

Henry Watterson

*Reconstructed Rebel*

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Wall

Henry Watterson, reconstructed  
rebel

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HENRY WATTERSON

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*Reconstructed Rebel*







Photograph by *Courier-Journal and Louisville Times*

HENRY WATTERSON

# HENRY WATTERSON

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## *Reconstructed Rebel*

by JOSEPH FRAZIER WALL

*with an introduction by Alben W. Barkley*

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FOR MY PARENTS

*who are staunch Republicans*

and

FOR BEATRICE

*who is not*

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## Introduction

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THE TORTUOUS COURSE of human events plays strange tricks upon our lives.

I grew to the age of fourteen years in the community of Lowes, in the Northwest corner of Graves County, in Western Kentucky.

My father was a farmer. He was an elder in the Presbyterian Church and a Democrat. I can vividly recall how he would go into the village every Saturday afternoon to get the *Louisville Weekly Courier-Journal* of which Henry Watterson was the editor.

Though a mere lad, I did not fail to note that my father read his weekly paper with as much relish and avidity as he read his Bible. In fact, the *Courier-Journal* constituted the Bible of all Democrats at that time in the county where we lived.

When we removed to another county, the paper followed us, or we followed it, until the great economic and political battles of the 1890's when, along with many others, my father found it out of tune with his views.

Little did I then think that one day I would be asked to write the introduction to a fascinating biography of the great editor of this journal.

We are frequently told by those who are devoted to the *status quo* that 'ours is a government of laws and not of men!'

But what law would ever find its way to the statute books but for men? And what law would ever be enforced without men to enforce it?

Ours is a government of laws *and* men, which in this country have combined to give us the best system yet devised for the development of social and political institutions.

Likewise, history is not made simply of an assembly of dates and statistics arranged in chronological order. History is the fabric woven of individual lives and activities, with all their coloring, emotions, and inconsistencies. History is the combination of ambitions, pulsations, victories, defeats, loves, hatreds, and achievements of peoples and generations. It is the essence and sum total of all the biographies of all the people.

In this sense, Henry Watterson was a great history maker, and his part in making it and his contacts with others who made it, his outstanding place in the field of creative journalism, all have been so perfectly portrayed in this new story of his life that those who read it will put it aside with mixed feelings of satisfaction and regret.

The period before and after the War Between the States has been variously described as 'Ante-Bellum,' 'Post-Bellum,' 'Tragic Era,' 'Compromise,' and 'Reconstruction.'

Watterson lived through these years and contributed magnificently to the story which records them.

Born in Washington, the son of a Tennessee Congressman, who was an intimate of Andrew Jackson and James K. Polk, it was inevitable that he would absorb into his veins the bloodstream of politics.

Politics and economics are almost inseparable twins. Politics is supposed to be the science of government, economics the science of production, distribution, and use of man's products and his energies. Politics is frequently governed by economic conditions, as economic conditions are frequently produced by politics. These twin agencies work together for the good or evil of the people in every country of the world, including our own.

The great journalists and editors of Watterson's day were largely political editors whose approach and consideration of politics was frequently through the channel of economics. Greeley, Dana, Prentice, and in the later years, Watterson, were all political figures. This was so because they wrought in a period during which our institutions were being molded. The economic and social foundations were being laid for the development of a civilization not hitherto known on this planet.

Into this setting Henry Watterson not only fitted, he helped create the setting.

The period lent itself to the development of outstanding characters

and characteristics. It also lent itself to the inconsistencies, sometimes superficial, sometimes deep-seated.

In many situations which Watterson dealt with he seemed inconsistent. But fundamentally he adopted and followed a pattern which presented a golden thread of consistency in serving what he deemed the best interests of his country. If occasionally he was forced to shift his approach or the application of his ideals, he was always impressive in proclaiming his ultimate goal and destination.

During the years before and leading up to the War Between the States, Watterson was devoted to the Union and its preservation. He was opposed to secession.

Yet he joined the Confederate Army and was identified with the southern cause until the day of Appomattox.

This very condition enabled him to speak for and to the people of both sections. He took advantage of this to use his great talents for reconciliation between the North and the South.

His experience in Cincinnati, Washington, McMinnville, Chattanooga, Nashville, and New York gave him superb equipment for the task he assumed when he became the editor of the *Louisville Journal* in 1868, later to be known universally as the *Courier-Journal*.

With the war but three years past, with the gathering storms of reconstruction threatening the new unity necessary to the re-welding of the bonds of nationality, Louisville was an ideal location from which to launch a new journalistic career, which would take him to the heights of his profession and create for him an imperishable name.

In the copy books of my youth, I remember reading that 'Talent will bring a man into the world. Tact will take him through the world.' It sounds like something from one of the McGuffey Readers.

Watterson assuredly had the kind of talent that brought him into the world! And though he was sometimes lacking in the highest degree of tact, he made his way through the world by such strides as few men can take. He walked with gods and never lost the common touch.

One of the great political tragedies of our history was the Tilden-Hayes political contest of 1876.

Henry Watterson, though a young man, became an intimate ad-

viser of Samuel J. Tilden. No one knows what sort of President Tilden would have made but the fact that he was cheated out of the election left an aura about his name and character which Watterson exploited with magic words.

Henry Watterson believed profoundly in two great principles, or policies.

One was low tariffs and the other was expansion. Tariff for revenue only, free trade were shibboleths he never abandoned.

Though disagreeing with Cleveland in many details, he supported both his tariff and sound money views and joined him in opposing Bryan and free silver and rejoiced in the election of McKinley, a Republican, as President of the United States in 1896.

Though a life-time expansionist, he supported Bryan on an anti-imperialist platform in 1900.

Though an original advocate of Woodrow Wilson's nomination in 1912, he fell away from him when Wilson told George Harvey that his support might be hurting him. To tell a friend frankly that the support of his periodical was injurious to his cause was described as a lack of character.

Harvey became a Republican, Watterson became a luke-warm Democrat, while Wilson became one of the great Presidents of the United States.

But Henry Watterson was more than a political editor and a writer of political platforms. He moved in other circles.

He enjoyed the friendship of outstanding men and women in the musical, theatrical, and literary world. He was welcomed in all advanced intellectual circles and accepted for what he was — an adornment of any circle in which he moved.

His famous word phrases created out of his resourceful mind, such as 'From Hell-for-sartin' to 'You-be-dam,' 'Through a slaughter house into an open grave,' 'On to Panama,' 'To hell with the Hapsburgs and Hohenzollerns' may have impressed the masses, but his gentler and more refined aesthetic tastes made their appeal to men and women of culture the world around.

It is not given to many men to live such a life. Its story brings to mind the language of the poet.

Like some tall cliff  
That lifts its awful form  
Up from the vale and



Midway leaves the storm.  
Though round its base  
The rolling clouds are spread  
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

Eighty-one years of life with all its fullness, beginning in the days of youth, constitute a charming chapter in the story of American democracy. Dr. Wall has written about this life in a fashion worthy of the subject. Although he takes Mr. Watterson from the day of his birth and even prior and holds him up to our vision until the day of his death, there is not a dull sentence in the recital. The story moves like a great stream, now an eddy, now a torrent, now the smooth rippling of a peaceful brook.

No one can study the life which it pictures without admiration and sympathy. No one can fail to recognize that Henry Watterson's life and achievements were worthy of the most facile pen.

No one will deny that Henry Watterson was the last of his tribe; the last great personal editor, whose very language and syntax were so distinct as to make it easy to realize that Henry Watterson was writing.

Modern journalism and modern life have made necessary the editorial staff. With few exceptions no one knows who wrote or writes a particular editorial but no one ever lived in ignorance of who wrote Henry Watterson's editorial and after reading this remarkable biography, no one can fail to recognize 'Marse Henry's' contribution to the history of America.

ALBEN W. BARKLEY



## Acknowledgments

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MANY PERSONS are responsible for the creation of a book. As the author of this biography, I am happy to acknowledge the truth of that statement, for at times, it seemed as if my creative function consisted mainly in the organization, assembly, and interpretation of material provided for me first by those people who had the opportunity of knowing Henry Watterson personally, and second by the many able scholars engaged in the task of interpreting America's political and social history. In the latter category, I should like to give special mention to E. M. Coulter for his careful study of Kentucky during and immediately after the Civil War; to my good friend and fellow Iowan, E. D. Ross, for his work on the Liberal Republican movement; to C. Vann Woodward for his most rewarding interpretation of the Tilden-Hayes electoral dispute; to Arthur S. Link, whose initial volume on the life of Woodrow Wilson proved so useful to me in my understanding of the 'Manhattan Club incident'; to those two scholars who first pioneered into the broad field of Wattersoniana, Miss Lena Logan and Neil D. Plummer; and particularly to Allan Nevins, not only for the debt I owe to his own writings on Abram S. Hewitt and Grover Cleveland but also for first suggesting this biography to me and for giving so generously of his time in assisting and encouraging me through all of the stages of writing this book.

I am also happy to give most deserved recognition to Lee Grove and Miss Leona Capeless of Oxford University Press in the preparation of the manuscript for publication.

But above all, in this attempt to portray Henry Watterson I have depended upon those persons who knew him and the world

in which he played so active a part: Tom Wallace, former editor of the Louisville *Times*, especially for the several articles he has written about his former employer; and Arthur Krock, who most generously made available to me his personal papers and writings on Watterson. I cannot adequately express my gratitude to Mrs. Milbrey Watterson Richardson, who certainly better than any other person could help me in the understanding of the personality of her father and who most graciously gave me complete freedom to make use of Watterson's papers and his memoirs, published in book form as *Marse Henry*.

Finally for the warm friendship of Young E. Allison, who opened for me the gates 'of the gateway city,' I acknowledge my most sincere gratitude.

HENRY WATTERSON

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*Reconstructed Rebel*



## ONE

# Tennessee-Washington Shuttle

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1840-1854

IN THE LATE FALL of 1839 there came to the city of Washington a young Congressman with his wife from Shelbyville, Tennessee. It had been a long, hard twelve-day journey by stagecoach, and undoubtedly the first reaction of Harvey and Talitha Watterson upon stepping down from the coach was simply a sense of relief that the tiring trip was over.

To the new arrivals Washington, now in its fortieth year, presented a study in contrasts. Having passed through its bucolic infancy, it was painfully adolescent, a sprawling, still unformed town of broad avenues that were nearly impassable in the rainy season, of handsome brick mansions and open sewers, of classically styled forums of stone mingling incongruously with cheap pine shacks. To the cosmopolitan visitor, particularly to the European critic, it was a city both crudely primitive and comically pretentious. But a representative from the Ninth Congressional district of Tennessee and his wife would be more easily impressed by the air of grandeur that Washington so hopefully sought to convey. They would hardly expect to find paved streets, and in the ugliness of unfinished buildings, bandaged in scaffolding, they would sense the promise of future greatness.

Washington has seldom been able to grow as fast as the government, and the year 1839 found it suffering from the usual housing shortage. Harvey and Talitha Watterson considered themselves fortunate to have found temporary quarters in the Exchange Hotel. Although the hotel was old beyond its years, worn and abused by an unending stream of uncaring, temporary residents, it was the best available and would have to do until a house could be found.

In the meantime, Harvey had to attend the business to which the voters of Tennessee had assigned him. The Twenty-sixth Congress opened its first session on 2 December 1839, and Watterson was there to represent the district that during the previous session of Congress had furnished the Speaker of the House, James Knox Polk. As the youngest member in Congress, Watterson might well have been awed by the position in which the fortunes of politics had placed him. But this self-confident young man already considered himself a veteran of the political scene. It had come as no great surprise when the party leaders of his district decided to run him as the Democratic candidate after Polk was persuaded to come home in 1838 to be the candidate for governor. For Watterson had been elected to his first office before he could vote and for the past eight years had represented Bedford county in the state legislature. Actually his political tutelage had begun almost as soon as he could talk. He had never known a time when he had not been interested in the affairs of state. His father, William Watterson, the most prosperous plantation owner in Bedford county, had seen to that.

William Watterson, coming into Tennessee from Virginia in 1804 when the state was new, had been from the first successful in cotton planting and had increased his fortune by careful investments in stocks and bonds. In the War of 1812, he had served on Jackson's staff at the Battle of New Orleans. Returning to his plantation, Beech Grove, and to his wife and four-year-old son, William Watterson had settled down to his business affairs and to the promotion of the political fortunes of his commanding officer, Old Hickory.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the boy Harvey grew up within the inner circle of Jacksonian Democracy in Tennessee. At sixteen he was sent to Cumberland College in Kentucky and after receiving the proper 'classical'



education of that day returned home to study law at the county seat of Shelbyville. In 1830, at the age of nineteen, he was ready to open his own law office.

He had strong backing. By that time his father was the most important man in the county, and his father's friend was President of the United States. The law business was not very profitable, to be sure, men in this small Southern town preferring a summons at daybreak to a summons in court to settle a dispute, but an indulgent father was always ready to make up any deficiencies in income. Harvey entered enthusiastically into the social life of the community and could shout for Old Hickory louder than most men at political rallies. Within a year after beginning his law practice, he was elected to the Tennessee legislature. Such had been Harvey Watterson's political education. Now at twenty-eight, he had moved confidently into a larger political arena. The record of Congressional proceedings clearly reveal that Watterson showed little of the timidity of the usual freshman congressman. He was quick to enter into debate with even the venerable John Quincy Adams over the sectional issues of the day.

Exciting as these first few weeks in Washington may have been for Harvey, for Talitha, now in the seventh month of her pregnancy and left alone all day in the musty rooms of the Exchange Hotel, time undoubtedly passed slowly. As the Christmas season approached she must often have thought of Beech Grove, where she had lived since her marriage, and also of the beautiful plantation home of her childhood.

Her father, James Black, like Harvey's father, had come into Tennessee as a young man of eighteen. Having found the prospects good, in the fall of 1806 he had returned to Kentucky to marry his childhood sweetheart, Mary Morrison, the daughter of 'Fighting Billy' Mitchell Morrison of Revolutionary fame.<sup>2</sup> Bringing his bride back to Tennessee, he settled in the rich Bluegrass country near Spring Hill. He was soon able to purchase from James Trimble a plantation of 275 acres for \$2,200.<sup>3</sup>

The following year, he built one of the first brick houses in the county, a house with large, low-ceilinged rooms, black walnut woodwork, and in the front hall an open circular staircase. For good luck, Mary Black placed three silver coins behind the mantel of the living room fireplace.<sup>4</sup> It was a large house, and with good

reason, for to James and Mary Black were born ten children, one boy and nine girls, among them Talitha on 22 June 1812.

Talitha's childhood had been a happy one. As she grew older, of course, she and her eight sisters shared a common problem in finding eligible beaux to meet the demands of so plentiful a supply of girls. Talitha might now with amusement recall how, during the summer that she was eighteen, the arrival of Harvey Watterson from Beech Grove attracted considerable interest in Spring Hill. But from the first the handsome visitor had given his entire attention to the beautiful red-haired Ann Standford, daughter of a neighboring plantation owner. After a brief but lively courtship Harvey had won Ann's consent to marriage and had hurried home to inform his father and obtain 'enough money to marry on.' During his absence, however, a Dr. Glasscock had arrived in Spring Hill from Alabama 'with a fine span and carriage, with a driver and outrider'—and obviously with enough money to marry immediately. The fickle Ann forgot her absent lover, and Harvey returned to discover that his fiancée was now Mrs. Glasscock on her way to Alabama, presumably in the handsome carriage.<sup>5</sup>

It was then that Harvey noticed the Black sisters, particularly the vivacious Talitha. One year later, on 5 June 1832, he and Talitha were married and went to Beech Grove to live.<sup>6</sup> Now seven years later, Talitha found herself in Washington, awaiting the birth of her first child.

She was determined that the Exchange Hotel should not be the child's birthplace. On her infrequent rides or walks about Washington, she must have gazed with envy at the handsome brick houses around Lafayette Square near the White House. These places she realized were unobtainable, and she was delighted when in late January her husband told her that he had succeeded in renting the furnished home of Mrs. Nancy Brawner, an ordinary brownstone front house located at 235 Pennsylvania Avenue in the commercial district.<sup>7</sup>

Here on 16 February 1840 their child was born, a son whom they named Henry. The Wattersons might have wished for a more spacious birthplace, but they could not have chosen a more appropriate one for this child. The house was situated next door to a printing shop and on a street that was the main thoroughfare of American politics, a proper birthplace for Henry Watterson.

As the early Washington spring quickly warmed into hot summer, most of the legislators hoped for an early adjournment. The nation's capital had not been situated with an eye to its being a summer resort, and, moreover, this was election year. The Wattersons in particular had reason to be eager to return home so that they might proudly exhibit their new son to his grandparents. But Congress, as usual, had difficulty in terminating its proceedings. It was not until 21 July that the Wattersons were free to leave for the comparative coolness of Beech Grove. Thus began for the infant Henry the annual migrations between Washington and Tennessee that were to mark his childhood.

Harvey Watterson, with a hard campaign to face, had little time for rest. The Whigs, taking a lesson from the long triumphant Jacksonian Democrats, were bidding for the vote of the Common Man. With the old Indian fighter, William Henry Harrison, as their candidate and with a platform built out of log cabins and hard cider they swept to victory. Even Tennessee, the home of Old Hickory, gave its electoral votes to a new hero, Tippecanoe. As Harvey Watterson often said, the year 1840 was 'a bad year for Democrats. I am afraid my boy will grow up to be a Whig.'<sup>8</sup> But at least the Ninth Congressional district remained loyal to the Jacksonian standard, and Watterson was re-elected to another term in Congress.

The elections over, the Wattersons returned to Washington for the second, 'lame duck' session of the Twenty-sixth Congress. Unlike many of his fellow Democrats who had failed to survive the Whig storm, Harvey Watterson could re-establish himself and his family in Washington with some feeling of security. The city no longer seemed quite so large and overwhelming as it had. There were to be no long, lonely hours for Talitha, for with ample funds from Harvey's father the Wattersons could afford and were now accepted into the best society that centered around the Willard and Brown hotels. A nursemaid, a young capable Irish girl, was found for Henry so that Talitha might enjoy the many events of this society.

On 4 March 1841 General Harrison was inaugurated as the first Whig President of the United States. One month later the old General was dead, and his successor, John Tyler of Virginia, felt it necessary to call the new Congress into special session. The

Wattersons gave up all hopes of returning to Tennessee that summer. It was during the heat of August that the eighteen-month-old Henry fell ill of what was then diagnosed simply as 'summer colic.' When one morning it appeared to his devout Catholic nurse that he could not possibly survive the day, she decided that he should not suffer eternal damnation simply because he had been born to heretical parents. She snatched up the infant and took him around the corner to St. Matthew's church to be properly baptized and saved. Whenever in later life he was asked about his religious affiliations, Henry Watterson always enjoyed saying, 'I was born in the Presbyterian Church, baptized in the Roman Catholic Church, educated in the Church of England in America, and married into the Church of the Disciples . . . Surely I have never felt or been the worse for it.'<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps because of the nurse's devoted spiritual and physical attentions, young Henry survived this illness. With the return of cooler weather, he seemed to be fully recovered. But he was not to be a very strong child and his health continued to be of concern to his parents throughout his childhood.

In spite of domestic difficulties and congressional duties, however, Harvey Watterson managed to enjoy his life in Washington. He had found a comrade in the handsome young Senator from New Hampshire, Franklin Pierce, and their escapades enlivened the talk at many a Washington tea party. It was one story in particular, that of finding the two young legislators in a most jovial mood, standing up to their necks in water in the Washington Canal, that prompted rather decisive action from both their families.<sup>10</sup> Pierce, whose wife had never been happy in Washington, resigned from the Senate in 1842 and hastened back to the New Hampshire hills.

Harvey Watterson's exile proved to be even more remote. Not even the fact that he had been elected vice-president of the newly organized Congressional Temperance Society could alter his father's decision that he must leave Washington.<sup>11</sup> Instead of running for re-election in 1842, through parental influence, he was sent by President Tyler to be a special emissary at Buenos Aires to report on trade and to keep an eye on the war that the Argentine nation was then waging on its unhappy little neighbor, Uruguay.<sup>12</sup>

Talitha Watterson did not accompany her husband on this long

and uncertain trip. To take their small son was out of the question, and to leave him behind for two or three years was for Talitha also impossible. Henry was by now a lively little boy, usually in the highest of spirits, but Talitha continued to worry about his health. So with the departure of Harvey for Argentina, in the spring of 1843, Talitha took her small son back to her family home in Maury county. The next two years were the most settled and probably the quietest in Henry Watterson's life. His mother spent most of her time with her small son, teaching him how to read and giving him his first piano lessons.<sup>13</sup>

It was during this time that Henry suffered from a severe case of scarlet fever. The after effect was to weaken his eyes so greatly that, even before a childhood accident completely destroyed the vision in his right eye, he often found ordinary light unbearable and reading all but impossible.<sup>14</sup> But from his mother, Henry got his almost intuitive quickness of mind that was to aid him greatly in overcoming the handicap of near blindness. In later years, he became so adept at quick scanning in order to save his eyesight, that to associates it often seemed that he could take in a whole page at a single glance.<sup>15</sup>

Harvey Watterson's mission to Latin America was a distinct failure. He had been in Buenos Aires only a few months when he received word that the Senate, hostile toward Tyler because of the President's frequent vetoes, had turned down Watterson's appointment.<sup>16</sup> There was no regret on Harvey's part when he received word that he must return home with his mission unfulfilled. He was lonesome for his friends, his life in Washington, and, above all, for his wife and child.

By the late spring of 1845 he was back home. The political scene had changed considerably during his absence. His old Tennessee comrade, James Polk, was the newly inaugurated President of the United States. Polk was a secretive, determined man, little understood by his contemporaries — and until recently greatly underestimated by the succeeding generations of historians. There was no place in his announced program for old debts to pay or old scores to settle. Harvey Watterson might well have expected some political preference from his old friend, but there is no evidence that Polk ever made any offers. The President had already an-

nounced himself as being opposed to Jackson's uninhibited spoils system.

Harvey Watterson was determined, nevertheless, to get back into politics. He ran for the state Senate in the fall elections of 1845 and was elected. The Senate then chose him as its president, a position in Tennessee synonymous with that of lieutenant-governor. For the next two years he divided his time between his legislative duties and his father's railroad construction. He also became a partner in the company that Amos Kendall had founded to build a telegraph connecting Louisville, Nashville, Memphis, and New Orleans.<sup>17</sup> With these commercial activities, both William and Harvey Watterson had become leaders in the ante-bellum movement for an industrialized South. As a mere child, Henry heard from both his father and grandfather the gospel of a New South which he himself would later preach.

In 1847, Harvey Watterson was not re-elected to the state Senate. He took his family back to his father's house, but he could not divorce himself from politics nor resist the lure of Washington. The migrations began again between Tennessee and the nation's capital, even though Watterson went in no official capacity. Talitha was delighted to return to Washington and the Wattersons were quickly accepted back into the society they had left. Henry, now seven, became the darling of Washington matrons and august statesmen. At an age when most children are playing marbles, Henry was dining at the White House with Polk or Taylor, reading volumes of history and biography in the Library of Congress, or playing at being page-boy on the floor of the House.<sup>18</sup> Being an only child of socially prominent parents, living in hotels or rented rooms or with his grandparents in Tennessee, he was growing up in an adult world with little opportunity to associate with other children.

It was hardly surprising that already the absorbing passion of his life was politics. Too young to be a page, he was nevertheless given the run of the Capitol. There he would listen by the hour to the florid speeches that dwelt upon the already serious rift between North and South. Sectionalism could not be ignored in 1848 as the nation prepared to divide the spoils from its conquest of Mexico. Most people, to be sure, dismissed the angry words in Congress as mere talk. The capital was a border city, dependent

upon national harmony for its existence, its very creation a symbol of compromise for union. Only a child might become alarmed over the brandished fists or believe that the ugly words which the nation's representatives yelled at each other were to be taken seriously. Since the time of Jefferson and Hamilton, the boy was told, men had always shouted and stormed in Congress. It meant nothing. Henry's parents, along with most of their friends, the Clays, the Pryors, and the Douglasses, felt that only the universe itself was more secure than the American union.

But the small boy listened and wondered. One cold afternoon in February 1848, he watched as an innocuous little resolution offering the customary 'thanks of Congress' to several generals of Winfield Scott's army was proposed by Lucien Chase of Tennessee. At once there were angry words and a motion was made by another Tennessean, a Whig, to refer the resolution to a committee. But as the Speaker prepared to put the question to a vote, he was interrupted by a cry of 'Stop!' <sup>19</sup> Henry looked up to see a little old bald-headed gentleman, who had often taken Henry into the Library of Congress to get him books, slip from his seat to the floor. Several representatives gently carried John Quincy Adams into the Speaker's room, with Henry following in the crowd and kneeling by the sofa 'with an improvised fan and crying as if my heart would break,' while the old man lay dying. <sup>20</sup>

So Henry, as spectator and occasionally participant, learned a great deal in these early years, and Washington already had the same fascination for him it had for his father. Late each spring, however, the Wattersons would return to Tennessee. Henry did not enjoy these constant migrations by stagecoach, and often as a child, he wished for a home that he could call his own. <sup>21</sup>

After the excitement of Washington, the months spent on the plantations of his two grandfathers seemed endlessly long. There was little to break the slumbering monotony of the summer days, and only a few incidents were to stand out distinctly in after years. He later recalled being taken, as a child of four, to a great mansion some distance from his grandfather Watterson's home and there being lifted up into the lap of a fierce looking old man with a blazing shock of white hair and being told that this was 'Andrew Jackson, the greatest President this country has ever had.' <sup>22</sup>

At another time, when he was somewhat older, he was taken by

his parents to an outdoor camp meeting to hear the renowned Henry Bascom, greatest of the Southern revivalist ministers. Although not understanding all of the words, Henry had been deeply moved by the great rolling torrent of words issuing from this man which swept out over the audience. Young as he was, Henry had sensed the effect that a frankly emotional appeal could have, and that evening was an experience that would remain vivid to him all of his life.<sup>23</sup>

But such events as camp meetings were rare. Being excluded from the society of the only children on the two plantations, the children of the slaves, he was largely dependent upon the companionship of his grandfathers. Grandfather Watterson was too busy a man to give Henry much attention, but on occasions, his grandfather Black would tell him wonderful stories of early days in Tennessee, and of his great-grandfather Billy Morrison, fighting the British in Pennsylvania and later the Indians in Kentucky, and of an even more remote ancestor, a sixteenth-century clergyman, David Black, who had dared to cry from his pulpit, 'Harlot,' at both Queen Elizabeth and Mary Stuart, and had gone to prison for his forthrightness. With his pride in ancestry, James Black was instilling in his young grandson a love for history which Henry would never lose.<sup>24</sup>

Mostly, however, the boy was left to his own devices, and for a lonely child piano playing proved to be a satisfying solace. Henry had begun to play the piano at the age of four under his mother's instruction. At eight while in Washington, he began the serious study of music with a Professor Schnell, a German refugee living in Georgetown. Henry would spend long hours in a semi-darkened room practicing Bach, Handel, and Mozart while his mother sat by to make sure that he rested occasionally in order not to overtax his eyes.<sup>25</sup>

It was during this time that the Wattersons took a trip to New York and while staying at the Union Place Hotel, they met the Patti family. Adelina Patti, only seven, already showed promise of a remarkable voice. Three years later in Washington, the children met again as performers at a charity concert. The twelve-year-old Henry played 'Home, Sweet Home,' and Adelina sang 'The Last Rose of Summer.' The audience gave them an ovation. Henry, greatly enjoying the applause, quickly sat down again and played



'Old Folks at Home,' which he had taught to Adelina, and she sang the words. 'Then,' Watterson remembered fondly, 'they fairly took the roof off.'<sup>26</sup>

Watterson began to dream of being another child prodigy like Mozart. But an accident intervened; a bone felon developed, necessitating the removal of one thumb to the first knuckle.<sup>27</sup> Music, however, remained always a source of comfort and a means of releasing pent-up emotions in later life. Moreover, he attributed his skill as a writer to, 'my ear for music, my appreciation of cadence . . . I do not write by rule of thumb but by ear.'<sup>28</sup>

In 1849, Harvey Watterson, wearying of these purposeless nomadic wanderings between Washington and his father's plantation, decided to re-enter politics, this time as a party journalist. He took his family to Nashville where he purchased the *Union*, then edited by A. O. P. Nicholson. As editor, Harvey could have the political influence he sought, for since its founding by Jeremiah Harris in the 1830's, the *Union* had been the leading Democratic newspaper in the Southwest, a Jackson organ and later for Polk, committed to vigorous nationalism and westward expansion.

Although young Henry had enjoyed life in Washington, he was to find that Nashville was not without its own particular attractions. The second largest city in Tennessee with a population of over ten thousand, it combined the quiet charm of a Southern country town with the raw, rude energy of a Western river city. Henry, unhampered by conventional school hours, could explore and investigate the narrow streets and busy wharves to his curious heart's content. Each morning, he would accompany the cook to the city market on Market Street near the river, where the farmers would line up their wagons to display their products—turnips and potatoes, wild fox grapes and flame-colored persimmons, jugs of sorghum molasses, 'pyor' honey and fresh cider, and the crudely manufactured articles of winter evenings, split bottom chairs and leather halters and bridles. Here Henry could catch the latest gossip and hear the rich beauty of Negro voices. Just a block away were the even more exciting wharves where flat heel boats were loaded with bales of cotton, tobacco, and hemp for their journey down the river to the Ohio. In Nashville there was a vitality, a feel of muscular action, which Washington did not have.

Henry became familiar with it all, from the ornate brick mansions with intricate iron fences on Cedar Knob next to the unfinished State Capitol, to the cavernous wharf-houses and dilapidated shacks of the Negroes. He soon knew all of the interesting people, from the gracious Mrs. Polk, living in lonely splendor in the house that had once belonged to Senator Felix Grundy, to the noted gambler, Oliver 'Chunky' Towles, whose lessons were to make Henry a master of draw poker for the rest of his life.<sup>20</sup>

Around the public square was the business district, low one-and-a-half-story brick buildings, not unlike the business district in any small western city of 1850. It was here just off the square that the Nashville *Union* was located. In this printing office Henry Watterson received his first lessons in journalism. His father's editorial policy was simple: to curse the dominant Whigs and Southern hot-heads and to hew to the line of Jacksonian Democracy and nationalism. There were at least nine papers in Nashville at the time, but only two gave Harvey Watterson much trouble, the *Daily True Whig* and the *American*. The former was the organ of the Whig John Bell, and against it Watterson sniped with true Democratic zeal. But it was against the *American* that the *Union* opened its big guns, for although a Democratic paper, it spoke not in the tones of Old Hickory, but those of the Southern extremists, Robert Barnwell Rhett and William Yancey. The emphasis that 'the *American* Fire-eaters,' as Watterson called his journalistic rival, gave to states' rights seemed a far greater threat than Mr. Clay's Whig party. In fact, on the most crucial issue of the day, the proposed compromise over the recently acquired territory from Mexico, one could look in vain for any real editorial difference between the *True Whig* and the *Union*.

Here Henry got not only the first printer's ink on his hands but also his first schooling in the two doctrines that were to be the cardinal political tenets of his life: the Union and the Democratic party. His father's political mentors became Henry's first heroes, particularly the magisterial Lewis Cass of Michigan, the unsuccessful Democratic candidate for the Presidency in 1848. Stephen A. Douglas was another favorite. Both Harvey Watterson and his son were staunch supporters of the Little Giant whose star seemed in the ascendancy in 1850.

The most immediate political problem that faced Harvey Wat-

terson in his first months as editor was the Congressional debate over the question of the extension of slavery into the newly acquired territory of the Far West. Cass had joined hands with Webster and Clay for compromise of the issue, and whither Cass went so went the *Nashville Union*. Watterson wrote angry editorials directed at those Southerners who would destroy the Federal union. He asserted that they were little better than the abolitionists. He was not, to be sure, swimming against the current of public opinion in Tennessee, for most men were supporting the Compromise and Union in both the Whig and the Democratic parties.

All of the current strife was particularly irritating to Harvey, who was much more concerned with the progress of the South as a section within the union than with the protection of the 'peculiar institution,' which he felt modern industry would make obsolete. Although reared on a Southern plantation, he held no brief for slavery, and in this attitude he would also indoctrinate his son.

Henry Watterson would later tell in one of his most celebrated orations of the only slave he ever owned, a young man called Isaac. This slave was given to him when he was a child by his grandfather after Henry attempted to stop an overseer from beating Isaac. Henry gave the slave his freedom, and Isaac died in battle on the side of the Union. 'I cannot recall the time,' Watterson wrote, 'when I was not passionately opposed to slavery, a crank on the subject of personal liberty, if I am a crank about anything.'<sup>80</sup> Clearly Harvey Watterson and his son were not the usual products of a Southern plantation.

When the various measures making up the Compromise of 1850 were passed by Congress and signed by President Fillmore, the whole nation celebrated this 'final' settlement. Such public figures as Clay, Webster, Lewis Cass, and Alexander Stephens have been rightly praised by history as the men who had saved the day. But the hundreds of Harvey Wattersons throughout the South and West whose writings and speeches for conciliation had made possible a public opinion that demanded a peaceful settlement should not be forgotten.

In the fall of 1851, Harvey Watterson, in recognition of his efforts in behalf of Cass and the conservative Northern wing of the Democratic party, was asked to come to Washington to become an assistant editor of the *Washington Union*. Robert Arm-

strong, a close friend of William Watterson and a fellow officer in the War of 1812, was the *Union's* proprietor, and another Tennessean, Jackson's adopted son, Andrew Jackson Donelson, was its editor. Harvey Watterson was thus assured of congenial employers. In October 1851 he wrote from Nashville to a former associate on the Nashville *Union*, Charles Eames: 'The disposition I have made of the Union office is just to my notion—and I feel like a new man.'<sup>31</sup> Obviously he was delighted at the opportunity to return to Washington.

The Wattersons were back in the nation's capital in time for the campaign of 1852, and Harvey became interested in the talk that the Democratic nomination might possibly go to his old drinking companion of ten years before, Franklin Pierce. Preposterous as this possibility seemed, Watterson was willing to work for Pierce, partly out of friendship, partly because Pierce, who apparently represented neither the Northern nor the Southern faction, might be able to save the party from the threatening schism. Young Henry, listening attentively around Kimball's livery stable, whose proprietor, a former New Hampshire man, had established a sort of unofficial Pierce headquarters, reported to his father on all developments. Thus Henry was with the Pierce movement early in the day.<sup>32</sup>

When the Democratic convention met in Baltimore on 1 June, it found itself hopelessly deadlocked between Cass and James Buchanan. For days the two factions refused to yield and then on 5 June, Harvey Watterson heard to his delight that on the forty-ninth ballot a landslide of votes from weary delegates had given the nomination to Franklin Pierce.

To the country at large the first reaction upon hearing of the nomination was that expressed by young Henry's poker teacher, 'Chunky' Towles, who asked in bewilderment, 'Who the hell is Franklin Pierce?' Henry later boasted: 'I could tell all about Gen. Franklin Pierce. His nomination came as no surprise to me.'<sup>33</sup> Young Henry had had his first glimpse of the exciting behind-the-scenes life of national politics and had enjoyed it immensely. He was learning that livery stables and newspaper offices could be as important in politics as executive mansions and Senate chambers.

The election of Pierce assured the Wattersons of their position in Washington, for Pierce was not the man to forget old friends,

and he made the *Washington Union* his official organ, giving it all the printing contracts that were within his power to bestow. The Wattersons were then living at the Willard Hotel, the companions of General Cass, who had recently lost his wife, and Talitha was serving as chaperone for General Cass's daughter. Harvey Watterson, soon after the inauguration of Pierce, had been raised to the position of co-editor with A. O. P. Nicholson, and was even more deeply involved in administrative politics. He and his young son were frequent visitors to the White House. Although Pierce always greeted them warmly, the sensitive boy found it a bleak place, for Pierce's young son, Benjamin, had been killed in a railway accident just prior to his father's inauguration. Henry recalled as one of the saddest episodes of his childhood his first visit to the White House after the inauguration, 'where a lady in black took me in her arms and convulsively held me there, weeping as if her heart would break.' <sup>34</sup>

Henry was twelve years old and had never attended a school. His mother had diligently tutored him from the time he was five and that, along with his insatiable curiosity about books and men, had given him an education superior to most children his age. His parents, however, felt that he needed youthful companionship. They selected a school in Philadelphia, the Academy of the Protestant Episcopal Church, conducted by an eminent theologian and educator, George Emlen Hare.

Henry spent four years in this school, the only formal education he ever received. Undoubtedly he found the disciplinary standards of the school irksome, for the austere Hare had a quite different view of the proper handling of young boys from that held by Talitha Watterson. A fellow student of Henry's wrote: 'There was a solidity and solemnity about the ministry of Dr. Hare in dealing with the boys which had in it a feeling that it was a slice out of the day of judgment.' <sup>35</sup> There is no record of Henry's being locked up by the janitor, the prescribed punishment for those failing in their lessons, but on occasions the free and exciting hotel life of Washington must have seemed very far away to the young boy who was receiving his first real taste of discipline.

Barred from most of the athletic activities of his schoolmates because of his poor eyesight, Henry turned to journalism. Already showing marked evidence of the same charm of personality that

had made his father a favorite in Washington, he was soon elected editor of the school paper, *The Ciceronian*. For the first time there appeared at a masthead the words, 'Henry Watterson, Editor.' So successful did he prove that the rule restricting the editorship to a one-year term was suspended for the only time in the history of the Academy to allow Henry to hold office all four years.<sup>30</sup>

During vacations Henry, delighted to be released from the Rev. Dr. Hare's strict regimen, would hurry back to Washington and the life that he loved. Unfortunately, Harvey Watterson did not find the current political situation in Washington as entertaining as did his son. Nor was the Washington *Union* under Armstrong, Nicholson, and Watterson the same paper that it had been in the time of Francis Blair. A political journal, like a mirror, can only reflect what appears before it, and the smiling Mr. Pierce could only appear in his journal to be what in truth he was — weak and vacillating. Pierce's only strategy in meeting the possibility of a grave schism between the Northern and Southern branches of the party was an attempt to placate both sides with promises and to avoid taking a stand on any controversial issue. His paper was to follow the same conciliatory line. As a result, Pierce satisfied neither faction, and the *Union* lost all of its former prestige.

The disfavor with which the paper was now regarded was strikingly revealed in December 1853 when the Senate turned down Pierce's request to make Armstrong its official printer and gave that job to Beverly Tucker, a notorious Southern fire-cater whom Harvey Watterson despised. The *Union* had fallen on unhappy days. Two steeds were attempting to gallop away in opposite directions with the Democratic party, and Pierce and his newspaper were finding it difficult to stay in both saddles. A short time later, when Pierce, deciding it had to be one horse or the other, chose the one headed South, Watterson refused to ride along.

Ironically enough, it was his political favorite, Stephen A. Douglas, who forced the issue and brought to an end Harvey's career as a Washington editor. The ill-starred Kansas-Nebraska bill was proposed by Douglas in January 1854. As first stated, the bill simply provided for the organization of the Nebraska territory and left the final settlement of the slave question until Nebraska should become a state, 'with or without slavery as their constitution may prescribe at the time of their admission.' It was assumed that the ter-

ritory, being a part of the free area established by the Missouri Compromise, would be prevented by Congress from admitting slaves until Nebraska should apply for statehood.

In this simple form and with this sort of interpretation, the bill received the *Union's* unqualified support. Douglas's bill, however, did not remain constant. First, it was announced that through a 'typographical error' an important clause had been left out of the official printing of the bill, a clause giving the people of the territory, rather than Congress, the right to decide on the slavery question while Nebraska still remained a territory. This article purposely left the status of the Missouri Compromise vague—too vague to satisfy the South. On Monday, 16 January, Archibald Dixon, Senator from Kentucky, proposed an amendment which would specifically repeal the Missouri Compromise. This made the bill quite a different proposal from that which Douglas had first submitted.

Watterson had not bargained for this in his initial support of the bill. At once, the *Union*, without waiting for a cue from the White House, came out in opposition to the bill as elaborated upon by Dixon. From Tuesday, 17 January, until Friday, 20 January, the paper decried the bill. And then quite suddenly, on 22 January, it reversed itself and presented long and cogent arguments in behalf of the bill, Dixon amendment and all. Obviously, something had happened on Saturday. The paper, already low in prestige, must have been told by the Southern Democrats that its life was dependent upon the support that it gave the Kansas-Nebraska bill. Nicholson could see the force of this argument only too well and prepared to surrender. Armstrong, already sick and with only a month of life left to him, had no desire to fight his party. He also acquiesced. Only Harvey Watterson wore a coat that was not reversible. He felt the national Union was more worthy of preservation than the Washington *Union* and he realized that this bill not only threatened the dissolution of the Democratic party but also that of the nation. He was to offer his son an example that Henry would remember sixty-five years later: when you are out of step with your paper and can no longer control it, you don't change step, you change jobs. Harvey Watterson resigned.

President Pierce, unhappy to see an old friend depart in anger, offered Watterson the governorship of Oregon and assurance of

his political influence to make Watterson a Senator when that territory should become a state.<sup>37</sup> Watterson was not to be placated, however. He took his family home to Tennessee. The winds of passion were rising, and Harvey felt the destructive potentiality of the cyclone that was already forming on the flat Kansas plains. Perhaps there was still a chance to divert the storm and keep it from sweeping across Tennessee. At least, he intended to try.



## TWO

### A Reporter-at-Large

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1856—1861

THE WATTERSONS, upon leaving Washington, settled in the small town of McMinnville in the heart of the central basin of Tennessee. Harvey may have engaged in a desultory law practice, but the principal source of his income was the inheritance from his father, who had died in 1851. Harvey's only real interest now was in rallying Union sentiment in this border state.

Young Henry continued in school for two years after his family returned to Tennessee. It was a difficult time for a boy to keep his mind on studies. The very air was crackling with adventure and the days of the freebooters seemed to have returned again. Even with almost half the country still to settle, Southerners were looking for other lands to conquer. With William Walker taking over Nicaragua and Narciso Lopez leading his band of young Southern cavaliers to Cuba and death, with Harvey's old paper, the *Washington Union*, screaming for war, and our ministers to Great Britain, France, and Spain meeting at Ostend to proclaim our God-given right to Cuba, it was as if America, intoxicated from the Mexican War, wished to drink more deeply from the barrel labeled 'manifest destiny.' It was in these years that young Henry acquired his faith in an imperialistic America stretching out over the whole

hemisphere, a faith that remained unshaken throughout his life.

There were other tales of adventure to thrill a young boy and to divert his attention from lectures on Greek philosophy. There were the proud clipper ships, making sailing records that would last for all time. The *Red Jacket* and *Westward Ho!*, *Young America* and *Great Republic*, *Flying Cloud* and *Sea Witch*—the very names were worthy of Homer. And the ships themselves—never before had man been able to translate wood, cloth, and rope into such poetry as had Mr. McKay of Boston. Henry must have seen some of these ships alongside the docks in Philadelphia. One instinctively thought of towering cumulus clouds sailing to far distant lands, to China and the recently opened Japan. It was difficult to climb down from these aerial dreams and to board the cramped wood-burning train for McMinnville, Tennessee.

In June 1856 Henry had finished his four years at the Academy in Philadelphia. Because of his eyes, his parents decided against a college education for him. Instead, he returned to Tennessee to be tutored by a Presbyterian minister, James Poindexter, in rhetoric, English composition, and public speaking.<sup>1</sup> A reading and dramatic club was organized by Poindexter, and Henry, who always was to be dazzled by footlights, entered into its activities with enthusiasm. The young people met at different homes, entertained each other with elaborately gestured readings, drank blackberry wine, and discussed plans for presenting plays to the public with a volunteer stage manager, Mr. Folemette. In due time a play was given in the old concert hall in McMinnville, and Henry starred in the title role of 'The Golden Farmer.' So gratifying was the reception that, against the advice of Mr. Poindexter, the company decided to present the play a second time, which proved its undoing. The leading lady forgot her lines and retired from the stage in tears, while Mr. Folemette hastily brought down the curtain. The unfortunate occurrence in no way lessened Henry's affection for the theater.<sup>2</sup>

Of more practical value than Poindexter's lessons as an education for the future was the printing press which Harvey Watterson gave his son in the summer of 1856. By October, Henry was publishing a small two-page broadside with the optimistic title, 'The New Era.' The first editorial was 'a bugle note' to the Democratic party to stand firm, elect Buchanan, and save the country from the disintegration which would result if the Black Republican,

Frémont, should be elected. So roundly did Henry curse the Republicans that the ultra-Southern Nashville *American* printed the editorial the following day, and it was reprinted in the *Washington Union* and in Democratic papers throughout the East. At sixteen young Henry had experienced the greatest thrill that can come to a country editor, that of having one of his editorials receive nationwide distribution. He felt 'knocked out completely.'<sup>3</sup>

For two years he continued in McMinnville as editor of his small paper, reporting weddings and funerals, farm sales, and important guests at the nearby Beersheba Springs. On occasion he turned to survey the national scene. He applauded all events that promised national unity and prosperous growth, and he vigorously condemned all attempts to widen the breach between sections. More and more he looked to the Northwest to stand by the South for the preservation of the Union, and he became convinced that the future hope of the country lay with the Little Giant of Illinois. With almost no assistance, he learned how to make up a paper, set type and, most important of all, to write in a style that would catch the public's attention.

By 1858 he felt ready for a wider scene. With characteristic audacity, he jumped from a small country town to New York. He was no open-mouthed rustic, but the confident young sophisticate returning to metropolitan life after a period of voluntary rural seclusion. He had already had a few poems accepted by *Harper's Weekly*, and he felt that it was only a question of time until he would be an accepted member of New York's literary set. Charles A. Dana, vigorous young assistant to Greeley on the *Tribune*, paid him five dollars on 'space,' which helped tide him over while he looked for regular work.<sup>4</sup>

He got a room on Elm Street in lower Manhattan and found congenial companions in two young brothers, Bentley and Sam Matthews, who shared an adjoining room. They flattered him by regarding him as a worldly man of affairs. Henry Raymond, editor of the *Times*, heard Watterson play the piano and hired him as substitute music critic during the absence of the regular critic, Mr. Seymour.

New York was already the financial and commercial capital of the nation, and, more important to Henry, the journalistic and literary center as well. Here he saw the picturesque white-coated

figure of Horace Greeley and gazed in awe through an open window at the elder James Gordon Bennett at work in the *Herald* office. As critic, he had the pleasure of reporting the first operatic performance of his childhood musical companion, Adelina Patti, who made her debut in the winter of 1858 in the opera *La Sonnambula*. Each night after turning in his review, he would return home to find the Matthewses ready with coffee and eager to hear of his day's activities. He would sit down at the piano in his room and play the airs that he heard at that evening's performance, picking out the chords from memory. On the evenings that he did not attend a concert, he read them selections from his favorite novelist, Thackeray. He was never to have a more appreciative audience.<sup>5</sup>

Though Raymond was willing to keep him on in some capacity after the return of Seymour, young Watterson was not happy. He was living alone in what must have seemed to him an alien city. For the first time in his life, the name Watterson held no magic that automatically opened doors. The boy was lonesome for the hospitality of the South. Till then, having spent his life in the border region of Washington and Tennessee, he had tended to underestimate the cultural differences between North and South, but now he saw some justice to the deep South's claim of having a different civilization.

Sometime in late November or early December 1858, Watterson packed his bags and returned to a city he loved and where all doors were open. He at once obtained rooms at the Willard Hotel and he was at home again. He was desolated in December that an illness caused him to miss the most important social event of the season, Mrs. William Gwin's fancy-dress ball, which he had planned to attend as a dashing Spanish cavalier.<sup>6</sup> Watterson at nineteen was a handsome youth. He wore his blond sandy hair long in the fashion of the day, and that, along with his thin, rather pale countenance, gave him the proper poetic, slightly unhealthy appearance that aroused warm maternal feelings in many a Southern lady's bosom. With his wit and polished manners, he was once more the darling of Washington society.

Watterson had arrived in Washington with no assurance of employment, but he was certain that he could obtain a job on a newspaper to tide him over until his literary ambitions should be realized. He was already at work adapting Cooper's *The Spy* into

a three-act play, and he had vague ideas for the great American novel.<sup>7</sup> He was happy to find employment on the *Washington States*, a strong states' rights paper but also committed to the preservation of the Union. The *States* had been established by Major John Heiss, along with Ritchie of the *Union*. The main purpose for its existence was to serve as an editorial rostrum for Colonel Ambrose Dudley Mann of Virginia, who had been assistant secretary of state under Pierce. Roger Pryor was the nominal editor-in-chief, but Heiss and Mann actually put out the paper, Mann writing most of the editorials. Young Watterson's job was to serve as a reporter and as a go-between from Heiss to Mann, who wished to keep his association with the paper a secret. Mann's editorials were bombastic utterances exhorting the South to develop a strong economic life independent of the North, a program in which Mann had been an early leader.<sup>8</sup>

Watterson learned much in his role, as he described it, of 'a kind of fetch-and-carry for Major Heiss.' Heiss was a wise old political journalist, veteran of many a combat as editor of the *Nashville Union*, *Washington Union*, and *New Orleans Crescent*. Watterson could have asked for no better teacher.

It was here also in the office of the *States* that he became acquainted with the remarkable Mrs. Jane Casneau. A woman of tremendous spirit, she wrote leaders for the paper and her one mission was to incorporate all of Central America into the Federal Union. From her, Henry received further indoctrination in the desirability of American expansion. A friend of Talitha Watterson, she took the young man under her guidance, teaching him how to write, and he was later to admit that 'whatever I may have attained in that line I largely owe to her.'<sup>9</sup>

Mrs. Casneau had learned the value of the short descriptive phrase; it was she who dubbed General Scott 'Old Fuss and Feathers,' and who hailed her hero, William Walker, as 'the gray-eyed man of destiny.' Watterson was an apt pupil and much of his later fame rested upon his ability to strike out with a short phrase that could deflate the most exalted politicians.

Watterson's closest friend on the paper was a young Irishman named Jack Savage, who, along with his friends, 'made a pretty good Irishman' of Watterson. He always felt that these friends helped his writing, for they had a ready wit and sensitivity, traits

that were not unnatural to Watterson himself. But 'they were a wild lot,' and could show Henry a side of Washington that he would not find in the parlor of Mrs. Pryor or the Library of Congress. Undoubtedly his poker lessons from 'Chunky' Towles stood him in good stead in these days.<sup>10</sup>

These were happy months for young Watterson. His father and mother joined him part of the time in what seemed a revival of the early chapters of his life. Harvey Watterson had lost greatly in the panic of 1857 and, never one to stint himself or his family, by 1859 had spent most of the inheritance received from his father. To a great extent the Wattersons were dependent upon their son's earnings. Soon after accepting employment on the *States*, Henry became Washington correspondent for Colonel Forney's Philadelphia *Press* and, on occasion, sent articles to the *Democratic Review*, an expansionist magazine in whose pages, in 1845, the term 'Manifest Destiny' had first appeared.<sup>11</sup> In addition to those journalistic activities, he was appointed to a clerkship in the Interior Department through the influence of his father's friend, Secretary Jacob Thompson. This clerkship, he later frankly admitted, was 'a real sinecure' and took little of his time. He soon felt ashamed of this parasitical attachment to the government payroll, and in a letter to Andrew Johnson attempted to explain it by the statement that 'nothing but the extreme moneyed distress of father could induce me to think of official position at all.' 'And,' Watterson continued, 'I think that, committing the honors and emoluments of State to "the vile dust from whence they sprung" I will retire from office like a philosopher, and go to work, like a man, not doubting, that whilst the certain salary of the one would be more convenient, the necessity for action in the latter will, in the end, prove better for a fellow of my go-a-head propensities.'<sup>12</sup>

Young Watterson had his hand in many affairs and was, in his own words, 'doing a "land-office business," with money galore and to spare.'<sup>13</sup> He could be seen in the press gallery of the House, listening intently to the arguments that had grown even more acrimonious than those that he had heard as a child. Or he could be spotted talking earnestly to politicians in the Senate corridors, scribbling notes and then dashing to his next assignment. He lived at too fast a pace and was frequently ill. Mrs. Clement C. Clay, wife of the Senator from Alabama, remembered that on those days that

he had to spend in bed, he would eagerly obtain from the ladies at the hotel all the news they had gathered in their afternoon visits to Congress and would try to piece together a story from their reports.<sup>14</sup>

The most important assignment that Watterson received in 1859 was to go to Harpers Ferry for the story of John Brown's raid. He arrived at noon on 18 October, just a few short hours after Colonel Lee's troops had taken the engine house. There he met the fanatical old man, undaunted by failure and the death of his two sons. The two made an interesting study in contrasts, this sophisticated boy, product of Southern aristocracy, and the tough old man, brittle remnant of ingrown Calvinism. It is difficult to imagine what words they could have exchanged. Watterson turned away from his interview with ill-concealed disgust. As he walked down the hill with Lieutenant Jeb Stuart, the latter told him the details of the day's fighting. 'The old man is crazy,' said Stuart, and Watterson agreed.<sup>15</sup>

Back in Washington, however, the repudiation of this mad act at Harpers Ferry by both sections of the country seemed to allay any danger, and Washington society remained as oblivious as ever to the possibility of disunion. Lawrence Keitt of South Carolina and Anson Burlingame of Massachusetts might hurl angry words at each other in the House of Representatives over the recent brutal caning of Senator Sumner by Preston Brooks, but afterward they would dine together in public restaurants. All of his political mentors continued to assure Watterson that, in spite of differences, there was no real threat to the Union.

Watterson, however, was ready to make a stand. The only hope for a united nation lay with the Democratic party, and the only hope for a united Democratic party lay with a candidate from the Northwest. He looked on the Southern 'hot-heads,' Yancey and Jefferson Davis, with as much distrust as he regarded the abolitionists, William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips. Kentucky and Tennessee, the homes of Clay and Jackson, must stand in close alliance with Illinois and Indiana against both Massachusetts and South Carolina if the Union was to be preserved. His candidate for 1860 was Stephen A. Douglas, who, Watterson felt, combined the conciliatory attitude of Clay with the rugged western nationalism of Jackson. He fervently hoped for success as he watched 'the

good men of the North and the good men of the South bravely, nobly join heart and hand to maintain the compromises on which the Union rested.' <sup>16</sup>

As for President Buchanan, Watterson had only cold contempt. 'I could never endure Mr. Buchanan. His very voice gave offense to me.' Part of the reason for this feeling of dislike was purely personal, as Watterson admitted. Soon after he started work in Washington he had written a sketch of the President. A short time later, he called at the White House, expecting a warm welcome, for Buchanan was an old acquaintance of his father. Instead he was received coldly and the article he had written was subjected to severe criticism. 'I came away from the White House my *amour propre* wounded, and though I had not far to go went straight into the Douglas camp.' <sup>17</sup>

Curiously enough, neither Harvey nor Henry Watterson seemed to hold any resentment toward Douglas for having been the author of the Kansas-Nebraska bill. Perhaps by then they felt he was the only hope of the party, perhaps they loved him for the enemies he had made. At any rate, when he broke with Buchanan over the proposed pro-slavery constitution for Kansas, he ran straight into their arms.

In the spring of 1860 Harvey Watterson was chosen as a delegate from Tennessee to the national convention at Charleston. There in the very heart of the secessionist movement he watched in heart-sick dismay as the first Southern delegates left the hall in dispute over the platform. He sprang to his feet and pleaded with them in the name of Andrew Jackson to come back and keep the Democracy intact. When the adjourned convention reassembled in Baltimore he sat staunchly in his seat while the last of the Southern delegates withdrew, and he proudly cast his vote for Douglas.<sup>18</sup> Returning to Tennessee, Harvey Watterson, along with William H. Polk, became the recognized leader of the Union factions in the state. In order to further the candidacy of Douglas he founded a campaign paper, the Nashville *Daily Evening Democrat*. In recognition of his valiant work, he headed the list of Douglas electors in Tennessee.<sup>19</sup> This proved to be an empty honor, however, for in November the state gave her electoral votes to John Bell, the old-time Whig Unionist. The two sectional candidates, Lincoln



and Breckinridge, carried all the other states except the borderland of Kentucky, Maryland, Virginia, and Missouri.

Henry Watterson, back in Washington, continued as a reporter for the *States*, which, having supported Douglas for the Presidency, now seemed at a loss as to which way to go. Henry wrote the dramatic and musical reviews, and also began to work seriously on the Elizabethan drama as part of a larger study to be entitled 'A Biography of the British Drama.'<sup>20</sup>

He saw Senator Douglas almost daily and they attempted to console each other. Watterson, always superstitious about the Presidency, believed that Douglas, like Clay, Calhoun, and Webster, was a man who chased a will-of-the-wisp, being doomed never to attain his long-sought goal. Later he was to write, 'Lincoln's bark rode a flowing tide, Douglas's bark rode an ebbing tide.'<sup>21</sup>

The Southern states began their departure from the Union. The question no longer was one of preserving the Union but of preserving peace. Washington was changing, the Clays of Alabama, the Pryors and Masons of Virginia were going home. The gay society dominated by Southern ladies had come to an end. In Tennessee, Harvey Watterson was fighting a last ditch stand for keeping the state in the Union. He was in close touch with Andrew Johnson, the only Southerner to remain in the Senate, and he was even arranging a truce with his ancient enemy, the violent Whig Unionist, 'Parson' William Brownlow. He campaigned to be chosen a delegate to the convention held in February to consider secession and was overwhelmingly elected.<sup>22</sup> The convention, much to Harvey's relief, was never held, however, for in a special referendum on 9 February, 1861 the people voted by a large majority for the Union and against holding a convention. Watterson could feel that he had won the first round.

But he battled against increasing odds. The governor, Isham Harris, stood openly for secession and, if war came, was determined that Tennessee should join her Southern sisters. Harvey Watterson wrote in desperation to Johnson that the Union '*will live—it must live . . .* The people will have to rise in their majesty and take their destinies in their own hands, or certain madmen will shatter this Union to pieces.' And then in calmer tones he argued that the border states should 'remain steadfast, uniting with Northern Con-

servatives in a just and honorable compromise,' and that if this agreement could be maintained 'peace and friendship would soon return, the cotton states would come back.'<sup>23</sup> But Southern propaganda was widely distributed by Governor Harris and his followers, and only in eastern Tennessee could Harvey Watterson feel that he was holding his ground.

All Washington waited with eager curiosity for the arrival of President-elect Lincoln, no one more eagerly than the bewildered Buchanan. Young Watterson was in the Capitol on the afternoon of the day that Lincoln arrived, and there he was presented to his future hero for the first time. Watterson had heard many exaggerated tales of Lincoln's lack of physical beauty, but as he later remembered: 'His appearance did not impress me as fantastically as it had impressed some others. I was familiar with the Western type, and whilst Mr. Lincoln was not an Adonis even after prairie ideals, there was about him a dignity that commanded respect.' Lincoln greeted the young reporter warmly and flattered him greatly by asking him if he were a member of Congress. Watterson answered that he hoped to be some day.<sup>24</sup>

Watterson won the greatest assignment in his career when he was asked by L. A. Gobright, manager for the Associated Press, to accompany Major Ben Perley Poore in reporting the Lincoln inauguration. Early on the morning of 4 March Watterson found in the keyhole of his bedroom door a note which ordered him to see Colonel Ward H. Lamon for an advance copy of the inaugural speech. Young Watterson had no idea who Colonel Lamon was or where he might be found, but the Willard Hotel would be a logical place to begin a search. Going down the corridor of the second floor, he passed an open door, and saw the tall figure of Lincoln pacing back and forth, manuscript in hand. Lincoln recognized Watterson at once. He introduced him to Ward Lamon in the next room, and in a matter of minutes Watterson was racing back to Major Poore with a copy of the speech.

Later that afternoon, Watterson, with his convenient connections, had an invitation to join the inaugural party, and pushed his way into the center of the Presidential procession which passed through the long passageway and across the rotunda to the east portico. When Lincoln arrived at the inaugural stand, Watterson was right

at his elbow. As Watterson remembered the scene in later years, Lincoln removed his tall stove-pipe hat preparatory to taking the oath of office and seemed at a loss as to where to put it. Watterson reached out eager to take it. But Stephen Douglas, with brilliant inspiration, took the hat and held it during the entire inaugural ceremony to show the crowd the unity of purpose that existed between these two old political enemies.<sup>25</sup>

In later years, when Watterson had come to regard Lincoln as the greatest figure in American history, he was to recall this day as one of the most important of his life and was to write of his reactions to Lincoln's inaugural address: 'I began to comprehend something of the power of the man . . . Firm, resonant, earnest, it [the speech] announced the coming of a man; of a leader of men . . . the voice . . . and the hand of a man born to command.'<sup>26</sup>

His estimate of Lincoln written for the *Washington States* the day after the inauguration, however, does not reveal this same conviction of Lincoln's greatness. 'To do the rail-splitter justice,' Watterson reported matter-of-factly, 'he read it well.' The young reporter also paid close attention to the reaction of the crowd:

Below was spread out several acres of human beings, with upturned faces, eager, excited, fanatical . . . It was a war mass. There was no peace anywhere that day . . . The faces of the Abolitionists present were filled with joy, and not a national man went away except with feelings of profound gloom and foreboding.<sup>27</sup>

After the ceremony, Watterson walked back into the Capitol between John Bell and Reverdy Johnson of Maryland, both former Whigs who, with seven states out of the Union, still could not believe the Rubicon had been reached. 'Their talk marvelled me greatly,' Watterson remembered. They seemed to move in a trance, and each taking the young boy by the arm told him that Lincoln's speech meant peace and all was still right with their beloved Union.<sup>28</sup> But Watterson expected war.

In his autobiography, Watterson said that soon after the inauguration he resigned his position in the Interior Department and, closing his accounts, prepared to leave Washington. It was not until midsummer, after Bull Run, that he actually left, however. In the meantime, he continued as reporter. As the shore batteries in Charleston blasted Fort Sumter, he debated, as did many a Southern

Unionist, what course he should follow. He saw Douglas for the last time on the morning that the Little Giant left on his last speaking tour to persuade his section to stand by Lincoln and the Union. Douglas, sad and prematurely old, gravely asked Watterson what course he would take. Henry answered, 'Judge Douglas, we have both fought to save the Union; you in your great way and I in my small way; and we have lost. I am going to my home in the mountains of Tennessee, where I have a few books, and there I mean to stay.' There were tears in both men's eyes as they bade each other a final farewell.<sup>29</sup> Within the year, Douglas would be dead and Watterson would be serving in the Confederate army.

Although Tennessee was still in the Union in the spring of 1861, letters from Harvey to his son indicated that she too might secede. With Lincoln's call for troops and Virginia's immediate secession, Harvey Watterson feared that the Unionists had little chance of turning the tide in Tennessee. By 20 April, Watterson's former paper, the *Nashville Union*, was telling its readers that the departure of Tennessee was both desirable and inevitable. In eastern Tennessee, which was still loyal to the Union, there was talk of a separatist movement which, if secession should come, would admit that area into the Union as a new state. On 25 April the state legislature met in special session and on 7 May passed a resolution declaring Tennessee an independent state, which would enter into a military alliance with the Confederacy. This extra-constitutional action was to be submitted to the people in June. Watterson, Brownlow, and the followers of Andrew Johnson campaigned valiantly for the defeat of the legislature's action, but they fought a losing battle. On 8 June, by a vote of 104,913 to 47,238, Tennessee joined the Confederacy as the eleventh and last seceding state. Only the eastern farmers and men of the hill country, by a vote of over two to one, had remained loyal to the idea of Union.

If Henry went to Tennessee now, as he had promised Douglas and his family, he would be entering an alien nation. There is no way of knowing how long Watterson might have remained in Washington had his job not ended with the closing down of the *Washington States*, which quietly expired in the early summer of 1861. Even then he hesitated to leave, and for a time he considered a governmental office in Washington. Late in June he wrote Andrew Johnson that Colonel Forney had presented his name to Secretary

Cameron for a position in the War Department that would pay \$1600 a year. Cameron had said he would give Watterson the job if Johnson would recommend him, and Watterson said he was seeking the job only in order to support his parents.<sup>30</sup> There is no record whether Johnson gave the recommendation, but at any rate Watterson never took the job. This letter to Johnson seems to contradict the account by Watterson in his autobiography, in which he stated that soon after Lincoln's inauguration, John W. Forney, on behalf of Simon Cameron, offered him a position as private secretary to Cameron with the rank of lieutenant colonel, but that he scornfully turned down Forney, realizing that he was to be used as a 'confidential middleman' while these two life-long political enemies joined forces in order 'to rob the government.' It is possible that after applying, Watterson discovered what his real function was to be and so turned the position down when it was formally offered to him.

Whatever the explanation may be, the fact remains that Watterson found himself unemployed in July 1861. With Washington becoming a Northern military camp, there seemed little for him to do but carry out his promise of returning to Tennessee to join his father in isolation from the angry storm of war. Nevertheless, it was with reluctance and misgivings that Watterson departed from the city of his birth.

On the roundabout journey home through Pittsburgh and Cincinnati, the train stopped several hours for repairs in a village near the Ohio river. Watterson, sitting on the river bank, suddenly had an almost irresistible desire to throw himself into the stream. All hopes for his nation, his state, his own personal career seemed lost. He felt certain that the life he had left behind him in Washington was the happiest he would ever know. 'I did not know how my heart was wrapped up in it until I had to depart from it,' he wrote.<sup>31</sup> He dreaded what lay ahead: a seceded state, a war-intoxicated people, and most of all, the lonely isolation into which his grieving father had withdrawn and now expected his son to join him. For a young man who had but recently boasted of his 'go-ahead propensities' the future seemed bleak indeed.

Such abject surrender to despair could only be temporary, however. When the train pulled out of the station, Watterson was on board, ready to be carried out of the Union.

## THREE

### A Rebel-at-Large

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1861-1865

HENRY WATTERSON returned to Tennessee fully intending to climb into the ivory tower of neutrality alongside his father. But in time of war, an ivory tower is more easily scaled by one who is fifty than by one who is twenty. Henry quickly tired of the dull routine at Beech Grove. His brave resolution of sitting out the war with only a few books and his own sad thoughts to occupy him had been easily made while he was still in Washington. Now that he was home he began to appreciate for the first time the reality of civil war. Senator Douglas's question 'What course do you intend to take?' had to be answered anew.

Although the term Civil War which history has given to the four-year conflict between two cultures has been criticized by the South as misleading, it has real meaning for a border state such as Tennessee, Kentucky, or Virginia. Here where the two cultures met and one shaded into the other, both the Union and the Confederate armies were invaders. This region had more at stake in the Union than either the free-soil North or the feudal South, and here had been the true home of compromise for Union. No part of the country had tried harder to avert war and no region was to suffer more from it.

With the fall of Fort Sumter, each border state had had to make the dreadful choice. Virginia and Tennessee had listened to their hearts and had chosen the Confederacy. Individual men had had to make the same decision. General Thomas chose the United States, General Lee chose Virginia, and all over the borderland, lesser men took one or the other of the two roads. Harvey Watterson stayed at Beech Grove and wept for his nation; Henry Watterson went to Nashville and fought against that nation. And yet, like Lee, he had little faith in his chosen cause; he hated slavery and thought secession wrong. There is no tragedy in American history greater than this hour of decision for the borderland in 1861.

Watterson, after a restless month at home, decided suddenly to go to Nashville to look around, possibly with the intention of finding newspaper work. But in the state capital he was quickly caught up in the war fever. The young men were leaving, the girls were kissing the boys goodbye, and Watterson soon found the martial music irresistible. 'The boys were all gone to the front. The girls — well, they were all crazy. My native country was about to be invaded. Propinquity. Sympathy. So, casting opinions to the winds in I went on feeling. And that is how I became a rebel, a case of "first endure and then embrace."' <sup>1</sup>

Watterson's career in the Confederate army was to be highly irregular, and it is not known what rank he held during his occasional terms of actual military service. He probably enlisted as a private, but at various times he was staff officer with General Leonidas Polk and Colonel Forrest, chief of scouts for General Joe Johnston and an aide to General Hood. Physically, he was ill-equipped for fighting. His eyesight was poor, and he weighed only eighty pounds. Colonel Forrest often said that he felt Watterson was committing suicide every time he went out on a raid.<sup>2</sup> Watterson was to prove a much more effective rebel with words than with musket shot.

He was in Polk's army in early September 1861, however, as it moved across Tennessee into western Kentucky to occupy Columbus, just down the Mississippi from the Federal guns at Cairo, Illinois. This was hardly a military campaign. The people of Columbus, overwhelmingly Confederate in sympathy, welcomed Polk's troops as deliverers from the Federal troops just across the river.

Watterson was to hear no guns fired, only the angry protests of the Kentucky state officials, attempting to maintain the state's neutrality. The campaign proved costly to the Confederate cause, for Kentucky on 18 September, in protest to this outright invasion, abandoned even the pretense of neutrality and called on Federal troops to expel the Confederates. Polk, for his impetuosity, was relieved of his command though his troops stayed on in Columbus.

Watterson himself did not stay long with this occupying force. He returned home because of illness and by late September 1861 he was back in Nashville. These being still the days when one could take military duty or leave it alone, Watterson casually left the army and accepted a position on the Nashville *Banner* as associate editor.<sup>3</sup> It was the most responsible journalistic position he had held, but it proved to be of short duration.

On the evening of 7 February 1862, the Nashville *Banner* carried the news that one of the twin watchdogs of central Tennessee, Fort Henry on the Tennessee River, had fallen to a hitherto little-known commander, Brigadier General Grant of Illinois. Then events moved rapidly. The fighting storekeeper from Galena swung his army against Fort Donelson, seventy miles down the Cumberland from Nashville. Its capture would make Tennessee's capital untenable. On 16 February the fort fell to the Union forces and Nashville's fate was determined. As General Albert S. Johnston's army retreated through the narrow cobblestone streets, the *Banner* closed its doors. The fall of the city to Generals William Nelson and Carlos Buell on 25 February found the entire editorial staff, including its newest associate editor, in unhappy flight down the Murfreesboro pike to catch up with the retreating Confederacy.<sup>4</sup>

Watterson's re-entry into military service was as casual as had been his departure. While jogging on foot with the panic-stricken refugees from the city, he was overtaken by Colonel Nathan B. Forrest and his cavalymen, the last Confederate troops to leave Nashville. Spotting an empty saddle, Watterson leaped into it and thus became a member of Forrest's cavalry.

He could not have chosen a commander more to his liking or one whose temperament more nearly suited his own. Reckless and impetuous, Forrest, although never commanding an important force, was able to harass the Union army in central Tennessee and north-



ern Alabama through four years of war. Time and time again, by the daring of his attacks he was to threaten such long-established Union positions as Paducah and Nashville. Forrest could promise excitement enough to satisfy any young adventurer, and Watterson got more than he had bargained for. The force made a series of short quick guerrilla raids across Tennessee to Nashville, back east to Huntsville near the Kentucky border, and then across central Tennessee, striking Federal detachments as they went, until they reached the Confederate headquarters at Iuka, Mississippi. It was the sort of fighting Watterson could enjoy; no long days stalled in muddy bivouacs, but a clean jab at the enemy and then back again to headquarters, good hot food and the eager questioning of earth-bound soldiers. 'It was mainly guerrilla service,' wrote Watterson summing up this chapter of his war experience, 'very much to my liking.'<sup>5</sup>

In June Forrest and his company were back in Chattanooga. They had fought in April at Shiloh, where Forrest's squadron, sweeping along the swollen Lick Creek, had protected General Handee's right flank as that corps caught the unsuspecting Union forces at breakfast and smashed them back against the flooded Tennessee. That night in the pouring rain, they had counted it another Confederate victory, but the next day, Forrest's 'critter' company was called to a different kind of duty—to cover Beauregard's retreat. The gallant Southern leader, Albert Sidney Johnston, was dead along with thousands of other men in the steaming land. Neither side could claim a victory although both sides did.

In Chattanooga, Watterson heard of a proposal that interested him greatly, for it sounded like a welcome relief after six months with the fast-moving and death-inviting Forrest. The Bank of Tennessee had purchased a small, run-down newspaper plant and had placed Franc M. Paul, clerk of the state Senate, in charge. It was rumored that Paul was looking for an editor. Watterson made discreet inquiries, and soon after he had accompanied Forrest in another successful raid, this time on Murfreesboro in July, he was approached by Paul. The latter wanted Watterson to come to Chattanooga at once to take over the paper. It was not difficult to persuade Forrest that his aide 'could do more for the Southern cause on the tripod than in the saddle,' Watterson later admitted. So

again the young journalist left the army to return to the print shop. 'Fate,' he concluded, 'if not Nature, had decided that I was a better writer than a fighter.'<sup>6</sup>

Chattanooga, in 1862, was a small town of five thousand lying just east of Moccasin Bend on the Tennessee river and just north of the Georgia line. Its once prosperous river trade in bacon, flour, iron, and whiskey had declined with the coming of the Memphis-Charleston railroad in the 1850's. But lying on an important spur of that railroad and the only town of any size along the three hundred miles of river between Kingston and Muscle Shoals, Alabama, it had great strategic importance. Threatened by Buell's Federal troops soon after Shiloh and by General O. M. Mitchel's forces in June, Chattanooga had been strengthened by the arrival of Bragg's forces in late June. It was from Chattanooga that Bragg planned to launch an offensive that would win back all of Tennessee and possibly gain Kentucky. Protected by this army and by the river and Signal Mountain to the northwest and Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge to the south and east, Chattanooga seemed nearly impregnable to Federal attack. Lying in the heart of the southeastern Confederacy, it was an ideal location to disseminate propaganda throughout the region. It was for that reason that the Bank of Tennessee had purchased the newspaper plant and had appointed Watterson editor.

The first issue of the paper with its braggadocio title, *The Rebel*, given it by Watterson, appeared in August 1862. It was a small paper, usually a single sheet folded to form a paper of four pages about fourteen by twenty inches in size. Although intended primarily as a civilian organ, it quickly became an army newspaper. Its circulation never exceeded eight thousand, but its reading public was much larger, whole companies subscribing for a single copy.

The paper's subscription rates were one dollar a month in cash and, because of the uncertainties of war, it cautiously advised its readers: 'No subscription received for a longer period than one month.' The paper, throughout its stay in Chattanooga, carried some local news in the interest of the community such as advertisements of private schools in Chattanooga, offers of pay to substitutes from men who had been drafted (a Mr. William Randall of Chattanooga was willing to pay \$5,000), and rewards for runaway slaves.

The paper was, however, sectional rather than local in scope. It was speaking to the army and the Confederacy at large, not to the small town of Chattanooga. Making constant requests for Northern papers from those who lived in middle Tennessee in order to widen the scope of news coverage, Watterson soon made *The Rebel* the most widely read journal in the Confederate army, soldiers paying as high as twenty-five cents for a single copy.<sup>7</sup>

Watterson had a great deal of fun with the first paper to be placed entirely under his direction; for Paul served in the capacity of business manager and took little interest in editorial policy until the very last. Here Watterson, 'the born insurrecto,' as he liked to call himself, began to emerge in the editorial columns of a daily paper. Here he developed his journalistic style — a style that would always have about it a tinge of the same extravagance that he found appropriate for those days. Here he could lash out at the North in unabated fury, could call Lincoln 'A man without mind or manners . . . a rude, vulgar, obscure, backwoods pettifogger,' could describe him as 'knock-kneed, shamle gaited, bow-legged . . . pigeon-toed, swob-sided . . . a shapeless skeleton in a very tough, very dirty, unwholesome skin . . . born and bred a rail-splitter . . . a rail-splitter still.'<sup>8</sup> This was crude enough to satisfy the coarsest of tastes among the Johnny Rebs. Watterson was after all writing about an enemy ruler in an admittedly propagandist organ, but unquestionably no other editorials would he later have so gladly retracted as these written about Lincoln in 1862-3.

Watterson's editorials in *The Rebel* reveal how as a former Douglas Democrat he had succeeded in rationalizing secession. One can see that he swallowed the pill of secession by coating it with nationalism. He never spoke of states' rights but always of the new nation. It was 'as a nation, we have a right to point with pride to eighteen-sixty-two,' not 'as the people of Tennessee.' Later, even after Vicksburg and Gettysburg, he still wrote hopefully of 'a free and independent nation' that would eventually emerge victorious. He had been able to leave the old Union only by pledging his allegiance to a new Union, which he hoped would eventually be as strong as the nation under Jackson. Although he had little confidence in Jefferson Davis, he had definitely allied himself to Davis's dream of Southern nationalism, as opposed to the state sovereignty philosophy of Alexander H. Stephens and Joseph Brown of Georgia.

As a part of his program of national strength, he looked to a new nation of factories and diversified agriculture. He had little sympathy for the old order of plantation feudalism. Smoky cities and blue overalls promised more for the South, he believed, than white Grecian porticoes and crinolines. In *The Rebel*, he was already formulating his post-war economic theories. Here too is seen for the first time Watterson's conservatism on monetary problems, his distrust of inflation, and his advocacy of more taxation rather than more paper money to meet the financial difficulties of the government.<sup>9</sup>

Watterson tried valiantly to support the Southern morale even after he himself had lost faith in victory. He assured his readers that every man had to maintain 'a religious faith that his beloved South will break the yoke of her Yankee oppressors.' He played up the draft riots in the North as indications of the enemy's eagerness for peace, and he dug up a canard which claimed the people of Gettysburg charged wounded Federal troops twenty cents for a bandage to show the lack of patriotism in the North.<sup>10</sup>

Bolstering morale did not include suppressing bad news, however, and *The Rebel* released without sugar-coating what information it had from the various fighting sectors, admitting in the summer of 1863 the possibility of losing Richmond, Wilmington, Charleston, and Savannah. Nor did support of the Confederate cause mean obsequious and unqualified support of its leaders. Jefferson Davis and his cabinet were treated with anything but respect in the editorial columns of *The Rebel* and the Confederate Congress was described as notable for its 'singular dearth of talent' and 'a plurality of black sheep, ignorant politicians and blatant demagogues.'<sup>11</sup> Watterson was never to find a government, Federal or Confederate, Republican or Democratic, that satisfied him.

The closer Watterson was to authority, the more critical he became. He had a choice target in the dyspeptic martinet, General Braxton Bragg. When Bragg moved out of Chattanooga in August 1862 for the invasion of Kentucky, *The Rebel* had high hopes. But after his failure to push his advantage at Perryville in October and his needless withdrawal to Stone River in Tennessee, *The Rebel* became highly suspicious of Bragg's competence. When the easily discouraged general again tossed away victory at Stone River and

withdrew farther into Tennessee to Tullahoma in December, Watterson's contempt was openly proclaimed.

As Watterson's criticism of Bragg had become the favorite reading material for those soldiers who had little love for their commander, Bragg attempted to impose censorship. But if Bragg had a powerful friend in President Davis, the young editor was not without his own influential contacts. Upon hearing of Bragg's intentions to censor *The Rebel*, Watterson got in touch with Colonel Alexander McKinstry, whom he had known when they had both served under Forrest. McKinstry had since been made Provost Marshal General of the Army and also chief of the Secret Service and Bureau of Intelligence. In protesting against Bragg's censorship, Watterson asserted that he had no desire to print anything which could possibly hurt the Confederate cause, but he insisted on presenting the news as he saw it. McKinstry agreed and the two soon arrived at a working arrangement. In return for his editorial freedom, Watterson agreed to print in the daily summary of the war only that information which McKinstry's bureau should give him. McKinstry, not Bragg, was to be the final judge of material that might aid the enemy. Watterson even offered McKinstry the use of his daily war column, 'The Front,' to give false information if by so doing it might mislead the enemy. Later, many Confederates were alarmed to read what seemed to be most indiscreet information in *The Rebel*, little realizing that this material, sent by McKinstry's office, was being printed expressly for the benefit of General Rosecrans' Union forces.<sup>12</sup>

These months in Chattanooga as editor were important to Watterson's later career as a journalist. He learned how to put out a very serviceable newspaper in spite of the ever-tightening military situation. It was an invaluable experience for an editor who would later be struggling to establish himself in the bleak period of Southern reconstruction. Watterson also developed an editorial style that he was to maintain little changed throughout the rest of his life, a style exaggerated and florid to be sure, but one that was his own and would serve as his personal trade-mark, easily identifiable to later generations of newspaper readers. Above all, Watterson was acquiring a fame beyond the narrow confines of a single city or state. Soldiers from all over the South and West learned and were to re-

member the name of Henry Watterson. At twenty-three, he had already achieved recognition by many as the journalistic spokesman of the South. The stories told among the soldiers about *The Rebel* and its editor were the first of many that would later make up the Watterson legend.

One of these apocryphal tales was of the seizure of the paper's printing presses by the Federal troops upon the fall of Chattanooga. The Union soldiers, short on ammunition, melted the lead type down for ammunition, and then fired at the flying coattails of the retreating editor. This story was told over and over by both Yankee and Rebel. 'Yes, sir,' they would say, 'First time an editor ever got chased all over hell and back by his own words.'<sup>13</sup> Such tales were to have inestimable publicity value for Watterson.

Chattanooga also had an importance in Watterson's life for the friendships he made there. Two men in particular were to have great significance in his life: Albert Roberts and Walter N. Haldeman, both future partners in Watterson's post-war journalistic activities. Roberts served as assistant editor on *The Rebel's* staff during those months that the paper was published in Chattanooga. Haldeman, editor of the *Louisville Courier*, had fled before the advent of Union troops into Kentucky's largest city, and in 1863 was editing his paper in exile in Chattanooga.<sup>14</sup> Watterson enjoyed the company of both men and impressed them with his journalistic ability.

