

## FOURTH LETTER.

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THE GREAT FLOOD OF 1832—JACK NELSON—THE "PHCEBUS"—STEAM-BOAT INTERESTS OF OLD MAYSVILLE—THE "LADY SCOTT," THE "NAPLES" AND THE "RUBICON"—SUNDAY SCHOOL NAVIGATION—THE WEBSTER BANQUET—CHARLES B. WILLIAMS—THE TOWN ELECTION—ESCORTING THE EMPEROR OF MEXICO—NATHANIEL POYNTZ—EXPLOSION OF "OLD TIP"—THE MAYSVILLE MILITIA—THE OLD STAGE DRIVERS—GRETN A GREEN.

WASHINGTON CITY, February 12, 1883.

*Dr. John P. Phister—My Young Friend:* The flood of February, 1832, was a grand affair to the young city of Maysville. It came upon the people without any preparation whatever from the boys. Whatever of praise or blame was given on account of it was freely accorded to providence. I remember it with great distinctness and know I felt a great concern for those who were made homeless and houseless by it. We saw from the bank of the river, as Front street was called, houses, barns, hay stacks, stock, and all the paraphernalia of a farm floating by without any means of saving them. It had a very depressing effect about the new market house; the old house was new then. We were cut off from all that part of the country immediately east of the city, and the people who supplied the market from the Ohio side of the river were unable to get to the city. The water came up Main Cross street nearly to Second.

The only man in Maysville who really enjoyed the waste of waters was Jack Nelson. He enjoyed it because of the drift or flood wood. How patiently that man would work to catch the floating timber. It was a mania with him to patrol the shores to catch a strong stick, and what great loads he would carry on his shoulders to his house up by the market. I knew him well and always had a sincere sympathy for him. He was feared by most of the boys and yet there was not a more harmless man than he, and at times when the light of reason would flash out he was a companionable man. He was known not only to the citizens but to the traveling public as well. His line of march was from the market house to the river side. He played his game in an humble way and was doubtless missed by many when his life work was done.

In 1831, I think it was, when the steamboat *Phcebus*, captain Davis Embree, came up from Cincinnati to enter the packet trade between that city and Maysville, the first boat to make the venture of plying regularly between the two cities. The first arrival of the boat was on Sunday morning, about church time. If my memory serves me right I did not go to church that day. The boat returned that evening and several prominent citizens went down on it, I was among the number. I want

to say just here that it was quite a struggle with me to give up my sabbath school class to go on this trip. I thought of my duty to my God and my duty to the city, and as luck would have it I fell on the side of the city. I don't think Lewis Collins ever fully forgave me for that palpable neglect of christian duty. That boat *Phœbus* was a very small affair but fully up to the requirements of the times.

Maysville was somewhat interested in steamboats before that day. In anticipation of Maysville being a city a steamboat had been named *Maysville* some six or seven years before. Captain Murphy was the commander. He lived up on Fourth street, between Grant's alley and the mouth of the creek. I think he was dead when the *Phœbus* came. Andrew T. Wood built a boat for the Cincinnati trade somewhere about 1835 or 1836, called the *Lady Scott*. He and his brother Jesse built a steamboat at David Clark's saw mill below town, called the *Naples*. A steamboat was finished off just below the mouth of the creek and the first work done at Langhorne's foundry was to make the machinery for that boat. When the cylinder, which was a very small affair was to be cast, invitations were sent out to all the scientific citizens of the place to be present at the casting, or in other words, the christening of the foundry. I was there. As might have been expected after such preparation had been made, the casting was a failure, and failure ever after followed the foundry so I learned.

