations are a severe test to a man of my years and quiet habits. My daughter don't like the aristocratic flummery of society here. It is an abomination if not a reproach. I will have nothing to do with it and I openly condemn politics because of the idiocy required in the manipulation. My son-in-law thinks there is a great responsibility resting on him because of the bonded extension bill and the tariff. He knows almost as little about such matters as do the members who spend their nights in the houses of sin and debauch and their days in neglect of duty. O. B.