It was chiefly for its romantic significance, however, that Chattanooga was to be remembered by Watterson. For here in the winter of 1862-3 he met the daughter of Andrew Ewing, a former Congressman from Nashville and an old friend of Harvey Watterson. Rebecca was also in exile, living with relatives while her father served in the Confederate army. To Henry, who always had a keen eye for the beautiful, she appeared at once to be the loveliest girl he had ever seen. With her dark curly hair piled high on her head, her thin aristocratic nose and proud almost regal bearing, she belonged to the old romantic South of ballad and legend. Yet there was a softness and gentleness about her, too, in her delicate, sensuous mouth and in her large deep-set eyes with their faint expression of distant sadness. Shy and reserved, Rebecca was lonesome in Chattanooga. She must have been flattered by the interest shown by the dashing young editor and former raider in Forrest's cavalry,



all copies found would be confiscated. Franc Paul, as manager, was responsible to the Bank of Tennessee for the success of the paper. Since *The Rebel* depended almost exclusively on its army patronage for readers, Bragg's order would mean the end of the paper. Paul had allowed his editor an unusually free editorial direction, but now he had no choice but to ask for Watterson's resignation. This Watterson at once gave him. With a change in editors, Bragg lifted his ban, and the paper continued publication until the Federal cavalry finally caught up with it in Selma, Alabama, in April 1865 and put an end to its life. But without Watterson, *The Rebel* had lost much of its fire, and the common soldier no longer read it as avidly as before.

In Atlanta, Watterson found employment as assistant editor of the *Atlanta Southern Confederacy*, a position he held during the fall and early winter of 1863. But he found being a subaltern on a strictly censored paper, with an editorial staff inflated to twenty by those seeking to avoid military service, singularly unattractive. There being little else to do, he spent long hours walking aimlessly about the city or poking about in second-hand bookstores.<sup>17</sup>

He was ill at ease and the whole city seemed to share his mood, for Atlanta sensed the doom that lay ahead. Bragg, outmaneuvered once again in November, had lost the great natural defenses south of Chattanooga, and now a path was available to the Federal troops which, if they could exploit it, would lead to the very vitals of the Southern Confederacy. Davis, in December, reluctantly dismissed Bragg from command. The fate of the Confederacy south of the Chesapeake was now to rest with General Joe Johnston and his three corps commanders, Hardee, Hood, and Bishop Polk.

Dissatisfied with his work, Watterson once again turned to military service. With no previous experience, he was made chief of scouts on Johnston's staff. During the early spring of 1864, Watterson and his companions made numerous scouting expeditions through the hills north of Dalton to keep an anxious eye on Sherman's army massing south of Chattanooga and preparing for its movement toward Atlanta and the sea.

Watterson by this time had found his own sources of supply in that ration-tight country. Rebecca's father, Andrew Ewing, was with the army at Dalton and Watterson was able to endear himself



with the man whom he hoped might some day be his father-in-law by serving as an unofficial procurement agent for him. Ewing wrote in February 1864 that he had heard Watterson could get him some coffee. 'We have decided to buy five pounds which please buy and bring with you and also a good horse brush and curry comb or either if they can be procured and my boots. I send you a check for a hundred dollars. You had better have them all put in one package and keep your eye on it.'<sup>18</sup>

The exigencies of war did not prevent Johnston's chief of scouts from taking trips to Warrentown, Georgia, to accept the hospitality of the Vice-President, Alexander Stephens, then at odds with President Davis and sulking at his home at Liberty Hall.<sup>19</sup> Watterson also accepted the invitation of Governor Isham Harris of Tennessee, then with his government in exile in Georgia, to tour the Confederate army in order 'to stir the boys up a bit' for the approaching campaign.<sup>20</sup> As usual, Watterson was making the best of a grim situation.

On 4 May the Union troops began their push down the pathway carved through the mountains of northwestern Georgia by the railroad builders, straight to Atlanta and the end of Southern hopes. The railroad towns of Tilton, Resaca, and Adairsville, boasting of little more than a general store, post office, and depot, were suddenly lifted by war from obscurity to take their places in history.

This was a different sort of war from the hit-and-run slashes of Forrest's squadron against a surprised enemy. Now that enemy under Sherman had formed itself into a machine powerful enough to roll over the prostrate body of the South. General Joe Johnston's plan of defense was a realistic acceptance of the power of this juggernaut. Not risking his army in a headlong clash, he planned to hold a point as long as possible, then fall back to another defensible position, all the while wearing the enemy down by attrition and extending its line of communications until it would snap. So the slow withdrawal to Atlanta began, across land scarred with miles of hastily dug trenches to the Etowah river and across to the last natural defense before Atlanta, the Chattahoochee river.

Watterson's role in this campaign is only sketchily revealed by a few letters and his later reminiscences. When the attack began he wrote General William Bate, one of the division commanders under General Hood asking for a horse. Bate answered that he would lend

a horse, but hoped that Watterson could procure his own saddle. He also invited Watterson to join his division if 'consistent with your wishes and convenient to yourself.'<sup>21</sup>

Watterson undoubtedly accepted the horse, but did not join Bate's division, for at the battle for Resaca he was serving as an aide to his old commander, General Leonidas Polk. Watterson was to remember with affection that the general asked him to share a box of food, containing such rarities as guava jelly and a piece of real white bread. The fighting on the outskirts of Resaca was fierce and Watterson suggested that the picnic might 'go a little better if we were in a safer place.' He led his commander to a small ravine out of the line of fire. No sooner were they seated under an oak tree and were spreading out their feast, however, than shrapnel struck the oak broadside, sending Polk, Watterson, oak tree, and lunch to the bottom of the gully. 'Hey dey!' cried the indomitable old general as he picked himself out of the debris. 'You're a pretty fellow for selecting covers! Come! We may as well take ourselves back to the front.'<sup>22</sup>

Much more than a lunch box was to be lost on that front, however; for on 15 May Johnston once again ordered his army to retreat to Allatoona Pass and then to the natural defenses at Kenesaw, Pine, and Lost Mountains. Here the Confederates held firm during the month of June while Sherman threw his forces against them to no avail. The machine seemed at last to have been stopped by the rough walls of Kenesaw. The lull in fighting permitted Watterson on 17 June to take leave to go to Atlanta to bury Rebecca's father. Andrew Ewing had aged with the war and had died a heartbroken man as the South faced defeat.

Watterson was back at the front in July when Sherman, having failed in a direct frontal assault, resumed his previous flanking movement. Again the slow, weaving procession toward Atlanta began. Johnston was not alarmed over being forced back to the metropolis, for he had always considered Atlanta the natural point to check Sherman's drive. But to the distraught Jefferson Davis, sitting in distant Richmond, this Fabian strategy appeared to be only a cowardly retreat. Without warning, he removed Johnston from command just as the latter's plans were reaching fruition and replaced him with the impetuous John Hood, who promised to fight and not to retreat.

Watterson was transferred to Hood's staff to serve as military aide in the final desperate battles for Atlanta. Hood gave Davis the battles the Confederate President had wanted. Unfortunately, Hood's strategy was exactly what the Union forces had also wanted, for instead of letting Sherman carry the battle to him, Hood launched one futile attack after another against the Union's hard line. Only in the length of the casualty list was Hood's record more impressive than Johnston's. Soon the nearly frantic Davis was writing Hood: 'The loss consequent of attacking him [Sherman] in his entrenchments requires you to avoid that, if practicable.'<sup>23</sup>

The siege of Atlanta had begun to end only with Sherman's circling movement to the south, the defeat of the Confederate forces at Jonesboro on 31 August, and the cutting of the Macon and Western railroad out of Atlanta. For six weeks the city had been a virtual battlefield, and Watterson saw now the horrors of a civil war that had become a war on civilians. At any time of the day or night some part of the city was burning — flimsy, wooden buildings that blazed up when struck by the heavy Federal artillery. Water became scarce and soon a typhoid epidemic added its particular element of terror. With the cutting of the last line of contact with the outside world at Jonesboro, Sherman forced Hood to withdraw from the 'Citadel of the Confederacy' on 1 September. On the following day, Mayor Calhoun surrendered the city.

Watterson stayed with Hood's army in its retreat from Atlanta to Lovejoy Station, twenty-five miles to the south, and then east to Palmetto, where Hood entrenched on 20 September to draw up plans for the future. They were bold plans indeed: to swing north and cut the railway at Marietta, then west into Alabama and north to the state of Tennessee. In his fevered imagination, Hood even dreamed of heading north from Tennessee into Kentucky. Watterson, however, had had enough of these uselessly bloody attacks. Never very confident of a Southern victory, he now saw the funeral pyre of the Confederacy in the smoke that hung over Atlanta. Only a madman would continue now, Watterson felt. 'Having no mind for what I conceived aimless campaigning through another winter — especially an advance into Tennessee upon Nashville — I wrote to an old friend of mine, who owned the *Montgomery Mail*, asking for a job.'<sup>24</sup>

The old friend was A. D. Banks, who had recently purchased

the paper. So pleased was Banks to get the editorial services of Watterson that he promised him use of 'the whole outfit' and ownership of half of the paper.<sup>25</sup> In the last week of September, Watterson was in the pleasant town of Griffin in the heart of the peach region south of Atlanta. Here he conferred with Governor Harris, who was preparing to move his peripatetic government to Montgomery. Watterson also joined another old comrade, Albert Roberts, his associate on *The Rebel*. Forty-eight hours after meeting Roberts and Harris, he arrived in Montgomery to accept Banks's offer.<sup>26</sup>

The days that followed were pleasant and dull. The war had by-passed south-central Alabama, and Watterson was to find in this quiet town, built on low hills overlooking the Alabama river, the last stand of the old South. It was a good time for a young rebel — never a very devout rebel — to make plans for his future, a future he had no intentions of spending in bitter exile. In this manner, Watterson spent these last days of the Confederacy in almost lassitudinous calm and deep reflection.

He was aroused to perform one last service for the Confederacy by an assignment that had about it the glamour of a Dumas novel. The government, in a last effort to obtain cash, wanted an agent to slip through the Union blockade, get to Liverpool, and there, under the direction of the Confederate fiscal agent, sell several thousand bales of cotton. To a young man nurtured on Scott, such an adventure was irresistible. Moreover, the mission, if successful, would take him to his literary Mecca, England. Perhaps, there he could find a future in creative writing. With no clear-cut plan of action in mind, he set out for the North in hopes of effecting his escape to Europe.

What his abortive mission lacked in success it more than made up for in fantasy. In a desperate effort to bluff his way through the Union lines, he covered his uniform with a black bombazine suit. Captured as a suspicious character, he demanded that he be taken to the commanding general, N. B. Dana. Dana quickly saw through Watterson's disguise but instead of shooting him as a spy as he might have done, he invited Watterson to dine with him on terrapin because he was 'a good friend of the family.' Dana even gave Watterson a pass 'to go home to see his mother,' and the way North seemed

clear. But as Watterson was approaching the Ohio river, he received information that the venture was no longer necessary. The cotton had been destroyed and the Richmond government had released him from its service.<sup>27</sup>

Where to go now? He had no desire to return to Alabama, even if he could have recrossed the Union lines. He was not eager to see the final debacle in the South. His old home in Tennessee was out of the question, for 'Parson' Brownlow and his east Tennesseans were seizing control, and preparing to give any returning rebel a lively reception. Ahead lay the alien North. To one less confident than Watterson, that too would have seemed out of the question. But he had bluffed his way this far. Why not strike out boldly into the North and seek a new start? In Cincinnati, he had relatives, his grandmother Black and her daughter, the wife of the prominent Ohio politician, Stanley Matthews. To this Republican family the unemployed young rebel turned as the world he had lived in collapsed about him. For him the experiment in rebellion was thankfully over.

One receives the impression in reading Watterson's later accounts of the war that he must have passed through it less emotionally touched than almost any other soldier in the Confederate army. Nowhere did he express any bitter recriminations or wistful 'it-might-have-beens,' but rather a strong feeling that the war had been but an aberration on the part of the South and the sooner over with the better. He was to emerge neither a pacifist nor yet an unforgetting rebel. In many respects he was the same person in 1865 as the boy who had gone into the fight in 1861.

Yet he was not exactly the same, and it was not just the full-length red-brown beard that had taken four years to grow, nor the stronger, more muscular body that he had acquired from the war. The importance of the war for him had been that, unlike so many returning Confederate soldiers, he had found the basic political principles of his youth had been crystallized for him into a hard and unchanging faith. Where in 1860 he had had a vague opposition to slavery, now he was to be one of the first of the Southern journalists to crusade openly for an acceptance of the Thirteenth Amendment, proclaiming that slavery had been evil and its abolition a national blessing. Where before he had felt secession

wrong but had joined the Confederacy, now he was to devote the greater part of his life to the reconciliation of the two sections. This was to be his major contribution to his time and country. In short, the war had made him a man and had given him his program for the future.

## FOUR

### A Rebel's Return

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1865-1868

HENRY WATTERSON arrived in Cincinnati early in 1865 with little more than the ragged suit on his back and a gold watch in his pocket. 'A picked bird,' his Grandmother Black called him when he appeared one February morning, but he was a bird certain of his future brilliant plumage. The wad of Confederate bills in his pocket was as worthless as the gray army uniform in his carpet bag, and his uncle, Stanley Matthews, a prosperous lawyer and judge, generously offered a loan. Watterson, refusing this kind of 'Republican money,' took his gold watch to another uncle 'who had no politics at all' and received \$50 on it.

Though refusing Judge Matthews's financial assistance, he was happy to accept a newspaper job that Matthews found for him on the Cincinnati *Evening Times*. The owner, Calvin W. Starbuck, offered to take young Watterson as a substitute for the 'amusements' critic who had gone on a month's fishing trip. Before the regular critic returned, however, the chief editor was drowned in a ferryboat accident on the Ohio river, and so impressed was Starbuck with Watterson's ability and experience that he offered him the position of editor-in-chief. The substitute drama critic was greatly surprised, for not even he could have believed that within

one month after arriving in the city, he would become the editor of Cincinnati's only afternoon paper. When Watterson protested that he was a former Confederate officer and an avowed Democrat on a Republican paper, Starbuck reassured him, 'I propose to engage you as an editorial manager. It is as if building a house you should be head carpenter, I the architect. The difference in salary will be seventy-five dollars a week against fifteen dollars a week.' Watterson took the job.<sup>1</sup>

For Starbuck to raise a former secessionist editor and Confederate soldier to such a high position before the war was even over might well seem to be a rash act, regardless of Watterson's ability or family connections. But this move was not so foolhardy as it would at first appear. In the first place there was no chance under Starbuck's careful scrutiny for Watterson to change the editorial policy of the paper, and Watterson for once seemed willing to take orders. Then, too, Cincinnati was a border city, and in the surrounding Ohio region there was almost as much division of opinion on the war issues as in Kentucky just across the river. To have a former Confederate as an editor would not hurt a paper that was trying to build up circulation with the Peace Democrats, more generally known as Copperheads.

Furthermore, Starbuck and Watterson were not as far apart ideologically as one might imagine. For if Starbuck was a Republican, he was certainly not a Radical. He was eager for a quick readjustment to peace and had no vindictive feeling toward the South. All in all, it proved to be a happy combination.

Watterson found a room in a boarding house on Third Street, but spent most of his time at the *Evening Times* office, 'a queer old curiosity shop,' which he proceeded 'to turn inside out.' Before a week had passed, he was putting out a 'paper whose oldest reader could not have recognized.' Soon the other editors were taking a not too friendly notice of the reinvigorated paper. They felt they had a particularly choice target in this rambunctious editor who had so recently crossed the river. The Cincinnati *Commercial*, the city's leading paper, headed the pack. Watterson's defense was simply a frank appeal to the *Commercial's* editor, Murat Halstead, for mercy. Explaining that he was 'the merest bird of passage with my watch at the pawn-broker's' and that Halstead's attacks might lose him his job but could in no way hurt the *Times*, he asked



Halstead to call off his dogs. Impressed by Watterson's frankness, Halstead agreed. The meeting ended with Halstead's buying the drinks, and a friendship had begun that was to last until Halstead's death.<sup>2</sup>

Watterson was editor of the *Times* when what he later regarded as the most important news story of his life broke — the assassination of Lincoln. A fellow journalist who roomed at the same house recalled walking to work with Watterson on that dark, rainy morning of 15 April 1865. Men were already draping all public and commercial buildings with black, and Watterson, saying little to his companion as they walked along but, 'Horrible! Horrible!', seemed distraught by the tragedy.<sup>3</sup> That afternoon there appeared in the *Times* a black-bordered column on the death of the President. This editorial expressed grief and anger against 'the deep damnation of this atrocity.' Already Lincoln was being enshrined as 'the exemplification of the three crowning glories of the human soul — faithful, hopeful, charitable,' and the editorial pointed an accusing finger at those it considered the guilty parties:

That it had its origin in the depths of the Rebel camp, that it was stipulated for and paid for by Jefferson Davis, and that it was perpetrated by his emissaries, we do believe as truly as we believe that God lives and governs the world. No other could have had the motive or the attainted soul for a purpose so mad and murderous.

This is a remarkable editorial to come from the pen of so recent a rebel. The last lines seem to reveal a rapid conversion to the Northern point of view for one who but two months before had risked his life as one of those very 'emissaries' of Jefferson Davis; for as the style throughout is purely Wattersonian, there is little question that he wrote this editorial himself. Yet it would be unfair to imply that Watterson was simply writing without conviction what he felt his readers wanted to hear; the grief and anger seem to be too genuine. Unquestionably, Watterson was deeply shocked. Quite possibly he realized that the South had lost its greatest champion in the North for a fair and easy reconciliation within the Union. After the initial shock had passed, he of course repeatedly expressed his belief in Davis's innocence of any connection with Lincoln's murder. His were but the angry immediate words that could be heard in any Northern town on that bleak day. But one

idea that he expressed in that editorial he was to hold to for the rest of his life — the spiritual greatness of the slain President. Abraham Lincoln had become the hero of Watterson's adult life.

Although Watterson could not complain about either his position or his salary, he was not content to remain long in Cincinnati. He missed the South, his friends, and above all, Rebecca Ewing, waiting for him in Nashville. In order to return to Nashville, however, he must first achieve a pardon that would pass the hard scrutiny of the Brownlow government. He had begun working for this almost as soon as he had arrived in Cincinnati, before Lincoln's second inauguration in March 1865. To help clear the way for his nephew, Judge Matthews arranged an interview with Andrew Johnson, then the Vice-President-elect, who was spending a day in Cincinnati on his way to Washington. Watterson hurried down to the Burnet House and was at once ushered into a private office. A quick glance revealed that Johnson and two other men present had been drinking heavily. As soon as Watterson arrived, Johnson's two companions quickly departed.

Johnson went over and locked the door and then laying his hand roughly on the young ex-Confederate officer's shoulder, demanded hoarsely, 'Well, what do you think of yourself now?'

It was a bad approach to the proud and touchy youth. Even with a pardon at stake, Watterson at once bristled with anger. 'I did not come to make any confessions.'

Johnson, somewhat taken back by such belligerence, put his arm around Watterson, pulled him down on the sofa beside him and said kindly, 'I don't want you to make any confessions, and I don't mean to be rough. Now listen to me, Henry: inside of six weeks I shall be in control of everything at Washington; then let us see which is the better Southern man, you or I.'

As Watterson remembered the incident later, there was more of this talk from Johnson. 'I mainly listened and I came away a little disheartened and altogether disgusted. What was I to think when the news of Lincoln's assassination was flashed over the wires? Nothing is surer than that Andrew Johnson had no more to do with the murder of Abraham Lincoln than I had. His talk was merely the vapping of drink. It was in his mind that he would be the strong man in the government; nothing more.' Nevertheless, both Matthews and Watterson agreed to keep this prophecy of future power

expressed by Johnson that day to themselves. Considering the fact that during the impeachment proceedings some Radicals attempted to bring charges against Johnson of complicity in Lincoln's murder, Watterson's and Matthews's discretion was wise.<sup>4</sup>

Johnson's friendly attitude toward Watterson in February gave him hope that with Johnson now President a pardon was available simply for the asking. Moreover, Watterson was supporting Johnson's reconstruction program in the columns of the *Times*, and he made sure Johnson knew of this by sending him copies of the editorials.

In a long editorial of 3 June 1865, entitled 'The Guilty and the Innocent,' Watterson laid the entire responsibility for the war on the doorstep of 'a few reckless men in the South who had for years instructed the people, by acts of the most cunning and designing nature, in a false notion of government and their own rights . . . and that by means of the foulest play they succeeded in inaugurating a resort to arms, and dragging their victims into it much to their surprise and regret. . . . The great body of people were coerced. . . . They are not leaders and principals, but poor people who were misled and have suffered fearfully.'

The remainder of the editorial was an obvious attempt to win the sympathy of the North by flattery, for Watterson speaks of 'the God of battles and the genius of Republicanism' which fortunately wrecked the nefarious plans of the few Southern aristocrats who would destroy the Union. 'The leaders must be punished,' Watterson wrote. He gave whole-hearted approval to Johnson's amnesty proclamation, which differed from Lincoln's chiefly in that it would exclude from pardon all Southerners participating in the rebellion who owned property worth \$20,000 or more. Even to this provision, which would deny pardon to most of his Southern friends and relatives, Watterson gave editorial sanction. He wrote, 'The action of Andrew Johnson, therefore — who is a friend of the poor people — who is the very embodiment of popular sovereignty — is wise and just, and we hope it will be enforced as the law of the land. . . .'

In thus supporting Johnson, Watterson appeared to be deserting his own class and placing himself in the position of being a sycophant for Northern favor. But in a larger sense he was defending the South as a section. By placing the war-guilt upon a few Southern

men of property, he hoped to absolve the Southern people in general from mass punishment. He undoubtedly realized that the Southern leaders were destined to be punished anyway by a North that had become fiercely vindictive after the assassination of Lincoln. By writing thus, he was offering up a scapegoat in the hopes that the South as a whole might win a general pardon. In any event, with Congress controlled by the Radicals, Johnson represented the only political hope for the South. These considerations can justify in a large measure the stand that Watterson took as editor of the *Times*. To a good many of his former Southern friends, however, Watterson's actions seemed those of a betraying Judas. Upon his return to the South, they were not to let him easily forget his praise of 'the genius of Republicanism.' His future program of promoting sectional harmony was to be made much more difficult because of the enmity he had aroused.

In sending his editorial to Johnson, Watterson had enclosed a letter in which he was even more explicit in his praise of the President's program as 'the act of a statesman . . . of a fair-minded man, who had divested his heart of all violence and passion.' Watterson added that he should like to see Johnson when he came to Washington that summer to attend the trial of Jefferson Davis.<sup>5</sup>

Davis's trial was never held, but Watterson went to Washington anyway early in the summer to obtain a pardon that would let him return to Tennessee. Watterson's return to his native city could not have failed to have a deep emotional effect. He called it 'a sentimental journey.' He was back again in his beloved city that held the happy memories of childhood. It had been four incredibly long years since a despondent boy had reluctantly boarded a train for a future he had dreaded.

Washington was still the capital of a whole nation, and he could find the old landmarks. It was the same old Willard Hotel, a little worn and needing redecorating perhaps, that Watterson sought out upon arriving. He walked down familiar streets past his old boarding house and saw the same little Negro boys sweeping the walks in front of the red brick houses. Yet the war had left its indelible mark. Many of the fine old trees were gone, rooted up for firewood by the troops of soldiers and hordes of war refugees. Washington, three months after the war was over, still gave an impression of an armed camp. The numerous temporary hospitals in

private and public buildings were filled with casualties and the dominating color on the streets was the blue of the Union uniform. The town had also been overrun with former slaves who had simply drifted north to the promised land and Father Abraham. Washington had no place for them but could not drive them away, and so they had thrown up their shacks and tents on empty lots between Washington and Georgetown and waited for any miracle that might be coming from these days of 'Jubilo.'

There were other changes also, more permanent than this backwash of war. The Capitol dome, Watterson noticed, had at last been finished and the Treasury building had been completed. There was a hustle and push not evident in pre-war days. The city's voice had changed from the soft drawl of the South to the nasal twang of New England and the Middle West. It was quite apparent who had won the war. Senator Sprague and cotton mills had replaced Senator Davis and cotton plantations. Northern Big Business and Government, married in war, had begun their long happy honeymoon and the divorced South had been pushed aside.

Watterson called on Johnson the morning after arriving. He expected no difficulty in obtaining his pardon. Johnson was receiving many such requests and was generous in granting them. Furthermore, Harvey Watterson was one of the President's most trusted advisers, and already Johnson was planning on sending him, along with Ben Truman and General Grant, on a tour of the South to report on conditions in respect to reconstruction and post-war readjustment.

For some reason, however, Henry Watterson's meeting with the President was anything but satisfactory. All Watterson ever revealed later was that Johnson received him 'coldly' and had almost nothing to say. If there was a reason for this attitude, Watterson never revealed it. Possibly Johnson recalled their meeting the previous February and regretting his uninhibited confidences at that time was resolved to treat Watterson with restraint. More probably, Johnson was tired, his mind occupied with the staggering problems facing him, and had no idea that he was not giving the sensitive young man the warm greeting that he had expected. In any case, Watterson never forgot what he considered a deliberate slight. 'After a few to me embarrassing moments, I took my leave without saying a word about a pardon. I saw him but once again. Ten years

after we passed in the lobby of a Nashville hotel without any sign of recognition.' <sup>6</sup> This was not to be the last time that Watterson's hypersensitivity led him to a permanent misunderstanding with men who, having basically the same views, should have been his warmest political associates.

As events were to prove, Watterson did not need Johnson's pardon to return to Nashville. Thanks to the influence of his father, the road was cleared for Watterson to return. Harvey Watterson had managed in his long years in politics to draw about him a circle of friends of an amazing diameter. At the same time that Johnson was turning to him for assistance, the Radical Republican boss of Pennsylvania, Simon Cameron, was sending him his photograph and asking to see young Henry, whom 'I love because he is your son.' <sup>7</sup> Few returning Confederate officers could claim such a free pass into the enemy Radical camp as the one that Henry had received by Cameron's letter.

It is not surprising that Harvey Watterson was able by a conference with 'Parson' Brownlow to smooth away any obstacles to Henry's return. Brownlow expressed the highest regard for Harvey Watterson's pro-Union stand during the war. He even offered Harvey four quarts of whiskey as a token of his affection, and it is not difficult to imagine that Watterson was able to persuade the fiery old Tennessee governor to take an indulgent attitude toward his son.<sup>8</sup>

For young Watterson, there remained only the question of employment. It was at that moment that he received a welcome invitation from his war 'bunky' and former newspaper colleague, Albert Roberts. Roberts and another boyhood friend, George Purvis, were planning to return to Nashville where Roberts's father was now owner of the defunct Nashville *Republican Banner's* newspaper plant. Roberts and Purvis planned to revive that highly respectable journal, and they wanted Watterson to join them as co-editor. Watterson jumped at the opportunity, and within a week after the proposal was back in Nashville. Two years after the fall of Chattanooga, he was at last reunited with Rebecca Ewing.

Cash was low, but enthusiasm and eagerness to work were not lacking, for all three young men were engaged to be married and hoped to accumulate enough money to wed their fiancées before Christmas. Roberts's father mortgaged a farm for \$1000 to give the

boys their working capital. They divided the territory into districts and each attempted to outdo the others in the number of subscriptions. If their readers had no money, they took anything that they could exchange or barter for cash. The citizens of Nashville greeted the return of the old *Banner* with enthusiasm. Of the five other papers in Nashville when the *Banner* had been revived, within a year only one was left; and before the first Christmas, all three partners felt financially able to set marriage dates.<sup>9</sup>

Watterson was at last his own manager with no one to supervise or suggest editorial policy. He was speaking again to a Southern border audience, an audience that he could understand and one that was as weary of war and as eager for a peaceful readjustment as he. Nashville, which had grown into an armed camp of 100,000 men during the last days of Federal occupation, had its own problems of readjustment. The Federals were departing, leaving behind a dirty war-scarred, over-expanded town. The Confederate soldiers and war refugees were coming back to broken homes. Money was scarce, and men walked the streets in threadbare gray uniforms and paper-soled shoes looking for work. There was some looting, and robbery was common. The war was hard to forget with the Union entrenchments surrounding the city still visible, with a new cemetery to carve out of the hillside to the south of town, and the debris of war to clean away.

What could Watterson say to these tired, war-shocked people? He could first of all tell them to forget the past and to face the future bravely. He implored the South to forget, the North to forgive. This was to be the cry that echoed through most of his editorials for the next fifteen years. This plea for sectional reconciliation and national harmony was to give him national prestige long before Lucius Lamar and Henry Grady rode to fame on the slogan of the 'New South.' In these views on post-war readjustment, Watterson was to show a moderation of approach, a sense of the gravity of the situation, and a realistic attitude toward its solution unsurpassed by any other editor. Never in any of the other causes that he espoused in his long career was he to achieve that same moderation and realism.

In his first editorial which appeared in the *Banner* on 27 September 1865, he told the North the war was over and that Southern men had accepted the results:

We want repose. We are weary of agitation. Rest and time to recover the waste of the war, and a fair chance for the blessings of free men will satisfy the craving of most of us. . . . God knows, if we, who have been the losers in the fight, are willing to wipe out the record, the extent and splendor of their triumph should enable those on the other side to illustrate their boasted courage and magnanimity. . . . We have had so much vitriol. The veins of the country have been literally injected with it and swollen by it. Can't we have a little oil, now that there is a pause and time for the contemplation of remedies?

In the fall of 1865, in the partial lull between the two storms of war and reconstruction, Watterson could have high hopes that moderation would prevail. Certainly the military leaders of the North had demonstrated both by act and word that the army wanted as quick an erasure of the horrors of war from men's minds as possible. Grant had not only received Lee with respect at Appomattox, but in December 1865 in his report to Johnson on the South he wrote that he had found 'the mass of thinking men of the South accept the present situation of affairs in good faith.'<sup>10</sup> And even Sherman, whose name was an anathema in the lower South, had granted to General Joe Johnston a peace settlement whose terms were so liberal politically that they were repudiated by Secretary Stanton.

Johnson, building upon the unfinished work of Lincoln, had issued proclamations for provisional governments in the former Confederate States and by September regular civil administrations were in operation in all but Texas. Reconstruction, the most magnanimous in spirit that any victorious people had ever demonstrated, seemed to have been accomplished. Johnson's other reporters on conditions in the South, among them Harvey Watterson, Ben Truman, Carl Schurz, and Chief Justice Chase, had all, with the exception of Schurz, agreed with Grant that responsible men everywhere were prepared to enter the Union with no reservations, had accepted emancipation, and desired only a peaceful solution to the post-war problems. Harvey Watterson wrote Johnson in October:

History records no such a spectacle as is now exhibited in the Southern States. After a four years war . . . the Southern people have suddenly laid down their arms and given unmistakable evidence of a determination to renew in good faith their former relations. . . . The voice of every good man . . . is in behalf of peace and reunion under the Stars and Stripes. This fact is manifest to all, whether citizens or sol-



diers, who desire to know and proclaim the truth. The man who gainsays it, either knows not what he is talking about, or has some selfish purpose to accomplish by wilful misrepresentation.<sup>11</sup>

Both North and South in these first months could compliment themselves on their wisdom, generosity, and uncommon good sense.

Henry Watterson, however, had some apprehension for the future. Congress had not met since the end of the war, and he feared the angry voices that men like Ben Wade and Thaddeus Stevens would raise in December. He saw enough of the fanaticism of Brownlow in Nashville to know that men still felt bitterly about issues that should have been settled. He cautioned the South to do nothing to give the extremists an excuse for violence. 'Let loose your grip upon the "nigger." Grapple the plow-share in your own hands. . . . Shame the rash malice of those who speak of your motives, and actions, and principles, by walking in the fear of the Lord and law of the land. . . . Go to church, say your prayers, think often of Old Hickory.'<sup>12</sup>

Although seeing some justice in the Black Codes passed by various states to handle the problems of the hordes of vagrant Negroes, Watterson nevertheless feared the interpretation the Radicals would place on these codes to arouse the people of the North. He considered the election of a Condeferate general, Wade Hampton, as governor of South Carolina 'highly impolitic at present' and asked the South to wait quietly for amnesty and the return of civil rights. Watterson felt that one must approach reconstruction as gingerly as one would a bee hive. All seemed quiet now, but the sentinels were there, ready to sting anyone too eager for the sweet honey of political prominence.

All of this was sound advice, but it is doubtful if the South could have escaped 'the tragic era,' already so imminent, no matter how circumspect she might have been. For to many Northerners the whole process of reconstruction in these months under Johnson had been too easily accomplished. The Radicals of Congress watched impotently at home while state after state came back into the Union and the people of those states elected, as their natural political leaders, the foremost figures of the late Confederacy to represent them in their state and national governments. The Radicals, who had no intention of losing their political power to the group who had dominated the government in the pre-war days, would point to

Wade Hampton and the Black Code of Mississippi, just as Watterson feared, and shout, 'See, they are still Rebels, unregenerate, unsubdued. They are even reintroducing slavery under a new name.' And the people of the North would listen and begin to wonder if their sacrifices in blood and wealth had indeed been in vain. When Congress met in the first week of December 1865 it was clear that the lull was over. The battle between Congress and the President over the political future of the South had begun.

Watterson, watching in dismay the activities of men like Thaddeus Stevens whom he considered as much of a disunionist as William Yancey, still urged caution on part of the South. Realizing the necessity for some constructive action, he elaborated the program for Southern industry and diversified farming that he had advocated in *The Rebel*. He told the planter class to cultivate other crops besides cotton, not only for food but for trade. Eager for Southern manufacturing, he invited Northern wealth to come down to develop the South's rich resources. It would be a happy combination 'of Northern monied men and Southern real estate owners,' benefiting both sections. Never having much understanding of the unskilled laborer's problems and believing that the Negro could never be employed in industry, he advocated immigration to satisfy the demands for cheap labor. He looked forward to the day when there would be no boundary between the industrial North and the agrarian South, when men could travel from one great industrial city to another throughout the whole land. What he was asking for was national unity, economic as well as political.<sup>13</sup>

The Negro problem, which was to remain the crux of the difference in opinion between the two sections, Watterson approached with great circumspection. He could hail the end of slavery as a social and economic blessing, but there was still the question of what to do with the freedmen. In an age marked with bitterness, Watterson's editorials again stand out for their moderation, good sense, and modernity of viewpoint. To each group concerned, Watterson offered sound advice. To the Southern whites, he condemned the use of violence and the more restrictive Black Codes. He asked the South to give the Negroes schools, to offer them an encouraging word and a friendly hand. He attempted to show the North that it was more important for the Negro to find his proper place in society than to find the ballot box. 'No good can be done by passing

laws in the morning designed to make him a white man before night. You might as well try to make a white man a negro by painting him with lampblack,' he wrote on 15 October.

The Negro too, Watterson pointed out, had a responsibility. He could 'do more good for his race by sobriety, industry, and modesty, than all his friends can do for him or his enemies against him.' To offset the promises of the carpetbaggers, Watterson attempted to show the Negro that his best hope lay not with 'the man who would make him a sovereign in spite of himself,' but rather with 'the intelligent Southern man, who entertains no prejudice against him, nor any passion in his favor, who comprehends his nature, knows his wants, estimates his capacity, and wishes to improve him, educate him, elevate him and give him all that his attainment deserves.'

Finding men of passion more and more in the saddle both in the North and South, Watterson attempted to reach men of moderation and sanity outside the regular political camps, particularly in the field of journalism. The Republican party of Lincoln was rapidly becoming the Radical party of Thaddeus Stevens, rapacious, vindictive, a minority party determined to stay in power by means of Negro suffrage. The only organized political opposition was the old Democratic party, bearing in the North the stigma of Copperheadism. Watterson had little faith in it and advised his Southern readers not to give it their support. He believed that its ancient two-thirds rule for Presidential nominations would always guarantee the Democratic party not the strongest but rather the weakest candidate, a Pierce in place of a Douglas, and he superstitiously felt that the party was destined for destruction by its own stupidity and by unavoidable misfortune. Above all, he did not wish to associate with Northern Copperheads. He thought men like General Ben Butler, who had fought for their principles in the war, preferable to cowards who had sat the war out in sullen criticism. He wrote Greeley in the spring of 1866, 'You don't despise the Copperheads any more than I do.'<sup>14</sup>

He began to toy with the idea of a National Administration party that would not be sectional but a true Union party, embracing men of common sense in both sections. He even forgot his injured dignity enough to write to Johnson as a possible leader. 'I wish to join, as far as one of such poor capacity can do, in the construction of that National Administration party on which reposes

the sole hope of the country.' This party should have as its objective 'a recognition of the new and future relations of the sections: of consigning the war and its passions to a common grave. . . .' <sup>15</sup> Watterson expected the party's greatest support would come from the soldiers, both Confederate and Union, who now wanted peace and progressive action. There would be no question of its strong national sentiment, for the Confederates would be as staunch in their support of that idea as any Federalist. To Greeley, he explained, 'In short, because a man was a rebel *once*, is no reason why he should be a fool now.'

There was at this time an actual movement started by such prominent politicians as the Blairs of Missouri and Maryland, Senator James Doolittle of Wisconsin, and Martin Van Buren's son, John, to form a third party with Johnson as its leader. Watterson undoubtedly would have given it his support if the movement had succeeded. But it was still too early in the day for a Liberal Republican movement. There had to be the excesses of the Radicals against Johnson and the four mismanaged years of Grant's administration before such a movement could achieve enough popular appeal to warrant putting a Presidential ticket before the people.

Watterson might well question the efficacy of his editorial counsel in achieving concrete political action, but he could console himself with the fact that his paper was selling. Of possibly even greater importance to the young editor, the great metropolitan editors of New York were beginning to quote the *Banner* and to praise the sound and reasonable tone that it had struck in its editorial column. This flattering attention did not come entirely as a surprise to Watterson for he made sure that such men as Manton Marble on the New York *World* and Greeley saw his best pieces. 'I enclose you two editorials from the "Nashville Banner" of yesterday and today,' he wrote Greeley. 'May I hope that you will run your eye over them, and that, partly in kindness and partly in justice, you will give them a place in the "Tribune"?' <sup>16</sup> Watterson was already seeking recognition by the Northern press as spokesman for the reasonable and progressive South.

By the winter of 1865 all three directors of the *Banner* attained their immediate objective of matrimony. Henry Watterson and Rebecca Ewing were married on 20 December at the First Church

of Christ in Nashville, Watterson being twenty-five at the time and Rebecca twenty-one. The young couple spent their first Christmas together in the winter sunshine of New Orleans at the Hotel Monteleone. The two were a handsome pair and must have attracted more attention than the usual honeymooners in the hotel. Watterson was proud of his bride's beauty and frankly enjoyed the covetous glances that his wife received whenever she accompanied him through the lobby or into the hotel dining room.

Their honeymoon in Louisiana was brief for Watterson felt it necessary to hurry back to the paper in order that Albert Roberts might go to Montgomery to marry. Moreover, Watterson had a much more grandiose journey in mind than a brief trip to New Orleans. He hoped to go to London as soon as he had collected enough funds. His literary ambitions still burned brightly and having finished what he considered 'the great American novel,' he was eager to have it first see the light of day with an English imprint. By the early summer of 1866, he felt financially able to go. It was a relief to leave behind the sordidness of the American political scene.

Armed with a batch of introductory letters, he and his wife set sail from New York with great expectations. It was the first ocean voyage for both and for Rebecca it was a miserable experience. Particularly susceptible to seasickness, she spent most of the long days and nights in their small stateroom. She wanted only to be left alone, so Watterson was left to his own devices and enjoyed the trip immensely. There were new people with whom he could exchange stories and there were highly profitable all-night poker sessions in which he taught a few intrepid British travelers the intricacies of American draw poker.

Pleasant as the trip was for him, Watterson eagerly awaited, although not with the desperate longing of his wife, their arrival in England. Since the age of five, he had so steeped himself in English literature that he already felt as if he knew Old London as well as he knew Nashville. And he found the city nearly as he expected it. The old literary landmarks were still there: 'the Bull-and-Gate in Holburn where Tom Jones repaired on his arrival in town, and the White Hart Tavern, where Mr. Pickwick fell in with Mr. Sam Wells; the regions about Leicester Fields and Russell Square sacred to the memory of Captain Booth and the lovely

Amelia and Becky Sharp; where Garrick drank tea with Dr. Johnson and Henry Esmond tiddled with Sir Richard Steele. There was yet a Pump Court, and many places along Oxford Street where Mantalini and De Quincy loitered; and Covent Garden and Drury Lane. . . . In short, I knew London when it was still Old London . . . before the vandal hordes of progress and the pickaxe of the builder had got in their nefarious work.' <sup>17</sup> Watterson was enchanted, and Europe, from the moment he first saw it, was never to lose its attraction for him.

Among his letters of introduction was one that he had not prized very highly, a letter from Mrs. Scott, his former landlady in Montgomery, to her brother, a certain Thomas H. Huxley of the School of Mines. Having already made use of the more promising introductory passes into London society, he quite casually introduced himself to Mr. Huxley, who proved to be most agreeable and invited the Wattersons to dinner. The other guests were John Tyndall, Herbert Spencer, and John Stuart Mill. The name of Herbert Spencer sounded vaguely familiar to Watterson, but the other two were completely unknown to this worldly young man who could have told anyone the exact inn where one of Fielding's fictional characters dined, but had not bothered with mid-nineteenth-century English philosophy. Watterson found the company at the table 'a bit pragmatic,' and one has the delightful picture in his autobiography of this omniscient young editor and general man-of-affairs leaning back in his chair and proceeding to enlighten his rather bookish acquaintances on the meaning of the contemporary world events. 'Finding them a little off on the Irish question as well as American affairs, I set them right as to both with much particularity and a great deal of satisfaction to myself.' <sup>18</sup>

What his companions' reactions to his elucidating comments were one can only surmise. But their reactions to Rebecca Watterson were certainly more overtly expressed. During the course of the dinner, Spencer asked her if she was familiar with the poetry of Longfellow. 'Oh yes,' she replied, 'but I enjoy most singing his poems set to music.' Spencer insisted that she sing after dinner, and for once, Rebecca had the center of the stage. She sang beautifully with perfect composure and the applause that she received delighted Watterson. <sup>19</sup>

For Watterson's immediate purposes Thomas Huxley proved to

be a valuable acquaintance, for he knew the English publisher, Alexander Macmillan. It was to the latter that Watterson proudly presented his novel. From Watterson's later description of this literary creation, which bore the lumbering title 'One Story's Good Till Another Is Told,' it would appear either that Macmillan in accepting it for publication had lost his critical ability in the last months of his life or else that the world lost a great literary agent when Watterson took up journalism. But although the novel was accepted by Macmillan, for some reason it was never published. Watterson was soon to forget his belletristic dreams in the excitement of politics, and it was quite a shock when, twenty years later, his wife showed him the old manuscript which he had hoped would admit him into the select group of Collins, Dickens, and Thackeray. He read it through and could only comment: 'The Lord has surely been good to me. If the "boys" ever got a peep at that novel, I had been lost indeed!' <sup>20</sup>

This initial trip to Europe was a brilliant social success, if not a literary one. Macmillan introduced Watterson into the Garrick Club, where, still stage-struck, he could listen to footlights talk by the hour and meet the greatest figures on the English stage. Here he formed lasting friendships that would allow him to pass freely in the theatrical world anywhere on two continents for the rest of his life. It was in the more lively Savage Club, however, that he found the brightest side of English society. Artemus Ward, the American humorist, whom Watterson had met in Cincinnati in 1865, had just arrived in London for what proved to be his last lecture tour, and it was he who brought Watterson into this gay company. <sup>21</sup>

This life was exactly suited to Watterson's taste — rich and soft as the plush chairs in the clubrooms, superficial as the painted sets on the stage at Covent Garden, bright as a *bon mot* of Halliday or Swinburne. It was gay but also expensive. Watterson was able to supplement his dwindling funds by occasional feature stories for the *Daily Telegraph*. He could never divorce himself completely from printer's ink. <sup>22</sup>

In September the Wattersons spent a few weeks in Paris, but the land seemed alien after England, and Watterson was happy to return to the now familiar surroundings of London. The late English fall passed quickly. In November Artemus Ward opened at the

Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly to a large and cheering crowd, who little realized it was laughing at the antics of a dying man. The Wattersons for reasons of climate had planned to spend the winter in Italy, but in early December they changed their plans and made arrangements for their return home. Watterson in his autobiography mentioned only that 'an event called me suddenly home.'<sup>23</sup> Undoubtedly the main reason for their sudden departure was that Rebecca was now expecting their first child. Moreover, with the fast-moving political events of that fall and winter, Roberts and Purvis wanted Watterson back in the editorial chair.

On their last night in London, they invited Ward to dinner. By this time the humorist was so feeble he could hardly walk alone. It was to be the last time that Watterson would ever see his convivial companion of the Savage Club. On 22 December 1866 the Wattersons sailed for home, back to an unhappy land. The rough north Atlantic ocean across which they sailed was no more turbulent than the political scene that they would find at home.

The Radicals regarded the Congressional elections of 1866 as a mandate from the people of the North for a vindictive policy toward the South. For the next two years, the United States was to be governed by a small Congressional cabal under the dictatorship of Thaddeus Stevens. There was no other effective department of government. The Supreme Court was intimidated, the President helpless, his veto power now but a mere formality which the Radicals could easily override with their two-thirds majority in Congress. The elaborate system of checks and balances so carefully written into the Constitution by its framers had thus been effectively nullified.

On the single day of 2 March 1867, Congress clearly revealed by three pieces of legislation its intentions first to subjugate the South by military despotism, and second to reduce the powers of the President to that of a mere figurehead. The First Reconstruction Act accomplished the first objective by destroying Johnson's reconstructed governments in all the Southern states except Tennessee. The South was to be divided into five military districts to be governed by generals of the United States Army until such time as these states should call a constitutional convention that would provide for universal male suffrage and guarantee the ratification of



the Fourteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution. The Command of the Army Act deprived President Johnson of his constitutional right to control the army, and the Tenure of Office Act deprived him the right to remove civil officials, including his cabinet officers, without the consent of the Senate. Thus did the Radicals in Congress effectively secure for themselves complete control over Reconstruction.

Watterson, so recently returned from the relatively placid political environment of Great Britain, found it difficult at first to appreciate the seriousness of the political situation at home. Even after the proscriptive legislation of 2 March, Watterson still counseled a policy of moderation on the part of his angry Southern comrades. The Military Reconstruction bill must be accepted because the South could do nothing else. He warned those Southern whites not disenfranchised by the Act who threatened, in protest to military reconstruction, to abstain from voting for members to state constitutional conventions, that they would be hurting only themselves and playing directly into the hands of the scalawags and the carpetbaggers. Those who would wait for the Supreme Court to declare the Reconstruction Act unconstitutional would wait in vain, Watterson added. The only hope for the Southern whites was in taking full advantage of those rights still left to them in order to exert as much influence as possible in the creation of new state governments.<sup>24</sup> Negro suffrage, Federal troops, and Northern arrogance must for the present be accepted and patiently borne.

Watterson's counsel, while promising hope for the future, smacked too much of submissive bowing to tyranny to satisfy most Southerners. It was all very well for a Tennessean who was not under military rule, they argued, to talk of patience and co-operation for the present in the hope for future relief, but angry men in Mississippi and South Carolina and Georgia preferred the white sheet and the midnight ride to win back their lost rights.

Watterson still maintained, however, that the only hope for the South lay in co-operation with the North. He blamed much of the present difficulty on the South's failure to accept immediately the first terms offered them by Congress and warned that each successive Congressional plan would be harsher than the preceding one if the South remained recalcitrant:

Therefore the unrestored should hold fast to their discretion, and if it is not too late, they should wheel into line under the Congressional plan as it is now construed and before it becomes more oppressive, and organize in a manner which will give Mr. Thaddeus Stevens and Mr. Benjamin F. Butler the very least excuse for their ultra propositions. Thus they will strengthen conservatism. Thus they will contradict the assertions of their enemies and swell the ranks of their friends. Thus they will christen the doctrine of 'reconstruction' with a new and saving grace, and rescue a decent word from the slough of falsehood into which it has fallen at the same time that they restore themselves to equal places in the Union.<sup>25</sup>

Such remarkable editorial comment coming out of the South at this time was bound to attract attention of Northern moderates. Watterson was beginning to formulate his doctrine of a 'New Departure' for the South, a departure from the lost past into a new future.

Although his counsel remained constant, Watterson's mood as reflected in these editorials varied from hopeful optimism to black pessimism. The approaching impeachment trial of President Johnson in February 1868 plunged Watterson into new depths of despair. There could be no justice for the President in the trial where 'the witnesses, the prosecutors and the judges are one and the same, forming a party league to carry out a certain party purpose.' Yet even with this latest and most grave threat to the American Constitutional system, Watterson attempted to find some consolation for himself and his readers:

We must hope for the best. One thing only is sure. If Andrew Johnson comes out of it safe, he will have made for himself the first place in contemporary affairs. . . . If he is convicted, he may become the most fortunate martyr in all history. He has, in a word, everything to gain, and as the case is now presented, little to lose. For this happy combination, he is alone indebted to his own circumspection, sagacity and courage.<sup>26</sup>

It is doubtful, however, that Watterson was successful even in convincing himself that there was much 'hope for the best' in the situation. Johnson's victory or defeat could make little immediate difference in the Radical Reconstruction program. The South still had a long road ahead to travel.

But it was in this same spring of 1868, so dark and ominous for most Southerners, that Watterson's own future was happily determined. Quite unexpectedly, he received an invitation from Isham

Henderson, the major stockholder of the Louisville *Journal*, to come to that city to take over the editorship of George Prentice's nationally known *Journal*. Prentice, once Kentucky's most noted editor, was now an old man and willing to relinquish the major editorial duties to a younger man. One of his editorial writers, John Hatcher, was a former Tennessean who had served with Watterson in the war. It was he who suggested Watterson's name to Henderson and Prentice. Both men had noticed Watterson's editorial work on the Nashville *Banner* and they readily accepted Hatcher's suggestion.

For Watterson it was a tempting offer. No paper west of the Alleghenies in the two decades prior to the Civil War had had higher reputation than the *Journal*. Furthermore Watterson was guaranteed complete independence in editorial policy. It was an offer with no strings attached.

He did not hesitate long before accepting Henderson's invitation to come to Louisville. Although he and his associates had succeeded beyond their fondest hopes with the *Banner*, nevertheless Watterson felt that he had reached the top of the journalistic ladder in Nashville, and he wanted to climb higher. Nashville, in these years of reconstruction, was an unhappy, defeated city. Louisville, untouched physically by war, had the great attraction of being a Southern city that still enjoyed Northern prosperity. The possibilities for further development were even more enticing. Perhaps with his keen Celtic intuition, Watterson could sense that in Louisville lay his future.

Rebecca Watterson decided not to go to Louisville until after the birth of their child, expected early in July, and until her husband had found suitable quarters for them there. It was not easy for Watterson to leave Rebecca behind nor to say goodbye to his close associates on the *Banner*, but having made the decision, he was eager to be on his way. Early in May Watterson boarded a Louisville and Nashville railroad car and headed north. After twenty-eight years of wandering he was ready to find a home.

## FIVE

### Louisville

1868

CUTTING NORTH across Kentucky from Nashville, the Louisville and Nashville railroad curves through the cave country of south-central Kentucky. It is not good land compared with the bright green opulence of the Bluegrass country to the east. The soil is thin, the land curiously knobbed and streaked with deep ravines. On the eroded hillsides little grows except straggling stands of cedar, pin oak, and scrub pine. In late fall and winter this part of Kentucky looks poor and starved, incapable of providing a comfortable living, for in those seasons the lean ribs of stone and the sunken hollows of gullies stand out sharply, naked of vegetation. In spring, however, the land has its particular charm and the small fields in the valleys and on the hilltops give forth a green promise which the autumn harvest seldom fulfills.

Henry Watterson, in the long slow journey northward in May 1868, had time to observe this less prosperous part of the state that he was to call his own. Daisies and fringed gentian and bright-colored trumpet vine gave a color and life to the gaunt hills. In the fields near the railroad towns were the green patches of strawberry beds, and little Negro boys would meet the train as it stopped at each small junction with boxes heaped high with strawberries. Out

in the country could be seen the evidence that men did try to make a living from this land — irregular corn fields and, in the valleys, the dark, heavy leaves of tobacco plants.

It took many hours for the small wood-burning engine to draw its load through these hills and valleys across the 190 miles separating Nashville and Louisville. At last, however, the journey ended, and Henry Watterson, along with the other weary passengers, could step out into the streets of Louisville.

Chance had directed Watterson to perhaps the most appropriate place in the country for him to build his fame. For if personal characteristics can be assigned to a city, then it is safe to say that Louisville and Watterson had much in common. Like Watterson, Louisville was of the borderland, its feet in the South but its face turned toward the North. Like him, the city respected wealth, enjoyed the comforts of upper middle-class prosperity, was essentially conservative, and was supremely confident of its future. It had, as one caustic critic has observed, 'the most complacent self-esteem in America.'<sup>1</sup>

Louisville was a mercantile town. No important manufacturing plants were here; like the ancient Hanseatic cities, she lived for trade, to carry the raw products of the South to the North, to bring back its manufactured articles to the South. Lying on a low flat plain on the south side of the Ohio, the city had been founded just above a stretch of rapids where the river tumbles twenty-six feet in two miles. It was the so-called falls that had given Louisville its hold on all traffic moving down the Ohio to New Orleans. In the early days, all boats had to break cargo here, and Louisville had extracted her payment for this transfer. After a canal had been built around the falls, she still extorted her price. The tolls on the canal were high, but merchants from Cincinnati on up to Pittsburgh had no choice but to dig into their pockets and pay, cursing the robber baron of the river.

Eventually the Federal government took over the canal and gave free passage around the falls, but by that time the peak of river traffic had passed, and Louisville had turned to another form of transportation. Immediately before the war, by shrewd financial maneuvering, the merchants and bankers of Louisville had raised enough money to push a railroad to the very heart of the South. This was the famed L & N railroad which was to serve the North

during the war in the movement of troops (at a price) and was to guarantee for many years Louisville's monopoly of North-South trade. Again Cincinnati might fume against the low railroad bridge Louisville had flung across the river to Indiana, preventing many of Cincinnati's boats from using the canal, and futilely protest the Kentucky legislature's refusal to allow Cincinnati to build her own railroad across Kentucky to the South. Louisville sat complacently holding the only North-South railway between the Mississippi and the Alleghenies firmly in her hands.

Louisville had never found it necessary to flaunt her wealth. Watterson, like most newcomers, was not at first glance much impressed with the appearance of his adopted city. The low one- and two-story brick buildings in the commercial district along Main Street and Fourth Street were humble settings for the business transacted within their doors. Near the river was a scene of slow and gentle decay. The once busy wharves were now falling into disuse, for the war had done much to finish off the river trade. In order to find the main artery of Louisville's life stream one would have to turn from the tranquillity of the river to the busy freight station and warehouses of the L & N railroad. The residential district, along Chestnut, Walnut, and South Third streets, wore an air of unpretentious, contented conservatism. Most of the homes were simple red brick dwellings with an occasional massive stone Romanesque dwelling standing like an impregnable fortress.

This then was Louisville, 'gateway to the South,' but a gate painted in the somber tones of New England and hung on hinges of Yankee practicality. Visitors had to go into the open rolling lands to the south and east to find the traditional Southern homes of wide porticoes and open doors. Though the Louisvillian thought of himself as a Southerner, to the man of Lexington or Frankfort he was a Yankee, preoccupied with business.

Although there had long been disagreement between Louisville and the Bluegrass region over prices, marketing, high railroad rates, and political control, they had found a common sympathy in their attitude toward the Union; for love of it was strong throughout the state, and it had been no political accident that the Great Compromiser, Henry Clay, had come from Kentucky. Stretching more than 400 miles along the river that divided North and South, Kentucky was the great neutral land between the two sections. Carved

on the stone that she contributed to the Washington Monument in 1850 were the words: 'Under the auspices of Heaven and the precepts of Washington, Kentucky will be the last to give up the Union.'

In the darkening days of the 1850's, Kentucky scorned the invitation to attend the Nashville Convention, and as the hysteria in both sections increased, her statesmen only worked the more diligently for union. Henry Clay's last contribution was the Compromise of 1850, and lesser Kentuckians continued in his path after his death. It was a Kentuckian, John J. Crittenden, who in 1860-1 tried to find one last compromise that would save the Union. When, by April 1861, all efforts to avert war had failed, Kentucky with heavy heart proclaimed her neutrality and her faithfulness to national unity.

This devotion to the Constitution on Louisville's part could be explained largely in economic terms. Her trade lay with both the North and the South, and disunion meant disaster. To a lesser extent, the Bluegrass also had an economic basis for desiring sectional harmony. It yielded the products that found outlets in both directions, and, moreover it believed that only by staying in the Union could it preserve slavery. If Kentucky left the Union, she would be overrun in six weeks, and the slaves would be freed by the conqueror's sword.

An economic explanation is not alone sufficient, however; for a great idea, like a tree, must have many roots to nourish it. Kentucky's loyalty grew out of the pride she felt in having been so long in the Union; the fear of attack because, a state of one million, she faced Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, which with five million people could, as Archibald Dixon pointed out, in one month pour 'an army of one hundred thousand men upon every part of us';<sup>2</sup> a feeling of kinship with both sections, for Kentucky had sent thousands of her sons to people Tennessee and Indiana, Missouri and Illinois; and finally, the essential conservatism of the state, her realization that disunion and war could mean only a political, economic, and social upheaval. By 1861, her great son, Henry Clay, was dead; two of her other sons had gone in opposite directions, Jefferson Davis to Mississippi and Abraham Lincoln to Illinois. Kentucky stood hesitantly in the middle.

When war came to Kentucky in the early fall of 1861, the L & N

became the main artery for Union supplies and troops going south into Tennessee, and was instrumental in the Union victories in that region. For this service the Federal government paid handsomely, even furnishing Negro labor for building a feeder line for the L & N into the Kentucky coal fields. Louisville was also chosen as the site of a Federal encampment. Prices soared and business boomed. Louisville emerged from the war with pockets bulging, the only city south of the Ohio that was more prosperous in 1865 than in 1861.

The North, upon viewing the general prosperity in Louisville, might have thought that Union sentiment in Kentucky should have been stronger than ever. Yet within a few short months after Appomattox, Kentucky had become the most 'unreconstructed state' in the Union. The explanation for this belated disloyalty is simple. In the first place, it was Louisville, not Kentucky, which had profited from war. Few bulging pockets could be found south of Chestnut Street, and with the emancipation of slavery, many Kentucky planters in the Bluegrass region saw only economic ruin. A more important consideration was the fact that Kentucky had given her support to the Union as she had always known it. Kentucky did not join the Federal side in order to have her rights as a state crushed by national power; she had not joined for the emancipation of slavery. Now she felt betrayed, her state placed under martial law, her slaves enticed away into Federal army camps, and many of her leading citizens proscribed from all political activities for being traitors to the nation. As she saw the defeated South ground under the boot of the Congressional Radicals, her resentment knew no limits. As an eminent historian of Kentucky summarized the situation, 'she had waited until the war was over to secede from the Union.'<sup>3</sup>

Watterson, in 1868, was coming to the most belligerently Southern state in the Union. By the end of December 1865 all wartime proscriptions against Confederates had been brushed aside by the Kentucky legislature, and in the state elections of 1866 the Confederates swept the state, rolling up such majorities as to make Kentucky a one-party state in which Republican and Unionist political opposition had become useless. Watterson's Confederate record was to be his greatest asset. His fame as editor of *The Rebel* assured him a receptive audience everywhere in the Bluegrass State.



In replacing George D. Prentice as editor of the *Journal*, Watterson was assuming leadership of the most illustrious paper of the entire Southwest. For nearly forty years, Prentice had been one of the most colorful and influential editors in the country. Like Watterson, he had come to Kentucky as a young man, had adopted the state as his own, and later came to be regarded as its spokesman by the rest of the nation.

Born in Connecticut in 1802, Prentice had attended Brown University, and in 1828 had founded a weekly, the *New England Review*, in Hartford. An ardent Whig admirer of Henry Clay, he came to Kentucky in 1830 to gather material for a panegyric biography to be used in the campaign of 1832. So impressed were Clay and his political cohorts with the biography, they asked Prentice to stay to publish a first rate Whig paper in Kentucky, where Jacksonian Democracy was strong. In Louisville the *Focus*, founded by W. W. Worsley in 1826, attempted to speak for the Whigs, but in the four years of its existence it had made only a slight inroad against the powerful Democratic organs of the state.<sup>4</sup> Prentice agreed to stay.

The first number of the *Louisville Daily Journal* appeared on 24 November 1830. The Whig party had chosen wisely. Within a few months, George Prentice's *Journal* had become the most widely read paper in the state. In 1832 Prentice bought out the *Focus* and assumed journalistic leadership for the Whig party in the whole Southwest. In that year, Kentucky deserted Jackson for the Whig party.

Picturesque in appearance with his short, squat little body, long hair, and ill-fitting clothes, Prentice was equally colorful in his writing. His barbed and caustic humor, the slashing cuts and sharp stings of his short epigrammatic paragraphs made his editorial column a delight to an audience that expected rough play from its editors. The chief object of his attack in the early years was Shadrach Penn, editor of the leading Democratic paper, the *Public Advertiser*, a giant of a man and a journalistic bully who had driven out many Whig editors. But he proved to be no match for Prentice, who took great delight in twisting Penn's most innocent remarks to suit his purposes of ridicule. If Penn wrote of 'lying these cold mornings curled up in bed,' Prentice would retort with, 'We always said you lie like a dog.' If the hapless editor mentioned he

had found and nailed up a rat hole in his office, Prentice would snap back, 'Shouldn't have. That would have saved you your next year's rent.' The unhappy Penn soon had had enough and retired ignominiously from the field.

Not all enemies retired so obligingly before Prentice's attacks, however. In the West of those days, an editor's invective was limited only by his physical courage. Nothing so effete as a libel law was used to protect name and honor from journalistic slander, and any editor might be knocked down or shot at sight. Prentice's fame as a crack shot soon equaled his fame as an editor, and he came through many an encounter on the streets of Louisville miraculously unscathed.<sup>5</sup>

There was more to Prentice's editorials, however, than the rough billingsgate that so delighted his country readers. He could write with logical and sensible conviction in behalf of the two guiding tenets of his life — the Whig party and the Federal Union. With the death of Clay and the dissolution of the Whig party, Prentice, with many other Whig editors in the country, brought his paper over to the support of Millard Fillmore and the Know-Nothings in the campaign of 1856. But his heart was not in it, and he watched with dismay as his beloved Union threatened to follow the Whigs into dissolution. He remained true to the vanished Whig dream of compromise by supporting Bell and his Constitutional Union party in 1860, and Kentucky, which had never failed to follow the *Journal's* lead in a national campaign, was one of three states to give her electoral vote to Bell.

Recognizing the extent of Prentice's influence in the border states, Southern sympathizers made every effort to get Prentice to abandon the Union. But although his two sons joined the Confederate army, Prentice remained unshaken.

On 13 August 1861, soon after the first reversals of the Union forces in Virginia, the *Journal* gave a ringing answer to the more weak-kneed editors of the North, like Greeley, who, seeing the horrors of war, were crying, 'Let the erring sisters go in peace.' Calling the action of the secession leaders tyrannical, being without public support in their own states, Prentice denied that there could be peace for even one year between the two nations. Tyranny and military despotism, the end of the hope 'of hundreds of millions through out the civilized world,' would follow. 'And now the ques-

tion is whether the United States, through the dread of the inconveniences and even the great sufferings and sacrifices of the war that is upon us, ought to accept the condition of things for the sake of a brief, and a hollow, a nominal peace. To our minds it would be a dreadful crime against God and the human race.' Lincoln was to find no stronger support anywhere, and Prentice's stand was regarded decisive in keeping Kentucky in the Union. At a dinner given in his honor in Washington in 1862, he was toasted by the Secretary of War as being 'in charge of the War Department in Kentucky.'<sup>6</sup>

The year 1861 represents the high point of Prentice's career and his influence in Kentucky. Breaking with Lincoln over the Emancipation Proclamation, he drifted unhappily into the Democratic camp to support McClellan in 1864. The end of the war found Prentice a tired, bitter old man. He now distrusted the Union to which he had devoted his life. His wife was dead, and his oldest son had been killed fighting with the Confederates. His life seemed to him to have been in vain.

When Watterson arrived in Louisville to take over Prentice's job, he found him a dirty, unkempt old man, living in a back room of the *Journal* office. 'The stream of life had passed him by.'<sup>7</sup> His once powerful *Journal* now stood a poor third among the papers of Louisville. But although the paper had lost most of its subscribers, men still remembered Prentice as Kentucky's greatest editor, still thought of the *Journal* as the leader of Kentucky's press. Watterson had bought his way into a business that was beginning to crumble on top, but the foundation was still there, strong and firm. It only needed a young hand to shore up the supports. Watterson was ready to go to work.

The *Journal's* two rivals in Louisville, which had passed it by in these last years, were the Louisville *Democrat* and the *Morning Courier*. Both had been staunchly Democratic from the first. Therein lay their advantage over the recently converted *Journal*. The *Courier*, in particular, edited by Watterson's friend of the Chattanooga days, Walter N. Haldeman, had the inside track in these days of the triumphant Confederates. Haldeman, who had taken over the defunct *Daily Dime* in 1844 and changed its name to the *Courier*, had been an early supporter of secession. In the last decade before the war, the *Courier* and the *Journal*, directly across the

street from each other, vividly presented in their editorial columns the dividing opinions of the borderland. On the morning after Bull Run when the *Journal* flew the flag of the United States, the *Courier* office proudly raised the Confederate flag.<sup>8</sup> With the arrival of Federal troops in Louisville, in September 1861, Haldeman found his paper suppressed as treasonous. He fled south to avoid arrest. The *Courier* was then published in exile, moving south with the Confederate army. When Watterson met him in Chattanooga, Haldeman was publishing a paper with the *Louisville-Bowling Green-Nashville-Chattanooga Courier* as its title. The masthead itself told the story of the unhappy fortunes of the Southern cause.<sup>9</sup>

At the end of the war, Haldeman returned to Louisville, and with the removal of martial law, resumed the publication of the *Courier*. Its immediate success was assured because of Haldeman's devotion to the Confederacy. The *Courier* soon pushed far past the *Journal* in circulation.

The only other paper of importance, the *Democrat*, had always run a poor third until the post-war period. Founded by Phineas Kent in 1843 with money furnished by Senator James Guthrie, it had been purchased by John Harney in 1844. Ably edited, it had been consistently Democratic. Although refusing to support secession, it had been during the war the mouthpiece of the Northern Peace Democrats. Now its record of opposition to Lincoln placed it second only to the *Courier*, and the *Journal* for the first time lagged behind.<sup>10</sup>

The unanimity of sentiment in Kentucky in 1868 was proved by the fact that all three papers in Louisville were proclaiming their undying allegiance to Southern Democracy. The Cincinnati *Commercial* sneered at this spectacle of three papers all scrambling to kiss the feet of the supposedly dead Confederacy: 'The *Courier* man sings psalms to the dead ass of treason, and morning, noon, and night glorifies the rebellion, while brother Harney of the *Democrat* splutters and flutters around the edge of loyalty, and the wheezy old *Journal* lumbers along, uttering its crazy jabbering to an uninterested public.'<sup>11</sup>

Especially pathetic was the *Journal* in casting lean, hungry looks at the former enemies of the Union, as when it reminded its readers that it had 'aided returning Confederate soldiers with food, clothing and means of transportation.' It was only the necessity of obtain-

ing subscribers that forced this former supporter of Whig Unionism hastily to daub itself with Confederate Gray. Prentice could not have been anything but wretched to watch his once powerful *Journal* lose prestige and subscribers to the *Courier*. Kowtowing to the Rebel-flavored Democracy was a painful process for the old Unionist editor. Watterson found an unhappy man eager to turn over to him the editorial reins of the once proud *Journal*.

Watterson quickly stepped into the head place and found that the editor-in-chief's desk was if anything a little small. For he already had grandiose plans that went far beyond the editorship of the *Journal*. This was a new age. Louisville was a busy place, building for a bigger future. It was a proper time for an energetic young man with supreme confidence in his own ability to begin a newspaper.

But that was precisely what was bothering Watterson. He was not starting a newspaper. He had been called up to Louisville to revive an old one. No matter how successful he might be in the task, it would not be his paper — it would be encrusted with the traditions of another age and for years to come people would think of it as Prentice's paper. Watterson was eager for a new venture.

He quickly sized up the situation. 'After I had looked over the field and inspected the *Journal*'s books, I was satisfied that a union with the *Courier* was the wisest solution of the newspaper situation, and told them [Prentice and Henderson] so.' <sup>12</sup> Haldeman's current editor-in-chief was the Confederate General, Simon Bolivar Buckner, whose name added prestige to the masthead, but whose ability added little to the news columns. Watterson, struggling with the *Journal*'s books, had never made any claim to being a businessman; but with the team of Haldeman as business manager and Watterson as editor the prospects for the future seemed dazzling.

Haldeman, although eager to get Watterson's services as an editor, was not enough interested in consolidation to accept the value that Henderson put on his *Journal* stock. Watterson realized that the only way to force Haldeman to accept consolidation was to make the *Journal* once more a serious competitor of the *Courier*. 'There was nothing to it but a fight,' Watterson wrote. 'I took the *Journal* and began to hammer the *Courier*.' <sup>13</sup>

One looks in vain through the files of the *Journal* and the *Courier* of that time, however, for the literary cudgeling of Penn and

Prentice. Not an unkind word was printed on either side, Watterson later remembered. The *Courier* ignored the bustling activities taking place in the office across the street, and the *Journal's* only mention of its rivals was to show from week to week how it was growing at their expense. For Watterson was achieving results. At the end of September, he could proudly announce the dramatic change in the receipts of all three papers. For the quarter ending 30 June, the *Journal* had placed a poor third with the *Courier* receiving \$15,949, the *Democrat* \$4,589, and the *Journal* \$4,178. But on 30 September, the *Journal's* receipts for subscriptions alone (it did no job printing) had jumped to \$12,744; the *Courier's* receipts including both subscriptions and job printing were \$17,800; and the *Democrat's* receipts were \$5,275. In view of this spectacular rise in a period of three months, the *Journal* was justified in boasting that 'it will, before the year is out, exceed the circulation of any newspaper published west of the Alleghenies.'<sup>14</sup>

Watterson in later accounts was vague as to how he produced this sudden prosperity. In his autobiography he implies that Henderson was willing to spend money freely for promotional purposes, and that he himself was able to provide additional capital by 'stripping the *Journal* to its heels.' Much of his success must be attributed to his own hard work. During these first months before Rebecca joined him, he literally lived in the *Journal* office. Sleeping on a cot in a back room, grabbing his meals at odd hours, he gave of himself untiringly, for the task before him was tremendous.

He had been somewhat shocked when first entering the *Journal* office not only by the unwashed appearance of Prentice but also by the general conditions within the office itself. The place was filthy, and Watterson, always immaculate, had insisted upon a general housecleaning: desks dusted, files put in order, windows washed. The staff itself was also badly in need of a thorough cleansing, for Prentice, indifferent to his physical environment, had paid little attention to the personal habits of his personnel. Watterson was, of course, accustomed, in this age of the tramp printer, to a certain amount of roughness in the composing room, but he demanded more of the parlor atmosphere in his editorial offices. The crowd of rough drunken young 'Bohemians,' making up Prentice's editorial and news staff, who drank in the office and

spat tobacco juice on the floor, were quickly dismissed. Watterson at once began to build up a staff that could on its own responsibility turn out the kind of paper that he expected.<sup>15</sup>

Prentice himself was more difficult to handle, for Watterson could neither scrub him up nor dismiss him. Though their relations remained amicable, the old man must have been something of a burden to Watterson. Prentice was sensitive, once remarking to Watterson, 'I hope you won't let me snuff out like a tallow candle.' Watterson had to be careful not to brush past him too rapidly and had to keep him convinced that the candle still burned with its old brightness.<sup>16</sup> There was no question in either man's mind, however, from the moment that Watterson joined the staff about who would direct the general policy of the paper.

Although the make-up of the paper was little changed, Watterson did alter the general slant of the news and introduced several new features. He stressed foreign news more than had Prentice, and from his new and eager reportorial staff he was consistently able to 'scoop' the other Louisville papers on local news. The Sunday paper each week carried a chapter of *Pendennis* by Thackeray, Watterson's favorite English novelist, to give a new literary tone to the paper. These innovations proved effective and soon 'circulation flowed in. From eighteen hundred daily it quickly mounted to ten thousand, from fifteen hundred weekly to fifty thousand. The middle of October it looked as if we had a straight road before us.'<sup>17</sup>

By late autumn the *Journal* seemed well on its way to recover the circulation recently lost. Watterson had found an old brownstone, three-story house on Second Street to rent and Rebecca and their three-month-old son, Ewing, at last were able to join him. His delight in having his wife and his new son with him gave an added zest to the pleasure he was finding in his work. It seemed clear to him that now was the time to bargain with Haldeman once again. He tells in his autobiography how he made a new approach to the proprietor of the *Courier*:

There was toward the last of October on the edge of town a real-estate sale which Mr. Haldeman and I attended. Here was my chance for a play. I must have bid up to a hundred thousand dollars and did actually buy nearly ten thousand dollars of the lots put up at auction, relying upon some money presently coming to my wife.

Always one for a dramatic show, Watterson had carefully staged this spectacle to impress Haldeman. On the way back to town, Watterson said to his future partner, 'Mr. Haldeman, I am going to ruin you. . . . But I am going to run up a money obligation to Isham Henderson I shall never be able to discharge. You need an editor. I need a publisher. Let us put these two papers together, buy the *Democrat*, and instead of cutting one another's throats, go after Cincinnati and St. Louis. You will recall that I proposed this to you in the beginning. What is the matter with it?' And, as Watterson writes in concluding his account, 'Nothing was the matter with it. He agreed at once. The details were soon adjusted.'<sup>18</sup>

Haldeman, who undoubtedly was more impressed with the *Journal's* circulation figures than with Watterson's ostentatious performance at the real estate sale, offered Isham Henderson a price for his *Journal* stock high enough so that Henderson was willing to sell. Haldeman also agreed to give Watterson, in addition to direction of editorial policy, one-third of the stock of the newly formed *Courier-Journal* corporation and Watterson at once accepted.

All of these arrangements were made in utmost secrecy. Few people in Louisville had any idea that the two old rivals had engaged in any such love feast and were considering a union. Just why Haldeman and Watterson considered it important to keep the transaction secret is not made clear. Perhaps, again, it appealed to Watterson's sense of drama to have the *Courier-Journal* burst unexpectedly upon an unsuspecting public. Up to the very day before the first issue of the combined *Courier-Journal* was to appear, the *Journal* was still boasting as to how far it had outstripped its local rivals. The rivalry, however, no longer existed. John Harney had died shortly before Haldeman and Watterson had come to an agreement. Thus the *Democrat* had been easily and rather inexpensively acquired. The field had been cleared.

On the night of 7 November the *Courier* staff moved its mechanical fixtures across the street into the *Journal* building, and an editorial corps was improvised from both staffs to put out the first issue of the *Courier-Journal*. Thus easily and quietly the *Courier* had moved across the narrow street that had for so many years separated the two offices — a street that had once been figuratively as deep as the chasm that separated Washington and Richmond.



It is an understatement to say the sleepy citizens of Louisville were surprised when they opened their papers on that Sunday morning and found this unexpected journalistic zygote of what had always been opposing forces. It was calmly announced on the front page:

An experience of six months of the most active and sustained competition known to journalism of the country convinces us that neither the times nor the situation justify the publication of two rival Democratic newspapers in Louisville on so large a plan as that pursued by the Louisville *Courier* and the Louisville *Journal*. Rather than reduce the character of either for enterprise of the first-class, and in order to furnish a newspaper reaching in all points the exacting demands of the public, we have arranged a combination of both, under the style and title of the Louisville *Courier-Journal*. The consolidation of two such presses enables us to produce a journal superior in every respect to its predecessors, distancing at once all competition, and assuming a circulation, influence and value enjoyed by no paper out of New York. Under this arrangement W. N. Haldeman takes the business and Henry Watterson the editorial management of the *Courier-Journal*, with a complete and efficient corps of writers, reporters and correspondents, including George D. Prentice.

Signed W. N. Haldeman, *Courier*  
Henry Watterson, *Journal*

In a brief editorial Watterson explained that the war had changed journalism as it had changed everything else. 'Wars are eminently progressive,' Watterson wrote, 'for they weed out the hacks and the quacks.' People now demanded journalism to be a science. There followed a statement of policy:

It is our aim to be just, to be liberal, to be conscientious. It is our interest to be active, to be spirited, to be enterprising. We shall permit no paper in the West or South to surpass the *Courier-Journal* in all the essentials we have named; and we feel assured that, having the muscle and material at our command, we shall not fall short either of our own intentions or the public expectation.

The union had been easily accomplished. Henry Watterson at last had his own paper. But the consolidation of the three Democratic papers into one vigorous newspaper had not *ipso facto* solved all his problems. The cries from the supporters of each of three separate papers were long and sustained. They felt they had been tricked on that November morning. Men were not yet accustomed, in those days of small journals expressing every shade of political thought, to one large monopolistic city press. But as the *Courier-Journal* had

the field to itself, there was no other paper to which the malcontents could turn. The *Courier-Journal* had the subscribers, but what was necessary, as Watterson himself expressed it, was 'the creation of a constituency' that would loyally follow Watterson into whatever channel of political reform he chose to lead it. For the ambitious young man from Tennessee had his own views on the political rebirth of the South. 'There was nothing for me,' he was later to write, 'but the ancient label of Democracy worn by a riff raff of opportunists. . . . But I proposed to lead and reform it.' <sup>19</sup>

The people of Kentucky seemed to be on the whole content with the political settlement following the elections of 1867. The Confederates were safely in the saddle, and the Radicals, who had had to lean on the military arm to maintain their power, had been driven out. Such an arrangement might maintain political order in a state that was weary of confusion but it did not satisfy Watterson. His ambitions for political influence were not limited to the land below the Ohio river but had the national boundaries as their horizon. For the South to assume its pre-war role in the national political life it must put away the bloody shirt, accept the Radical constitutional amendments as the real treaty of peace between the North and the South, and give up the 'lost cause' for a new cause — the cause of national Democratic supremacy. This was the program that Watterson laid out for himself and the *Courier-Journal*, and in the long fight to get the South to accept it he was to achieve what he most desired — national recognition and fame.

With the consolidation of the *Courier* and the *Journal* he could feel that the first step had been taken, the first rope had been thrown across the 'bloody chasm,' separating the two sections.

## SIX

# Bridging the Bloody Chasm

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1869—1872

HENRY WATTERSON was only twenty-eight when he became editor of the newly consolidated *Courier and Journal* newspapers, but he felt himself fully equipped for the position which he had assumed. The years in Chattanooga, Cincinnati, and Nashville had been a valuable apprenticeship, in which he had acquired a technical knowledge of newspaper publishing equal to that of any editor in the country. More important, he had developed a program and a style that he was to hold to virtually unchanged during his fifty years as editor of the *Courier-Journal*. It is true that in this half a century he was to vary radically in his estimates of the leading figures, and his readers would often have difficulty in telling the heroes from the villains, so rapidly did they change their roles. Yet his basic ideas, already fixed by 1868, would remain constant through the long years ahead.

Of primary importance to him was his belief in the Union. Everything else was secondary to this concept. It was the Union of 1850 of which he spoke, however, a nation of low tariffs, states' rights, and an honest but essentially weak Federal government. He feared all movements that tended toward a centralization, and was almost morbidly suspicious of the despotic ambitions that he was sure he could detect in nearly every occupant of the White House. Many

people were confused by his combination of inflammatory style and cautious beliefs, for though he could write with the revolutionary ardor of a Tom Paine, his was the conservatism of a John Taylor of Caroline. 'Faith of our fathers' was stamped across his every opinion, and he could denounce the monied power behind Senator Aldrich and the radical demands of Eugene Debs with equal vigor as untrue to the traditions of America. He was realistic enough to temporize with both extremes, but always with the objective of preserving the basic American ideals of his youth. Men had difficulty in understanding this basic consistency of his political doctrine. Whereas in 1868 he was hailed by Northern liberals as a brother and denounced by Southern Bourbons as a radical, in 1918 he seemed to Northern liberals hopelessly conservative — the prototype of Southern reaction. Yet he had remained the same, holding to the old ideas, hoping for the realization of the old dream.

In 1868 the immediate obstacle to overcome lay in the post-war resentments that seemed to block all hopes of progressive action. Against this log jam of bitterness, Watterson drove with all the vigor of his youth. Even after he had established his family in Louisville, he still worked fifteen to eighteen hours a day. At two o'clock in the morning, his colleagues would find him bright and alert, refreshing their weary minds with his stories as they all took time out to eat the meal he had ordered from Cuba's Restaurant next door.<sup>1</sup>

Stronger now than he had been during the war, Watterson was still a man of slight physique. He had given up his long beard while in Europe, contenting himself with a mustache and a short goatee. He had a rather fierce, eager look, and Louisville soon became familiar with the quick-moving figure who dashed in and out of the *Courier-Journal* office, incapable of walking at a moderate pace.

By the time of the *Journal's* consolidation with the *Courier*, Watterson had already built up an able and large staff. Including Prentice, the *Courier-Journal* had ten editorial writers, and for many years it was famous throughout the country for having more editors than reporters. To Watterson, the editorial page was both the heart and the mind of a newspaper. Without it, a newspaper lost all personal identity and became a mere commodity to be sold over the counter like bread or cheese. During these early years, Watter-

son was his own managing editor. His chief assistant was Donald Padman, an able paragrapher, who also wrote a column of local news faintly spiced with gentle humor called 'Small Talk.'

