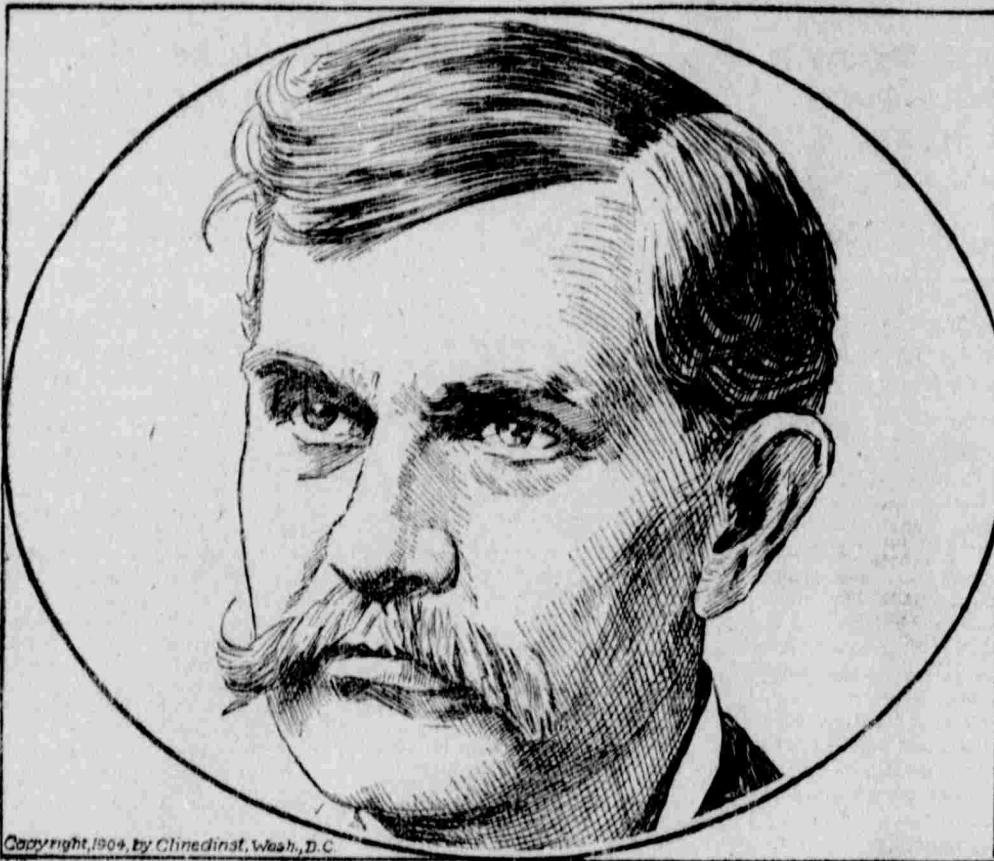


# John Sharp Williams, Leader of the House Minority; The Scholar and Wit of the American Legislative Body

**S**INCE John Sharp Williams became leader of the minority in the national house of representatives, at the opening of the Fifty-eighth congress, no competitor of sufficient caliber to cause him a moment's uneasiness has arisen to dispute his claim to intellectual precedence. Every congress, with its constantly recurring political discussions, affords an opportunity for distinction to the party of the opposition. The test of the opposition in the Fifty-eighth congress was well met. In John Sharp Williams it furnished a leader who has lived up to the expectations of the minority which chose him and won the admiration of the majority.

No other opposition leader in recent times has become so well known as has the representative from the Eighth Mississippi district. Southern as he is, Mr. Williams has probably made himself more acceptable to the whole nation, irrespective of political creed, than any other minority leader since the civil war. Plain spoken and logical, unhesitating and honestly pugnacious, as free to excuse as to attack, with a self-possession undisturbed by any heat of debate, undismayed by reverse and not carried off his feet by success—these are some of the characteristics that have been made conspicuous during the leadership of John Sharp Williams of Mississippi.



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JOHN SHARP WILLIAMS.

