VISIT TO SPEAKER CANNON AT HIS DANVILLE HOME

His Views of Public Questions—Uncle Sam Will Own This Hemisphere—Canada and Its Future—The United States Abroad and at Home—Our Great Fortunes and How They May Be Regulated—The Government and Its Expenses—The Campaign of 1904—Why Joe Cannon Does Not Want the Vice-Presidency—He Likes the Speakership, But Has Not Been Stung by the Presidential Bee.

By Frank G. Carpenter.

(Special Correspondent of The Times-Dispatch.)

DANVILLE, ILL., Aug. 13.—Sit down with me on the big porch of Speaker Cannon's big house in Danville and have a heart-to-heart talk with one of the really big men of the country. That wind which fans our cheeks like a sea breeze comes from the corn-laden Illinois prairies, rustling the forest trees at our side with its song of prosperity and peace. We are away from the factions of politics, away from the strife of legislation, away from the struggling of everyday statesmanship; we are away from the big cities, away out in God's country, where one can look at himself and the world. It is under such conditions that I have had a visit with Joe Cannon, the results of which are embodied in the conversation which follows.

The first part of our talk was of a personal nature. I had asked the Speaker as to his boyhood and he replied that he could remember as far back as when he was four years old, now sixty-four years ago.

"It was then," said he, "that we emigrated from North Carolina to Indiana. We came over the mountains in canvas-covered wagons, sleeping in tents. We crossed the little Dan River. It was as big to me then as the Mississippi is now. I can still see the great forests, the wild flowers by the roadside and the squirrels darting from tree to tree."

His Quaker Ancestors.

"Then your parents were southerners, Mr. Speaker?"

"They were born in North Carolina, but they were Quakers of the old stock that went from Massachusetts south and emigrated thence to different parts of the west. They were natural pioneers, always moving from place to place. My father and mother lived in Guilford county, N. C. Father taught school in a little red school house, of which I have a picture. He afterwards studied medicine and practiced it. There were about twenty families in the caravan which went to Indiana and settled at our little town on the Wabash. It was there I got my first schooling and there I lived until I was fifteen, when father was drowned and I had to go to work."

"What did you do then, Mr. Speaker?"

"I clerked in a country store for five years, after which I went into an office and studied law. It took me some time to get a start as a lawyer, but I finally succeeded, and was doing well when I was first elected to Congress, about thirty-two years ago. With the exception of one term I have been in Congress ever since."

The Delights of Youth.

"Then your boyhood was not an easy one, Mr. Speaker?"

"Perhaps not, in comparison with that of the city boys of to-day; but it was like that of the other boys of the community and I thoroughly enjoyed it. There is nothing like the pleasures of youth and its glorious dreams of the future. As we grow older we are content with the present. I have not built an air castle for thirty years, although I enjoy life still.

"And yet the pleasures of my youth might be considered hardships now. In those days every boy rose at daybreak to make the fire. You crept from the warm sheets out on the cold floor to dress. It might be that your boots had frozen over night, and how you did have to pull getting them on. Then if you had been thoughtful and had carried in the wood before bedtime it was not hard to kindle it and to put the kettle on the crane; but if not, you had to go out and split the wood in the snow. After the fire was built came the milking, and you took two pails and went out to the barn. One pail held the milk and the other served for the strippings. You had to watch that the old muley cow did not kick you, and it might be that she would flirt her bedraggled tail into your still half-sleepy eyes. After milking you came in and had breakfast, and how it did taste!

"Snow balls then were as good as apples now and every bit as sweet.

"When I worked in the country store I had to get up, make the fire sweep out, eat breakfast and be ready for business by 6 o'clock in the morning, and I stayed in the store until 9 o'clock at night. Was it hard? No! Other boys did the same, and we had our fun, too. Many a time we went out and danced till daybreak and got back ready to open up at the usual time. We may have yawned a little during the day, but the elixir of youth remedied all before night."

The Education of a Speaker.