Watterson's main support was his partner and business manager, Walter Haldeman. He could not have appreciated, when he first suggested the merger, just how strong that support would be. The two men made a curious combination. Superficially it would appear that they were completely diverse as to temperament, taste, and interests. Haldeman was quiet, solemn, unobtrusive. He shunned the society, the club life, the theatrical world that so delighted Watterson. His social life was restricted almost exclusively to his regular Sunday attendance at the First Presbyterian church where he served as a deacon. Watterson's roaring enthusiasm and uninhibited behavior were a constant source of amazement to him. At a fancy dress Leap Year ball held in Frankfort in 1872, Watterson went attired in an orange-colored frock coat trimmed with violet lace, white pearl buttons, sky-blue pants (gold-striped), magenta gloves, purple necktie and white kid slippers.<sup>2</sup> Haldeman, of course, did not attend. He could as easily have imagined himself walking naked down Chestnut Street as appearing in public in such an attire.

Yet it was more than just a tolerance for each other's behavior and a common devotion to the paper that held the two men together and made their partnership such an effective one. For behind that aloof reserved façade that Haldeman presented to the public there was a restless, inquisitive spirit quite akin to Watterson's own, and in matters of finance Haldeman was as bold as Watterson was on the editorial page. Although he probably never joined his partner in a poker game, Haldeman was in many respects more of a gambler than Watterson, willing to risk their entire capital on a new building or the latest printing equipment. Very rarely did the two men's interests clash, for each thoroughly appreciated the other's contribution to their joint success. The editorial content of the paper was Watterson's, the business office belonged to Haldeman. Watterson got all of the glory, Haldeman most of the profits, and both men were satisfied.

Watterson's immediate task, that of uniting moderate men of the North and South to bring an end to radicalism in both sections, had Haldeman's complete approval for it appealed to the best business interests of the country. It did, however, bring the two men

up against the united opposition of the Democracy in Kentucky, the very political faction to which Haldeman's *Courier* had once appealed for its support. These unreconstructed rebels were labeled Bourbons by Watterson and other like-minded editors. The origin of the term is uncertain. But whether it came from Bourbon county in the very heart of the Bluegrass region of Kentucky, or whether it connoted the attitude of mind of the royal family of France that forgot nothing and learned nothing from the past, the term seemed appropriate and stuck. The Bourbons in turn furiously denounced 'Haldeman's capitulation to the Radicals for what he thinks pays.'<sup>3</sup>

There were angry cries of monopoly from the former readers of both the *Journal* and the *Courier*. Watterson attempted to answer these charges by pointing to the L & N railroad and asking, 'Does anyone call it a "monopoly," or propose to build another along side it?'<sup>4</sup> Here Watterson used a most unfortunate example, for many people were calling the L & N exactly that, and there were men in Cincinnati eager to 'build another along side it.' Haldeman and Watterson soon realized 'that at least the appearance of competition was indispensable.' When they learned of a proposal to found a Republican paper in Louisville in 1869, the *Daily Commercial*, with Colonel R. M. Kelly and John Harlan as its sponsors, they at once agreed to share Associated Press dispatches over which they had complete control in Louisville. Since it would have been extremely difficult for a daily paper to succeed without this news service, it can be said that the *Courier-Journal* deliberately created its own competition.

'Then and there,' Watterson recalled, 'the real prosperity of the *Courier-Journal* began.'<sup>5</sup> In the rival Republican paper Watterson had an effective foil to set off his Democratic doctrine. Louisville was not again reduced to a single newspaper until the 1920's.

Watterson began working for sectional reconciliation at an inauspicious moment, for Grant had just been elected over Seymour when the first issue of the *Courier-Journal* made its appearance. And although the country was at first doubtful of the course that the politically untutored general would follow, within a week after the inauguration it was apparent that Grant would offer no resistance to the Congressional Radicals in their plans for reconstruction. The South must look to itself for its own salvation.

To Watterson, in the comparative tranquillity and freedom of

Louisville, the course to follow seemed obvious. Give the Radicals no excuse for intervention through mistreatment of the Negro or acts of violence against the carpetbagger. Reveal to the moderate men of the North who, Watterson was convinced, still comprised the major portion of the public that the South could be trusted with self-government. With the resulting removal of military rule, the South would go Democratic and with the Democrats in the North would sweep the Radicals back into the gutter from which they had climbed. It was as simple as that to restore the Union to prosperity and peace. All that the situation required was patience, moderation, common-sense — qualities that Watterson soon discovered were exceedingly rare in 1869.

The obvious place to begin this program was at home, in Kentucky, the only place south of the Ohio still in control of the free Democratic party. Kentucky must prove to the North that Southern Democrats could be entrusted with the reins of government. With this as his objective, Watterson went to work on the Bluegrass State in the editorial pages of the *Courier-Journal*, and the fight was on.

The core of the problem was the Negro. War idealism was still strong enough in the North to support that part of the Radical Reconstruction program, at least as it applied to the South, that would guarantee the Negro's social and political freedom. It was on behalf of the Negro that such idealists as George Julian and Horace Greeley were still willing to stay in partnership with the 'new Radicals,' the Mortons, Conklings, and Chandlers, who were using Reconstruction to keep themselves in power and their pockets lined with gold. The Southern whites, Watterson reasoned, must show both the idealists in the North and the Negroes in the South that they could be trusted to deal more sympathetically with their former slaves than any Northern adventurer newly arrived whose main object was to fill his carpetbag with money. And Kentucky must lead in this demonstration of the native whites and Negroes finding their own basis for an amicable relationship.

In Kentucky it should have been relatively simple. The state did not have to contend with an overwhelming Negro population as did South Carolina or Mississippi, Negroes making up only one-fifth of the population in 1860. Of greater significance was the fact that although Kentucky ranked only ninth among the slave-holding

states in her total slave population, she ranked third in the number of slave holders.<sup>6</sup> This meant that many men had each held a small number of slaves and, accustomed to working with Negroes, could sympathize with their difficulties in adjusting to freedom. Here there had been but few large plantations ruled by the overseer's whip. Here, except in the eastern mountain region, there was no great class of poor whites as in Alabama and Georgia, who despised the Negro and saw in his freedom a threat to the white man's economic security (for the worst cases of persecution of the Negro came from those who had never owned slaves). Because Kentucky was of the borderland, Watterson had the proper foundation upon which to build his doctrine of racial readjustment.

Yet the solution was not easy. The Bluegrass planter, watching with alarm the overthrow of white supremacy in the deep South, was determined to hold the freedman with tight reins. Much of Watterson's counsel struck against hardening hearts. Watterson's general program was much the same as that which he had argued for in Tennessee on the *Banner*: schools for Negroes, organized efforts to find employment for them (for a brief time he had advocated forced labor for Negroes but the outraged cries of the Northern press caused him to abandon this point very quickly),<sup>7</sup> and a general acceptance of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution, which gave the Negro citizenship and the franchise.

Such an acceptance of Radical measures on Watterson's part could not fail to bring forth torrents of abuse upon his head from other editors and Democratic officials of Kentucky. He was accused of being 'a creature of the Freedmen's Bureau,' and one ultra-Bourbon paper recalled Watterson's earlier association with the Republican Cincinnati *Times*.

The picture of a gallant Confederate soldier, whining around a radical paper at Cincinnati for a crumb of support, and now beslobbering the mongrel concern with praises for having given him a living, for urging on the bloody crusade against the South, is a very touching picture for Kentuckians to contemplate. It ought surely to win their hearts, so that no utterance of his should fail to be heeded.<sup>8</sup>

In 1871, to break the *Courier-Journal's* hold on the Democrats of Louisville, the Bourbon Democrats founded the Louisville *Ledger*,



under the direction of ex-Governor Bramlette and L. G. Matthews, to give expression to the same ultra-Southern viewpoint held by most of the newspapers of Kentucky, including the state organ of the Democratic party, the *Kentucky Yeoman*. There were personal encounters and frequent talk of challenging Watterson to a duel. Watterson had a stock answer to all such proposals. 'Very early in the action I made a direct fighting issue, which — the combat interdicted — gave me the opportunity to declare — with something of the bully in the tone — that I might not be able to hit a barn door at ten paces, but could shoot with any man in Kentucky across a pocket handkerchief, holding myself at all times answerable and accessible.'<sup>9</sup> Needless to say, Watterson never received a formal challenge. That he never received an informal bullet in his back proved that the days of Prentice and Penn were indeed over.

It is easy now to see the logic in Watterson's arguments, to understand his position as being the only possible way in which the South could win out over the Radicals. But for the Kentucky Democrats theirs was the immediate view, the natural reaction to the unnecessary oppression that was being inflicted on their Southern kinsmen. It was difficult to read of Rufus Bullock's plundering in Georgia, or the unrestrained debaucheries of Robert Scott and Frank Moses in South Carolina, or the inexcusable mob action of Kirk's 'army,' sent with Grant's blessings into North Carolina to terrorize the citizens, without feeling the gorge rise in one's throat. Watterson's long term plans of Negro education, elections that might be won in the future, and the peaceful acceptance of the present Reconstruction acts could have little immediate appeal. Only a very young man would have been bold enough to have adopted such a program against such odds. Quite rightly, Watterson could look back on 'those evil days when the *Courier-Journal* stood alone' as the proudest and finest of his life.

Prentice, who was tired of strife and 'who knew the lay of the ground better than I did, advised against it,' Watterson later said. But Watterson could not give up the fight. He turned to action more positive than the simple acceptance of the Radical constitutional amendments to show Kentucky's good will. He fought for the right of Negroes to ride on street cars in Louisville and saw this approved by the city council.<sup>10</sup> Above all, he opposed the

growing spirit of lawlessness that swept Kentucky, for he had had no sympathy from the start with the organized Ku Klux Klan, even though it was led by his old commander, N. B. Forrest. For the lawless element in his own state, he had only contempt. He denied that the Kentucky movement had any connection with the formal organization under Forrest, and he even suggested that the Radicals themselves were committing the outrages in order to bring about Federal military intervention.<sup>11</sup> He demanded an anti-Klan bill inclusive enough to stop all such night raids. After a Negro mail clerk had been assaulted within nine miles of Frankfort and the Federal government in retaliation had stopped mail service to Kentucky's capital, even the Bourbon element saw the judiciousness of Watterson's demands. He won the begrudging support of the hostile *Kentucky Yeoman*.<sup>12</sup> In 1873 a law was enacted severe enough to break up the last of the organized bands.

Watterson's most notable fight for positive legislative action was his crusade to admit Negro testimony in the state courts. It was a trivial concession from the whites, Kentucky being the only state in the Union that did not admit such testimony, but it became the *cause célèbre* in the long struggle between Watterson and the Bourbons. From May 1869 on he hammered away on every anvil of argument, never retreating from the angry protests of those who fought the proposal simply as a loosening of the hold on the Negroes. Slowly Watterson began to win support. The Breckinridge family, powerful in the Bluegrass region, threw their aid to him on the particular issue.<sup>13</sup> In February 1871 Watterson could announce that while in 1870 only three papers in the state supported him in his fight, now only three papers in all Kentucky opposed him. That spring, the battle was won. Paragraph seven of the Act to Amend the Laws of Evidence, which read: 'No one shall be incompetent as a witness because of his or her race or color,' Watterson was always to regard as his personal contribution to better racial relations.

By 1872 Watterson felt secure enough in his position at home to turn his attention more directly to the national scene. He had been watching developments on this broader stage with a keen eye even while engaged in the struggle within Kentucky, and he had lashed the extremists in both sections of the country. He was especially

suspicious of the three leading figures of the dead Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, Alexander Stephens, and Robert Toombs. He called them 'the three old men . . . They are not of our time . . . Therefore as Democratic counselors, we reject them.'<sup>14</sup>

Watterson's battle against Radicalism in the North and Bourbonism in the South was bringing him recognition from leading journalists of the North. The *New York World* in July 1870 made the comment that 'by far the ablest Democratic paper in that state and one of the ablest in the country, the *Courier-Journal* . . . cannot fail to exert a great influence.' There were other complimentary words from the *New York Times*, and a prized letter from Parke Godwin of the *New York Evening Post*:

I appreciate highly the work you are doing. I hope you may go on with it, till the mean and contemptible little prejudices of locality which prevail are utterly extirpated from this nation. . . . The *Courier-Journal* is discriminating, broad, earnest and noble. It has the rare merit of being enough and not the common fault of being too much.<sup>15</sup>

Watterson even found himself in political accord with his Republican uncle, Stanley Matthews, who wrote to his nephew, 'You are making yourself not only a great name in journalism and statesmanship but a great triumphant power.'<sup>16</sup> It was David G. Croly, editor of the *New York World*, who expressed to Watterson the view of many Northern editors concerning Watterson's future:

You are making a good paper, but you are too large a man for Louisville. You are driving a six horse team to a buggy. New York is your field but you ought to have an independent not a party paper. Louisville wants a good clever hack . . . for its leading editor. This is a description which does not fit you at all.<sup>17</sup>

Undoubtedly Watterson was gratified by these words but there is no indication that he considered leaving Louisville. He preferred his own buggy to a hired coach-and-six. He realized that he had found his proper milieu in the city on the Ohio river.

There were even more encouraging signs in the North for the realization of Watterson's program of sectional reconciliation than these expressions of personal recognition. At a Democratic convention held in Dayton, Ohio, in May 1871, enthusiastic support was given to a series of resolutions calling for the Democrats to

accept 'the natural and legitimate results of the war' including the recent constitutional amendments, and to turn to the living issues of the present. The resolutions held that this would mark 'a new departure' for the Democratic party, which should appeal to liberal Republicans everywhere. Watterson, watching these events with keen interest, was delighted. Now he not only had official endorsements for the views he had long held but he also had a name for that program — 'the New Departure.'

Promising murmurs of discontent could also be heard from the Republican camp at this same time. Senator Grimes of Iowa, in political exile for having voted against Johnson's conviction in the impeachment trial, wrote to a fellow senator from Illinois, Lyman Trumbull, concerning their Grand Old Party, 'I believe it is today the most corrupt and debauched political party that has ever existed.'<sup>18</sup> As evidence, there was Grant's intimacy with Gould and Fisk at the time of the 'Black Friday' incident when these two notorious financiers attempted to corner the gold of the country to the ruination of many businessmen. Hints of even greater scandals were current. There was the army of lobbyists hanging leech-like on to the government and growing bloated on their corrupt feasting. Northern Republicans, even if they failed to catch the odor of corruption in the distant South, were finding the air befouled in their own midst.

A group of dissident Republicans in Missouri, led by Frank Blair, B. Gratz Brown, and Senator Carl Schurz, revolted against the party machine in 1870. Brown was elected governor, and Blair was sent to join Schurz in the United States Senate. This reform movement soon spread beyond the borders of Missouri. Schurz, convinced that a new party was needed to save the country from four more years of Grant, in a series of lectures spread the doctrine of the 'New Departure' to the people of the South and West. In September, he spoke in Nashville, stressing the need to end sectional hostility and outlined a general program of amnesty to Southerners, civil service reform, tariff reduction, and the return to specie payment. Two hundred former Confederate soldiers sent a joint letter to Schurz the following day telling him they wished 'to turn our backs on . . . all parties groping in the moonlight of the past,' and to ally themselves with any new party he might form.<sup>19</sup>

Watterson was in early contact with Schurz, and although he

kept this association secret for the time being, he was increasingly addressing his editorials to the Northern Republicans. He warned that 'when he [Grant] has broken the spirit of the South . . . will try to get the South to help conquer the North . . . and the North will experience what the South is familiar with — martial law, provost marshals, prisons, bayonets and what not.' There were frequent editorials, reminiscent of those in the Nashville *Banner*, addressed to Northern capitalists to invest in Southern resources for the mutual benefit of both sections. Watterson had become a recognized leader of the 'New South' of cotton mills and railroads, and these editorials had as much appeal for Northeastern merchants as his 'New Departure' editorials had for the Northern liberals.

Watterson's life in these early years was not confined exclusively to the *Courier-Journal's* office wrestling with the problems of Grant, Negro suffrage, and political schemings. He was no recluse, and unlike Prentice he had not been content with a room in the back office and working fifteen hours a day. Now definitely established in Louisville, Watterson was soon in the center of the city's social activities. A new theater had opened just before Watterson's arrival, and this for him was the real center of the town. But the most brilliant piece of finery in Louisville was the new Galt House, built in 1869 to replace the famous old hotel of the same name that had burned in 1865. The *Courier-Journal* declared that only three other hotels in the country could compare with it. The public marveled at its splendor: the frescoes by Signor Pedretti of Lombardy, the large allegorical statues of Plenty and Commerce in the vestibule, the potted palms and on-tiptoe nymphs in the lobby. Thirty-two chandeliers could be counted on the main floor, and the whole building cost \$1,100,000, awed Louisvillians told each other. It was a gaudy brooch on Louisville's rather plain old housedress. In the gentlemen's sitting room on the first floor, with its heavy walnut armchairs and beautiful dark green plush carpet, Watterson and his political cronies were to receive many important visitors. Their ladies, meanwhile, could retire to the ladies' reception room on the second floor, to Wilton carpets and red plush Turkish sofas. The First Lady of the Land could be received in that room with pride.<sup>20</sup>

In January 1870 George Prentice died and Watterson made his first appearance as a public orator when he gave the memorial ad-

dress before the state legislature on 22 February. This invitation was the first friendly gesture that had been shown him by the Frankfort politicians, and the speech, an excellent example of Victorian funereal oratory, was a great success.

By 1871, with the prosperity of the paper, the Wattersons were able to entertain more freely. Rebecca was a gracious hostess and welcomed these visits into her home of people whom Henry had found interesting. Her quiet charm and gentle manners complimented Watterson's exuberant geniality. Their house was not large, but Northern visitors were received with the open hospitality always associated with Southern mansions of ante-bellum days.

With their great interest in music, Rebecca and Henry were particularly pleased to entertain Christine Nilsson, the Swedish soprano, who was on her first American concert tour in January 1871. After dinner, Watterson quite casually sat down before the small piano in one corner of the parlor and began to play softly, 'Swanee River.' Mlle. Nilsson, above the general conversation, caught the strains of Foster's plaintive ballad. She was immediately delighted and insisted upon learning the words. In all probability, it was Rebecca who that evening sang the song for Mlle. Nilsson which she would later make world-famous.<sup>21</sup>

But Louisville was never to be a large enough stage for Watterson's social interest. From the first months in Louisville, he was re-establishing and making new contacts, particularly in New York and Washington. His father and mother were back in Washington where Harvey was a partner in the prosperous law firm of Watterson and Crawford. There his father could prove invaluable to him, not only in introducing him to men of importance but also in keeping him closely informed on the situation in the nation's capital.

Watterson's closest and most valuable associate in New York was Whitelaw Reid. He had met Reid in Cincinnati soon after the war. Now Reid was an editor on Greeley's *Tribune* and one of the city's most promising journalists. In November 1869 Watterson was invited by Reid to dinner at Delmonico's, and here was first introduced to New York's society.

Another close friend that he made at this time was Lincoln's former secretary, John Hay. When the genteel reading public was shocked over Hay's poems, 'Jim Bludso' and 'Little Breeches,' Wat-

erson leaped to Hay's defense, finding in these poems 'a dash of Browning' and ranking Hay alongside of Whittier.<sup>22</sup> Hay was so gratified by Watterson's review that he invited Watterson to a dinner at the Lotos Club in New York, a club that soon extended an invitation to Watterson to become a member.<sup>23</sup> Thus Watterson slipped easily into a cosmopolitan society that he was always to cherish, and New York no longer seemed the alien city that it had in his youth.

These were important people that Watterson was meeting in Washington and New York in the fall and winter of 1871: August Belmont, William Dorsheimer, Whitelaw Reid, and Lyman Trumbull, men of varying shades of political expression, who were not only delightful dinner companions but also keen observers of the changing political scene and who could keep Watterson informed of political trends.

The Republican party appeared to be hopelessly divided over Grant's renomination. If the moderate Democrats could capitalize on this division by joining hands with the insurgent Republicans who were sick of nepotism, corruption, and dangerous imperialistic designs, Grant could be stopped. Watterson's dream of peace and prosperity within a nation at last truly united seemed very close to realization that winter. He could almost see the magnificent bridge that would forever span the bloody chasm. But one must move cautiously so as not to frighten either the Bourbon Democrats or the timid Liberal Republicans who might scurry like rabbits for cover at too bold an approach.

The events of the past three years, however, were bringing results. Each discontented Republican — Greeley, Charles Sumner, Trumbull, Matthews, J. D. Cox — was cautiously sniffing the air, trying to decide whether to make a dash with Schurz into the open or remain in the fetid but secure shelter of the Radical hutch.

On 24 January 1872, the Liberal Republicans of Ohio met and issued a call for a national convention to be held in Cincinnati in May. Four of Ohio's leading Republican statesmen, J. D. Cox, George Hoadley, Judge Stallo, and Watterson's uncle, Stanley Matthews, endorsed the movement. Watterson on 7 February told his readers that the Democratic party of Kentucky was ready:

to support any liberal and patriotic movement having a fair and practicable showing of efficiency. . . . Old divisions and feuds have passed away . . . and whilst we prefer our own standards, signals and leaders, and mean to adhere to them as long as they are in the field, there need be no fear on the part of the reformers that we shall cause them disgrace or humiliation. . . . If both Sumner and Trumbull go into the liberal movement, then indeed there is fire in it, and it will take the country as a dry prairie, for the people everywhere are eager for a reunion and reform, based upon equal rights of all men.

Watterson evidently thought it was time to prod the Democrats a little. He was by now far in the lead of the other major Democratic papers of the nation in support of the Liberal Republicans. The New York *World* was still noncommittal and the other Democratic papers of the North were following its example.

In the middle of February, Watterson went to Boston to purchase books for the new public library in Louisville. He was gone a month and had ample time to take soundings in the disturbed political waters of the Northeast. He returned home more definitely committed to the Liberal Republicans and that quickening interest was reflected in his editorials. By 3 April he went so far as to say that though

we hold the old Ship of Zion [the Democratic party] well to the wind . . . we do fly a white flag and are keeping a sharp look-out for friendly signals. . . . If the old Ship of Zion seems irreligious or fogyfied, call her the Young Ironsides. . . . In other words, what's in a name?

Or in other words, what difference does it make if you call it Liberal Republican or New Departure Democrats? Watterson was performing a rather amazing metamorphic movement from chrysalis to butterfly, eager for flight, before his readers' eyes. He ended this editorial with the cheery if cryptic hint, 'There's a good time coming boys. Wait a little longer.'

Meanwhile, as the revolvers' chance for success grew, prospective Presidential candidates mushroomed. Men who had long been denied political preferment in the major parties now looked with eager eyes toward Cincinnati. There was David Davis, the rotund Supreme Court justice from Illinois, a perpetual candidate for office, who had accepted the nomination of the radical Labor Reform party in February 1872 in the hopes that it would be a stepping-stone to the nomination at Cincinnati. There was B. Gratz Brown,



early leader of the Liberal Republican movement in Missouri, who might well expect that the crown would be given to him. And there was Horace Greeley, still pursuing the will-of-the-wisp of high office and nursing ancient grudges against 'Seward, Weed and Company.' As early as the spring of 1871 there had been talk of Greeley for President among such eccentric admirers as Theodore Tilton, and the highly erratic Cassius M. Clay of Kentucky, who hated Grant for recalling him from his diplomatic post in Russia. In April 1871 Greeley had answered a Kansas correspondent who inquired about his availability with the proper reluctance expected of American Presidential aspirants. He wrote that while in the future he desired never to be a candidate, nevertheless he wished 'never to decline any duty or responsibility which my political friends do devolve upon me.'<sup>24</sup> Greeley's tour of Texas in May was regarded as a campaign for the nomination. By early spring 1872, Greeley was lining up candidates for the national convention. He wrote to Josiah B. Grinnell of Iowa, 'I hope you may at Des Moines discuss the one-term principle and the reasons that underlie it . . . Speak plain and the people will hear. Try to send a strong delegation to Cincinnati.'<sup>25</sup>

Even Chief Justice Chase, the country's most experienced Presidential aspirant, who since 1856 had been unsuccessfully competing for top-billing on either the Republican or Democratic ticket, still warmed a few hopes in his convention-scarred breast. And so they were emerging, all the men who had long dreamed of that famous address on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Henry Watterson's choice was the scion of America's political aristocracy, Charles Francis Adams, whose intellectuality and personal integrity made him most appealing to the reformers. It was characteristic of Watterson to look to the Northeast for a candidate, for in that section could be found the capital for the industrial development of the South. Moreover, he distrusted the ideas of the West as expressed in the Greenback movement and the early populist protests. He had railed against the Supreme Court's reversal of itself in declaring greenbacks legal tender, calling the second decision 'a parody upon justice' from 'a packed bench' that had been 'degraded to a mere province of the Executive.'<sup>26</sup> Altogether, he had as little conception of the West and as little sympathy for the agrarian problem as the Adams family itself. It was entirely

natural for him to find in Adams the answer to the search for a Presidential nominee. If Adams lacked the fire for a rousing crusade, he and others in the movement could provide that. Even before he had openly joined the Liberal Republican camp, he was urging its leaders to, 'as they say on the river, "Fire up."'<sup>27</sup>

Of all the potential candidates, Charles Francis Adams showed the least interest in the nomination. He indicated quite clearly in a letter to David A. Wells, the tariff reformer, that he would accept the nomination only if it was brought to him on a silver tray bearing no fingerprints of the politician's grimy hand. Moreover, on the very eve of the Cincinnati convention, Adams left for Europe to serve on the arbitration board of the Geneva Tribunal to settle the 'Alabama' claims against Great Britain for having permitted Confederate cruisers to be armed in and sail from British ports. But in spite of Adams's apparent coolness to the political excitement of the day, Watterson had been assured by friends like Schurz that the New Englander could be nominated.

There has never been a national party convention quite like the one that assembled in Cincinnati in the spring of 1872. They were all there, the bitter, mouth-puckered malcontents, the lofty idealists, and the shifty, cigar-chewing politicians — mingled together in a strange and unorganized assembly. There were the free-trade doctrinaires of New England, David Wells and Edward Atkinson, and the high protectionists, William Dorsheimer and Whitelaw Reid; the old-time abolitionist, J. B. Grinnell, came face to face with 'a motley array of Southerners of every sort'; and the Civil-Service-minded Carl Schurz was registered at the same hotel with that master spoilsman, Reuben Fenton. Every paper in the country seemed to have sent its own personal delegation. 'One might have mistaken it,' Watterson remembered later, 'for an annual meeting of the Associated Press.'<sup>28</sup>

Watterson had arrived early in Cincinnati. When he bade farewell to Haldeman in Louisville he had not been sure in his own mind in what capacity he was going to the convention. His editorial staff undoubtedly assumed that he was going only as a reporter to an important political conclave, for after all this was a Republican convention and, unorthodox as the *Courier-Journal* might appear to many Kentuckians, it was still committed to the Democratic

party. Certainly no one, probably not even Watterson, suspected that within hours after his arrival he would cast off even the pretense of reportorial objectivity and attempt to assume leadership of both the convention and the party.

It was Watterson's first national convention, and from the moment he entered the convention headquarters at the St. Nicholas hotel he was captured by the drama of America's most exciting political process, that of choosing a Presidential candidate. The confused crowds, the blaring bands, the whispered conferences in hotel bedrooms, above all the sense of power it gave one to think that he was naming the Next President of the United States — all of this was to Watterson the real essence of politics. In the long years ahead, he was to become one of the country's most professional convention-goers. In the four-year interim between campaigns, he found politics a dreary and sordid business, and he would frequently proclaim, 'Thank God, I'm a journalist and not a politician.' But at the end of each quadrennial period for the next twenty years, as the boys began to gather in some convention city, Watterson would eagerly push aside his editorial duties, grab up his hat, and dash off to become a politician.

The Liberal Republican convention was an appropriate introduction for Watterson into this particular American political sport for it remains unique in our history as 'the newspaperman's convention.' Among the hundreds in attendance, four editors in particular assumed leadership of this gathering: Horace White of the *Chicago Tribune*, Murat Halstead of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, Sam Bowles of the *Springfield (Mass.) Republican*, and Watterson. Calling themselves the Quadrilateral after the four impregnable fortress towns in the Italian Alps, they were prepared to hold the pennants of Reunion and Reform high and unsullied above the discordant crowd below. All four were bright-eyed with idealistic fervor. The world was still green with spring and the millennium was very approachable. Choosing Schurz as their mentor, they decided that only Adams or Senator Lyman Trumbull of Illinois could possibly meet their high standards. Their meeting place to plot their strategy was the sitting room between Watterson's and Schurz's bedrooms in the St. Nicholas hotel.

The first assailant of their fortress, whom they disposed of with ridiculous ease, was the eager Supreme Court justice, David Davis.

It was not Davis himself who aroused the fire of these four guardians of the truth, for he was a rather high-minded individual who had won considerable support in the South for his defense of civil liberties in the Milligan case, in which he had declared martial law in Indiana during time of war had been unconstitutional. But Davis had been unfortunate in his choice of friends. His alliance with the paper-money labor class was enough to damn him, and the fact that Senator Reuben Fenton of New York was there in his behalf made his name an anathema to Schurz. This convention was devoted to idealism, and there was no place for the moist hand of the ward-heeler. So the Quadrilateral disposed of Davis simply by exposing him in the Cincinnati *Commercial* as a politician, which in this most curious of all conventions, was enough to kill him politically. The Davis boom quickly collapsed, his supporters silenced. 'The earth seemed to have arisen and hit them amidships.' Watterson related. 'The incoming delegates were stopped and forewarned. Six months of adroit scheming was set at naught, and little more was heard of "D. Davis."' <sup>29</sup>

The self-confidence of the Quadrilateral was fed enormously by such an easy victory; but this proved to be the four editors' undoing, for they soon threw open their gates to a Trojan Horse. It was Watterson who played the role of Sinon in urging the admission of the enemy into the camp. Whitelaw Reid had accosted Watterson in the corridors of the St. Nicholas and asked why the New York *Tribune* had been left out of this newspaper combine. Watterson agreed that it was a preposterous omission, and suggested to his colleagues that Reid be admitted to the Quadrilateral. Well aware that Reid was there to represent Greeley, his friends demurred, but Watterson answered that in the coming campaign the support of the New York *Tribune* was indispensable. 'If we admit Reid we clinch it. You will all agree that Greeley has no chance of a nomination, and so, by taking him in, we both eat our cake and have it.' <sup>30</sup> The gift of the Greeks was irresistible. Reid was admitted and the defenses were laid bare before him.

The convention was formally opened in the great Music Hall on Wednesday 1 May by William Grosvenor, editor of the St. Louis *Democrat* and chairman of the Missouri delegation. As no state had sent official delegates, each held an open caucus to select delegates from the mobs in attendance. Carl Schurz was chosen as permanent



On the first ballot, Adams was far ahead, with Greeley and Trumbull a poor second and third, respectively. Then Brown, as had been arranged, released his delegates to Greeley while the pre-arranged Greeley clique set up its noise. As a result of Brown's action, Greeley jumped into the lead on the second ballot but still the Adams men hung on through three more roll calls. Then the carefully laid plans of the night before were put into action. Just prior to the sixth ballot, the Illinois delegation, which had remained hopelessly divided, went into consultation. The Greeley men began their cries and when the sixth ballot was announced, Greeley had gained seventy-four votes. The stampede, so carefully rehearsed, began. It was contagious, and Schurz could only stand with frozen face and gravely rap for order while the convention tore itself into a frenzy. Delegation after delegation fell over each other in its effort to change its vote. The final revised count was 482 for Greeley, 187 for Adams. The impossible had happened. The Quadrilateral had turned out to be castles of sand caught by the tide.

It was unquestionably the most surprising nomination any convention with professed principles had ever made. The convention had stood for Civil-Service reform, and yet Greeley's pronounced views on behalf of the spoils system would make even Grant look good to the leader of the reform movement, George William Curtis. The convention hoped to make an appeal to the Democrats, yet it had chosen a man who for thirty years had been the greatest public reviler of that party in the country. The majority of the delegates favored tariff reform. They had voted for the nation's most outstanding spokesman for high protection. In short, these intellectuals had wanted the cold, mathematical logic of a Euclidean geometry text and they had taken the unpredictable whimsey of a Mother Goose rhyme.

The Quadrilateral sat stunned in the midst of pandemonium. 'Not a face in the hall,' gloated the Radical Republican *Cincinnati Gazette* the following morning, 'grew paler than that of Henry Watterson when the nomination of Greeley was announced.'

Reid, before the balloting had begun, had invited the Quadrilateral to dine with him that night, and they had accepted. Now, although no one except Reid was in a mood to celebrate, he still insisted that

they come. It was a gloomy gathering, Watterson describing the scene as resembling a funeral more than a dinner party:

Horace White looked more than ever like an ice-berg; Sam Bowles was diplomatic, but ineffusive; Schurz was as a death's head at the board; Halstead and I, through sheer bravado, tried to enliven the feast. But they would have none of us, nor it, and we separated early and sadly, reformers hoist by their own petard.<sup>35</sup>

Men like Schurz and Wells could go home, stunned and unhappy, and take time to think out the course they should follow, but for the equally unhappy journalists, there could be no such hesitation. Each in order to meet the deadline of his paper had to decide almost immediately whether he would continue in his support of the Liberal Republican movement with Greeley as its leader. For the other members of the Quadrilateral, the decision was not as difficult as it was for Watterson for they at least were Republicans with a Republican nominee. Bowles best summed up their feelings in his now famous telegram to his editorial staff, telling them he expected them to accept the nomination but 'not to gush!' <sup>36</sup> But Watterson was now expected to support for the Presidency a man of whom he had once written: 'There is enough in him that is . . . pestilent to make two pestilent men.' <sup>37</sup>

It was a chastened young editor who returned to Louisville on 4 May to meet with his editorial staff. Never had a reporter become more personally involved in a story that he had set out to cover. But it seemed to him now too late to withdraw. He was too completely identified with the Liberal movement. If the Kentucky Democrats failed to endorse Greeley then the *Courier-Journal* would be left stranded on a very precarious ledge with only such men as the Republican abolitionist Cassius Clay for company, but Watterson had to take that chance. All of his hopes of the past years for national harmony were now centered in this political venture. Watterson hesitated for only a day.<sup>38</sup> Then holding his nose and shutting his eyes, he jumped in. On 6 May he gave his support to Greeley. The gist of his editorial was that Democrats had no choice for 'All roads that lead from Greeley go to Grant.' He pointed out Greeley's magnanimity toward the South in providing bail for Jefferson Davis. He emphasized the fact that there

was no greater foe of Wall Street than Greeley. He claimed Greeley's 'nomination is an assault upon the hearts of men, and will derive its power from their affections.' By the end of the editorial, Watterson, with typical enthusiasm, had worked up to such a pitch that he was comparing Greeley's famous Old White Hat to the white plume of Henry of Navarre.

Watterson could now write Reid, 'You will see that I am coming up to scratch beautifully. I have no doubt I shall beat Bowles and Halstead a full length, howbeit, every rider must consider his course. The prospect hereabout is encouraging. But the old gentleman *must* quit the Tribune. It will be his ruin if he stays there during the canvass.'<sup>39</sup> Bowles and White agreed with Watterson on the necessity of Greeley's retirement, and on 15 May Greeley stepped out of the office that he had dominated so long. Reid had the *Tribune*. Watterson wrote to congratulate him 'on a great opportunity and I would not congratulate you if I did not know that you will fill it to the fullest.'<sup>40</sup> The Quadrilateral felt that it could at least congratulate itself for having muzzled Greeley.

To the great surprise of many of the liberals, however, the country accepted the nomination of Greeley with enthusiasm. His foibles, to be sure, were well known; his eccentricities and his round baby face fringed with a ridiculous beard were the cartoonists' delight, yet through his editorials he had a following greater than any other man in the nation. From the log cabins on the western frontier to the counting houses of Boston and New York, his name was as well known as that of Lincoln. The intellectuals might stamp out of the Liberal movement in a huff; Bryant might write an urgent letter to Trumbull requesting that he drop Greeley because 'his associates are the worst sort and the worst abuses of the present Administration are likely to be even caricatured under him'; Godwin might write Schurz demanding a new ticket; and Godkin of the *Nation* might second such a proposal, but the Greeley movement could not be halted.<sup>41</sup> There is a very real possibility that if the election had been held in June, Greeley would have been elected.

Watterson found his task in Kentucky of convincing the Democracy to accept Greeley surprisingly easy. By the middle of May, all but three or four newspapers in the state had come out for the Liberal Republican candidate, and this well ahead of the Demo-



cratic national convention. Watterson did his best to give Greeley a good press, even though freely admitting that

Mr. Greeley is an odd, exceptional person . . . But after all, may we not make a common psychological mistake, and attach too much importance to the outside of the man? . . . Well, well, well. We mean to take our chance on him anyhow. He is an able man. He is an honest man. He is a good man. He may be cranky — he may be curious, according to our preconception. Who knows? We do know that Grant is an iron-hearted, wooden-headed nutmeg, warranted to kill . . . So, feeling toward Horace Greeley downright affection, not unmingled with the fear of the boy that didn't know what confounded notion the old man might take in his head, only he was sure 'the old man would neither lie nor steal,' we take Horace Greeley . . .<sup>42</sup>

Some of Watterson's readers, to be sure, might well have asked if there were no other qualification expected of a candidate for the Presidency than the fact that he did not lie or steal.

While Watterson was assuring his readers that 'Greeley and Brown can be elected' and 'the Democracy have desired only a chance to endorse this Cincinnati movement,'<sup>43</sup> he was watching anxiously the position that his political mentor, Carl Schurz, would take. The Missouri Senator, having failed in an effort to get Greeley to withdraw voluntarily, was still sulking in his tent and there were rumors that he would call for a new party and a new candidate.

Watterson later admitted in the *Courier-Journal* that he had been prepared to follow Schurz in a revolt against Greeley had Schurz demanded it.<sup>44</sup> But if that was so, he certainly kept any such idea secret from his readers and from Reid. Indeed, his actions in regard to the anti-Greeley movement when it did get under way were such as to indicate that he would never have bolted, even if Schurz had done so. In the second week of June, Watterson received an invitation signed by Schurz, Jacob Cox, William Cullen Bryant, Oswald Ottendorfer, editor of the powerful *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, and David A. Wells to meet at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, New York, with 'a number of gentlemen belonging to different branches of the opposition for the purpose of consultation and to take such action as the situation may require.'

In spite of the fact that the invitation explicitly requested secrecy upon his part, Watterson sent it to Reid with an accompanying note that 'this means mischief, and . . . I mean to attend the meeting. I shall be at the Brevoort next Wednesday morning and should like

to see you before the meeting is held. I think I can do something with two or three parties and I mean to try.' <sup>45</sup> So once again, this time deliberately, Watterson laid bare the anti-Greeley defenses to Reid. Reid had ample time to prepare his counter-attack. Many years later he wrote Watterson:

We had no better politics during the campaign than in the management of the Fifth Avenue Conference. I remember that Hurlburt and some others who were doing their best then to defeat us did not wake up to the real significance of our attitude towards this conference until the morning it met. Then Hurlburt described the course of the Tribune as that of a Court gallant, tip-toeing forward to bow the favorites to their places.<sup>46</sup>

Reid made sure the meeting was filled with Greeley men. Even Josiah B. Grinnell of Iowa (it had been he whom Greeley had first advised many years before to 'Go West, young man, go West') came back East to defend his old friend. Watterson met Greeley at the Lincoln Club the day before the scheduled meeting. The old man was petulant. He was furious that Horace White had demanded, as his condition for support, that Greeley say nothing publicly during the campaign. 'If I am to stand throughout the campaign for you to shoot apples off my head, I mean to get out of the way,' he told Watterson, and then continued: 'A pretty set of boys, you are! Envious of an old man because he can write and talk better than you can! Want to stop his mouth! Want to drive him out of the profession. Well, well, have it your own way. But there are some people who know as much as other people, and there are old men, old enough to be the father of you all, who could teach you something about politics' — and then after a sly pause — 'and newspapers, too!'

Watterson smoothed Greeley's ruffled feathers by assuring him that he had nothing to fear from the Fifth Avenue conference. He explained his and Reid's plans for the campaign and gradually the old editor cooled off. Greeley's final words were pathetic in their simple eagerness to co-operate with his youthful advisors. 'I'll do anything, go anywhere,' he promised Watterson. 'It shan't be said that I have thrown any stumbling blocks in the way.' <sup>47</sup>

Watterson had invited Schurz to breakfast with him on the morning of the conference. He found that the Missouri Senator was still considering a break with Greeley. Watterson spent the break-

fast hour arguing that it was too late in the day for a revolt against the Cincinnati nomination. With Grant already renominated by the regular Republican convention on 5 June and with the Democratic convention in the immediate offing, it would be suicidal to break camp now. Watterson, by the time the breakfast was over, was sure that Schurz would not follow Godkin and Bryant out of the Liberal Republican party.<sup>48</sup>

The conference turned out as Reid and Watterson had hoped. J. D. Cox presided and the group spent several hours in earnest debate. Most of the leaders could agree that Greeley's nomination had been a mistake. Parke Godwin suggested a new ticket to be headed by Adams and William Groesbeck of Ohio, but Trumbull, Grosvenor, White, and Watterson all gave speeches opposing such a suggestion. The meeting closed with Schurz's speech supporting Greeley's nomination. Bad as Greeley might be, Schurz admitted, the only alternative was Grant, and he preferred Greeley. The net result of the conference had been to strengthen Greeley's hand.<sup>49</sup>

With Schurz safely in the Greeley camp, the next problem that faced the Liberals was to get Greeley accepted by the Democratic National Convention, which was to meet in Baltimore on 9 July. It would have seemed fantastic a few months before to think that a man who had called the Democrats 'traitors, slave-whippers, drunkards and lecherous beasts' should now be selected by the objects of his vituperation as their Presidential candidate. Yet the Democrats were in much the same unhappy situation as the Liberals at the Fifth Avenue conference. There seemed to be no other choice.

When the Democrats assembled at Baltimore, it was a memorable moment in the long history of expedient politics to witness the conservative financier, August Belmont, who detested Greeley as a socialist, give a speech of welcome to a gathering of Democrats waving pictures of the Old White Hat. But Belmont had said that he would vote for his 'deadliest enemy' if he could defeat Grant, and Governor Vance of North Carolina had promised that 'if the Baltimore convention puts Greeley in our hymn book, we will sing him through if it kills us.'<sup>50</sup>

Sing him through they did. The business was soon over. Greeley was nominated 686 to 38, and the Cincinnati platform was adopted without changing a letter. Watterson could at last breathe a sigh

f relief. Not only had his commitment at Cincinnati been upheld by his party, but he also felt that the action of the Democrats marked the beginning of real sectional reconciliation.

With the flood of national principles which the Liberal Movement has poured into the South will come a flood of practical measures of public improvement. . . . The tide of immigration which has enlarged and invigorated the North will turn this way. . . . The old plantation epoch is over. . . . It was a pleasant thing for the rich, and a bad thing for the poor, and good for none. Let us hope that this period of transition is nearly ended . . . and that we are inspired by one common impulse, to place our children beyond the reach of the passions of a system which we would not recall if we could. . . . These are no after-thoughts with us. We have urged them since the war.<sup>51</sup>

But this optimism was short-lived. The prospects for Greeley, so bright in June, began to fade with summer. Many a Republican in the North who had at first enthusiastically climbed aboard the Greeley wagon now found it too crowded when the Democrats joined them. The war was still too recent for many men. The Iowa farmer who claimed that he had been for Greeley at first, but had lately noticed that 'all my neighbors who used to go on sprees when the rebels whipped our soldiers were for Greeley and I wouldn't belong to their party,' spoke for thousands of men in the North.<sup>52</sup> Tom Nast's cartoons, probably the most vicious expressions of partisanship ever carried in a respectable American journal, depicted Greeley clasping hands with Jeff Davis over the murdered body of Lincoln. The bloody shirt was waved with telling effect.

Watterson had been one of those who along with Horace White had insisted that Greeley must keep quiet during the campaign, but by the middle of August, he was eager to get Greeley to speak in Louisville. He wrote Reid on 28 August, 'The situation out here is gloomy and depressed . . . Indiana *needs money and fuel*. Mr. Greeley *must come* . . . I am not in a fright or panic, but I feel, my dear old boy, the situation here is really critical, and we have no time to lose.'<sup>53</sup> So the old man, whom they had tried to silence, took the road, touring the East first and surprising all, including his managers, with the wisdom and moderation of his speeches.

By September, Watterson was writing directly to Greeley, begging him to appear in Louisville. Greeley answered with excusable irritation. 'I wrote you long ago that you must apply to

the national committees to have me assigned to visit your place. You do not mind but keep writing to Reid and me. I am to be in Cincinnati Friday next, and think I can go then to your city, if not involved elsewhere. Do understand my position. I want to oblige.' <sup>54</sup>

On 23 September Greeley went to Cincinnati, where he spoke to a large and enthusiastic crowd. Watterson met him there and escorted him to Louisville for the Industrial Exposition, which had been held partly as an excuse for Greeley's presence. The speech was a tremendous success. Watterson wrote Reid with more optimism than he had felt in weeks:

You can rely upon it that the success of Mr. Greeley's visit is all it is represented. . . . Urge Schell and Allen to flood the country with Mr. Greeley's speeches. I don't know what you think of them, but the opinion is pretty general with us that they are the most effective speeches ever made in a Presidential campaign.<sup>55</sup>

But in spite of Greeley's speeches, in spite of the crowds and cheers that greeted him, the tide had turned. The movement collapsed when in October, Indiana and Ohio elected Grant men. The regular election in November proved to be but a dismal anticlimax. Greeley carried only six of the thirty-seven states: the border states of Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Maryland plus Texas and Georgia. Too many Republicans had been frightened by the bloody shirt; too many Democrats had not bothered to vote.

So the dream of May had ended in November. But the story of the campaign of 1872 was not quite over on election day. The old man of the *Tribune*, who had lost his last chance to find political prestige, died within a month after the election. The passions of the campaign were suddenly forgotten. A long line of mourners passed by his casket: the newspaper boy and the new editor of the *Tribune*; Carl Schurz and President Grant; Bourbon and Radical and Liberal were all there. Then Watterson realized: 'The crank convention had builded wiser than it knew. That the Democratic Party could ever have been brought to the support of Horace Greeley for President of the United States reads even now like a page out of a nonsense book. That his warmest support should have come from the South seems incredible and was a priceless fact. His martyrdom shortened the distance across the bloody chasm; his coffin very nearly filled it.' <sup>56</sup>

## SEVEN

# To Victory with Tilden

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1873-1876

THE WRECKAGE of the Liberal Republican-Democratic coalition in November 1872 might have appeared to Watterson as the worst political tragedy for America since 1861, but for him personally the campaign had not been without its compensations. By identifying himself as the Southern leader of the New Departure movement he had attracted national attention; he had been widely quoted by such powerful organs as the New York *Tribune* and *Herald*, and young Henry Grady had declared in the *Atlanta Herald* that the best writing of the campaign had been that in the *Courier-Journal*.<sup>1</sup>

From the Greeley campaign, moreover, Watterson had learned the sobering value of defeat. The days of his political naïveté had ended on the night that he had heard the election returns. The millennium was not obtained simply because it was good and logical. One did not win battles with the raised lance of Don Quixote for these were not flimsy windmills that housed the opposition but rather solid battlements of stone. American politics demanded more realism than either Greeley with his whimsical eccentricities or Schurz with his lofty idealism had provided. Watterson was now ready to play the game by the established rules.

It was apparent in the spring of 1873 that the business interests

were making those rules. While in Washington to attend the second inauguration of Grant, Watterson noted the self-confidence with which the lobbyists of industry mingled with the representatives of the people. The crowded hotel corridors and the brightly lighted drawing rooms resounded with the raucous laughter of the new capitalists and the complacent politicians.

Washington merely reflected the general air of prosperity that prevailed in the country. True there were ominous signs: a growing murmur from farmers protesting the high railroad rates and the low prices for agricultural products; the ugly look on the face of labor which seemed to derive little from the golden age of business. But few of Watterson's associates noted this unrest. The country was young and unbelievably large. Unlimited opportunity for all was the religion of the day. Expansion without limit, wealth without end — this was the American creed.

Watterson would not have had to leave home to find evidence of this material prosperity. Louisville, although lagging in the race for industrialization, was booming with the riches of trade. Her businessmen sent drummers all over the South, showing wares, taking orders, and prying hard cash out of the tight fist of the South with their bright words. The city had nearly doubled her population from that of 1860. Barney Macauley opened his new theater costing \$100,000 in 1873, a fitting companion piece for the new Galt House.

The *Courier-Journal* was prospering too. The Greeley campaign had increased the number of subscribers. Advertising patronage from the conservative Louisville merchants was not very large, to be sure, but by now the paper's circulation could attract advertising from as far away as New York and New Orleans. The debt incurred at the time of consolidation had long been paid off. The restless Haldeman had purchased three lots on the corner of Fourth and Liberty streets in the heart of the business district and was busy drawing up plans for a new building which would be the finest newspaper plant west of the Alleghenies.

Watterson had also been busy in strengthening his editorial staff. His idea of the role an editor should play in relation to his paper was changing. He now believed an editor should set general policy and then delegate authority to able men under him to carry out that policy. This would make for a livelier, more readable newspaper, for there was always the danger that an editor who spent his time

in supervision of all details of publishing would impress his own ideas 'too forcibly on all his writers with the result that he so spreads his own little brains and narrow scope of vision around that it [his paper] is but his own brain diluted.' <sup>2</sup> This delegation of authority, it might be added, gave an editor freedom to move beyond the narrow confines of his office, enabled him to travel to conventions, visit Washington, even go on extended tours of Europe. By 1872 Watterson had discovered in a young Yankee journalist, Ballard Smith, a man capable of directing policy and willing to attend to those details of publishing that Watterson felt an editor should scrupulously avoid. Altogether it proved to be a happy reconciliation of Watterson's theories of editing and his own personal desires. If Haldeman had any different theory of editing a paper, he did not express it. All he asked was a first-rate paper, and that he got whether Watterson was in town or not.

In the late spring of 1873 Watterson was ready for another trip to Europe. He wrote Reid that he would leave the middle of May, taking his family with him. Besides Ewing, who was nearly five, there was now a daughter, Milbrey, a year and a half old. 'On the whole,' he wrote Reid, 'I have come out of the Winter campaign considerably ahead. Some of the personal altercations were really serious. But they are done with; and I feel that I can take my respite with satisfaction and composure. I wish you were going along too.' <sup>3</sup>

The Wattersons sailed for England on 10 May aboard the *Oceanic*. The two days that they were in New York prior to their departure Watterson spent largely with Reid and John Hay. Hay gave Watterson letters of introduction to important people in England and Spain to add to the letters he had obtained from Charles Dana, Joe Harper, and Edwin Arnold. Harper's letter promised a certain Mr. Blackburn, who was to be a fellow passenger aboard the *Oceanic*, that Watterson 'knows all about men and things in London, especially art and artist'; and Edwin Arnold's letter attempted to secure for Watterson from D. Birch of the London *Daily Telegraph* permission to read in the British Museum Library, 'if not inconsistent with Library Rules — he being an American gentleman!' <sup>4</sup> Watterson, as usual, was well fortified against spending any lonely hours in an alien city.

Now that he knew London, Watterson entered enthusiastically into the social life of the city: a luncheon at Nottingham Square,



the guest of M. D. Conway, theater parties at the Royal Opera House and the Theatre Royal, visits to renew acquaintances at the Savage and Garrick clubs. At the Savage Club he found Mark Twain, in England on a lecture tour. The two men regarded each other as 'bloodkin' for an uncle of Twain had married Watterson's aunt. They had much more in common than this tenuous claim of relationship, however, for both combined in their natures the easy friendliness of the Southerner with the extravagant expansiveness of the Westerner. Any company was fortunate that found Twain and Watterson in the center swapping stories and the two men did much to enliven London society for each other.

The Wattersons were staying in a private home at 103 Mount Street, and between their address and 102 was a parochial work house without a house number. Not long after they arrived, Watterson coming in one evening found Mark Twain's card on the hall table with a note describing his shock on discovering that next door to 102 — presumably 103 which the Wattersons gave as their address — was the work house. Twain wrote that he had always feared that Watterson would come to no good end but had never suspected that he would drag his fine family down with him to the public disgrace of 'a work-us.'<sup>5</sup>

At infrequent intervals during the summer, Watterson sent back to his paper for publication long letters typical of the average American tourist's reaction to Europe in the mid-nineteenth century: somewhat bombastic, certainly pontifical in their judgment of what the author obviously regarded as a decadent society, and shot through with an extravagant pride for America.

The French seem to be going down the melancholy hill which the Latin race has been travelling for centuries . . . and if they come up on the other slope, as come they may, it will be after they have gotten rid of the monarchists and the priests and entered upon a new life; for, whatever may be said of Republicanism in France, it cannot be pretended that despotism has been much more successful.

Only in Germany could he find a people moving forward 'with something like the clear-sightedness' one found in the United States. The English Watterson found particularly irritating:

There is a deal to see abroad that is well worth the journey. But if a man wants to take his pleasure, if he wants to live cheaply and comfortably, he had better stay at home. There are a thousand worries

and frets which he will encounter in England in the ways of lean living, poor accommodations and high prices, and it will not increase his power of endurance to be asked wherever he goes if he does not think the English live better, that they possess more luxuries and that they are the most genial and delightful people on the face of the globe. This sort of provocation passes the bounds of endurance, however, when he is assured that, in spite of the shortcomings of America and the Americans, the British regard them with favor.<sup>6</sup>

As long as Watterson restricted his observations to such generalities glittering with the proper American bias, he was on safe ground, but when he attempted a more specific report on what he pleased to call 'that vast and glittering demi-monde' of London and Paris, he became too graphic in detail. His good, staid Victorian public wanted the usual trillings over Wordsworth's lake country and Shakespeare's Stratford. They were quite unprepared for what they now read in Watterson's letters. At the head of their peripatetic and too observant editor, they threw many letters of righteously indignant protest. Watterson in his final letter from England attempted to defend himself:

As this is the last letter I shall write you from the British capital . . . you may be willing to allow me this bit of prosing by way of answer to a few criticisms which have found their way this far from home. They have reminded me merely that the most odious thing a man can do, next to speaking the truth, is to write it . . . Nothing is more natural than that . . . one class should assail me for writing down as plainly as I was able the harlotocracies of London and Paris . . . It occurred to me, when I began to write, that you might be tired of picturesque descriptions of foreign architecture and statistical accounts of foreign commerce got out of guide-books and public documents. It occurred to me that you would be willing to dispense with rhetorical observations for homely sketches of real life . . . Nor did I consider it my duty to suppress all mention of that vast and glittering demi-monde which is spreading itself over Europe, which once restrained upon the outskirts of French society, is at length quartered upon the respectability of London itself . . . Thus I find myself charged by one set of critics with licentiousness and by another set with sensationalism; when in truth I am conscious of having put check-rein upon both my imagination and my resources.<sup>7</sup>

If this final blast from Europe was designed to placate his readers it was remarkably inept. It succeeded only in tantalizing them with its hint of suppressed information, although upon what their editor had put the check-rein, they hardly dared imagine.

It was in this rather sour mood toward both his English hosts and

his American reading public that Watterson left for home in the late summer of 1873. The return trip did little to improve his disposition. With Rebecca ill most of the way and two small children to watch over — a task to which he was little accustomed — Watterson had little time for the pleasant conviviality that he had enjoyed on previous crossings. He didn't even stop to greet Reid in New York, but hurried his family straight to Louisville. When Reid wrote anxiously to inquire of him, he answered gloomily: 'It is very good of you to think of me. For my own part I have somehow taken on a big disgust of myself, and, on that account, ran away from New York in order that I might save you an infliction of which you have had enough this last year or two. Damn the world, the flesh and the devil . . . I'd get me to a nunnery if I could.'

It was almost too much, upon returning to his long neglected desk, to have to face a pile of letters from angry readers still complaining of his attempt at reportorial realism. He morosely concluded his letter to Reid:

Reid, Reid! Don't you be wicked. Be goody, goody all the time. Don't write any lewd letters when you go to Europe. If I should turn the Courier-Journal into a religious paper and issue a Sunday edition every day in the week for a dozen years — if I should be able to secure the pen of a good man like Bromley — I'd barely come off by sufferance and then with a damaged reputation. I am up to my chin in household dirt. Write to me again and again. Look upon me as a man who is grateful for encouragement . . . Think of me daily when the twilight descends upon Delmonico's. Remember me as one that hath starved and been mortified withal. The which notwithstanding I am ever and ever Your friend.<sup>8</sup>

Watterson had discovered at his own expense that although the public would accept a Daniel Drew and a Jim Fisk in its market places and an Orville Babcock and a William Belknap in its government, only a Henry Wadsworth Longfellow would be welcomed in its family parlor. In describing too frankly what he had seen in Europe, he had quite unwittingly aroused in his readers' minds suspicions that would cause them to be more receptive later to the many drinking and gambling tales that would be told about him. The Watterson legend had begun to grow.

Watterson arrived back in the United States in time to witness the collapse of the post-war boom. There had been warning signs

in the summer: the increasing difficulty to find capital for investments, a European recession that drained the source of loans, the failure of three or four railroad companies in June and July. Then on the morning of 18 September, the financial house of Jay Cooke closed its doors and the panic was on. The 'dance of the millions' was over. The musicians had fled in fright.

This was no 'Black Friday' of 1869; this was a major depression whose effects on the economic and political life of the nation would be far-reaching. The day of reckoning, made inevitable by a too rapid expansion, by corrupt business practices, and by an overly indulgent government, had finally arrived.

As the soup lines lengthened and the farmers shoveled rich grain into their kitchen stoves, the nation looked around in bewilderment for an exit from this Cave of Despair. A variety of suggestions was offered for attacking the fundamental causes of the crisis. To the Westerners the solution was simple: there was a shortage of money in a depression; obviously what was needed was more money. The least that the government could do would be to re-issue the \$44 million of Greenback notes that had been retired since the war to bring the amount of Greenbacks in circulation back up to the statutory limit of \$400 million. With this proposal as their panacea, the Greenbackers were to play havoc with both major parties in these years of depression.

To Watterson and his Eastern friends, such a cure was worse than the disease. They turned to more general reforms of less drastic nature. They felt that simply 'turning the rascals out' and reintroducing honesty into government would do much in putting the nation back on solid foundation. Many of them, including Watterson, also attributed the depression to the loss of trade. They advocated the freeing of the South from the bondage of Reconstruction in order that that potentially rich market might once again be prosperous enough to buy Northern products. Blaming the high tariffs for destroying our markets abroad, they demanded a return to the pre-Civil War tariffs to stimulate world trade.

Pushed out by the hard pressure of depression, the political issues for the next three decades appeared: cheap money, free trade, and political reform. These issues would transcend strict party lines and find adherents in both major parties. The Radical Republicans,

watching with alarm the stirrings in the agrarian West and South and in the industrial cities of the East, seemed incapable of offering any remedy. They could only wave more vigorously the bloody shirt before an increasingly apathetic audience.

The times called for a change. The question was in what form should the change come. Would the old parties be able to incorporate these ideas within their established doctrines, or was a new third party, built upon the wreckage of the Liberal Republican experiment, the answer? Watterson seemed to have little faith in either the Democratic or the Republican party in the months after the Greeley campaign. As late as September 1874 he was writing in the *Courier-Journal*, 'Neither party, as a party, loves its country. One is imbecile and ignorant, hidebound and feeble; the other malignant and mischievous, led by professional adventurers in the South, in the North by narrow-minded bigots and dastardly hypocrites.'

In the same mood of pessimism, he wrote to Reid, 'I peg away in a dissolute — no, a desultory fashion. On the whole things do not look as cheerful for our beloved country as they might. As for me, I wait and wait and wait, and am growing a trifle indifferent withal.'

The winter of 1873 was a long and trying one and there was little to lift his spirit from the gloom that he had felt upon returning home the previous fall. The local clergy continued to snipe away at him for his European letters. Watterson himself could have ignored these clerical attacks, but Haldeman was disturbed and insisted that the paper make amends. As a result, the *Courier-Journal* began to carry full and sympathetic reports on local church services.

Watterson was tired of his adopted city with its provincial and pseudo-sanctimonious outlook, tired of the monotony of his office routine. For the first time, he questioned his decision to come to Louisville. In this despairing attitude, he wrote to Schurz:

The truth is I came in one of selling out my entire lot of lumber last week and taking myself and my brood out of the country. I have had these ten years a little box at Auteville — 'in my mind's eye, Horatio' — which, with certain romantic literary occupations, used to be my chateau in Spain. And I may do it yet. I am disgusted and

discouraged with American politics, with American journalism, with myself. If I did not dread the lack of incessant, active employment I should certainly let go my grip and drift off into listlessness and obscurity.<sup>9</sup>

In April, he felt that he must get away if only for a brief vacation. He took his children to Washington to leave them with their grandparents while he went on to New York. From there, he and Reid went to Boston to hear Schurz's eulogy of Charles Sumner on 29 April. Keen-eyed newspaper reporters, noting that Bowles, Watterson, and Reid sat together in the audience and that they spoke to Schurz with a great show of friendliness after the sermon, at once concluded that the old Quadrilateral was forming again. But Reid had no intentions of tying himself up with the unhappy past. In the pages of the *Tribune* he laughed the idea of a resurrected Quadrilateral out of existence.

Watterson had considered going on to Europe from New York, but because of the approaching Congressional election, he decided to return home. Moreover, Haldeman was ready with his plans for the new building. The cornerstone was to be laid that summer, and Watterson wanted to be on hand. A few weeks in New York had done much to lift his spirits, and he was ready for the work that lay ahead.

The campaign that Watterson waged in the columns of the *Courier-Journal* that summer was in many ways a repetition of the 1872 campaign, for it was directed largely against Grant and the possibility of the third term. He opened the attack with a letter on 'The Political Outlook' written from Washington on 9 May. He painted a dismal picture concerning the prospects of defeating Grant, particularly since there was no one in the Republican party to take the nomination away from the President. Watterson admitted that the Democrats had no outstanding leader either and the 'out and out Liberals are scattered . . . If the presidential election should come up this year nothing could keep him [Grant] from a third term . . .' The key note of Watterson's campaign had been sounded, and for the rest of the summer he hammered away on this one theme of Third Termism.

By the fall of 1874, even Reid was ready to admit that Watterson had been right about Grant. He wrote Watterson, 'How thoroughly events have indicated your prescience last spring when you aston-

ished us all with declaring that Grant really meant a Third Term. I woke up to it in midsummer . . .'<sup>10</sup> Reid was now sufficiently aroused by the Third Term danger to give the *Tribune's* support to Samuel Tilden, the Democratic candidate for governor of New York. Reid had little love for the Democratic party, but he was ready to do anything to stop Grant. Reid's support of Tilden played no insignificant part in the latter's victory of that year.<sup>11</sup> Watterson could congratulate himself that his 'third term furore' had brought results. It was to be the last time, however, that he and Reid were to join hands in a political campaign. Although they remained close friends, the two men were drifting apart politically.

As the Congressional campaign warmed up in the early fall, Watterson despaired of victory. He felt sure that the acts of violence against the Negro in the South would give the Radical Republicans victory once again, and he blamed the Democratic party for its lack of leadership. 'It was a bad thing for the South that its fortunes were in any way tied to the lumbering bag of dry bones and dead language, which at the close of the war, was labeled the Democratic party.'<sup>12</sup> His was the frustration of a man on a desert island. He would gladly have left the party, but there was no place to go.

Then the first reports from the October states of Indiana, Ohio, Nebraska, Iowa, and West Virginia came in. The voters, weary of the fiasco of Reconstruction, shocked by the scandals in the government, frightened by military despotism, and angry at the 'Republican' depression, had voted their various protests, and the Democrats had carried the day. Watterson's gloom turned overnight to buoyant optimism for November, and he told his readers that the October upset had reminded him of what the hunter had said to a wild turkey which he had only winged, 'Well, d — n you, hereafter you will have to roost a good deal lower anyhow.'<sup>13</sup>

October was but the preview of the landslide of November in which the Democrats captured such important governorships as New York, Massachusetts, and New Jersey, and for the first time since the Civil War controlled the House of Representatives. It was a great but solemn victory, as Watterson hastened to advise his readers.

The Republican party . . . is yet a power in the land and must be met adequately at every point. Herein lies the danger and the weakness

of the Democracy . . . We shall see an energetic striving for leadership among little people . . . We are a monster without a head, as it were; and must need rely upon time to bring forth the heroes of the new crusade. Assuredly we owe our victory to our liberalism, and we must keep on liberalizing . . . Steady's the word, and broad; broad as the whole country . . . loving and forgiving all around, wiping out the old bloody score and opening a fresh set of books.<sup>14</sup>

Watterson, at the very moment that he was writing this editorial, felt he had already found his 'hero of the new crusade.' Two days after the election, he wrote excitedly to Reid, 'You have a real triumph in Tilden, a pure and able man, and doubtless your private friend. Why not rally on him for '76?'<sup>15</sup> Reid cautiously answered his impetuous colleague, 'Yes, Tilden is personally an old and cordial friend. But it is too soon to be making personal plans for 1876. Tilden himself makes none.'<sup>16</sup>

Watterson, however, had little patience for such hesitancy. 'How would Tilden look at the head of a Democratic Presidential ticket?' he wrote in the *Courier-Journal* on 5 November. The hero had been found, and his pennant was already proudly flying from the top of the *Courier-Journal* mast.

All of the despair and inner doubts that Watterson had experienced the previous year seemed now to have entirely evaporated. 'Politically my work is plain before me,' he wrote Reid. 'I have literally beaten down the last vestige of the formidable opposition with which I have had to contend these six or seven years and have nothing to do but keep straight ahead on the general line of policy indicated in the present issues of the *Courier-Journal*, thoroughly democratic but thoroughly independent. My adversaries now seem to be confined to the clergy. Oliver Lucas says they ought to be. I hope however there is nothing serious in this.'<sup>17</sup>

In October 1875 the *Courier-Journal* moved from its cramped quarters into the new building. Watterson enthusiastically described it to Reid as 'a most elegant and substantial structure on the crack corner of the town. I mean to equip myself like the president of a Railroad, gorgeously.'<sup>18</sup> Red brick, five stories high, with a steeply pitched mansard roof crowned by an intricate iron-work railing, it was certainly one of the most impressive buildings in Louisville. It was the equipment inside, however, that brought forth the most comment from visiting newspapermen. The heavy presses,



located in the enormous basement, were larger and more modern than any in the country with the possible exception of the New York *Herald*. The composing and editorial rooms on the first floor were regarded as a model of efficiency although Watterson would in the years ahead prove to be a rather disruptive force in the arrangement. His own office was connected directly with the composing room by a head-high swinging door. As he constantly revised his editorials until the very moment that the paper went to press, he would make frequent trips into the composing room with the latest changes. But at least once during the day as he came charging against the door he would collide with the composing foreman coming in the other direction with galley proofs of Watterson's previous revisions. There would be loud curses, mutual recriminations, and a confused dancing back and forth on the part of both men. It never occurred to Watterson to cut the door down to eye level or remove it altogether. For years, the Battle of the Swinging Door, as his editorial staff called this daily encounter, continued until Watterson finally wearied and moving up to another floor, sent his editorials down to the composing room in a wooden box hung on a string.<sup>19</sup>

With the completion of the new building, the promise that Watterson had made to Haldeman in 1868 of building a first-class paper had been more than realized. In the fame of its editorial page, in the accuracy of its news coverage and the expertness of its management, the *Courier-Journal* stood second to no paper west of the Alleghenies. The imposing building was but the tangible evidence of the paper's pre-eminence.

But for Watterson personally, the building meant more than that. From the time that he had first come to Louisville he had been concerned over the strength of the Prentice legend, had feared that his own identity might be shadowed by his predecessor's great fame. For that reason he had been insistent upon consolidation with the *Courier* in order to create a paper that would be his own. And although Prentice had furnished half of the name and fame for this consolidation and Haldeman the other half, still the two halves in no way had made up the whole. The whole was Watterson and of that he was now assured. In a niche above the doorway of the new building there had been placed a large stone statue of George Prentice, seated in an armchair and staring down at all who

entered the front door like some brooding gargoyle. But there was nothing else about the building or the paper to remind the people of Louisville of their late editor.

With understandable pride, Watterson wrote Reid urging him to bring Sam Bowles out for a visit. 'You shall find the Blue Grass both succulent and abundant.'<sup>20</sup> Reid, who was also in the midst of constructing a new plant for the *Tribune*, answered that he had heard 'gorgeous things about your new building,' but warned Watterson, who was still being plagued by the temperance crowd, not to 'let your basement for a German restaurant.'<sup>21</sup>

Thus regally seated in his new building, Watterson could turn his full attention to the promotion of the candidacy of Governor Tilden. In November 1875 he wrote the New York governor:

I have talked with many of our leading people and am satisfied that we shall not have as much trouble as I anticipated upon the financial issue. The presidential issue needs to be presented with circumspection; but even as to that I feel increased confidence after a deliberate survey of our local field . . .

I have ordered the Courier-Journal to be sent to your address and hope you will find time now and then to run your eye over it. There is not a great deal in it just now; but after awhile it will grow more interesting.<sup>22</sup>

A committee of Southerners living in New York was organized to conduct visiting Southern politicians on a pilgrimage to Tilden's home at Gramercy Park. The strategy of Watterson and Tilden was apparent. The Middle West, they both realized, was hopelessly lost to the Greenback madness and would support Governor Thomas J. Hendricks of Indiana. Tilden had strength in the East, but in his own state he was alienated from Tammany and its chief, John Kelly. The only hope for Tilden's nomination lay in gathering up a sufficient number of delegates from the Southern states. Upon the Kentucky editor's influence much depended as Tilden well knew. Small wonder that the precious bottles of 'blue-seal' wine were opened when Watterson came to 15 Gramercy Park.<sup>23</sup>

It was a curious bond, this friendship between Tilden and Watterson. Ideologically, to be sure, they were very close. Both were essentially conservative, both respected wealth and the established rules safeguarding property. Both believed in what they regarded as the Jeffersonian concept of limited government, and both stood

sincerely for reform in the North and conservative home-rule in the South. They looked backward to the Democracy of Van Buren and Polk for guidance in financial policy, adhering closely to the traditional standards of hard money and low tariffs.

But beyond this realm of ideas there was little similarity between the two men. Tilden was a quiet, shrewd politician, the manipulator of invisible wires from a hidden position. Watterson always played his political role in full view of the national audience. Tilden's movements were cautious and often half-hearted, while Watterson's were flamboyant and at all times whole-heartedly vigorous. Tilden's spirit was miserly, guarding niggardly both his health and wealth, while Watterson spent lavishly all that he had of time, energy, and money. Each man should have found the other singularly unattractive, the very vigor of Watterson a personal affront to the hypochondriac Tilden, and Tilden's caution maddening to one of Watterson's impetuosity. Yet the two men remained friends to the end. Tilden admitted Watterson into his small circle of close admirers, and Watterson for the rest of his life always reserved his highest praise for Tilden, singling him out as being 'the nearest approach to the ideal statesman I have known . . . If ever man pursued an ideal life he did.' Watterson saw in him qualities that no other man saw. To him, Tilden was 'a William of Orange' in leadership, a 'veritable Sir Roger de Coverley in his gallantries,' a 'philosopher pure and simple' in politics.<sup>24</sup>

Watterson wrote in the spring of 1876 concerning Tilden, 'the time and the man had met,' and so it indeed seemed. As the scandals in the Grant administration appeared with sickening regularity, the public demanded reform. Tilden, the man who had smashed the Tweed and Canal rings, became a symbol for honorable public service. Here was a man who could clean away the filth of eight years and admit the fresh air of honesty into Washington. As the nation prepared to celebrate the centennial year of its independence, it looked with shame at the black shadow that fell across its capital and longed for the austere virtues of Washington and Jefferson. At a time when any honest official would appear noteworthy, it was not difficult to drape Tilden with the classical toga of statesmanship.

Throughout the spring, Watterson was in close touch with Tilden reporting on conditions in the South. 'I do not think it

advisable to make a fight before the appointment of our delegation, but to secure a good delegation uninstructed, defeating in the meantime any foolish rag money resolutions. The outlook is sufficiently promising, and after a tolerably thorough reconnaissance of three months I find myself strengthened in the belief expressed to you last fall.' He suggested that John Bigelow, who was writing Tilden's campaign biography, be advised to 'bring out strongly, with a few ringing extracts, your States' Rights antecedents and utterances. This for the benefit of Kentucky especially and for general use in the South.' <sup>25</sup>

Kentucky would have to be the spearhead of the movement if Tilden was to win the South. For three months before the convention the *Courier-Journal* became Tilden's personal organ of the Southwest. In the latter part of April, Bigelow's biography appeared in its pages, and from 2 May on there were almost daily editorials to indoctrinate the people with the belief that Tilden was the only possible nominee who could carry the North as well as the South. As objections to Tilden arose, Watterson knocked them aside with all the force that he could command with his pen. Humor, logic, patriotism, sentimentalism — there was no type of appeal that he did not use, no section or class whom he did not address.

The flood of his editorial tidal wave was reached in a letter which Watterson sent from New York to be held for publication until the eve of the Democratic convention on 21 June. This communique is a brilliant example of the impassioned appeal of which Watterson was a master. The editorial 'we' was forgotten in the intensity of feeling. It was as if Watterson, whispering in great confidence the secrets of inner politics, were clutching each reader by the coat lapel to beg for his support. He listed and then answered each objection to Tilden; he boldly named each man who opposed Tilden's nomination and gave the secret for that opposition; he admitted all sections and all classes into his confidence and made promises in Tilden's name to each. He concluded with this remarkable editorial peroration:

During these dark years I have often lost faith in our poor old blundering Democratic party; but God love it and chasten and liberalize it and ennoble it, I have never thought of deserting it. It has now its chance for life . . . We have an opportunity to enter the field of reform alone — a rare opportunity — when reform is the cue of the

people and the time. We have a lifelong Jeffersonian Democrat who is the embodiment of reform . . . He will obliterate the lines on which we have been beaten. It is not his chance but our chance; and we should be wild — mad as only the gods make those who are meant for destruction — if we should let it slip. I speak strongly, and I mean what I say . . . I am not afraid or ashamed to gush over my political convictions.

. . . Running over these hastily jotted notes . . . they strike me as a little imprudent, somewhat egoistic and altogether sincere. So I let them go . . . I have the good comfort of knowing that I have never had a secret from a reader of the *Courier-Journal*. This letter must be considered as a private one, a confidential communication to the whole lot of you. It is written with the purpose to tell the truth and with the hope of doing some good; but also from the standpoint of one who has nothing to gain and nobody to outwit. Having swallowed the frog in '72, I can stand anything and need not be considered in the bill of damages.

Effective as Watterson's editorials were in their appeal to the general public, they represented only a part of Watterson's efforts on behalf of Tilden. There were also politicians to corner and delegates to instruct in order to set the stage for the St. Louis convention. At the Kentucky state convention held on 25 May, Watterson was elected one of the delegates-at-large. That evening he wrote to Tilden:

The fight has been a hard one and up to the last was a doubtful one. But we have won it at length fairly and squarely. Two-thirds of the delegation selected today are for you and I have good hope of capturing the whole of them before the twenty-seventh of June. I found it unwise to make a fight upon the money question; preferring to take what I could get in delegates. Nevertheless the soft money lunatics were routed horse, foot and dragoon. Hendricks had his people here in force. They got one delegate from Louisville who is for Tilden and Hendricks. I write in the midst of a press of work merely to say that all things considered we have done rather better than I had expected.<sup>26</sup>

So conspicuous had Watterson become in the Tilden movement that several Republican papers, including the St. Louis *Globe-Dispatch*, attempted to discredit both him and Tilden by circulating the story that Tilden had bought the support of the *Courier-Journal* with a very large loan at a small rate of interest. How else, these newspapers charged, could Watterson and Haldeman explain the new building, erected at great expense in a year of business depression. Anyone who knew both Watterson and Tilden might well

question the validity of this story on two counts: first, that Watterson's political support could be purchased; and second, that Tilden would loan money at a small rate of interest.

Actually, Haldeman had made all arrangements for financing the estimated cost of \$400,000 for the building a year before Watterson committed himself to the Presidential candidacy of Tilden. The company in the summer of 1876 still owed \$180,000 on mortgage and, as actual costs had exceeded the estimate, a \$60,000 floating debt. The net profits of the paper were increasing each year, however, from \$39,000 in 1874 to \$40,876 in 1875, even after deducting Watterson's and Haldeman's salary of \$6,000 each a year, and there had been no difficulty in meeting the regular payments on the mortgage. Haldeman had been somewhat concerned about the floating debt and had written his partner in June while the latter was in New York visiting Tilden, 'We can manage it all at the expense of great annoyance, but if I could pay off one half of it, the balance I could handle without trouble or worry.' He wanted Watterson to secure a loan of \$30,000, using his stock as security.<sup>27</sup> It is true that this letter from Haldeman to Watterson explaining in detail the financial conditions of the paper is to be found among Tilden's letters indicating that Tilden was in on the negotiations as an advisor. But the loan that Watterson obtained in New York came from the multimillionaire Amos R. Eno.<sup>28</sup> Haldeman at this same time borrowed \$25,000 from Judge Van H. Higgins of Chicago.<sup>29</sup> Tilden contributed nothing to the financing of the *Courier-Journal* building, but because Haldeman would not allow the actual details to be published, the Republican version continued to circulate during all the years that Watterson was associated with Tilden.

The Republican convention met in Cincinnati in mid-June and after a lengthy battle between the Radicals and the Reformers, surprised the nation by choosing an exceedingly dark horse, Governor Rutherford B. Hayes of Ohio. It was a victory for the Reformers, and Watterson at once warned his party that the Republicans in choosing Hayes over James G. Blaine had made the nomination of Tilden imperative.

Ten days later the Democrats gathered at St. Louis. The long awaited moment for Watterson had arrived. With great confidence he wired Tilden, 'Tell Blackstone [Tilden's favorite riding horse] that he wins in a walk.'<sup>30</sup> Yet Watterson must have had his mo-

ments of doubt when a caucus of the Kentucky delegates was held and it was discovered that of the twenty-four, only ten would vote for Tilden on the first ballot. General Winfield Scott Hancock's supporters had been active and several Kentuckians had made promises to them. This was a serious situation, for it was generally believed that Kentucky would set the course for the whole South. Watterson at once called for a caucus and for five hours pleaded, reasoned, and shouted for Tilden. At the end of that time, the exhausted delegates emerged, all twenty-four committed to Tilden on the first ballot. Ballard Smith later wrote, 'It can be stated of my personal knowledge, that except for Mr. Watterson's efforts and appeal, the Kentucky delegation would have voted for the nomination of General Hancock and the other Southern States would have followed its example, and that General Hancock in all probability would have been the nominee in 1876 instead of Mr. Tilden.'<sup>31</sup> The *New York Tribune* hailed Kentucky's unity for Tilden as 'a great triumph for Watterson, as it gives the best proof the party in his State has ever accorded him of his great influence and popularity.'<sup>32</sup>

That evening Watterson was serenaded by a large group of Kentuckians, led by Schneider's band from Louisville resplendent in bright blue military uniforms. Watterson appeared briefly to make his bows and to give his assurance that reform would be the keynote of the convention and a reform candidate would be its nominee.

Later that evening as the weary editor was preparing for bed a far more significant tribute was paid him. A group of Tilden's friends on the National Committee appeared to tell him that Tammany was putting up the name of S. S. 'Sunset' Cox, the popular and able congressman from New York City, for temporary chairman of the convention in order to block the Tilden movement. Watterson's visitors assured him that only he among the Tilden men could defeat Cox as the Committee's selection. Watterson, highly flattered, protested that he knew nothing of parliamentary law and that his poor eyesight would make it impossible for him to recognize anyone ten feet away, which, in that huge auditorium, would be an almost insurmountable handicap. The committeemen assured him that they would have the 'best parliamentarian on the continent' at his elbow all the time and that there would be a dozen men to serve as his eyes. And so Watterson, who had been eager

to accept from the first, agreed. His popularity had been judged correctly and he won handily over Cox by a vote of 25 to 7 in the National Committee.<sup>33</sup>

The naming of Watterson as chairman was everywhere regarded as a decisive step in the nomination of Tilden, for it thus became clear that Tilden's forces had control of the convention and that the bandwagon had begun to roll. The press of the country, both Republican and Democratic, hailed the selection of Watterson as a fitting tribute to a man who, as the *Pittsburgh Chronicle* said, 'has worked harder for peace and order at the South, and for honest money, as against the Greenback delusion, than any other journalist in his party.'<sup>34</sup>

Watterson later remarked of the day that he officially presided over the Democratic party, 'I never had a better day's sport in all my life.' Having barely enough time to write his keynote speech, and no time to commit it to memory, he found himself in a difficult position. The only way he could have read the speech was to have remained seated, with his head lowered in order to have his one good eye only three or four inches above the manuscript. Such a method of delivering a keynote address to a large assembly was out of the question. A plan was devised whereby a friend would stand close by with Watterson's speech concealed in his hat and would hastily mutter the next sentence to Watterson as the audience was cheering the last one. Everything, of course, depended upon the noisy enthusiasm of the crowd for what the keynoter had to say. Fortunately, as Watterson said, 'Luck was with me. It went with a bang — not, however, wholly without detection. The Indianians, devoted to Hendricks, were very wroth. "See that fat man behind the hat telling him what to say," said one to his neighbor, who answered, "Yes, and wrote it for him, too, I'll be bound."' <sup>35</sup> As evidence of how completely Watterson had captured the Democratic party in Kentucky, it should be noted that 'the fat man' who so obligingly read Watterson's speech to him was Col. Stoddard Johnston, editor of the *Kentucky Yeoman*, formerly the most outspoken paper in Kentucky against the *Courier-Journal's* New Departure policies.

Following Watterson's speech, which clearly set the stage for the nomination of Tilden, the convention turned to the business of approving a platform and selecting candidates. Watterson quickly



discovered that 'one might as well attempt to drive six horses by proxy as preside over a national convention by hearsay. I lost my parliamentarian at once. I just made my parliamentary law as we went. Never before nor since did any deliberative body proceed under manual so startling and original. But I delivered each ruling with a resonance — it were better called an impudence — which had an air of authority.' With his easy manner and quick wit, he got by with this unorthodox procedure, for he was correct in assuming that 'the mass was as ignorant as I was myself.'