The great event of boat building about Maysville in my time was the building of the *Rubicon* at Clark's saw mill. The boat had many stockholders and no good managers. She was a success in speed and a failure in everything else, except one; she was a success in losing money. My old friend Joseph Conwell, was a large stockholder. I wish you could have lived in those days and known the man. He was a tailor and without guile. What he ever wanted with a steamboat no one knew. As energetic as I was in such matters I never could tell. Whatever may have been his ambition on the premises I know he owned the boat or controlling interest in it. That boat *Rubicon* was the cause of shaking my faith in the adaptability of Sunday schools to promote commerce and navigation. As I said the boat was a failure as a means of benefiting the stockholders. Finally it was thought to be a good thing to go into the church and Sunday school for a captain; after much prayerful consideration William Tinker was selected and entered on the discharge of his duties, and from that day my friend Conwell cursed the hour he ever thought of becoming a steamboat stockholder. Maysville was proud of the *Rubicon* but contributed nothing towards reimbursing the stockholders for losses. William Tinker had for years been the sexton of the Presbyterian church and greatly respected by the people. From sexton of a first-class church, with a prayerful congregation, to captaincy on a steamboat, was to my christian mind a departure fraught with evil. I have no good reason to doubt but what Tinker took his religion with him in his new venture, and did the best he could with it under the circumstances.

We had an exciting time in making arrangements for the reception and banquet to Daniel Webster. A few of the boys who had sealed them-

selves to Henry Clay, knew what the object of Mr. Webster's visit to Kentucky was. They were not disposed to aid Mr. Webster in making inroads on Mr. Clay's political domain and for awhile they sulked in their tents. I am proud to say I did not sulk, I gave aid and comfort to every movement looking to a grand reception. I wanted him to see the market house and city hall and such other things as might serve to gratify his curiosity in the city. A meeting was called at the city hall at which John Armstrong presided. One of the boys was made secretary. Resolutions laudatory of Mr. Webster were offered and passed, speeches were made and the hospitable banners of Kentucky and the city of Maysville were hung on the outer walls. The banquet which was given at Langhorn's Tavern, was the theme of conversation for weeks afterward. The school teachers of the city and surrounding country impressed upon their male pupils that they would all be Websters in the future and banquets would be their reward. I polled my class at Sunday school on that subject and found that they cared but little about Webster, but were much interested in the reward.

When we determined to elect Charles B. Williams, mayor of the city, the business of politics began with me and held on pretty well until the smash-up in 1852. Richard Henry Lee was a candidate for mayor and was the embodiment of the aristocracy and wealth of the city—a lawyer and gentleman of admitted worth. The boys did not take well to his nomination for some unexplained reason. They, therefore, proclaimed war, and marshaled themselves under the leadership of Charles B. Williams, a man of sterling worth, great energy of character, a good talker and one who could not be excelled in gracing the head of a banquet table. He was the son of my old school teacher, and the war as arranged met my cordial views. Henry Ryan, who by the way, was a man of great good humor and sound judgment, managed the battle on the side of Williams. In those days a poll tax of \$1 was required to be paid before any one could vote at a municipal election. Money was not so plenty then with everybody as it is now, people were honest in those days and if they did not have the money to pay the poll-tax they would not steal it. Henry Ryan and some of the other boys raised the amount necessary to pay the tax of all voters who were unable to pay. It is needless to say that Charles B. Williams was elected. The contest was very bitter, estrangements between friends took place growing out of it, and society circles were much shaken up on account of it. How well Williams discharged the duties of his office, any old citizen can tell. He became a convert to the doctrine that incessant labor would destroy the strongest constitution. By a rigid adherence to that doctrine he has been enable to live to a green old age as I learned when last in Hopkinsville, Ky. I remember to have seen Hugh McCullough, who was shingling a house in a row of frames he was building on Limestone street between Second and Third, east side, slip off the roof and fall to the pavement below. He broke his legs, I greatly pitied his condition. Some years after he became a tavern keeper on the upper grade. I told one of his boarders of the accident I had witnessed. He gruffly replied that he wished it had been his neck that was broken.

It occurred to me that maybe McCullough did not keep a good tavern or that his boarders did not pay promptly.

In 1836 I was one of the escort to accompany the emperor of Mexico across the Ohio river at Maysville. Santa Anna was then a prisoner and was being sent to this city. We crossed on the ice. The escort performed their duties well, and I think the general expression was, as we returned, that future honors would attend them. Two years after I was in command of a small and important guard in the emperor's domain. I cannot say what the consequences would have been had we met on that occasion. I bore him no personal ill will.