I here asked Mr. Cannon to tell me more about his education. He is a well-read man, and in his speeches uses excellent English, illustrating his points from history and literature, ancient and modern.

Mr. Cannon said: "My education was confined to the country school, to home teaching about the big log fireplace, where father read to us at night, and to my own private study. While I was clerking I had more or less time when business was slack, and after I began to read law I got a smattering of Latin."

"What books did you have?"

"Very few during my boyhood. There was a little public library in the saddler's shop in our town, and its books were passed around. We had Plutarch's Lives, Aesop's Fables, Josephus' History of the Jews, Rollins' Ancient History, Shakespeare and the Bible. I read all these again and again. I read Shakespeare before I was fifteen, and every year from nine until fifteen I had to read the Bible through from end to end."

"Can you quote much from the Bible?"

"I never could quote anything," said the Speaker, but the Bible has furnished me more illustrations for my speeches than any other book. It is full of grand pictures, and it has parables and examples illustrating every phase of human life and action."

"What parts of the Bible have helped you most?" I asked.

"I can hardly say. They are all good. The Old Testament and the New are full of great thoughts and striking images. Take David and his Psalms, the Proverbs of Solomon and Solomon's Songs. There is nothing like them anywhere. Ecclesiastes is a great philosophical poem, and all Job is poetry. Think of the story of Exodus and the wandering of the chosen people through the wilderness for forty years, and that only two of all their host ever saw the promised land. And then the sermon on the mount and the life of Paul. The Bible is a treasure house. It has had great influence upon me all my life."

"What books stand next to the Bible in your estimation?"

"Shakespeare has, I suppose, the second place, but I study Shakespeare still and finds it ever fresh and ever new. Plutarch's Lives I know almost by heart, and their characters are very real to me. From Rollins I got much of my knowledge of the Greeks and Romans, and from Shakespeare human nature."

College Educations for Congressmen.

"I here asked the speaker as to what he thought of the benefits of a college education. He replied:

"I have regretted that I was not able to go to college. The lack of such an education made it so that I have had to do my life work with dull tools. Education sharpens the intellectual faculties and the man who possesses it works more surely and safely. I have for years been on the appropriation committee of the House of Representatives and have signed conference reports appropriating more than one billion dollars. I have had my say as to the contents of those reports, but I would not have attempted the writing of one for a fortune. Why? Because the reports are written in a hurry and the misplacing of a single comma might have cost the nation millions of dollars and brought me everlasting disgrace."

Schools That Make Men.

"But schools like yours have their advantages over the colleges. Mr. Speaker," said I. "It is such schools that make men."

"That may be true," was the reply. "There are greater disadvantages than having to work one's way through life. Such work brings out the man and hardens his character. Those who are doing things in the world to-day, are largely men schooled as I was. They come from the middle walks of life. They have had to fight their way upward and through fighting they grew. I learntd much in that country store. It taught me exactitude, industry and the value of the nickel. Only the fewest people ever learn that twenty nickels make a dollar. In that store the accounts had to be exact. I remember we sold a calico dress for a dollar and it then took just eight yards to make a dress. We measured it off with a yard stick—just eight yards, not a quarter of an inch more, not a quarter of an inch less. Eight pounds of coffee were sold for a dollar and I learned to measure out just eight pounds. I think we put the paper on the scales first. Another common article we sold was tobacco which cost forty cents a plug, but which was usually sold in five cent cuts. I learned to cut a plug in eighths and to put the other seven-eighths away in a glass jar for future customers. All this taught me to be exact."

Cannon's First Five Hundred Dollars.

"It must have taught you to be economical as well?"

"Economical!" exclaimed Mr. Cannon! "Ye gods! how economical I was then! A nickel looked bigger than a double gold eagle does now, and I am not extravagant to-day. I wanted to study law and get ahead, and I saved every cent. How closely I saved you may know when I tell you that for that five years I received $1,000 in wages, an average of $4 a week, and I saved just half of that. The result was that I had $500 when I stopped clerking. I lived upon that while I studied law.