The convention threatened to get out of hand only when the explosive currency question was introduced. To silence the wild disorder which threatened to sweep the floor, Watterson moved the previous question thus cutting off further debate. The inflationists yelled in anger and General George Morgan leaped up to threaten Watterson with a duel. This outburst of passion diverted the attention of the convention from the issue at hand, and by the time Morgan had been pacified and order re-established, Watterson was able to introduce another issue for debate.<sup>36</sup> In the end the convention adopted a platform which severely chastised the Grant administration. It condemned high tariffs and the needless delay in the resumption of specie payment, and concluded with the statement that 'reform can only be had by a peaceful civil revolution.' It was a platform built for Tilden.

There was no great surprise when the New York governor easily obtained the two-thirds majority necessary for nomination on the second ballot. Watterson wired Tilden with justifiable pride, 'It is not possible for me to fulfill my promise made six weeks ago to congratulate you in person on your nomination but Kentucky sends you a better representative who will congratulate for the whole ships crew of United States — and at the [same?] time assure you that the support given you in the West and South is whole hearted and undoubting.'<sup>37</sup>

As a consolation prize for the Middle West and the inflationists, Governor Thomas Hendricks of Indiana was given second place on the ticket, and the convention adjourned with expressions of hope for November. Watterson returned home to find a proud state hailing him its 'foremost citizen.' The Kentucky press was lavish in its praise and many editors thought he should have been nominated Vice-President. On the night of the balloting at St. Louis, a

large throng in Louisville had gathered before the bulletin board in front of the *Courier-Journal* building, and when the expected bulletin was received, a portrait of Tilden was flashed on to an improvised screen from a magic lantern while the crowd cheered with equal enthusiasm for both Tilden and Watterson. Watterson was coming home a prophet in his own land.<sup>38</sup>

In no campaign of his life did Watterson work harder for victory; yet in no campaign did he write fewer editorials in behalf of the ticket, for during the first four weeks he was campaigning not only for Tilden but also for himself. Watterson had always opposed the idea of a journalist accepting public office, maintaining that the fascination of political fortune had led many an able editor to professional ruin and that he 'knew too much of the national capital to be allured by its evanescent and lightsome honors.' When, however, soon after the Democratic convention, the representative in Congress from Louisville, E. Y. Parsons, died in office, Watterson, at the urgent request of his friends, consented to take the Democratic nomination for the unexpired term. He felt he could be of service to Tilden by serving as his 'personal representative' in the House of Representatives, and as a congressman he would have greater prestige in the campaign speeches he planned to deliver. Moreover, as he frankly admitted, 'after a long uphill fight for personal and political recognition in Kentucky an election put a kind of seal upon the victory I had won and enabled me in a way to triumph over my enemies.'<sup>39</sup>

Watterson conducted a spectacular campaign in the special Congressional election that summer. He toured the district, speaking to all groups, rough rivermen and conservative bankers, holding flag-raising ceremonies during the day and fireworks spectacles at night. From the energy that he expended in this canvass, one might have thought that he was doing battle against the whole Republican party instead of running for a six months term in Congress from a solidly Democratic district. It was a short campaign but a merry one. On 7 August the voters went to the polls and of the 12,244 votes cast, Watterson received 11,567.

As soon as his credentials had been certified, Watterson left for Washington to be sworn in before Congress should adjourn for the fall campaign. On the night he arrived, he was informed that Congress was in an all-night session to finish up the backlog of

business, so Watterson went to bed. He was awakened early in the morning by the sergeant-at-arms who conducted him to the House chamber. Watterson was led a prisoner down the aisle, while the weary legislators cheered. It was moved that he be fined the full amount of his mileage to Washington. Another Representative offered the resolution that he be suspended and sent under guard to the old Capitol prison. Finally after 'they had all sorts of fun with me, such as it was,' he was duly sworn into office.<sup>40</sup>

The next day Congress adjourned and Watterson went on to New York to confer with Tilden and his party managers. Headquarters for the Tilden campaign had been established at the Everett House and here Watterson was in daily conference with Abram S. Hewitt, chairman of the National Committee, Colonel William T. Pelton, Tilden's nephew, and William Dorsheimer, Bigelow, and Manton Marble. At the printing house at 59 Liberty Street he worked on publicity details. Hewitt was excellent at organization, and publicity had been organized with military precision. Although Watterson found most of the Tilden men congenial, from the first his attitude toward Hewitt was one of coolness which later developed into antipathy. Although no two men were more devoted to the Tilden cause, each was suspicious from the first of the other's methods. Watterson resented what he regarded as Hewitt's officiousness in taking entire command of the campaign without proper consultation with Tilden. Watterson was so blinded by affection that he failed to see that Tilden, vacillating and uncertain, was leaving the entire burden of the campaign to his subordinates. Hewitt distrusted Watterson's impetuosity as evidenced by his frequent rash statements on behalf of Tilden's candidacy, and little appreciated the dramatic appeal that Watterson could add to any campaign. Hewitt, moreover, resented the fact that although he had been picked by Tilden personally to be executive chairman, he was seldom consulted while friends like Watterson and Marble had easy access to Tilden's home.<sup>41</sup>

Tilden was in fact a most curious Presidential candidate. It was expected, that with his millions, he would contribute generously to the campaign fund. Yet most of the money he turned over to the National Committee he had received from wealthy friends, with hardly a cent coming from his own pocket. The distraught Hewitt had to find what money he could by himself, for the real wealth

of the country was backing the Republicans. The money received had to be spent in the doubtful states of Indiana, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, while the Southern states, struggling to free themselves from carpetbaggery, had to shift for themselves because of the lack of funds for legitimate campaign purposes. Hewitt believed that ten thousand dollars, a sum that Tilden would not have missed, could have saved Florida.<sup>42</sup>

It was also expected that Tilden would at least answer the gross charges leveled against him: that he had evaded payment of his income tax in the Civil War and that he would, if elected, compensate the Confederate property holders for damages incurred during the war. Yet he maintained a dangerous silence until Hewitt and Bigelow were forced to drag a denial from him.

Watterson recognized none of these flaws of indecision and timidity in his political ideal. He only saw Tilden at his genial best, seated in the comfortable drawing room at 15 Gramercy Park, sipping 'blue seal' wine with his close friends, writing down long columns of figures with neat precision and predicting with an actuary's accuracy the vote that he would win in November through the efforts of his subordinates. One such evening, after Watterson and Manton Marble had been in lengthy conversation with Tilden, Marble bluntly asked what he and Watterson would receive as their reward when Tilden entered the White House. With a look of shrewd calculation, Tilden answered, 'You boys don't want any offices. They would do you more harm than good. What you really want is big influence with the administration.' Afterward Marble spluttered out to Watterson, 'Do you know — blank blank him! that he meant every word of it.'<sup>43</sup> As usual, Tilden was not tipping his hand even to his closest friends.

After nearly a month of yeoman service in writing dispatches, talking with newspaper reporters and conferring with wealthy New York businessmen, Watterson returned to Louisville. But he did not rest, nor even give much attention to his much neglected editorial duties. He at once set out for a speaking tour of northern Kentucky, southern Indiana, and Ohio.

In some respects, it was not an easy campaign to conduct, for the Republicans by nominating Hayes had denounced Grantism just as surely as had the Democrats. If Tilden represented honesty and reform in public office in New York, Hayes symbolized the

same virtues in Ohio. Tilden stood for sound currency, but so did Hayes. The South could expect immediate relief with Tilden's election, but Hayes also gave every indication that he considered Reconstruction at an end. There simply were not enough points of issue between the two candidates.

By necessity the Democrats were forced to campaign against Grant and to ignore the good gray candidate from Ohio. If the Republicans could be accused of waving the bloody shirt of Civil War, the Democrats could be charged with waving the torn shirt of Reconstruction. The best argument that the Democrats had was that Hayes could not be the whole government, that along with him went Conkling, Chandler, Morton, and other souvenirs of the unhappy past. Much more could have been made of this point by Watterson and the other Democratic speakers, however. Watterson's speeches followed the usual pattern of vilifying the past eight years of Grant and were ennobled chiefly by their appeal for sectional reconciliation.

On the Sunday before the election, Watterson was back in Louisville writing one last editorial of the campaign in which he warned that 'even if Tilden obtains a majority tomorrow, they [the Republican opposition] propose to inaugurate Hayes in opposition to the voice of the people at the polls. The Republican leaders are bold, bad and desperate men, and the scheme is not so chimerical as might be supposed at first glance . . . Morton means mischief.' He urged that the Democrats insist on the Joint Congressional Rule 22 which the Republicans themselves had passed in 1869, providing that in case of dispute over the electoral vote of any state, both houses of Congress, and not the President of the Senate, had the right of deciding whether the vote should be counted. It was an ominous warning, but not even Watterson realized how prophetic it would prove to be. On election eve, he spoke briefly to a rally in Louisville and then the long, hard campaign that had begun in 1874 was over.

On 7 November there was the usual election day weather, dark and cloudy, with the threat of rain or snow. The results seemed to be as uncertain as the weather, as the *Courier-Journal* staff waited for the first bulletins. Around eight o'clock in the evening the telegrams began. From the first the Democratic trend was apparent, a heavy vote for Tilden in New York City, then similar reports from

Connecticut, Indiana, and New Jersey. By midnight it was clear that Tilden had carried enough Northern states which when added to the Solid South would give him the election. Bedlam prevailed inside and outside the *Courier-Journal* building. Watterson flushed and happy, made repeated appearances at the front door to acknowledge the cheers of the crowd. Then with his staff he sat down to compose the first page of the morning paper. They covered the page with crude woodcuts of crowing roosters and unrecognizable profiles of Tilden. A vertical heading took up the entire first column and shouted in the boldest type procurable:

THANK THE LORD!  
BOYS WE'VE GOT 'EM.  
AND YOU CAN JUST SWING  
YOUR CASTORS AND BET ON IT.

Watterson went home in the early morning hours far more inebriated from victory than from the drinks that had been handed him by a host of congratulating friends. But as he crawled wearily into bed, the lights in another editorial office were still burning. There John Reid of the *New York Times* and his staff were writing a different sort of headline from the one that would appear in the *Courier-Journal*, a headline that would read 'Results uncertain.'

## EIGHT

### And On to Defeat

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1876-1877

THE STORY of 'the crime of '76,' as the Democrats labeled the process in which the defeated Rutherford B. Hayes was declared the duly elected President of the United States, is an incredible tale. It has been often told but never completely. Writing many years after the event, Watterson described a small dinner party in Washington given by President Cleveland at which four of the principals in the drama were present. During the course of the meal, the conversation turned to the disputed election, and each of the four had his own story to tell of how it all happened. 'Finally Mr. Cleveland raised both hands and exclaimed, "What would the people of this country think if the roof could be lifted from this house and they could hear these men?" And then one of the four replied, "But the roof is not going to be lifted, and if anyone repeats what I have said I will denounce him as a liar."' Watterson concluded the story with his own cryptic remark that 'long ago I resolved that certain matters should remain a sealed book in my memory.'<sup>1</sup>

So the American people have never had and never will have the complete account of the events that followed the election of 1876. But if the known details reveal the most unpleasant aspects of

American politics: stupidity, duplicity, and the narrowest partisanship in the highest offices in the land, the final outcome reflects only credit to the American electorate who accepted the decision with a forbearance and an uncommon good sense unsurpassed in the history of a free people anywhere.

The beginnings of the story were simple enough. A die-hard attitude on the part of one metropolitan newspaper, the *New York Times*, in refusing to concede defeat in face of overwhelming evidence of Tilden's victory; a foolish telegram sent by the New York State Democratic chairman to that same paper, for what reason no one has ever known, requesting information on the vote from Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida; the sudden inspiration upon the part of John Reid, the *Times* editor, to claim those states for Hayes; his hurried conference in the early morning hours with Zach Chandler, national Republican chairman; and then the frantic telegrams to the carpetbag governments in those three states, 'Can you hold your state?' As easily as that, the Republicans changed defeat into victory. There were long weeks of debate to be sure, bluffs and threats on both sides, tortuous plans of compromise to discuss, reject, and finally accept; but given the known factors of Democratic hesitation and Republican audacity, the issue was already determined on the morning after the election when Zach Chandler issued his flat, unequivocal statement, 'Hayes has 185 electoral votes and is elected.'

There was never a question, of course, that Tilden had won a majority of more than a quarter of a million votes over Hayes. The whole trick of putting the Ohio governor into the White House was accomplished through the means of the Electoral College. If the nineteen electoral votes of the three Southern states and the one disputed electoral vote in Oregon were given to Hayes, he would have 185 electoral votes, the majority of one necessary to give him the Presidency. The only three carpetbag governments left in the South were willing to oblige. Method was unimportant, as long as a thin veneer of legality might be applied to satisfy the conscience of Hayes and the other scrupulous Republicans.

With the cheers of the crowds that had gathered to serenade him still ringing outside his door, Watterson sat down to face this unexpected turn of events. His first reaction, and a correct one,



was to act quickly, to prevent this impious wish from being made into unalterable reality. He at once wired Tilden proposing that a conference with Governor Hayes be held on the course of action to follow in the threatening crisis, and he suggested that both agree on a committee of eminent citizens to go to Louisiana to supervise the canvass of votes by the notoriously corrupt Returning Board there.<sup>2</sup> It was good advice. If Tilden at this stage of the game had made an overture to Hayes, who was an honorable man, the plans of Chandler might well have been thwarted. But Tilden did nothing, and Hayes, under the pressure of his advisers, soon rationalized defeat into deserved victory. In answer to Watterson's telegram came a foolishly optimistic wire from Tilden's nephew, Colonel Pelton, 'The returns from Florida, South Carolina and Louisiana show all three for Tilden and Hendricks. Their election is now conceded by intelligent Republicans. The people of New York are wild with enthusiasm.'<sup>3</sup> Watterson was not concerned with the 'intelligent Republicans' but with the unscrupulous ones. He sent another urgent telegram to Tilden: 'Our friends in Louisiana need moral support and personal advisement. Have Bayard, Thurman, Barnum, Randall, Macdonald, Dorsheimer, and others go to New Orleans at once. A strong demonstration will defeat designs of returning board. Beck, McHenry, and I start tonight. You must reinforce us. Answer.'<sup>4</sup> Thus the so-called 'visiting statesmen' plan was born. In forty-eight hours, the city of New Orleans was overflowing with the greatest conclave of politicians that the Crescent City had ever seen.

The 'visiting statesmen' idea, which might have had merit had Watterson's first proposal to Tilden of a joint committee been accepted, became a schoolboy's game, as Republicans appointed by Grant and Democrats supplied by Hewitt and Tilden raced south to Louisiana, more to watch each other than to inspect the official returns. Watterson, being one of the first on the scene, learned that the four members of the Returning Board who were to canvass the votes, although Republicans, were open to 'reason.' He was approached in the hotel lobby by a state senator who stated as casually as if he were selling a horse that the price for their conversion to Tilden was \$250,000. 'Senator,' Watterson replied, 'the terms are as cheap as dirt. I don't happen to have that amount about me at the moment, but I will communicate with my principal

and see you later.' Two or three days later the man was back and Watterson told him that he had never had any intention of accepting the proposal.<sup>5</sup> The Returning Board then proceeded to change an 8,000 majority for Tilden to a 4,000 majority for Hayes, by simply tossing out 12,000 Democratic votes as being fraudulent. How the Republicans paid for this service has never been disclosed. Watterson thought that perhaps patronage was enough of an inducement, but Hewitt in a speech at Chickering Hall in 1891 assured his audience that the Returning Board demanded and got hard cash.<sup>6</sup>

On 13 November Watterson wired Tilden from New Orleans, 'Well organized plan supported by troops to cheat us in count of vote. Our majority seventy seven fifty seven. The whole case one sided in every particular.' He then advised sending Democrats to Florida and repeated his proposal of a conference with Hayes. 'Have you yet determined what you will do as to a direct proposition to Gov. Hayes my judgment is that it will become necessary and might as well be acted on at once.'<sup>7</sup> The next day Randall, Lamar, and Ottendorfer joined Watterson in a wire, 'After a full survey of the situation here we urgently recommend that you make at once to Governor Hayes the proposition hitherto communicated to you.'<sup>8</sup> But Tilden seemed incapable of action and sat silent in Gramercy Park while his companion, Bigelow, recorded gloomily in his diary an expression of that heavy fear that hung in the house. 'Another civil war may be the consequence of this state of things and we may enter upon the next century under a diff. form of gov't from that which for nearly a century we have been boasting.'<sup>9</sup> In that fear lay the great advantage of the Republican schemers, for they knew how hesitant responsible Democrats in general, and Tilden in particular, were to take any action that might again bring down upon them the responsibility of civil war.

As no action was forthcoming from New York, Watterson became discouraged.

The chance had been lost. I thought then, and I still think, that the conspiracy of a few men to use the corrupt Returning Boards of Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida to upset the election and make confusion in Congress, might, by prompt exposure and popular appeal, have been thwarted. Be that as it may, my spirit was depressed and my confidence discouraged by the intense quietude on our side for I was sure that beneath the surface the Republicans, with resolute determination and multiplied resources, were as busy as bees.<sup>10</sup>

He stayed in New Orleans until 17 November, sending an occasional dispatch to the *Courier-Journal*, but accomplishing little. When it had become apparent what decision the Returning Board would make, he returned home to spend a few days before going on to Washington for the lame duck session of the Forty-fourth Congress.

The expression on the face of the *Courier-Journal's* front page in the two weeks since 8 November had changed from that of a broad grin to a look of grim determination. It still carried woodcuts of crowing roosters, but these symbols of the Democratic party looked more bedraggled each day. The paper attempted to keep a note of optimism in its lead story, but Watterson's editorials were anything but optimistic. Although he played up the chances of winning one electoral vote in Oregon on a technicality, he spoke grimly of the performance in Louisiana being repeated by the Returning Boards in South Carolina and Florida, and urged that Democrats stand united against the greatest conspiracy in the history of the Republic. But the South, he assured the nation, would take no militant action. 'Every conceivable means has been tried by the conspirators to excite us . . . to make us an accomplice in the wicked work of misleading and arousing the North. But this hope will not be realized.'<sup>11</sup>

Watterson was right in assuming that a show of violence on the part of a few Southern hot-heads would give the Republicans a chance to wave the bloody shirt and perhaps permit them to strengthen their military forces in the carpetbag states. Undoubtedly there were many Republicans waiting for just such an opportunity. But certain supporters of Hayes regarded the stirring up of violence as too dangerous a weapon to use at this tense moment. There was no assurance that it could be contained below the Mason-Dixon Line, but might well sweep across the nation. Watterson was closer to the truth when he asserted that the Republican game was all bluff and that the last thing in the world that the Hayes men wanted was war. 'The Republican bondholders would rather see Republican politicians out of office than to lose the value of their bonds,' he wrote.<sup>12</sup>

To these men there occurred another possibility of using the South to promote the candidacy of Hayes. If a basis of negotiation could be found that would attract the Southern representatives in Congress, perhaps they could be induced to desert their own

candidate and join the Republicans in counting Hayes in as President. It was not as preposterous an idea as it might at first appear. The South had long felt frustrated over missing out on the vast Federal program for internal improvements. While she had been under military occupation, the North had feasted sumptuously at the 'great barbecue' of Federal subsidy, the transcontinental railroad systems being evidence of the richness of the repast. Now the South was eager for similar nourishment, but its own candidate, in the name of reform and economic entrenchment, had clearly indicated that the picnic was over. Was Tilden what the South really wanted after all? Or might not a Republican President who would act favorably on a Texas, Pacific railroad subsidy better suit its purpose? <sup>13</sup>

For those Southerners who were little concerned with Federal grants to railroads, the Hayes men had ready an equally enticing if somewhat more ingenious argument for not opposing the inauguration of Hayes. The Republican candidate, it would appear, was a remarkable man who thoroughly understood the problems of the South. While representing the old, free and easy order in respect to Federal grants to industry, he stood as the herald of a new era in the North's political relationship to the South. The dismal Reconstruction period would officially come to an end with Hayes in the White House. Federal troops would be withdrawn and the native Democratic governments of the last three states still in the hands of the carpetbaggers would be recognized. It is true that Tilden promised the same things, but such a program could hardly be implemented without the active support of Congress. Who had the better chance of bringing into line the Senate, still dominated by the Radicals, Conkling and Morton, a Republican or a Democratic President?

And so the basis for negotiation was set forth. In return for the Southern congressmen's promise not to block the Republicans' efforts to count the electoral votes for Hayes, thus leaving the Northern Democrats without support, the South would receive Federal subsidies to internal improvements and home rule. Two groups were the instigators of this attempt at a new sectional compromise: the first, consisting of Tom Scott, president of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company and General Grenville M. Dodge, who were interested in continuing Federal subsidies, and the

second, the directors of the Western Associated Press, which held a virtual monopoly on wire news service west of the Alleghenies. This latter group included William Henry Smith, general agent of the Association and Hayes's closest friend; Murat Halstead, president of the group; and, as members of the board of directors, Andrew J. Kellar, editor of the Memphis *Avalanche*, Richard Smith of the Cincinnati *Gazette*, and Joseph Medill of the Chicago *Tribune*. General Henry Van Ness Boynton, Washington correspondent for the *Gazette*, served as the go-between with the railroad interests.<sup>14</sup> As Haldeman was also one of the Western Associated Press directors, he was certainly aware of the plan and from the first the pressure on him to bring the *Courier-Journal* into line must have been great.

Watterson, waiting in Louisville until Congress should reconvene in December, gave no indication of such pressure. He was eager to force the issue in Tilden's behalf. These two weeks of waiting, sitting in his office furiously writing editorials, were very difficult for him. Moreover, there was a vexing problem concerning his editorial staff to give him trouble at this trying moment. Ballard Smith had left the paper early that year to be editor of the Louisville *Evening Ledger*, and there would be no experienced managing editor to serve during Watterson's absence in Washington. The best that Watterson could do was to outline a general line that he expected his writers to follow in the weeks ahead and to leave the final responsibility for editorial policy to Haldeman. Having made these arrangements, Watterson left for Washington on 1 December with a sense of relief that at last something would be accomplished in settling the issue of the election.

Congress convened in an atmosphere that was strained and hostile. The situation was not unlike that of December 1860 and the threat of war was no idle talk. Even in Gramercy Park, Tilden was for the moment assuming a warlike attitude as he discussed with Governor-elect Robinson the advisability of making General McClellan, his adjutant 'in view of possible contingencies.'<sup>15</sup>

Watterson the day after his arrival sent from Ebbitt House a detailed letter for publication in the *Courier-Journal*. Although he paid his greatest respect to Secretary of State Hamilton Fish for giving to the Grant Administration for eight years 'the little respectability it has had,' he discounted the hopes of some of the

Democrats that Fish would be able to stay the hands of the conspirators. Watterson dealt rather harshly with Abram Hewitt's surprising call on President Grant two days before.

It seemed to me that Mr. Hewitt's visit to the president was ill-advised. Mr. Hewitt is a gentleman of honor and culture. General Grant is a desperate gamester who will keep faith with nobody. It is not material what passed between the two. Because . . . the president . . . would of course cloak his intentions behind a pretense of decency and fair play. Conspirators do not begin by confessing conspiracy.

Watterson evidently feared that the Democrats would be lulled into a false security by the assurance that Grant had given Hewitt that he would not use military force to settle the dispute in favor of the Republicans. This criticism is also further evidence of Watterson's long-standing distrust of Hewitt himself.

The letter ended on a note of deep pessimism regarding any peaceful solution of the crisis.

Hayes is merely a weak tool. He is now, as he would be if he were president, the creature of Zach. Chandler, and Chandler's confederates, Morton, Cameron and Logan . . . [It] is tolerably safe to predict the Senate will count him elected, and that Grant will try to install him at the point of the bayonet. The congregation of troops in the national capital has this design, no other. Force is the only law recognized by the desperate and despicable leaders into whose custody the once great Republican party has come, and their sole hope is a pretext for a bloody collision.<sup>16</sup>

The House of Representatives, preponderantly Democratic, chose Samuel Randall of Pennsylvania as Speaker. Recognition was paid by the House to its newest member when Watterson was appointed to the important Ways and Means Committee to replace James Blaine, who had been promoted to the Senate to fill the unexpired term of Senator Morrill. Of far greater moment, Watterson was also chosen by party caucus to a place on the Democratic Advisory Committee to deal with all proposals concerning the disputed election. His colleagues on the committee were such distinguished Democratic figures as Randall, Hewitt, Lamar, Payne, Hunton, and Warren of the House; and Bayard, Thurman, McDonald, Kernan, and Stevenson of the Senate. The Committee met frequently, sometimes at Hewitt's home, more generally in

the Speaker's Room at the Capitol, so that Watterson was fully informed in regard to all legislative proposals.

The only real interest in this second session of the Forty-fourth Congress lay in determining who had been elected President. Like an intricate Chinese puzzle, the problem grew more complicated with the handling. South Carolina and Oregon had each submitted two sets of electoral votes, while Florida and Louisiana had submitted three. Who had the authority to decide which set was valid? The clause in the Constitution regarding the counting of electoral votes was read and reread, and it told nothing. 'The President of the Senate shall, in the Presence of the Senate and House of Representatives, open all the Certificates, and the Votes shall then be counted.' But by whom? There was no answer. Because the acting President of the Senate, Thomas Ferry, was a Republican, his party claimed that he not only should open the certificates but should also count them. The Democratic House attempted to invoke Joint Congressional Rule 22 which had provided that the electoral vote of any state being in dispute, either house of Congress might demand that the vote of that state be disregarded. In that case, neither Hayes nor Tilden would have a majority of the electoral vote, and the election of the President would go to the House. The Senate, however, having dropped that rule in January 1876, now refused to reinstate it. And so the matter stood at deadlock. Precedent was appealed to, but there no answer could be found. In previous cases the vote of a state in dispute had in some instances been discarded; in other instances it had been counted both ways. And in any case, the election of a President had never before been dependent upon disputed electoral votes. There were serious proposals to have Hayes and Tilden draw lots for the Presidency. The most constitutionally minded people in the world had become hopelessly ensnared in their own Constitution.

The situation carried the threat of tragedy. Many Democratic papers were computing figures of potential armies and pointing out that the Democrats had three-quarters of a million more white votes than the Republicans. The *Courier-Journal*, in particular, was at this time assuming an even more bellicose tone than it had when Watterson had been writing the editorials. It assured the Northern Democrats that if they 'believe the time has come to

crush out usurpation, let them speak out. They can draw on the men of the South at sight.' <sup>17</sup> The encouraging signs of economic recovery of the previous summer were no longer apparent as business trembled before the prospects of a civil war that would cut across every section of the country.

What of Tilden in this crisis? There had been no public statement from him since the beginning of the trouble. He sat closeted in his library with Bigelow and Marble, writing a long history of *Presidential Counts* while the nation waited. Did he want arbitration, surrender, or war? His closest advisers did not know.

On 19 December Congress adjourned for the Christmas holiday with no solution in sight. Watterson did not go back to Louisville but spent the Christmas week in New York. There with Bigelow and Marble he spent long hours talking with Tilden, trying to reach some sort of decision. To Watterson, the situation was maddening, like a nightmare in which one crawled toward an objective that remained always an arm's length away. In his desperation Watterson was chasing very shadowy fancies indeed. He told Tilden and Bigelow that when the showdown came Senator Blaine would not stand by Hayes. When Bigelow warned him not to put too much faith in Blaine's word, Watterson replied that Blaine dared not deceive him, that he had once defended the name and honor of Blaine's wife from an ugly scandal, even accepting a challenge to a duel in her defense, a duel that did not materialize when Watterson insisted on navy revolvers at three paces. 'For this protection of his wife Blaine, Watterson thinks, feels very grateful,' Bigelow recorded in his diary. 'And if he says he will assist in any way in defeating Hayes, W. feels perfectly sure he will be as good as his vow.' <sup>18</sup>

Robert McLane of Maryland came to visit Tilden while Watterson was staying at Gramercy Park. As a boy, McLane had been in England during the excitement over the Reform Bill of 1832. The youth had been much impressed by the force of an aroused public opinion in pushing the Reform Act through Parliament. McLane felt that a similar demonstration on the part of a determined public to see that justice prevailed might be effective here. So a plan was conceived that was to have unfortunate consequences for Watterson. It was decided that Watterson would make a speech in Congress in which he would suggest that 'a mass con-



vention of at least one hundred thousand peaceful citizens exercising the freeman's right of petition' should assemble in Washington on 14 February, the day the electoral votes were to be counted, to see that the will of the majority was not thwarted. Watterson had no great faith in the idea, but he was willing to do what Tilden thought advisable. This at least was a decisive move. Anything was better than the inaction of the past weeks.

The idea was not as drastic as it sounded. There had been several such proposals in the public press in the past few weeks, and even the cautious Hewitt had suggested early in December that 'while the people are yet free and independent, we invite them to assemble at their usual places of meeting in every city, town and hamlet in the country on the 8th day of January next to consider the dangers of the situation and by calm, firm and temperate resolutions, to enlighten their representatives in Congress now assembled as to their duties in this great crisis of our institutions . . . ,'<sup>19</sup> a suggestion that incurred less danger of an explosion but which was based on the same idea of a mass protest as the McLane proposal. It is interesting that Tilden had vetoed Hewitt's earlier suggestion as being too radical whereas he now agreed to the more dangerous proposition of a huge mass meeting in Washington. The reason for Tilden's reversal is obvious. Hewitt's appeal was to be an official declaration by the Democratic party of which Tilden was the head. If the proposal should backfire or lead to open conflict, he would be directly implicated. The McLane proposal had the great advantage, which Tilden immediately perceived, of coming not from Tilden but simply from an individual in the Democratic party. If the appeal caught on and proved effective, well and good; but if it should fail or lead to trouble, Tilden could protest clean hands. To make sure that it could not possibly be considered as an official statement, the plan at the last minute was changed so that Watterson was to make the proposal not in Congress but in an open meeting in Ford's Opera House as a private citizen.<sup>20</sup> Watterson, to be sure, ran the risk of being the scapegoat, which was unfortunate but unavoidable.

Watterson, who never questioned the motives of his chief, returned to Washington the first week in January with the speech, which had been approved by Tilden and McLane, in his pocket. On 8 January, which was Jackson Day, there were meetings of

Democrats all over the North, urging expressions of protest from an outraged citizenry. That evening, speaking to an excited audience in Washington, Watterson said, 'If it should become necessary that they [the people] should have a leader, another Jackson stands ready to take his life in his hand and make their cause his own.' He then issued his call for the 100,000 unarmed citizens, and so launched Tilden's trial balloon. Watterson was followed by Joseph Pulitzer, who, carried away by the excitement of the moment, asked that these 100,000 citizens be armed.<sup>21</sup>

Tilden did not have long to wait for an answer. Immediately such a blast went up from the Republican press that the balloon was burst even before the frightened Democrats could draw it back down. It was easy to mix Watterson's statement with the then relatively unknown Pulitzer, and to change his demand for an assembly of peaceful citizens to a call for a revolutionary mob, armed to the teeth. Upon Watterson's head descended the most violent abuse of the whole struggle. Tom Nast depicted Watterson as a wild-eyed Southern rebel with Medusan locks and fire bursting from his nostrils. So malicious were Nast's cartoons, in fact, that Watterson protested to Joe Harper and the latter ordered Nast to make some sort of public apology. Watterson's third son, Harvey, was born at this time, so Nast drew a cartoon of the editor walking the floor with his infant son in his arms squalling lustily and a caption below saying, 'Let us have peace.' This cartoon along with the widely quoted remark of some punster that Watterson's son was 'the only one of the hundred thousand in arms who came when he was called' helped take some of the sting out of Nast's earlier cartoons.<sup>22</sup>

But, in the main, Watterson was left to face the attack alone. The proposal may have been unwise, but it had not been his idea originally, and the least he might have expected was some word of support from his own party. But no word came from Gramercy Park, only a silence so icy that one might suppose that Tilden had never heard of such a proposal. The other Democratic leaders followed suit. When during a session of the Joint Congressional Committee to draw up a plan of arbitration, Senator Edmunds made some slighting allusion to 'Henry Watterson's one hundred thousand Democratic men who are said to be coming,' a virtual chorus of Democratic voices answered him with, 'Oh, they are

not coming; we've telegraphed them not to come!,' followed by much laughter.<sup>23</sup> Watterson had become the obliging court fool whose antics were meant to amuse but not to frighten.

The unfortunate victim of Tilden's faltering gesture of defiance wrote to Reid to express his thanks for the *Tribune's* printing something in his defense. 'It seems to me that I have been berated beyond my offenses as to the 100,000. The speech of the 8th of Jan'y was decorous, the outgiving preconcerted and *by authority*. You know me not to be an extremist. And yet; if I were a mad dog, I could not have come in for greater disparagement.'<sup>24</sup> The condemnation of Watterson, however, had only begun. Forgotten were his long years of laboring for sectional reconciliation. He was never allowed to forget the speech and he became a symbol for 'irresponsibility' and 'hot-headedness.' In some standard texts of American history the only mention of his name has been in connection with 'the ten thousand armed Kentuckians.' Certainly he was 'berated beyond his offenses.' The bitterness that he felt in facing alone the storm of public disapproval could not help affecting his attitude toward the electoral debate in Congress.

At the very moment that Watterson was being branded as a resurgent rebel, yelling for war, there were interesting developments taking place in the editorial policy of the *Courier-Journal* which were to change that paper from one of the most bellicose in the nation to one of the most conciliatory. There had been rumors as early as December of an attempted compromise between the South and Hayes, but the *Courier-Journal*, in line with the instructions received from Watterson, had vigorously denied that the South would ever be a party to such negotiations. It had identified Murat Halstead as one of the authors of the compromise, and had scornfully rebuffed him, telling him that he ought to know that he could not 'buy the South for Hayes.'<sup>25</sup> But the paper's publisher, to whom Watterson had delegated the final responsibility for editorial policy, was not so sure.

Haldeman found himself at this moment in a very difficult situation. He was a lifelong Democrat and a former Secessionist, but his commitment to the Democratic party was largely an environmental rather than an ideological one. His natural sympathies lay with the business interests of the country and there was much in the compromise plan as presented to him by his fellow board members

of the Western Associated Press, particularly in regard to Federal subsidies to Southern industry, that appealed to him.

It was while Haldeman was thus painfully struggling in his own mind with the problem of a new editorial policy for the paper that he received the first reports of Watterson's speech in Washington. He was so alarmed by its content that for four days he suppressed mention of it altogether, although nearly every major paper in the country was giving it wide publicity. On 12 January, carefully buried on an inside page, a delayed press dispatch informed the *Courier-Journal* readers that Henry Watterson had addressed a group of Democrats in Washington on 8 January. As the time for the state convention on 18 January approached, the convention that was supposed to provide 'the ten thousand Kentuckians,' the *Courier-Journal* expressed the hope that there would be no 'rash and intemperate declaration.' The *Chicago Tribune* was now ready to concede that 'the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, much to public astonishment, is one of the fairest Democratic papers.'<sup>26</sup> The public, however, was probably not as surprised as Henry Watterson.

Watterson thus found himself deserted even by his own paper. There would be no public protest in Washington or anywhere else. Tilden and the Democratic party had been effectively frightened away from any overt public action. Tilden's only solution now, which to Watterson and Bigelow 'was simplicity itself,' was to sit tight and demand in a formal resolution the right of both houses to determine the correct electoral vote. If the two houses failed to agree on the actual count, and if neither candidate had a majority of undisputed electoral votes, as would be the case, then the election of the President would go to the House of Representatives. The Constitution was quite explicit on this point. Not only was Tilden's plan 'simplicity itself,' but it had the merit of having both precedent and the Constitution behind it. Nor did this plan entail any more danger of provoking civil conflict than any other suggestion except outright capitulation. If it had, the cautious Tilden never would have suggested it. If it could be assumed the Republican game was all bluff, and subsequent remarks by many leaders of that party gave evidence that this was a safe assumption, then the Republican party would be forced to yield.<sup>27</sup> To prevent this plan from becoming effective the Republicans would have to make the overt

act of rebellion. This would be difficult to do, even if they so wished, for both President Grant and General Sherman had given their assurance that the Federal army would not be used to settle the dispute.

The Republican schemers had been forced into an untenable position. Their claim that the President of the Senate had the right to count the electoral votes and in case of contradictory returns to decide which were valid had no precedent to support it, and it was no longer certain that even the Senate was in accord with this interpretation of the Constitution. Even Senator Ferry, the President of the Senate, was said to be weakening.<sup>28</sup> Unless the promoters of Hayes could come forth with another plan, their cause seemed hopeless. All that the Democrats needed, as Tilden pointed out, was patience and the courage of their conviction.

It was at this moment, when Tilden's election appeared most certain, that an Electoral Commission plan was first proposed. Because the Democrats in both houses were later to give it their overwhelming endorsement, history has generally ignored the fact that this plan was introduced by two Republicans, Representative George W. McCrary of Iowa and Senator George F. Edmunds of Vermont. The plan was born of desperation, a last chance for the Republicans to obtain the Presidency for Hayes. It was an open admission that the previous claim regarding the powers of the President of the Senate was both false and insupportable even in the Senate. It carried no guarantee of success for Hayes, but it was a chance. One of the most interesting documents to come to light during the long Congressional debates that followed the decisions of the Electoral Commission was a letter from George Edmunds to a constituent written in January explaining why he proposed the plan and worked for its acceptance. He briefly reviewed all of the electoral disputes of the past beginning with 1817 and pointed out that in no single instance had it ever been claimed that the President of the Senate had the right to determine which set of electoral votes should be accepted in case of dual returns. He concluded his letter with this frank admission: 'The present bill, then, saves the republican cause from the predetermined destruction of its hopes and fortunes being left solely in the hands of its opponents.'<sup>29</sup>

Why then did the Democrats accept the Republican-conceived

plan of a final tribunal to decide the election? There can be no easy, single answer to the question. Panic is part of the answer, for the newspapers of the country had made good use of the crisis by sensationally developing the theme of imminent war. Too many Democrats were afraid the Republicans were not bluffing, and Tilden's plan required a calm patience that they did not feel at this moment. The financial interests of the country were demanding some kind of plan acceptable to both sides which could be put into operation at once. Business was at a standstill; hungry unemployed men were roaming the streets. It seemed folly to sit quietly and wait until 14 February when the electoral votes would be opened. Then too, and this must have been the decisive factor in most Democratic congressmen's thinking, the plan seemed to promise Tilden victory. Hayes had to win all twenty contested electoral votes, Tilden only one. Any tribunal that would even glance cursorily at the fraudulent returns from Louisiana would have to give the nod to Tilden.

The first to capitulate to the Republican plan were three Democratic Senators: Thurman of Ohio, Bayard of Delaware, and Ransom of North Carolina. They were members of the special Senate committee which had been created in December to work with a like committee in the House. Thurman and Bayard were old, conservative Democrats, fearful of the consequences of delay, eager for settlement. John Bigelow hinted broadly that they also bore no love for Tilden since both had been candidates for the Presidential nomination.<sup>30</sup> Tilden afterward regarded them as the real authors of his defeat.

When Hewitt, as a member of the House committee, presented the plan to Tilden for the first time on 14 January, Tilden objected. He felt the action was premature and an unnecessary surrender of the Democratic position. Hewitt informed him that the Senate committee with the unanimous support of its Democratic members would report the bill anyway. Tilden then asked if it was not too late in the day to be asking for his counsel.<sup>31</sup> Although Hewitt always insisted that Tilden could have killed the Commission plan idea at that moment, he could have done so only over the vigorous protests of some of the leading members of his own party. The truth was that the Democrats in Congress were already committed to some such compromise plan, and by that commitment had

made Tilden's plan unfeasible. In the words of his confidant, John Bigelow, 'Unfortunately, the course of procedure which Mr. Tilden had traced out and urged upon the party was no longer possible. Their line of battle had been broken. The two controlling Democratic Senators on the Committee by their negotiations had practically surrendered the Democratic fortress. The plain, square issue made by Mr. Tilden could not be revived after a willingness to negotiate and make concessions had once been manifested.'<sup>32</sup> All Tilden could do now was to make suggestions in respect to the proposed Commission. With these suggestions, Hewitt, who was also a victim of the panic that had seized the Democrats, hurried back to Washington.

The plan as finally evolved by joint action of the two committees established a commission consisting of fifteen members, five from the House, five from the Senate, and five from the Supreme Court. Of these fifteen, it was tacitly agreed that three Democrats and two Republicans would be chosen from the House, three Republicans and two Democrats from the Senate. Although it was thought the Supreme Court should be sufficiently 'removed from the passions of the party politics of the day,' as Hewitt said, to make political considerations unnecessary, here also two Democrats and two Republicans would be chosen. The four justices would then choose a fifth justice who, it was generally believed, would be the Independent, David Davis. That the Democrats did not insist upon naming specifically all five justices and thus officially commit Justice Davis to service on the Commission as they did with the other four justices is but one more instance of their blundering and unforgiveable haste to reach a settlement with the Republicans. Tilden called it 'a panic of pacificators,' and so it seems to have been.<sup>33</sup>

On 16 January the bill was presented to the Democratic Advisory Committee. Watterson is in error when he states that there had been no intimation of such a bill and that it 'fell like a bombshell upon the members of the Committee.'<sup>34</sup> The general features of the bill had been widely discussed for days, the *Courier-Journal* itself having given an outline of the plan on 15 January. Watterson, still loyal to Tilden's plan of insisting upon the constitutional rights of the House of Representatives, attacked the bill in the committee as being a means of giving legality to what Hayes would otherwise have to take by force. Although a few of the other members

including Randall and Payne felt some uneasiness regarding the bill, no other member spoke up. Finding himself the lone protestant, Watterson then yielded. As he later explained on the floor of the House, 'I did what I always do, and always shall do under similar circumstances — being unable to further meet and combat in friendly debate with my colleagues, I accepted their view and joined them in the measure proposed. But I was no means lured into a feeling of security.'<sup>35</sup>

The bill was then presented to both houses for approval. Having been assured by Colonel Pelton that Tilden could see no other alternative but to give the Electoral Commission his reluctant approval, Watterson refused to join his colleague from Kentucky, Representative Blackburn, in attacking the bill, but instead delivered a twenty minute speech in the House for its passage. Edward P. Mitchell, later editor of the *New York Sun*, as a young reporter watched with interest as this highly publicized Southern 'fire-brand' arose to speak, and his notes give us a picture of Watterson at this time. 'From a gallery point of view Mr. Watterson is a blond young man, apparently thirty-five but probably older, with yellow moustache and imperial brow and chin . . . eyes, indeterminate, top of head showing small veneration but considerable hair, of medium stature and loose gait.' Mitchell found Watterson's style of speaking 'declamatory,' his gestures 'awkward and often inappropriate . . . giving undue emphasis to unimportant words.'<sup>36</sup>

Watterson began his speech with a discussion of sectionalism, the futility of civil war, and the need for a sympathetic understanding in the North regarding the problems of the South. These were familiar words from him, but they were words that could bear repeating. He then discussed the bill under debate. He admitted honestly that he did not like it, 'as an original proposition I may, and I do, feel a sense of indignation that such a contingency has been forced by the operations of what I believe to be conspiracy.' Nevertheless, Watterson argued, 'the sole hope left the people — a choice of evils, I grant — is the proposed commission . . . The happiness and peace of forty millions of people will press upon the commission raised by this act; its members will cease to be partisans; they will sit for the whole country; and as they discharge their full duty, they will be honored in the land. It seems to me that, if arbitration is our only recourse, as I believe it is, the



proposed is both legal and just. Upon it, therefore, good men everywhere will rest the issue, trusting that the God from whom we received our fair, free system, building wiser than we knew, will bring it safely through this present danger.' <sup>37</sup> These were temperate words, and Representative Adlai Stevenson of Illinois remembered that Watterson 'was listened to with earnest attention and it [his speech] at once gave him high place among the great debators of that Congress.' <sup>38</sup>

The bill easily passed both houses with a preponderance of the votes coming from the Democratic side. Although a larger proportion of Northern Democrats in the House voted for the measure than did Southern Democrats, the affirmative vote was so large from both sections as to make such a comparison insignificant. The country as a whole ignored its Republican origins, and its passage was generally conceded to be 'a Democratic victory.' It should be pointed out, however, that in the Senate where Republican votes were needed for passage, twenty-one Republican senators gave their assent and only sixteen voted against the bill. If more votes had been needed they could have been found among the nine who refused to commit themselves on the measure.

The Democrats were in an exultant mood, quite confident that Justice Davis would make Tilden the next President. Then the unexpected happened. With an incredible lack of perspicacity on the part of the Democratic legislature in Illinois, and with an equally unpardonable failure on the part of Hewitt and the National Democratic Committee to keep their party informed, the Illinois legislators elected Davis United States Senator. He accepted, and at once declared himself ineligible to serve on the Electoral Commission. For the all-important fifteenth member of the Commission there were now only avowedly Republican justices from which to choose. Still the Democratic leaders did not give up hope. It seemed impossible, unless the Commission should vote on the most partisan lines, to exclude Tilden from the Presidency. When Justice Joseph P. Bradley was chosen, there was a good deal of satisfaction within the Democratic camp. The *Courier-Journal* told its readers that it was glad Davis was not to serve, as he might have leaned too far the other way in order not to be biased. As for Bradley, the Louisville paper was convinced that 'in point of ability and personal character he is the peer of any man on the

Supreme Court bench.'<sup>39</sup> Hewitt was also convinced that Bradley was 'a man of highest integrity,' and had been assured by the two Democratic justices serving on the Commission that 'absolute reliance could be placed upon the radical fairness of Judge Bradley.'<sup>40</sup>

It was with high expectation then that the Democratic leaders watched as the Electoral Commission assembled in the Supreme Court Room on 1 February to receive the first disputed certificates from Florida. There were able attorneys on the Democratic side — George Hoadly, Charles O'Connor, Lyman Trumbull, Jeremiah Black, and William Whitney, while the Republican case was to be argued by equally eminent jurists headed by Edwin Stoughton, William M. Evarts, and Stanley Matthews. Watterson once again found his uncle conspicuously prominent upon the opposing political side. The great debate had begun.

The whole issue rested on one point. Did the Commission have the right to go behind the returns submitted by the Republican governor of Florida? If the Commission ruled that it did have that right, the case was won for Tilden, for it would be a simple matter to prove that the Florida Returning Board in its canvass of the votes had fraudulently changed a majority of the popular vote from Tilden to Hayes. It was a curious reversal of traditional party line to find Republicans arguing for states' rights while the Democrats vigorously supported the right of the Federal government as represented by the Commission to intervene in the affairs of a state.

On 7 February, after two days of almost unbearable tension while the Commission met in secret session, Justice Miller presented a motion to accept no evidence in addition to the legal certificates of electoral votes that had been received by the President of the Senate, thus forbidding the Commission from going behind the returns. It was passed by a vote of 8 to 7 on strict partisan lines. The stunned Democratic leaders discovered that Justice Bradley was not as completely removed from the 'political passions of the day' as Hewitt had hoped him to be. Hewitt himself could hardly believe it, for he had been told shortly before midnight on 6 February that a close friend, John G. Stevens, had just called on Bradley, and that Bradley had read Stevens his opinion which gave the vote of Florida to Tilden. It was later reported, however, that the justice had had other visitors that night after

Stevens had gone. Senator Frelinghuysen and Secretary of the Navy Robeson, had called to appeal directly to Bradley's sense of party loyalty. They were joined by Mrs. Bradley, hastily attired in a dressing gown, who knelt on her knees before her husband and prayed to God not to allow the nation to be delivered over to the Democrats. God and the Republican party proved to be too powerful for the wavering justice. The next morning he changed the last few paragraphs of the report he had shown to Stevens and gave the Presidency to Hayes.<sup>41</sup>

But the incurably optimistic Democrats still chased after the rainbow of hope. The *Courier-Journal* on 10 February headlined the Florida story with a flippant 'Bye, Bye, Florida! Now for Louisiana.' It was felt that not even the most partisan Commission could ignore the open fraud there or could countenance having the notoriously corrupt J. Madison Wells, head of the Returning Board, choose the next President of the United States. Congressional leaders had been assured by several 'reliable sources' that Senator Conkling would speak in the Senate against accepting the Republican returns from Louisiana. It was believed that several Republican Senators would then join his revolt and Louisiana would go to Tilden without even being submitted to the Commission. But on the day scheduled for his speech, Senator Conkling's seat in the Senate was empty and it was discovered that he had left for Baltimore.<sup>42</sup>

On 16 February, by the now familiar vote of 8 to 7, the Commission handed J. Madison Wells's eight votes over to Hayes and the suspense was over. The proud little roosters were gone now from the front page of the *Courier-Journal*, and the editors, tossing aside Haldeman's caution, headlined the story 'A Foul Crime — The People Betrayed, Robbed and Defied by an Infamous Decision.'

With the Louisiana decision, the last hope of the Democrats for obtaining a just hearing before the Commission was dissipated. It was at this moment that a sizable number of Democrats in the House, led by those few who had voted against the Electoral Commission, organized to prevent the completion of the electoral count by filibuster, dilatory measures, and repeated calls for recess. By these tactics, they hoped to force a new election in which they felt that the Democrats would sweep the country. That this strategy

carried the threat of war they did not deny, but they were willing to accept that consequence.

And so in mid-February the crisis, which seemingly had been amicably disposed of in January, was renewed. Tension mounted and once again newspapers spoke of war and there was excited talk that the Democratic governors would soon call up the National Guard. Once again representatives of the two great parties faced each other across a narrow aisle and tried to guess in the angry words that were spoken just how much was an expression of grim determination, how much was only bluff. But the positions of the two parties had been reversed. It was now the Republicans who could make an appeal to law and order, and if force was to decide the issue it would have to be the Democrats who would take the overt action. The Democrats had been outmaneuvered in more ways than one by the Electoral Commission bill. Each Democratic congressman had to decide for himself whether he was willing to assume the responsibility for provoking armed conflict.

It was in this atmosphere of tension that the packed galleries and the House waited on the afternoon of 19 February as Representative Cox yielded the floor for ten minutes 'to the gentleman from Kentucky.' Watterson as he rose to face the speaker's stand could not have failed to appreciate the high drama of the moment. He was aware that many in the galleries who leaned forward so eagerly to hear him knew him only from the reports of his speech of 8 January, for which he had been labeled 'the citizen Marat of the Republic.' But if they now expected to hear a Rebel yell, they were to be disappointed. In twelve sentences he scotched the idea of filibuster:

Mr. Speaker, if the acceptance of the inevitable with resolution and dignity be the highest, as it is the rarest, form of courage known among men, it is made in this present instance the harder by the consciousness of double-dealing and foul play. Two courses are open to the majority on this floor: on the one hand, passionate outcry, at once impotent and childish; on the other hand — offering no needless obstruction to the progress of events — an earnest, manly, but temperate protest against what we believe to be a great grievous wrong. In my judgment, the latter is our duty, plain and clear. We owe it to the necessities of the case, we owe it to the country. We owe it to ourselves. That we were duped by false pretenses into a snare furnishes no reason why we should forget the obligations that always press upon honorable men. In the very act of passing the electoral commission

bill we provided for the contingency which has come upon us. I voted for the measure in perfect good faith. The result has gone against me, and detestable as I must think the means that brought it about, I accept it as a finality . . . Life will go forward in spite of all this. There is yet much to live for in this rough world, and among the rest that day of reckoning, *dies irae, dies illa,*  
 When the dark shall be light  
 And the wrong be made right.<sup>43</sup>

He sat down to a burst of applause. From that moment on, he consistently cast his vote against filibuster and for a speedy completion of the count.

Had 'citizen Marat' become quite suddenly a 'Bishop Talleyrand,' who, casting all convictions to the wind, had rushed to the winning side? Had this so-called 'Southern hot-head' yielded to Haldeman's policy of cautious conciliation, had he been lured away from his loyalty to Tilden by the glittering promises of Tom Scott and company to join 'the apostasy of the South'?

This is one interpretation that can be given to Watterson's refusal to join the filibuster movement, but it fails to coincide with Watterson's subsequent remarks. It is true that General Boynton, hard at work on selling Scott's compromise plan to the Southern congressmen, had written exultantly to William Henry Smith on 26 January, the day in which Watterson spoke on behalf of the Electoral Commission bill, that Watterson had been the first to 'surrender' to Scott.<sup>44</sup> But Boynton was eager to impress Smith with his success in Washington, and Watterson's sudden reversal from being the most outspoken critic of the bill while in committee to speaking for it on the floor of the House could well appear to be a 'surrender.'

A more fundamental question than why Watterson and such other leading Southern Congressmen as Lamar, Reagan, Singleton, and Hill refused to join in the filibuster movement needs answering, however, and that question is, was there 'an apostasy of the South'? Was it because the Western Associated Press and the railroad interests succeeded in luring away so many Southern Congressmen that the effort to delay the count failed? Certainly the Northern Republican press was eager to have the public think it was the South that defeated the filibuster movement. The Radical Washington *National Republican* was lavish in its praise of the 'Southern statesmen' who came 'to the rescue' of orderly procedure.

The *New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune* were equally generous in giving most of the credit for halting the filibuster to the Southern delegates.<sup>45</sup> So generous indeed were these papers that the suspicion arises of their having a more ulterior motive than simply giving credit where credit was due. It would not be to the disadvantage of the Republican party to have the natural rift between the Northern and Southern factions of the Democratic party widened by such stories.

The simple fact is that no special credit — or discredit — belongs to the South as a section for opposing the filibuster. An analysis of the vote on each motion to recess or otherwise delay the count reveals that a larger proportion of the Southern and border state congressmen voted for delay than did the Northern Democrats. For example, on the motion to recess on 20 February, a crucial test of the filibusters' strength, 31 per cent of the Southern delegates voted for the recess, nearly 39 per cent of these from the border states of Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri, while only 28 per cent of those Democrats from the Northern states voted for the motion. Again on 28 February when there was a motion to read the full testimony given before the Commission in the case of South Carolina, a task which would have taken at least five days and would thus have defeated the count altogether, 50 per cent of the Southern Democratic representatives voted for the motion compared with 46 per cent of the Northern Democrats.<sup>46</sup> Only on 1 March after Representative Levy of Louisiana, who had consistently voted with the filibusters, had given notice to his Southern colleagues that he had 'solemn assurances' from the friends of Hayes of a policy of conciliation toward the South, did the proportion of Southern Congressmen favoring filibuster drop below that of the Northerners and even then only slightly.<sup>47</sup> In view of the generous promises made to the South in Hayes's name by Boynton, Smith, and others and with due regard to the very real differences that existed between the Northern and Southern delegates, the surprising fact is not the number of Southerners who urged a speedy completion of the count, but rather the number of Southerners who continued to delay even after all hope was gone.

As there were far more Northern Democrats in Congress than Southern, the actual number of Northerners who voted against filibuster was much greater than would appear by these proportions.

Even if the entire Southern faction of the party had consistently voted for delaying the count, the Northern Democrats who were voting with the Republicans could still have forced the count through to a conclusion. Yet there has been very little attention paid to this 'apostasy of the North.' Not only did the Northern Democrats furnish the numbers but also the leadership to stamp out the efforts at filibuster. The most consistently outspoken opponent of all dilatory motions was Fernando Wood of New York. On 1 March, when the filibusters were fighting a desperate last battle to defeat the count, an irate representative from the border state of Maryland, William O'Brien, stood up and shouted at Wood, 'Let the gentleman from New York be the high priest of the Republican party.' This challenge to Wood was quickly answered by another Northern Democrat, Carter Harrison of Illinois, who shouted back, 'And let the gentleman from Maryland be the small priest of the filibusters.'<sup>48</sup>

There is then no simple sectional explanation of why each representative voted as he did in the last tumultuous weeks of debate in Congress. If Watterson voted to end the count as quickly as possible, so also did Abram Hewitt. If William Lynde of Wisconsin fought up to the last minute to prevent the completion of the count, so also did William E. Smith of Georgia. An interest in the Texas and Pacific railroad undoubtedly had some influence on Lucius Lamar of Mississippi to vote with the Republicans, but he was joined in those votes by William Holman of Indiana, an old anti-monopolist who had persistently blocked all of Lamar's efforts to introduce a railroad subsidy bill. If the South was under constant pressure from railroad men lobbying for Hayes, the North was by no means free from pressure by business interests to end the crisis and allow Hayes to be inaugurated quietly and peacefully. In this connection it is interesting that at the time when the Electoral Commission plan was approved by both Congressional committees, Hewitt's immediate remark was that the settlement was 'worth five hundred millions to the country at once.'<sup>49</sup>

Watterson at a much later date, in recounting this period, made mention of 'the double constructions possible to men's actions, the contradictory promptings, not always crooked.' Every Congressman who had to decide his own course of action would understand what Watterson meant by that phrase: the contradictory

promptings of fear and anger, of self-interest and national interest, of loyalty to party and to nation. Watterson himself never felt it necessary to apologize for his course of action. He had believed in both the justice and feasibility of Tilden's plan to give the election to the House of Representatives, had opposed the Electoral Commission plan in committee as an unnecessary surrender. But once the Democratic party had committed itself to that plan, he felt it incumbent upon himself as a point of personal honor as well as for the security of the country to live up to the bargain. Certainly, he never felt that he had betrayed Tilden in these last few weeks.

On 24 February, following the decision of the Electoral Commission on Oregon, he had the following remarks entered into the Congressional record:

Mr. Speaker, I shall join in no movement to obstruct the progress of the presidential count. If the deed is to be done, and sure all of us know that it is to be done, 't were better when 'tis done, 't were done quickly.' No man has worked harder or longer than I have to prevent it. No man is more hurt by it than I am; but, as matters stand, it is inevitable. . . . Those who affect to think differently propose nothing definite. They have no objective point, except chaos or a case in law.

God help us! we have enough 'law' — such 'law' as the Supreme Court has to give us.

We have also had enough anarchy.<sup>50</sup>

Watterson was speaking here not only for himself but for all those, including Tilden, who sought an end to the controversy. A realistic acceptance of the situation is the one logical explanation for why a majority of the Democrats, both Northern and Southern, monopolist and anti-monopolist, voted as they did to accept the decisions of the Electoral Commission as final.

The South had had repeated assurances by such friends of Hayes in Congress as Charles Foster of Ohio that the Republican candidate would follow a policy of conciliation toward the South and would erase the last vestiges of carpetbaggery in Louisiana and South Carolina. But representatives from those states, while the filibuster crisis was at its height, saw an opportunity to obtain a more binding pledge from the Republicans in Congress who would have to implement with legislation any administrative policy. Led by that master lobbyist from Louisiana, Major E. A. Burke, these



Southerners demanded and got a series of interviews with Senator Sherman and Stanley Matthews climaxed by the famous session in the Wormley Hotel on the night of 26 February. Although Watterson had heard rumors of Burke's activities with the Ohio Republicans, he was surprised to receive an invitation from Representative E. J. Ellis of Louisiana to attend the conference to meet with Stanley Matthews. Ellis said that Watterson's uncle wanted him there to serve as referee in the negotiations.<sup>51</sup> It was too good a story for a newspaperman to miss, so Watterson consented to go. At the last minute, at the request of M. C. Butler of South Carolina, Watterson agreed to represent that state at the meeting, and thus changed his role to that of an active participant.

It was an illustrious gathering: Matthews, Evarts, Garfield, Sherman, Foster, and Governor Dennison to speak for Hayes; and the representatives from Louisiana in addition to Watterson and John Young Brown of Kentucky to represent the South. The meeting proved amicable. Much of the ground had already been covered in the previous meetings between Burke and Sherman, but the proposals were repeated for the benefit of the newcomers. Matthews intimated that the Republican government in Louisiana would no longer be supported by Federal bayonets and the Democratic government of Nichols would be recognized. When Watterson spoke up for South Carolina, Governor Dennison answered placatingly: 'As a matter of course, the Southern policy to which Mr. Hayes has here pledged himself embraces South Carolina as well as Louisiana.' With this assurance and having already obtained a signed pledge from Charles Foster that Hayes would recall all Federal troops, the Southerners bade their Republican hosts a warm good night.<sup>52</sup>

The Wormley Conference, while highly dramatic in effect, was not really necessary. Assurances had already been given before the meeting and even more binding commitments on the Radical Republicans would be extracted from Grant two days later. But this meeting has become a useful symbol marking the end of Reconstruction and as such has been given a place in American history out of proportion to its actual achievement.

And so the drama came to an end. At four a.m. on 2 March the Senate filed into the House chamber and the last state, Wisconsin, was called and its electoral votes duly counted for Hayes.

Someone yelled to Watterson to bring on his ten thousand, but few men laughed. They were too tired and sat in silence as Senator Ferry solemnly pronounced, 'Wherefore I do declare: That Rutherford B. Hayes, having received a majority of electoral votes, is duly elected President of the United States, for four years, commencing on the 4th of March, 1877.'

Much of the fascination that the Hayes-Tilden disputed election holds lies in the fact that it abounds with hypotheses, historically valueless but absorbing. Could the conspiracy have been stopped short of war once Chandler had set the wheels in motion? Would a bold statement from Tilden along with his appearance in Washington in the first weeks after the election have thwarted the plans of the Radicals? Could the Democrats have forced the Republicans to yield had they remained united in insisting that the election go to the House? And most teasing of all, would Judge Davis as the fifteenth member of the Commission have voted to go behind the returns in Florida and Louisiana? Stanley Matthews told Watterson several years later, 'You people wanted Judge Davis. So did we. I tell you what I know, that Judge Davis was as safe for us as Judge Bradley. We preferred him because he carried more weight.' Watterson, viewing the subsequent career of Davis as Senator, was convinced that Matthews was right.<sup>53</sup>

The Democrats had throughout the crisis proved singularly inept. Hewitt had been too secretive in his plans, too impatient of delay; Thurman and Bayard had been too eager to yield to the Republican schemers; but perhaps the greatest weakness lay with Tilden himself. He could and should have presented his ideas for the solution of the crisis more forcibly to the nation. He lacked both the physical stamina and vigorous leadership essential to a great President. It is impossible to imagine that Jackson, Lincoln, or either of the Roosevelts could so easily have been shoved aside. Even Watterson and Bigelow, his most devoted servants, implied that it was Tilden's own infirmity, both physical and spiritual, that had defeated him.<sup>54</sup>

But in spite of these failings, the Democrats on the whole presented a united and an inspiring front in their moment of defeat. Watterson's last dispatch to the *Courier-Journal*, prior to his return to Louisville, might well serve as a fitting curtain speech:

The deed is done, and there is in this, as in most matters, a certain inexpediency, not to say unwisdom, in weeping over spilled milk. The milk that is spilled was good milk . . . What of that? The milk is gone.

You ask me how I feel? I can only tell you that I feel too much respect for myself, too much respect for my people and my Country, to fall into passionate, unmanly, imbecile oratory. The inauguration of Hayes, under these circumstances, is something of a calamity. But the world will not stop on its axis; the people will live, move and have their being; parties will continue to exist; politicians will plan and plot. I shall not despair, nor beat my breast, nor saw the air with my hands, albeit — well, let us say, the worse for considerable wear and tear both within and without in the course of what has been to me, the hardest, saddest, and yet, when I come to think of it seriously and rightly, the most wholesome and invigorating experience since the war. I hope that I shall never be so weak, that our Southern men and women, who have borne so much will never be so weak, as to hang all earthly hope on any public or political event . . . For my part, I mean to accept it, as I have accepted many things, 'on faith,' faith in the creative principle of the universe, faith in human nature, faith in the people, and faith in the future. I earnestly advise everybody to do the same, especially urging upon Democrats the good sense, as well as the duty, of doing these things, to wit:

First — Preserve the party organization intact, without a flaw or doubt.

Second — Suppress violent thoughts and extreme ejaculation, for anger never mended any cause.

Third — Treat Hayes like a gentleman until he proves himself a usurper by his acts.<sup>55</sup>

With the expiration of the Forty-fourth Congress, an epoch had ended. Watterson could return home from his only venture into officeholding knowing that officially the reconciliation of the sections had been achieved. The age of Radicalism was over, even though the Republicans still held the White House.

## NINE

### Editor-at-Large

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1877-1890

WATTERSON RETURNED to Louisville the day after the inauguration of Hayes refusing to accept Tilden's defeat as the final word. He was eager to devote all of his efforts to the renomination and election of Tilden in 1880. It would, of course, be sheer folly for the Democrats not to offer to the public the 'old ticket' of 1876, to give the voters a chance to repudiate the work of the Electoral Commission. The Potter committee of the House of Representatives, inquiring into the election of 1876, had by its findings raised public anger to such a point that it would appear that all the Democrats had to do to win in 1880 was to maintain a solid front and present Tilden and Hendricks to the voters once again.

But Watterson in his zealous efforts to insure Tilden's renomination proceeded in the worst possible way and did much to destroy the united front so necessary for Democratic success. Both he and Tilden now felt the Democratic managers had been outbluffed in the election crisis and had tossed in their winning hand without even calling — an error Watterson found as inexcusable in politics as in poker. Both men seemed to have forgotten how desperately high the Republicans had raised the ante. They no longer remembered their own caution and, in their eagerness

to find a scapegoat, were willing to place upon Abram Hewitt the entire blame for the Democratic defeat. Watterson had long held Hewitt in low esteem, had called him, during the crisis, 'a bob-o'line, scudding cloud-like between the White House and the office of the Associated Press.'<sup>1</sup>

When Hewitt forced Watterson to leave a Democratic Congressional caucus in June 1878 on the grounds that Watterson was no longer a member of Congress, Watterson was ready to use harsher names. Breathing fire, he hastened to New York to hurl epithets against Tilden's former campaign manager. The Republican press was only too happy to print such colorful descriptions of Hewitt as 'the red snake in the grass, falsifier and charlatan.' John Kelly, boss of Tammany, long jealous of Tilden's leadership in New York, rubbed his hands gleefully as he witnessed this made-to-order schism in the ranks of the reformers. It gave him the very opening he desired in cracking the Tilden-Hewitt organization. Watterson might find personal satisfaction in seeing Hewitt ousted from his seat in Congress in the election of 1878, but the cost was too high. The very forces that defeated Hewitt in that year would see to it that Tilden's renomination was sidetracked in 1880.

Not content with pushing Hewitt aside, Watterson next turned his attention to Tilden's running mate, Thomas J. Hendricks. This proved to be the final disaster. By the spring of 1879, Watterson became convinced that Hendricks, supported by the Greenbackers within the party, was attempting to get the Presidential nomination himself. Not waiting to consult Tilden or anyone else, he gave an interview to the Republican Cincinnati *Commercial* in which he called Hendricks a fool who 'has gone on in a covert, unmanly way to belittle Mr. Tilden.' When the amazed reporter asked if this meant 'an abandonment of the old ticket,' Watterson agreed. 'But what of that? He [Hendricks] has not only abandoned it, but is openly assailing it. . . . Is it not best to know what we are to expect in advance, to wash our dirty linen before we are required to wear it?'<sup>2</sup> The Republicans greeted this public washing with joy. As Watterson was generally regarded as Tilden's personal journalistic spokesman, this interview could mean only one thing — the 'old ticket' would not be presented to the nation in 1880. The heavy weight that the Republicans had borne as they faced

the next Presidential election had been miraculously lifted from their shoulders. If Watterson's attack on Hewitt had hurt Tilden in New York, his declaration of war against Hendricks and the Greenbackers destroyed Tilden in the Middle West.

It may have been this disastrous break, as well as the concern that Tilden felt regarding his health, that persuaded him to withdraw his name from consideration when the Democrats assembled in Cincinnati in June 1880. Watterson, to be sure, refused to accept Tilden's letter at face value and did his best to rally the Democrats into drafting Tilden by acclamation. But he had already done too much. Tilden was now too controversial a figure within the party. The New York delegation did not even present his name to the convention. On the second ballot General Winfield Scott Hancock received the nomination.

Dreams die hard, but Watterson was enough of a realist to know now that he would never see his beloved Sage of Gramercy Park take his rightful place in the White House. Watterson might have learned much from this experience, the danger of being too frank in political debate, the foolishness of headstrong action in political maneuvering, the necessity for occasionally playing the game of politics as if it were chess, not a free-for-all brawl. But Watterson was never to be a good chess player, and the only lesson he seemed to have learned was never again to place all of his hopes in the political fortunes of one man. For him there was to be only one Tilden and no other man would ever again receive his complete allegiance.

If Watterson could not nominate the candidate, as chairman of the Committee on Resolutions, he could write the platform. This he did in ringing phrases that read like paragraphs from his editorials. To Watterson, the most important paragraph in the entire platform was a phrase of but five words which promised 'a tariff for revenue only.' This was the shortest statement that any major party had ever made on the question of tariff reform. If Watterson could no longer promise the American people the end of their political woes with the inauguration of their 'Uncle Samuel,' he could promise them an economic panacea with 'a tariff for revenue only.'

The loss of Tilden as a candidate nevertheless left Watterson at loose ends politically. Except for his concern for tariff reform,

he professed to have little interest in national politics, and when General Hancock in October virtually repudiated the low tariff plank in the platform, Watterson divorced himself entirely from the campaign. James Garfield's victory came as neither a surprise nor a disappointment to Watterson. 'The Democratic party,' he wrote, 'had this election in the hollow of its hand; and when, by an act of supreme ingratitude and folly, it let it go, it forfeited its claim to be considered an unflinching bulwark.'<sup>3</sup> With this final blast at those who had blocked Tilden's second nomination, he turned his back temporarily on the American political scene, and remembering that he was, after all, an editor and not a politician, seemed content for the time being to devote his full attention to the *Courier-Journal*.

These were years of rapid growth for 'the Old Lady on the Corner,' as Watterson affectionately called his paper. By the end of the decade, it was to boast of the largest circulation of any Democratic newspaper west of the Alleghenies, with a combined daily and weekly circulation of nearly 150,000. The mortgage on the building had at last been paid off, and Watterson and Haldeman felt that they could raise their own salaries from \$6000 to \$8000 a year.

This, along with the dividends from the company stock that he held, should have provided Watterson with ample funds; but with his expensive tastes and the demands that his family made on his income, it was barely adequate. He found himself frequently overdrawn and on two separate occasions he found it necessary to sell some of his stock to Haldeman to make up the deficiencies.

Watterson's editorial staff continued to expand along with the paper. To replace Ballard Smith as managing editor he had hired a young Louisville journalist, Daniel O'Sullivan, who proved to be an efficient manager, but so sensitive to all criticism that Watterson found it exceedingly difficult to get along with him.

The greatest addition that Watterson made to his editorial staff in these years was a young boy from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Harrison Robertson, who having heard Watterson give a lecture in his hometown was determined to join the *Courier-Journal* staff. Without any notice, he appeared, hat in hand, one morning

early in January 1879 seeking a job. Watterson asked him bluntly if he could write. Robertson thought he could and Watterson gave him a trial at writing a column of local items called 'Roundabout.' Robertson did so well with this that he was given the position of literary and dramatic critic, the final initiation rite before being admitted into that select group of editorial writers known as 'Watterson's boys.' This was the acid test, for it was the one section of the paper outside of the editorial page itself in which Watterson took a keen personal interest. Many an ambitious young reporter, eager for promotion from routine news assignments, had been tripped up in this position. It required an adroitness in the use of language that few reporters possessed, for Watterson had his own particular ideas on reviewing the world of books, the theater, and the concert stage. To be critical without criticizing, to be selective without either panning or patronizing was what he demanded. 'No composer; no pianist or violinist or player upon lute or flute could be improved by sharp criticism. The bludgeon would only depress and discourage him. Constructive criticism of any artist . . . never should be destructive of the performer's self-respect. The preceptor must avoid wounding the *amour propre* of the pupil or fail in his effort to lead him to a higher plane of achievement.'<sup>4</sup> Undoubtedly any visiting artist, had he known of Watterson's dictum concerning reviews, would have resented being put in the position of pupil to some young boy who sat as preceptor, observing his efforts. But knowing only that at worst the *Courier-Journal's* reviews would not be caustic or unkind, performers held Louisville in high regard, and Watterson constantly added new friends from the theater world.

So admirably did Robertson pass this critical test that within a short time he was admitted to the inner circle of editorial writers. There he was to remain for the next sixty years, a brilliant writer whose genius lay in his ability to adapt himself completely to his editorial environment. For nearly four decades, he served as Watterson's alter ego on the editorial staff and so completely did he identify himself with his employer that both in thought and in expression he was able to convince many readers that his editorials were Watterson's own. He wrote what was expected of him, trained young editorial assistants to do the same, and always remained aloof from the internal politics of the editorial office.



Watterson's frequently caustic remarks did not disturb him as they did O'Sullivan. If he felt the criticism was justified, he made the necessary changes; if not, he quietly ignored it. Unlike the others on the staff, he did not regard his position as but a step toward a more important place in journalism. He had no greater ambition than to be what he was, an editorial writer on the *Courier-Journal* staff. Quiet, dispassionate, faithful, he approached that ideal of a staff writer that every editor seeks. He never questioned Watterson's political views. If Watterson opposed a political figure one year only to support him the next, Robertson made the editorial transition without a bobble. Eventually he was to prove that his final commitment was not given even to Watterson, but remained solely with the *Courier-Journal*.

Robertson's faithful service to the paper enabled Watterson to enjoy the comfortable routine that he had established for himself by the mid-'eighties, a routine that allowed ample time for social amenities. He rose fairly early, drank a hot cup of beef tea and then sat down at the long table in his study. If there was an issue worthy of his attention, he wrote his editorial, scratching the words hurriedly and illegibly on coarse paper with a blunt stub pen that punctuated the page with blobs of ink. Having pronounced his verdict, he ate a hearty breakfast, gathered up his papers, and strode rapidly down to the office.

Watterson's arrival at the *Courier-Journal* building had an electrifying effect upon the staff. He usually contributed not oftener than two or three times a week, but on the days that he arrived with an editorial in hand, a nervous thrill ran throughout the building. Watterson handed his editorial to the foreman of the composing room and retired to the office which he shared with Haldeman. There he took off his coat, loosened his trousers and sat down to read his mail.<sup>5</sup>

In the composing room, the foreman handed the editorial to the one compositor trained to read Watterson's great scrawling hieroglyphic symbols. The man who set Watterson's editorials received twice the pay of any other printer in the office and not a little local fame, for the tales of Watterson's handwriting were legendary. The favorite story was that of a vagrant printer who wandered into the composing room and boasted that he had set copy for every

great editor from Greeley on down and had found no one's handwriting too difficult. Without a word the foreman handed him Watterson's editorial and the printer proceeded to the stone. Then he stopped, scratched his head, turned the paper sideways, upside down, and finally laid it down and walked over and picked up his cap. 'I've set every kind of writing,' he shouted back, 'but I've never set musical notes and I'm too old to learn.'<sup>6</sup>

For years, a man named Welch set Watterson's editorials. Upon receiving the copy from the foreman he hurriedly attacked it.<sup>7</sup> Speed was important, for Watterson's time in the office was limited and the foreman knew only too well what lay ahead before the editorial was safely locked in the frame. Space had been saved in the center of the editorial columns, for Watterson usually insisted that his copy be sandwiched between the other editorials of the day. If this was prompted by a desire for editorial anonymity, it was nullified by his equally insistent demand that all of his editorials be double-led.<sup>8</sup> Occasionally, even the specially trained printer had difficulty with a word and there was a hurried conference with Watterson's private secretary. Watterson once overheard one of these excited conferences and sticking his head out of the office door murmured soothingly to his employees, 'There, there, boys, don't worry. If you can't read it, make up your own word and stick it in.' No one, however, would have dared follow such a foolhardy course. Everyone remembered too well the time when one of Watterson's editorials entitled 'Caesar, O Caesar, O Caesar' had been inadvertently printed as 'Caesar, O Caesar.' The memory of the editor's enraged roar of, 'Where the hell is the other Caesar?' still struck terror into the force.<sup>9</sup>

Feverishly the first galley proof was made up and rushed to Watterson. He studied it, holding the sheet a half inch from the one eye in which he had any vision, and read a paragraph or two half aloud to himself. Then the revisions began. Back went the first proof, with fine wavering lines of interlineation and strange symbols which the harassed printer must interpret and set up. On an important editorial this process might be repeated four or five times. At last, Watterson smiled contentedly, the presses started rolling, and the wilted force could relax.

Watterson then put on his stiff bowler hat and strolled leisurely over to the Chili Con Carne Club in the back of a small cafe at

Third and Walnut. There he had lunch and a game of pitch at fifteen cents a corner with his closest friend, John T. Macauley, owner of the local theater.<sup>10</sup> If the company at the club proved entertaining, he would not return to the office for the rest of the day.

The Chili Con Carne Club had been organized by Watterson and afforded just the social activity that he most enjoyed. It had the easy graceful camaraderie of a Viennese tavern or Parisian sidewalk cafe. Although the records are not clear on just how much chili was eaten, the amount of beer consumed was remarkable. Membership was strictly limited to five: Watterson; Macauley; Ed Lausche, one-time dramatic critic for the paper; Wilton Lackeye, a local actor; and Elliot K. Pennebaker, an attorney. In this small back room, Watterson mellowed to his best as the afternoon wore on. With his bounding imagination he could entertain his friends by the hour. Should a noted actor play an engagement at Macauley's theater, he would be sure to be at the club for lunch. Then Watterson was quite willing to listen to the stories of the glittering life that he imagined all actors led. For Watterson made no secret of the fact that he was unabashedly stage-struck. He was always willing to devote time and money to young people whom he considered to have dramatic ability, and many bright figures on the American stage had found the first doors leading to success pushed open for them by Watterson. It was he who had discovered Mary Anderson in Louisville and helped boost her to stardom.

It is not surprising that Watterson with his sense of the dramatic should throughout his life have such an interest in the theater. His lecture tours, which he had first begun in 1877, were but one expression of this interest. More than money — and his tours proved highly profitable — it was the old lure of a visible audience that prompted him to become a public lecturer. From the time when as a small boy he had stood in the flickering light of a Tennessee camp meeting and had seen dry theology translated into dramatic fervor, he had been keenly aware of the power of oratory. He himself had felt this power when as a congressman he had spoken before a tense legislative assembly. There was exhilaration from an immediate audience response which he could not find in an editorial office.

The lecture that he had worked up for his first tour and which

he was to use successfully throughout the country was entitled 'The Comicalities and Whimsicalities of Southern Life.' It was an attempt to explain from the stage, as he had been explaining in his editorial columns for the past ten years, the Southern man to a Northern audience. A great part of the lecture was devoted to the reading of selections from such provincial Southern authors as Longstreet, George Harris, and W. T. Thompson. Although educated men of the South might well resent Watterson's choice of Southern types — the ignorant 'Hell fur sartin' revivalist, the backwoods card shark, and the bashful country swain — Watterson's choice was deliberate. Such selections could not fail to elicit from a Northern audience the laughter and sympathy that he wanted, and would allow him to make his appeal for sectional understanding before an amused instead of suspicious audience. Watterson in closing could then present the gist of his message, that the differences between the Northerner and Southerner were 'purely exterior.' 'No people in the world are more homogeneous than the people of the United States,' he would tell his listeners. Even the exterior differences were being swept away, for the culture that produced them had been destroyed.<sup>11</sup>

Watterson was not, in a technical sense, an effective orator. His voice was too high-pitched, his gestures too forced, abrupt, and repetitious. During the first few moments on the stage, he always seemed ill at ease and too conscious of his audience. But in spite of these defects in style, his success as a public lecturer was never questioned. For one thing, he was always assured of a good press. In the beginning, he had made sure of that by a frank appeal to his editor friends. For instance, before his first New York lecture in Chickering Hall on 20 November 1877, he wrote Reid, 'The discourse is purely humoristic . . . The purpose — mercenary. I write to acquaint you with the fact and ask such aid as your friendship may suggest.'<sup>12</sup> Later on, however, he needed no such advance solicitations for support. His editorial fame was great enough to ensure him of an audience in any town in which he appeared, and the fact that he was an ex-Confederate soldier pleading for sectional harmony and the glorification of the American union was particularly appealing to Northern audiences. His listeners within the first few moments became accustomed to his voice, to the curiously erratic sawing motions of his arms, and the intense,

piercing glance of his one good eye. They were impressed with his classical allusions, the sonorous rhythm of his sentences and were deeply moved by the sentiments of patriotism that he expressed. But mostly, they were caught by the charm of his personality which not even the stiff formality of the lectern could hide. And as they cheered his peroration, he found some measure of the satisfaction that he had anticipated in his childhood hopes of becoming a concert pianist.

His lecture tours and political missions took him away from Louisville for increasingly longer periods in these years. Because of his frequent absences from home, Watterson was not able to supervise fully the bringing up of his two older sons, Ewing and Henry. When he was at home, Watterson was a delightful companion to his children. He later realized, however, that he was too indulgent, particularly with Ewing, who was given too much money and too little discipline. Much of the burden of training the children fell upon Rebecca, who, having been brought up in a Southern patriarchal home, must have felt an inadequacy in handling her sons.

In 1881, a year after the birth of their fifth and last child, Ethel, the Wattersons moved to a larger house farther out Chestnut Street. It was decided at that time to send their older daughter, Milbrey, who was now nearly twelve and who her father thought showed a talent for music, to a private school in Switzerland. But Milbrey's absence did not mean a smaller household for Rebecca to care for because Harvey and Talitha Watterson, who had been frequent visitors, now moved from Washington to make their permanent home with their son. With doting grandparents eager to lavish their affection, Rebecca probably found it even more difficult to discipline her sons.

In the summer of 1882, Watterson, who had been tired and ill most of the spring, decided that he and Rebecca should go to Europe and join Milbrey in a tour of the continent. Leaving the younger children in the care of their grandparents, they took Ewing with them. It was decided to enter both Ewing and Milbrey, who was progressing well in her musical studies, in private schools in Germany for the coming year. Watterson was hopeful that the strict regimen of a German gymnasium would provide needed discipline for Ewing.