I often think of Nathaniel Poyntz. He lived up at the corner of Fourth and Market. The warehouse was on the corner of Third and Market. He was a little round-bellied man of great quietude and a generous flow of fun. I somehow or other, I didn't just know why, always connected him with Japhet whenever I read the book "Japhet in Search of a Father." I always get my memory taxed up with Nathaniel Poyntz. As I remembered him he was a happy, contented man, devoted to the benches before his warehouse door, kind to his family and considerate to the boys. He could always be relied upon to chip in when there was music in the air.

I return with affection for a moment to "old Tip." That gun frequently disturbed the noonday siesta or the midnight slumber without seeming cause. In my day the voice of that gun was not heard unless business was meant and a jolly good time was intended. The members of the order were not at all times in the city—such members as James A. Armstrong and Ned Lee would frequently be in some of the outlying districts. It would then be necessary to take "old Tip" up on the hill opposite the head of Market street and fire it a few times to call the members from labor to refreshment. There was always an understanding when their presence would be needed after hearing the gun. On one occasion we were firing at midday to call in some new recruits. Jeff Coburn, a colored man, and an honorary member of the artillery corps, was acting as rammer, when a premature explosion took place sending the ramrod over into Aberdeen, severely mutilating Jeff. That was a costly performance to the boys. I think between \$300 and \$400 was raised and paid to Mrs. Coburn as damages for the injuries to Jeff. Notwithstanding this untoward event Jeff maintained friendly relations to the gun up to the time I left Maysville.

In the early days of the city Chauncey B. Shepperd lived up in Lewis county, round about Concord. He was one of the aboriginal statesmen and legislators of that section. He represented Lewis and all the outlying counties, or adjacent territory, up to the Virginia border. He was a good man and had much to do with the wisdom of the people he represented.

You talk to some of the old citizens of Maysville and they will tell you of the effort made in 1836 to get up a feeling in the interest of general Harrison for the presidency. A great barbecue was gotten up on the fifth of October, in honor of the battle of the Thames. The ropewalk at the lower end

of the city was chosen as the place for holding the barbecue. A big snow fell on that day but the barbecue went off all right notwithstanding.

In the good old times no city was complete without a light infantry company. Maysville soon brought herself to the standard in that line. I think captain William McClanahan led off, then Withers Madden, then William Calvert. There may have been others who commanded the light infantry company. One thing I do know, the Tudor boys always stood in manfully with the light infantry and many of the younger boys tried to see how close they could get to the bass drum. A cornstalk muster about Maysville frequently presented some of the unpleasant features of a Donnybrook fair. When these features were presented I jumped the fence and went home.

I had as well say at this point by way of quieting your apprehensions for the future, that the circus tents were usually spread in the wagon yards of the city, of which there were three. One in each ward.

I don't think I would recommend the starting of a city with three wards, unless they would give evidence of more harmony than did the original three wards of Maysville. There was always a row on their account and the boys were kept busy regulating.

The first mansion built in Maysville to my knowledge was that of William B. Phillips, on the corner of Third and Sutton streets. I use the word mansion in connection with that house in its fullest signification. It was a grand house in its period, and its owner and occupant became mayor of the city.

I am of the opinion that Christian Shultz lived on Third street, below Sutton and the mill, before he built below the city. John Shultz was one of the early boys of Maysville, and so was William January, who lived on the corner of Second and Sutton. A man named Baird, a jeweler, lived on the corner of Third and Sutton, opposite the fine house of W. B. Phillips. I think there was a log house adjoining it, I mean adjoining the house of Baird. William Newell had a cooper shop on the southeast corner of Third and Sutton. The opposite corner was vacant. Elijah Johnson had a woolen mill on Third street, midway between Market and Sutton, north side, and James Phillips had a stone cutter's yard adjoining. He carved all the tombstones for the city and neighborhood. I used to go there and read about blissful immortality, good husbands and wives, devoted fathers and mothers, dutiful children, etc. I thought better of the world then than I do now. Even a tombstone was a teacher then. Peter B. Jones, there is the name of a man for whom I entertain a high regard. There was nothing pretentious or overbearing about him. He was one of the men who, though small of stature, knew his place and could keep it without affront. He lived on the south side of Second street, opposite Griffith's tavern. He was a Methodist in good standing and a class leader, if I mistake not. His business profession was that of a cabinet maker and undertaker. Andrew Mitchell was also a cabinet maker and undertaker, and had a shop on Third, near Limestone. I am of the opinion that Andrew and John F. were brothers. Whether they were or not I will say this, that if Andrew's make of coffins were as

solid as were the hats made by John F. there may be some delay in the burial grounds round about Maysville on resurrection day.

