

MISCELLANEOUS.

Written for this Paper.
FROM PLOWBOY TO SENATOR.

(Copyrighted by Frank G. Carpenter, 1895.)
WASHINGTON, October 26, 1895



HAD A LONG chat the other night with Shelby M. Cullom, the famous United States Senator from Illinois. He is one of the most interesting talkers among our public

men. Plain and simple in his ways, there are no frills nor furbelows about either himself or his conversation. He calls a spade a spade, and as a story teller has many of the attributes which were so noted in Abraham Lincoln. He grew up under the shadow of Lincoln, and his likeness to the martyred President has been often remarked. No one would call Cullom handsome. His frame is big, bony and angular. His figure is straight, with shoulders so square that the arms seem to fall from them at right angles, the whole acting as a clothes frame for his Prince Albert coat. His gestures are not graceful, and his face in repose is severe. When he talks, however, a smile creeps out of the corners of his eyes, the lines of his features soften, and you forget everything else in the impression of his honest strength and good fellowship which shows out of them. You soon discover that Cullom has lots of personal magnetism, and that, with it all, he is full of brains, and at the same time possessed of a remarkable degree of plain, practical common sense. There are few men in the United States who stand so close to the people and who appreciate their wants so well. There are few who have had as remarkable a career and have not been spoiled by it; and few Senators whose lives would be more inspiring examples to the boys of the United States.

During my visit with Senator Cullom I drew him on to talk about his boyhood. He told me that his family was Scotch-Irish, and that his ancestors came from Maryland to Kentucky. It was there that Cullom was born, and when he was a baby of nine months, chewing his little fists, which were not so angular then, with his toothless gums, and squalling at times, I venture, in more piercing tones than those he now uses in the United States Senate, the family moved to Illinois. They rode out and in through the stumps in canvass-covered wagons, and Baby Cullom, wrapped in a feather bed, was rocked by the jolting of the wheels. Father Cullom settled within fifteen miles of Peoria, taking up about 500 acres and chopping a farm out of the forests. Baby Cullom crept over the log floor and toddled about the clearings year by year, until he became old enough to go to school. His first lessons were studied in a log school house, and working on the farm and studying at school made up his boyhood life.

After he had finished his schooling at

the country schools, young Cullom concluded that he wanted a better education. His father was hardly able to send him to college, and Shelby had to look out for himself. How he succeeded I will tell in his own words. Said he:

"I was about seventeen years old at this time. I thought I ought to be better educated, and I looked about to see how I could make some money to pay my way through the academies. I saw an opening in a country school near where I lived. I applied for it and got it. My wages at the start were \$18 a month, and I must have done pretty well, for at the end of the second month they raised me to \$20, and I received this for the remainder of the year. I boarded with the scholars, and saved nearly every cent of my munificent salary."

"A whole year's salary wouldn't amount to much, Senator, at \$20 a month," said I. "Was this the only way you had to make money?"

"No; I made something after school was over by plowing. I got \$1.25 an acre for it. I borrowed five yokes of oxen from my father, and went to breaking up land for the neighbors. We plowed a furrow about eighteen inches wide and hitched from four to five yokes of oxen to the plow. We fastened the plow to wheels and set it to the proper depth. I walked outside and yelled at the team. It is not an easy matter to drive oxen, I tell you, and a great deal of lung power which I have today was, I venture, developed then."

"By the way," the Senator continued, with a twinkle in his eye, "a rather queer thing happened in connection with that plowing. You know they talked a little of me for president four years ago, and some of my old friends in Illinois thought I had a chance for the White House. One of these was a farmer for whom I had broken land in my boyhood. He wrote me, recalling the circumstance. He said he had a print of my bare foot, which I had made at that time, in a clayey strip on his land. He said he had cut it out and kept it, and that he was going to frame it as the foot of a president."

"He must have been one of the grandfathers of Du Maurier's Billie, and history is only repeating itself in the craze over the foot of Trilby," said I, as I looked at the good, comfortable understanding of Mr. Cullom. And did you plow in your bare feet, Senator?"

"Yes, I suppose so," replied Mr. Cullom. "We did a great deal of farm work in our bare feet in early days. It was more comfortable than working with shoes, though now and then one was liable to raise a stone bruise or snag off a toe nail against a root."

"Where did you go to school, Senator," I asked.

"It was at a seminary at Mount Morris, in northern Illinois," replied Senator Cullom. "There was a big Methodist institution there at that time, and it was considered a very good school. I studied Latin and Greek and other things, but before I got through I fell sick. This was within three months of the close of the term. I thought I was

going to die, and I wanted to go home. They persuaded me to stay, however, and give the valedictory."

"Then, I suppose, you were at the head of your class, Senator?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Cullom, "I managed to keep pretty close to the top."

"What did you do next?"

"I came home," was the reply. "No one thought I would live. I was as lean as a rail and pale as a sheet of white paper. I had an ambition to be a lawyer when I started to the seminary, but my sickness led me to give this up and go back to the farm. Ten days after I was in the harvest field. I soon grew better, and by fall I had rented a quarter section of land from my father, and was putting it in crops. As winter came on, I grew restless. I told my father he could have the land again, and that I was going to Springfield to study law."

"You studied there with Abraham Lincoln, did you not?"

"No," replied Senator Cullom, "I did not study in the office of Mr. Lincoln. A great deal of his work was on the circuit, and he spent but little time in his office. I had known him since I was a boy of eleven, and he was already my ideal hero. When I went to Springfield I asked him if I had not better study law with him, but he advised me to go into the office of a lawyer who would be stationary. He gave me lots of good points, however, and I was closely associated with him from that time on."

"How did you like the law?" I asked.

"I like it very well," replied the Senator, "and I would not object to practicing now. I did not get to be a lawyer without considerable trouble. A few months after I took up the study I began to get sick again. I had an attack of typhoid fever, and hung for some time between life and death. The doctors told me that the only thing that could save me was to buy a pony and ride in the open air. I then went back home and tried the pony cure. But it was no good. I had no object in my rides, and I could not gain strength."

"This was the situation when I went to Peoria one day. It was then, as it is now, quite a hog market. I met one of the capitalists, and he asked me if I would like to buy hogs for them. He offered to pay me ten cents a hog, the farmers to keep the hogs until they were wanted, and to be paid the market prices prevailing at the time of delivery. I accepted the proposition and started out to buy. During the next few months I bought thousands of hogs. I galloped from one farm to another, buying all the swine within sight, and I contracted for all the hogs in two or three counties. At the close of my season I found that I had cleared \$500, and also that I had entirely regained my health. I took the money and went back to Springfield. I resumed my studies and was soon admitted to the bar."

"How did you get into politics, Senator?"

"Every lawyer in those days was, to a certain extent, a politician," replied Senator Cullom. "The law is, as a rule, one of the stepping stones to politics. I got into politics because I tried to use politics as a stepping stone to the law. I was practicing in Springfield, you know, and I thought if I became a member of the legislature that this would give me acquaintances all over the state, and would help my law business. The