"That saving taught me the uses and value of money," continued Mr. Cannon. "It gave me habits which enabled me to pay the debts incurred in the dull season of my law study and early practice. It caused me to invest my surplus thereafter, with the result that when I went to Congress I had what was then considered a good income outside my salary."

"Could you not live upon your salary while in Congress?" I asked.

"I have not done so," was the reply. "I have lived well, although not extravagantly. My expenses have been about twice as much as the amount received from the government. Nevertheless those investments made in the days of my law practice, owing to the rise in farm lands and other things, have made it so that I could now leave public life and be comfortably off. I don't mean that I would be a rich man in the present sense of the word, but I would have enough for all my needs."

The Prime of Life at Sixty-Eight.

"You are too young a man, Mr. Speaker, to think of retiring. You seem to be in your prime."

"If a man is as old as he feels," said Mr. Cannon, "I am still in my prime. I am sixty-eight, but I have never felt better, physically or mentally. I work more easily and can handle men better than in the past. How long this will last I do not know, but there are many men in public life older than I who are still doing good work. Senators Frye and Proctor are seventy-three; Cullom, the chairman of the foreign relations committee of the Senate, is seventy-four, while Allison and Hoar are each seventy-five. All these men are more efficient than they have ever been. The length of a man's working life is largely a matter of individual constitution. Some are older at thirty than others are at sixty. If the Lord should give me threescore or even fourscore years of working life I shall be glad. I should like to remain upon this earth as long as I can be useful to myself and my fellows, and no longer. When I begin to fail I want to retire. I don't want to cumber the ground."

Uncle Sam and His Hemisphere.

The conversation here turned to public questions, and I asked Speaker Cannon his opinion as to the future of the United States. He replied:

"The future of this country is the future of the world's civilization. This is the great breeding ground for the best of the human race. It is the source of that element which does things, controls things, creates things. We have eighty million people now. Within another hundred years we shall have three hundred millions, and will have spread beyond our borders on the north and south. By the close of this century we Americans will dominate this continent and this hemisphere. We will have passed beyond Mexico, Central America and the Isthmus of Panama, and will have inclosed all South America in the grasp of our influence."

"By this I do not mean that we will undertake the political government of the South American republics. I do not mean that we will hold them as we now hold our Colonies, nor even as Cuba, which is to some extent a dependency of ours. But I do mean that American capital and Americans will have so settled themselves in our sister continent that the day of revolutions and non-progress will have passed away. In the Monroe doctrine we have established the fact that no European power shall ever acquire any new territory in South America. That doctrine will always prevail. There may be European immigration, but those Europeans who go to South America must become South Americans, and this, with the great overflow of our people to that country, means that they will become a part of the world dominated by our ideas and the spirit of our civilization."

The Canada of the Future.

"How about Canada, Mr. Speaker?"

"Canada is already almost a part of the United States. It may remain still tied to England in a nominal way, but as time goes on it will become American in sympathy and more and more American in population and industry. Canada is one of the growing countries of this time. I look for an enormous emigration there from the United States. It is a land of vast undeveloped resources, which are to be opened up by our people."

The United States Abroad.

"I suppose that the future of the United States will be confined to this continent," said I.

"Yes, to a great extent," said Mr. Cannon, "but we are now a world nation and we are reaching out in every direction and across every sea. The earth is old, but is is hardly touched as far as modern development is concerned. There are vast areas of new country in South America; Africa is still an unknown continent, and so is almost the whole of northern Asia. The world is said to have fifteen hundred million people. There is room upon it for double that number, and many parts of it will support ten which now support one."

"Then you do not believe in the Malthusian theory?"

"No, it will be a long time before wars or pestilences will be needed to restrict the world's population."

The Greatest Factory on Earth.

"I suppose you look upon the United States as pretty well filled now?"