In my day a hearse was unknown in Maysville. The bier was in use and the pall-bearers actually walked their way to the grave and sorrowing friends followed along on foot. Funeral notices used to be sent around and friends sat up with the dead. The march of improvement has taken away much, if not all, of the solemnity formerly attendant on death and burial. The rich are buried with pomp and ceremony, attended by honorary pall bearers, and the bodies of the poor find their way to the dissecting table. Such is the progress of the world.

Elijah Lyons was one of the important citizens of Maysville early in the thirties. He lived on the turnpike not a great way from Market street. He was the pioneer stage driver of the Maysville and Lexington road, and no driver ever had a better name among travellers than did Lige Lyons. His team were always the finest and he took a great pride in handling it.

It was always a matter of doubt with me which was the greatest man, Mathew Stanley, Thomas Donovan or Lige Lyons. They were the authorities of the road. Oliver Hukill was a shoemaker, and his brother, Elzey was a butcher, unless I have got things mixed up.

Stephen Lee was a valuable man and a good citizen. He was city marshal for a long time. A few whigs set up a job to defeat him for that office by making a combination with some of the loco focos. The combination settled on Adna A. Wadsworth, a man of nerve and popularity, as their candidate. Lee was defeated and Wadsworth became the marshal. He was a saddler and kept a shop on the north side of Second, near Market.

The Rev. George C. Light, father Light, was one of the able men of the Methodist church in my day. How he did wrestle with the boys and tell them of hell-fire and damnation. When he warmed up to his work in the pulpit what an odor of brimstone there would be in the church. Hell is not laid down in the geographies now as we used to have it located from the pulpit. I think its boundaries have been somewhat extended and a corresponding cooling off has taken place, we bring men to the foot of the cross now by a persuasive love for God and not for a fear of hell-fire and damnation. Time has wrought changes in theology, if it has not worked a demolition of the market house. I have an indistinct recollection that the Rev. Dr. Grundy informed me when I last saw him in Memphis, early in 1862, that Pap Middleton had lived a purer life, if it was possible, in his declining years, that he had joined the Presbyterian church and become a consistent and worthy member of it. If I am correct about that information I rejoice, and attribute the change to the christian influence of his devoted wife. I know by experience that in early days there was a commendable purity in the Presbyterian church, and it speaks well for old Pap that he had the sagacity to drink the pure water of life through the teachings of that church.

Micajah Bland lived on Third street above Limestone, and Magnus T. Cockrell was his chum. There was something good about these men. They were industrious, worthy men, and contributed their full share to

the development of the infant city. I can't think who lived in the stone house up on the hill as you went over into the valley of Limestone creek. I have an impression it was Heflin, Coleman Heflin, probably. I know the house was there and occupied the most commanding position about the city.

The gallantry of the "old boys" in early days prompted them to aid all the runaway couples who sought to have the silken tie which binds, be tied by 'squire Shelton. I used to go over to Aberdeen and stand up with the couples to the end that the tie might be more binding. I had a good opportunity to bring the market house question to the attention of president Arthur a day or two since. It was brought about in this way: My son-in-law was going to see him about the tariff and persuaded me to go along. As the tariff measure was discussed I saw that the president was perplexed and confounded by the sharp points made by my son-in-law. I pitied the president and came to his relief by citing the difficulties you have in the market house questions. He appeared grateful and thanked me by saying that was a local question and a similar one had come up in a town in which he once lived. I thought I saw a merry twinkle in his eye as he dropped that remark, but I never let on and did not attempt to controvert his position. I reckon that presidents, like all other great men, are human, and belongs to the masses, when you get close to them. The only exception I know of to that supposed is a member of congress. If it were possible to have a city councilman in every house there would be a glimpse of the millennium.

O. B.