As always, the European scene seemed to revive Watterson's spirits, and while on the tour he was able to write Tilden:

I have not been so well in mind and body in many years, and, with returning strength and hope, my heart naturally turns to you, to whose confidence and friendship I owe so much of inspiration and to whose wisdom so many wise counsels . . . On my return, the last of October, I shall make it a point to stop over in New York, to see and talk with you.<sup>13</sup>

By the time Watterson had returned from Europe, he felt well enough to schedule another lecture tour. With his parents in the home, Rebecca felt that she could on occasions accompany Watterson on his tours. These occasions became more frequent as the children grew older, and their daughter Milbrey would remember that while Watterson stood on the stage in the bright spotlight that he loved, Rebecca would usually be waiting for him in the wings. This picture of Rebecca and Henry which their daughter was to cherish throughout her life was more symbolic of the respective roles they played than she perhaps realized. Rebecca Watterson was certainly in all respects a wonderful wife for Watterson. A loving companion, devoted mother, and gracious hostess, she was to give his life the certainty and stabilizing balance that it needed. Yet she remained a somewhat shadowy figure, admired but little known outside of her immediate family and close circle of friends. So much of his life — the political campaigns, his metropolitan club life, his journalistic activities — were all part of a world in which she never presumed to enter. It was not that she was uninterested in this part of his life or that he thought her incapable of understanding it. In the privacy of their home, he would discuss his editorials with her and she would spend long hours reading political tracts and speeches to him when he needed to rest his eyes. Her absence from the public stage was owing rather to a deeply rooted belief that both of them held in the conservative nineteenth-century tradition of a man's world and a woman's world, each quite separate and distinct, touching upon each other only in the home. Neither of them was ever to question the wisdom of this belief.<sup>14</sup>

Flattered by the national attention that he was receiving as lecturer and editor, Watterson by 1885 had come to regard himself as something of a dean of journalism. Wherever he might travel, he would be interviewed on such subjects as journalism as a profession,

the ideal newspaper, and helpful advice for young reporters. Generally on these occasions, he would speak in noble phrases about the moral obligations of the press. He always tried, he told the Chicago Press Club in 1881, to 'address myself to the promulgation of great underlying moral truths that lie at the bottom of our social structure and must permeate and inspire our parties, both Democratic and Republican.' His instructions to his own reporters were, he added, 'First, be sure that you tell the truth, and second, be sure that you are not animated by an unworthy motive in telling the truth.'<sup>15</sup>

On another occasion, he described the ideal newspaper as that which is based on three cardinal principles, 'disinterestedness, cleanliness and capacity . . . It should, to begin with, be a history, and a complete history, of yesterday, neatly and justly told, and that, it should, to end with, be a chronicle of the life and thought and, as far as may be, a reflection of the temper and tone of the people, done with absolute fidelity.'<sup>16</sup>

These were lofty sentiments on the aims and purposes of the press. In his advice to the men of the press, he was apt to be more succinct and earthy. His simple precept for the successful editor was 'to know where hell is going to break loose next and having a man there to report it.' A great editor, he wrote, must have courage and not 'care a damn about anything but the truth.'<sup>17</sup> At another time, on one of those infrequent occasions when he himself felt the pressure of the business office, he caustically defined the happy editor as 'a man of salient characteristics owning a majority of the stock.'<sup>18</sup>

To the eager young reporter who might be interviewing him and hoping for some magic formula for success, Watterson would delight in saying:

My boy, the axiom of newspaper success is news. The cub in the city department who does not consider a dog fight a thing of beauty and a joy forever may not be in danger of the Judgment, but he is in constant danger of discharge. In no other way can he get his perspectives adjusted. From the conflicts of canines to the quarrels of kings, from hell to breakfast and back again, through a system of regular geometric progression, he arrives at the hang of it, beginning as 'scoop' to end as managing editor.<sup>19</sup>

Although Watterson in his own personal life glorified his profession as few other editors could, he frequently took a perverse

satisfaction in dispelling any illusions of the glamour of journalism. He would deny that it was a profession, insisting that it was only a business, like the selling of saddles and cheese. 'It is a wearing, tearing business. You get nothing out of a newspaper excepting what you take from it. I am bent on it that neither of my sons shall go into journalism.'<sup>20</sup> But to the cub reporter in Louisville, who was faithfully reporting all dog fights in the faint hope that he might someday become a managing editor, Watterson's own life seemed to belie his derogatory remarks about journalism as a career. Observing Watterson's frequent hurried trips to important political conclaves, his profitable lecture tours, and his lengthy sojourns in Europe, one could come to the conclusion that it was possible to take quite a bit from the newspaper profession.

Not all of the country's small town editors took kindly to Watterson's pontifical remarks about their profession. These men found a spokesman in the new trade journal, *The Journalist*, which began publication in 1882 and which from the first took a delight in puncturing what it regarded as the self-inflated pomposity of Watterson. Attacking what it called the 'Star System' in journalism, it pointed out the *Courier-Journal* as the most glaring example:

Mr. Henry Watterson is editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal. That is to say, his name is used in this connection. Nobody who knows anything of Mr. Watterson's movements will pretend to believe that he really edits the paper, or does any important work in its conduct.

Mr. Watterson spends a great deal of his time away from the city of Louisville. During his periods of absence, Mr. Watterson writes as to the proper way to run the United States. Mr. Watterson is a very good correspondent, and he ought to be spoken of in that relation. But as an editor—bosh! The paper is a good deal better run when Mr. Watterson is away from home than it is when he is in Louisville . . . There is no profession where it is more difficult to make personal headway, and this hard condition is due to the Henry Watterson sort of thing, which gives all the credit to one who does not deserve it, at the cost of the hundreds who deserve all and receive nothing.<sup>21</sup>

Although there was some justification for *The Journalist's* criticism of the editorial 'star system' as it related to the *Courier-Journal*, its attack upon Watterson at this time was motivated not so much by its desire to see justice done to the unknown writers on the *Courier-Journal* staff, but rather by its anger at the lobby-



ing efforts of Watterson to get an eight-hour copyright act for all news copy of more than one hundred words. The small presses of the country, already resentful of the monopolistic tendencies of the New York Associated Press, regarded this proposed bill as but one further step in destroying those daily papers not fortunate enough to have an AP franchise. Since the Associated Press granted a franchise to only one daily in each city, competing dailies either had to pay the contract price demanded by the franchise holder to use the wire service or else wait and take the news from the columns of the franchise holder's paper after it came off the press. An eight-hour copyright act would virtually end this latter practice and would in many cities reduce the number of dailies to one. It is not surprising then that *The Journalist*, speaking for the less affluent presses of the nation, would regard Watterson as a journalistic trust-builder.

But *The Journalist* in directing its fire against Watterson was not hitting its real enemy on the *Courier-Journal* staff. For although it was Watterson who spent the first three months of 1884 in Washington attempting to get the copyright bill through a joint Congressional committee, the real instigator of this measure sponsored by the Associated Press was his partner, Walter Haldeman. In 1882, following the demands of the subsidiary Western Associated Press for a greater voice in determining the general policy of the New York Associated Press, the parent organization had set up a new board of directors consisting of three New York and two Western representatives. Haldeman, along with Richard Smith of the Cincinnati *Gazette*, had been named to represent the Western presses. From the point of view of the New York directors it was a wise choice. Haldeman, much more than Watterson, represented the business spirit of the age. Witnessing the concentration of wealth and power in all other forms of business activity from railroads to barbed wire, he felt it both practical and ethical for men of vision to exert the same efficient control over the selling of news. If this control meant the end of certain papers, that in itself would be a real service, for it would mean the end of news piracy and cheap competition.

This was the age of the survival of the fittest, and Haldeman had devoted his life to making the *Courier-Journal* fit. Its physical plant was more modern than any press outside of metropolitan

New York. In 1886 he had dazzled all Louisville with the installation of electric lights throughout his building, and the following year the *Courier-Journal* became the third newspaper in the country to adopt Mergenthaler's revolutionary linotype, which brought an end to the laborious setting of type by hand and which in a few short years was to make the tramp printer as romantically obsolete as the rail-splitter or pony express rider.

On the night the linotypes were installed most of the printers walked out on strike and stayed out two days in protest against this machine that threatened their jobs. Watterson generously offered his services in order that the paper might be printed, but he had been away from a composing room too long to be of much assistance. He did manage to set one stick of type but couldn't empty it. Before the amused grins of the few printers still on the job, he quickly retired to his editorial sanctuary.<sup>22</sup> As for Mergenthaler's machine, he never made any pretense of understanding it. Essentially a conservative in his business habits, he regarded most of Haldeman's mechanical innovations with mild interest tinged with skepticism. Not until after 1900 was a typewriter admitted into the editorial offices, and he himself never touched one although he tried to be open-minded about its use. He told his young assistant, Tom Wallace, who was the first to introduce a typewriter into the office, that he might someday use a machine if it were not for the fact that his handwriting was 'as plain as print.'<sup>23</sup>

One of his partner's innovations during this time, however, aroused in Watterson a more positive reaction than the rather indifferent attitude with which he regarded Haldeman's mechanical experiments and brought the two men into the only serious argument of their long years of association. Haldeman, noting the success of the Louisville *Evening Post* which was controlled by the Du Pont family, became convinced in 1884 that the *Courier-Journal* company should publish an afternoon paper to meet this competition. At the suggestion, Watterson exploded. There was for him only one paper, the *Courier-Journal*, and he was adamant against dividing its strength in order to meet what he regarded as the inconsequential challenge of a cheap afternoon paper — a Republican paper at that. But inasmuch as Haldeman controlled two-thirds of the stock, Watterson could do little except storm and rage against Haldeman's insistence on carrying out his proposal. He

could, however, completely isolate himself and his staff from this bastard child, produced by Haldeman's foolishness, and so for nearly fifteen years Watterson never mentioned the *Louisville Times*, never permitted a word of his to be used in it, and forbade any of his staff to write for it. What went on in the press rooms in the late mornings and early afternoons was Haldeman's business, not his. It was some source of satisfaction to him to observe that during the first years of its existence that the *Times* consistently lost money. It would not be until the desperate years of 1897-8 that Watterson would finally accept the fact that the *Times* did exist and that Haldeman had been right in establishing it.

But aside from this one disagreement, the two men could by 1890 view their long partnership with satisfaction and pride. Together they had produced a paper equal to that of any metropolitan daily in the country. With more truth than modesty, Watterson could write:

We have labored as one man instead of two to a common end, the making of a newspaper of the first class and the highest character. Both of us have disdained money except as it contributed to this aim. Neither of us has allowed himself to be diverted by any allurements of speculation or office. The result shows for itself.<sup>24</sup>

Although both men were generally regarded as being too big for Louisville, neither was ever seriously tempted to leave the *Courier-Journal*. In 1886 Watterson vigorously denied the rumor that he was going to join the staff of the New York *Herald*, and believing that the story had been circulated by his former editor Daniel O'Sullivan, whom he had dismissed in 1884, he never forgave him for it. The *Courier-Journal* was Watterson's life. No other newspaper job could give him as much freedom and fame even if it might offer more in the way of fortune. Watterson had found the good life and he knew it.

## TEN

# Cleveland and the Star-eyed Goddess

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1884-1892

NO PERIOD in Watterson's life had as little meaning politically as that from the inauguration of Hayes to the election of 1896. America has had weaker Presidents than the men who occupied the White House in those years but seldom more colorless ones. The good gray Hayes was succeeded by the equally pious and neutral Garfield, whose assassination in turn gave the high seat of honor to Chester Arthur. But even Arthur, who as a notorious spoilsman from New York might have been expected to give a pungent air to the Presidency, seemed to have been overwhelmed by the sudden honor thrust upon him, and the necessity for self-preservation forced him to assume the protective coloring of drab grayness worn by his predecessors. After Arthur, there was to be Cleveland, as reassuringly American as Plymouth Rock and like that noted boulder, deservedly famous for his wearing qualities but not particularly remarkable for any quartz-like sparkle. Finally, there was the glacial Benjamin Harrison, who had the austerity and beard of an Old Testament prophet, but nothing of the heart or eye. Only in the case of Cleveland over Blaine can it be argued that American history in this period was much affected by the choice the electorate made between the two candidates in each election. Political passions, to be sure, were quadrennially raised

to a feverish pitch, and both parties predicted anarchy and chaos if victory should be achieved by the opposition. But upon viewing the political scene in retrospect, one is forced to the conclusion that the names Democrat and Republican had become shibboleths, the contests for the Presidency but the tumbings and tossings of Tweedle-dee-dum and Tweedle-dee-dee.

Without strong leaders, men attempted to give political meaning to these years by pushing a cause, by offering an easy panacea for the ills of the nation. This was the age of the doctrinaire: the bimetallist, the civil reformer, the single taxer, the Christian Socialist, even the 'status quo-ist,' who made a dogma out of doing nothing. For Watterson it was tariff reform to which he dedicated this period of his political life. And if the tariff was a dull subject, he would give it life, transform it into a 'Star-eyed Goddess of Reform' for men to worship. As much as any man in the nation, it would be he who would make the tariff for the next decade and a half the vital issue that it was in American politics. Watterson was no economist, but he was a superb dramatist. Men might nod over a treatise by the free trader, David A. Wells, in his scientific approach to tariff reform, but they could not be left indifferent by Watterson's stormy assault upon their emotions. When he shouted, 'Democrats everywhere, gather about this star-eyed Goddess of Reform and fear not, for Truth is mighty and will prevail,'<sup>1</sup> he was sure of an audience, be it delighted or enraged, that would listen to his exhortation.

It was because of the grayness of the political backdrop that the doctrinaires flourished in this period. It was not difficult for a man with Watterson's flamboyance frequently to steal the show. He could play his role as barker with such effectiveness that he could pack the tent for each performance, but the political acts that were played on the inside were hardly worth the price of admission. For the real drama of these years was outside the tent, in the rich salons of Fifth Avenue and the hovels of Skid Row, and the real protagonists were the Carnegies and Rockefellers versus the Mary Leases and Molly Maguires. It was a show which Watterson, in spite of his love of the dramatic, could neither understand nor appreciate. There was a coarse, surging vitality in America in these years, but the political leaders were generally to ignore or, at most, to fear it.

The years of 1882 and 1883 were years of political drifting for Watterson. It is not surprising that during this time he should devote most of his attention to his newspaper and to his speaking engagements, for in politics he was not sure of either direction or guide. Although he continued to consult frequently with Tilden, his old counselor could be of little assistance; the old man seemed to have retired even farther within his shell of political seclusion. In the early summer of 1883 Watterson was in New York, renewing his friendship with Reid and John Hay, giving small dinner parties at the Manhattan Club, attending the theater and, most important, meeting with Tilden.

Upon his return home, Watterson gave a full account of his conversations with Tilden, stressing so strongly Tilden's physical vigor and mental alertness that quite inadvertently he helped start a new Tilden boom for the Democratic nomination in 1884. Cartoonists took delight in showing Tilden swimming up stream towing a boat with the amazed Kentucky editor standing at the prow. During the following winter appeals came from all over the country urging Tilden to seek the Presidency once more, while one state convention after another bound its delegates to vote for Tilden on the first ballot. It fell to Watterson, as the last bit of irony in the Tilden story, to kill the movement when it never before had shown so much life. With bluntness and no little bitterness, Watterson wrote in the *Courier-Journal*, 'The public career of Mr. Tilden is ended.'<sup>2</sup>

But if not Tilden, who then? Tilden himself gave no indication of his preference, but some of his friends in New York were talking loudly in favor of the governor of that state, Grover Cleveland. This was a suggestion for which Watterson from the first had no enthusiasm. He felt that Cleveland was too little known to the general public, that his rise in a few short years from sheriff of Erie County to governor was too meteoric to be anything but a sudden accidental flash of fire. Charles Dana's unreasonable and intransigent opposition to Cleveland undoubtedly influenced Watterson's attitude also inasmuch as he respected the judgment of the *Sun* editor above that of any other New York journalist.

The early months of 1884 that Watterson spent in Washington in his futile attempt to get the eight-hour copyright bill passed gave him an opportunity to size up the situation as politicians began warm-

ing up for the approaching contest. His father accompanied him to Washington and sent back to the *Courier-Journal* at regular intervals a column of political reminiscences signed "the Old Fogey," while Henry in his signed editorials was surveying the current situation.

Watterson in these weeks saw a good deal of Blaine, who easily captivated and won Watterson's heart. Blaine had the proper urbanity and the magnetism of personality that could win over a man as susceptible to charm as Watterson. There were frequent dinners at Chamberlin's, the city's most famous restaurant, and Watterson was never better than when confronted with terrapin and canvas-back on the table and a man like Blaine across from him. Blaine himself, already shining in the light of great expectations, was never more sparkling, and Washington society would long remember some of those supper parties.<sup>3</sup> There were also dinners at the White House with President Arthur, whom Watterson found almost as agreeable as Blaine. Arthur, he would remember, was 'a man of surpassing sweetness and grace,' under whose administration 'the White House bloomed again.'<sup>4</sup>

The Republicans might be delightful dinner companions, but there was still the world of politics and that winter Watterson was searching eagerly for some Democratic standard-bearer other than Cleveland. It was a fruitless search. His final decision to back Joseph E. McDonald, a former senator from Indiana, was as ineffectual as it was curious, for McDonald had never had much sympathy for tariff reform. The Cleveland movement could not be stopped by such a weak pretender, and as soon as Watterson arrived in Chicago for the national convention he must have realized that Cleveland was the overwhelming choice for the nomination in spite of the opposition of Tammany Hall.

As a member of the Committee on Resolutions, Watterson pushed through the selection of William B. Morrison, Congressman from Illinois and noted low-tariff man, as chairman of the committee. The committee then wrote a platform which included a plank for tariff reduction. Although it was not the low tariff plank of 1880, it did conclude with the statement that 'Federal taxation shall be exclusively for public purposes and shall not exceed the needs of the Government economically administered.' That was the best the tariff reformers could do.

It had been agreed in the committee that Watterson would speak on behalf of the platform after fiery old General Ben Butler had presented a minority report. Butler in his report asked the convention to repudiate the platform as presented and concluded his remarks with the warning that if the convention endorsed the sound currency and low tariff planks as written by the Morrison-Watterson faction, the party faced certain defeat in the national election. 'If you do this,' he thundered, 'God may help you; I cannot.'

Watterson then arose to answer the General. After speaking eloquently for the platform as presented, Watterson closed his speech by saying that for three days he had been learning to love General Butler, but if it came to a choice between God and the General, he feared they would have to let the General go. The debate ended in shouts of laughter as the delegates approved the Morrison platform.

Once again it was a case of Watterson's winning the battle of the platform but losing the war for a candidate. Grover Cleveland easily won the nomination on the second ballot, and the Democratic party had found a new leader, a man of courage, stubbornly determined to do right. He was, to be sure, frequently wrong in his efforts to be right, and he failed to grasp the meaning of the new and powerful forces that were stirring within the nation, but no one could doubt his integrity and his honesty of purpose.

That Watterson failed to grasp the significance of this 'man from Buffalo,' that he should have permitted petty differences to affect his judgment of the man, that he allowed his relationship with the first Democratic President of his adult life to be twisted into a senseless feud is the most indefensible episode in Watterson's political life. Here was a man to whom Watterson should have clung, for there was no other man who occupied the White House during his lifetime that stood so unqualifiedly for the things that Watterson believed in. No other man so certainly made the cause of the 'Star-eyed Goddess' his cause, no other President so valiantly defended the conservative's precarious hold on financial security in the roaring rip tide of Populism. The wall of hatred that was to separate them took many years to build, but the foundation had been laid in the days prior to the nomination when Watterson had been outspoken in opposition to Cleveland's candidacy.



This early opposition, however, had no personal malice in it, and once Cleveland had been nominated at Chicago, Watterson was willing to abide by the decision of his party. On the day after the nomination, the *Courier-Journal* announced that 'the tide to Cleveland was too strong . . . and the *Courier-Journal*, recognizing this, will support the ticket of Cleveland and Hendricks earnestly, as heartily, as hopefully as it did that of Tilden and Hendricks eight years ago.'<sup>5</sup>

Men would long remember the campaign of 1884 as being one of the most exciting political canvasses of the post-Civil War period. The campaign, it is true, lacked a great political issue. But if the political platforms of the two parties were similar, the candidates were not. Under these circumstances, this campaign became one of the most personal and abusive in our history. Watterson might plead for the 'Star-eyed Goddess,' men like Curtis and Schurz might argue for Civil Service reform, but the mass of voters marched and shouted and prayed for either 'the plumed knight' or 'the courageous Cleveland.' The campaign became a political sideshow, and one could choose between the supple twisting and daring acrobatic feats of Blaine as he somersaulted in mid-air, and the strong-man act of Cleveland, who stood unflinching as one weight after another was piled on his shoulders.

It was apparent from the start that the election would be close. Blaine had a decided advantage over Cleveland in that he was one of the best-known men in the country, a born politician, who could travel the length of the land and in each small town call men by their first names and charm them with a smile and a warm handshake; but in some respects, he was too well known. His part in the railroad scandals of 1876 which had prevented his nomination that year had not been forgotten. The refusal of the most high-minded and public-spirited men in the party to accept Blaine proved to be the most decisive political revolt since the fire-eaters had left the Democratic party in 1860. Charles Francis Adams, Josiah Quincy, Leverett Saltonstall, Charles Eliot, and T. W. Higginson of Massachusetts, and George William Curtis, Henry Ward Beecher, and E. L. Godkin of New York joined the insurgency, which Dana derisively labeled the Mugwump movement. Watterson found himself once again in political harmony with his old friend Carl Schurz. Even the *New York Times* and

*Harper's Weekly* deserted the Grand Old Party, and for the first time a Republican candidate became the butt of Tom Nast's acidic cartoons.

Watterson's editorial campaign was straightforward, reasonable, and remarkably restrained in such a campaign as this one proved to be. He kept on writing about tariff reform even though the general public found the scandals concerning both candidates much more exciting reading. The Democrats took full advantage of Blaine's past financial transactions, while the Republicans with equal delight revealed to a shocked public that Cleveland had accepted responsibility for the paternity of a son born to an unmarried woman in Buffalo, New York.

During the last weeks of the campaign Watterson suffered such personal grief and anxiety that he could give the approaching election only part of his attention. On 15 September his mother died in his home. During the past few years that she and Harvey had made their home with him, Watterson, as when a small boy, had found Talitha to be a source of unflinching wit and graciousness. His children had adored her, and their grief but added to Watterson's own.

Following closely upon this loss, there arose a problem concerning Ewing which greatly upset and embarrassed Watterson. The year in Germany had not brought the improvement in his oldest son that Watterson had expected. Upon his return home, Ewing was sent to a preparatory school. When he protested against returning to school in the fall of 1884, Watterson told him that perhaps it might do him good to get out and earn his own living, and the boy left in anger with no word of where he was going. The first news of him was in October when Watterson heard that he was in New York and had applied for a job at the *Tribune* office. Watterson at once wrote Reid:

I have just learned that my son Ewing has found trial work with you. He is not bad, but a very perverse boy, who refuses all discipline of home and school. I thought it best . . . to let him go his own gait and set up for himself, although I had no idea that he would apply to you. I write now to beg that you will not consider me at all in the transaction but that you will treat him precisely as you would treat any lad seeking employment. He stands greatly in need of some of the rough and tumble experience which you and I had at his age . . . Be sure that I shall not lose sight of him . . .<sup>e</sup>

Reid answered that he would look after Ewing and was eager to help in any way that he could. To which Watterson replied:

I am very much obliged by your kind and considerate letter. Of course if I had designed Ewing for a newspaper career, I would have taken him under my own instruction. My chief purpose now is to keep him away from Louisville and the companionship of a clique of rich and idle youngsters, who have been his familiars. Until I can reach New York, which circumstances may delay a few weeks, I want you to help me in this. . . .

If he will not be an incumbrance or inconvenience to your City Editor . . . let him remain where he is, treat him as exactly as possible, and allow him the very least which a poor and obscure young man . . . can subsist on. Your city editor can determine the amount, estimating the simplest necessities by the humblest standard, and draw each week on the Courier-Journal for the same.

My great hope is that a sound lesson in adversity will teach Ewing certain contrasts in life which he has no dream of, give him some notion of the value of money, and show him the folly of insubordination.<sup>7</sup>

A couple of weeks later, Reid answered that Ewing was 'earning enough to give him a bare subsistence,' and added, 'He is getting pretty well disgusted I hear — thinks it is a very hard way of getting a living and that going to school would be much easier. He told one of the gentlemen on the staff the other day that "when the old man cooled down he thought he would go back to school."' <sup>8</sup>

Watterson had already cooled down and he answered to ask Reid to send Ewing home. 'I am not without hope that the lesson will be of service to him. Let me thank you for the shelter you have given him. His mother feels especially grateful to you.'<sup>9</sup> Ewing came back home and returned to school, but it did not appear that he had benefited much from this experiment in independence.

These personal problems could not entirely divert Watterson's attention from the progress of the campaign, however. He became increasingly suspicious of the Eastern Democrats in respect to tariff reform, and in this connection, he found much to praise in the conduct of his recent foe, Governor Hendricks, who 'has spoken frequently and faithfully against war taxes in time of peace.'<sup>10</sup>

This unsavory campaign of personalities had a fitting conclusion in the famous Burchard incident during the last days of the campaign. At a public rally in New York, the Reverend Mr. Samuel

Burchard greeted Blaine with these words: 'We are Republicans and don't propose to leave our party and identify ourselves with the party whose antecedents have been rum, Romanism and rebellion.' Blaine was too tired at the moment, as he later admitted to Watterson, to catch the full significance of Burchard's remark and permitted it to go uncontradicted. To the Democrats, who had been fearful of losing the Irish Catholic vote of New York because of Tammany's coolness toward Cleveland, this incident was a god-send. In a campaign as close as this one was, this inept remark probably had as much influence on the outcome as the tariff issue.

On Wednesday 5 November, for the second time in its history, the *Courier-Journal* carried an exultant front page announcing a Presidential victory. Just eight years before it had carried a similar shout of triumph only to meet with disappointment and eventual defeat. Now once again the nation waited in suspense, this time as the vote of New York, without whose electoral vote Cleveland could not win, was counted and recounted. 'The old game will not win,' Watterson snorted in an editorial entitled 'An Imbecile Conspiracy.' 'This will be found an exceeding cold year for Electoral Commissions. . . . There are yet manhood and courage in the land, and a people and a God.' But it was not until four days after the election that Blaine conceded defeat.

On that evening, Watterson spoke to a crowd of over 25,000 celebrating Louisvillians. Standing on a platform in front of the courthouse which was brilliantly illuminated by hundreds of bonfires, Watterson spoke of the long lane that had at last led to victory. Even at this moment, he could not completely conceal the fact that Cleveland had not been his initial choice, but he tried gamely to compliment the new President-elect: 'I am glad, for my part, that he is not a magnetic man, or a showy man, but that he is made of tough stuff, good goods, honest homespun that will wear well and can stand the racket.' And then fumbling a bit for a further word of praise for Cleveland, he ended rather lamely, 'The older I grow the more respect I have for character and the less for intellect. . . . In this world we rarely get all we want. I never did ask for the earth.'<sup>11</sup>

In his post-election editorial Watterson showed more enthusiasm. 'The election of Mr. Cleveland closes an era in our history

beginning with the election of Mr. Lincoln . . . There will be in the South a new birth of patriotism . . . The whole people have before them the dawn of a new era . . . ' <sup>12</sup>

Watterson perhaps was overstating the case in calling this 'the dawn of a new era.' The election of Cleveland was not a major political reversal comparable to the elections of 1800 and 1828. It was merely the continuation of the same conservative policies under a more positive leadership. Events were to show that the Ship of State was not veering suddenly to either left or right. The decks might be cleaned up a bit, the new captain might expect and get more discipline, but the course would remain unaltered. The winds from the west and south might blow more fiercely through the riggings, but for the next few years at least, the conservative passengers could still be sure of the ship's destination. Watterson was closer to the significance of Cleveland's election when he wrote to Reid, 'Well, the election is over . . . My sole gratulation relates to the change of parties, for the sake of change, and the invigoration which the transfer of power peacefully from one party to another will give to our Republican system. Otherwise . . . personally, I am indifferent to the aspects of the case.' <sup>13</sup> Watterson in these lines was speaking for the conservative financial interests all over the country. Cleveland would be safe; this was no Jacksonian revolution.

But if Cleveland's election was no political revolution for the nation at large, for the Federal officeholder it could well mean a political upheaval of tremendous importance. A large number of the thousands of exultant Democrats who gathered in Washington on that cold March day in 1885 to see the first man of their party inaugurated in twenty-eight years were looking for jobs. 'To the victor belong the spoils' was an ancient and honorable Democratic slogan, and after wandering for so long in the desert of political oblivion, Democrats everywhere expected to taste the fruits now that the oasis had been reached.

Within a few short weeks after the inauguration, however, many began to suspect that the oasis was but a mirage. Cleveland had attracted from the Republican ranks hundreds of Mugwump dissenters who had believed in the Democratic program which had promised 'honest civil service reform.' Cleveland soon made it known that he was going to keep that promise. He assured all lesser

officeholders, providing they were not 'offensive partisans,' that they could count on a four-year tenure of office.

Watterson belonged to those practical politicians who saw office-giving as the nourishment of a party without which it could not long survive. Not since his early idealistic days as a member of the Quadrilateral had he had sympathy for civil service reform. He had explained his objections to a Civil Service act on the grounds that he feared the creation of a permanent bureaucracy comparable to the British and German system which was not responsive to the people.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, how could a President maintain that party discipline necessary for the success of his administration unless he had the weapon of patronage at his disposal? These arguments seemed so valid to Watterson that he read with alarm Cleveland's statement on behalf of reform. When during the first six months in office, Cleveland gave every indication of extending the service, Watterson's anxiety turned to anger, prompting his first critical editorials against the Cleveland administration.

Nor was Watterson upset with Cleveland over patronage only on a matter of principle. As the acknowledged Democratic leader in his state, he expected to be consulted in the appointment of any Kentuckian to office. Instead, Cleveland ignored him. Watterson felt especially injured when two inappropriate appointments from Kentucky were made at the suggestion of his old opponent, Abram S. Hewitt.

But aside from this dispute over patronage, the first two or three years of Cleveland's administration were quite gratifying to Watterson. For the first time since the 1850's when with his father he had visited President Pierce, the White House doors were truly open to him; for the first time since he left Washington in 1861, he could visit the capital in a role other than that of a spokesman for the opposition. It seemed apparent to Watterson that Cleveland was inexperienced and badly in need of counsel from a veteran politician, and Watterson was more than willing to provide that counsel.

Cleveland in these first few years seemed pleased to accept this gratuitous assistance from Watterson, who bloomed in his role of a lesser Warwick. Only rarely would the President show resentment at Watterson's frequent meddling, once complaining to a mutual friend, 'Henry will never like me until God makes me over again.'

To which Watterson replied rather pompously, 'Mr. President, I like you very much — very much indeed — but sometimes I don't like some of your ways.' <sup>15</sup> The time was still distant when Cleveland would bluntly tell Watterson to 'go to hell.' <sup>16</sup>

Watterson and his family spent the summer of 1886 in Europe, and consequently missed all the excitement attendant upon the marriage of Cleveland to the daughter of his former law partner, Oscar Folsom. He sent Cleveland a belated letter of congratulation from Switzerland in which he expressed the hope that 'it is not too late for a wandering American, lost amid these faraway mountains, to send his congratulations . . . and to say that, whatever he may think of the general course and policy of the Administration, this New Departure has his entire sympathy and approval . . . May I ask you to present my respectful compliments to Mrs. Cleveland, whose presence in the Executive Mansion will constitute another among the many reasons which can be given for keeping her husband there.' <sup>17</sup>

Watterson, after his break with Cleveland had been complete, always maintained that there were two Grover Cleverlands, one before his marriage when Cleveland had been hesitant, uncertain of himself, and willing to take advice; and one after his marriage, when he became overly confident, arrogant, and even hostile toward his former friends. Actually, Watterson was never closer to Cleveland than the year and a half immediately following Cleveland's marriage. When Watterson was in Washington he made almost daily visits to the White House, and he was easily charmed by Mrs. Cleveland's beauty and grace of manners. There were poker games at Secretary of the Navy Whitney's home and occasionally in the White House itself. There were other more formal social events, and on at least one occasion Watterson was delighted to serve as Mrs. Cleveland's escort to the theater in company with Speaker Carlisle and his wife when the President was unable to join them.

But the real significance for Watterson of these last months of Cleveland's first administration was the President's unqualified commitment to the cause of the 'Star-eyed Goddess,' for which Watterson could take a great deal of the credit. For Watterson, tariff reform so transcended all other issues that he could give only passing attention to the pension question, the demands of silver interests,

and the rising labor agitation. Although his name was to become synonymous with free trade, he always maintained that all he ever wanted was a gradual reduction of the tariff schedules to the pre-Civil War level. It was largely the intemperate language used deliberately in his editorials to dramatize the issue that gave him the reputation of being a free-trade radical.

In an article in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* of January 1888, Watterson demonstrated his ability to state his objections to protection cogently without resorting to the emotional fervor of his editorial writing. In that article he answered the protectionist's arguments that high tariff insured a high standard of living. The farmer, he pointed out, had no protection. Forced to sell in a free market and buy in a protected market, he was the greatest victim of this forced tribute to the manufacturing interests. In answer to the argument that the tariff protects the laborer, Watterson conceded that wages were higher here, but anticipating Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis, he claimed that the sole reason was free land. The American laborer was little better off than the European, except in his ability to obtain free land, for although he might receive higher wages, because of the tariff he had to pay much higher prices for the products he needed. And if American labor was so prosperous, he asked, why then was it the most discontented economic group in the world today? 'Why the clamor, and why the strikes and why the lock-outs . . . What is the matter with them? What is their complaint? What do they want? They have, and they have for twenty-five years had, all the protection which the most exacting friend of subsidy could desire.' The tariff, Watterson concluded, is the real cause of radicalism in this country. As for reform, Watterson granted that 'a tariff for revenue only' could not come over night, but the tariff plank of the 1880 platform was the eventual answer, of that Watterson was certain. 'The slave owner,' he warned, 'thought he could not raise sugar, rice and cotton at a profit without the protection he enjoyed in slave labor . . . Let our manufacturers reperuse the strong and marked parallel between the progress of slavery and the progress of protection.'

Watterson's one political objective had been to convert Cleveland to these views. When he wrote Cleveland early in the first administration that 'I shall rejoice when the offices are all filled, and we can turn from that arena of greed and strife . . . to the con-



sideration of great public questions,' he meant to the consideration of the tariff question.<sup>18</sup>

But Cleveland in the first year of his administration, although sympathetic, seemed hesitant about making the tariff a paramount issue. The Democratic party itself was far from being united on the subject and one of its ablest spokesmen in Congress, Samuel Randall, was a leading protectionist. The greatest advantage which the tariff revisionists held was the fact that the tariff issue could not be ignored. Each month there was accumulating in the Treasury a surplus of income over expenditures. This increasing surplus not only withdrew needed currency out of public circulation thereby increasing the demands for inflation, but it also was a constant temptation to Congress for extravagance. For the fiscal year of 1885-6, the surplus of receipts over expenditures was close to \$94,000,000. The surplus would have to be reduced, and the most logical way would be to reduce the chief source of income, the tariff revenue. At a series of conferences held in the late summer of 1887, Cleveland indicated that he was at last aware of the problem and was ready to act.

When it became clear that Cleveland's message to Congress in December 1887 would deal largely with the tariff and surplus question, the pressure on him from both sides increased. Many Democrats, even those favoring reform, urged a moderate policy. George Hoadly of Ohio wrote with concern over the political consequences of any bold move, 'I am, theoretically . . . a free-trader . . . but above all things I am in politics what the French call an Opportunist. I think you have now the opportunity to make a very great success, but that, if the counsels of Henry Watterson and Frank Hurd were fully followed, the success would be converted into defeat.'<sup>19</sup> Other Democratic leaders also cautioned moderation at a time so close to the national election, and the *New York Herald*, which had been one of the most outspoken advocates of reform, now asked for delay until after election. It addressed a series of five questions directly to Watterson, the main purport of which was to force from Watterson some sort of admission that the approaching election was more important at this moment than any attempt to pass a general tariff reform bill.<sup>20</sup> But the *Herald* should have known the answer to its questions. Nothing was more important to Watterson than tariff reform — not even the election. Nor did it

seem that anything was more important to Cleveland, once he had made up his mind. For he had a question to ask too, and one for which the timid politicians had no ready answer. 'What is the use of being elected or re-elected,' he asked, 'unless you stand for something?'<sup>21</sup>

Not even Watterson or Hurd, hopeful as each might be over Cleveland's determination to bring about reform, expected the unequivocal arraignment of the existing tariff system which the President handed to Congress on 6 December. The message, covering a dozen pages of fine print, was entirely devoted to the tariff issue which it analyzed with the thoroughness only a man of Cleveland's temperament would give. He had not quibbled or compromised; he had not asked for a lowering of tariff duties on luxury goods as Hoadly had suggested or for a partial tax reduction on the internal revenue in order to save face for men like Randall. The surplus problem was to be remedied by reducing the tariff on necessities such as iron and steel and clothing.

To say that Watterson was overjoyed upon reading the message would be an understatement. For this document, he could forgive Cleveland a multitude of patronage sins. The editorial in the *Courier-Journal* the following morning sang a paean to the 'fearless' President, who 'shows a familiarity with affairs and with the vast network of commercial forces and laws resting upon human nature which must surprise even his most ardent admirers . . . To the party itself the President's message makes clear that in 1888 it will be tariff reform or nothing.'

It was with considerable interest that Watterson watched the translation of Cleveland's message into legislative action in the early spring of 1888. The Mills bill, which after weeks of debate finally passed the lower house, he found to be a 'compromise measure,' but highly commendable for being a step in the right direction and 'a break with the past.'<sup>22</sup>

By the time that the Mills bill had passed the House, the country was already engaged in another Presidential campaign. Cleveland's nomination by the Democrats was of course assured. The only real question as the Democrats gathered in St. Louis was how forcibly the tariff issue would be pressed. In the interest of party harmony, would the convention compromise with the protectionists, Randall and Senators Gorman and Barnum? Or would the party follow the bold lead set by the President the previous December? As chairman

of the platform committee, Watterson intended to give his answer to those questions.

After an all-night closed session, he forced the committee to accept the President's message as 'the correct interpretation . . . upon the question of tariff reform,' over the strenuous objections of Senator Gorman. Reporters who had crowded around the closed door of the room where the committee met in the Old Southern Hotel had heard the high-pitched voice of Watterson dominating over all the other angry voices inside. When Watterson finally emerged after nearly twenty hours of debate he was exultant in his victory. The party had been committed to genuine tariff reform.

Thus challenged, the Republicans ten days later answered by placing in their platform a bold statement for protection and by nominating as their candidate the ultra-protectionist, Benjamin Harrison of Indiana. The battle lines had been drawn. The people were to give a mandate on the issue of reform.

Unfortunately, American Presidential elections seldom win a mandate from the people on any issue, and much as Watterson, Mills, and the other reformers hoped it might be, the election of 1888 could in no way be regarded as a polling of the electorate on the tariff issue. The two parties, in spite of their platforms, were not clearly defined on the issue. The Democratic party was badly divided, and the Republican party, for all of the bold protectionist talk in its platform, found it necessary to temporize somewhat on the tariff, particularly in the Northwest in order to satisfy such men as Knute Nelson of Minnesota and Senator Allison of Iowa.

Moreover, in an election as close as the Cleveland-Harrison election proved to be, many extraneous incidents assume importance in determining the outcome. The continuing coolness of Tammany toward Cleveland; the subtle maneuvers of those Democrats in New York who were supporting Governor David Hill's future Presidential ambitions at the expense of Cleveland; the stupidity of the British minister, Sackville-West, who wrote a letter advising recently naturalized Britishers to vote for Cleveland thereby arousing the easily aroused Irish; the outright purchase of votes in Indiana — all of these factors could be regarded as decisive.

For Watterson, however, the campaign from beginning to end was a glorious crusade for tariff reform. He wrote editorials praising the platform and the candidate in extravagant terms. He dramatized

the Star-eyed Goddess to the extent that she became one of the best known symbolical figures in America of that day. When his elder daughter, the beautiful and vivacious Milbrey, attended a fancy dress ball in Louisville dressed as the Goddess in a costume copied after that of the allegorical figure of Columbia, his pride in her reached a new high.<sup>23</sup> He was willing to go anywhere, speak to any audience in behalf of Cleveland's candidacy. From the first of August until the last of October, he deserted his desk to work on publicity at the national headquarters in New York or to tour the country at his own expense, speaking with an almost religious fervor for Cleveland and reform.

The first week in November, Watterson returned home to vote. It had been a hard-fought campaign and no man could be sure of the outcome. The large manufacturing interests of the East had spent millions for Harrison's election, and when the final vote had been counted, they could be satisfied that the money had been used well. Cleveland had won a plurality of the popular vote over Harrison greater than his plurality had been over Blaine, but it was not as well distributed. The electoral votes of both New York and Indiana had been lost to the Republicans. The great tariff battle of 1888 had ended. But who had won? Those men in both parties who were opposed to any tariff reduction loudly proclaimed that the people had voted for protection. But was this a fair deduction?

Two days after the election, Watterson took great pains to analyze the results of the election in order that the protectionist elements in his own party might be refuted. He laid great stress on Cleveland's efforts at Civil Service reform, which he considered an important cause of Cleveland's defeat. But in the final count, Watterson believed, Cleveland had been defeated by no issue but by 'a successful use of boodle and falsehoods by the Republicans.'<sup>24</sup>

Watterson evidently considered Cleveland's career at an end for the following day he wrote that although Cleveland lacked magnetism and grace, 'An honest, braver man never occupied the White House . . . He may carry with him into his retirement many plaudits . . . Let us hope that in His own good time, God will raise us a leader adequate to the needs of the conflict.' If Watterson thus hoped somewhat cavalierly to relegate Cleveland to an early retirement, the party itself was by no means ready to dismiss him from leadership.

For discontent, as yet formless and undefined, could be sensed throughout the land. The people were stirring, and no man who traveled about, as Watterson was doing on his lecture tour, could then fail to notice these first fumbling gestures of protest. The complacent 'eighties were ending and the stormy 'nineties were at hand. The men of property who filled the halls to hear Watterson's lectures were uneasy. They remembered Cleveland as a pillar of strength that might be relied upon in a structure that was beginning to shake. The lecture that Watterson delivered on this tour, entitled 'Money and Morals,' with its attack on materialism and its plea for a return to the simple virtues of the early Republic, could itself be interpreted as an appeal for the rugged and fearless leadership of a man like Cleveland.

Upon returning home in the early spring of 1890, Watterson wrote Cleveland:

I have been much over the country and, among Democrats, have heard no other name than yours seriously considered in that connection [i.e. for the Presidency]. You ought to know . . . no one felt our defeat more keenly than I did. My only apprehension now is that the causes which procured it then may be able to procure it again. They exist I think in the State of New York . . . Governor Hill is out of the question — not to be thought of for a moment. But I do fear that he may so muddy the stream as to put you at a disadvantage. On this point, it seems to me that you should close up all the breaks you can, and keep in close support with your friends. The man never lived who can afford — in the long run — to stand wholly aloof and alone. I have always thought, and regretted, that you do not give the personal aspects of public life their sufficient quantum.<sup>25</sup>

All through the spring of 1890, Watterson pondered this problem of Governor Hill's obvious political ambitions. That Hill could carry New York by a plurality of over 19,000 at the same time that Cleveland was losing the state to Harrison by 13,000 votes seemed to smack of duplicity. Although no evidence of 'a corrupt bargain' could be laid directly on Hill's doorstep, it was evident that a good many of his supporters had either failed to vote for President, or, to strengthen Hill's prestige in the Empire State, had voted for Harrison. Since that time, the balloon of Hill's political ambitions had been steadily inflated, with such diverse characters as the Tammany tiger, the Western silverites, and Eastern protectionist Democrats manning the air pumps. To Watterson the situation had be-

come intolerable. The party could not sit idly by while its two strongest men killed each other off.

Watterson at this time was still on very friendly terms with Cleveland. He had seen Cleveland in New York at infrequent intervals and the poker games had continued even after Cleveland was out of office. Watterson, in his memoirs, tells a delightful story of a game of draw poker at William Whitney's home soon after Cleveland's defeat. Besides Cleveland, Whitney, and Watterson, Senator Don Cameron from Pennsylvania and Speaker Carlisle were also present. In one hand, Watterson had been dealt a pat flush, Cleveland, a full house. Cameron and Watterson began 'bluffing' the game, raising each other each time the limit of five dollars. Carlisle, who, as Watterson said, 'handled his cards like a child,' stayed in through the raises. When it came time to draw, while Cleveland and Watterson each stood pat, Carlisle to the delight of his card-shark friends asked for four cards. After further betting, it reached a showdown, and to the amazement of all, Carlisle laid down four kings. 'Take the money, Carlisle, take the money,' Cleveland muttered. 'If ever I am President again you shall be Secretary of the Treasury. But don't you make that four-card draw too often.'<sup>26</sup>

Cleveland, moreover, in answer to Watterson's letters of this period showed a warmth of affection that Watterson had often looked for in vain when Cleveland had been President. In the winter of 1890 Cleveland sent Watterson a letter he had received from a Tennessee farmer which Watterson prized dearly:

Ex president Clevean

I hav concluded to write you a few lines as I feel that I would be pleased to reade one leter from you . . . in 1884 I voted for you for president I was on my Beed not able to get to the Electtion without help, a frend came and carried me to the Electtion on wheels, and in 1888 I had to Bee carried on wheels again to vote for you, I am in hopes that by 1892 I will Be able to go to the Electtion and vote for you without help if you see anyone, spending his money foolishly tell him to save the money and send me the Couier-Journal for one year for I am not able to take a paper.<sup>27</sup>

As for Hill, Watterson could appreciate the fact that the New York governor had many of the qualities lacking in Cleveland that made for success in the rough-and-tumble game of politics. Hill was a politician's politician, a man who could never be accused of



Early in 1891, Hill, having already forced through his election to the Senate as a further step toward the White House, made political capital out of Watterson's letter by presenting it to the press as a request from Cleveland begging Hill to step aside in order that the ex-President might have the nomination. Watterson, in dismay, saw the Republican press play up the Hill-Cleveland controversy for all it was worth. Soon other stories were in circulation that Watterson, having failed to drive off Hill, had sent a letter to Cleveland asking him to step aside. In angry rebuttal, Watterson wrote on 9 March that nothing could be more absurd than the suggestion of setting aside Mr. Cleveland and substituting Governor Hill in his place. But, Watterson warned, the renomination of Cleveland 'depends largely, if not wholly, upon the action of the Democrats in New York. If New York came to the National Democratic Convention resisting the nomination of Mr. Cleveland . . . his nomination would be suicidal.'

As Hill continued his efforts to snatch away the prize by such tricky political maneuvers as forcing an early assembly of the New York Democratic convention which he could dominate and which would select delegates to the national convention committed to him, Watterson became convinced that the party must look elsewhere than to New York for a candidate:

The followers of the ex-President must see, as Mr. Cleveland must see himself, that his election is not possible in the face of the stubborn opposition of Mr. Hill and his friends. But how much more probable is Mr. Hill's election in the face not merely of the wide-spread disappointment caused by the subordination of a popular favorite, but of an Independent ticket which his nomination will surely force into the field? . . . We offer, as a substitute, the Hon. John Griffin Carlisle, of Kentucky; next in succession to Grover Cleveland, as leader and embodiment of the great issue of Revenue Reform.<sup>30</sup>

Thus did Watterson turn his back on both New York candidates.

Watterson's disavowal of Cleveland, as he stated repeatedly, was motivated entirely by the logical deduction that had to be drawn from the Democratic quarrel in New York. He insisted that his decision was made without a trace of personal animosity on his part toward Cleveland. With the advantage of hindsight, it is easy to see that Watterson erred on two counts: first, in giving undue emphasis to Hill's strength in New York; and second, in under-



estimating the personal appeal that Cleveland had throughout the nation. But at the time that Watterson first made his decision, his action made more sense than it would a few months later. It was not until the spring of 1892 when state conventions everywhere revealed the amazing strength of Cleveland that the folly of Watterson's action could be seen fully. By that time, Watterson felt he could not retreat. His opposition to taking a candidate from New York had become so fixed that pride alone prevented him from going back to the Cleveland camp where he belonged. When the Kentucky convention met in May, Watterson warned his fellow Democrats that if they went to New York for a nominee, 'We shall walk through a slaughter-house into an open grave.' This proved to be Watterson's most unfortunate prophesy and one which his adversaries never allowed him to forget, but at the time he felt that he spoke with the vision of Cassandra.

The weakness of the anti-Cleveland movement to which Watterson now belonged lay in its inability to unite behind one man. Hill was of course as politically impossible as Cleveland. Watterson had at first come out squarely for his close friend, John Carlisle, but as the national convention approached he became doubtful of Carlisle's national strength and quite suddenly he switched his support to Governor Horace Boies of Iowa, an opponent of the protective tariff who had the distinction of twice winning the governorship in a state that had otherwise been consistently Republican since 1856. Watterson even agreed to give the seconding speech for the Iowa governor.

But it was apparent to everyone at the convention that neither Boies nor Hill had a chance against the Cleveland forces, even though the Boies men had brought to the convention a special train filled with gallery rooters. Setting up headquarters in the Palmer House, they had attempted to make up in noise and enthusiasm for their deficiency in delegates. In the great parade up State Street, the Iowa men with their fifteen bands and great silken flags had stolen the show from the Cleveland and Hill forces.<sup>31</sup> But inside the convention hall it was Cleveland all the way. While a violent rainstorm raged outside, inside the leaking, barnlike hall, neither Tammany nor the silver men from the West could disturb the calm equanimity of the Cleveland delegations as they proceeded to nominate their candidate on the first ballot. Only the thunder from the skies was

successful in drowning out the voices of those who cried for 'honest Grover.'

But Watterson had his one moment of triumph when the platform was presented to the entire convention for approval. He had earlier been informed that Cleveland's managers were eager to temporize on the tariff issue and this information proved correct when Senator Vilas of Wisconsin read the platform. The proposed tariff plank, although declaring for revision, added that 'in making reductions in taxes, it is not proposed to injure any domestic industries, but rather to promote their healthy growth . . . Moreover, many industries have come to rely upon legislation for successful continuance, so that any change of law must be at every step regardful of the labor and capital thus involved.' Clearly the Cleveland men on the committee had attributed the defeat of 1888 to the bold stand taken on tariff reform. Watterson was ready to meet this challenge. Lawrence Neal of Ohio, a member of the committee representing the minority, was on his feet as soon as Vilas had finished reading, with a substitute plank written by Watterson which denounced 'Republican protection as a fraud, a robbery of the great majority of the American people for the benefit of the few,' and declared bluntly that any attempt to impose tariff duties 'except for the purposes of revenue only,' was unconstitutional. According to the excited *Courier-Journal* reporter who witnessed the session, as soon as Neal finished reading the proposed amendment, 'there were loud cries for "Watterson, Watterson!" Men stood upon chairs and yelled for the noble champion of tariff reform and ladies waved their fans and handkerchiefs at the Kentucky delegation.'<sup>32</sup>

Watterson needed no urging. He demanded that the convention 'reject this monstrosity which has been hurled among you.' The vote was called for the Neal-Watterson substitute plank, and the vote was Watterson's vindication. The campaign of education had not been in vain. Of the delegates present, 564 voted for the amendment, only 342 against it. This triumph was a fitting valediction for what was to be Watterson's last appearance as a delegate to a national convention. Since 1872 he had only once known victory in the choice of a candidate, but he had always succeeded in leaving his stamp upon the Democratic platform. Now almost single-

handed, he had forced the convention to place the figure of the Star-eyed Goddess at the top of its banner.

His greatest fear now was that Cleveland in anger would repudiate the tariff plank. In a bold attempt to force the issue into the open, he wrote an editorial claiming that Cleveland's only hope for victory lay with the tariff issue. He enclosed this editorial in a letter to Cleveland in which he lectured him on the necessity of standing by his great message of 1887.

But Cleveland, quite understandably, now proved to be as little receptive to Watterson's gratuitous advice as Hill had been. He replied, with a show of exasperation, that

in all the platform smashing you ever did, you never injured nor inspired me that I have ever seen or heard of, except that of 1888 . . . I would like very much to present some views to you relating to the tariff position, but I am afraid to do so. I will venture, however, to say this: If we are defeated this year, I predict a Democratic wandering in the dark wilds of discouragement for twenty-five years. I do not propose to be at all responsible for such a result. I hope all others upon whom rests the least responsibility will fully appreciate it.

Watterson, feeling himself rudely rebuffed, answered hotly:

I do not see how you could misunderstand the spirit in which I wrote, or be offended by my plain words. They were addressed as from one friend to another, as from one Democrat to another. If you entertain the idea . . . that your eminence lifts you above both comradeship and counsels, I have nothing to say . . . You could well afford to be more tolerant.

In the last five national conventions my efforts were decisive in framing the platform of the party . . . In all of them except the last, I was a maker, not a smasher. Touching what happened at Chicago, the present year, I had a right, in common with good Democrats, to be anxious; and out of that sense of anxiety alone I wrote you. I am sorry that my temerity was deemed by you intrusive and, entertaining a respectful protest against a ban which I cannot believe to be deserved by me, and assuring you that I shall not again trouble you in that way, I am, your obedient servant.<sup>88</sup>

Thus ended all relations between the two men. Watterson was placed in the difficult position of publicly supporting a candidate with whom he would not even exchange a civil word of greeting and opposing his old friend Whitelaw Reid, who had been nom-

inated for the Vice-Presidency on the Harrison ticket. But Watterson never wavered in his party loyalty, although he confined his own editorials chiefly to a defense of the Democratic tariff plank. Watterson hailed the victory of Cleveland in November as 'a verdict against the policy and theory of Protection,' but he did not pretend that the campaign of 1892 had been the honest tariff battle of 1888. Privately he attributed Cleveland's election not to the fight for tariff revision, but to the Homestead strike of that summer which had cost Harrison thousands of labor votes. Watterson could look forward to the new Democratic administration with little enthusiasm. By saying too much at the wrong times, by driving too hard in the interest of the Star-eyed Goddess, he had succeeded only in divorcing himself completely from the administration.

The rupture of personal relations between Cleveland and Watterson can only be regarded as unfortunate and needless. Neither man showed up well in the quarrel, and the passing of time only intensified their hostility. Cleveland would in later years quite unjustly refer to Watterson as 'that dirty little scoundrel who is allowed to scatter filth through the columns of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*,'<sup>34</sup> while Watterson, with equal recklessness, would accuse Cleveland of trying to get a fourth nomination and of retiring to Princeton in order that he might keep himself 'constantly before the minds of four or five thousand students.'<sup>35</sup> When the two men met, as they did on a few occasions after 1892, they would stare at each other in open hostility and stomp past each other without a nod of recognition.

Both were to be the losers in this quarrel. Watterson had no chance to exert the influence that he might have had in the tariff and currency struggle, and he missed much of the political excitement in a critical period. Cleveland, by rebuffing Watterson, lost from his circle of advisers a vibrant personality, a publicist of great popularity who could have done much to dramatize Cleveland's position before the nation in the conflicts of his second administration. No two men had better reasons for friendship, nor less grounds for a quarrel.

## ELEVEN

### Watterson Becomes 'Marse Henry'

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1890-1895

SINCE WATTERSON took no active part in the campaign of 1892 except to write a few editorials in behalf of his tariff plank in the Democratic platform, he was free in October to accept an invitation to deliver the opening address at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The rough new metropolis of the West was vastly proud of the fact that she had been chosen as the city to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America. With boisterous energy she had cleared away hundreds of acres of lake-front swamp land as a site for the spectacle. Standing before the massive columns of the Administration building on that twelfth day of October and surveying the unfinished scene before him, Watterson expressed his admiration for the ingenuity and spirit of a people who were attempting to prove that a Rome could be built in a day. After briefly reviewing America's history, Watterson was so moved by the magnificence of that past and the prospects for the future that he could only conclude with:

I cannot trust myself to proceed. We have come here not so much to recall bygone sorrows and glories, as to bask in the sunshine of present prosperity and happiness, to interchange patriotic greetings and indulge good auguries, and above all, to meet upon the threshold the

stranger within our gates, not as a stranger, but as a guest and friend, for whom nothing that we have is too good.<sup>1</sup>

The World's Fair was officially opened — America's proof to the world that she had come of age. In the months ahead the shining White City would dazzle foreign critic and country boy alike. Millions would remember their first glimpse of the stately buildings, the formal gardens, and the silent, light-reflecting lagoons as the most enchanting moment of their lives. But this fairyland built upon the shores of Lake Michigan was a paper pageant resting upon shifting sands. America had chosen a singularly inappropriate time to display itself before the world. Depression gripped the nation and the real symbol of America's maturity was the abandoned clapboard shack on the scorched Dakota plains, not the alabaster palaces on the lakefront in Chicago. The 'sunshine of our present prosperity' of which Watterson spoke was as illusory as the replicas of Columbus's three ships that rode serenely on the lagoons. Like the giant Ferris wheel, one of the favorite attractions of the Fair, prosperity at the top of the cycle had presented a beautiful vista of perpetual wealth, but now the bottom had been reached and the ride was over. In the East, spectacular business failures rudely jolted management and labor alike out of their seats and sent them sprawling on the ground. In the West and South there had never been any real prosperity in the past few decades, only fervent hope. Now even that hope was ended and men burned corn and left cotton to rot in the fields as they cursed both the forces of nature and the forces of man that seemed to be allied together to defeat them.

There was little of the jubilant air of his first inaugural when Cleveland took the oath of office before a shivering and silent crowd in Washington on 4 March 1893. The chill winds from the Potomac seemed to herald the years that lay ahead.

Watterson was not present at this second inaugural. Never before had he so completely separated himself from the national political scene as he did during Cleveland's second administration. His concern for tariff reform, to be sure, was in itself strong enough to keep alive his interest in politics and he hopefully followed the Congressional debate on the Wilson bill, which was to be the fulfillment of the Democratic party's pledge to lower tariff.

Although he privately felt, as he wrote David A. Wells, that the original bill as proposed in the House gave 'the lie to our promise and thus a black eye to Reform,'<sup>2</sup> he nevertheless gave the measure his editorial support.

But unfortunately even the mild reform of the Wilson bill, whose most radical features were the placing of iron ore, coal, sugar, and wool on the free list, had no chance of passage. The Democratic low tariff line held firm in the lower house under the able leadership of William Wilson of West Virginia and Bourke Cockran of New York. In the Senate it was a different story. The lobbyists, representing the interests of steel, sugar, and barbed wire, clustered like locusts attacking a grain field. For five months the debate raged in committee and out, and in the end the Wilson bill was mangled beyond recognition. Over six hundred amendments were tacked on, and as the bill grew in volume it shrank in reform. Senators Gorman and Hill led the protectionist element in the Democratic party and in the end the Star-eyed Goddess of Reform was murdered in committee room by Democrats. Watterson sent angry telegrams to friends in the Senate and in the President's Cabinet, but he could not influence the final vote.<sup>3</sup> On 28 August the Wilson-Gorman bill, far more Gorman than Wilson, became law without the President's signature.

The only bright spot for Watterson in the whole dismal story of this betrayal of reform was the stand taken by Cleveland. In a letter to Representative Catchings published on the day the bill became law, Cleveland explained his refusal to sign as that of taking 'my place with the rank and file of the Democratic party who believe in tariff reform and who know what it is, who refuse to accept the results embodied in this bill as the close of the war . . . The trusts and combinations — the communism of pelf — whose machinations have prevented us from reaching the success we deserved, should not be forgotten nor forgiven.'<sup>4</sup>

For a brief moment, Watterson forgot the bitterness he felt toward the President and a single word from the White House might have sent Watterson running to Washington to embrace Cleveland. As it was, he hailed the President as 'the logical, the inevitable leader of the Tariff Reform,' and urged that 'truth prevail and the President lead. The rank-and-file will follow, and woe be to the Gormans that get in the way!'<sup>5</sup>

But the Gormans had nothing to fear, for there was very little 'rank-and-file' left to follow the President's lead. By 1893 the tariff reformers could not even point to a large Treasury surplus as a valid excuse for lowering revenue duties. On the contrary, the policies of Congress during the previous Harrison administration in generously meeting the demands of the politically powerful G. A. R. for pensions, and in requiring the government under the Sherman Act to purchase four and one-half million ounces of silver a month had reduced the Treasury surplus to a dangerously low level. The protectionists could now insist that a high tariff was an absolute essential to provide an adequate revenue for the government, particularly after the Supreme Court in 1895 by a 5 to 4 decision declared the income tax unconstitutional. Moreover, as depression rode the land, manufacturers were more determined than ever to protect the home market from imported goods, while the farmers of the South and West, once the chief supporters of tariff reform, had lost hope and had turned to the free coinage of silver as a more immediate and efficacious cure for their ills. In spite of his exhortations to 'Let the Battle Go On,' Watterson knew that the tariff fight was over and had ended in defeat.

On 8 November 1893 the *Courier-Journal* celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. In spite of the depression and the resulting decrease in the amount of advertising space being sold, circulation was at an all time high. And if Watterson, having divorced himself from the Democratic administration in power and having witnessed the defeat of his hopes for tariff reform, felt politically frustrated, he could with pride review his journalistic achievements of the past quarter of a century. Old Harvey Watterson, who had died only two years before at the age of eighty, had lived to see his son fulfill the promise he had given of becoming a great editor when he turned out his first editorial on a hand press in McMinnville, Tennessee. For the extent of the *Courier-Journal's* fame and influence was not limited to its circulation figures. Its editorial page was as widely quoted as that of any paper in the country, Watterson's more spectacular editorials being sent out over the wires to be reprinted as news stories throughout the nation. Certainly no other small inland city could boast of a paper as well known as the Louisville *Courier-Journal*.

For this fame Watterson could take most of the credit, because



apart from its editorial page the *Courier-Journal* was a good, but in no way an outstanding, paper. It remained extremely conservative in form and layout, making no essential changes in style during this entire period and resisting all temptation to adopt the radical innovations of Pulitzer and Hearst: banner headlines, comic strips, 'special features,' and the sensational exploitation of crime. In news coverage it could not compare with the New York *Herald*, the *World*, or the Chicago *Tribune*. It obtained much of its national and international news from the wire services or directly from other papers which had men covering events of importance. Its coverage of local news was adequate but not exceptional. It spearheaded no reform crusades in its news columns, gave no special prominence to feature stories of local interest. But the editorial page was enough to give the paper its special distinction, and that distinction was due almost entirely to Watterson.

No editor since Horace Greeley had been so successful in capturing the imagination of the country as Watterson. And if the nation laughed or snorted in anger at his overstatements, if his readers exaggerated his eccentricities as men had done with Greeley, if they were hinting that he had already in the 1890's become an anachronism when they labeled him 'the last of the personal journalists,' still their affection for him grew. He might be gone from the paper for long periods of time, but fellow editors in quoting a *Courier-Journal* editorial always prefaced their remarks with 'Henry Watterson says.' Haldeman might occasionally feel that Watterson was taking his duties rather lightly, but he must have at the same time realized that these numerous activities of his partner were of inestimable value to the paper. Watterson was often on hand when some political story broke, and he would report the event in the form of a letter or an editorial. Above all, he himself was good copy for other papers no matter what he might be doing and so served his own paper not only by giving it a broader outlook but by advertising it wherever he went.

Watterson's success as an editor in part lay in his administrative ability to select able men who, from Ballard Smith to Harrison Robertson, Tom Wallace, and Arthur Krock, could produce a paper of the quality that he expected. In part, his success lay in his personal and geographical background. Fortune had blessed him from the beginning. Oswald Garrison Villard has called him 'the darling of the Southern gods,'<sup>6</sup> and so he seemed to be. His

very beginning had been auspicious, for his childhood in Washington, with the political and social contacts made there, had been the best of all possible apprenticeships for his later career. Similarly, his service in the Confederate army which he had undertaken with grave misgivings also proved to be most fortunate for it enabled him to be an effective spokesman to both sections for national reconciliation: to the South, because he had already proved his loyalty to his section, and to the North, because here was a Johnny Reb who had seen the light. Quite fortuitously, he had chosen the best possible region from which to speak, the great borderland between North and South.

But it was more than managerial ability or early background and geographical chance that made Watterson the successful editor that he was. It was largely because he knew how to write to the people. No one could ever claim that his appeal was intellectual; it was quite unabashedly emotional. That is not to say that Watterson did not try to make sure of his facts before expounding on the issues of the day. He prided himself upon his 'inside information,' and made good use of his friends in Congress and his political contacts throughout the country. He was well read in history and knew how to draw convincing analogies between the present and the past. But first and last, Watterson played upon his reader's emotions with the sure skill of an actor.

Often and deliberately he wrote with a crudity that smacked of his early Western editorial predecessors — as in this article in which he speculates upon a favorite topic, the fate of the Republican party:

At length the dog is returned to his vomit, the hog to his wallow. That party which, owing its rise to power in the first place to a senseless division among Democrats — owing its origins to a period of moral hysteria, artfully fomented by designing politicians, both Northern and Southern, the two extremes playing each into the other's hand — owing its succeeding tenure partly to chance and partly to our insufficiency — that party, fancying it has the world in a sling, is repeating the familiar story of the beggar on horseback; it is beginning to ride to perdition.<sup>7</sup>

He never felt any necessity for 'blocking that metaphor' as long as he achieved the desired effect. He could without a qualm write about 'that old war horse of the Democracy waving his hand from the deck of the sinking ship,' or describe Theodore Roosevelt's

speaking technique as: 'He seized hackneyed truths, dressed them in fresh language, and dealt them out as though they were hot from his intellectual anvil.'<sup>8</sup> He cared little if the purists winced over his paragraph-long sentences and amazingly involved figures of speech as long as he conveyed to his readers a fresh spontaneity and a sincerity of feeling that they would remember.

Arthur Krock maintained that there was a musical quality to Watterson's editorials, that 'his paragraphs become strophes and his sentences scan.'<sup>9</sup> Another admirer of Watterson, an editorial writer on the Baltimore *Sun*, used more exaggerated words in describing his reactions to Watterson's style:

Plain prose can never hope to do justice to the Colonel's powerful pen. It is a thunderbolt, a thirteen-inch rifled cannon, a runaway locomotive, an earthquake, a cataclysm. When he dips it into the ink, it throws a ripple which invades the farthest limbo of lost worlds. When it scratches the paper the sound deafens the inhabitants of the far-away Malay Archipelago.<sup>10</sup>

The very name of Watterson seemed to inspire the extravagant.

Watterson was frequently compared to Greeley, Dana, Prentice, and the other great editors of the nineteenth century, and there is no question that he owed much to the school of journalism that had produced these men. Yet he was more than a disciple of any man. He had that saving grace of a sense of humor that Greeley lacked and the personal charm that Prentice wanted. Watterson once wrote that editors and orators, unlike poets and artists, are made not born. Yet no amount of training could ever make another Watterson, for it was his own flamboyant personality that entered into his written words and gave them a vitality of their own.

It was in this decade of the 1890's that Emmet Logan, the *Courier-Journal's* news editor, and a few others on the staff began to refer to Watterson as 'Marse Henry.' This affectionate title was in time to create a false impression for many Americans. They would forget that for his whole life Watterson had been crusading for a new South and would instead regard him as the last courtly voice of the old, mint-julep plantation. Now in his early fifties, he had long ago lost the emaciated, somewhat feverish appearance of his youth. But while becoming portly, he had still maintained the erect mili-

tary bearing of his army days, and that with his heavy snow-white hair and thick gray mustache and small goatee made him the cartoonist's prototype for the Southern colonel.

Watterson was aware of this subtle transition that was to change him to 'Marse Henry,' and at first he welcomed it. It was invaluable publicity both for the paper and for his lecture tours, and he played the role to the fullest. He was his own press agent and he studied all notices of himself that appeared in public print with the avidity of a stage star. One of the regular jobs on his editorial staff was the 'exchange editor' whose duty it was to clip from all major newspapers any references to Watterson. Tom Wallace, editorial writer under Watterson and eventually editor of the *Louisville Times*, was given this assignment as his first duty on the staff. He recalls how he detested and shirked his job. One day Watterson, in shirt sleeves and with his suspenders hanging down on his hips, burst into Wallace's little cubbyhole where the young boy sat dreaming over the stack of papers before him and shouted, 'Young man, you are the worst exchange editor the *Courier-Journal* ever had.' Wallace, desperate over his unhappy plight, was brash enough to answer, 'I believe you are right, Mr. Watterson, and I should like to get off the exchange deal so I can devote more of my time to writing.'

'Writing?' Watterson roared back. 'What do you write and where do you publish it?'

'I write about a column of editorial matter every day and I publish it next to yours. Sometimes it is mistaken for yours, and then, if I see it, I clip it and it comes to your desk.'

Instead of being fired for this answer, Wallace within a few days was called into Watterson's office and was informed that he was to be promoted to the position of drama critic, or 'amusements editor,' as Watterson called it.

'As amusements editor, you will have to associate with me somewhat intimately. It will not hurt your intellect, but may destroy your morals. Now go about your business; and if you aren't a better amusement editor than you are an exchange editor, I shall have you taken down to the wharf and dropped into the river.'<sup>11</sup>

In time, Watterson became increasingly sensitive about some of the press notices, most of them written in a spirit of friendship, to be sure. He was delighted to be called the 'Light Horse Harry'

and the 'Henry of Navarre' of journalism, but he began to fear that more and more he was being fitted into the stereotyped pattern of a bourbon-drinking, tobacco-chewing, improvident Kentucky colonel and he felt it necessary to speak out sharply against the legend. He would assert that he had never used tobacco or tasted a mint julep in his life. He denied that he ever drank any alcoholic beverage except wine or beer and certainly was never under any alcoholic influence when he wrote his editorials. He disliked being called 'Colonel,' as he was by his closest friends, insisting that he had never held that rank even in Kentucky where it was a title about as distinguished as Mr.

At one time, in order to ridicule this legend and also to point up his aversion to the free-hand interview of which he felt he was often a victim, he interviewed himself in a long editorial in the *Courier-Journal*:

'Colonel — !' They always say 'Colonel' — why I know not! (The Colonel took another whiff from the long Cuba-six — ) It is true that I have never used tobacco, nor smoked a cigar in my life; but think of a Kentuckian without his weed! He might as well be without a mustache, or a gun.

'What is it you want, young man?' says the Colonel kindly. 'Have you lost anything?'

'No, sir, but I shall lose my job if you refuse to talk.'

'Refuse to talk, you jackanapes! What am I here for but to talk? What was this station built for but to shelter me whilst I talk . . . Do you see this grip, sir? It contains nothing but six-shooters, mint juleps and talk, sir! Fire away, sir, and I will talk! . . .'

'Well, Colonel —'

'Yes, sir, go on, sir, don't be bashful, sir.' (It will be observed that they insist upon the 'sir,' though they mistakenly print it 'sah,' when, if they had any ear for music and verisimilitude, they would spell it 'suh.')

'What do you think of Teddy?'

'You mean the President, I suppose, sir? Young man, when you speak of dignitaries, give each his proper style and title. Never call a Captain Lieutenant, nor a General Major . . . Oblige me by saying either Mr. Roosevelt or . . . just plain the President. I think very well of him around about in spots, sir. He ought to have been the Editor of a daily newspaper. The last time I was in London, I heard the Lord Chancellor say to the Archbishop of Canterbury that if Mr. Theodore Roosevelt had charge of the London *Times*, he would double its circulation in a fortnight. . . .'

'But as Mr. Roosevelt is not the Editor of the London *Times*, nor likely to be, how about him as President of the United States?'

'Now there you corner me.' The Colonel obviously began to be

interested . . . 'There you put me to thinking, sir. If Teddy were Billy — excuse my French! — the thing would be dead easy. But, Teddy being Teddy, Theodore being Theodore, Roosevelt being Roosevelt — and all of them Republicans — it is a kind of conundrum.'

'But that last message of his,' the Reporter ventured; 'wasn't that a corker?'

The Colonel frowned. 'Young man,' says he, 'never use slang. Nothing so ill becomes a writer for the press as slang. Nothing so gives a reporter away as slang. Say sockdolager, sir. It was a sockdolager. Too long for a pert paragraph — too piquant and spicy for a sermon — it more reminded me of one of Mr. George Bernard Shaw's prefaces — musically speaking, a prelude in G sharp — taking the high C, as, in the olden time, an Irish thoroughbred might take a six-barred gate.'

'Its philosophy?'

'Splendid.'

'Its morality?'

'Sublime.'

'Its politics?'

'A cross between Felix Adler and Caesar's Commentaries, with a dash of Tom Lawson!' <sup>12</sup>

Delightful as this auto-interview was, it did little to dispel the Southern Colonel legend. Equally irritating to Watterson was the wide spread belief in his financial incompetency. Because he was a good spender and did on occasions overdraw his salary, he had acquired the reputation, particularly in Louisville, that he was a child in matters of money. A story which *The Journalist* took delight in printing was of Watterson's mention of the Latin Quarter in one of his periodic letters from Paris. The printer who was setting the letter up asked Haldeman who was standing near by, 'Mr. Haldeman, what is a Latin Quarter?' To which Haldeman is supposed to have answered, 'I'm sure I don't know, but if Henry took it in change, it's probably worth only twenty cents.' <sup>13</sup>

But the favorite story about Watterson in this connection, still being told in Louisville today, is of his business secretary's attempts to establish some system in his constant withdrawals from the petty cash drawer. Finally the secretary hesitantly suggested that while it was all right for Mr. Watterson to take what he needed it would help greatly if he would leave a memorandum of how much he had drawn. Watterson was most gracious and promised complete cooperation. The next morning the secretary was delighted to see the editor go to the drawer, take out a handful of money, carefully write out a note and place it in the drawer. Hurrying over to see

how much had been withdrawn, the secretary found a note which read: 'Took it all. H. W.'

It is a good story, but apocryphal. Watterson was no Greeley in matters of finance even though he was so pictured by his public. In spite of the demands of his family and his own expensive tastes, the best in foods and wines, the frequent trips to Europe, and the winter vacations in Florida, he was able to save enough from his dividends on the stock he held over the years to boast that he could at any time leave to each of his five children \$100,000.

A more unpleasant impression that some people in Louisville had of their famous editor, and one of which Watterson was undoubtedly unaware, was that he was a snob. Nothing could have been further from the truth. This unfortunate opinion can be attributed to Watterson's poor eyesight. Too proud to wear glasses except when reading, Watterson would frequently pass acquaintances on the street without recognition. Because he never permitted his near-blindness to be mentioned, many people did not know that he could seldom recognize anyone until he heard that person speak. But throughout his life people — all kinds of people — fascinated him. Whether playing poker with the Prince of Wales and his friends in London or chatting with a waiter in a restaurant in Sioux City, he always gave to his companions the impression that they were the most delightful persons he had ever met. And he was probably sincere. For he enthusiastically enjoyed each moment to its fullest and then would pass eagerly on to the next.

He always enjoyed a good game of poker, but felt that the stories concerning his gambling activities were greatly exaggerated. One story that he did enjoy telling himself, however, was when he and Dr. David Yandell, a noted Louisville physician, attended a vaudeville show and witnessed a remarkable performance by a trained pig who could play whist. After the show Watterson and Dr. Yandell decided to investigate the act further. The showman invited them to have a game with him and the Learned Pig. The three men and the pig, with an assistant to play the cards that the pig indicated, sat down at a table. 'There must have been a trick in it,' Watterson would recall, 'but if there was, Dave and I couldn't discover it. The hog played a good game of cards. In fact, he beat us.' <sup>14</sup>

To say that Watterson by the 1890's had built a pleasant, busy life would be an understatement. If he felt exiled from the political scene he could still, with boisterous good humor, enjoy his other activities. Early in 1895 he began a new lecture tour, using a speech he had delivered that winter before the Lincoln Union in Chicago. This lecture on Abraham Lincoln proved to be the most popular he ever gave and one he was to use for the rest of his life. To a nation that had canonized its martyred President, Watterson's eulogy struck a strongly responsive chord. He had made a careful study of the life of Lincoln, and the selections that he made for the lecture: the Lincoln-Douglas debates, Lincoln's autobiographical statement for the campaign of 1860, the first inaugural address, the struggle with Seward and other Cabinet officers for control of the administration, the Widow Bixby letter, the Hampton Roads conference, and Lincoln's attitude toward the defeated South, were all good. Watterson seemed to catch the essential spirit of Lincoln and his meaning to our history. The fact that Watterson himself as a young reporter in Washington had had personal contact with Lincoln added an appealing touch to his account. But the real attraction of Watterson's lecture lay in the fact that this tribute to their greatest hero was being delivered to Northerners by a former Confederate soldier. Veterans of the G. A. R. in Des Moines and Springfield, Cincinnati and Albany would turn out in full force to hear an old Johnny Reb offer homage to their beloved Father Abraham. When he came to the final paragraph and read with great emotion these lines, 'inspired by God was Abraham Lincoln; and a thousand years hence, no drama, no tragedy, no epic poem will be filled with greater wonder, or be followed by mankind with deeper feeling than that which tells the story of his life and death,' there would be few dry eyes in the assembly and the ovation would be tremendous. Then Watterson could feel that the long struggle for personal reconciliation between the two sections had been won and his own contribution had been great.

The incident that for Watterson served as a symbol for the culmination of this long struggle for sectional harmony came in 1895 when the Grand Army of the Republic, largely through his efforts, agreed to hold its annual encampment in the city of Louisville. It was his personal triumph, his opportunity to show the nation that the bridge across the chasm was at last so firm that even



the G. A. R. could cross it. Standing before these veterans of a conflict that had left such deep scars upon the nation, he could say with pride:

It is with a kind of exultation that I fling open the gates of this gateway to the South! I bid you welcome in the name of the people whose voice is the voice of God. You came, and we resisted you; you come and we greet you; for times change and men change with them . . .<sup>15</sup>

For Watterson it was a valediction to an era. Tilden had died without ever being seated in the White House; the Star-eyed Goddess had been betrayed; but standing in the warm sunlight of that bright May morning and gazing down at thousands of men wearing the Union Blue, Watterson knew that the greatest cause of his life had ended in victory. He had once said, 'In this world, we rarely get all we want. I never did ask for the earth.' He could feel content with what he had won.

Soon after this Watterson began to think seriously of retirement from the active field of journalism. He was only fifty-five at the time and still vigorous in health, but he felt that this was the proper time to free himself from the newspaper office. For many years the ties that bound him to the *Courier-Journal* had been loose chains, but now he thought he wanted complete freedom. His studies had convinced him that there was a need for a better biography of Lincoln, and the close friendship with Robert Todd Lincoln that he had won as a result of his lecture assured him of the sympathetic interest and help from the ex-President's only living son. With that as his only serious task before him, Watterson made preparations in the late fall of 1895 to take his entire family to Europe. For several years, he had been urged by his old friend Ben Ridgely, a cousin of Rebecca Watterson and former reporter on the *Courier-Journal* staff, now consul-general in Geneva, to come to Europe and to enroll his younger children in boarding schools there. Early in 1896 the Wattersons left for Switzerland.

That Watterson had no intention of becoming an expatriate was evident by the fact that just prior to leaving Louisville, he purchased a large, old mansion located in a beautiful rolling section of country just outside Jeffersontown, a small village some fifteen miles from Louisville. Nor did he resign from the *Courier-Journal*,

and his name continued to be carried at the top of its masthead. But Watterson sensed the newspaper world was changing, was becoming big business. The first of the great newspaper syndicates were being formed. The Associated Press could now furnish news stories to the nation's presses as standardized as the machine-made goods offered by department stores. The 'personal editor' was being replaced by the editorial board. Watterson felt that his world, which was essentially Greeley's and Raymond's, and Prentice's, was ending, and that it was a good time to get a new perspective, perhaps even find a new career.

Thus it was that Watterson was away during the most feverish and vital Presidential campaign since that of 1860 and the *Courier-Journal* had to go through it without his aid. Out of the havoc of that political storm, Watterson would be forced to return to save his paper.

## TWELVE

### 'No Compromise With Dishonor'

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1896

THE POPULIST STORM, which reached its climax in the Bryan-McKinley campaign of 1896, had been long brewing on the level prairies of the new Middle West. It had its origins in the Greenback line squalls of the 1870's but had gained its real momentum during the dark days of the early 1890's when corn dropped to ten cents a bushel and cotton to less than five cents a pound. All of the various elements of protest had then been gathered into one thunderhead of action, the demand for the free coinage of silver at a ratio of 16 to 1. Economists could explain that the idea was mistaken, that free coinage of silver at a ratio to gold of 16 to 1 when the market price of silver was at a ratio of 32 to 1 would mean cutting the value of the dollar in two and the dizzying inflation that would result would but increase the sufferings of the wage earner. Political analysts could show how this idea was deliberately foisted upon the people by silver mine owners who wished an unlimited market for their product at twice the world price. But such explanations cannot explain the fervor that characterized this campaign. A cotton farmer in Georgia or a drought-stricken wheat grower in Kansas would not listen to the logic of the economist or the political analyst. To such men more money in circulation meant more

money in their pockets. Tom Watson, the demagogue of Georgia, would bellow at these desperate men: 'Mr. Farmer, have you let the dog-fennel and black-jacks and old field pines take your farm because you have got too many silver dollars? . . . Grover Cleveland says so. He and Mr. Carlisle say you have got more money than you can use,' and the answering roar would be frightening in its anger.<sup>1</sup> Mary Ellen Lease, the Populist crusader of the Kansas plains, would yell, 'What Kansas needs to do is raise less corn and more hell,' and the crowd was ready to raise it.