For all of these things his political foes have been compelled to admire him. His friends are prepared to go even further in their appreciation. Loyal, liberal, sympathetic, optimistic and, above all, patient under the stress of responsibility, he has bound the minority to him by exceptional ties of devotion to his integrity, judgment and resourcefulness. The power he has

shown as a leader is not due entirely to that somewhat elastic influence known as personality. In the net of physical magnetism he is by no means an adept. Nature has even been a trifle niggardly in endowing him with the complete equipment of the statesman. His makeup is not that of the typical American orator. A serene indifference

to fashionable attire is his manner of offsetting his natural plainness of person. He is utterly devoid of vanity in any form and is apparently impervious to personal criticism. Above all this, the thing that has most impressed the house and also the public at large is the discovery of the lofty character of the man and the ability that makes it



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MR. WILLIAMS IN DEBATE.

conspicuous. Since his election to congress he has addressed himself with zeal and animation to the discussion of every subject of importance which has come up and has shown a mobility of temperament which has fitted each phase admirably. It is also true that during all of his versatile action his followers have always been able to

poem. One of the verses was to the effect that—

No other sailor ever sat  
Behind a desk and fought  
As glorious a fight as that  
Or planned as grand a plot.

He did not attack either admiral, but chose as the object of his satire the bureau of navigation and its head. It is not likely that Mr. Williams will ever be able to live down the reputation he acquired by this bit of doggerel. From that day to this letters asking him for a copy of the verses come in from all parts of the country, and it is easily the most popular speech he has ever made, not excepting his famous tariff effort.

Like all well educated persons, Mr. Williams never makes a point of his education and is exceedingly modest as to his attainments. "He may be the best educated man in the south," said a Tammany member after Mr. Williams had been in congress for some time, "but he keeps it to himself mighty close." The gentleman from New York had evidently been selecting quotations from the Latin classics and was disappointed when none was forthcoming. Another member, alluding to the leader's carelessness in the matter of attire, said: "Williams is always in fatigue dress, but his mind is always in active service. If ever I see his necktie in a tight bow I am going to break a lance with him. I believe he might lose his temper then."

John Sharp Williams was born in Memphis, Tenn., in 1854. When his father was killed at the battle of Shiloh his son was seven years of age. The Williams family was one of the fortunate few that saved a competency from the wreck of the war. From his father's estate Williams inherited property in Memphis, and from his mother many thousand acres of cotton land in Mississippi. He always had money sufficient to meet his demands, and his guardian permitted him to do pretty much as he liked. That he had mapped

out his future even at that early age is evident from a French exercise book which is still in the possession of Mrs. Williams, on the fly leaf of which he once wrote, "John Sharp Williams—agriculture, law and politics."

His early school days were spent at the Kentucky Military Institute. Later he matriculated at the University of the South, at Seavane, Tenn., and in 1875 he completed the course and entered the University of Virginia, where he remained three years. Then he went abroad and studied at the University of Heidelberg, subsequently going to Paris and Dijon for lectures on political economy. Returning to America, he entered the law school of the University of Virginia and remained a year. He did not receive the diploma from this school, but pursued the study of law in a private office in Memphis and was admitted to the bar in that city in 1877. In 1878 he removed to Yazoo City, Miss., near which were situated the cotton plantations which were the main feature of his wealth.

Mr. Williams was not at all in a hurry to begin public life. He kept strictly to the business of putting his estate into good condition until he had satisfied himself in that respect, and he was thirty-eight years of age when he was elected to congress. Since then he has practically given up the law, but he has always retained a firm hold in the direction of the plantations. Yazoo is in the heart of the black belt—a land of sunshine and plenty. At home Mr. Williams is always called "John Sharp." That is because his mother's family, the Sharps, were the great people of the Yazoo country. According to his own confession, John Sharp Williams' notion of earthly happiness is to sit on his veranda at Yazoo in the company of plenty of good books and watch the cotton grow. There was only one vote cast against him at the last election—that of one of his seven children as a joke. EVERETT BROWNELL.