"Not at all. We have only eighty millions and by intensive cultivation we should support ten times that number. It is said that Texas alone would feed the United States. And then our mineral resources. The country has not been scratched and we do not know what we have under the soil. We are already the greatest manufacturing nation of the world, producing more than Germany, France and England, our three greatest competitors. We send only 3 per cent. of what we make abroad, but that 3 per cent forms 29 per cent. of our exports, and we are now the greatest exporting nation on earth. Indeed, we make one-fourth of all the factory goods made by the world."

"The basis of our manufactures is our home market," continued the Speaker. "I want to see this protected in every possible way, for it is the foundation of our prosperity and of our enormous possibilities. There is no markets like this. We have more wants than any other people, and spend more money to satisfy them. We consume three times as much per capita as the people of Europe. Our eighty millions in that respect are equal to any other two hundred millions. We are equal as consumers to two-thirds of all the people of Europe. This market we must keep to ourselves, and the tariff must be so adjusted that there will be no danger of losing it."

Great Fortunes and Their Dangers.

"I know we are rich Mr. Speaker. But are we not growing too rich? Are you not alarmed at the growth of the great American fortunes?"

"No. Most of our great fortunes have come from small beginnings. They are the result of the brains and industry of the men who own them, and when their owners die they will soon disappear. I know many of the multi-millionaires of to-day.

"Take Marshall Field. When I first saw him he was a boy clerking in a store. He is worth many millions now. John Rockefeller, who started life poor, is said to be worth hundreds of millions and the same is true of Andrew Carnegie and others. When these men die they cannot carry a dollar away with them. Naked came they into the world and naked shall they depart from it. That fact exists to-day as it did in the time of the Scriptures."

"Yes," said I, "but the fortunes still remain in the families."

"Not long," replied Mr. Cannon, "... is an old saying that it is just three generations from shirt sleeves to shirt sleeves. It is impossible to tie up fortunes so that they will remain long in the hands of one's descendants. You may remember the case of old Thulleson, who died about two hundred years ago. That man was enormously rich for his day and he willed his fortune so that it should be kept intact, and invested and re-invested for generations, and at the end divided among his heirs. His will was contested again and again, but in vain. The result of it was that the English Parliament made a law that no man could dispose of his property for longer than the lives of his descendants in being, and for twenty-one years thereafter. That law has been adopted by nearly every other country. It is a part of the laws of every one of our States.

Taxes for the Rich.

"Such things, however, are, after all, in the hands of the people," continued the Speaker. "It is they who make the laws regulating the accumulation and continuance of wealth. In many of our States there are now inheritance taxes graded according to the size of the estates of the deceased. There may be no tax at all on the first $20,000, one per cent. on the second $20,000, two per cent. on the next and five per cent. on all of the estates above $100,000. The people can if they will increase the amount of taxes paid according to the bulk of the property owned by the individual tax payer. I do not say that they should do so, but they have the power, and if at any time great fortunes become dangerous some way will be found to reduce or distribute them.

"Do not misunderstand me," said Mr. Cannon, "I do not deprecate great fortunes. So far I think they have been for the good of the people. It requires great capital to do great things, and the masses are enormously benefitted by the enterprises of the rich. I am only saying that the people have the power, and that, after all, the future is in their own hands."

The Government and Its Expenses.

"It seems to many, both rich and poor, Mr. Speaker, that our taxes are very heavy now. Are you not alarmed at the increasing expenditures of the government?"

"No. We spent last year in round numbers something like 700 million dollars, or over two million dollars for each working day in the year. The sum is enormous, but you must remember that this is an enormous country, doing an enormous business. Our business is growing much faster than our population. According to the postal receipts it has increased 1,700 per cent since 1860, and it has doubled within the past ten years. We are also doing more in the work of human progress than any other nation on earth, and, whether willingly or not, as we ourselves are concerned, our sphere is constantly widening. We have become a world power and we must accept the responsibilities of a world power. We must have a strong army and navy, not to wage war, but to insure peace and to be ready for emergencies if they should come. I don't believe the people object to heavy expenditures if such expenditures are needed and the money is properly handled."