So the movement rolled on, across the yellow plains of the Midwest and the black lands of the South. The Supreme Court's rulings in the income tax cases and Cleveland's sale of government bonds to the Morgan banking syndicate at a price well below their market value in a desperate effort to save the gold reserve in the Treasury were both interpreted as shocking evidence that the entire government had fallen into the hands of Wall Street. The despair was great, and silver became its cry.

During these years, Watterson had remained singularly aloof from the silver issue. Although since the days of the Greenback movement he had been on the side of sound currency, in the 1880's, as the monetary issue began to come to the fore, he had in the interest of tariff reform shown a tendency to straddle the question of inflation. Now when there was no longer any doubt of the immediacy of the problem, he still considered the whole movement for free silver as belonging to that lunatic fringe known as the Populist party. Being a doctrinaire himself in blaming all economic ills on the protective tariff, he had only contempt for other men who clung as tenaciously to another doctrine, cheap money. Only after William Jennings Bryan achieved the nomination did Watterson wake up to the fact that the 'lunatic Populists' had managed to swallow up the Democratic party.

Watterson faced the political storm of the 1890's not realizing that times had changed. America had had depressions before, there had been inflationary movements before. He could not understand that this depression called for new tactics to meet its intensity.

What has been said of Watterson's attitude can also be said of Cleveland's. Although the President would be accused of having sold out to the money-changers of the East, of sacrificing the

farmer and the laborer for the bondholder of Wall Street, such charges were as unjust as those accusing Watterson of selling his editorial page to the advertisers. That he could not appreciate that the times called for a change does not detract from Cleveland's integrity or sincerity of purpose. A wiser man might have found a better answer than that of simply holding the line, might have been able to harness the tremendous forces of revolt into the proper channels of needed reform. It would take the nation another two decades to find such a man in Woodrow Wilson, and he was successful largely because the wild storm of Populism had died down to a cleansing rain of Progressivism. When the storm was at its height, America was fortunate to have a man of courage as President.

Watterson had written a few editorials in support of the Administration's efforts to save the gold reserve before he left the country, but the paper's real crusade against free silver did not come until after he was in Europe. From April 1896 on, the editorial page was devoted to an exposure of this monetary 'heresy.' The editorials were positive expositions of the gold standard principle, but against a movement that depended almost exclusively upon emotion, they did not have the magic fire of Watterson's pen.

The *Courier-Journal* attempted to save the Kentucky state convention, held on 3 June, from being seized by the Silver Democrats, but it was disastrously defeated. Kentucky joined nearly every other state in the Union in choosing a silver delegation to the Democratic national convention. To make the poison more bitter, the entire delegation was bound as a unit to vote for Watterson's old political enemy and now an ardent free silver man, Senator Joe Blackburn.

When the Democratic platform was announced at the Chicago convention, the worst fears of the *Courier-Journal* were realized. 'It is a platform from which Democrats turn sick at heart,' was its comment. The only question left to be decided was which one of the four B's of the silver heresy, Bland, Boies, Blackburn, or Bryan would be nominated, but even that was not long in doubt. Bryan's 'Cross of Gold' speech handed the convention over to him. How the 'boy orator of the Platte,' as Watterson dubbed him, swept 20,000 men into frenzy by one carefully rehearsed speech that had about it the charm of spontaneity, is part of the political

legend of America. When he finished speaking, men openly wept and embraced each other while the Gold Democrats sat in sullen silence. It had taken less than thirty minutes to kill the old party of Tilden and Cleveland.

Even after Bryan's nomination, however, the Gold Democrats at Chicago hesitated about bolting the party, but for Haldeman, now in complete charge of the editorial policy of the paper, there was no such indecision. He at once took the *Courier-Journal* out of the Democratic party. In an editorial entitled 'Is This Your Party?' he blamed the action at Chicago on 'foolhardy and bastard leadership.' The *Courier-Journal*

rejects the new faith of fiatism, repudiation and anarchy which the Chicago convention has proclaimed as the Democratic creed, refuses to support the nominees who have been, in an unprecedented convulsion of frenzy, ordained the apostles of that faith, and calls upon true Democrats everywhere, sick at heart though they be, but undaunted and resolute, to stand forth for their cause and put out a ticket, planted on a platform that shall embody alike the undying purpose and the immortal record of the Democratic party.

It was a bold act, requiring nearly as much courage as that Prentice had shown in staying by the Union in 1861, for the Democratic party in Kentucky was solidly behind Bryan, and throughout the South Haldeman's action would be regarded by most subscribers as base treachery.

If Haldeman had any doubts of what Watterson's reaction would be to this unprecedented step of breaking with the party they were resolved by the telegram he received on 14 July. In a statement classic in its brevity and fixity, Watterson wired, 'Another ticket our only hope. No compromise with dishonor. Stand firm.' The insurgent Gold Democrats were to make the phrase 'No compromise with dishonor' their battle cry for the campaign.

The *Courier-Journal's* precipitate action in calling for a new ticket gave it a place of leadership in the organization of the 'Gold' or National Democratic party. In Watterson's collected papers is his rough draft of a letter to an unnamed addressee stating the need of a third party:

The centre of the operations—each a pivotal point—are the states of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, on the one hand, and the states of Missouri, Tennessee, and Kentucky on the other hand. To be elected Bryan must carry all of those states.

In each of them thirty percent of the Democrats are for sound money and can be counted for a third ticket. In the absence of a third ticket it is safe to say that at least ten percent of them will drift to Bryan. Not more than five percent of the remaining twenty percent will vote for McKinley. With a third ticket in the field Bryan can not carry one of the states named. Without it he has a chance for some of them. Why give him this chance?

I am, you will observe, not arguing whys and wherefores, but simply finding the elements we have to deal with as it is, and I know it to be from a lifelong experience with it.

The implication of this endorsement of a third party is obvious. There would be no chance for such a party to win a single electoral vote, but it could guarantee the defeat of Bryan by drawing enough Democratic votes away to a third party candidate to hand the election to McKinley. Such was to be the *raison d'être* for the National Democratic party organized a few weeks later.

As early as 14 July Senator John Palmer of Illinois and James Herron Eckels, the Comptroller of Currency under Cleveland, issued a joint statement to the press asking that a new convention be held to name a Democratic ticket that would support the gold standard. On 23 July a conference of the Gold Democrats was held at Chicago at which time a temporary executive committee of five members was named, among them Haldeman's eldest son, William B. Haldeman, who was then general manager of the *Courier-Journal*. The executive committee met in Chicago on 17 August to plan for a national convention, and it was here that Watterson was first suggested as a Presidential candidate for the new party. William Haldeman wrote Watterson, 'It was the unanimous expression of the Committee that an endeavor should be made to obtain from you your consent to accept the nomination . . . I threw cold water on the proposition, urging the fact that you had made all arrangements to remain abroad.' John R. Hopkins, former mayor of Chicago and one of the most active leaders of the Gold Democrats, then stated, Haldeman continued, that he had good reason to believe that Watterson would accept the nomination if it was offered him. Haldeman agreed to cable Watterson to ask for his views.<sup>2</sup>

Watterson's telegram in reply on 22 August was ambiguous enough to leave Haldeman still in doubt. He wrote back to Watterson that 'Hopkins and Seymour [editor of the Chicago *Chronicle*]

strongly favor you making this sacrifice, and state that arrangements would be made to meet you in New York Harbor, have a grand gathering at Madison Square Garden the day after your arrival in New York, and then arrange for a series of speeches (twenty or thirty in number) to be delivered at principal points in the United States.' Seymour also promised 'that the vote which you would receive in November this year would be larger than any other man could obtain, and would make you the certain nominee and elect you in 1900.'<sup>3</sup>

Watterson's statement the following day in the *New York Herald*, a paper which had started a minor boom for him four years before, revealed that he was available as a candidate if the convention should insist. He wrote of his 'idyllic life' in Europe, then added:

To abandon this, to throw myself into the activities of an exciting campaign, to become a participant in an embittered family quarrel, to give over to angry crimination the association of a lifetime, and to mortgage the repose of my old age . . . are sacrifices before whose contemplation one of an easy going, peace loving disposition may well stand aghast . . . But I have never urged any man to do what I durst not myself attempt and when the Convention meets, and if it decides to put a ticket in the field, and is unable to induce any of the other gentleman I have named [Carlisle, Palmer, Simon Buckner, or Secretary of Interior Sterling Morton] to take up the thankless post and duty, I would take it if I knew it led me to the stake.

William Haldeman was placed in a difficult spot by this statement. Not having considered the possibility of Watterson's candidacy, he had already lined up Kentucky's delegates to the national convention behind the old Confederate general and former governor of Kentucky, Simon Bolivar Buckner, for the Vice-Presidency. Since a Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidate may not be from the same state, it would be necessary for Buckner to step aside should Watterson obtain the Presidential nomination. The old man, who had been greatly flattered by this political recognition, was most reluctant to withdraw his name and refused to say anything publicly to release those delegates pledged to him for the Vice-Presidency until such time as the Presidential nomination should be made. Hence Kentucky's delegation went to the convention still pledged to Buckner and unable to lead a rally for Watterson.



The convention, meeting in Indianapolis on 2 September, was attended by 888 sound money Democrats who openly courted political death by thus breaking with the regular Democratic organization. Every state with the exception of 'three of the rotten boroughs of the West,' as Haldeman described the silver states, was represented by at least one delegate.

Watterson's supporters were busy in his interest. Henry Vollmer, the mayor of Davenport, Iowa, and Hopkins were particularly active, the latter paying out of his own pocket the cost of printing and distributing over the convention hall 25,000 to 30,000 telegraph sheets bearing Watterson's now famous statement, 'No compromise with dishonor.'<sup>4</sup> The New York *Herald* published an unofficial poll showing that Watterson had at least 163 delegates pledged to him, giving him the lead over all candidates. But the *Herald* admitted that Watterson had slight chance for the nomination because he did not have a single vote pledged to him from his own state.<sup>5</sup>

The real opposition to Watterson, however, came from those friends of Cleveland at the convention, led by Comptroller Eckels. These men, disappointed in their efforts to give the nomination to Cleveland himself by the President's blunt telegram of refusal, were determined to prevent Watterson's nomination.

Watterson, who from the first had been reluctant to take the nomination, realized that any Gold Democratic candidate without at least the tacit support of the Cleveland administration would be entirely ineffectual. Furthermore, he had no desire to push aside his old friend Buckner, who had set his heart upon obtaining the nomination for second place on the ticket. Consequently, Watterson sent a telegram to be read to the convention by J. C. Carroll of Kentucky withdrawing his name from consideration. Watterson's delegates then turned to Senator John M. Palmer, the originator of this third party movement, who, being satisfactory to the Cleveland men, received the unanimous vote of the convention.

The seventy-nine-year-old John Palmer was given as a running mate the seventy-three-year-old Simon B. Buckner, whose nomination for the Vice-Presidency had been assured by Watterson's withdrawal from the race. Led by these two septuagenarians, one a former general in the Union, the other in the Confederate army, the Gold Democrats marched off bravely into a campaign, out of which all they could hope for was the election of William McKinley.

In the weeks after the Gold Democrats' convention, the campaign increased in its fury and hysteria. Bryan took his message to the country as no previous candidate had ever done. To the people who gathered at depots in small villages throughout the Middle West and South to look up at his youthful face and to be entranced by his rolling oratory replete with Biblical quotations, Bryan was a new Messiah who had dared to brave the wrath of the rich to deliver his people from unholy bondage. To others from the East who made the long trek to a front porch in Canton, Ohio, to gaze hopefully up at the placid and calm features of Ohio's favorite son, McKinley appeared to be a reservoir of strength and sanity in a world that was threatened by the madness of anarchism. Not since 1860 had sectionalism seemed so explosive an issue. 'East versus West,' the papers and the orators on both sides screamed. Never had Republican campaign managers found it less difficult to raise funds as the fear of Eastern capitalists grew to match the fervor of Western Populists. Any sane observer, to be sure, could have seen by October that Bryanism was on the wane, but there were few sane observers that autumn.

The *Courier-Journal* battled courageously against the solid phalanx of Southern Democracy. Its editorial page contained but one theme, a constant, strident cry against Bryan. It carried at the head of its editorial columns a picture of Thomas Jefferson framed in a wreath and below it the caption:

For President, John M. Palmer of Illinois,  
For Vice-President, Simon Bolivar Buckner of Kentucky.

But none of its readers was fooled as to whom the *Courier-Journal* was really giving its support, and Democrats by the hundreds canceled their subscriptions to the paper. Particularly hard hit was the *Weekly Courier-Journal*, which depended upon the rural subscribers throughout the southwestern region of Kentucky, Tennessee, northern Alabama, and Mississippi for its support. W. B. Haldeman had written Watterson in August that although 'we have lost subscribers in some places,' he was not alarmed and predicted that when the campaign was over the circulation would be even greater than it had been before Bryan's nomination. But by October, he was writing in a more desperate tone. 'We have lost a great number of old subscribers whose comments in leaving us have been

bitter in the extreme . . . We will be glad to have you back to steer the ship out of troubled waters.'<sup>6</sup>

Watterson contributed very little to the *Courier-Journal* during the entire campaign. His telegram to Haldeman, to be sure, had received the widest circulation, not only by Gold Democrats but by Republicans as well. Mark Hanna later told Watterson that the dispatch had been worth a million votes to McKinley and to show his appreciation had, at Watterson's request, seen to it that Ben Ridgely was kept on in the consular service.<sup>7</sup> Other than that telegraphic blast, Watterson's sole contribution to the *Courier-Journal* seems to have been a long signed letter sent from Geneva for publication on 9 October. It was as effective an editorial as any that Watterson wrote in his career.

Beginning with the admission that the world 'is passing through a period of economic transition,' Watterson denied that Bryan's panacea for the problems arising from that transition was anything but 'a quack nostrum' which professional politicians were attempting to sell the people by the same 'liberal advertisements and loud protestations' used in the sale of patent medicines. Watterson then defended both Secretary Carlisle and the *Courier-Journal* against the charge that they were once for bimetallism but had since been paid by the monied interests to change their tune and sing for gold. 'Twenty years ago, everybody in the United States was for silver. Nobody was against it. Not to be a bimetallist was not to be a Christian.' In those days before the great silver mines of the West had been opened silver had been undervalued by the government to such an extent that no silver was brought to the mints and the government in 1873 had simply stopped coining it. But 'nothing stands stationary — not even silver.' With the production of silver increasing 500 per cent in the years after 1873 while at the same time the production of gold actually decreased, silver became so overvalued by the government that, Watterson wrote, a free coinage of silver would 'drive out gold . . . and put the country on a monometallic basis of silver.' Men and papers must change their views as conditions change, for 'information with intelligent people does not remain stationary' either. But on one point the *Courier-Journal* has remained consistent, Watterson maintained: 'neither the *Courier-Journal* nor its editor ever favored fiat money, or gave their assent to a depreciated currency.'

After praising Palmer and Buckner as 'two noble and rugged old heroes' before whom 'all other candidates are dwarfed,' Watterson added a few personal paragraphs. Like Lincoln in 1849, he by 1894 had lost interest in politics, had decided 'never again to trouble myself, or anybody else, about politics; and to leave to younger hands the responsibility and details of my own particular business.' But as Lincoln had been aroused by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise to return to politics, so now, Watterson wrote, 'The action of the Chicago convention changed all this . . . The scandalous circumstances attending the Chicago proceeding, the shameless abandonment of Democratic truth in the platform there adopted and the grotesque character of the ticket nominated, left me no alternative as a true Democrat and an honest man . . . I am back to stay, and on my return to Kentucky, shall consider myself enlisted for the war.' The dream of early retirement had been quickly dissipated. The fight was on, and Watterson could not stay away.

Never had the *Courier-Journal* announced an election victory with any more enthusiasm than on the morning of 4 November 1896. 'Glorious Kentucky,' the headlines read, 'The Conservative Old State Turns Down The Conspirators Who Plotted Against Democracy.' Thus did this former organ of the Democratic party hail the victory of McKinley and rejoice in the fact that for the first time Kentucky had given her electoral vote to the Republican party. Even the Gold Democrats must have been somewhat surprised by the exultant tone of the *Courier-Journal*. As for the regular Democrats, the headlines that morning were the last convincing evidence of the *Courier-Journal's* betrayal of the party. Those that had not yet canceled their subscriptions, did so now. The *Weekly Courier-Journal* that had had over 100,000 subscribers could now count its readers in the hundreds while the daily paper had few but Republican buyers in Louisville.

'Palmer and Buckner,' the *Courier-Journal's* editorial page proudly proclaimed two days after the election, 'have saved the country from shame and have saved the party from destruction.' Unfortunately they had not been able to save the *Courier-Journal* from near extinction. Watterson must do that if he could. In the late fall of 1896, Watterson came back home.

## THIRTEEN

# Compromise

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1897-1900

HENRY WATTERSON returned to find himself a pariah, his paper an anathema. Old friends who had stood by his side in the political battles against Bourbonism and the protective tariff now passed him on the street without even a nod of recognition. The *Courier-Journal* was dying. Only the *Louisville Times*, which Watterson had hitherto studiously ignored, had so far saved the company from bankruptcy, largely because it had no positive editorial policy. Most of the *Courier-Journal's* subscribers had been lost to the new *Louisville Dispatch*, a morning paper founded by the Silver Democrats, and there were expressions of hostility even more violent than the simple cancellation of subscriptions: public burnings of the *Weekly* in many Southern towns and anonymous threats to blow up the printing office.<sup>1</sup>

Watterson's first reaction to these attacks was, characteristically enough, to fight, no matter what the cost. Both he and Haldeman had accepted the Eastern point of view that the defeat of Bryan would mean the end of Populism in the Democratic party. Neither man could now accept the obvious fact that Bryan was still the party's leader. This fanatical loyalty to a defeated candidate Watterson regarded as analogous to the post-war devotion in Kentucky for the defeated Confederacy. Bryan was the new Lost Cause.

Because he had been successful in defeating Bourbonism in 1872, Watterson now felt confident that Bryanism could be eradicated from the party by 1900 if one had the courage to fight.

Watterson threw himself into this fight with the same energy that he had demonstrated a quarter of a century before. There was to be no quarter given or expected. The unreconstructed Populist, like the unreconstructed Rebel, must be convinced that his cause was hopeless. The place to begin was in Kentucky.

There being no general election in Kentucky until 1898, Watterson, eager for a decisive encounter, chose to make the off-year election of clerk of the Kentucky Court of Appeals a test of strength against the Silver Democrats. Along with the other members of the so-called Big Four of Kentucky Conservatism, Carlisle, Senator William Lindsay, and W. C. P. Breckinridge, Watterson backed the candidacy of Captain James R. Hindman of Adair, while the Bryan Democrats, happy to accept the challenge, put up S. J. Shackelford.

Although the office was insignificant, the campaign was fought in the *Courier-Journal* and in the opposing papers with as much vituperation as if the Presidency of the United States were at stake. Watterson even urged Carlisle to come to Kentucky to campaign for Hindman, a request which Carlisle, now out of public office and busily engaged in setting up a law office in New York, was unable to accept. On 2 November 1897, the day of the election, Watterson flung out his last defiant taunt at Bryanism.

If Mr. Hindman gets a hundred thousand votes today, or if he gets but ten, the course of the *Courier-Journal* will be nowise changed. We shall go on in religion preaching the Gospel of Christ, and Him crucified, and in politics, the doctrines of Honest Money, Home Rule, and Free Trade.

Bold words, but when the ballots were counted and it was revealed that Shackelford had surpassed Hindman by over 20,000 votes, the battle was over. The Gospel of Christ might still be left to Watterson, but there was little else. Without subscribers, without political prestige and patronage, the *Courier-Journal* could not continue. For the first time, the paper was faced with the choice either of yielding to public opinion or of submitting quickly to bankruptcy proceedings.

This was undoubtedly the darkest moment in Watterson's career.

It had been easy to fling out the brave cry, 'No compromise with dishonor,' as the battle began. But now the battle had ended in defeat. The victors demanded homage. Watterson and Haldeman had to choose between their principles and their paper. Given that choice, the two men showed little hesitation.

Two days after the election, Watterson announced the end of the *Courier-Journal's* struggle against Bryan:

We may regret the verdict against us, but we accept it. We shall make no further effort to direct the party course or counsels, or to share in any of the responsibilities of party leadership . . . With charity for all, with malice toward none, we shall continue to do business at the old stand precisely as if nothing whatever had happened; relieved to be rid of all responsibility in party affairs; glad to go to the rear of the columns.

If Watterson expected his former readers to welcome him at once back into the Democratic fold as a returning prodigal son, he was to be disappointed. He might think that he could continue doing business 'precisely as if nothing whatever had happened,' but for the Bryan Democrats, much had happened. They viewed the unusual spectacle of Watterson's eating humble pie with mixed expressions of skepticism and indifference. As for the petty politicians who had long smarted with resentment under the *Courier-Journal's* rule in the state, its fall from political power was so comforting that they only hoped it might never rise again. If the *Courier-Journal* wished to march in the rear of the column, well and good, but no more pontifical advice from its editorial pages, no more dictation of platforms and candidates would be tolerated.

Many Southern editors were equally vindictive toward the *Courier-Journal*. They too had resented its past political power, but even more they had feared its influence within their profession. They had long suspected it of working for a monopoly that would place the control of the distribution of news in the hands of a few wealthy newspaper owners. These suspicions had been borne out, they felt, in the sensational report made by Victor Lawson of the *Chicago Daily News* at the Western Associated Press meeting in August 1891. Lawson had revealed that the Associated Press's Joint Executive Committee of which Haldeman was a member had been in league with the supposedly rival United Press to place all of the news gathering facilities of the country in control of a trust dom-

inated by the wealthy Chicago financier, John Walsh. In return for the news which it received secretly from the AP, the United Press had given to four of the five men on the Executive Committee, Charles Dana, Whitelaw Reid, Richard Smith, and Haldeman, stock in its company ranging in amounts from \$50,000 to \$72,500 per man. Haldeman at the time the report was made had entered an elaborate plea in his own defense, pointing out the great progress that had been made in news gathering for the whole Association during the years that he and his fellow members had served on the Committee. But he could not explain away the stock he held in the monopolistic United Press.<sup>2</sup> There is no evidence that Watterson personally benefited from this secret arrangement, but there is also no record that he disapproved of his partner's activities.

It mattered little to these Southern editors that Haldeman had long ago resigned from the Executive Committee or even that by 1897 the United Press had been driven into bankruptcy by a re-organized Associated Press, which was now an entirely co-operative and non-profit association. The old taint of monopoly still clung to the *Courier-Journal* and many rejoiced that Watterson and Haldeman were at last receiving a lesson on the meaning of competition, a lesson that was emphasized by a bill pushed through the state legislature which forbade the Associated Press from granting exclusive contracts within the state, a direct slap at Watterson and Haldeman who had long held the AP franchise for Louisville.

Both Watterson and Haldeman worked harder in these years than at any time since 1868. They sacrificed their leisure and much of their salaries to save the Old Lady on the Corner. They put up part of their stock as security to obtain more working capital. Every promotion trick that they could think of was used to revive circulation: reader contests, price cuts, free trial subscriptions, and reduced advertising rates. To attract readers the form and content of the paper were moderately changed. A slightly larger type was used, more special features for women and a greater number of drawings were included. Even banner headlines were cautiously introduced.

Both men knew, however, that they could have no real success until they were once again generally accepted by the Democratic party. The political situation in Kentucky in these years immediately



after the 1896 campaign was such that it made the *Courier-Journal's* task of reingratiating itself even more difficult and unpleasant than it would otherwise have been. In 1895 the Republicans, because of the schism in the Democratic party over the silver issue, had captured the governorship for the first time in history, and the following year had pushed through the state legislature the election of a United States Senator, William J. DeBoe. As a consequence, the Kentucky Democrats were even more vindictive than most Southerners following the defeat of Bryan. They had found a strong man in State Senator William Goebel of Covington. He was taciturn and sullen by disposition, ruthless in his opportunism, and a genius at political organization. In exploiting the Populist sentiment of the day, Goebel was establishing a pattern for twentieth-century Southern demagoguery. Under his leadership, the state legislature in 1898 passed the notorious Goebel Election Law, which gave to a board of three men chosen by the legislature the power of canvassing election returns from each county and determining whether the reported count was a fair one. In the hands of unscrupulous men, this board could virtually appoint all state officers. The *Courier-Journal* had at first been vehement in its protests against the measure, further alienating itself from its party within the state.

In the state convention of 1899, Goebel captured the gubernatorial nomination. Watterson was now faced with the unhappy prospect of having to accept Goebel, election law and all, if he wished to rejoin the party. In an editorial of 28 June 1899, Watterson swallowed hard, but managed to get down the bitter dose of Goebelism:

This is a purely practical question about which there can be no possible misunderstanding, and, summing up all the pros and cons, we can not for the life of us see why . . . we should prefer a Republican to a Democratic Administration at Frankfort . . . Mr. Goebel heads the ticket . . . severe and sad as are the dispensations of Providence, we shall be compelled to support the ticket. There are thousands of Kentuckians who will look askance and there are some who will sulk. But we risk nothing in predicting that before the day of election this Goebel ticket will not need the machinery of the Goebel law . . . and that surely elected Governor, he will make a great Governor. All hail, King Goebel, then, the hope not merely of the reunited Democracy of the State, but of the young, the free, the noble mankind of Kentucky.

With this flourish of flags and brave sound of trumpets, Watterson and the *Courier-Journal* rejoined the Democratic party. There was

one consolation in the dismal affair. After Goebel it would be relatively easy to take Bryan.

The Republicans nominated a minor political hack, William S. Taylor, who at once received the support of the L & N and the other large corporations which were violently opposed to Goebel. But Watterson did not even bobble from the straight party line. The *Courier-Journal* closed its eyes to much of the unpleasantness of a campaign which was marked with vituperation and scandal and attempted to conduct an honest campaign for Goebel. The wreath-framed picture of Thomas Jefferson, emblem of the Gold Democrats which the paper with dogged determination had carried for two years at the top of its masthead, disappeared, and once again the cocky little rooster of orthodox Democracy adorned its editorial page.

The election was close, but the final count seemed to give Taylor a slight edge. Watterson at once conceded defeat, but Goebel was not so easily discouraged. The cry of fraud was raised and Goebel's election law was given a chance for operation. But to the surprise of all, the board of three, by a vote of two to one, still gave the election to Taylor. Taylor was inaugurated governor, and Goebel prepared to leave the state.

The state legislature, now controlled by the Democrats, refused to acknowledge the inauguration, however, and set up a special commission to investigate the entire vote. Frankfort quickly assumed the appearance of a city under siege as state militia mingled in the streets alongside armed civilians, including fierce looking Republican mountain boys, carrying their long squirrel rifles and swearing that Goebel would never take office. Bryan made a hurried trip to Kentucky to plead for Goebel, which only increased the tension.

On 30 January 1900, while on his way up the state house steps to confer with friends in the legislature, Goebel was shot down by a long rifle shot fired from somewhere in the capitol office building. The Democratic legislature at once dispensed with even the pretense of rechecking the votes, and counting Goebel duly elected, the leaders of the party hurried across the street to where Goebel lay dying to swear him in as governor. Upon the death of Goebel two days later, J. C. W. Beckham, the Democratic candidate for lieutenant-governor took over as governor, and the Democrats moved their government to Louisville. The case of Taylor *v.*

Beckham was taken to the courts, where Circuit Judge Fields, accepting the Democratic victory as *fait accompli*, gave the decision to Beckham, and Taylor, fearing for his life, fled to Indiana.

Watterson must have found this spectacle of rampant partisan politics most unpleasant, but he kept quiet. The initiation back into the fraternal brotherhood of the Kentucky Democracy was rough, but the *Courier-Journal* stood the test. As the nation prepared for its next quadrennial Presidential sweepstakes, Watterson was safely back in the party.

One thing could be said for the Goebel affair. The excitement that it had aroused had helped immensely in increasing the paper's circulation. The current international situation also proved to be a godsend in reviving the moribund *Courier-Journal*. Much has been written of the way in which William Randolph Hearst made use of the events leading up to the Spanish-American War to create a new type of journalism, the yellow press, but it should not be forgotten that editors throughout the country, although they might have scorned Hearst's methods, found these same international events extremely useful in selling papers. Dewey in Manila was as good copy for Louisville or St. Paul as he was for New York, and the *Courier-Journal* did not lag far behind metropolitan journals in exploiting America's new whirling dance with Manifest Destiny.

Since the days that he had watched the proud clipper ships sail for distant China or had listened to the tales of Walker's free-booting activities in Nicaragua, Watterson had been an unabashed jingoist. Although, as he told the Patria Club in 1890, he was not yet ready to 'fall in with the assertion of that American who said the future of this country is bounded on the north by the aurora borealis, on the south by the equator, on the east by the rising sun, and on the west by eternity,' still, 'I rather incline in that direction.'<sup>3</sup>

If Watterson's editorials and speeches were militaristic, it must be remembered that he was writing in an age thoroughly indoctrinated in 'social Darwinism.' Such men as Herbert Spencer, Thomas Huxley, and Arthur Gobineau had given to Darwin's biological theories a social implication by transferring evolution from species to nations. Darwin's theory of 'the survival of the fittest' now had both zoological and political implications. It could explain the long neck of the giraffe and also the size of the British navy. One

might as well protest the lion's devouring the zebra as object to the British conquest of Sudan. It was the law of nature. The Anglo-Saxon's immediate duty was to boost the rest of mankind up the evolutionary ladder as quickly as possible. To delay in bringing to the less fortunate races indoor plumbing, the Christian Bible, and Mother Hubbard dresses was to deny our Teutonic role in the national scheme of things. The 'White Man's burden' for this generation was very demanding.<sup>4</sup> Conveniently, science had given rationality to man's natural acquisitiveness at the very moment that economic, political, and religious factors were joining forces to create a new age of imperialism. It was an age that Watterson would glorify.

Watterson had applauded, with visions of Canada dancing in his head, Cleveland's bold stand against Britain over the Venezuelan boundary dispute and, just as vigorously, had condemned Cleveland's refusal to annex Hawaii when it came, 'like Texas, to rap at our doors.' It was frustrating to sit by while the great European powers brought the glories of civilization to Africa and valiantly took up the white man's burden in Asia. America must hurry or there would be no place left to which she could carry the light.

In 1895 Watterson along with most Americans regarded with interest the latest outbreak in Cuba against Spanish misrule. The island had long been nearly as tempting a morsel for the American expansionist appetite as Canada, and, unlike the territory to the North, stood in need of Anglo-Saxon supervision. Now that the American continental frontier had come to an end, the American people were ready to give to this latest Cuban insurrection their attention and sympathy.

The Cuban patriots, eager to obtain from the United States more than sympathy, found in the American press their greatest ally. During the years from 1895 to 1897, as the insurgents continued to resist all Spanish efforts of pacification by military force, the American newspapers played up the stories of Spanish atrocities, the horrors of Governor Weyler's concentration camps, and the hopes of the Cuban patriots for American intervention. By March 1898 Watterson, along with most editors in this country, was already assuming war with Spain and criticizing our inadequate preparations for what might prove to be 'a hard war.' When war was finally declared in April, it came because the people, stimulated by sen-

sational news stories, had demanded it. No war in our history has been as short but few have proved more momentous. We entered the conflict a provincial nation that had long pursued a foreign policy of continental isolation; we emerged as a world power with newly acquired possessions halfway around the globe.

As Watterson had hoped, the war also did much to promote a better understanding between the North and South. To see Southern boys, including his own son Henry, marching off with Northern youths as comrades against a common foe was the realization of an old dream. What matter if the fiery old Confederate general, Joe Wheeler, in leading troops up San Juan hill should forget himself momentarily and yell, 'Charge the damn Yankees!' The South had now proved on the field of battle its loyalty to the nation. This was the essential meaning of the war for Watterson, and the theme of the reunited sections ran strong throughout all of his speeches and editorials in these exciting months.

Late that summer in delivering the dedicatory speech for the monument over Francis Scott Key's grave in Maryland, Watterson pictured a glowing future for the nation:

The problems of the Constitution and the Union solved, the past secure, turn we to the future; no longer a huddle of petty sovereignties, held together by a rope of sand . . . no longer a brood of provincial laggards, hanging with bated breath upon the movements of mankind, afraid . . . to put their principles to the test of progress and of arms; but a nation and a leader of nations . . . It is the will of God; let not man gainsay . . . until the word of God has been carried to the furthestmost ends of the earth; not until freedom is the heritage of all His Creatures; not until Latin licentiousness fostered by modern wealth and culture and art, has been expiated by fire . . . not until that sober-suited Anglo-Saxonism . . . has made, at one and the same time, another map of Christendom and a new race of Christians and yeomen, equally soldiers of the sword and of the Cross, even in Africa and in Asia, as we have made them here in America.

Here was a remarkable exposition of social Darwinism, pure and undiluted.

Soon after the outbreak of the war, in spite of the heavy demands of his editorial duties and speaking engagements, Watterson consented to write a history of the war at the request of the Werner Publishing Company. Attracted by the royalty fees and the glittering assurance that the book would sell 300,000 copies, an estimate

which proved to be ridiculously high, Watterson rashly promised to have the book finished in six months. He soon discovered, however, that because of his numerous other commitments, including his services as one of the officers for the United States Sanitary Commission, he had neither the time nor the inclination to write a full-length history and turned the entire task over to a former editorial assistant and a writer of note in Louisville, Young E. Allison. Allison and the American army finished their respective tasks at approximately the same time, and the book was hurried off the presses as *A History of the Spanish American War* by Henry Watterson, although all that Watterson had furnished the project was his name.<sup>5</sup>

But if Watterson had failed as a historian of the war, the war had in no way failed him. He would agree wholeheartedly with his good friend John Hay that 'It has been a splendid little war.' In writing his editorial of farewell for the year 1898, Watterson looked back on that outgoing year with a great deal of satisfaction. The past was dead, the bloody shirt, while it had proved good for many elections, 'would, bless God, never be good for another.' America awaited her 'true Heritage of Glory.'

Watterson could review his recent personal history with equal satisfaction. The past two years had been difficult ones for him both spiritually and physically. Now nearly sixty, he had found it necessary to work at his desk with an energy that he had not shown since he was thirty. But these years had been happy ones for him too; in some respects, the happiest of his life. Because it had been necessary for him to spend more time at home, he felt closer to his wife and children than he ever had before. Rebecca loved the big old house outside Jeffersontown and had been particularly touched when Watterson named the estate 'Mansfield' after her family home in Tennessee. With its wide verandah, large high-ceiling rooms, and ten acres of rolling grounds it was large enough to accommodate the needs of Watterson's family. For the spacious living room, Watterson purchased two concert grand pianos, one for each of his girls. Here the whole family would gather in the evenings, and while Watterson and Milbrey played the pianos, Rebecca and Ethel would lead the singing. They would all sing out together Stephen Foster ballads, Negro spirituals, and the newest songs from Gilbert and Sullivan.

Watterson now had a study large enough to accommodate his personal library of nearly 7,000 volumes, mostly English novels and works of history and biography. Here in the early morning before breakfast he would write the rough drafts for his editorials. He enjoyed the life of a commuter, for the round trip between Jeffersontown and Louisville on the interurban gave him a chance to read other newspapers. He frequently took a basket with him and did the marketing in either Louisville or in Jeffersontown before riding on out to Mansfield with Jim Wilson the caretaker. Watterson liked the small shops in Jeffersontown, the candy store, meat market, and pharmacy. His particular crony among the townspeople, however, was the barber. He had always had a passion for barbers for there were few of the simple pleasures in life that he enjoyed more than to stretch out in a chair and have his head massaged. So devoted did the barber become to his most famous and frequent client that he daily met the interurban to help Watterson out of the car and to carry the newspapers and bundles that the editor brought along.

By the middle of 1899 the *Courier-Journal* had regained most of its lost subscribers. It could even boast that the circulation of its Sunday edition was larger than ever before. There remained, however, one final act of political propitiation to make. Watterson was aware, long before the convention was held, that he would have to accept Bryan as the Democratic candidate in 1900. He hoped Bryan, seeing the realities of the situation, would allow the now dead silver issue to be quietly buried and would campaign on the issue of trusts. Watterson had recently become concerned over the rapid growth of corporate wealth and the centralization of business. In a speech to the Patria Club in 1898 he had pointed out that the real danger to the country 'lay not without but within . . . The one great menace is — in one word — money. Not hard money or soft money, but simply money in its relation to the moral nature of the people.'

On this particular point Bryan could agree, and in the weeks prior to the convention at Kansas City, the two men had their first brief exchange of letters. Bryan wrote Watterson early in June 1900:

Am very much gratified that you appreciate the magnitude of the contest in which we are engaged, between the demands of corporate wealth and the rights of the people. In '96 nearly every railroad corpo-

ration was against us, not so much because of the silver question, I think, as because of my opposition to government by injunction, my advocacy of arbitration, and my hostility to the watered stock and imperious domination of the Rail Roads.<sup>6</sup>

Watterson thought he saw here an indication that Bryan was willing to forget silver in the greater crusade against undisciplined corporations. But he was soon to have his hopes shattered. When the convention met, not only did Bryan insist on keeping the 1896 plank calling for the free coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1, but he also demanded and won a clear-cut statement opposing possession of the islands recently won from Spain. This latter plank threatened to revive the great debate that had raged in the Senate the previous year when that body had been presented with the Treaty of Paris giving us outright possession of the Philippines and Puerto Rico. Watterson at that time had placed himself unequivocally on the side of the expansionists and had hailed the ratification of the treaty as the acceptance of our 'noble obligations.' Now he discovered to his dismay that Bryan intended to make the question of imperialism the major issue in the Presidential campaign. But for Watterson and the *Courier-Journal* there was no alternative but to take Bryan, platform and all.

In the editorial of 12 June addressed to the leaders of the Gold Democrats who were planning to meet in Indianapolis to discuss the future of that splinter party, Watterson advised them to meet and disband:

In all things, even in politics, the worldly wise accept facts as they find them. Even heroes do not wantonly and uselessly sacrifice themselves . . . The *Courier-Journal* was so simple as to imagine that people in general are as sweet and gentle and good and beautiful as it is itself; and it believed that the Palmer and Buckner ticket would get a million or a million and a half votes; it believed that Mr. Bryan would not get five million votes; after the event it was its purpose to revise the Democratic party as a poet might revise his verses . . . and it was so fixed in this delusion that its disenchantment required the total breakdown of the movement, promoted by it in 1897 here in Kentucky. That was, as it should have been, enough. It is not the business of a newspaper to call conventions and to set up tickets which nobody will vote for. With the defeat of Hindman there were two courses open to the *Courier-Journal*; either to go straight into the Republican camp, or to fall back into its own camp. It had described the Republicans as the organized rascality, the Democrats as the organized folly of the times. It had declared that in a choice between



the fools and the knaves it would go with the fools. And there it is today.

He could not have been more frank in explaining his acceptance of Bryanism.

Watterson's statement must have carried weight with the Gold Democrats who assembled in July to decide the fate of their party. By a vote of 26 to 1, the former followers of Palmer and Buckner voted against putting up a separate ticket in 1900. It was W. B. Haldeman, the leader in establishing the Gold Democratic ticket of 1896, who first arose at the Indianapolis meeting to ask that the party disband:

I am compelled with a sense of what is due to free America that I love, to earnestly, actively support an American whom I believe to be the highest and best type of an American citizen, and thus believing, I shall vote for and support William Jennings Bryan! <sup>7</sup>

This was a remarkable tribute to Bryan from a man who but four years before had called him 'a conspirator who plotted against democracy.' The act of contrition was complete. Never had a more penitent Henry trudged in sackcloth and ashes to Canossa for release from the ban of excommunication. Absolution by the high priest of Democracy was given in a brief sentence hastily scrawled to Watterson:

Am glad to see the C-J coming around so gallantly. Yours truly,  
W. J. Bryan.<sup>8</sup>

In the campaign that followed, Watterson did the best he could by his party's candidate and platform. He dealt with the detestable free silver plank (as indeed did most of the Democratic politicians, including Bryan himself) in the only way possible, that is by simply ignoring it. As for imperialism, which Bryan had chosen to make the chief issue, Watterson performed all sorts of sophistical gymnastics in semantics to show that there was a difference between expansionism and imperialism, one being in the tradition of Jefferson, the other in the spirit of Caesar. He could not help but glance over at the camp of Caesar, however, or to forego an admiring comment on the surprising choice for the Vice-Presidency that the Republicans had made in Governor Theodore Roosevelt, the enterprising colonel of San Juan hill. Watterson pointed out that

Roosevelt 'brings to the ticket just the thing that McKinley can not give it . . . It is a bold and picturesque figure the young Governor makes as he advances to the side of the chieftain who is closing his public career. Youthful, well-balanced; a gentleman cow-puncher; a man of letters, a man of action; a clear-headed politician, a dashing soldier, he has the respect of those to whom ability, both mental and physical, appeals.'<sup>9</sup>

As the weeks of campaigning passed, Watterson became convinced that any hopes of a Bryan victory had long since been dissipated. The golden sunshine of prosperity, resulting largely from the war, warmed the land. The people were apathetic over the money issue and wholly indifferent, as Watterson knew they would be, to Bryan's excited cries against the use of force in the Philippines. Bryan's chief strength against McKinley in 1896 had been an ability to attract crowds wherever he went. But Bryan no longer held even that advantage. The truth of Watterson's comment that Roosevelt furnished to the Republican ticket the very qualities that McKinley lacked was only too apparent. The Rough Rider could outshout, outgrimace, outdraw Bryan at any crossroad gathering that he chose to visit.

Bryan's defeat did not plunge Watterson into the depths of gloom. He felt that Bryan, after this second defeat, could certainly now be eliminated from party leadership. Of greater importance to Watterson was the notice which the *Courier-Journal* now carried on its front page: 'Largest Morning Circulation in the South.' The paper had been saved and was prosperous again. Haldeman was already buying up lots for a new building.

## FOURTEEN

# The Progressive Era

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1900—1910

IN THE FIRST DECADE of the twentieth century America, surfeited with foreign conquest, turned once again to the problems of domestic reforms. It was the golden age of the muckraker. The feared Populist of the 1890's had now become the respectable Progressive who could everywhere find public support for his program, which called for municipal and state political reform, lower tariffs, legitimate checks on Big Business, and the conservation of natural resources. The nation had awakened after 1900 to the problem of a new urban society and few Americans could escape the excitement of this general housecleaning. For once the spirit of reform had been born in a time of general prosperity; there was not the biting necessity that accompanies a reform movement engendered by depression. On the contrary, this was a time of high optimism when men confidently expected to create of the twentieth century an American Periclean age.

Watterson's own conversion to the Progressivism of this decade is in itself indicative of how pervasive liberalism had become. Men of his political leaning, the former Gold Democrats and Cleveland conservatives, had once classed Populism along with anarchism as a doctrine that would destroy the American way of life. They had considered even the Interstate Commerce Act a daring intrusion

of the government into the field of private property, justifiable only on the grounds that the grants of land to the railroads had made them semi-public institutions. But now these same men could talk calmly and expectantly about pure-food laws, the licensing of businesses engaged in interstate trade, and the necessity for state wage and hour laws. Even old Andrew Carnegie, who during the Homestead strike had been to the Populists the very symbol of brutal capitalism, could write from his retreat in Scotland to congratulate Watterson on his editorial campaign against the steel trust (!) and to add that 'the end of it all must be a tribunal that will regulate prices.'<sup>1</sup>

Watterson, to be sure, still had close personal ties of friendship with those men who remained untouched by the liberalism of the decade: Thomas Fortune Ryan, August Belmont, and George Harvey, editor of *Harper's Weekly* and the *North American Review*. But he was making many new friends among the crusading literary muckrakers. Ida M. Tarbell was a frequent guest at his home and an even more frequent correspondent, asking for his views on past political events, material on the tariff, and articles for the *American Magazine*. William Marion Reedy, editor of the liberal *Mirror* was another close friend, who even attempted to win Watterson over to Henry George's single tax doctrine. And Watterson now regarded the vigorously liberal editor of the *New York World*, Frank I. Cobb, with the same high respect that he had once given to Dana, calling him the 'ablest editor in America.' These people could not help influencing his thinking, not only on particular issues and candidates, but on the changing role of government in an industrialized society.

Watterson's persistent battle against the protective tariff had, of course, long brought him into political opposition with the industrialists of the East, and as early as the 1890's in his lectures and editorials he had warned against the money 'evil,' as creating a new aristocracy more dangerous to the economic and political stability of the nation than the old slavocracy had been. His greatest editorial contribution to the Progressive movement was to make specific these general warnings of a decade before. He was particularly interested in the efforts of the conservationists to prevent America's great natural wealth from being exploited and wasted by a predatory few. His opposition to monopoly was perhaps best

expressed in a series of editorials supporting the Congressional investigation of the steel trust in 1911. When the investigation began, Watterson wrote:

The Trust — give a dog a bad name! — is here and it is here to stay. It can no more be extinguished than electricity, shut off than automobiles and air ships. That which is wanted is to cure it of evil doings and this perhaps may be done through such government supervision of it as will insure the same publicity as prevails with respect to the railways . . . We have had at Washington thirty years of constructive statesmanship aimed chiefly in the interest of the favored few. That they have profited by it to the tune of piling up mammoth fortunes in less than a generation goes without saying and is not surprising. Scarcely any of these enormous aggregations of wealth would bear close moral scrutiny . . . It is the system which is wrong, and the removal of the system to which we must address ourselves.<sup>2</sup>

Representative A. O. Stanley of Kentucky, chairman of the investigation committee, immediately wrote Watterson to say that 'your valuable aid will be a tower of strength to us in this work, and we cannot too strongly express our infinite gratification that you are following this inquiry with such genuine interest.' He thereafter kept Watterson fully informed on the progress of the investigation, so that the *Courier-Journal* might present the full case to its readers.

Much of the credit for this national rejuvenation, this returning faith of Americans in America, has been attributed to the character of the man who served as President during most of these first ten years of the twentieth century, and rightly so. For although Theodore Roosevelt was more a symbol of his age than a creator of it, he nevertheless became its greatest publicist and restored an importance to the office of the Chief Executive and a vigor to national life that had been missing since the administration of Lincoln.

Watterson's own relations with Theodore Roosevelt were as varied as with any public man that he encountered. From the first, he had been fascinated by this 'cowboy from Oyster Bay,' and he had watched Roosevelt's rapid rise in politics with the keenest interest and sympathy; yet no other man, not even Grant, did he more viciously excoriate once Roosevelt had achieved the Presidency. The man whom Watterson in 1900 had hailed as 'youthful,

well-balanced, a gentleman cowpuncher, a man of letters, and a clear-headed politician,' became as President in Watterson's opinion 'something of a crank; over-educated and overbred for practical affairs, affecting the cowboy among men of letters and the man of letters among cowboys; with more of audacity than common sense.' Watterson at one time called him 'as sweet a pirate as ever scuttled a ship.' Yet they remained close friends and it is safe to say that Watterson actually admired Roosevelt more than any other public figure of this time.

The two men were nearer alike in personality, temperament, and character than either would have cared to admit. Both were kindhearted, emotional, even romantically sentimental, and both in many ways remained boys in spirit. Life was a tremendous adventure, zestful and exciting. Neither ever outgrew his eagerness to climb one more hill to see what lay on the other side. But above all, both were superb showmen who knew how to capture the public's attention and affection.

It was because Roosevelt was such a colorful and irresistible target that Watterson missed no opportunity for shooting his editorial arrows in that direction. The very drabness of Hayes, Garfield, Harrison, and McKinley had made of each poor hunting for Watterson. But here at last was quarry worthy of the hunter, and Watterson never enjoyed the sport of editorial head-hunting more than in these years that Roosevelt served as his victim.

During Roosevelt's first administration it was the Panama Canal incident that provided most of the editorial excitement for Watterson. With John Hay continuing on from the McKinley administration as Roosevelt's Secretary of State, Watterson should have had a closer connection than usual with the State Department and with foreign affairs in general, for his friendship with Hay, dating back to the early 1870's, had been continued. In his autobiography, Watterson remembered with great affection those evenings in the 1880's when, on his frequent visits to Washington, he would call at Henry Adams's house to converse with those 'Three Musketeers of Culture,' as Watterson called Hay, Adams, and Henry Cabot Lodge. It was, Watterson remembered, 'worthwhile to let them have the floor and to hear them talk; Lodge, cool and wary, as a politician should be; Hay, helter-skelter, the real man of the world crossed

on a Western stock; and Adams, something of a litterateur, a statesman and a cynic.'

Hay, as Secretary of State under McKinley, had had Watterson's confidence and editorial support in his efforts to come to some sort of treaty agreement with Great Britain in regard to an isthmian canal, which Watterson hoped would be in Nicaragua. But Hay as Secretary of State under Roosevelt was quite a different person. Actually, Roosevelt was his own Secretary of State, and Hay merely carried out the orders of his chief. Roosevelt had become convinced that Panama was the proper place to dig a canal and was prepared to ride roughshod over the objections of those who favored Nicaragua.

Senator John Tyler Morgan, an old Confederate cavalry man from Alabama, was the leader of the Nicaragua forces in the Senate. Elected to the Senate in 1874, he had long been interested in the possibility of an isthmian canal in order to stimulate Southern trade and was the chairman of the Senate Committee on Inter-oceanic Canals. He now found his position of leadership being challenged by Roosevelt and Hay. Morgan had been a friend of Watterson since the dark days of 1864, and he now turned to him as one of his confidants, writing long letters, frequently up to twelve or fifteen pages in length, explaining in detail every incident related to the canal and every example of Roosevelt's 'deceit and treachery.' It was because of Morgan's full exposure of the canal story, much of it confidential in nature, that Watterson was able to deliver his attacks on the Administration.

Roosevelt's methods of obtaining canal rights in Panama were to bring Morgan and Watterson to the near boiling point. A revolution in Panama for independence from Colombia was conveniently staged and, supported by an American warship, was brought to a successful conclusion in less than twenty-four hours. Two days later, the United States recognized Panama, a treaty was signed, and before Morgan could even raise a voice in protest the forces supporting the Panama route had achieved a smashing victory. We got our Canal Zone, Panama got its somewhat shaky independence, and the directors of the defunct New French Canal Company, headed by M. Bunau-Varilla, got \$40 million, the price they had put on the franchise rights they held in Panama. All of

this had been accomplished, to be sure, at the cost of another nation's humiliation and the increased suspicion of all Latin America toward the United States.

Watterson believed that the Panama venture showed such a shocking disregard of international law that the American people, once they knew the facts, would rise up in their awful wrath to repudiate this reckless administration. Morgan promised him material regarding the Panama deal that would 'contain Greek fire, that will burn Roosevelt's ships above and below the water line.'<sup>3</sup> Watterson proceeded to enlighten the public as to the true facts. In editorial after editorial he continued his attacks against the Panama swindle. But for all of Watterson's sound and fury, the general public refused to be shocked by the Panama venture. They might laugh at his calling Bunau-Varilla, 'Vanilla-Bean,' or the Panama Canal Company, the 'Forty Thieves of the Forty Millions.' They might even wonder along with Watterson 'what has happened to the forty million dollars?' But no one cared enough to attempt to find an answer. Roosevelt, Watterson learned, had been right all along; the public wanted a canal, and for them, as well as for their President, the end justified the means.

The Panama Canal affair reveals the political difficulty that faced not only Watterson but the entire Democratic party in the Roosevelt era — the general satisfaction of the public with the administration. Roosevelt gave them enough reform — or at least talked enough reform — to satisfy their Progressive inclinations. He gave them international prestige and, above all, he gave them excitement. There was, as a journalist friend wrote to Watterson, 'rather too much of this era of good feeling and of feeling good.'<sup>4</sup> One could not excite the people sufficiently to 'turn the rascals out' no matter how frequently one rang the alarms.

But there was one segment of the population that watched the antics of Roosevelt with some uneasiness and showed itself to be not entirely satisfied with the talk about 'the malefactors of wealth' and with the waving of the Big Stick. Eastern financial interests had never quite overcome their shock upon hearing of the assassination of McKinley and had never been able to allay their fears that they were carrying at the head of their party a very uncertain and easily ignitable explosive.

These Republicans had their counterparts within the Democratic



party — the Ryans, Belmonts, and Harveys, who were as equally unhappy over Bryan's control of their party. Following Bryan's second defeat in 1900, these few wealthy Democrats were determined to give the party new leadership. They argued that since it would be impossible to compete with Roosevelt in promising social reform, the Democratic party should become a real party of opposition by purging itself of Bryanism and presenting itself to the nation as the party of conservatism in 1904.

It was while this group was looking the field over for a safe and sane candidate that Watterson permitted his name to appear in the lists as a possibility. The *New York Herald*, to be sure, had for the past twenty years been suggesting Watterson as a Presidential candidate, but heretofore he had shown no real political ambition. He had once written, 'Office seeking is always disgusting,' and repeatedly held up the sad fate of Greeley, Raymond, and Forney who had deserted their chosen field of journalism to follow the will-o'-the-wisp of public office.

It came to the public as a surprise then to read the announcement in 1901 that 'Henry Watterson will be a candidate for Governor of Kentucky in 1903 and may be a candidate for President in 1904.'<sup>5</sup> Some of Watterson's friends, to be sure, maintained that they had long suspected his interest in office. The American actor Otis Skinner remembered that during an evening spent in Louisville he was surprised to hear Watterson say as they walked home from an after-theater supper, 'Boys, it's coming; it is in the air! Watch the developments. As sure as we stand here I am going to be the next governor of Kentucky. From the governor's chair there is just one more step — the presidency of the United States. It has been written.'<sup>6</sup>

The excitement over Watterson's availability was short-lived, however, for although Watterson had succeeded in re-establishing himself and his paper within the party, the state organization was certainly not ready to put him at the head of its ticket. In particular, Governor J. C. W. Beckham, Goebel's successor and an ambitious young man, had no intentions of permitting Kentucky's most noted editor to snatch the prize from him. When Watterson returned from Europe in the spring of 1902, he found that the move to make him governor had been checked by Beckham's effective political machine. Realizing he faced defeat at the state convention and political

ostracism once again, Watterson withdrew his name from consideration a full year before the nominating convention met. But he never forgot Beckham's opposition to him. It was the beginning of the famous intra-party feud between these two men that was to last for the rest of Watterson's life.

The Eastern Democrats finally settled on Judge Alton B. Parker of the New York Court of Appeals as the conservative candidate for 1904. Parker was sold to the Democratic national convention on the basis that he would attract Republican votes, and, more important, Republican money. But it proved to be a hopeless campaign, as Watterson felt it would be. The Democrats belatedly awoke to the fact that if they could not compete with Roosevelt in promising social reform, neither could they compete with the Old Guard faction of the Republican party in conservatism. It came as no great surprise that Roosevelt defeated Parker more soundly than Bryan had ever been defeated. This was the worst defeat for the Democrats since 1872; only one name again seemed important — Bryan. When all else failed, there was always Bryan, and most Democrats seemed to prefer losing with Bryan than losing with any other man.

Watterson was one of the first to state publicly what most Democrats felt. Eighteen months after the defeat of Parker, the *Courier-Journal* was back in the Bryan camp. Watterson himself indicated in a magazine article written in the fall of 1906 that his espousal of Bryan was based on the assumption that Roosevelt would once again be the nominee of the Republican party in 1908.<sup>7</sup>

This article gives expression to the curious political phobia that affected Watterson's political thinking throughout his life: the fear of a Presidential third term. Let any man hold the office of Chief Executive for one month longer than his first four-year term, and Watterson would become convinced that his ambitions would lead him to seek a third term, then life tenancy. He believed that the country was not safe from any President until he was safely laid in his grave. He had once facetiously remarked that the only solution for the problem of what to do with ex-Presidents, for whom any other occupation would seem anticlimactic, was to shoot them.<sup>8</sup>

Theodore Roosevelt presented a particular danger. Not only was he the youngest President in our history, but also one of the most popular. Technically, re-election in 1908 would not be a third term.

No man had ever seemed to enjoy the Presidency more. What was more natural than to expect him to seek another term? Watterson devoted most of his editorial writing to this theme during Roosevelt's second term.

In January 1908 there appeared in the *Cosmopolitan Magazine* a curious little tale by Watterson called 'A Mid Winter Fantasy,' purportedly an account of a meeting that he had had with a lonely, slightly unbalanced old woman in Georgia. He had known her, he said, as a beautiful young girl in Washington in the years before the Civil War. The death of her lover in the battle of Chickamauga had left her without hope. For years she had lived with only her memories of a Southern aristocracy. Now when Watterson saw her again after many years, he saw a new light in her face, and it developed from her conversation that the change in her attitude was attributable to President Roosevelt. Because he was the son of Martha Bullock of Georgia and nephew of the Confederate hero, Admiral Bullock, he represented at last the South returned to political power. And with his great Caesarean ambitions, he would replace with a monarchy the miserable failure that was the Republic and restore the Southern aristocracy. 'We shall have a king — ultimately an emperor — and a rebel king and emperor, Southern to the marrow of his bones! That is why my youth has come back to me, my friend, for the stars assure me that the cause was not lost, as you thought it, in 1865,' she concluded. And Watterson had added cryptically, 'if out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, why not out of the fancy of this crazed old woman of the South!' The story created quite a political stir.

A few weeks later when Watterson was in Washington, Roosevelt called him to the White House. 'The first thing I want to ask you,' the President demanded, 'is whether that old woman was a real person or a figment of your imagination?'

When Watterson assured him that she was indeed but a fictional character, Roosevelt said very soberly, 'Henry Watterson, I want to talk to you seriously about this third term business. I will not deny that I have thought of the thing — thought of it a great deal.'

Watterson's response to this admission was: 'Mr. President, you know that I am your friend, and as your friend I tell you that if you go out of here the fourth of next March placing your friend Taft in your place you will make a good third to Washington and

Lincoln; but if you allow these wild fellows willy-nilly to induce you, in spite of your declaration, to accept nomination, substantially for a third term, all issues will be merged in that issue, and in my judgment you will not carry a state in the Union.'

Roosevelt seemed impressed and with some feeling replied, 'It may be so. At any rate I will not do it. If the convention nominates me I will promptly send my declination. If it nominates me and adjourns I will call it together again and it will have to name somebody else.'<sup>9</sup>

Watterson left the White House with his fears somewhat allayed, but it was not until the Republicans had actually nominated Taft that he was to have even a temporary respite from his fears of Roosevelt's political ambitions.

It had been a foregone conclusion to most of the country following the disastrous Parker campaign that Bryan would be the Democratic nominee in 1908. Watterson had seemingly made his position clear before he left for Spain in the winter of 1906. Upon his return the following spring, however, he unexpectedly began the promotion of the candidacy of John A. Johnson, the young, able, liberal governor of Minnesota.

The reason for this diversionary tactic by Watterson at a time when nearly the entire party was already committed to Bryan is not clear. Perhaps Watterson only wanted to stir up the hornet's nest for a little fun or perhaps he hoped that by building up a potential rival, he could force from Bryan, who by this time was giving the impression that he owned the party, some concessions in regard to his stated program. Whatever the reason, he soon realized that the Democratic party had received his suggestion of Johnson with cool indifference. By December 1907 Watterson had rejoined the Bryan camp. But if he had boomed Johnson in order to tame Bryan, the threat seemed to have worked. His assurance that he was dealing with a 'new Bryan' came when the Democratic nominee wrote soon after the convention to ask Watterson to 'caution the papers that are with us to simply ignore the question upon which Democrats have differed. There is no use in discussing the silver question, because it is not in the campaign.'<sup>10</sup>

It was the usual Bryan campaign, although somewhat better organized than the previous ones. Watterson, at Bryan's suggestion, was made chairman of a Committee of the Daily Press, and along

with key Democratic editors across the nation, he worked hard at giving Bryan a better press than he had ever had before. The New York *World* and *Herald* carried Watterson's more important editorials, and never before had Watterson achieved such a vast sounding board to amplify his political sentiments across the nation.

In the early weeks of the campaign there was a general air of optimism in Democratic circles, but this faded with the campaign. The upsetting economic situation in 1907 had turned out to be a mild banker's panic. The dinner pail was still full, God was in His Heaven, Roosevelt was on the wing, and Taft looked good for the White House. It was the oft-repeated tale once more. Bryan, Watterson wrote, 'led sublimely,' but Taft won the election.

Watterson's old friend John Bigelow had some blunt advice for him following Bryan's third defeat:

You made Bryan a candidate. *Bryan's nomination elected Taft*. . . . Now it is up to you to make Bryan withdraw from the field of candidates for the Presidency and to make him useful to the Democratic party and to the country, which he can be if he is as sensible as you think him to be and as I hope he is. . . .

We ought to have nominated a sensible man from the South for our candidate, and if you can find a man from that quarter of the horizon who has not too many crude notions in his mind at one time . . . we can win with him in 1912.<sup>11</sup>

Watterson, when he read Bigelow's letter, was already looking for that man. He was one of the few Democrats not completely demoralized by the defeat of 1908, and like Bigelow, was confident that the Democrats could win in 1912.

Watterson's predictions early in 1909 of a triumphant Democracy in 1912, predictions which seemed so preposterous to the exultant Republicans, were based on his understanding of the personality of Theodore Roosevelt. Watterson was not convinced that Roosevelt's political ambitions were satiated when the latter left the White House for his grand tour of Africa and Europe. Although his successor had been of Roosevelt's own choosing, Watterson knew both men too well to believe that Roosevelt would remain long satisfied with his sub-lieutenant whom the people had elevated at his wish to the Presidency. The genial, easygoing Taft, who believed that government should follow hesitantly the will of the people, and then only within the narrow confines established by

law and tradition, would soon prove himself to be mentally, morally, and spiritually, poles apart from his predecessor. Watterson stated flatly that when the impatient Roosevelt awoke to a full realization of these basic differences, the resulting explosion would be something to kindle the hopes of all true Democrats.

When Watterson announced in the columns of the *Courier-Journal* his belief in the inevitability of a Taft-Roosevelt head-on collision, the jeers of the nation were loud and prolonged. Men who remembered his statement that the renomination of Cleveland in 1892 would but lead the Democratic party 'through a slaughterhouse to an open grave,' now recalled that unfortunate prediction and warned him that his crystal ball was once again badly befogged.

The New York *World*, in particular, was scornful of Watterson's predictions. Watterson had long been in close political agreement with that distinguished journal, but at his suggestion of a Taft-Roosevelt break, the two papers parted company. The New York *World* declared that Watterson's reasoning was but wishful thinking: 'Roosevelt cannot quarrel with Taft without confessing that Taft was a mistake . . . When did Theodore Roosevelt ever plead guilty to a blunder? When did he ever lay a desecrating hand upon the doctrine of his own infallibility? Can the Colonel [Watterson] recall an instance?'<sup>12</sup>

Watterson at once answered in the *Courier-Journal* that he was positive that there was 'a well-organized conspiracy to make a breach between the President that is and the President that was,' and that it would not take too much persuading on his friends' part for Roosevelt, intoxicated with his triumphs in Europe, to return like Napoleon from Elba to demand the throne back. So sure was Watterson in this belief that:

albeit opposed on principle to games of chance, we have a wager to offer the *World*, not of money but of wittles, with maybe a drop or two unbeknownst to the W.C.T.U. to wash 'em down, to wit: a dinner for twenty-four, to be given in Washington City, District of Columbia, on or before the first Monday of December 1911, the *World* to invite twelve, the *Courier-Journal* twelve, the proposition to be that Taft and Roosevelt are at daggers' points, by the *Courier-Journal* in the affirmative, the *World* in the negative.<sup>13</sup>

The *World* accepted Watterson's challenge, and the bet was on.

Watterson proceeded to do his utmost to win his own wager.

Knowing full well that of all public policies conservation of national resources was nearest to Roosevelt's heart, Watterson joined Norman Hapgood of *Collier's Weekly* in denouncing Taft as betrayer of the Roosevelt conservation policy. This accusation concerned the celebrated Ballinger-Pinchot affair. When the Taft administration was less than six months old, Richard A. Ballinger, Taft's Secretary of Interior, was accused by one of his subordinates, Louis R. Glavis, of deliberately allowing fraudulent private claims to be staked out in Alaskan coal fields that had been set aside as national reserves. Because Glavis had taken his charges over the head of his superior to the public, Taft promptly authorized Ballinger to dismiss Glavis. At this point, Gifford Pinchot, as Chief Forester in the Department of Agriculture, came to the support of Glavis and was also dismissed on the grounds of insubordination. This was material enough for Hapgood and Watterson, for unfortunately for Taft, Pinchot had been a particular court favorite of Roosevelt. From 6 November 1909 on, for the next three months, the two editors did not allow this valuable controversy to be forgotten.

Although a joint Congressional investigation by a strictly partisan vote of 7 to 5 whitewashed Ballinger and upheld the dismissal of Glavis and Pinchot, the damage to Taft had been done. Coming as it did so soon after Taft's approval of the notorious Payne-Aldrich bill which had made a mockery out of the campaign promise to reduce the tariff, *Collier's* exposé of the Ballinger-Pinchot affair seemed but further evidence to progressives in both parties that Taft had sold out to the predatory interests. Pinchot hurried off to Africa to tell Roosevelt the whole story. The entering wedge had been made.

But it took no Pinchot or Payne tariff bill to drive Taft and Roosevelt apart. As Watterson had said from the first, the two men by their very natures were incompatible, and the real dispute was based on a personality difference, not issues. Long before the 'first Monday of December, 1911,' it was apparent to the whole nation that Watterson had won his bet. Rather belatedly the *World* accepted its defeat. As an explanation, it wrote:

Frankly we were shocked by the view that Colonel Watterson took of the ultimate relations between Taft and Roosevelt. It seemed too selfish and cold-blooded to be true. It belongs to the politics of Talleyrand and Metternich, not to that long line of American states-

men who established and maintained republican institutions . . . The record is complete and there is nothing further for us to say. To you Colonel Watterson, *The World* presents its respects . . . We who are about to dine, salute you!<sup>14</sup>

Watterson answered with courtly condescension,

If the Editor of the *World* had known that the Editor of the *Courier-Journal* is the only child of the seventh daughter of the seventh son in a straight line from Shohr Thyng, in early ages the boss prophet of Caledonia . . . our esteemed contemporary would not have ventured upon predestined trial of anticipatory mind-reading.<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately the dinner was never held, but for Watterson, it was victory enough to witness the division of the Republicans.

Since Roosevelt's open break with Taft presented a great opportunity to the Democrats in 1912, it became extremely important that the party choose the right candidate. Watterson had begun his search to find a new leader to replace the thrice-defeated Bryan as soon as the votes in 1908 had been counted. It was this quest that led him on to his last effort at President-making.

Watterson in 1910 was not, contrary to some accounts, looking for a 'safe and sane' candidate of the Parker brand for 1912. He had not been keen on Parker in 1904, and by now, busy with his campaigns for national conservation and effective trust regulation, he was deeply committed to the Progressive movement. His first choice for the nomination was the reform mayor of New York City, William J. Gaynor, a favorite of the muckraking school of Ida Tarbell and Lincoln Steffens.

It was at this time that Watterson received a letter from George Harvey, who spoke for the conservatives within the Democratic party. It was a typically cryptic Harvey letter, filled with tantalizing hints of great events to come. He agreed with Watterson that the Republican party was hopelessly divided:

Meanwhile, there is a real movement on our own inside. It is quiet as it should be, but the house is being cleaned. . . . I don't give a damn about Bryan. . . . We have the National Committee and are on the job. Do lend us a hand! We are going straight ahead to a hell of a victory. You see.

My love to you, dear friend. And do write me often. I am simply charged with the electricity of things *sure to come*.<sup>16</sup>



Harvey's secret turned out to be no secret at all to anyone who had been reading his magazines since 1906. It was simply his determination to make the president of Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson, the next President of the United States. As a first step he sought the governorship of New Jersey for Wilson in 1910, and he wanted Watterson's support. Watterson at first showed little interest in Harvey's plan, but did agree to come to Harvey's home in Deal, New Jersey, on 26 June to meet Wilson. Harvey also invited James Smith, former United States Senator and still the political boss of Newark.

Harvey had already sold Smith on Wilson's availability for governor in 1910. Faced with a possible revolt of young progressives who were determined to reform New Jersey's lax corporation laws and clean out the corruption in the state house, Smith was looking for a 'respectable' candidate. Under these circumstances it had not been difficult to convince him the president of Princeton was the right man. Now Smith was coming to see what he had bought.

The chief purpose of this dinner meeting was to persuade Wilson to agree to what Harvey had already negotiated, the Democratic nomination for governor as the first step to the White House. Harvey hoped that Watterson would be impressed with Wilson and would, with his facile tongue and contagious enthusiasm, assist in the persuasion.

Wilson at this historic dinner played his part well. He quickly captivated both Watterson and Smith. Watterson in particular was an easy conquest, for he was delighted to meet his famous 'cousin.' Although the relationship was very distant — Mrs. Wilson was a cousin of Rebecca — Watterson always referred to Wilson as 'closely connected to me by marriage.' A favorite story in the Watterson household was the time one of Rebecca's relatives, Dr. Tom Hoyt, visited cousin Ellen Wilson. Being accustomed to the domestic help of the South, he had left his shoes outside his door for shining. The Wilsons, however, had no maid service, and so Wilson had carefully shined the shoes himself before he retired.<sup>17</sup> With such friendly family stories to influence him, Watterson had come expecting to like Wilson and was not disappointed.

After dinner the men proceeded to business. Smith, eager to obtain Wilson's consent to be the gubernatorial candidate, pressed for

a decision. Wilson could not give Smith and Harvey a definite answer that night, but that he was obviously interested was indicated in the letter he wrote to David B. Jones, one of his closest friends on the Princeton Board of Trustees, the next day.

Last evening I dined with Colonel Watterson of the Louisville Courier-Journal, Colonel Harvey of Harper's Weekly, and James Smith, the reputed Democratic boss of New Jersey. Whatever one may think of Colonel Watterson, there can be no doubt of his immense political influence in his section of the country, and indeed throughout the whole South. He came on to make my acquaintance and before the evening was over said that, if New Jersey would make me Governor, he would agree to take off his coat and work for my nomination in 1912. The opportunity seems most unusual.<sup>18</sup>

Harvey's dinner party had proved a success. All four of the principals were satisfied. For 'Boss' Jim Smith there was the delightful prospect of being another Mark Hanna; for Wilson there was the 'unusual opportunity' for public service to which he had early dedicated himself; and for Watterson, a definite interest in this scholar who talked like a statesman. As for Harvey's motives in so zealously promoting the political fortunes of Wilson, no adequate explanation has ever been given. He enjoyed playing the part of Warwick, as every reader of his magazines knew. He was determined, moreover, to kill the influence of Bryan in the party, and sincerely believed he had at last found the right conservative to do it. He had been one of the first politicians to see in Wilson's political treatises the reflection of an exceptional mind and spirit. Harvey's difficulty was that he wanted Wilson to be two contradictory persons. He wanted a man strong enough to carry the whole party to victory, and at the same time, he wanted a puppet who would dutifully move as he pulled the strings. In Wilson, he had found the man but not the puppet.

Within a week, Smith had the answer that he had hoped for, Wilson's consent to have his name presented to the New Jersey Democrats for governor. Smith and Harvey at once began work to get the nomination for Wilson. This pre-convention campaign for Wilson's nomination proved to be much more difficult than Harvey and Smith had expected, for the progressives were suspicious of anyone, even the president of Princeton, who was offered up to them by the New Jersey bosses. But the ward heelers were brought

into line; the Smith machine worked; and at the nominating convention in September, Wilson won handily on the first ballot.

Watterson, meanwhile, back in Louisville remained silent for a time on the whole question of Wilson's candidacy. He was still more or less committed to Gaynor, but the more he heard of Wilson the better he liked him. Early in August, Gaynor was seriously wounded by a former city employee. A week after this attempted assassination, which seemed to remove Gaynor as a possible candidate, Watterson wrote in the *Courier-Journal*, 'There's a speck no bigger than a man's hand — an exhalation, as it were, rising above the towers of Princeton — forming in the clouds that gather about the rising sun the letters, "Woodrow Wilson." ' <sup>19</sup>

When Wilson won the nomination the following month, Harvey exultantly telegraphed the news to Watterson in these words: 'It's up to you now, Marse Henry.' <sup>20</sup> Watterson at once replied. 'Hurrah for Wilson. Am going to do my best.' <sup>21</sup> At seventy, Watterson could still enjoy the game of President-making. Furthermore, he was now convinced that he had found a great man, 'the intellectual leader of Democracy as Mr. Tilden was thirty-six years ago.' <sup>22</sup> From Watterson there could be no higher praise.

## FIFTEEN

# The Manhattan Club Incident

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1911-1912

THE STATE AND CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS of 1910 clearly revealed the political strength of the Progressive movement. A decade that had been marked by the tireless propaganda of the muckrakers for municipal and state reforms and by the public utterances of Roosevelt and Bryan directed against the malefactors of wealth had reached its culmination in this election. No victory loomed larger in the eyes of the Democratic party than Woodrow Wilson's majority of 50,000 votes in New Jersey. His campaign had attracted national attention, for the more Wilson talked, the more attentively the progressives listened. He had given his pledge that he was a free man who would not submit 'to the dictation of any person or persons, special interest or organization.'<sup>1</sup> And in spite of his questionable Smith machine sponsorship, when he spoke he sounded like a man who meant what he said.

The first person to appreciate fully Wilson's sincerity was Boss Smith, who let it be known soon after the election that he would be a candidate before the New Jersey legislature for the United States Senate. Wilson at once protested, claiming that he had consented to run for governor only after being assured by Smith that he had no further political ambitions. When Smith refused to withdraw,

Wilson realized that he must take a stand against the machine that had put him in power.

The story of Wilson's fight against the bosses to obtain the election of James Martine over Smith is significant in showing that of the three men who met with him at Deal in June to start him on his political career, it was only Watterson who supported him in this first struggle to prove that he was the independent and liberal leader for which all three men had said they were searching. After failing in his efforts to get Smith to withdraw voluntarily, Wilson turned to Harvey and Watterson to ask them to use their influence. Harvey, who was attempting to swing political bosses across the nation into line for 1912, could only regard this threatening show-down battle between Wilson and Smith with dismay. Bosses expected loyalty, and Wilson was showing far too much independence. As a consequence, Harvey did nothing to persuade Smith to withdraw, nor did he once mention the senatorial fight in the columns of his magazine during the weeks ahead.

Watterson, however, could see that Wilson was right when the governor-elect wrote, 'It is a national as well as a State question. If the independent Republicans who in this State voted for me are not to be attracted to us they will assuredly turn again, in desperation, to Mr. Roosevelt, and the chance of a generation will be lost to the Democracy . . .'<sup>2</sup> Watterson at once went to Smith and urged him to withdraw. Watterson's efforts were futile, but at least he had demonstrated his respect for Wilson's judgment in casting his lot with the progressives against the reactionary interests in the party. Wilson recognized this when he wrote Watterson in December just prior to Watterson's departure for Europe, 'I do not know anything that has heartened me more than your friendship and counsel. I want to express my genuine gratitude and my very warm friendship.'<sup>3</sup> To give emphasis to his words, Wilson went to New York to give Watterson his personal best wishes for a good trip.

Watterson by January 1911 was thus the only one of the original triumvirate that had launched Wilson on his remarkable political career who was still enthusiastic in his support. Smith emerged from his public battle with Wilson a defeated and bitter man, while the still silent Harvey pondered over these events with a growing suspicion that he had chosen the wrong man. Watterson, however,

sent back from Europe an enthusiastic shout for Wilson's victory in the senatorial fight, 'First blood for Wilson! . . . Smith is a fool — an old fool — and deserves what he has got.' <sup>4</sup>

When Watterson returned home in May, the Wilson boom was in full swing. William Rockhill Nelson, editor of the *Kansas City Star*, greeted Watterson with these words:

Welcome home again! . . . Henry, the Democratic ship is wobbling more or less. It needs your firm hand at the tiller. You are the only man in the country who can hold her straight — thanks to our training back in the old days. So hurry along.

Seriously, though, I believe it is mighty fortunate for the party that you are coming back now. Everybody is talking about Woodrow Wilson. If you should take charge just at this time there isn't the slightest doubt in the world that you could swing the South for him and that he would get the nomination. If he keeps on as well as he has been doing I don't see how he could fight *The Star* off and keep it from supporting him for President . . . Of course there is no telling what changes another year may bring. But he looks like a winner. . . .

We'll elect Wilson and you can be ambassador to France and I'll come over and board with you and we'll foregather again in the *Cafe Voisin*. It's up to you, Henry.<sup>5</sup>

Wilson also welcomed Watterson back with great enthusiasm, regretting only that Watterson had passed through the East when he was away so that he had no opportunity to see him, since he wished to have 'a long talk over the many matters which now fill my head, and in some degree perplex my thought.' <sup>6</sup>

In July, soon after his extended tour of the West and South, Wilson came to Lexington to address the Kentucky Bar Association, and Watterson took advantage of this visit to open a full-fledged campaign for Wilson's Presidential nomination. He wrote in the *Courier-Journal* the morning after Wilson's address in Lexington,

Woodrow Wilson stands before the people today as that rarest of phenomena, a public man who, elevated to office, faithfully keeps his pre-election promises . . . Since he has put on the robes of office he has displayed qualities that reveal his equipment for a part in public affairs for which no other man in the nation seems equally fitted. . . .

The *Courier-Journal* cannot think of Woodrow Wilson without recalling Samuel J. Tilden. How much alike they seem as doctrinaire Democrats; as faithful and courageous party leaders; as practical and eminent officials; how much they think alike, and talk alike, and write alike.<sup>7</sup>

Desha Breckinridge, editor of the *Lexington Herald*, with whom Wilson had stayed, wrote Watterson soon afterward suggesting that a resolution be presented to the Democratic state convention, which was to convene in August, endorsing Wilson's candidacy. Watterson, however, hesitated at this juncture and advised Breckinridge to do nothing in regard to the state convention at present.

Watterson's desire to postpone action on Breckinridge's proposal did not arise from any lessening of his enthusiasm for Wilson, but rather lay in the fact that he knew he faced an ugly situation at the state convention. His old foe, J. C. W. Beckham, whose try for the United States Senate in 1908 Watterson had blocked, was at that moment organizing his forces in order to humiliate Watterson at the convention.

The point of issue between the two men in 1911, as free silver had been earlier, was the county option law, the favorite device of the temperance crowd to achieve gradual prohibition by working through the county votes. Watterson had long been a foe of prohibition under any guise believing it to be a dangerous form of sumptuary law, generally unenforceable, and if enforced, unconstitutional in its restrictions on the individual's personal freedom. Because of Watterson's well-known views, Beckham was determined to force through the convention a resolution which would put the Democratic party on record as favoring the extension of the option law to those counties which had not yet voted on the liquor question. It was generally conceded by both sides that the vote of the convention on the local option issue would determine whether Beckham or Watterson controlled the state Democratic organization.

It was while both sides were jockeying for position in the last days before the convention that Watterson realized that the Beckham forces had captured James McCreary, former Senator and now the only real contender for the Democratic nomination for governor. This was to Watterson as unforgivable as it was surprising, for McCreary was an old friend, and the man in whose interest, Watterson always maintained, he had first broken with Beckham. Not content with stealing Watterson's gubernatorial candidate, the Beckham men, seeing clearly in 1911 which way the wind was blowing, had come out for Wilson for President. Watterson's motives in cautioning Breckinridge to lie low for the

time being were thus apparent. He wished to delay convention action on Wilson until after he had crushed Beckham in order that Wilson could be presented to the Kentucky Democracy as his and not Beckham's candidate.

Unfortunately, however, he was not able to crush the Beckham organization. Working through McCreary, Beckham so organized the convention that Watterson never had a chance. Beckham himself was made chairman of the Committee on Resolutions and wrote the platform, which contained the local option provision. Watterson tried to force through a substitute resolution against the extension of local option, but by a vote of 667 to 514, he was defeated and the Beckham platform was accepted.

Watterson left the convention sorely tempted to wash his hands of the party and to retreat into isolation. After one day's reflection, however, he came out in support of the ticket and the platform. Two considerations influenced his decision to stay by the party: first and of paramount importance, was the bitter memory of 1897; and second, but by no means negligible, was his determination to make Woodrow Wilson President. Writing to Desha Breckinridge soon after the convention, Watterson emphasized this point:

I am afraid we are in for a spell of mongrelized Tennessee politics in Kentucky. There is not the least doubt that the Knott-Beckham Combine expects next year to swing into leadership upon the coattails of Woodrow Wilson, as Beckham, Haly and Co., have swung this year upon the coattails of McCreary . . . To me personally nothing political much matters. I shall do my best for Woodrow Wilson . . . I should hate to have to work either tandem, or in harness, with Beckham and Knott; but I have done it before and can and will if need be do it again.

Poor old McCreary! But whatever else could have been expected of a man who dyes his hair at 73? <sup>8</sup>

With that pardonable parting shot at McCreary, Watterson attempted to bury his anger in the interest of Wilson.

During the late summer and early fall of 1911, Watterson, resolute enough even to work alongside the hated Beckham, was tireless in his efforts to build up the Wilson organization. With Josephus Daniels in North Carolina, James Gray, editor of the *Atlanta Journal*, and Senator Culberson in Texas, Watterson was building up an effective machine in the South. Much was made of Wilson's Southern birth and early teaching career in Georgia. These men



promised that Wilson's election to the Presidency would be a restoration of Southern political leadership in the nation.

The Wilson campaign was at this stage in its development becoming increasingly the handiwork of the political amateurs, zealous young men such as Joseph Tumulty and William McAdoo. Although they added youthful enthusiasm to the movement, they did not have access to men of wealth, and Watterson took upon himself the task of raising money. It was not an easy job, for as Wilson became daily more popular with the liberals he was at the same time losing favor with his early backers, the Eastern financiers and political bosses. Hence Watterson's offer to raise money was accepted gratefully by Wilson's new campaign manager, William McCombs, a young New York lawyer, inexperienced in the game of politics but learning quickly that money as well as idealism was essential.