## Well Known Lawmakers Caught by the Camera Man; Snapshots of Some Americans of National Repute



**J**OSEPH G. CANNON, known colloquially and appreciatively as "Uncle Joe," is easily the central figure of the Fifty-ninth congress. This is due not so much to the fact that he is speaker of the house of representatives as it is to his general picturesqueness and his unique methods of controlling the rather unwieldy body over which he presides. Mr. Cannon is a native of North Carolina, born at Guilford, May 7, 1836. He removed to Illinois at an early age, became a lawyer and began going to congress in 1873, a performance he has repeated so frequently that he has acquired the habit.



**J**OHN WARWICK DANIEL has been United States senator from Virginia for about eighteen years. He is a veteran of the civil war, and he bears with him wherever he goes a witness to that effect in the shape of a cork leg, a halting substitute for the one shot off in the second battle of Bull Run. Although his locomotion has been impeded for more than forty years, Senator Daniel exhibits no other sign of slowness. His whole career has been one ceaseless round of activity as student, soldier, lawyer and politician. His physical misfortune is more than offset by his energy and geniality.



**S**AMUEL DOUGLAS McENERY, a senior senator from Louisiana, is a well known figure on the streets of the national capital. He has been in the senate since 1896, and his present term will expire March 3, 1909. Like Senator Daniel, he was an officer in the Confederate army and served a campaign in Virginia under Magruder. He had been a cadet at West Point, June 20, 1824—he is still in fair physical condition and as vigorous mentally as ever. Mr. Morgan is not college bred, but is reputed to be one of the most scholarly men in the south and for many years has had a great reputation as a lawyer. He entered the Confederate army as a private and became a general.



**I**F John Tyler Morgan should live until March 3, 1907, he will have served continuously for thirty years in the United States senate. There is every reason to warrant this belief that he will round out the full five terms, for although he is no longer a young man—he was born in Athens, Tenn., June 20, 1824—he is still in fair physical condition and as vigorous mentally as ever. Mr. Morgan is not college bred, but is reputed to be one of the most scholarly men in the south and for many years has had a great reputation as a lawyer. He entered the Confederate army as a private and became a general.



**J**OSEPH WEEKS BABCOCK is pretty well known in Washington, since he is now serving his seventh consecutive term as a member of the lower house. He was born in Vermont fifty-five years ago, removed with his parents to Iowa when he was five, emigrated to Wisconsin when he was thirty and in five years became a wealthy lumberman. About this time he was elected a member of the assembly, and a few years later he was sent to congress. He has been chairman of the national Republican congressional committee ten years and has shown great ability as an organizer.



**W**ILLIAM ANDREWS CLARK, United States senator from Montana, is a notable example of the self made man. He went from Pennsylvania to Montana during the civil war and worked at mining as a day laborer. In a few years he acquired mining interests which made him one of the richest men in the world. His advent into politics was stormy. He was defeated for congress, elected but unseated as a United States senator in 1890, elected again in 1899, investigated and discredited, vindicated at the ensuing state election and returned.



**S**ERENO ELISHA PAYNE, chairman of the ways and means committee of the house of representatives, is serving his eleventh term, but not consecutively. Born in 1843, he began to practice law at Auburn, N. Y., in 1866, and is still in harness. In 1899 Mr. Payne was appointed a member of the American-British joint high commission, which was a direct recognition of his ability as an interpreter of international law. It was due to his remarkable talent for combining business with pleasure that he was invited to become a member of Secretary Taft's recent Philippine expedition.

## A Year's Progress In Practical Wireless Telegraphy; What the American Naval Authorities Have Done

**R**ECENT experiments in wireless telegraphy made by the officers of the American navy seem to prove beyond question the perfect adaptability of this means of long distance communication to naval purposes. On Christmas eve a greeting was sent out by the officials in charge of the bureau of equipment at Washington to every wireless telegraph station on the Atlantic coast. This was done not merely as an interesting episode, but as a practical test of the value of the apparatus and the degree of efficiency to which it had been brought.