"But is it so handled, Mr. Speaker? Some people think that a great part of it goes into the hands of the officials?"

"That is not true," was the reply. "There may be and doubtless are public officials here and there who forfeit their trust, but they are very few. The majority of the men in the service of the government are earnest, honest and more economical as to government expenses than they are as to their own expenses. I believe that the standard of official morality is higher every year. I have no sympathy with the idea that the country is going to the devil. Our people are better, purer and stronger than in the past, and the trend of public and private life is upward."

The Campaign of 1904.

The conversation here turned to the presidential race, and I asked Mr. Cannon if he thought the Republicans would have a "walk over."

"There are no 'walk overs' in our presidential contests," said the Speaker of the House of Representatives. "Parties are too evenly divided. Indeed, a change of 2 per cent. in the vote will almost always throw the election to one party or the other. I think that the Republicans will win both the presidency and the House of Representatives, but they will not do it on the walk. They will have to fight steadily from now until the election. The Democrats have a permanent asset in the solid south, and this gives them the odds at the start."

"Why would you not consent to be a candidate for the vice-presidential nomination, Mr. Cannon?" I asked.

"Why should I wish to be?" replied the Speaker. "I am a member of the House of Representatives, and in my opinion the weakest and least efficient member of that body has a more desirable place than has the Vice-President of the United States.

"The representative can do things; he can vote and have an effect on legislation. The Vice-President is merely a figurehead, whose possibilities are all on the dread future of the death of the President. He is the presiding officer of the Senate; but the Senate has so hedged itself about with rules that the Vice-President has no power whatever. He has only the appointment of a private secretary, a messenger and a page, that is all."

Mr. Cannon and the Speakership.

"How do you regard the speakership?"

"It is a very important office and one of great power and influence. It ranks next the presidency among the public offices, for the Speaker is the head of the House of Representatives, which is the chief originating, creating and working branch of our national legislature."

"Do you like the place?"

"Yes. I feel honored by the confidence expressed by electing me to it."

"But does it not worry you? The pressure of public business must be enormous."

"Yes there is plenty to do," replied the Speaker, "but I have always been a busy man and I think I was more busy at the head of the appropriations committee than I am now as Speaker. As to worry I do not worry about anything. What is the use of that? I do the thing that is before me as well as I can, and then take up what comes next."

The Presidential Bee.

"I should like to ask you, Mr. Speaker, if you have any ambition to go higher. Would you not be glad to be President of the United States?"

"Glad to be the President of the United States!" said Mr. Cannon. "Of course I should be glad to be President if the people wanted me and thought me fit for the election. There is no American capable of filling that place who would not be glad to have it. The President of our people ranks higher in my mind than any monarch who sits a throne, and as things go to-day he had more power than any ruler on earth. Any one would be glad to be President!"

"I do not mean by this that I am tormented with such an ambition. I thank God that the presidential bee has never hummed about my head. Its poisonous sting has never inoculated my veins and I hope it never will. I have known many politicians who have been so stung. Some are dead and some are living still. None, however, ever recovered. The blood of the man so attacked becomes contaminated, and he carries the attendant ambitions, anxieties and disappointments with him to his grave."

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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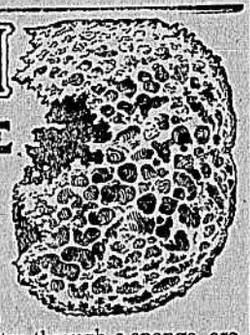

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AN ALLIGATOR IN DELAWARE

What Befell Three Fishermen Who Hooked Him for a Pike.

(Special to The Times-Dispatch.)