Among the names that suggested themselves to Watterson was Thomas Fortune Ryan, the wealthy financier and frequent 'angel' of the Democratic campaign fund. As early as 1906 Ryan had expressed an interest in Wilson, and in December 1910 he had said he would be willing to give financial support to his fellow Virginian when Harvey and Watterson made such a request of him. McComb, according to Watterson's later testimony, was delighted at the prospect.

So unsavory a reputation did Ryan have among the liberals of the country, however, that Wilson requested Watterson not to solicit funds from him. Watterson himself felt that 'none of the mammoth fortunes will bear too close a scrutiny,' and could see little difference in money that came from Ryan from that which came from Cyrus McCormick, which Wilson was willing to accept; nevertheless, he respected Wilson's wishes and dropped Ryan from his list. This incident, trivial at the time, had great significance in the dispute that was to arise.

Watterson continued his efforts at fund-raising. At the suggestion of Josiah Quincy, former mayor of Boston, he turned his attention to Frederic C. Penfield, a career diplomat under Cleveland and now the husband of an extremely wealthy woman. 'Fred is somewhat too conservative or sensitive, I think on the subject of giving financial assistance,' Quincy wrote Watterson, and expressed the hope that Watterson would be able to obtain some money from Penfield at that time rather than after the nomination had been

made. Quincy also asked Watterson if he could arrange 'a rather delicate matter of having the Penfields invite Governor Wilson to luncheon or dinner.'<sup>9</sup>

Watterson was successful in satisfying both of Quincy's requests. The dinner was arranged just prior to Penfield's departure for Europe. On the morning after the dinner, Penfield wrote to Watterson, 'What a good time we had last night. The Jersey Governor certainly looks good to me.' So good in fact that Penfield contributed \$12,000 to the pre-convention campaign fund.<sup>10</sup>

In view of the later charges by Wilson's followers that a Harvey-Watterson conspiracy against Wilson existed prior to the famous Manhattan Club meeting on 7 December 1911, it is significant to note that the Penfield dinner at which Watterson successfully won over Penfield to Wilson's support was held on 6 December, the evening before the Watterson-Harvey-Wilson encounter! If there was a conspiracy against Wilson, Watterson was certainly unaware of it.

But George Harvey, meanwhile, had changed considerably in his attitude toward his former protégé. Harvey's early uneasiness as he listened to Wilson campaign for the liberal votes in 1910 had grown into alarm as he saw Wilson translate those campaign promises into vigorous and bold action, beginning with his fight with Smith and continuing on through his successful demands upon the New Jersey Assembly for a primary election law, an invigorated public utilities act, and employers' liability legislation. With his closest business associates growing increasingly hostile toward Wilson, Harvey found himself in an almost impossible position. To withdraw his support from Wilson now after having been his earliest sponsor would make himself appear ridiculous before the nation. Yet to continue that support would be contradictory to all that he had always held most dear. It was not pleasant for him to remember that he had found and built up Wilson in order to kill off Populism in the Democratic party only to discover that his political ward had turned out to be a Bryan in sheepskin all the while.

It was a worried and unhappy Harvey who in November 1911 placed at the head of his editorial page in *Harper's*: 'For President: Woodrow Wilson.' He must already have been looking for a way

out, but to save face, the initiative for his withdrawal must come from Wilson himself.

By early December, Harvey was desperate enough to reveal his unhappiness to Wilson's newly discovered supporter from Texas, Colonel E. M. House. Dining with Harvey on 5 December, House was surprised to hear Harvey say that 'everybody south of Canal Street was in a frenzy against Governor Wilson' and that 'they were bringing all sorts of pressure upon him [Harvey] to oppose him . . .' Furthermore, Harvey warned House that if he became convinced Wilson was a 'dangerous man,' he would come out in opposition.<sup>11</sup>

In that frame of mind, Harvey two days later came around to Watterson's suite in the Manhattan Club for a conference with Wilson. Watterson was in New York that week in order to complete arrangements for a lecture tour that he had agreed to make for the National Citizens' Committee organized in behalf of Taft's general arbitration treaties with France and Great Britain. Watterson undoubtedly saw in the tour an opportunity to further Wilson's candidacy throughout the South and East. While waiting for his first appearance, which was to be in New York on 12 December, he had engaged his usual suite in the Manhattan Club. There in that sedate, Victorian setting, the climax to the Wilson-Harvey-Watterson drama was enacted.

There was no hint of any trouble during the course of the conversation. All three men were later in agreement that the meeting was entirely amiable and friendly in tone. Watterson was elated over his success with Penfield and while still convinced Ryan should be approached, once again agreed not to do so at Wilson's insistence. If Harvey seemed worried, neither Wilson nor Watterson noticed it. It was just as Wilson arose to leave that Harvey quite abruptly asked, 'Is there anything left of that cheap talk during the gubernatorial campaign about my advocating you on behalf of the "interests?"'

Wilson with his usual frankness said that he was sorry that Harvey had asked him that, but since the question had been raised, he must confess that some of the members of his campaign staff had said that the support of *Harper's Weekly* was having an undesirable effect in the West. Harvey at once replied, 'Then, I will simply sing low.' Watterson agreed that this would be the wisest

policy. The three men then briefly discussed how the public might be convinced of *Harper's* independence of Wall Street and after a brief exchange of pleasantries, Wilson departed entirely ignorant that anything serious had taken place.<sup>12</sup>

But after his name abruptly disappeared from the masthead of *Harper's*, with no explanation, Wilson realized that Harvey might possibly have been piqued by his blunt answer and at once wrote a letter of sincere apology. Harvey answered that he had taken Wilson's name from the masthead only because they had both agreed that *Harper's* support at that time was doing Wilson harm, and added: 'Whatever little hurt I may have felt as a consequence of the unexpected peremptoriness of your attitude toward me is, of course, wholly eliminated by your gracious words.'<sup>13</sup>

At the same time that Harvey was writing these words of generous pardon, however, he was sending messages to Watterson urging him to tell the whole story of Wilson's ingratitude. Harvey's strategy was at last clear. He could appear before the public as the loyal friend submissively bowing out at Wilson's ungracious demand. And it would not even be necessary for Harvey to be unkind enough to tell the story himself. Watterson would do that for him. His scheme shows brilliant planning and it very nearly worked in wrecking Wilson's candidacy.

It must have been within the next six days, before Watterson left New York, that Harvey succeeded in convincing Watterson that Wilson was a selfish ingrate, who would climb over his best friends to reach his goal. Knowing full well Watterson's own innate sense of loyalty, his sentimental attachment to old friends, and his traditional distrust of the overzealous office-seeker, Harvey had much material to work upon. There was Wilson's battle with Smith, the man who had made him governor, and more recently the support of Wilson by Beckham. What else could that mean than that Wilson for his own purposes was turning to Watterson's most detested foe? And now this repudiation of the man who had first found Wilson a college president and had boosted him to the very doors of the White House. Certainly there were enough incidents which, if interpreted properly by Harvey, could convince Watterson that here indeed was a man in whom 'beneath the veneration of scholarly polish lay the coiled serpent of unscrupulous ambition.'<sup>14</sup>

Whatever may have been Harvey's methods, it is certain that Watterson left New York for his tour of the eastern seaboard prepared to blast Wilson out of the race with a tale of gross ingratitude. Having gone this far with his plans, Harvey was eager for the kill and could see no reason for waiting. When no statement had been issued by Watterson by the third week in December, Harvey sent a mutual friend and old-time Democrat, Wayne MacVeagh, to Atlanta, Georgia, where Watterson was speaking on 24 December to urge Watterson to tell the story at once. Watterson answered:

Your messenger came to me as I was starting for my audience and I had time only to say a word or two to him and to scribble a few lines to you. The burthen of these was 'wait' . . . I promise immediately on reaching home to write to Governor Wilson a letter fully and frankly explaining why I can go no further in support of his candidacy. In this I shall give as my pivotal point his treatment of you, making common cause with you . . . Whatever I do must emanate from Louisville.<sup>15</sup>

Harvey, however, did not want to wait, and on 31 December he once again urged that Watterson release the story of the Manhattan Club affair to the public. But still Watterson delayed. 'I feel entirely sure of my ground,' he assured Harvey.<sup>16</sup>

Winding up his speaking engagements in Chicago on 2 January, Watterson returned to Louisville ready to issue his long-delayed account. There he found a surprising letter from Rebecca's brother, Robert Ewing, cousin of Ellen Wilson. Mrs. Wilson, in desperation, had written Ewing the full story of the Manhattan Club incident and Ewing had enclosed a copy of this letter along with his own note appealing to Watterson's sense of justice.<sup>17</sup>

Watterson was nonplussed. Mrs. Wilson's explanation of the affair and her expressions of Wilson's sincere regret for any unintentional rudeness seemed to be a genuine effort at reconciliation. Watterson at once answered Ewing, telling him that he was sending his letter with its enclosure to Harvey in the hopes of reaching 'some kind of understanding.'

Watterson also telegraphed Harvey to hold up any statement for the press because he had just 'received most important communication from the other side.' Harvey, who by this time must have feared that the chance to destroy Wilson's candidacy would be lost unless someone acted quickly, wired back that Watterson's

telegram had arrived one hour too late. His own public statement on the affair had already gone to the newspapers.<sup>18</sup>

Harvey's statement 'To Our Readers' was a masterpiece of half-truth, which by saying little implied volumes.

The name of Woodrow Wilson as our candidate for President was taken down from the head of these columns in response to a statement made directly to us by Governor Wilson, to the effect that our support was affecting his candidacy injuriously.

The only course left open to us, in simple fairness to Mr. Wilson, no less in consideration of our own self-respect, was to cease to advocate his nomination.

We make this explanation with great reluctance and the deepest regret . . .<sup>19</sup>

Harvey's statement seemed to imply that Wilson had on his own initiative and without warning curtly dismissed his loyal friend. There was no mention of Harvey's direct question to Wilson regarding his support, no hint that Harvey and Watterson had both agreed that *Harper's* should 'soft pedal' its support for the time being, no indication of Wilson's desire to convince the public that *Harper's Weekly* was an independent organ, free of Wall Street influence.

The effect was all that Harvey could have wished. Taking up the story with joy, the Hearst papers and the Republican press outdid one another in hurling charges of base ingratitude at Wilson's head. The Wilson supporters were stunned. They knew full well that the American people put a high premium on loyal friendship and cherished the illusion of coaxing American Presidential candidates into accepting nomination.

It was Watterson who at this moment, quite unintentionally, came to the rescue of Wilson. Believing that Harvey's precipitous statement required a fuller explanation, Watterson told the whole story of the Manhattan Club incident in the *Courier-Journal* on 18 January. The effect upon Wilson's forces was electric. Here was quite a different light on the affair. Harvey had asked for a frank answer, Wilson had given it. And it was an answer that would endear Wilson to the Bryan men across the country. Whereas Harvey's half-account had nearly ruined Wilson, Watterson's full account made him stronger than ever. Bryan himself, who up to this time had shown little interest in Wilson's candidacy, leaped to his defense in a public letter to the country.<sup>20</sup>

Watterson, who by this time was thoroughly weary of the whole miserable affair and in view of Ewing's letter no longer entirely convinced of Wilson's ingratitude, would undoubtedly have been willing to allow the matter to drop. He might possibly have even been brought back into the Wilson camp had not Wilson's publicists seen in the Harvey episode an opportunity to take the offensive against the very interests which had sought to destroy their candidate. Ralph Smith, a clever young newspaper man, began the attack in a dispatch to the *Atlanta Journal* suggesting that the real reason for the Harvey-Wilson break was that Harvey had attempted to force Ryan money upon Wilson. Fiery old 'Pitchfork' Ben Tillman, inveterate foe of the 'interests,' at once picked up the story and in an interview on 24 January announced that Wilson had refused 'to be lassoed and tied by Thomas F. Ryan,' and accused Watterson of deliberately leaving this highly significant detail out of his account.

Watterson was now thoroughly aroused. He at once sent a note to Senator Tillman, via Congressman Swager Sherley of Kentucky, demanding 'upon what warrant of authority you make this accusation.' The doughty old Senator from South Carolina replied that everyone knew that what he said was the truth and that surely 'you as a leading newspaper man and self-confessed expert groomer of Presidential candidates must have known it.' Watterson's answer to this was once again to deny that the Ryan money had been the basis for the rupture.

I know of my knowledge that that story is a lie out of the whole cloth. . . . I do not accuse Governor Wilson of originating or circulating this invention, manufactured to make a hero of him at the expense of the friend who has most effectually served him . . . He may or may not feel that he owes any obligation to Colonel Harvey. That is a matter of which he must be the judge. But I do insist that he owes to his own honor to repudiate that story and to disavow those who are striving to inject calumny into the public mind.

At Governor Wilson's instance, I had undertaken to assist his accredited managers in raising considerable sums of money needful to the prosecution of his campaign and in this my efforts were not wholly unfruitful. As the business proceeded the name of Thomas F. Ryan not unnaturally came into my mind . . . I hoped that I might induce him to help out what I believed a worthy cause. Governor Wilson's managers were delighted with the suggestion. Colonel Harvey had nothing whatever to do with it . . . and as far as I am aware knew nothing whatever about it.<sup>21</sup>

Wilson, who during the entire controversy had maintained a dignified silence, unfortunately decided upon reading the Tillman-Watterson correspondence to make a statement regarding Watterson's efforts at fund raising. The New York *Sun* quoted him as saying after reading Watterson's explanation to Tillman of his efforts in behalf of Wilson, 'Great Scott! That's the most remarkable paragraph I've ever read.' Wilson's official statement to the press was, 'So far as I am concerned, the statement that Colonel Watterson was requested to assist in raising money in my behalf is absolutely without foundation. Neither I nor anyone authorized to represent me ever made any such request of him.'<sup>22</sup>

Wilson, whose conduct up to this point had been exemplary and even generous to his adversaries, was here guilty himself of creating a false impression. If it was true that Watterson had taken it upon himself to obtain money for the Wilson campaign, it was also equally true that McCombs and other men such as Quincy had backed him in his efforts. Surely Wilson knew of these efforts, knew of the purpose of the Penfield dinner, and had done nothing to hinder Watterson's efforts. On the question of the Ryan contribution, to be sure, Wilson had drawn the line. But Wilson's statement, like that of Harvey's, in failing to tell the whole truth had the effect of creating an untruth. He should have admitted that Watterson had first consulted him about Ryan and had then, at his insistence, agreed not to accept Ryan's money. As it was, Watterson now faced the full wrath of the liberals who saw in the affair the ugly hand of Wall Street.

Watterson now tossed all discretion to the wind. 'Watterson Calls Wilson "Liar"' was the headline of the Philadelphia *Press* in carrying the full statement of Watterson's reply to Wilson. Watterson once again repeated the whole unhappy story and called for a court of gentlemen to decide who was telling the truth. By this time, however, the public, being thoroughly convinced that the incident had been a subtle conspiracy to bind Wilson hand and foot at the doorstep of Morgan and Ryan, was in no mood to listen to the truth. Watterson's anger seemed to them to come from a guilty conscience and his suggestion of a feudal court of honor ridiculous. With this parting blast addressed 'To the Democrats of the United States,' Watterson made his exit from the Wilson drama with the



catcalls of his former friends ringing in his ears. He left that evening for Florida 'beyond reach even of the telegraph,' an unhappy and disillusioned man.

There was no word of support even from Harvey. The New York *Evening Post* soon afterward published the Harvey-Wilson correspondence as proof of Wilson's sincere efforts to make amends to Harvey for any offense he might have committed. These letters must also have shown to Watterson the duplicity of Harvey in feigning forgiveness to Wilson at the same time he was urging Watterson to attack. Watterson could not help expressing his sense of injury to Harvey by pointing out that the publication of these letters had put him

in the false position of making a quarrel with Wilson about nothing — of calling him down on your account when you had forgiven him — exposing me to every manner of misrepresentation and abuse . . . Your letters did as a matter of fact leave me the bag to hold. Subsequent events put me in for all the fighting and all the damages. I do not in the least blame you for this. I merely regret that I could not have had your strong arm in the fray.<sup>23</sup>

Watterson's last demonstration of his talents as an 'expert groomer of Presidential candidates' had thus ended in misfortune for him. But in a very real sense, Harvey and Watterson by breaking with Wilson did more to help his candidacy than anything they had been able to do by supporting him, for they gave his publicists the opportunity to portray Wilson as a David against the Goliath Wall Street, or as Bryan put it, 'the new Saul of Tarsus' abandoning his pagan past.

Wilson's secretary, Joe Tumulty, recalled that several years after the Manhattan Club affair he and Watterson discussed the whole controversy at dinner in Washington. At their table, Tumulty relates, was the 'young fellow who had inspired the story which so grievously distressed Marse Henry and Colonel Harvey . . . Marse Henry was in fine spirits, and without showing the slightest trace of the old bitterness rehearsed the details of this now famous incident . . . and at its conclusion turned to my newspaper friend and laughingly said, "You damn rascal. You are the scoundrel who sent out that story that Harvey and I were trying to force Wall Street money on Wilson. However, old man, it did the trick. If it had not

been for the clever use you made of this incident, Wilson never would have been President.”<sup>24</sup>

For Watterson, the remainder of the campaign of 1912 was bound to be an anticlimax and one in which he could show little interest. In February, he sent a long letter from Florida to the *Courier-Journal* addressed to the Democrats of Kentucky. Its avowed purpose was to prevent the state convention from giving its endorsement to Wilson. The letter repeated once more the story of his relations with Wilson and of his reasons for breaking with the ‘school master.’ Watterson tried to make it clear that he still had the highest respect for Wilson’s political and social beliefs. It was certainly not because Wilson had proved too liberal for him that he had withdrawn his support, regardless of what Wilson’s backers might say, but rather because he distrusted Wilson’s personal characteristics. Watterson called for care in selecting the right candidate to meet the great responsibility that faced the Democratic party. With a passing sarcastic reference to Wilson’s and Harvey’s reconciliation and their ‘interchange of the touching letters indicating Wilson’s contrition and Harvey’s magnanimity,’ Watterson promised to continue the fight against Wilson when he got back to ‘God’s country’ in the spring.<sup>25</sup>

Watterson’s influence, according to Arthur Krock, was decisive in turning the Kentucky Democrats from their earlier support of Wilson to Speaker Champ Clark. After receiving an endorsement from the Kentucky convention, Clark sent a telegram of ‘heartfelt thanks’ to Watterson for achieving ‘the splendid victory.’<sup>26</sup> Upon Watterson’s return to Louisville in April, he threw the full support of his paper to Clark, but as the national convention assembled at Baltimore, Watterson showed a surprising indifference to the final outcome. He resisted Clark’s pleas to come to Washington to aid him in the last week of June, nor, once the convention was deadlocked between Clark and Wilson, did he answer William Underwood’s pleas to throw his support to Congressman Oscar Underwood of Alabama as a compromise candidate.<sup>27</sup>

When on the forty-sixth ballot, Woodrow Wilson received the nomination, Watterson accepted the verdict, if not with good grace, at least with grim resolution. He wrote that while ‘it would be idle for the *Courier-Journal* to deny that it is disappointed, never-

theless it approves at least the platform and will support the ticket.' In a fuller statement on 4 July, Watterson wrote:

The *Courier-Journal* did not oppose Governor Wilson because it thought him a weak candidate. It regarded him as a very strong candidate. . . . It abandoned its support of him because of reasons which were solely personal and wholly satisfactory to itself. It gave them to the public equally with candor and disregard of consequences . . . With this plain statement, let the battle go on! . . . Up with the ensign of Wilson and Marshall. And if, after they are elected and inducted to office, they don't behave themselves, there's plenty of pitch left over in the pot to do them to a turn!

The outcome of the campaign, with the Republicans divided, was a foregone conclusion. A few days before the election, Watterson in commenting upon the general apathy of the public, paid a backhanded compliment to Roosevelt for furnishing what little excitement there was in the campaign. As for his own candidate, Watterson wrote in guarded terms. 'Wilson may surprise everybody, but by the side of Taft, he appears a prodigy of statesmanship, by the side of Roosevelt, a miracle of safety.'<sup>28</sup>

Wilson as President surprised no one more than he did the *Courier-Journal's* editor. Watterson, who had expressed fear that Wilson's political inexperience would cause him trouble in facing an unruly Congress, watched first with amazement and then with unconcealed pleasure as the Wilson administration pushed through a banking reform bill, a new anti-trust law, and, most desirable of all, the first tariff act that substantially reduced duties on imports since the Civil War. On reviewing the first year of Wilson's administration, Watterson wrote from Paris in April 1914:

[His] abilities are unmistakable. His intrepidity seems not only sufficient but abundant. No one questions his integrity. What has he to do with a heart? . . . With such a man in the White House the people can go to bed and sleep o' nights . . . I made no mistake in estimating the capabilities of Woodrow Wilson for shining public service, nor failed to hit the bull's eye when I warned the party leaders what they were going to get when they got him.

Later that year, Watterson discovered that Wilson also had a heart. Upon the death of Mrs. Wilson in August, Watterson wrote a gracious editorial which so moved Wilson that he wrote to thank its author. Watterson promptly answered Wilson's note to give additional words of consolation and to add:

I hope hereafter you and I will better understand one another . . . I very much regret the use of any rude word — too much the characteristic of our rough-and-tumble political combats — and can truly say that I have not only earnestly wished the success of your administration but have sought to find points of agreement, not of disagreement.<sup>29</sup>

Wilson replied:

Your kind letter has gratified me very deeply. You may be sure that any feeling I may have had has long since disappeared and that I feel only gratified that you should again and again have come to my support in the columns of the *Courier-Journal*. The whole thing was a great misunderstanding.<sup>30</sup>

Three weeks after these exchanges of letters, Watterson paid his first visit to Wilson in the White House, and after more than an hour, he emerged, according to a New York *Sun* reporter, 'beaming as brightly as the sun in the October sky.'

For Watterson, who always liked a story to end happily, it was as good an ending as could be hoped for to such an unhappy and complicated drama.

## SIXTEEN

# Substance and Shadow

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1900—1915

WATTERSON must have had difficulty believing, in the first busy decade of the twentieth century, that he had once contemplated retirement at the age of fifty-five. Now approaching seventy, he never felt more vigorous in his life. He had always been careful of his health, his simple rule for longevity being: know how to relax; never work when you can play; never walk when you can ride; never sit up when you can lie down. He had the ruddy physical well-being of a man twenty years younger than he, and his friends could detect few changes in his appearance with the passing years.

Not even the death of Walter Haldeman in 1901 could discourage him from continuing his active life as editor, lecturer, and political strategist. Although he missed his partner greatly, he was at first quite satisfied with Haldeman's younger son, Bruce, whom Haldeman had designated in his will to be his successor as business manager and president of the company. The elder son, William, was made vice-president and editorial manager of the *Times*.

Now that the *Courier-Journal* was again prosperous, Watterson could return to his earlier practice of editing the paper by remote control. He had once more built up a fine editorial staff — the best he ever had: Robertson, Tom Wallace, Arthur Krock, and Wallace Hughes, some of the ablest writers in the country. Watter-

son and his family, in the years after 1900, spent less time in Louisville than ever before. There were the periodic trips to Europe and the occasional winter vacations in Florida in addition to his frequent speaking engagements and hurried visits to New York and Washington for political reasons. Always, of course, there was Mansfield to which to return, particularly in the spring when the Bluegrass country was at its best.

These were years of rich substance for Watterson and his family, even though his income was very modest compared with most of his associates. It was during this time that he discovered the excitement of Monte Carlo, and at the Hôtel Metropole he and Rebecca spent several winters. It was not only the beauty of the natural setting that attracted him, the bright blue Mediterranean, the white cliffs, and shady green walks, but also the exotic pageantry of society that could be found here. Always fascinated by the dramatic, Watterson delighted in the festival of human emotions that was to be found at the Casino: the exaggerated desperation in the faces around the roulette wheels in the public rooms, the nonchalance that only the very wealthy inhabitants of the white and pink villas could afford at the baccarat tables in the inner sanctums, the stolid indifference of the croupiers, the haughty airs of the bogus 'countesses' as they rubbed elbows with genuine kings — each face a character study worthy of a Daumier or a Goya. In this strange little world composed both of shiny tin and sterling silver, Watterson found the perfect setting for the cosmopolite, and he never wearied of describing it for the edification of his provincial readers back home. 'Nowhere on earth,' he wrote in one of his many letters to the *Courier-Journal*, 'can any theater be found so brilliant and varied . . . Nature made Monte Carlo the loveliest spot in the world. Art and money have completed the work of nature . . . Pictorially nothing remains to be done.'<sup>1</sup> Whether cruising with Joseph Pulitzer on his yacht, *S. S. Liberty*, or discussing the relative merits of stud poker and *trente et quarante* with King Leopold of Belgium, Watterson enjoyed every moment immensely, and at such times, Louisville would seem very far away.

After Monte Carlo, there was Paris. 'The gay capital of France,' Watterson wrote, 'remains the center of the stage and retains the interest of the onlooking universe. All roads lead to Paris as all roads led to Rome.'<sup>2</sup> And wherever the Wattersons might travel in

Europe, the road always led back to Paris. Watterson's rising fortune might well have been charted by his changing Parisian addresses. When he and Rebecca had first come as a newly married couple, they had stayed at an obscure little Hôtel d'Orient on a narrow side street and had dined cheaply at the Café de Progrès. Later they stayed at a pension on the Avenue de Courcelles and had luncheons at the Boeuf à la Mode; and finally, the Hôtels Palais D'Orsay and Continental with elaborate dinners at the Café Voisin and Champoux's. But whether he resided on the dark little Rue Dannou or on the Rue Castiglione, Watterson sought for and found on every street the traces of the romantic past. Nowhere else on earth did Watterson find 'so rare a setting' for 'the fable we call existence'; nowhere else had history and romance been blended so successfully and preserved so perfectly as in Paris.

On the last Sunday afternoon that he was ever to spend in Paris, Watterson wrote:

Roll the screen away! The shades of Clovis and Genevieve may be seen hand-in-hand with the shades of Martel and Pepin, taking the round of the ghost-walk between St. Denis and St. Germaine . . . Cyrano de Bergerac and François Villon leading the ragamuffin procession; the jades of the Fronde, Longueville, Chevreuse and fair-haired Anne of Austria . . . on the side, Rabelais taking notes and laughing under his cowl. Catherine de Medici and Robespierre slinking away, poor guilty things, into the pale twilight of the Dawn!

Names! Names! Only names? I am not just so sure about that. In any event, what a roll call! . . . I should be loath to say good-bye forever to the Bois de Boulogne. I want to come back to Paris. I always want to come back to Paris. One needs not to make an apology or give reason.<sup>3</sup>

Reprinting portions of this article in his autobiography five years later, when he knew that he would never go back to Paris, would never again dine at the Café Anglais or stroll down the Champs Elysées, Watterson added as a wistful postscript, 'It was not to be. I shall not die in Paris. I shall never come again.' This was one of the few regretful sentences that he allowed himself in his memoirs.

Yet as well as he knew Europe, as familiar as he was with the principality of Monaco and as conversant as he might be in the language of Paris, he always appeared to be exactly what he was, an American in Europe. No European who ever observed his short

stocky figure as he hurried down the street to buy the latest edition of the *Paris Herald* or busily poked about in forgotten alleys to find traces of the past could mistake him for anything but a citizen of the United States. He might demand and get the best vintages in wine, he might be as critical of the terrapin and bouillabaisse as the chef at Voisin's, but he always remained the traditional Mark Twain American abroad, a little awed, a little contemptuous but always intrigued. Indeed, he would have had but little sympathy for the disillusioned young American expatriates of the 1920's who would hide their national origins under the flowing beard and a rakish beret. 'I have not loved Paris as a Parisian, but as an American,' he would always stoutly maintain.<sup>4</sup>

But if he was never taken for an European, he was frequently attributed with possessing greater wealth than he had. To observers who saw him sunning in the fashionable watering places of Europe, he appeared as any American millionaire relaxing from the arduous task of making a fortune. This semblance of wealth was no intentional masquerade on Watterson's part. He frankly enjoyed good living, knew how to make the most of the money he had. And whether he was dining with Sir Henry Irving at the Garrick Club in London, visiting Carnegie at his estate in Scotland, or spending a fortnight with Ambassador Whitelaw Reid at Wrest Park in England, Watterson was always impeccably dressed for the part. Once he refused an invitation to visit J. Arthur Barrett because a coat which he had ordered from his London tailor was not ready. Barrett had answered to say how sorry he was that Watterson and his wife had not come. 'But please throw the tailor to the winds and all when you come again and give us the pleasure of seeing you in any costume. After the (alleged) appearance of Winston Churchill in the House of Commons in his pink pyjamas public men may dress as they please.'<sup>5</sup>

A great part of Watterson's pleasure in traveling was due to his many friends everywhere who were eager to entertain him. He was particularly indebted to his friends in the diplomatic service: Louis Lombard in Switzerland, Frank Mason, consul-general of Paris, Robert Skinner in Marseilles, Francis Keene in Florence and Watterson's own protégé, Ben Ridgely, who for several years was consul in Barcelona. Ridgely was more than eager to roll out the



red carpet whenever Watterson came to Spain. Seated at a sidewalk table with such an admiring listener, Watterson would be at his best. On one such gay occasion, he and Ridgely sent to their mutual friend, Young E. Allison, the following brief comment on what seemed to them at the moment one of the mysteries of natural science:

And the squinch owl squinched  
                                   H.W.  
 And kept on squinchin'  
                                   B.H.R.

Allison, who was to read the note in the bright daylight of Louisville without benefit of a strolling Spanish guitarist, a golden moon, or a flacon of old port, was less impressed with the squinch owl's behavior than with that of his distant friends. Before filing the note away, he added his own initialed comment:

Drunk again!  
 Y.E.A.<sup>6</sup>

Watterson was delighted when Whitelaw Reid went as ambassador to the Court of St. James's in 1905. For the remaining seven years of Reid's life, Watterson was always assured of a welcome at the American embassy in London. The two men resumed their friendly correspondence that had been interrupted for many years. Political history interested them both, and they wrote long letters discussing early campaigns, particularly that of 1872. On those occasions when Reid's official duties prevented him from seeing his friend, Watterson would feel aggrieved over the needless demands of the diplomatic service. Being in London when he heard of the death of their old friend John Hay, Watterson at once hurried over to see Reid so that they might weep together. Upon finding Reid away attending some official party, Watterson sent him a rather sharp note reminding him that he had certain obligations to old friends as well as to his office and further warning him not to 'wear yourself out as Hay did . . . You are too big a man, too much your own man, too actually strong, to need to make over many sacrifices even to English Society.'<sup>7</sup>

Attractive as the bright lights always were to Watterson, his main preoccupation was not a hedonistic pursuit of diversion. Not

only did he accept more writing assignments than ever before, but he also was in great demand as a public speaker for every kind of event — from addressing the constitutional convention for the new state of Oklahoma to delivering the oration commemorating the centennial anniversary of Lincoln's birth at Hodgenville, Kentucky. Many requests he had to refuse, some because there was a limit to his energy and time, some on the matter of principle, such as the request for him to address the Conference on Immigration and Quarantine, which sought to limit immigration into the South — an objective which Watterson considered both foolish and un-American.

No speech that he made aroused more interest and received more praise in the North than the address that he made in Carnegie Hall on 17 January 1908 at the request of Booker T. Washington on behalf of Tuskegee Institute. For a nationally known Southerner to speak in support of the Negro's efforts to improve his status in society was front-page news throughout the country, and Watterson received letters from people of all races throughout the nation. Oswald Garrison Villard, editor of the *New York Evening Post*, a paper which had never been particularly friendly toward Watterson since the days of the Greeley campaign, wrote to him concerning this speech: 'I recognized in it the most important utterance ever made by a Southern white man in the North on this subject.'<sup>8</sup> A Negro girl in Washington, D. C. thanked Watterson with these words:

Coming as it does from a man of your ability and renown, also a Southerner, it will bring the eyes of the world upon us, and, I am sure, do untold good. The part that appealed to me particularly is: 'I want nothing for myself or for my children which I am not ready to give to my colored neighbor and his children.'<sup>9</sup>

Watterson wrote fewer editorials for the *Courier-Journal* in these years, but he devoted much more time to miscellaneous magazine articles, particularly for *Century Magazine*, the *American*, and *Collier's Weekly*. This was the golden age of the literary and political periodicals, and Watterson was justifiably proud of his success in this medium of expression. Most of his articles dealt with current political issues, such as Roosevelt's political ambitions and Bryan's constant hopes. But Watterson took particular pride in those articles of his that dealt with American history. The *Cos-*

*mopolitan* for February 1909 published his essay on Lincoln, all that ever came of his long-cherished plan of writing a full-length biography of his favorite President.

Perhaps the most valuable contributions that Watterson made to historiography were the two articles on the Greeley and Tilden campaigns which were published in the *Century Magazine* for November 1912 and May 1913. These articles gave so personal an insight into the events of that period that they remain today a valuable source of information for any student of American political history. The success of these two articles brought forth numerous requests for him to write his autobiography from various publishing concerns.

Watterson, however, refused such overtures, feeling in 1912 that he was not yet ready to retire from active life in order to sit quietly by the fire and spin out his reminiscences. He was also sensitive about his two most recent attempts at full-length book publication. The dismal failure of his ghostwritten *History of the Spanish American War* should have been, he felt, warning enough against this form of publication. But five years later he had consented, at the entreaties of Rector Fox, brother of Watterson's novelist friend John Fox, Jr., to permit the new publishing house of Fox and Duffield to bring out a collection of his major public addresses, from his eulogy of Prentice before the Kentucky legislature in 1870 to his address at the Emerson Centenary dinner in New York in 1903, under the title of *The Compromises of Life*.

Watterson himself was pleased with the collection and wrote Reid:

Most of them [the speeches] I have not seen since they were first uttered. I have been pleased and flattered, not by their literary or oratorical merit—in which most of them are lacking—but by two or three dominant notes running through the whole of them, which seems to have been the emanation of a kind of unconscious cerebration and which certainly meets the approval of my mature and final judgment.<sup>10</sup>

Nearly all of these speeches reveal Watterson's great and abiding interest in sectional reconciliation and national unity. But however commendable they were in sentiment, they lacked in cold print the warmth of Watterson's personality which had given them their popularity when they had been delivered from the public platform. Like most published collections of speeches, the book failed to

arouse much public interest. The literary critics were also unkind and Watterson became convinced that he should attempt nothing in the way of publication more ambitious than editorials and magazine articles.

It was not until 1913 that he once again tried his hand at writing a book. At the request of Philip J. Britt, president of the Manhattan Club, Watterson agreed to write a history of that famous Democratic club in celebration of its fiftieth anniversary. But even then he consented only after being assured that he would have the necessary editorial assistance and that the book would be sold only on a private subscription basis. *The History of the Manhattan Club* was a creditable piece of work, being a brief account of the organization of the club and the main political events that concerned it during its half a century of existence.

That Watterson's pride could be so deeply injured by the attacks of literary critics was but symptomatic of a growing sensitivity on his part toward all criticism. In this respect, Watterson realized he was growing old, for although he had always been quick to respond to any critical remark, he now was apt to be more hurt than angry. When on one occasion Robert Sterling Yard, the editor of *Century Magazine*, wrote to apologize for a statement which appeared in his magazine, Watterson replied:

Hearty thanks for your kind letter which I have just received. Give the matter no further thought, nor hold dear Frank Crowninshield answerable for a very common infirmity of the time — that is the 'Keerlessness' about printer's ink which Henry Grady alleged of General Sherman about 'fire' . . . All my life I have been pursued by a shadow not cast by me but by the phantom Kentuckian as he exists in the riotous fancy of the stranger — mostly the admiring stranger — not meaning to belittle; or disparage, but falling in with preconception, predilection, accepted tradition. I cannot say that, when I was a youngster fighting for a seat in the saddle, I was wholly averse to it. Anyhow, I could whack-whaddle myself and give as good as I had to take. But as we grow old — less agile in combat and loving it less — dignity ruffles even at exploitation and the respect which should accompany old age counts before all else. Forget it.<sup>11</sup>

Not only had Watterson come to despise the Kentucky colonel legend, he also now resented the stories about the illegibility of his handwriting. He wrote to ask Robertson if his copy was really as bad as it was reputed to be. The cautious Robertson replied:

You ask if your copy is not 'perfectly legible.' Just now it is. When you try to be good you are very good. The trouble is that naturally having your mind more on what you are saying than on your penmanship an occasional word is slurred and we are forced to guess at it, with the possibility, of course, of making a mess of it.<sup>12</sup>

But not even the tactful Robertson could make a good penman out of Watterson. Tom Wallace once received a postcard from Watterson in Florida which seemed to say, 'We are having a good time despite Mrs. Watterson.' This sounded so unlike Watterson that Wallace was sure it could not be right. He finally deciphered it as 'We are having a good time despite the No'westers.'<sup>13</sup>

But if Watterson was becoming more sensitive to criticism, he was more than compensated by the public affection that he received in these last years. The days when he had to face a frequently hostile audience in political combat were nearly over. In these years, as the *New York Times* noted at the time of Watterson's death, 'He had almost as many reconciliations as quarrels; and for years he had been a sort of public character or institution and his whimsicalities, sallies, prejudices, his wild wit and passionate rhetoric were relished by the nation.'<sup>14</sup>

Watterson had at last reached that age when he might become a prophet with honors in his own land, and many honors came to him. As early as 1891, the degree of Doctor of Civil Law was conferred upon him by the University of the South. This was followed by a Doctor of Laws degree from Brown University in 1906 and the degree of Doctor of Literature from the University of Kentucky in 1916. To Watterson, whose formal education had been limited to four years at the Protestant Episcopal Academy in Philadelphia, such academic recognition meant a great deal.

In 1915 Watterson was both surprised and pleased to be elected by the Senate of New York University as an elector of candidates in the division of editors, authors, and artists to the Hall of Fame. It must have been with mixed feelings of pride and a sense of personal loss that on the first ballot he submitted to the Committee he voted for some of his dearest friends: Sam Clemens, Joel Chandler Harris, Horace Greeley, and Joseph Jefferson.

Some of the honors paid to Watterson in these years, although trivial, pleased him immensely. He was delighted when a race horse

was named 'Marse Henry' and carefully preserved among his papers the following telegram from its owner:

Marse Henry has a sense of responsibility and won his first start in a gallop, pulled up in the best time of the meeting.<sup>15</sup>

For one who spent so much time in traveling and residing in hotels, Watterson considered it highly appropriate that a hotel should be named for him in Louisville, with the promise of its manager that a suite of rooms would always be available for his use. Although Louisville was the one place in the world where he had little need of a hotel room, Watterson was flattered because it was one of the few public recognitions made to him by a citizen of Louisville during his lifetime. On the other hand, he was amused by the inappropriateness of naming a cigar after him, for he never smoked in his life. Rebecca, however, proudly gave 'Henry Watterson' cigars to her relatives as gifts.

But if old age had its honors, it also had its penalties, not the least of these being the loss of old friends in each passing year. With his own immense vitality, youthful spirit, and great joy in living, Watterson seldom thought of old age and death for himself. But he could not ignore the demands that time was making upon his circle of friends. The comrades of many a political and editorial scrap, the old companions of the card table and the *gemütlich* rathskeller: Walter Haldeman, John Hay, Joe Pulitzer, Carl Schurz, Sam Clemens, Murat Halstead, John Carlisle, and Whitelaw Reid all, by 1912, were dead. Watterson found new friends, of course, for it was not in his gregarious nature to sit alone and mourn the past. There were Alexander Konta, the Hungarian-born writer and play producer, and Frank Cobb to welcome him back to the Manhattan Club, with a warming glass and a seat at the green, felt-covered table. But it could not be quite the same. There were too many memories which they could not share with him, too many old jokes whose humor escaped them, too much of the past that they had missed. If these were years of rich substance for Watterson, they were also years of increasing shadow. On occasions, the shadow seemed to blot out all of the light.

The most tragic period in Watterson's life was from the autumn of 1907 to that of 1908, when calamity struck at his family and it

seemed as if he would be destroyed by grief. During the several years since moving to Jeffersontown the family had seemed especially close to each other, and Watterson was never more delighted than when his children with their families gathered at Mansfield. Ewing, to be sure, was still a constant source of anxiety. Marriage and a family had not given him the stability or sense of responsibility that his parents had hoped it might. On the contrary, his increasing emotional instability gave evidence that he was mentally ill and that it was impossible for him to support his wife and children. But this difficulty the Wattersons had come to accept.

Their second son, Henry, back from the Spanish-American war, made his home with them. The two girls were happily married with children of their own. The pride of Watterson's life, however, was his son Harvey. A brilliant student at law school, upon graduation he had started as a junior member of John Carlisle's law office in New York. A few years later he had become a partner in a law concern of his own. He had given his father considerable assistance in the last Bryan campaign, and Watterson glowingly predicted an important future in politics for his son.

The tragic year began with the death of his younger daughter, Ethel, who, dying in childbirth, left behind a desolate young husband and two-year-old son. Then a few months later, in October 1908, came news that Ben Ridgely had died in Mexico, where he had been serving as consul-general for the past year. Although Ridgely was a cousin of Rebecca, he had been closer to Watterson than any of his own relatives.

Watterson's sorrow over the death of Ridgely was overshadowed, however, in the greater tragedy that struck at his immediate family but four weeks later. In the late afternoon of 11 November 1908, Harvey plunged to his death from the nineteenth floor window of his law office at 37 Wall Street, and for Henry and Rebecca Watterson the brightest light in their lives was rudely and without warning snapped out.

The nature of the accident was such that there were the inevitable rumors of suicide, but such rumors were short-lived if for no other reason than that no conceivable motive for such action could be found. Harvey was in excellent health and remarkably successful in his profession. On his desk there were discovered a partly finished draft of a business letter and two tickets for the

theater that evening. Obviously he had been very much in the midst of life when the tragic accident occurred.

As nearly as the action could be reconstructed during the investigation, it appeared that young Watterson had gone to the window to open it. The floors were highly polished and just under the very low window was a wide radiator. The window must have stuck momentarily, and then by giving suddenly, had thrown Harvey off balance. Tripping, he had fallen headlong out of the open window.<sup>16</sup>

For a time Watterson's grief seemed too heavy to bear. He moved as if in a daze, and to his secretary all he could say was, 'I have lost my only son.' When his secretary reminded him that he had two other sons, Watterson could only reply, 'But only one Harvey.'<sup>17</sup> All efforts to console him seemed unavailing, and he announced to the nation that he never again would appear in public. In declining to speak at a dinner for Bryan in Florida that winter, he wrote:

The death of a dearly loved daughter, followed by the appalling tragedy which took from me a son who was the very apple of my eye, leaves me stranded and helpless and wholly unequal to any kind of publicity. Before I left home I cancelled all my speaking dates and resolved never again to appear before any audience.<sup>18</sup>

In a letter to the widow of John Hay written to thank her for sending him the three-volume edition of *Letters of John Hay*, Watterson commented particularly upon those letters that dealt with the accidental death of Hay's son.

The letters relating to 'Del's' appalling death struck home to a heart yet bleeding from a wound wrought by a catastrophe identical in almost every detail. Of our boy I could say as your dear husband said of your boy, 'he was a part of our lives; our hopes, our plans, our pride, our affections were all bound up in him' . . . God help and pity us all!<sup>19</sup>

Immediately after Harvey's funeral, the Wattersons left for their winter residence in Fort Myers, Florida. It was Rebecca with her deep religious faith and quiet courage who sustained Watterson and prevented his complete breakdown. She went with him for walks along the beaches, read to him in the evenings, had Milbrey bring her children down from Louisville to give a new interest and a noisy



distraction to his life. Watterson would take the children down to the shore to play in the sand or over to the wharves to select just the right fish for Mary, the cook, to prepare for dinner. Slowly he recovered from the shock, but without Rebecca, he would indeed have been 'stranded and helpless.'

It was Watterson's love of history, particularly his interest in the Civil War, that was responsible in bringing him back to public speaking. He was unable to refuse the request that he be the orator for the unveiling of the statue of Stephen D. Lee, Confederate general and later commander-in-chief of the United Confederate Veterans, at Vicksburg Military Park in June 1909. Nor could he refuse Robert Todd Lincoln's request that he speak at the Lincoln centenary celebration at Hodgenville, Kentucky, on the last day of May 1909. Lincoln had written Watterson, 'The events of the birthday celebration seem to prove that the often repeated hopes and prayers of my father have been almost perfectly realized — that this is so is, I think, due more to you than to any other living man.'<sup>20</sup> After such a tribute Watterson could not deny the son of Abraham Lincoln any request.

Watterson's interest in literature also helped immensely in these months of personal sorrow. He frequently enjoyed appearing in the columns of the *Courier-Journal* in the role of literary critic. His greatest literary interest, however, was not in current books, but rather in reviving ancient belletristic quarrels. He was always eager to defend his beloved Thackeray against Dickens, whom he regarded as an able storyteller, but 'mawkishly sentimental' and 'as a child compared to Thackeray.'

Watterson also delighted in entering that favorite literary guessing game over the question of the authorship of Shakespeare's plays. His interest had been aroused in this problem by Mark Twain's curious little book, *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, and Watterson came to the same conclusion as his friend, that the materialistic actor and play manager of Stratford was incapable of writing the greatest poetry and drama in the English language. Watterson refused to accept the usual theory that Francis Bacon was the true author, however, claiming that the Baconians with their 'cryptograms' and hidden signatures 'seek to prove too much.' Instead, he advanced a much more original theory that Christopher Marlowe had not

been killed in the tavern brawl as history records, but rather, having killed another man, was smuggled out of England with the assistance of Bacon. It was from his exile in Italy, Watterson maintained, that Marlowe wrote and sent back to England the immortal plays, which for reason of security, Bacon gave to Shakespeare for the latter to produce as his own. Not to be outdone by the Baconians with their mysterious anagrams, Watterson claimed to have knowledge of a secret manuscript written by a Paduan, Pietro Basconi, who had nursed Marlowe in his last illness and then wrote the story that he had heard from the dying poet's lips.<sup>21</sup>

It was good Sunday supplement material, and when Watterson's theory appeared, not as an editorial but as a signed front-page feature story on the three hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's death, the other newspapers in the country grabbed it up. Arthur Krock relates that the *Courier-Journal* realized over a thousand dollars from its syndication of the story.<sup>22</sup> Whether Watterson seriously believed his Marlowe theory or merely tossed it out as a satire on the fantastic theories advanced by Bacon's admirers, one cannot say. At any rate, he enjoyed immensely the public furor that his story aroused, and only a year before his death, he was still writing on the Shakespeare-Marlowe controversy.

Thus it was that Watterson found the world too interesting to abandon. Life might at times be cruel without meaning, but it could also be good, and was always fascinating. And for one whose interests were so catholic that he found both Shakespeare and the Underwood tariff equally absorbing, there was too little time to waste in tears.

## SEVENTEEN

# 'To Hell with the Hohenzollerns and Hapsburgs'

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1915-1917

THROUGHOUT HIS LONG CAREER, Watterson had never achieved among his fellow politicians and editorial friends a reputation for consistency. His blowing hot, then cold, then hot again for Bryan seemed to his contemporaries but an example of his weather-vane gyrations to meet the prevailing winds of politics. This inconsistency seemed most pronounced in his views on foreign policy. He was, for example, a self-confessed jingoist and was to say repeatedly that eventually all of Mexico and Canada would give allegiance to the Stars and Stripes. Yet unlike most expansionists, he had little regard for that sacred cornerstone of American foreign policy, the Monroe Doctrine. He felt that it was 'a British invention' long since obsolete, and he continually urged that the United States 'should relegate the Monroe Doctrine to the lumber-room of things that were.' He particularly resented its more recent application under the 'Roosevelt corollary' as an instrument for protecting, by force of arms, American investments in Latin America, and he had joined hands with Senator William Borah of Idaho in a successful effort at blocking a proposed Nicaraguan treaty which would

have made that small nation a virtual protectorate of the United States.

Then there were the apparently contradictory views on Mexico that Watterson expressed during these years when revolution raged across that unhappy land, sweeping away the Diaz dictatorship and destroying American property rights. A cry for intervention at once arose from those men who saw their wealth being destroyed: Hearst, Senator Fall of New Mexico, and the directors of American oil companies. The *Courier-Journal*, however, supported Wilson's 'watchful waiting' and told its readers, 'The United States is quite right in not taking a hand in Mexican affairs and attempting the difficult if not impossible task of bringing about the inauguration of law and order.'<sup>1</sup>

This conciliatory approach changed, however, when General Huerta, the current dictator of Mexico, refused to permit his troops to salute the flag of the United States. Watterson quickly forgot his words advocating nonintervention and a peaceful arbitration and was ready for action.

Let us not deceive ourselves. It is war . . . The best thing that could happen to 'the Mexicans' would be for us to take over Chihuahua, Sonora, and Lower California . . . We may commiserate Mexico. We may say 'the pity of it' and feel a little contrite touching the duty imposed upon us. But it is nevertheless a duty and we must face it with resolution.<sup>2</sup>

Watterson's sudden reversal of attitude toward Mexico took the public by surprise. But before the avalanche of editorial criticism that poured in upon him from the leading newspapers of the country, the *New York World*, the *New York Evening Post*, and others, Watterson did not budge. 'Except we act to some purpose in Mexico, we should not act at all,' he wrote in answer to those who called him imperialistic. When Wilson accepted the offer of Argentine, Brazil, and Chile for peaceful mediation and the withdrawal of American troops from Vera Cruz, Watterson turned away in disgust. Wilson, he wrote, speaks 'like a schoolman rather than a statesman, like a philanthropist rather than the leader of a great nation and a militant people.'<sup>3</sup>

But in spite of these apparent contradictions, there was an over-all pattern to Watterson's views on foreign policy, which consisted of three basic tenets. The first was a genuine belief in iso-

lationalism. He distrusted anything that smacked of foreign entanglement. Even the venerable Monroe Doctrine was to him a dangerous commitment to international action.

In the second place, Watterson professed a hope for world peace. Although he believed there was a natural proclivity for war in all men, he encouraged those movements that had universal peace as their ultimate goal. It was more than the lecture fee that induced Watterson at the age of seventy-two to make the most extensive speaking tour of his life in behalf of President Taft's proposed arbitration treaties with Britain and France. In November 1914, Watterson wrote in support of America's outstanding pacifist, David Starr Jordan:

Did ever man fight his way to an end that might not have been better reached through fair and kindly agencies? Does not each man's reason tell him this is true? We have not only abolished the code of honor and the duello in the South . . . but we have made an appeal to them ridiculous. If gentlemen have ceased to fight, why should nations continue to fight? . . . The lion and the lamb we are told shall lie down together. Why not the human beasts that make the world hideous by their strife? <sup>4</sup>

Yet six months before he wrote this editorial on peace, he was shouting for war against Mexico. The difficulty for Watterson lay in the fact that peace remained to a great extent an abstract ideal. Arbitration was excellent as a principle, but quickly forgotten whenever Watterson felt that the nation's honor was at stake.

For if Watterson was an isolationist and an advocate of peace, he was, above all, a nationalist. It was this third tenet which dominated Watterson's views on foreign policy. As long as he felt that national honor was not involved, he would not risk one soldier's life to protect Hearst's millions, but when an irresponsible and drunken general refused to give the proper salute to the American flag, Watterson was ready to conquer the whole of Mexico.

His sense of national honor could not only be extravagant in expression as it was in the Mexican crisis, but could, at other times, be highly commendable. For example, he was one of the few editors in the country to back Britain in its vigorous protest against the action of Congress in exempting American coastwise shipping from paying tolls through the Panama Canal. This preferential treatment given to American shipping was in violation of the Hay-Pauncefote

treaty which had plainly stipulated that the vessels of all nations would be required to pay the same toll rates. For Watterson, the question of abiding by our treaty agreements was one of national honor. 'If we want to subsidize our ships,' he wrote, 'let us by all means do so; let us do so openly and above board.' For once, Wilson's foreign policy received his complete approval when the President appeared in person before Congress to urge the repeal of the toll-exemption provision. 'Never a President showed himself finer than Woodrow Wilson, when, wrapping the flag around him, he marched down to the capitol and read the Riot Act to the braves in Congress. I cannot doubt that he has the better sense of the country behind him.' <sup>5</sup>

If these three principles of isolationism, pacificism, and nationalism frequently clashed in Watterson's editorials, the resulting inconsistency is more apparent to the historian than it was to Watterson's readers. Most Americans subscribed to these same principles and gave to them the same relative value that Watterson did. He was not out of step with the times either when he prayed for peace in 1914 or when he shouted for war in 1917.

The events in Europe in the summer of 1914 were quickly to relegate to obscurity such vexing questions as Mexico, Nicaragua, and the Canal, and for Watterson, there was to be little else of editorial importance during the remainder of his career. The war in Europe came to Watterson, as it did to most Americans, as a complete surprise. Having spent the preceding winter in Italy and France, Watterson had never found the land more beautiful or peaceful. There was no suggestion of war in the gay crowds that swarmed over the Riviera in the last springtime of peace, nothing but the carnival spirit of prosperity. Writing from Nice in January 1914, Watterson confidently told his readers at home, 'There will be indeed no more earth-shaking wars. The battles ahead are to be trade battles — the fighting for markets.' <sup>6</sup> It was with no presentiment that this was a final farewell to his beloved Europe that Watterson with his wife and small granddaughter Milbrey departed from France on the *Imperator* in April 1914.

But if the war came as a surprise to Watterson, he made no initial mistake in underestimating its significance. To those who thought in early August that the war would be quickly over, he wrote that

it was entirely possible that the population of Europe might be reduced as much as 10 per cent before the war could be ended, and he direly warned that this was 'probably the most general and catastrophic war of world history . . . The need for a compact for peace and an international court of arbitration was never so impressed upon the world.'<sup>7</sup> On 4 August Watterson wrote, 'The thoughtful American will hesitate before taking sides . . . All the nations have been preparing for this during more than a generation.'

But it proved to be as impossible for Watterson to follow Wilson's injunction to remain 'neutral in thought' as it did for most Americans, including Wilson himself. For Watterson, 'neutrality in thought' lasted exactly three days. On 7 August he flatly announced his sympathies:

That treaties are no stronger than their strongest signatories has been fully attested by the ruthless proceeding of the Kaiser in Belgium . . . Bravo Belgium, and bravo all who fight for national liberty and life . . . The word of the modern world is, Down with Tyranny, autocracy, and brute force.

In these first weeks of war, to be sure, he made a point of differentiating between the German government and its people. This position was clearly stated on September 3, when, with the war only a month old and most Americans still undecided over who were the heroes and villains, the following brief paragraph appeared in the *Courier-Journal*:

Herman Ridder flings Japan at us. Then he adduces Russia. What does he think now of Turkey? How can he reconcile the Kaiser's ostentatious appeal to the Children of Christ and his pretentious partnership with God — 'meinselb und Gott' — with his calling the hordes of Mahomet to his aid? Will not this unite all Christendom against the unholy combine? May Heaven protect the Vaterland from contamination and give the German people a chance! To Hell with the Hohenzollerns and Hapsburgs.

Watterson had been the author of many felicitous phrases in the past, but none had obtained the general popularity that his 'To Hell with the Hohenzollerns and Hapsburgs' was to receive in the months ahead. Watterson was delighted with the reception given his phrase and thereafter seldom ended an editorial without it. One of the high moments of his life came shortly after our entry

into the war when at a dinner given by friends at the Manhattan Club, he discovered that at the ends of the dining room were huge electric signs, one reading 'To Hell with the Hapsburgs' and the other, 'To Hell with the Hohenzollerns.' In answer to the objections from a few churchmen who protested against the profanity, Watterson insisted that he meant nothing irreverent by his oft-repeated remark; on the contrary, it was uttered as a most pious abjuration.

Having himself decided the identity of the guilty parties, Watterson soon had difficulty in understanding how any other American could have a different opinion, and he became increasingly suspicious of those German-Americans who showed sympathy for the cause of the Central Powers. Only Watterson's conviction that the war was 'the most momentous moral crisis since the crucifixion of Christ' could explain his increasing hostility toward a group of Americans for whom he had always before had real affection. Watterson had never been in sympathy with the deeply rooted Southern traditions of nativism. His long association with such men as Carl Schurz and Herman Ridder, editor of the *Staats-Zeitung*, as well as with many of the most prominent men in Louisville such as I. W. Bernheim, had convinced him that 'No American is a better citizen, a more loyal American, than the German who has resided a few years in the United States.'<sup>8</sup>

But as the war continued, his resentment toward those citizens who seemed to be traveling as rapidly away from neutrality as he, but in the opposite direction, became more pronounced. Soon after the outbreak of the war, Herman Ridder, who had been an old colleague of Watterson in many Democratic campaigns, had written him in regard to their differing views, 'I am sure that you will always give me kindest consideration. We will not drift apart. I wish the war ended and that very soon.'<sup>9</sup>

But the two men soon drifted far apart. By February 1915, when the Allies seemed blocked on all fronts, Watterson was sounding the tocsin against Germans everywhere and suggesting that all people of German ancestry in this country should either prove their loyalty or be detained in prison camps until they could be deported. He even urged that Ridder be at once placed under bond. The *Staats-Zeitung* answered with the charge that the *Courier-Journal* was being subsidized by the British and had obtained a very favorable contract for newsprint from Canadian paper



mills at \$50,000 below the market price in return for its pro-Allied editorial policy.<sup>10</sup> The passions engendered by a distant conflict were finding expression in the press of America. Watterson, as much as any editor in the country, was conclusively demonstrating the impossibility of the very isolationism he had demanded in American foreign policy.

As the weeks passed he became more involved in the Allied cause. He accepted the honorary presidency of the Belgian Relief Committee in Louisville, and arranged for an entire shipload of food to be sent from Kentucky. His editorials expressing the greatest sympathy for the Allied nations and predicting perdition for the leaders of the Central Powers were regularly reprinted in Lord Northcliffe's *Daily Mail* and in the *Paris Herald* as well as being translated for *Le Temps*.

But while entirely sympathetic with the Allied cause, Watterson still clung to the hope that the United States might stay out of the actual fighting. As late as 1915, at William Howard Taft's request, he agreed to serve on the committee on information of the League to Enforce Peace, which had been founded to preserve American neutrality.<sup>11</sup> Even when the attacks of German submarines resulted in death for Americans traveling on belligerent merchant vessels, he urged that the United States remain calm. But it was becoming increasingly difficult for him to reconcile his desire for peace with his sense of national honor, and on 5 May 1915, following the sinking of a tanker with the loss of three American lives, he wrote:

Suppose instead of an obscure tank steamer and three unknown Americans, it had been the *Lusitania* with three or thirteen hundred representative Americans—making another Titanic disaster—what then? This indeed may happen at any time. If it should, the popular explosion which followed the blowing up of the *Maine* would be as a popgun to the overwhelming madness instantly seizing the people of the United States.

Watterson, who prided himself on his gift of prophecy, had never proved himself to be a more direful Cassandra. Two days after this editorial appeared, the *Lusitania* went down off the coast of Ireland with the loss of 1198 persons, of which 128 were American citizens. Watterson's question of forty-eight hours before, 'What then?' had now assumed a terrifying immediacy for America and the world.

Watterson attempted to give an answer to his own question in a series of remarkable editorials that followed the sinking of the *Lusitania*. The first editorial, written one day after the dreadful news broke in America, was entitled, 'The Heart of Christ — the Sword of the Lord and Gideon.' It was probably the most copied and widely read editorial that Watterson ever wrote. In it could be seen reflected all of the horror and anger sweeping America at that moment.

Truly, the Nation of the black hand and the bloody heart has got in its work . . . Nothing in the annals of piracy can in wanton and cruel ferocity equal the destruction of the *Lusitania* . . . But comes the query, what are we going to do about it? . . . Please God, as all men shall behold, we are a Nation; please God, as Europe and all the world shall know, we are Americans . . . The *Courier-Journal* will not go the length of saying that the President shall convene the Congress and advise it to declare against these barbarians a State of War. This may yet become necessary. . . . Yet we are not wholly without reprisal for the murder of our citizens and the destruction of their property. There are many German ships — at least two German men-of-war — in the aggregate worth many millions of dollars, within our reach to make our losses — repudiated by Germany, good — and their owners — robbed by Germany, whole again.

We must not act in haste of passion. This catastrophe is too real — the flashlight it throws upon the methods and purposes of Germany is too appalling — to leave us in any doubt what awaits us as the bloody and brutal work goes on. Civilization should abjure its neutrality.<sup>12</sup>

Watterson's earnest counsel for retaliation against Germany was not to be accepted by the President, who instead sent another note of protest to Germany and then in a speech at Philadelphia that same week uttered the much-misunderstood phrase that there was 'such a thing as a man being too proud to fight.'

Although still willing to follow the leadership of the President, Watterson could at least vent his pent-up anger and frustration against the Secretary of State. He had never been happy over Bryan's appointment to that key position, and now when Bryan showed himself reluctant to take even the very mild diplomatic action against Germany that Wilson proposed and resigned in protest over Wilson's second *Lusitania* note, Watterson's wrath knew no bounds:

Men have been shot and beheaded, been hanged, drawn, and quartered for treason less heinous. Whatever his motive, whether political or mercenary, it leaves him altogether indefensible and ignoble.<sup>13</sup>

With that as his final estimate of the man for whom he had held such various opinions, Watterson bade farewell to William Jennings Bryan.

Wilson's policy of writing notes, surprisingly enough to his critics, appeared to be getting results when the German government in the so-called Sussex pledge early in the spring of 1916 agreed to abandon for the time being its policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. To most Americans it appeared that Wilson by the use of the pen had scored a signal victory over German brutality. It was with a sigh of relief that the people turned away from the frightening uncertainty of the international situation to the comforting uncertainty of the approaching Presidential campaign.

Henry and Rebecca Watterson spent the winter of 1915 in the deep South, where on 20 December, at the same Hotel Monteleone in New Orleans that they had visited fifty years before, they celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. Gifts and good wishes came to them from all over the country: editorial greetings from most of the major newspapers of the country, congratulatory cards from Taft and Wilson, a gold dresser set from Louisville friends — in all, more than enough to gratify Watterson's love of sentiment. On New Year's Day of 1916, the Wattersons left New Orleans for Havana on a second honeymoon cruise, accompanied this time by three of their grandchildren.

Watterson returned to Louisville in April to resume his editorial duties, take another look at the progress of the war, and — what seemed more immediate — size up the political situation. Wilson's nomination was, of course, assumed. His re-election, however, might not be so easily achieved, for this time the Republicans showed little disposition to oblige the Democrats by dividing their forces. Roosevelt was now seeking to return to the fold, and the Progressive party without him was doomed to die. Watterson publicly expressed confidence in victory, and boasted that the 'democrats do not need the services of Colonel Roosevelt as the hamstringer of his party. They can win without him and would prefer the honors of war to an easily won victory.'<sup>14</sup> Privately, however, Watterson was less confident.

Watterson's own relations with Wilson were, if not strained,

certainly cool. Mexico still stuck in Watterson's craw — he could never swallow Wilson's handling of that. Above all, Watterson found in Wilson a certain haughty disdain for the advice of others, too great a faith in his own unerring judgment, the intellectual impatience with others that the schoolmaster might have with his pupils. Frank Cobb's letter to Watterson in the first year of Wilson's administration, while written in defense of Wilson, but corroborated Watterson's opinion:

His [Wilson's] mastery over Congress is more pronounced than ever. It seems to be a sheerly intellectual domination. He is not popular. His personality is never described as captivating. He seems to have no close friends, no confidants. In some respects, he is as much of a recluse as Tilden, and in other respects still more — for Tilden was an indefatigable writer of letters. Wilson is governing the country much as he governed Princeton — by mind and will power —<sup>15</sup>

To one of Watterson's temperament, such a man as characterized by Cobb would always be a stranger.

Yet in spite of his reservations regarding the Democratic candidate and the platform, which advocated national woman suffrage, there was for Watterson but one issue in this campaign, the European war. If Wilson should be defeated, Watterson was convinced that such action would be regarded by the world as America's repudiation of Wilson's firm stand against Germany. 'He kept us out of war' had little appeal for Watterson as a campaign slogan, but the fact that Wilson had preserved the dignity of the American nation could cover a multitude of minor sins. Watterson soon became convinced that Hughes was the German-American candidate, a conviction that grew stronger as Hughes, in the name of political expediency, kept a discreet silence on the explosive subject of the German-American support that he was receiving. For Watterson, such a support could only mean that Hughes was in league with the devil, and for that reason alone, he would have backed Wilson.

Although the results of the election of 1916 were the closest since that of 1876, Watterson hailed Wilson's narrow victory as a 'vindication of Democracy,' and marveled over the narrow escape from 'an act of changing administrations so fraught with peril to the state.'<sup>16</sup>

Events moved rapidly in the days after the Presidential election. No one could say for sure whether Wilson had won more votes

on the slogan 'He kept us out of war,' or on the argument used by Watterson that Hughes was 'the Kaiser's candidate.' But it was not to be either the pacifist or the interventionist that in the end determined America's course of action. The decision was made in the Wilhelmstrasse, not Washington. By January 1917, with the effects of the blockade more oppressive than ever, Germany decided to use the only weapon she had against the blockade. This meant war with the United States, for Wilson had obtained the celebrated Sussex pledge by means of a virtual ultimatum. But to the harried German government it was difficult to see how America could be more in the war on the side of the Allies than she already was, for the Germans believed our only contribution could be in supplies which already were going exclusively to the Allies. Consequently, the German government on 31 January 1917, announced the resumption of the submarine campaign. Wilson at once ended all diplomatic relations with Germany.

For the next six weeks after the German announcement, America waited for the 'overt act' that would mean war. On 12 March an unarmed American merchant ship, the *Algonquin*, was sunk without warning, but still Wilson hesitated, and on 17 March Watterson angrily declared, 'Germany is already waging war against us — cruel, relentless war — and we can do nothing less than defend and protect ourselves.'

It was not until 2 April that Wilson, after days of terrible self-debate, appeared before Congress to ask for a declaration of war. Four days later the United States was at war. Watterson's editorial 'Vae Victis,' hailed the advent of war the following morning.

Surely the time has arrived — many of us think it was long since overdue — for calling the braves to the colors. Nations must e'en take stock on occasion and manhood come to a showdown . . .

Like a bolt out of the blue flashed the war signal from the very heart of Europe. Across the Atlantic its reverberations rolled to find us divided, neutral and unprepared . . . There followed the assassin sea monsters and the airship campaign of murder.

All the while we looked on with either simpering idiocy, or dazed apathy. Serbia? It was no affair of ours. Belgium? Why should we worry? Food stuffs soaring — war stuffs roaring — everybody making money . . . Even the *Lusitania* did not awaken us to a sense of danger and arouse us from the stupefaction of ignorant and ignoble self-complacency.

Then followed his thundering peroration to war and victory:

First of all on bended knee we should pray God to forgive us. Then erect as men, Christian men, soldierly men, to the flag and the fray — wherever they lead us — over the ocean — through France to Flanders — across the Low Countries to Koln, Bonn and Koblens — tumbling the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein into the Rhine as we pass and damming the mouth of the Moselle with the debris of the ruin we make of it — then on to Berlin, the Black Horse cavalry sweeping the Wilhelmstrasse like lava down the mountainside, the Junker and the saber rattler flying before us, the tunes being 'Dixie' and 'Yankee Doodle,' the cry being 'Hail the French Republic — Hail the Republic of Russia — welcome the Commonwealth of the Vaterland — no peace with the Kaiser — no parley with Autocracy. Absolutism and the divine right of Kings — to Hell with the Hapsburg and the Hohenzollern!

Two and a half years before, in November 1914, he had written:

Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching; marching and fighting; food for powder; brave lads from Severn and from Clyde, from the Rhine and the Rhone; little red-legged French boys out of the sweet Provence country, and beardless oval-faced German boys from Bingen and Stuttgart; wood-choppers from the Black Forest and sail-makers from Belfast and Brittany — what's imperial Hecuba to them that they should fight for her, bleed for her, die for her? . . . May not Europe . . . know at last that *in strife there is neither glory nor gain*; in war only the wrath of God and the ruin of the world? . . . Here Thou, dear God, this day this prayer; make the nations sane again; drive out the devils from the hearts of men . . . give us the grace that passeth understanding — peace on earth as it is in Heaven — peace — <sup>17</sup>

There is in both paragraphs the same rolling rhythm, the same unmistakable style, even the same geography, but an immeasurable difference in sentiment, for between the earlier and later paragraphs lay much history.

Watterson's two editorials, 'Vae Victis' and 'War Has Its Compensations,' written at the time of America's entry into the war, won for the seventy-seven-year-old editor the Pulitzer Prize of 1917 for the best editorial writing of the year. No one could have been more surprised or delighted than Watterson himself. 'The gander-legged boys in the City Editor's room will find out that the old man is a promising journalist,' he told his editorial staff.<sup>18</sup>

## EIGHTEEN

### Victory and Disillusionment

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1917-1918

PRESSING AS Watterson might find the international situation to be, he could give it only part of his attention in the weeks after the declaration of war, for he was at the time engaged in a private war of his own with Bruce Haldeman for control of the *Courier-Journal*. The fight had been many years in the making but had not reached a state of open conflict until May 1917.

The trouble had its origins in the last wishes of Walter Haldeman in respect to his property. At the time of his death, he had held seven-eighths of the 600 shares of the *Courier-Journal* stock, and an equal percentage of the 1000 Louisville *Times* shares, the remainder of both companies' stock being owned by Watterson. Haldeman's will provided that the shares owned by him should be divided equally among his three surviving children, William, Isabelle, and Bruce. Furthermore, he requested that his position as president of the two companies be conferred upon his younger son, Bruce, for he saw in Bruce an exceedingly able business executive. William, however, was sixteen years Bruce's senior, and there would be a natural resentment on his part that his younger brother should be placed in full authority. Both William Haldeman and Watterson agreed to abide by the elder Haldeman's wishes, however, and for

many years the arrangement seemed to be entirely satisfactory. Watterson, whose only real interest was in the editorial direction of the *Courier-Journal*, was willing to allow Bruce to have as complete charge of the business affairs as his father had had. William simply kept silent, devoting most of his attention to the editorial management of the *Times*.

For the first ten years after his death, it appeared that Walter Haldeman had arranged matters wisely. Bruce proved his ability as business manager and both papers prospered. Following a series of small fires in the old *Courier-Journal* building, Bruce took complete charge of building a new plant on lots his father had earlier purchased a block east of the old building. But although Bruce had all of his father's business ability, he lacked his father's imagination. He was, at least to Watterson's thinking, a little too cautious, unwilling to take the chances that his father had, chances which had usually paid off in rather handsome dividends. Bruce, moreover, failed to understand Watterson, and could not appreciate the fact, as his father always had, that Watterson was the *Courier-Journal's* best advertisement, its best source of news, its reason for being a national instead of a small provincial paper. Bruce was often secretly alarmed over Watterson's editorial extravagance and more than a little irked by his frequent absences from Louisville. His idea of employment was a regular schedule of hours with a paid vacation once a year, and it was impossible for him to hide his irritation. On one occasion when Watterson wrote from Europe requesting additional funds, Bruce answered in the sharp tone of a parent writing to a son in college:

My dear Mr. Watterson:

While I cannot say that I am exactly enthusiastic over the receipt of your letter of December the 5th, still I can truly state that I am always glad to hear from you and to know that you and Mrs. Watterson are in good health. Following the receipt of your letter, I have written to the National Bank of Kentucky requesting Mr. Fenley to extend your letter of credit in the amount you ask, viz: 500 pounds. We are still strapped for money at the office and it will not be possible to declare the usual quarterly dividend January 1st. I regret this exceedingly, but for the reasons stated in my last letter to you it will be absolutely necessary to pass the dividend. There are evidences piling up every day now to demonstrate the tight status in business and financial circles . . . I fear the Democrats, with the President [Wilson] at the head, may upon reassembling of Congress continue to force



through more radical legislation . . . If they do this, I am very much afraid they will get the country into very much the same condition it was in when Cleveland was President.<sup>1</sup>

Watterson, on the other hand, found Bruce's frequent 'retrenchment programs,' annoying and unnecessary. Although his own salary was never touched, he was upset to see such letters as the one sent to Bruce Haldeman by O. O. Stealey, the *Courier-Journal's* Washington correspondent and a faithful employee for over thirty years. Stealey had requested a raise, and when Bruce showed a reluctance to give it, Stealey had answered:

When the paper was in hard line in '96-'97, I cut down of my own volition my salary one-half during the recess of Congress . . . Of course, I understand the low rate of advertising in Louisville and the lack of generosity of Southerners in supporting their newspapers, but if I had not thought the *Courier-Journal* was doing well from a business standpoint I would not have asked for an increase in salary. This I hope you know so if you do not feel able to accede to my request, all right. The *Courier-Journal* with the *Times* should at least pay for the phone.<sup>2</sup>

This, Watterson felt, was no way to reward able and loyal writers.

On another occasion when Bruce was attempting to cut down expenditures, Watterson wrote directly to Harrison Robertson to find out what effect such a policy was having on the paper. Robertson answered, 'You ask me how the retrenchment measures on the *Courier-Journal* affect me. Only to the extent of working on a more economical basis and getting out a paper not quite as good as I should like.'<sup>3</sup> Robertson's cautious statement confirmed Watterson's apprehensions.

It was inevitable that between two men of such different temperament an open clash would eventually come, although both men had a genuine affection for each other and each tried to make concessions to the other's personal idiosyncrasies. The immediate cause for friction between Watterson and Bruce Haldeman was the war in Europe. Bruce had been alarmed in the past by Watterson's forthright editorial expressions, particularly those against Wilson following the Manhattan Club incident, but he had remained silent. When, however, Watterson began to wield a heavy stick against German-Americans who supported the Central Powers, Haldeman felt the business interests were being jeopardized and that he must

remonstrate with his editor. The Germans in Louisville comprised by far the largest part of the city's foreign element, and had an even greater share of the wealth. The liquor interests contained many German names, one of the most important being Watterson's friend, I. W. Bernheim. These men had advertising contracts to give, and they were not slow in informing Bruce of their displeasure at Watterson's anti-German editorials.

Early in March 1915, as Watterson's espousal of the Allied cause grew warmer each day, Bruce had written to Watterson:

Enclosed you will find a letter from one of your liquor friends, Mr. I. W. Bernheim. I am not surprised; and in fact anticipated receiving letters like this. The paper is also hearing from it — subscribers discontinuing their papers and business men refusing to advertise.

It has been very seldom that I have not agreed with the editorial policy of the Courier-Journal, and I do not think that anyone can accuse me of imposing the business end upon free editorial expression. However, in regard to this editorial, before I had ever received a complaint I felt it was unnecessary and regarded it as a serious mistake, as I do now . . . It certainly was rabid and I feel that unless there is some very excellent reason why such an extreme stand should be taken by the Courier-Journal, it is unfair to me at the business end just at this time, when business is certainly in a very unsatisfactory condition . . . I sincerely trust that you will suppress your inclination to indulge in any more abuse of the Germans.<sup>4</sup>

With remarkable self-restraint, Watterson had answered:

Touching the editorial matter give yourself no further concern. My wish and aim are to meet, not to antagonize, the business end of it. Under any circumstance or conditions it would distress me to find myself in disagreement with you. I can truly say that after the death of your father I sought to place you firmly in his seat, to see you rise to it and broaden to it — which you certainly have done — realizing that the whole burden must presently fall upon your shoulders.

This is now imminent. It is of the first importance that you realize that the newspapers do not edit themselves, that there must be a head and a policy, and that more than most newspapers, the Courier-Journal has had for forty-six years a head and a policy which have given it character, distinction and influence, and, I think also, prosperity . . . Such letters as that of Bernheim should not disturb you. The article in question was written to meet the murderous decree of the Germans and contained no sentence that was not intended as a timely warning. It was deliberately, not thoughtlessly or maliciously written . . . I feel myself no bitterness. The time is coming when these German-Americans of Louisville will not only know I was a friend

but will look to the *Courier-Journal* for sympathy and leading in the situation which will arise after the war.<sup>5</sup>

Bruce, upon receiving Watterson's letter, instead of letting well enough alone, answered in an even more critical tone:

I will have to forgive you for endeavoring to impress upon me the importance of realizing 'that newspapers do not edit themselves.' I have never said or intimated anything that would call for a mild rebuke of that character. All that I have complained about has been certain extremes to which you go. *I do not recall your ever having acknowledged that you were wrong about anything, but notwithstanding I do not consider you infallible.*

However, Mr. Watterson, I am not going to have any quarrel with my father's old friend after having trotted in harness with him for so many years, but before an impartial tribunal I could very easily convict you of being an extreme writer at times, as your 'Crook' editorial on President Wilson might be cited to illustrate. *All I am trying to do is to keep this business out of the kinks and make enough money for the high muck-a-muck editors who chase about the Southern climes and Europe.*<sup>6</sup>

Watterson was never to forget this letter, later claiming that it had been this that had convinced him co-operation with Bruce was impossible. Nor did Watterson change his editorial policy toward Germany and toward those German-Americans whom he considered disloyal to America's interest. When he showed even more hostility toward Germany during the Presidential campaign, Bruce on one or two occasions insisted Watterson's editorial be toned down before publication. For the first time in his life, Watterson felt his freedom of editorial expression was being restricted. Such a situation could not long continue.

While Watterson's relations with Bruce were reaching a point of showdown, his feelings toward the older brother remained as cordial as ever. He had always felt closer to William, who was but six years his junior, than to Bruce, who belonged to another generation. Both Watterson and the elder Haldeman brother were serving in the Confederate army before Bruce had learned to walk; both were working together in political campaigns while Bruce was still in school. Their children were nearly the same age and the two families had frequently spent their winters together in Florida. Moreover, William Haldeman had always expressed the highest regard for Watterson's value to the name and fame of the *Courier-Journal*. At the same time that Bruce was writing about

'high muck-a-muck editors chasing about . . . Europe,' William was writing letters to Watterson expressing quite a different sentiment:

I trust that you are having a pleasant visit to New York and I know that you will come home with the usual amount of valuable information that you always gather during your New York visits. You manage to keep in touch with affairs more thoroughly than any public man I know of and this information is most valuable to you and to the *Courier-Journal*.<sup>7</sup>

It was an argument between Bruce and William that finally brought the tension in the *Courier-Journal* office to its climax. The immediate cause of the trouble between the two Haldeman brothers was Bruce's interference in the editorial policy of the *Louisville Times* over the prohibition issue in the late fall of 1916. All three men were opposed to the prohibition movement, which was gaining such strength in these years, but while Bruce and Watterson were opposed to bringing any statewide prohibition bill before the state legislature, William Haldeman suddenly decided that it would be better strategy to have an immediate vote on the prohibition bill, confident that it could be defeated and the temperance crowd would thus be routed. Without consulting the others, William stated on the front page of the *Times* that the special legislative session to be called in the winter should consider the prohibition bill. Bruce was furious when he saw the position the *Times* had taken without consulting him, and when Watterson expressed an opinion that there might be some measure of wisdom in the elder Haldeman's tactics, Bruce accused him of being in league with his brother to change the basic editorial policy of the paper without his permission. After a few angry words, Bruce locked the door between his and Watterson's office as a sign of his displeasure. Watterson, already resentful of Bruce's criticism of his editorials, realized that at last the breaking point had been reached.

Watterson left Louisville for Florida almost immediately after the quarrel with Bruce. Upon arriving there, he wrote to Bennett H. Young, the company's legal adviser and also the representative on the Board of Directors for Isabelle Haldeman, who had been ill for many years. Since he had 'received little other than distrust' from Bruce, Watterson wrote, 'when the Board of Directors holds

its next meeting. I shall ask to be relieved of my duties as Editor of the *Courier-Journal*.'<sup>8</sup>

William Haldeman and Young both answered Watterson's letter, urging him not to resign. 'There is no reason for you to do so,' Young wrote, 'and I think it would greatly injure the paper. . . . Anyhow, do nothing until you can come home and we will talk it over.'<sup>9</sup> Young enclosed a letter from Bruce, which the latter had requested him to send along. Bruce's letter, which Watterson must have destroyed, evidently did nothing to restore amicable relations, for Watterson wrote to Bruce in return:

Dear Bruce; I have sometimes wondered whether it be possible for you to apply unbiased judgment not to say a friendly interpretation to anything that I do, or say, in our business relations. There has often seemed an underlying distrust of which you may be unconscious but which has been nevertheless very painful to me. I read your letter to Bennett Young with positive amazement . . . Recurring to this present misunderstanding . . . you certainly gave me the impression of very great anger touching a matter of which I was as innocent as a baby . . . I not only think every serious matter connected with the paper either editorial or administrative should come to your knowledge or have your sanction, but I would not contemplate one without conferring with you. There had been in the C.J. no change of policy whatever . . . Nor had I any conversation with Will before his article appeared seeing it for the first time in the *Times*. Under the circumstances I could not see why you should visit any displeasure, or loss of confidence, upon me . . . I am an old man. My career is behind me. Neither name, or fame, or jurisdiction in law . . . is my purpose. My single aim has been to keep things together, to go along harmoniously and to develop the property . . . But I cannot live happy nor work to advantage, without the confidence — I may say the hearty confidence — of my colleagues, and despairing of this with you, I have asked to be retired.<sup>10</sup>

Watterson did not carry out his threat, however. One reason for his deciding to comply with Young's request was a telegram that he received from Bruce informing him that one of his editorials regarding the German-Americans would not be printed. This must have infuriated Watterson to such an extent that he decided then and there to fight Bruce for control of the paper. Young wrote Watterson to say that he was 'delighted to hear that you do not intend to take any action . . . until we can all have a meeting together.'<sup>11</sup> At the same time, William Haldeman wrote hinting that

he had a plan of action which, if carried through, would be in both their and the paper's best interest.