Beginning at 2 o'clock in the evening the station at the capital sent out the greeting "Merry Christmas" at intervals of fifteen minutes until 10 o'clock. Replies were received from Portsmouth, N. H.; Newport, R. I.; Boston, Mass.; Guantanamo, Cuba; Norfolk, Va.; St. Augustine, Fla.; Beaufort, N. C.; and Jupiter Inlet, North Carolina. Some of the smaller stations, such as Cape Elizabeth, Me., were obliged to relay because their power is not sufficient. Even those stations heard the message. San Juan, Porto Rico, is also a weak point, its power plant not being practically an unbroken system of communication by wireless telegraph between Cape Elizabeth, Me., and Colon, Panama. St. Augustine heard Cape Elizabeth's acknowledgment of the message and relayed its answer to the capital. The distance from Cape Elizabeth is 576 miles. The stretch from Washington to Guantanamo is 1,509 miles. This successful test, coming in the wake of two others—the continued communication with the West Virginia and the other cruisers of the fleet which recently brought President Roosevelt north from New Orleans and the chief of the Newport station—has made it clear to the minds of the naval authorities that every vessel in the United States navy should be equipped with

wireless apparatus and that shore stations should be built in sufficient numbers to communicate with the ships no matter where they may be cruising. Various wireless schemes have been tested at the naval station at Newport. At the present time the Telefunken system, a German method of applying the science, is on trial. Last year a station was established on the lightship at Nantucket shoals. Shipping passing that busy marine vicinity are reported to the wireless station at Newport. The good work done by the service is appreciated not only by the navy, but by the shipping interests of the whole world.

A year ago when the lightship was moving from New Bedford, Mass., to her station at Nantucket shoals and became caught in the ice the wireless apparatus called the Newport station and reported the helpless plight of the craft. Thousands of wireless messages have passed between the lightship and the Newport station, which is one of the best equipped on the coast and is in charge of Commander Albert Cleave.

Inspector in charge of ordnance at the torpedo station. Among some of the best tests which have been made between the Newport station and other stations in various parts of the country, at an average speed of eighteen words a minute, may be cited the following: Washington navy yard, distance 329 miles; Boston navy yard, 70 miles; Philadelphia navy yard, 250 miles; Atlantic City, 345 miles; Portsmouth navy yard, 150 miles; Cape Henry, Virginia, 350 miles; forts in New York bay, 190 miles, and many others.

According to the annual report of General A. W. Greely, chief signal officer of the army, the signal corps is now prepared to furnish all equipment necessary for 10,000 miles of communication. Direct wireless communication is now established between five military posts in Alaska. The commercial business alone has netted \$100,000 during the past year. This is the only wireless system that is operated regularly as a part of a telegraph line doing a commercial business. It has handled daily the entire telegraphic business of Nome and Seward peninsula, which with the official business averages several thousand words every twenty-four hours. In a single hour there have been transmitted 2,000 words without error or repetition. The tests made during the president's voyage from New Orleans to the Capital City were in some respects very remarkable. The wireless instrument on board the flagship West Virginia was in continuous communication with the other vessels of the fleet and with the shore stations all the way from New Orleans to Norfolk. One night, with the flagship 225 miles from Key West, the messages between the operator at that point and the vessels of the fleet could be read at the navy yard in Washington without any difficulty. These messages were clear at a distance of 1,050 statute miles. The New York navy yard caught one of them, and the station at Manhattan Beach, on Long Island, caught another.

The longest distance over which a wireless message has come safely to the operators of the navy department has been 1,000 miles. That was from San Juan, Porto Rico, to Manhattan Beach station on Long Island. The operator at Colon recently read messages passing between the operator at Key West and the steamer Concho, plying between Galveston, Tex., and New York. The distance was 1,200 miles. The operators at Newport and St. Augustine often talk at night, but have never been able to do so in the daytime. Wireless telegraphy does not succeed as well by day as at night. Experience shows that the range at night is at least three times that of the daytime. The reason for this is not yet accurately understood. The theoretical explanation is that the rays of the sun "ionize" the atmosphere. That is supposed to mean that the atmosphere is not as good a medium for the electric current when the sun is shining as it is at other times.

As soon as the government has completed its system of naval wireless telegraph stations communication may be held between all points on the coast line of America. There will be a chain of wireless stations along both coasts

CHANNING A. BARTOW.