Watterson returned to Louisville early in May 1917, determined that either Bruce or he and William must resign if the paper was to survive. The Board of Directors meeting held on 9 May was a stormy one. But by voting as a unit, Watterson, the elder Haldeman, and Young could with their 425 shares outvote Bruce on every point. Over his vigorous protest, the Board voted that he must share his final authority with Watterson and his brother, acting as an executive committee. Furthermore, there was to be for each paper a separate business manager chosen by the Board of Directors, thus further limiting Bruce's powers. The president of the company was to hold an indefinite term of office subject to the will of the Board, and Young was to be retained as general counsel for both papers. By this arrangement, Bruce was to be little more than a figurehead, subject at all times to the executive committee where he would have but one vote out of three.<sup>12</sup> It was not a very happy solution, for it gave promise of continuing the quarrel for as long a time as Bruce should stay on as president, even though Watterson and William Haldeman were now free of Bruce's dictation.

Bruce Haldeman was determined to fight this action of the Board, which he considered illegal. He held a contract dated 22 May 1912 and signed by both William and Isabelle which stated that 'so long as all three children are alive' Bruce Haldeman was to act as president, W. B. Haldeman as vice-president, and that 'the stock allotted to Isabelle Haldeman will be on all proper occasions voted to retain . . . the said management.'<sup>13</sup> On the grounds of violation of this contract, Bruce petitioned the Jefferson County Circuit Court, Chancery Branch, on 16 June for a mandatory injunction against the Board, enjoining it from acting under the resolutions recently passed. Following Bruce's petition, Watterson entered an affidavit claiming that he had never seen or been a party to the contract of May 1912 and had not even known of its existence until a year before the present action. He made the plea that the action of the Board had been necessary 'to rescue a noble property and an honored institution from threatened destruction' owing to 'the irreconcilable differences between Bruce Haldeman and his brother William B. Haldeman and his sister Isabelle Haldeman.'<sup>14</sup> When Bruce in his answer before the court still insisted that Watterson had known of

the contract at the time it was signed, Watterson felt that he had been accused of perjury. Any reconciliation between the two was now out of the question.

On 14 July Judge A. M. Wallace granted Bruce Haldeman a temporary injunction. Alexander Humphrey, representing Watterson, and E. P. Humphrey and Robert W. Bingham, counsel for William and Isabelle Haldeman, at once appealed against this injunction to the Court of Appeals of Kentucky. Two weeks later, Judge Shackelford Miller, speaking for the unanimous court of six judges, dissolved the injunction and ruled the contract of 22 May 1912, 'invalid and impossible of performance,' on the grounds that it was merely a private contract to which all the stockholders had not given their assent. The opinion of the court was that it would be dangerous to establish a precedent whereby a court of equity, by commanding the vote of a director, could thus supplant the directors and rule the corporation.<sup>15</sup> The battle was over. Bruce Haldeman resigned and Watterson was elected president of the two corporations.

But it was a hollow victory for both Watterson and William Haldeman. It had been to Watterson a detestable and, he believed, an unnecessary quarrel. He was under no delusion that either he or William could fill Bruce's vacant chair. Both men were editors not business managers, and both men were well over seventy years of age, too old to accept such large new responsibilities.

Their advanced age made the question of the future control of the paper an imminent one, now that Bruce had withdrawn. William Haldeman had no sons to whom he might turn over some of his tasks and eventually his position. Watterson's two sons could not be considered. Henry, Jr., had neither interest nor talent for a journalistic career. As for Ewing, the final denouement to his tragic life had come in 1911 when, after shooting and seriously wounding a man in Kingston, New York, he was committed by the state to the Matteawan Asylum.<sup>16</sup> Watterson had intended upon his retirement that his daughter Milbrey's husband, W. A. Miller, should take his place on the Board of Directors, but even that hope of family succession had ended with the death of Miller that year. It is not surprising then that within a year after taking over control of the paper, both Watterson and William Haldeman were eager to sell their interests to an outsider.

The last year that Watterson served as editor of the *Courier-Journal* was not a happy one. He was not accustomed to have to deal with such mundane problems as the office expenditures, circulation figures, and advertising contracts which had now become his responsibility. There were frequent and anxious meetings with Robert Hughes, business manager of the *Courier-Journal*, concerning the problem of boosting the paper's circulation and meeting the lively competition of the Louisville *Herald*. Such questions as whether it would be wise to reduce the price to one cent and whether more use should be made of comics and, as Watterson's secretary George Johnson termed it, 'yellow stuff' in the news columns had to be answered. At such times, Watterson must have sorely missed Bruce's expert hand in the business office.

Watterson also felt that as president of the company he must now keep a more careful eye on the news columns of the paper than he had for many years. He had an able editorial manager in Arthur Krock, but Watterson took his new responsibilities very seriously, and now began to have some concept of the problem that had faced Bruce as president. The war itself increased the number of problems that were now brought to Watterson for his consideration: a paper and man power shortage, rising prices and taxes.

Nor was Watterson happy with the trend of the times. He was highly critical of Wilson's conduct of the war, feeling that the President was too dilatory in pressing for an all-out effort in Europe and at the same time was too demanding in restrictions for the home front. Watterson was particularly aroused against the Administration's proposed Espionage Bill which, among other provisions, would authorize the Postmaster General to ban from the mails any printed material he regarded treasonable or seditious. It seemed but one more evidence to Watterson of Wilson's growing autocratic spirit, and he savagely fought the measure both in the editorial columns of the *Courier-Journal* and by means of telegrams to his friends in Congress. When because of Administrative pressure and war hysteria the Espionage Bill passed Congress, Watterson felt himself more than ever at odds with the Wilson government.

As wartime controls increased, Watterson no longer made even a pretense of supporting the Democratic administration. When the Nashville *Tennessean* suggested that in time of war, the President should be respected as a leader and should be obeyed, Watterson



snorted in answer, 'This is something worse than hero worship — it is fetich worship — It reads almost treasonable.' <sup>17</sup> And when there were those who, remembering his outbursts against Cleveland, suggested that Watterson was the only Democratic editor in the country who seemed to prefer a Republican for President, Watterson had an answer for them too:

Things have come to a hell of a pass  
When a man can't whip his own jackass.<sup>18</sup>

Watterson, in spite of his excited arguments about autocracy, must have realized that such measures of governmental control as the Lever Food Act, the Army Appropriation Act, and the Espionage Act were but temporary measures forced through by the emergency of war. He found it much more difficult to accept the additions made to the Federal Constitution in this last flurry of Progressive reform, amendments granting woman suffrage and prohibiting the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages.

Watterson had been a foe of both proposals since the early days when they had been largely in the hands of those whom he referred to contemptuously as 'the crazy janes' and 'the red-nosed angels.' But the prohibition and the woman suffrage movements had grown tremendously in recent years and had now acquired respectability. The war with both its high idealism and its materialistic demands was to bring victory to both movements. It became a patriotic duty for men to give up liquor in order that more grain might be sent abroad and for women to leave the home and find jobs in order that industry might be served. The feminist's and the teetotaler's soapboxes were now wrapped in red, white, and blue bunting, and with such a décor they proved irresistible.

Watterson's objections to prohibition were precise and well known to the entire country. He believed that any attempt to pass a prohibition amendment would not only be an unconstitutional attack on personal liberty, but it would also make a mockery out of the Constitution and Federal law because it would be impossible to enforce. His arguments against woman suffrage while no less pronounced were not as concise and consistent. On occasions, he would argue that he was not opposed to suffrage for women because they were women any more than he was opposed to suffrage for Negroes because they were colored. Rather what he was op-

posed to was the indiscriminate extension of the franchise to all. 'I would discriminate and educate,' he would say at such times — in the belief that the ideal Jeffersonian aristocracy of intellectuals might be achieved.

But at other times, he would maintain that he was opposed to suffrage for women precisely because they were women. With a Victorian belief in woman's innocence and the traditional Southern male attitude of protectiveness, he was convinced that he was the true guardian of woman's real interest. He would prevent 'the dragging of women into the mire of politics; the diversion, if not the pollution of domestic interests; the coarsening — certainly not the refining — of the feminine character and fibre . . . I would keep our women ignorant of dirt. I would preserve in her the child unto the end.' <sup>19</sup>

Because he felt this protection of motherhood and home 'the most momentous question of modern times,' he gladly consented to contribute articles to the *Woman Patriot*, the journal of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. Evidently he saw nothing incongruous in women organizing politically to stop women's political organizations.

Whatever his motives might be, either for a more literate electorate or a more pure womanhood, there was no love lost between him and the 'suffragettes.' These determined ladies did not know whether he irritated them more when he shouted, 'Harlots' at them or when he adopted the gentle condescending tone of a benevolent father toward an erring daughter as in the following:

Often I have felt like swearing 'You idiots!' and then like crying 'Poor dears!' But I have kept on with them, and had I been in Albany or Washington I would have caught Rosalie Jones in my arms and . . . have exclaimed: 'You ridiculous child, go and get a bath and put on some pretty clothes and come and join us at dinner in the State Banquet Hall, duly made and provided for you and the rest of you delightful sillies.' <sup>20</sup>

But Watterson could not stop the 'red-nosed angels' with logic nor the 'crazy janes' with threatening words and lollypop promises. With disgust, he saw both amendments easily pass the two houses of Congress and begin their successful tour of the forty-eight states. In a moment of black pessimism, he wrote:

[It] looks as though the United States, having exhausted the reasonable possibilities of democracy, is beginning to turn crank. Look at woman suffrage by Federal edict; look at prohibition by act of Congress and constitutional amendment; tobacco next to walk the plank; and then — ! Lord, how glad I feel that I am nearly a hundred years old and shall not live to see it!<sup>21</sup>

The world was whirling too fast away from him. The ideal of a Jeffersonian republic that he had cherished for so long was more remote than ever, impossible now to recover. It was time to quit.

## NINETEEN

### Thirty — End of Copy

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1918-1921

IN APRIL 1918 Watterson was seriously ill. For several days his condition was extremely critical, but his strong constitution and amazing vitality brought him through. Although he was sufficiently recovered to leave the hospital in June, he realized that he could no longer continue as head of two corporations and active editor of the *Courier-Journal*. William Haldeman was also willing to sell, and so it became only a question of finding a buyer. In late July 1918 it was announced that Robert Worth Bingham, who had successfully represented William and Isabelle Haldeman in Bruce's suit against them, held an option to purchase the major share of the stock, Bruce having refused to sell his shares. Judge Bingham, successful Louisville lawyer and former mayor of the city, was now, as the husband of Henry M. Flagler's widow, a man of great wealth and the most likely prospective buyer in Louisville. On 6 August Bingham purchased the controlling stock of both corporations and became the new editor of the *Courier-Journal*. The purchase price was not revealed, but Watterson on that same day deposited in the National Bank of Kentucky the sum of \$186,000.

Tributes came to Watterson from across the nation in the form of telegrams, letters, and editorials. To most men, it came as a great shock that Watterson was nearly eighty years old and had been

contemplating retirement. Of all the tributes that came to Watterson on the day that his retirement was announced perhaps the one that pleased him the most, because it was so unexpected, was that from *The Nation*, a journal with which Watterson had frequently been at odds. *The Nation* wrote as its farewell to Watterson:

The sale of the Louisville *Courier-Journal* — another transfer of a powerful newspaper to a very rich man with no special fitness for journalism — carries with it the retirement of Henry Watterson, now in his seventy-ninth year . . .

. . . [T]he commercializing of our press, or its changed ideals, has brought to an end the day of great editors. It is the newspaper owner who to-day bulks largest in the public eye, not the men who formulate a newspaper's views . . .

If it is true that the public no longer desires the old-fashioned verbose and ponderous three-column editorial, filled with invective, dire prophecy, and didactic statesmanship, of which Mr. Watterson is still a past master, it nevertheless remains a fact that a more widely educated newspaper clientele seeks almost in vain for simple, straightforward editorial guidance, beyond question in its unselfishness and independence . . . There is surely still room for a man with a message and a pen to phrase it . . .

So we regret the passing of Colonel Watterson. . . .

His is an original figure where originality is rare. With him a patriot leaves the profession.<sup>1</sup>

The 'Old Lady on the Corner' had a new master. But even then Watterson could not leave her entirely. Not yet. He was delighted when Bingham suggested that he continue to write an occasional editorial for which he would be paid his full salary of \$10,000 a year. He at once chose for himself the title Editor Emeritus, claiming that the *Courier-Journal* was as much an institution as Harvard University and entitled to at least one emeritus.<sup>2</sup> Frank Cobb wrote Watterson, 'Editor Emeritus it is . . . and may it remain not less than Editor Emeritus for many years to come.'<sup>3</sup>

Watterson, of course, was pleased over the salary arrangement, but more than that, he was happy just to stand in the doorway a little longer. In two months the *Courier-Journal* would be fifty years old. He wanted his name still at the top of the masthead until that anniversary had been reached. And he wanted to see the end of the war, to fling a final maledictory 'To Hell' against the defeated Hapsburgs and Hohenzollerns. Until then at least, he wished to keep the door open.

In the meantime, there was more than enough work to keep him occupied. Besides his frequent editorials in which he was given complete freedom by Bingham to 'whack-doodle' the Administration as he saw fit, he had at last consented to write his autobiography. Many friends and numerous publishers had for years been urging him to do so, but he had always regarded the writing of memoirs as 'an unprofitable task for a great man's undertaking.' But he admitted:

from the days of Caesar to the days of Sherman and Lee, the captains of military and senatorial and literary industry have regaled themselves, if they have not edified the public, by the narration of their own stories; and, I dare say, to the end of time, interest in one's self, and the mortal desire to linger yet a little longer on the scene . . . will move those who have cut some figure in the world to follow the wandering Celt in the wistful hope —

*Around my fire any evening group to draw  
And tell of all I felt and all I saw.*<sup>4</sup>

Whatever Watterson's motives were, whether he wished 'to linger a little longer on the scene,' or because as he told Arthur Krock, 'my name is Crummy, and I love money,' he could not turn down the offer that Krock had arranged for him: a \$20,000 contract with the *Saturday Evening Post* for his memoirs plus a contract for the book rights from the George H. Doran Publishing Company.<sup>5</sup> In the late fall of 1918 Watterson began work on the first installments of his autobiography.

The two great events for which Watterson had waited, the end of the war and the fiftieth anniversary of the *Courier-Journal*, occurred within three days of each other: 8 November 1918 marked the half-century of continuous daily publication of the *Courier-Journal*; on the same day the German Kaiser abdicated. An excited editor from the *Courier-Journal* telephoned Watterson at Mansfield. 'You started it. . . . The Hohenzollern has now followed the Hapsburg into the hell of abdication on the *Courier-Journal's* fiftieth anniversary. Will you make some comment on it?'

Watterson's answer was:

The *Courier-Journal's* abjuration touching the Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs has been answered sooner than I expected. Its prophecy that in thirty-five years there will not be a crowned head in Europe will also come true. It has been for a long time obvious that aristocracy

was on the down grade. This is a poor era for Kings, Kaisers and other figure heads. The world is moving toward self-government. Each man thinks himself to wear the purple. Let us put upon the Kaiser's tomb Ben Jonson's inscription over the grave of a dead pig:

'Whilst he lived he lived in clover;  
When he died he died all over.'<sup>6</sup>

The remainder of Watterson's life would have been happier, he would have escaped much criticism and heartache if at this high moment he had closed the door behind him and left the *Courier-Journal*, a prophet with honor in his own land. The victorious Allied world was eager to give him the honors. From France came the Croix de Légion d'honneur as 'a mark of gratitude for service and friendship for France in the greatest crisis of its history'; from Belgium, 'the dignity of Officer in the Order of the Crown as a token of his [the King of the Belgians] appreciation of the devotion you have shown to the cause of Belgium.'<sup>7</sup> So Watterson might have left the world of journalism to enjoy his last few years in peace.

Bingham, however, was not anxious to lose what could still be regarded as the *Courier-Journal's* greatest asset, and Watterson seemed to be in no hurry to leave. There were still the peace negotiations that needed careful watching, for the good Lord only knew what the visionary schoolteacher, who had had such 'a namby-pamby thought' as 'Peace without Victory,' might dream up in the way of a treaty. The duties of an Editor Emeritus were not onerous. He had complete freedom of editorial expression, and could write as little or as much as he desired. Watterson decided to stay on, and thus it was still as editor that he began the last political fight of his life.

In the feverish flush of victory that swept across America in November 1918, Watterson could for the moment forget his hostility toward Wilson, and could even dream of a new world that was struggling to be born.

Thus it is that a war begun only from the motive of the pirate and the freebooter . . . ends in the emancipation of mankind . . . Was not such a war as we have just witnessed the necessary travail through which alone such a victory in the march of human liberty could be won?<sup>8</sup>

But hardly had the confetti and the torn streamers of the victory parades been swept from the streets than Watterson, surveying a land of militant feminism and prohibitionism, was writing in quite a different mood about the New World:

How long shall it be when the mudsill millions take the upper ten thousand by the throat and rend them as the furiosos of the Terror in France did the aristocrats of the Regimen Ancien, as the Bolsheviki are overrunning Russia and presently all Europe? <sup>9</sup>

And a little later with macabre humor he was still more direful:

I claim to be the only son of the seventh daughter of the seventh son in a straight line from Brian Boru, the Scottish prophet — and I know everything that has been, or ever will be, and I tell you — confidentially, of course — that the world is on its last legs; Marconi with his wireless to get in touch with Mars; some fool to explode from the top of Washington monument a bomb, which will stifle the universe and destroy all living things, including the fantastical profiteers of Miami and the horsey girls over at Palm Beach. I am not a pessimist. Dear no, but I am neither blind, nor deaf, and I refuse to be dumb . . . Where shall we look for a ray of hope? <sup>10</sup>

Perhaps Watterson was a descendant 'from Brian Boru,' who saw already the ominous shadow of the Bomb that was to be. Certainly he was one of the first victims of that disillusionment which was to infect all of America in the next few years and make the decade of 'Normalcy' the most abnormal ten years in our history.

It was in this mood of despair that Watterson greeted Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations. He had been apprehensive when Wilson, breaking precedent, had sailed off to Europe to write his own peace treaty. Now when the first rumors of the treaty, including its provision for a League of Nations, drifted back to America, Watterson felt his worst fears had been confirmed.

In January 1919, when the organization of the League was still in the rumor stage, a letter bearing the names of such noted American public figures as William Howard Taft, Alton B. Parker, Norman Hapgood, Cardinal Gibbons, Henry White, A. Lawrence Lowell, and others, came to Watterson's desk in Louisville while he was in Florida asking him to attend a series of nine Congresses on behalf of the proposed League. The faithful George Johnson, who for years had handled all of Watterson's mail during his absence, carefully penciled his own note on the bottom of the letter: 'Answ'd Away. J.' <sup>11</sup>



Watterson was indeed far away — much farther than Florida — from those who would rally public opinion to stand behind the League. The League of Nations, as it finally evolved in Paris was, in Watterson's thinking, the very antithesis to all three of his cardinal tenets for an American foreign policy: isolationism, nationalism, and the abstention from foreign wars.

On 14 February 1919, at a plenary session of the Peace Conference at Versailles, Wilson read to the assembled delegates the completed League Covenant and then hurried home to present his great dream to the American people. But before the President's ship had even docked in New York harbor the forces opposed to him were beginning to organize.

The sources of opposition to 'Mr. Wilson's League' were numerous. By far the most vocal were those motivated by partisan politics who found their natural leader in Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. To this Republican, politics-as-usual nucleus were added such diverse but equally dissatisfied groups as certain star-eyed liberals who, looking for perfection, wanted a peace treaty made by angels not men; special interests groups such as the Irish-Americans, who saw in the whole scheme but an underwriting of the British Empire; the Italian-Americans, who were disgruntled over Italy's failure to achieve an ever-expanding *Italia Irredenta*; and the German-Americans, who felt that Wilson's original Fourteen Points had been lost in the shuffle. Finally there were the sincere isolationists, who felt that Thomas Jefferson, in warning against entangling alliances, had spoken the last and final word for an American foreign policy.

It was to this last group, in general the most honest and least selfish of all those opposing the League, that Watterson owed his allegiance. He felt that he was motivated only by the most patriotic and traditionally American ideals. It had been only briefly during the crisis of war, and then without completely understanding the full implications, that Watterson had abandoned isolationism.

As soon as the League of Nations had been presented by the President to the leaders of the Senate, Watterson did not hesitate to make public his views. In an editorial which was to furnish material for many an anti-League meeting, Watterson declared:

Inevitably Woodrow Wilson would be caught by such a whimsy as the League of Nations. We must do the President no wrong. He is our file leader. He possesses a fruitful, speculative mind. He is unafraid.

What a journalist he would have made! . . . But the League of Nations! It is a fad. Politics, like society and letters, has its fads . . . In a sense the Monroe Doctrine was a fad . . . But your Cousin Woodrow, enlarging on the original plan, would stretch our spiritual boundaries to the ends of the universe . . . [T]here is nothing but sentiment — gush and gammon — in the proposed League of Nations.

It may be all right for England. There are certainly no flies on it for France. But we don't need it . . . We should say to Europe: 'Shinny on your own side of the water and we will shinny on our own side.' <sup>12</sup>

It was this editorial that prompted the League for the Preservation of American Independence, then being organized by Senators James Reed and William Borah, and George Wharton Pepper for the purpose of 'coordinating various local bodies in opposition to the League,' to ask Watterson to be its president. Watterson accepted, in spite of the fact that the *Courier-Journal* had come out openly for the League. At the age of seventy-nine, after declining all public appearances and offices for the past five years, Watterson once again took up the cudgels for a cause he believed to be right. It was useless to argue with him, as his friends did, that his position now was false to those very sentiments that he had expressed in 1917 as America prepared for war; that, as he himself had said, what happened to Serbia, or Belgium, or Greece was important to the United States, that recent events had conclusively demonstrated Europe could not 'shinny on her side' and the United States 'shinny on the other side' in splendid isolation. But if at this moment he appeared blindly stubborn to logic, even his friends had to admit that he showed courage. It was the final demonstration of his independence, this stand that he now took against his closest friends, even against his own paper.

As an indication of what he had brought upon himself, there is the letter from Alexander Konta three days after the announcement that he would head the League for the Preservation of American Independence. Several weeks earlier, Konta had written Watterson that he was planning a special session at the Manhattan Club for Watterson in the middle of April when he came to New York from Florida. 'The boys are waiting for you,' Konta had written. 'So hurry up! You're going to get a better greeting than W. W. got on his return from Europe . . . What the boys plan to do is to ply you with free spirit and then take the royalties from you with busted flushes and bluff frappe. Their hopes are greater than their

sense.'<sup>13</sup> Watterson had looked forward eagerly to one of his favorite sessions, but now Konta wrote anxiously:

I am in one h—l of a hole over that dinner. Everything was going swimmingly . . . and the boys were saving up their plate-money as they never saved before, when the news burst on the Club that you had gone . . . 'again' the President and the League of Nations.

My God, Sir! The storm broke loose. It was a cyclone. Every Wilsonite brought out his axe . . . They just went on the war-path, took my blessed scalp, slammed and banged your honorable self, and said they'd be consigned to the everlasting pit before they'd buy beer at our banquet . . . So what shall we do? My own opinion is that we ought to call the function off.<sup>14</sup>

Konta's dinner for Watterson was finally held at the St. Regis. But it wasn't the same convivial gathering that Watterson had anticipated. It was not easy to be in political opposition to Cobb and the other members of the Manhattan Club and to be hobnobbing now with men like Stuyvesant Fish, whose views on the Kaiser and the European situation Watterson had found particularly irritating in 1915. It was especially difficult to find himself in opposition with his own paper, with Harrison Robertson and his new employer, Robert Bingham.

The *Courier-Journal*, to be sure, had faithfully carried all of the anti-League editorials which Watterson had sent to them, but Robertson wrote daily in behalf of the League. The situation of having both a pro- and an anti-League policy was becoming ludicrous if not impossible.

It was a particularly embarrassing situation for both Watterson and the management of the paper because on Sunday, 2 March, just three days prior to Watterson's opening attack on the League, the *Courier-Journal* had brought out a special 'Marse Henry' edition. Carrying no advertising, the paper had two hundred and sixty-two special articles from as many contributors, consisting of the leading editors, statesmen, clergymen, labor leaders, cartoonists, authors, and actors of the nation. The edition was a labor of great love and a tribute of respect that few men in any profession are privileged to receive in their lifetime. It had touched Watterson as few other honors that he received in his life did. Now, so soon after that tribute, neither Watterson nor the editorial staff of the *Courier-Journal* found it easy to take the step that had apparently become necessary.

But after several weeks of carrying editorials both praising and damning the League and thus showing to a bewildered public the battle in microcosm that was then being waged all over the United States, Bingham and his editorial managers finally decided that something had to be done. Wallace T. Hughes, editorial supervisor of the *Courier-Journal*, consented to write the necessary letter to Watterson. He wrote, in substance, that while respecting Watterson's honest opposition to the League and not wishing to interfere with his editorial freedom, the editorial staff of the *Courier-Journal*, nevertheless, felt that the situation was contributing to public confusion and expressed the hope that Watterson would 'help dispel the public's impression of an existing feud by varying the subject matter of his articles.'<sup>15</sup>

Watterson at once replied that he realized how incongruous the situation had become and had been expecting such a letter for many days. He was only surprised that it had not come sooner. He had been willing to retire since the time that the paper had been sold, he wrote, and not wishing to prolong the editorial warfare but at the same time unable to vary the subject matter of his editorials, he requested that this letter be considered his formal letter of resignation.<sup>16</sup>

On 2 April 1919 at the head of the editorial columns of the *Courier-Journal* there appeared this announcement:

Mr. Watterson retires as Editor Emeritus of *The Courier-Journal* with this issue. From 1868 until 1918 its editor, his brilliant, forceful and individual writings on public questions brought fame both for himself and this journal. Desiring to retire last August when control of the newspaper changed hands, he yet was persuaded to remain in the capacity of Editor Emeritus, through which connection he might continue to address readers of *The Courier-Journal* while relieved of the active responsibilities of editorship. He now requests his retirement, finding in conflict his views, opposing the League of Nations, and those of *The Courier-Journal*, favoring the proposal. His personality will continue to be an inspiration to *Courier-Journal* workers; his accomplishments, a standard of achievement; his name, one to be praised and loved. He has passed his seventy-ninth birthday. May he pass many another milestone before the world loses him as a companion or letters are deprived of the magic of his pen!

Watterson did not consider his retirement from the *Courier-Journal's* editorial staff a retirement from life, however. In the days that followed, he found more than enough to occupy his time. All

through the spring of 1919 he continued his active campaign against the League, sending letters and telegrams to anti-League rallies throughout the United States. His editorials, to be sure, no longer could appear in their familiar setting, but the *New York Herald* was ready to give him space in its editorial columns whenever Watterson felt moved to speak out against the League, prohibition, Wilson, and other national menaces.

There was also his autobiography to make claims upon his time. The memoirs, appearing as a serial in the *Saturday Evening Post*, proved to be very popular and in December 1919 they appeared in book form under the title of *Marse Henry*. At last Watterson had the satisfaction of seeing a book bearing his name achieve general approval, probably because this book more than any of the others was genuinely his, in style, personality, and sentiment. The organization of the book for those who expected chronological order was disturbing, for Watterson wrote as he might have spoken to a group of cronies seated around a dinner table. It did not bother him that the story of his courtship and marriage was told in the last pages of the book, for this was but the rambling anecdotal account of the people he had known, the cities he had visited, the fun that he had found everywhere.

Many were disappointed that Watterson in his memoirs had not written a political history. As a man who had known personally every occupant of the White House, past, present, and future, from John Quincy Adams to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, with the single exception of William Henry Harrison, and who had taken an active part in eleven Presidential campaigns, he could have given a special and invaluable insight into American politics. But except for one or two rather revealing chapters on Cleveland, where even the dullest reader could detect the smarting acrid smoke of old political fires, and the two chapters on the Greeley and Tilden campaigns, which had previously appeared in the *Century Magazine*, there was little on politics. There was much more on Joseph Jefferson, Stephen Foster, Mark Twain, and such obscure but colorful figures as a restaurateur in Louisville known simply as the Frenchman. Watterson had warned his readers in the first few pages not to expect any 'state secrets or mysteries of the soul' to be revealed here. Nevertheless, the discerning reader could learn much about Watterson by implication, even by the book's omissions. For instance, William

Jennings Bryan's name was not once mentioned. Watterson could not trust himself to write dispassionately about a man whom he now thoroughly detested. Nor was there any mention of the ill-fated Gold Democratic movement of 1896, which Watterson long ago had admitted was the *Courier-Journal's* one great mistake in his years of editorship. Woodrow Wilson was there, to be sure, for in 1919 Watterson was still fighting the battle of the League. Prohibition and woman suffrage also appeared like two evil dervishes, dancing in the most improbable places throughout the pages of the book. But in general, it was the firelight of an old man's hearth, not the fierce flames of battle that lighted the pages of the book, and on each page was stamped unmistakably the character of the author, with all of his humor, his charm, his love for life.

Just prior to the appearance of *Marse Henry* in book form in December 1919, the Wattersons left for their annual winter vacation in the South. They had planned to spend the winter in Cuba, for Watterson had said that he wished to go to a place where he might have the pleasure of observing 'free men taking a drink when they felt like it.'<sup>17</sup> But after only a few days in Havana, he wrote indignantly to Johnson, who still handled his correspondence:

Send my mail to Hotel Halcyon, Miami Florida. We are just leaving and will reach there Tuesday afternoon. Havana is impossible, preposterously impossible. They charge at this hotel for three small rooms \$38 a day, without meals! How's that for high? . . . For a milk punch, 80 cents! For a cocktail, 50 cents!! This is what prohibition in the United States has done!!!<sup>18</sup>

Watterson had this letter printed in the Louisville papers, for he never missed an opportunity to take a swing in public against prohibition, and he found the opportunities almost unlimited. Later that same year, for example, when he was asked to come to Washington for the annual gathering of the Press Club, he had sent his regrets, adding tartly that the 'thought of a long journey to a dry carouse is little short of appalling.'<sup>19</sup> At another time, when asked by a reporter how long he thought that prohibition would last, he had answered:

If it be not accompanied by the stimulation of the drug habit, as in Turkey, where alone among the nations it has made a permanent lodgment, the reaction will come with the knowledge that in the cities it cannot be enforced. The constitutional inhibition may never be re-

scinded. But, like the fifteenth amendment in the Southern States, it will become inoperative.<sup>20</sup>

Only occasionally, when bursting with an opinion that could only be relieved by writing out an editorial did Watterson deeply regret his departure from the *Courier-Journal*. For now instead of being able to hand down his views to the public from that 'raised dais in the center of a great hall,' as he himself described the editor's chair, he had to be content to see his pronouncements on affairs of state published in the 'Letters to the Editor' column. This did not deter him from writing whenever he felt the occasion important enough, nor force him to turn to another paper as a regular contributor.

In these last days he read every inch of the *Courier-Journal* with a proofreader's care. When upon one occasion he noticed in the paper the startling disclosure that Abraham Lincoln had read the *Courier-Journal* as a boy, Watterson's letter informing the editorial staff that Lincoln had been in his grave three years before the *Courier-Journal* was born had all the old fire in it that had once struck terror in the souls of green young copywriters. Wallace Hughes replied that upon seeing the remark in the paper after it was printed he knew 'your holler' would be something to hear. 'It is a good thing for all of us to be jumped on by you . . . [D]on't hesitate to come running with your ferule in hand.'<sup>21</sup>

On 16 February 1920 Watterson celebrated his eightieth birthday. On that same day, the United States Senate began debate for a second time on the League of Nations, a debate that was to end a month later with the final defeat of that proposal. Weighed down by the reservations which the wily Lodge and the special interests groups had forced upon it, the Covenant had been voted down by both the isolationists and those supporters of Wilson who refused to accept the amendments. Watterson took satisfaction in knowing that he had played a part in preserving what he considered was America's proper role of 'Splendid Isolation.' In a letter to Senator Reed that winter, Watterson wrote as an obituary to Wilson's great dream:

The League is an iridescent dream. We have everything to lose and nothing to gain by hitching up to a star . . . I think the people are beginning to understand this . . .<sup>22</sup>

Mercifully for Watterson, he was not to live to see the hitchless wagon, unguided, roll on toward disaster.

Watterson spent his eightieth birthday with his family in a hotel at Miami. He had refused an invitation from the Louisville Board of Trade to return home in order that 'this whole city . . . might . . . give you a hearty old-time Kentucky celebration of this great day.' He had written in declining the honor, 'I must forgo the proposed occasion. I am nowise equal to so long a journey in the dead of winter and trust you will accept this as the only reason which stands between me and my life's crowning festival.'<sup>23</sup> Reluctantly, Watterson had to admit the limitations of old age.

Watterson decided in the spring of 1920 to take no part in the approaching Presidential contest, the twenty-first such campaign of his life. He had mentioned something during the previous summer to Webster Huntington, with whom he had long been associated in connection with the Perry Memorial at Put-in-Bay, Ohio, that he would rather vote for James Cox, Governor of Ohio, for President in 1920 than any other Democrat that had been mentioned, but he refused Cox's request to make a public statement in his behalf. He also turned down many offers, some of them preposterous, that came to him all through the spring and summer of that election year: the New York *Sun* wanted him to write a series of articles on 'the dark horses you have seen nominated'; Clinton T. Brainerd of the McClure and Wheeler newspaper syndicate wanted Watterson to go to each of the two national conventions and write an article a day on the proceedings; A. S. Hough of the *Florida Times-Union* in Jacksonville wrote Watterson urging him to re-enter journalism by buying his own newspaper and added that he had even seen Watterson's name suggested for the Democratic nomination in 1920.<sup>24</sup> But it was impossible to escape the political fever altogether when such men as Mark Sullivan, Joe Bailey, and William Marion Reedy kept writing him about the situation and requesting his opinion as to the possible nominees and candidates. By the time that Watterson arrived back in Louisville in April he was running a high political temperature, as any reader of the *Courier-Journal* could perceive.

Although the *Courier-Journal* continued to give its unqualified support to Wilson, Watterson was burning up the 'Letters to the



Editor' column with his fulminations against 'the schoolteacher of the world.' In one such letter he wrote:

There are three classes of political nondescripts, the thick-and-thin partyist, who, willy-nilly, votes the ticket; the mongrel nincompoop who attaches himself to a particular leader; and the self-seeking aspirant who tries to fall in and keep in with the procession . . . Inevitably they rally about the President and a Third Term in the White House . . . General Grant came very near disgracing himself by allowing his friends to put him up for a third term. What was denied to Grant will not be allowed Wilson . . . Paste this in your hat, stick a pin and mark what I tell you. H.W.<sup>25</sup>

It was the same old Watterson. Even without 'the raised dais' from which to speak, he could still make himself heard. And it was the old fear of a third term that had brought him charging back into the political arena. When one or two readers had the courage to answer him in the same open column to the editor, Watterson brushed them off with a mere flick of his vocabulary:

The two or three sapheads — excuse my French! — who have been writing the *Courier-Journal* in belittlement of the Third Term tradition and in advocacy of four years more in the White House for its present occupant, unite to the obsequiousness of the would-be courtier the ignorance of the transparent tyro . . . We are not yet a race of degenerates, nor ready to Mexicanize the Government. If there be any office from President to constable for which only one man is fit, we should abolish the office for the man might die.<sup>26</sup>

Watterson was finding that there was a certain sport, now that he was no longer garbed in the Olympian robes of editorship, in roughing it up with *hoi polloi* in the pages of the *Courier-Journal*.

When in June in a smoke-filled hotel room, George Harvey, now a Republican, gave to the party and to the nation Warren Gamaliel Harding as his last political service to his country, Watterson tossed his winter reticence to the wind. He telephoned the *Courier-Journal* that the Ohio Senator's nomination made 'the nomination of Cox by the Democrats indispensable, and I think inevitable.'<sup>27</sup> Cox at last had the statement he had wished for, a statement that was duly published in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*.

Having seen the country safely through one more third-term crisis, Watterson showed surprisingly little interest in the actual campaign. Although he received requests, such as the one from

L. W. Arnett in Kentucky to help write Cox's campaign speeches,<sup>28</sup> Watterson contributed little, except one short message to a Kentucky rally sponsored by Webster Huntington.

It was not age alone that discouraged Watterson from active participation in this campaign. Like millions of other Americans, he could see little difference in the two parties. What Wilson had hoped would be the great national referendum on the League of Nations turned into a vague groping backward for 'Normalcy.'

Watterson accepted Harding's election with more equanimity than he usually displayed at the election of a Republican president. When asked to comment on the inauguration of Harding by a newspaper reporter in Galveston, Texas, where he and his wife and daughter Milbrey had gone to spend the winter of 1920, Watterson spoke with a resignation that was almost indifference:

I have nothing to say of the immediate future except in the most perfunctory way to hail the coming and speed the parting President . . . The organized parties seem to me as two empty bottles bearing two old and not very clean labels . . . Mr. Harding comes in to make his own history. That he is an honest, patriotic man who wants to do what is best for the country, I do not doubt. But the world is more or less in a state of chaos and he is going to find Jordan a hard road to travel.<sup>29</sup>

The year of Watterson's birth was, as his father had said, 'a bad year for Democrats.' The last year of his life was not much better.

In late March, the Wattersons returned to Mansfield. In physical appearance Watterson seemed as hale and hearty as ever. The reporter in Galveston who interviewed him prior to his departure for Louisville found him 'quite as youthful and vigorous as he appeared the last time I saw him,' nineteen years before.<sup>30</sup>

Watterson's mind, too, seemed as keen as ever, and he was still more than a match for any reporter who sought an interview with him. When the *New York World* sent a young woman to interview him, his answers were terse and caustic:

'Are newspaper women an asset to a paper?'

'Journalism is sexless.'

'What do you think of the present-day woman with her bobbed hair, short skirts and devotion to cigarettes?'

'She looks like a freak and acts like a harlot.'

'What city handles the news best?'

'That which has the best newspapers.'

'How has journalism improved in the last fifty years?'

'It has not improved — merely expanded and enlarged.'

'What is the future of journalism?'

'It has none. It has reached the limit. The public knows its "tricks" only too well.'

'What has prohibition done for the newspapers?'

'Kept the boys sober and made liars, sneaks and lawbreakers out of the rest of us.'

'Can a man write as peppily without an occasional bit of something for inspiration?'

'No man can write his best under alcoholic stimulation. To write well one must keep his head cool and his feet warm . . . A clear brain, a full mind and an honest purpose are the essentials to good and useful writing, the only kind of writing that has any real value.'<sup>31</sup>

To the readers of this interview, Watterson would appear to be still the same old rebel who would never be tamed. Yet those closest to Watterson knew that he had aged considerably in the past year. He seemed eager in this summer of 1921 to get his affairs in order. Perhaps the death in June of George Johnson, who for over fifteen years had loyally and efficiently served him as secretary, prompted this decision. At any rate, Watterson now wrote his will and spent the summer in sorting and arranging his papers and letters preparatory to giving them to the Library of Congress.

It was a difficult task both physically and emotionally to go through these papers. Watterson had never been particularly careful about his correspondence, had seldom kept copies of letters that he sent, nor by any means all of the important letters that he had received. It had often been the trivia that he had taken particular pains to save and treasure: a penciled note from Lily Langtry, the 'world's most beautiful woman,' inviting him and his friends to join her for supper after the show; dinner menus from Delmonico's; a pass, 'good forever,' to Buffalo Bill's Wild West show — revealing Watterson's own personality, his love of the dramatic, the glittering make-believe.

Watterson, in this last summer, was still as eager as ever for social companionship. Although not strong, he insisted on going to New York in September to see 'the boys' once again. The Wattersons stayed out at Brighton Beach, but Watterson was a frequent visitor at the Manhattan Club where he could talk and joke with Konta and Cobb. Always gregarious, he seemed particularly desirous this time of having as many of his old friends get together as possible. He wrote Krock urging him to leave the paper for once and come

up to New York for 'a metropolitan shindig . . . There's lots to talk about and still a bit of sugar in the bottom of the glass.'<sup>32</sup>

He was flattered that the New York papers still sought his opinions on world affairs. When asked about the approaching Washington Conference on disarmament, Watterson answered, 'I should vote for disarmament, but my faith in it as a cure for war would find commodious quarters in a runt mustard seed.'<sup>33</sup>

In November, the Wattersons returned to Louisville to prepare for their annual winter trip to Florida. By 28 November the bags were packed, the last instructions to the household help were given, and the Wattersons were ready to leave. As was his custom, Watterson called together the servants and, with the proper traditional ceremony that he loved, announced, 'Well, here's my little Christmas remembrance,' then shook hands and gave to each a sizable check. Matt Taylor, the yard man, drove the Wattersons down to the little railroad depot at Jeffersontown to board the train.<sup>34</sup>

The Wattersons in the past few years had made it their practice to stay in Jacksonville, Florida, until after Christmas before going on down to Miami. It broke the long journey and gave them an opportunity to spend the holidays with their good friends, Dr. and Mrs. Marshall O. Terry. It was in a hotel at Jacksonville on Tuesday, 20 December that he and Rebecca Watterson celebrated their fifty-sixth wedding anniversary at a quiet dinner with Milbrey and Henry, with Milbrey's children present. That evening soon after the dinner Watterson complained of a slight cold and went to bed early. On the following morning just after breakfast, he suffered an acute bronchial attack. All that day he labored for breath and early Thursday morning he called his anxious family to his bedside. His breathing seemed easier and he spoke briefly with his wife and two children. Then quite suddenly he was dead.

No sooner had the news of his death been sent across the telegraph wires of the country than messages came to his family from throughout the nation. The most appropriate tributes, however, were the farewell editorials to 'the last of the personal journalists' which nearly every newspaper in the United States carried on the following morning. Of particular interest was the editorial in the *New York Times*. In this, its parting tribute to a man with whom it so seldom agreed, it for once allowed its careful editorial diction to become almost Wattersonian:

That Wattersonian style, pungent, vivid, superlatively personal; those adhesive epithets, that storm of arrows, those 'razzers flyin' through the air,' the ludicrous imagination, the swift sarcasm, the free frolic of irresistible humor — it was as if the page was not written but spoke and acted before you.<sup>35</sup>

Watterson would have liked that paragraph.

## Notes and Footnotes

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NO ATTEMPT will be made here to give an extensive bibliography of the material used in the preparation of this biography, but in fairness to the reader, brief mention should be made of those sources which have proved to be of greatest value.

The most useful single source in the area of manuscript collections was the thirty-four-volume collection of *Henry Watterson Papers* in the Library of Congress (LC). The collection, unfortunately, is a most incomplete record, for Watterson was careless of the correspondence he received, particularly in the years before 1890, and he rarely kept copies of the letters he sent. Next to Watterson's own papers, the most valuable collection was that of *Whitelaw Reid*, in the possession of Whitelaw Reid II, in the New York *Herald-Tribune* offices. Other manuscript sources of value for specific periods in Watterson's life were: the *Young E. Allison Papers*, in the possession of the Allison family, Louisville; the *John Bigelow Diary*, New York Public Library (NYPL); *Bryant-Godwin Papers*, (NYPL); *Greeley Papers*, (NYPL); *Arthur B. Krock Papers*, in the possession of Arthur Krock; and *Samuel J. Tilden Papers*, (NYPL). Certain manuscript collections proved to be disappointing. The *William J. Bryan Papers*, (LC), had little of value on Watterson. The same is true of the *Theodore Roosevelt Papers*, (LC). The *Grover Cleveland Papers*, (LC), contain only a few letters from and to Watterson, but these were extremely valuable in understanding the relationship of the two men.

Certain unpublished theses were also most helpful. Lena Logan's doctoral dissertation, *Henry Watterson, the Border Nationalist* (Univ. of Indiana, 1942), is an excellent study of Watterson's role in the Reconstruction period. *The Political Leadership of Henry Watterson*, a doctoral dissertation by Leonard N. Plummer (Univ. of Wisconsin, 1940), surveys Watterson's political activities from the point of view of the political scientist. Margaret Weldy's essay, *George Dennison Prentice* (Columbia Univ., 1929), is a brief but informative account of Watterson's great journalistic predecessor in Louisville.

The one indispensable source in the writing of this biography was the complete files of the Louisville *Courier-Journal* from 1868 to 1921. The editorial page was, in a sense, Watterson's diary, a fifty-three year record of his political, social, and economic views. Other newspapers upon whose staffs Watterson served were also studied: the *Washington States and Union*, the *Cincinnati Times*, the *Nashville Republican Banner*, the *Louisville Journal*, and of particular interest for revealing Watterson's attitudes during the Civil War, the *Chattanooga Rebel*. Aside from such standard sources as the *New York Times*, the *Nation*, and the *New York World*, other periodicals of special interest were: the *Nashville Union* and *Washington Union*, edited by Harvey Watterson in the 1850's; the *Louisville Courier*; and the *New York Herald*, which was consistently friendly to Watterson, three times backing him as a Presidential candidate in the period from 1892 to 1908. The little-used trade journal, *The Journalist*, forerunner of *Editor and Publisher*, was on the other hand highly critical of Watterson and was most valuable for that reason.

It is not possible to mention even a part of the secondary sources which contributed a great deal to my understanding of this long period of American history which Watterson's life spans. In the following documentation, aside from specific footnote references, I have noted a few sources particularly appropriate to the material contained in the related chapters. There were three secondary works so essential for this study, however, that special mention must be made of them: Watterson's autobiography, *Marse Henry* (Doran, N. Y., 1919); *The Editorials of Henry Watterson*, edited by Arthur Krock (Doran, N. Y., 1923); and Watterson's collection of his public addresses, *The Compromises of Life* (Fox, Duffield, N. Y., 1903).

## ONE

1. Louisville *Courier-Journal* (hereafter referred to as CJ), 2 Oct 1891; M. C. Bates to Watterson 20 Jan 1919, Watterson Papers (hereafter referred to as WP), vol. 29.
2. Watterson to his grandson, Austin Gilmour, 3 March 1914, WP, vol. 17; Watterson to T. G. Stuart, CJ, 25 Dec 1921; Louisville *Times*, 16 June 1924.
3. Deed in court records, Columbia, Tenn., Mrs. W. J. Lamb to the writer, 20 Aug 1949.
4. G. M. Orr, *The Black Home Near Spring Hill*, unpub. mss. in possession of Mrs. John W. Walton, Spring Hill, Tenn.
5. W. B. Turner in Columbia (Tenn.) *Herald*, 31 Aug 1949; Orr, op. cit.
6. Orr, op. cit.; Louisville *Times*, 15 Sept 1884.
7. A. Krock to Rudolf Kaufman, 15 Feb 1922, Krock Papers.
8. Henry Watterson, *Marse Henry* (hereafter referred to as MH), I, 24-5.
9. Ibid. II, 297.
10. Ibid. I, 26-7.
11. *Niles' Register*, 19 Feb 1842.
12. Washington *Globe*, 29 March 1844; CJ, 2 Oct 1891.
13. Mrs. Milbrey Watterson Richardson, Watterson's daughter, to the writer, 22 Aug 1948.
14. Authorities differ as to cause. Tom Wallace, associate of Watterson on CJ, claims it was a dart thrown by a playmate. Others assert it was a tip of a shoelace that went into his eye. Watterson himself never mentioned the accident.
15. Morton M. Casseday, 'Henry Watterson,' *Mid-Continent Magazine*, VI, May 1895, 5-7.
16. Samuel F. Bemis, *American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy* (Knopf, 1927), VI, 552.
17. Watterson to Arthur [Krock?], 18 Dec 1915, WP, vol. 21.
18. MH, I, 36.
19. *Congressional Globe*, 1st Session, 30th Congress, 389.
20. MH, I, 36-7.
21. Ibid. 48.
22. Ibid. 20, 33.
23. Ibid. 20-21.
24. Ibid. 19-20.
25. Mrs. Richardson to the writer, 22 Aug 1948.
26. Philadelphia *Inquirer*, 10 March 1891; MH, II, 27.
27. Mrs. Richardson, 22 Aug 1948.
28. CJ, 23 Dec 1921.
29. Watterson, 'Gambling,' CJ, 23 Aug 1890.
30. Watterson, *The Compromises of Life*, 46-7.
31. Letter of 6 Oct 1851 quoted in letter from Clarence Wilson to Watterson, 19 July 1920, WP, vol. 33.
32. MH, I, 29-30.
33. Ibid. 30-31.
34. Ibid. 33.
35. Article by Harris E. Starr in the *Dictionary of American Biography* (Scribner's, 1946), VIII, 262.
36. J. S. Johnston, ed., *A Memorial History of Louisville*, II, 487; P. J. Steinmetz, 4 April 1919, WP, vol. 30.
37. MH, I, 53-4.

## TWO

For background on the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the events leading up to secession see Allan Nevins, *The Ordeal of the Union* and *The Emergence of Lincoln* (Scribner's, 1947, 1950).

1. Johnston, op. cit. II, 488.
2. Mrs. Blanche S. Bentley, 23 April 1916, WP, vol. 22.
3. Casseday, op. cit. 7.



4. Watterson to R. V. Oulahan, 21 March 1910, WP, vol. 9.
5. Phila. *Inquirer*, 10 March 1891; Bentley Matthews, 19 Dec 1915, WP, vol. 21.
6. MH, I, 62.
7. Elisha J. Edwards, 'Henry Watterson,' *Munsey's Magazine*, Jan 1906, 439.
8. MH, I, 55; N. Y. *Times*, 23 Dec 1921.
9. MH, I, 55-7.
10. W. E. Beard, 'Henry Watterson,' *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, July 1931; MH, I, 58.
11. MH, I, 59.
12. 19 March 1860, Andrew Johnson Papers.
13. MH, I, 59.
14. Joseph M. Rogers, 'Henry Watterson,' *Book Lovers Magazine*, March 1905, 309.
15. Watterson, 'An Abortive Hero,' *North American Review*, Jan 1911, 43-4.
16. *The Compromises of Life*, 52.
17. *Ibid.* 60-61.
18. CJ, 2 Oct 1891.
19. George Fort Milton, *The Eve of Conflict* (Houghton Mifflin, 1934), 498, 534.
20. Watterson manuscript, undated, WP, vol. 28.
21. Watterson to W. I. Manny, 10 April 1914, WP, vol. 14.
22. CJ, 2 Oct 1891.
23. 4 Jan 1861, Andrew Johnson Papers.
24. Watterson, 'Abraham Lincoln,' *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, March 1909, 364.
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26. *Compromises of Life*, 154.
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28. Watterson, 'Abraham Lincoln,' op. cit. 364.
29. MH, I, 59; Beard, op. cit. 257.
30. 26 June [1861], Andrew Johnson Papers.
31. MH, I, 59.

## THREE

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2. Phila. *Inquirer*, 10 March 1891.
3. Casseday, op. cit. 8; John W. Townsend, *Kentucky in American Letters* (Torch Press, 1913), 326.
4. MH, I, 85.
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6. *Ibid.*; Atlanta *Constitution*, 23 Dec 1921.
7. Phila. *Inquirer*, 10 March 1891.
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10. *Rebel*, 22 July 1863.
11. *Rebel*, 14 Feb 1863.
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13. One of the many stories usually told in any sketch on Watterson, and repeated to the writer by many Louisvillians.
14. John W. Faxon, 5 May 1915, WP, vol. 19; MH, I, 165, 169.
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16. Atlanta *Constitution*, 23 Dec 1921; Roy L. McCardell to G. E. Johnson, 24 Dec 1918, WP, vol. 29.
17. J. Ohl, 'Watterson as a Confederate,' *Journalist*, 27 Aug 1887, 3.
18. 14 Feb 1864, WP, vol. 1.
19. Alexander Stephens, 7 April 1864, WP, vol. 1.
20. MH, I, 80.
21. 7 May 1864, WP, vol. 1.
22. Wm. M. Polk, *Leonidas Polk, Bishop and General* (Longmans, Green, 1915), II, 352-3.
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24. MH, I, 97.
25. *Ibid.*
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27. MH, I, 91-2.

## FOUR

1. MH, I, 161-3.
2. Cincinnati *Enquirer*, 23 Dec 1921; MH, I, 163-5.
3. E. O. Henderson in Cincinnati *Enquirer*, 23 Dec 1921.
4. Watterson manuscript, undated, WP, vol. 34.
5. 3 June 1865, Andrew Johnson Papers.
6. Watterson manuscript, undated, WP, vol. 34.
7. 23 March 1865, WP, vol. 1.
8. John Bell Brownlow to Watterson, 10 April 1919, WP, vol. 30.
9. MH, I, 165-6.
10. *Senate Executive Document No. 2*, 1st Session, 39th Congress, 106.
11. W. L. Fleming, *Documentary History of Reconstruction* (A. H. Clark, 1906), I, 51n.
12. Nashville *Banner*, 11 Oct 1865.
13. Nashville *Banner*, various issues: 28 Sept, 4 Oct, 11 Oct, 25 Oct 1865.
14. 24 April 1866, Greeley Papers.
15. 7 Dec 1865, Andrew Johnson Papers.
16. 24 April 1866, Greeley Papers.
17. MH, I, 166-7, 99-102.
18. *Ibid.* 103-4.
19. Mrs. Richardson to the writer, 21 June 1953.
20. MH, I, 105.
21. *Ibid.* 106-7; Don C. Seitz, 23 March 1918, WP, vol. 27.
22. H. Lawson, 21 Sept 1914, WP, vol. 18.
23. MH, I, 104-5.
24. Nashville *Banner*, 22 March 1867.
25. Nashville *Banner*, 2 July 1867.
26. Nashville *Banner*, 28 Dec and 5 March 1867.

## FIVE

An excellent history of early journalistic activities in Kentucky is Wm. H. Perrin's *The Pioneer Press of Kentucky* (Louisville, 1888). For background on Kentucky, see E. M.

Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (U. of No. Carolina Press, 1926).

1. G. R. Leighton, 'Louisville, Kentucky, An American Museum Piece,' *Harper's*, Sept 1937, 402.
2. E. M. Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 11.
3. *Ibid.* 439.
4. W. H. Perrin, *Pioneer Press in Kentucky*, 72.
5. C. G. Shanks, 'George D. Prentice,' *Lippincott's*, iv, Nov 1869, 555; Johnston, op. cit. v, 231.
6. J. S. Johnston in CJ, 5 April 1879; Margaret Weldy, *George Dennison Prentice*; J. Piatt, *The Poems of George D. Prentice*, 28.
7. MH, I, 169.
8. Johnston, op. cit. II, 68.
9. Perrin, op. cit. 86.
10. Perrin, op. cit. 87-8; Coulter, op. cit. 255.
11. Quoted in Coulter, op. cit. 405.
12. MH, I, 169.
13. *Ibid.* 170.
14. *Louisville Journal*, 16 Oct 1868.
15. Casseday, op. cit. 14.
16. See *Compromises of Life*, 22.
17. MH, I, 170.
18. *Ibid.* 171.
19. *Ibid.* 177ff.

## SIX

For background on the Quadrilateral, see Royal Cortissoz, *The Life of Whitelaw Reid* (Scribner's, 1921); Claude M. Fuess, *Carl Schurz, Reformer* (Dodd, Mead, 1932); G. S. Merriam, *Life of Samuel Bowles* (Century, 1885); E. D. Ross, *The Liberal Republican Movement* (Henry Holt, 1919).

1. Casseday, op. cit. 10; W. L. Vischer, 29 April 1919, WP, vol. 30.
2. Frankfort *Yeomen*, 1 March 1872, reprinted in *Louisville Times*, 22 Jan 1949.

3. Lena Logan, *Henry Watterson, Border Nationalist*, 120.
4. CJ, 28 March and 29 March 1869.
5. Louisville *Times* 3 March 1927; MH, 1, 171-2.
6. Coulter, op. cit. 7.
7. CJ, 14 and 16 Nov 1870.
8. Louisville *Ledger*, reprinted in Cincinnati *Gazette*, 31 Aug 1871.
9. MH, 1, 178.
10. See comments of approval on Watterson's stand in Cincinnati *Gazette*, 15 May 1871.
11. CJ, 14 March and 2 Dec 1870; Wkly CJ, 8 March 1871.
12. CJ, 3 May 1871.
13. Watterson to W. C. P. Breckinridge, 8 July 1869, Breckinridge Papers.
14. CJ, 17 June 1871.
15. 1 Feb 1871, WP, vol. 1.
16. 2 Aug 1871, WP, vol. 1.
17. 17 Sept 1871, WP, vol. 1.
18. Quoted in Horace White, *Lyman Trumbull* (Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 341.
19. F. T. Reid and others to Carl Schurz, 21 Sept 1871, quoted in Frederic Bancroft, ed., *Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers of Carl Schurz* (G. P. Putnam's, 1913), II, 306-7.
20. CJ, 21 and 22 March 1869.
21. CJ, 29 Dec 1927; N. Y. *Herald*, undated clipping in papers of Mrs. Richardson.
22. CJ, 9 May 1871; Tyler Dennett, *John Hay* (Dodd, Mead, 1933), 78.
23. Hay to Watterson, 5 March 1872, WP, vol. 1.
24. E. D. Ross, *The Liberal Republican Movement*, 37-9.
25. 3 March 1872, J. B. Grinnell Papers, Grinnell College.
26. Wkly CJ, 31 Jan 1872.
27. Wkly CJ, 17 April 1872.
28. Watterson, 'The Humor and Tragedy of the Greeley Campaign,' *Century Magazine*, vol. 85, Nov 1912 (hereafter referred to as *Century*, Nov 1912), 35.
29. *Ibid.* 33.
30. *Ibid.* 31.
31. CJ, 2 May 1872; *Century*, Nov 1912, 35.
32. White, op. cit. 382.
33. *Century*, Nov 1912, 36.
34. *Ibid.* 34.
35. *Ibid.* 39-40.
36. G. S. Merriam, *The Life of Samuel Bowles*, II, 186.
37. CJ, 2 Feb 1869.
38. On 5 May the CJ had evaded the issue by saying that the decision to support Greeley must be left to the Democratic national committee.
39. 8 May 1872, Reid Papers.
40. 16 May [1872], Reid Papers.
41. White, op. cit. 386, 392-3.
42. CJ, 3 July 1872.
43. CJ, 15 May 1872.
44. Wkly CJ, 11 Dec 1872.
45. Invitation dated 6 June 1872 and letter from Watterson to Reid, 15 June 1872, both in Reid Papers.
46. 3 May 1911, WP, vol. 11.
47. Wkly CJ, 11 Dec 1872.
48. Watterson to Schurz, 15 June 1872, Schurz Papers; Wkly CJ, 11 Dec 1872.
49. C. M. Fuess, *Carl Schurz, Reformer*, 196; Ross, op. cit. 120-21.
50. E. F. Oberholtzer, *A History of the United States Since the Civil War* (Macmillan, 1926), III, 47-8.
51. Wkly CJ, 31 July 1872.
52. Quoted in C. E. Payne, *Josiah B. Grinnell* (Iowa City, 1938), 271.
53. 28 Aug 1872, Reid Papers.
54. 16 Sept 1872, WP, vol. 1.
55. 28 Sept 1872, Reid Papers.
56. MH, 1, 266.

## SEVEN

1. R. F. Terrell, *A Study of the Early Journalistic Writings of Henry M. Grady*, 57.
2. Cincinnati *Daily Gazette*, Oct [1882?].

3. 23 April 1873, Reid Papers.
4. Letters of introduction dated 9 May 1873 in WP, vol. 1.
5. Watterson, 'Mark Twain — An Intimate Memory,' *American Magazine*, vol. 70, July 1910, 373.
6. 'Goodby to England,' original manuscript of letter to CJ, 20 Aug 1873, WP, vol. 34.
7. *Ibid.*
8. 9 Sept 1873, Reid Papers.
9. 20 April 1874, Schurz Papers, quoted in Logan, op. cit. 325.
10. 9 Nov 1874, WP, vol. 1.
11. Royal Cortissoz, *The Life of Whitelaw Reid*, 284. Cortissoz gives Watterson the major credit for swinging Reid to the support of Tilden in 1874.
12. CJ, 15 June and 24 Aug 1874.
13. CJ, 20 Oct 1874.
14. CJ, 5 Nov 1874.
15. 5 Nov 1874, Reid Papers.
16. 9 Nov 1874, Reid Papers.
17. 16 Nov 1874, Reid Papers.
18. 16 July 1875, Reid Papers.
19. Young E. Allison, *Louisville and a Glimpse of Kentucky*, 110; Tom Wallace, 'Old Courier-Journal Building was Some Gal in her Day,' *Louisville Times*, 22 Sept 1948; Interview with Bruce Haldeman, Sept 1946.
20. 16 July 1875, Reid Papers.
21. 21 July 1875, Reid Papers.
22. 25 Nov 1875, Tilden Papers.
23. Watterson, 'The Hayes-Tilden Contest for the Presidency,' *Century Magazine*, vol. 86, May 1913, 8, (hereafter referred to as *Century*, May 1913).
24. MH, I, 273; CJ, 19 June 1876.
25. 16 Feb 1876, Tilden Papers.
26. 25 May 1876, Tilden Papers.
27. 5 June 1876, Tilden Papers.
28. *Journalist*, vol. III, 14 Aug 1886, 3; see also Watterson to B. H. Young, copy undated, WP, vol. 22.
29. W. H. Haldeman to Watterson, 3 June 1878, WP, vol. 1.
30. *Century*, May 1913, 8.
31. Ballard Smith, 'Henry Watterson,' *Harper's Weekly*, 20 Aug 1887.
32. *N. Y. Tribune*, 27 June 1876.
33. *Century*, May 1913, 8.
34. Quoted in CJ, 29 June 1876. See also expressions of approbation from the *N. Y. Tribune*, *Philadelphia Ledger*, *Springfield Republican*, et al., quoted in same issue of CJ.
35. *Century*, May 1913, 8-10.
36. CJ, 29 and 30 June 1876; *Official Proceedings of the National Democratic Convention*, 1876, 107ff.
37. 29 June 1876, Manton Marble Papers.
38. CJ, 28-30 June and 1 July 1876.
39. MH, II, 22.
40. CJ, 17 Aug 1876; MH, II, 22-3.
41. Allan Nevins, *Abram S. Hewitt* (Harper, 1935), 315.
42. *Ibid.* 312-13.
43. Watterson, *History of the Manhattan Club* (De Vinne Press, 1915), 147.

## EIGHT

There are many accounts of the disputed election of 1876. For a thorough study from Hewitt's point of view, see A. Nevins, *Abram S. Hewitt*. C. Vann Woodward's *Reunion and Reaction* (Little, Brown, 1951) is invaluable and provocative in its interpretation of the role of the South.

1. MH, I, 278-9.
2. *Century*, May 1913, 13.
3. CJ, 10 Nov 1876.
4. 9 Nov 1876, Tilden Papers.
5. *Century*, May 1913, 14; this story is confirmed by W. C. Hudson of the *Brooklyn Eagle*, as reported in Alexander C. Flick, *Samuel J. Tilden* (Dodd, Mead, 1939), 341.

6. *Century*, May 1913, 15n.
7. 13 Nov 1876, Tilden Papers.
8. *House of Representatives, Misc. Documents*, 3rd Session, 45th Congress, Pt. IV, No. 31, 336.
9. Bigelow, *Diary*, 11 Nov 1876.
10. *Century*, May 1913, 15.
11. CJ, 27 Nov 1876.
12. CJ, 30 Nov 1876.
13. For a full development of this thesis, see C. Vann Woodward's *Reunion and Reaction*.
14. *Ibid.* 26ff.
15. Bigelow, *Diary*, 22 Nov 1876.
16. CJ, 8 Dec 1876.
17. CJ, 12 Dec 1876.
18. Bigelow, *Diary*, 28 Dec 1876.
19. Nevins, *Hewitt*, 332.
20. *Century*, May 1913, 17.
21. CJ, 12 Jan 1877.
22. *Harper's Weekly*, 10 March 1877, 188; *Century*, May 1913, 17.
23. Milton H. Northrup, 'A Grave Crisis in American History,' *Century*, vol. 40, Oct 1901, 931.
24. 2 Feb 1877, Reid Papers. The italics are mine.
25. Woodward, op. cit. 121.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Blaine two years later told Bigelow, 'If the Democrats had been firm, the Republicans had no alternative but to yield, and such was the result he had anticipated.' John Bigelow, *Life of Samuel J. Tilden*, II, 74n.
28. Nevins, *Hewitt*, 336.
29. *Congressional Record*, 2nd Session, 44th Congress, vol. 5, 2059-60.
30. Bigelow, op. cit. II, 76.
31. Nevins, *Hewitt*, 352-3.
32. Bigelow, op. cit. II, 77.
33. *Ibid.* 76.
34. *Century*, May 1913, 18.
35. *Congressional Record*, 2nd Session, 44th Congress, Appendix, 188-9.
36. E. P. Mitchell, 'A Great Editor's Gallery of Portraits,' *Bookman*, vol. 51, March 1920, 48-9.
37. *Congressional Record*, 2nd Session, 44th Congress, vol. 5, 1005-7.
38. Adlai E. Stevenson, *Something of Men I Have Known* (A. C. McClurg, 1909), 33.
39. CJ, 1 Feb 1877.
40. Nevins, *Hewitt*, 367-8.
41. *Ibid.* 371-2.
42. *Ibid.* 374-6.
43. *Congressional Record*, 2nd Session, 44th Congress, vol. 5, 1690.
44. Woodward, op. cit. 121.
45. For a discussion of the role of the Northern Republican press, see Woodward, op. cit. 181ff.
46. *Congressional Record*, 2nd Session, 44th Congress, vol. 5, 1705, 2008.
47. *Ibid.* 2046-8.
48. *Ibid.* 2057.
49. Nevins, *Hewitt*, 361.
50. *Congressional Record*, 2nd Session, 44th Congress, Appendix, 188-9.
51. See testimony of Ellis and Burke in the *House Misc. Documents*, 3rd Session, 45th Congress, vol. 5, Pt. III, 597-601.
52. *Ibid.* vol. 3, 595-620; *Century*, May 1913, 19.
53. *Century*, May 1913, 18.
54. Watterson in a speech delivered in Louisville, recorded in Bigelow, *Diary*, 1 April 1877.
55. CJ, 20 Feb 1877.

## NINE

1. CJ, 20 Feb 1877.
2. Cincinnati *Commercial*, undated clipping in the Tilden Papers.
3. CJ, 8 Nov 1880.
4. Quoted in CJ, 23 Dec 1921.
5. Interviews with Tom Wallace, Bruce Haldeman, and Judge Mark Beauchamp, Watterson's former business secretary, Sept 1946.
6. Louisville *Herald*, 23 Dec 1921.
7. Louisville *Times*, 30 March 1938.

8. Interview with Tom Wallace, Sept 1946; Daniel E. O'Sullivan, 'Brisbane Contrasted with Watterson,' *Louisville Times*, 6 Jan 1937.
9. Interviews with Mark Beauchamp and Brent Overstreet, Sept 1946.
10. *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 23 Dec 1921.
11. *Compromises of Life*, 97.
12. 20 Oct 1877, Reid Papers.
13. 29 July 1882, Tilden Papers.
14. Interviews with Mrs. Richardson, July 1948 and Tom Wallace, Sept 1946.
15. Philip Kinsley, *The Chicago Tribune* (Knopf, 1943), III, 5.
16. *Journalist*, 9 Oct 1886, 6.
17. *Baltimore Sun*, 23 Dec 1921; CJ, 18 Jan 1881.
18. Tom Wallace in CJ, 1 Jan 1942.
19. *Boston Transcript*, 18 Dec 1915.
20. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 10 March 1891.
21. *Journalist*, 22 March 1884.
22. Fred A. Pettit in CJ, 14 June 1942.
23. Tom Wallace in *Louisville Times*, 22 Sept 1948.
24. Watterson manuscript, undated, probably around 1900, WP, vol. 34.
13. 21 Nov 1884, Reid Papers.
14. CJ, 10 Jan 1882.
15. MH, II, 116-17.
16. William A. White, *Masks in Pageant* (Macmillan, 1928), 139.
17. 4 July 1886, Cleveland Papers, vol. 112.
18. 18 June 1885, Cleveland Papers, vol. 42.
19. 22 Nov 1887, in Allan Nevins, ed., *Letters of Grover Cleveland* (Houghton Mifflin, 1933), 166.
20. *N. Y. Herald*, 8 Nov 1887.
21. Quoted in Nevins, *Cleveland*, 377.
22. CJ, 8 March 1888.
23. Letters from Mrs. Richardson, 9 July and 22 Aug 1948.
24. CJ, 9 Nov 1888.
25. 9 March 1890, Cleveland Papers, vol. 234.
26. MH, II, 211-12.
27. W. H. Carter to Cleveland, 20 Jan 1890, WP, vol. 2.
28. 21 Nov 1890, Cleveland Papers, vol. 234.
29. Watterson to Hill, 21 Nov 1890, WP, vol. 2.
30. CJ, 23 Feb 1892. Part of this editorial has been frequently quoted as proof that Watterson deserted Cleveland for Hill. Hill, as Watterson plainly states, was also out of the question. See D. S. Alexander, *Four Famous New Yorkers*, 169; Nevins, *Cleveland*, 485.

## TEN

See Allan Nevins, *Grover Cleveland, A Study in Courage* (Dodd, Mead, 1932) as the most thorough study of the Cleveland period.

1. CJ, 29 April 1884.
2. Flick, op. cit. 482.
3. MH, II, 104-7.
4. *Ibid.* 103.
5. CJ, 12 July 1884.
6. 20 Oct 1884, Reid Papers.
7. 24 and 30 Oct 1884, Reid Papers.
8. 10 Nov 1884, Reid Papers.
9. 21 Nov 1884, Reid Papers.
10. CJ, 29 Oct 1884.
11. CJ, 9 Nov 1884.
12. CJ, 8 Nov 1884.

## ELEVEN

1. *Compromises of Life*, 310.
2. 10 Jan 1894, David A. Wells Papers, NYPL.

3. See Secretary of State Gresham's letter to Watterson of 21 August 1894, informing him that his telegrams arrived too late to stop the stampede. WP, vol. 2.
4. Nevins, ed., *Letters of Grover Cleveland*, 364-6.
5. CJ, 29 Aug 1894.
6. O. G. Villard, *Some Newspapers and Newspapermen* (Knopf, 1923), 265.
7. CJ, 8 June 1904.
8. See 'The Metaphors of Colonel Watterson,' *Bookman*, Oct 1907, 113-14.
9. Krock, op. cit. 15.
10. Baltimore *Sun*, undated clipping, *Kentucky Authors Scrapbook*, vol. 5, Louisville Free Public Library.
11. Tom Wallace, 'There Were Giants in Those Days,' *Saturday Evening Post*, vol. 211, 6 Aug 1938, 54.
12. CJ, 19 Feb 1908.
13. *Journalist*, 11 Sept 1886.
14. Wallace, 'There Were Giants in Those Days,' op. cit. 55.
15. 'A Welcome to the Grand Army,' *Compromises of Life*, 315-16.

## TWELVE

1. Quoted in Nevins, *Cleveland*, 595.
2. 22 Aug 1896, WP, vol. 2.
3. *Ibid.*
4. W. B. Haldeman to Watterson 8 Oct 1896, WP, vol. 2.
5. *N. Y. Herald*, 3 Sept 1896.
6. 22 Aug and 8 Oct 1896, WP, vol. 2.
7. Undated clipping, *Kentucky Authors Scrapbook*, Part v, Louisville Free Public Library.

## THIRTEEN

Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought, 1860-1915* (U. of Pa. Press, 1944) is an ex-

cellent study of the social implications of evolution.

1. Krock, op. cit. 87.
2. See Oliver Gramling, *AP, The Story of the News* (Farrar, Rinehart, 1940), 112ff.
3. Quoted in *Philadelphia Evening Star*, 10 Dec 1898.
4. Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought, 1860-1915*.
5. J. Christian Bay, ed., *Select Works of Young E. Allison*, 12. Young E. Allison, III, has shown this writer the original manuscript in his father's handwriting.
6. 7 June 1900, WP, vol. 3.
7. Quoted in CJ, 26 July 1900.
8. Bryan to Watterson, undated, WP, vol. 3.
9. CJ, 22 June 1900.

## FOURTEEN

Suggested background reading: Henry F. Pringle, *Theodore Roosevelt* (Harcourt, Brace, 1931) for the Canal story; Winifred G. Helmes, *John A. Johnson, the People's Governor* (U. of Minn. Press, 1949) for Watterson's support of Gov. Johnson in 1908; H. F. Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft* (Farrar, Rinehart, 1939), vol. 1, and Alpheus T. Mason, *Bureaucracy Convicts Itself* (Viking, 1941) for opposing views on the Ballinger-Pinchot affair; W. O. Inglis, 'Helping To Make a President,' *Collier's Weekly*, 7 Oct 1916, for the story of George Harvey's dinner party for Woodrow Wilson.

1. 16 June 1911, WP, vol. 11.
2. CJ, 5 June 1911.
3. Morgan to Watterson, 5 Oct 1904, WP, vol. 4.
4. P. J. Smolley, 28 Sept 1905, WP, vol. 4.
5. *Louisville Post*, 14 Oct 1901, reprinted in papers across the nation.

6. Otis Skinner, *Footlights and Spotlights* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1924), 303. Many people in Louisville have attested to Watterson's Presidential ambitions.
7. Watterson, 'The Next National Campaign; Is a Duel between Roosevelt and Bryan To Be Fought in 1908?,' *The Reader*, Sept 1906.
8. Nevins, ed., *Letters of Grover Cleveland*, 204.
9. MH, II, 161-3.
10. 4 Aug 1908, WP, vol. 7.
11. 6 Nov 1908, WP, vol. 7.
12. N. Y. *World*, 21 Nov and 4 Dec 1909.
13. CJ, 22 Nov 1909.
14. N. Y. *World*, 14 Jan 1912.
15. CJ, 16 Jan 1912.
16. 23 Feb 1910, WP, vol. 9. Italics his.
17. Told to the writer by Mrs. Richardson.
18. Quoted in Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson, Life and Letters* (Doubleday, Page, 1931), III, 57.
19. CJ, 4 Aug 1910.
20. 16 Sept 1910, WP, vol. 10.
21. Baker, op. cit. 81.
22. Watterson to Desha Breckinridge, 22 Aug 1911, WP, vol. 12.
2. Wilson to Harvey, 15 Nov 1910, quoted in Link, op. cit. 213. Wilson's letter to Watterson undoubtedly expressed much the same sentiment. Letter not preserved.
3. 31 Dec 1910, WP, vol. 10.
4. Quoted in Link, op. cit. 235.
5. 20 May 1911, WP, vol. 11.
6. 15 June 1911, WP, vol. 11.
7. CJ, 13 June 1911.
8. 22 Aug 1911, WP, vol. 12.
9. 22 Nov 1911, WP, vol. 12.
10. 7 Dec 1911, WP, vol. 12; Link, op. cit. 403.
11. E. M. House's letter to Bryan, 6 Dec 1911, Charles Seymour, ed., *Intimate Papers of Colonel House* (Houghton Mifflin, 1926), I, 51.
12. The three sources for the events that took place in Watterson's suite are: (1) Watterson's statements in CJ, 18 Jan and 30 Jan 1912; (2) Harvey's memorandum, quoted in Baker, op. cit. 248-9; (3) Stockton Axson's memorandum of Wilson's report to his wife the day after the meeting, quoted in Link, op. cit. 361-2.
13. Printed in the N. Y. *Evening Post*, 30 Jan 1912.
14. Watterson's description of Wilson, CJ, 21 Feb 1912.
15. Quoted in W. F. Johnson, *George Harvey*, 193-4.
16. *Ibid.* 195.
17. *Ibid.* 198.
18. *Ibid.* 199-200; see also Robert Ewing's letter to Watterson, 31 Jan 1913, WP, vol. 14.
19. Released by N. Y. *Sun*, 17 Jan 1912; printed in *Harper's Weekly*, 20 Jan 1912.
20. Published in various newspapers, 24 Jan 1912.
21. N. Y. *World*, 27 Jan 1912.
22. N. Y. *Sun*, 26 Jan 1912.
23. Quoted in Johnson, op. cit. 208-9.
24. Joseph P. Tumulty, *Woodrow*

## FIFTEEN

The most detailed account of events in the Harvey-Watterson-Wilson affair may be found in Arthur S. Link's excellent study, *Wilson: The Road to the White House* (Princeton Univ., 1947). In spite of its bias, Willis F. Johnson's *George Harvey: A Passionate Patriot* (Houghton Mifflin, 1929), contains some valuable information on Watterson's friendship with Harvey.

1. Quoted in Arthur S. Link, *Wilson: The Road to the White House*, 146-7.



*Wilson As I Knew Him*  
(Doubleday, Page, 1921), 89.

25. CJ, 21 Feb 1912.
26. Krock, op. cit. 172-3; C. Clark to Watterson, 25 May 1912, WP, vol. 13.
27. Telegrams from 19 June through 1 July 1912, WP, vol. 13.
28. CJ, 2 Nov 1912.
29. 24 Sept 1914, WP, vol. 18.
30. 28 Sept 1914, WP, vol. 18.

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1. CJ, 1 April 1911.
2. MH, II, 54.
3. Ibid. 70-71.
4. Ibid. 68.
5. 31 Aug 1909, WP, vol. 9.
6. 30 May 1907, Allison Papers.
7. 25 July 1905, Reid Papers.
8. 3 Feb 1908, WP, vol. 6.
9. Esther G. Irving, 23 Jan 1908, WP, vol. 6.
10. 24 June 1903, Reid Papers.
11. 20 Dec 1913, *Century Collection*, NYPL.
12. 28 Dec 1916, WP, vol. 24.
13. Wallace, 'There Were Giants in Those Days,' op. cit. 56.
14. N. Y. *Times*, 23 Dec 1921.
15. S. P. H. Camden, 1 May 1915, WP, vol. 19.
16. Interviews with Wallace, Sept 1946 and Mrs. Richardson, July 1948.
17. Interview with Judge Mark Beauchamp, Sept 1946.
18. Quoted in N. Y. *World*, 6 Feb 1909.
19. 12 April 1909, WP, vol. 8.
20. 28 Feb 1909, WP, vol. 8.
21. CJ, 23 April 1916.
22. Krock, op. cit. 347.

## SEVENTEEN

1. CJ, 26 Feb 1914.
2. CJ, 18 April 1914.
3. CJ, 7 Aug 1914.

4. CJ, 26 Nov 1914.
5. CJ, 14 and 29 April 1914.
6. CJ, 21 Jan 1914.
7. CJ, 3 Aug 1914.
8. CJ, 15 Aug 1914.
9. 4 Sept 1914, WP, vol. 18.
10. *New-Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, 15 July 1916.
11. W. H. Taft, 29 July 1915; Herbert Houston, 28 Aug 1915, WP, vol. 20.
12. CJ, 9 May 1915.
13. CJ, 12 June 1915.
14. CJ, 8 June 1916.
15. 25 Jan 1914, WP, vol. 16.
16. CJ, 9 Nov 1916.
17. CJ, 26 Nov 1914. Italics mine.
18. Krock, op. cit. 416.

## EIGHTEEN

1. 17 Dec 1913, WP, vol. 16.
2. Stealey to B. Haldeman, copy to Watterson, 6 Jan 1910, WP, vol. 9.
3. 20 Jan [year not given], WP, vol. 14.
4. 6 March 1915, printed in *Louisville Post*, 29 June 1917.
5. 12 March 1915, printed in *Louisville Post*, 29 June 1917.
6. 15 March 1915, printed in same paper, 29 June 1917. Italics mine. These italicized sentences are those which Watterson later quoted in court to show Bruce Haldeman's unfriendly attitude.
7. 22 Nov 1915, WP, vol. 21.
8. Watterson to Young, rough draft, undated, WP, vol. 22.
9. 9 Jan 1917, WP, vol. 24.
10. 11 Jan 1917, WP, vol. 24.
11. 22 March 1917, WP, vol. 24.
12. Papers regarding the agreement, dated 8 May 1917, WP, vol. 25.
13. Copy of contract, CJ, 17 June 1917.
14. Watterson's affidavit, CJ, 29 June 1917.
15. Court ruling, *Louisville Herald*, 29 July 1917.

16. See *N. Y. Times*, 22 May 1914; 6 May 1925.
17. *Editor and Publisher*, 9 March 1918.
18. *N. Y. Times*, 23 Dec 1921.
19. Editorial, 'God Save Our Women!' *CJ*, 10 March 1918.
20. *MH*, 1, 199.
21. *CJ*, 5 March 1919.

## NINETEEN

1. *Nation*, 17 Aug 1918.
2. Krock, *op. cit.* 426.
3. 7 Aug 1918, *WP*, vol. 28.
4. *MH*, II, 187-9.
5. Krock, 30 Aug 1918; G. H. Doran, 4 Sept 1918, *WP*, vol. 28.
6. Krock, *op. cit.* 425-6.
7. *CJ*, 27 Feb 1921; C. Symons, Belgian legation, 26 June 1919, *WP*, vol. 31.
8. *CJ*, 12 Nov 1918.
9. *CJ*, 19 Jan 1919.
10. *CJ*, 5 Feb 1919.
11. 20 Jan 1919, *WP*, vol. 29.
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13. 6 March 1919, *WP*, vol. 30.
14. 18 March 1919, *WP*, vol. 30.
15. The quotation is not from the

- actual letter Hughes sent, but from his statement concerning the substance of the letter made to the *CJ*, 19 May 1949.
16. *Ibid.*
  17. *Louisville Times*, 9 Jan 1920.
  18. Printed in *Louisville Times*, 9 Jan 1920.
  19. *Louisville Herald*, 24 April 1920.
  20. *CJ*, 9 Feb 1919.
  21. 24 March 1920, *WP*, vol. 32.
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  26. *CJ*, 31 May 1920.
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  28. 10 July 1920, *WP*, vol. 33.
  29. *CJ*, 8 March 1921.
  30. G. N. Bailey for the Houston (Texas) *Post*, reprinted in *CJ*, 19 Jan 1921.
  31. Reprinted in *CJ*, 16 Sept 1921.
  32. 18 Oct 1921, Krock Papers.
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  34. Statement of James Wilson, Watterson's caretaker, *Louisville Herald*, 23 Dec 1921.
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