LAUREL, DEL., August 13.—About seven years ago a small alligator escaped from a circus at Salisbury Md., and there has been much commotion among fishermen caused by what was supposed to be a mammoth pike in "Old Hitch" mill pond about fifteen miles east of this place. The pond abounds with pike and it is a very bad fisherman who can't bring home a fine catch after a day's fishing. The supposed pike has taken off the hooks from the lines of almost all the habitues, and on Thursday John Kenton, George Johnson and Hiram Wilson decided to troll for the monster pike. Accordingly, they set out with hooks attached to steel chains.

They caught several fish and were just preparing to start for home when Wilson felt a mighty tug on his line, and felt sure that he had the coveted fish. His calls for assistance brought the other fishermen, and with their united efforts finally after a struggle that had pulled their boat almost across the pond, they saw a scaly monster just below the surface of the water. None of them could tell what it was. So it was decided to row the boat to the bank nearby, and continue their efforts from that vantage point, where they would not be in danger of being capsized. After fifteen minutes' hard pulling they discovered that the object of their struggles was an alligator. When the monster saw his tormentors on the bank close by, he made for them with fearful sounds. The men did not remain to argue with him, but took safety in flight. A party of picnicers were near, and hearing the cries of the men, supposed some one had fallen into the water and rushed down to the bank. They were confronted by his alligatorship, and the female members of the party were badly frightened. None of the party had ever seen such a monster, and all made for their homes. Several returned with their guns and clubs, but the alligator could not be found. Yesterday Kenton and his companion went to Hitch's Pond with large hooks and armed with a gun and axe, and fished several hours, but it was almost night when the alligator took the hook, and a fight that the participants will never forget, took place. The boat trolling the alligator, was gotten near shore where the water was only about five feet deep, when the boat was overturned. All three of the men were thrown into the water with the alligator. It was then that a real life and death struggle was begun. The gun was useless being at the bottom, and the powder, water soaked. The men used their axes and clubs, finally overcoming the alligator, but not before he had severely injured Kenton and Wilson. The discovery of the alligator has made plain several supposed mysteries of the pond last spring, and many of the weird stories told of sudden disappearances and strange sounds. James Miller about a month ago was teaching a bird pup to retrieve by throwing a ball in the water and sending the dog after it, the pup made several trips, when with a yelp and struggle disappeared under the water never to be seen again. Geese, pigs and ducks have been seen to disappear in a like manner on several occasions.

ELECTRIC PHOTOGRAPHY.

Well Authenticated Pictures Left on Skin by Human Lightning.

(Special to The Times-Dispatch.)

CHASE CITY, VA., August 13.—Having noticed in The Times-Dispatch and other papers accounts of what seems to be a miracle occurring in Morristown, N. J., recently, of a man struck by lightning, after which it was discovered that there was a reproduction on his back of the crucifixion, and that the devout made pilgrimages to see Christ's image on the back of the youth.

There is noting new about "lightning photography," and numerous cases quite as remarkable as this have been reported before, and the phenomenon is not at all perplexing.

Colonel Byrd, in his history of the dividing line between Virginia and North Carolina, run about 1730, says: "But of all the effects of lightning that I ever heard of, the most amazing happened in this country in 1730. In the summer of that year a surgeon of a ship, whose name was Davis, came ashore at York to visit a patient. He was no sooner got into the house but it began to rain, with many terrible claps of thunder. When it was almost dark there came a dreadful flash of lightning, which struck the surgeon dead as he was walking about the room, but hurt no other person, though several were near him. At the same time it made a large hole in the trunk of a pine tree which grew about ten feet from the window. But what was most surprising in this disaster was that on the breast of the unfortunate man killed was the figure of a pine tree, as exactly delineated as any limner in the world could draw it; nay, the resemblance went so far as to represent the color of the pine, as well as the figure. The lightning must probably have passed through the tree first before it struck the man, and by that means have printed the icon of it on his breast."

Modern electrical experts say that an image may be impressed not only at the time of the stroke, but even some time afterwards. It was still daylight when the unconscious young man was removed to "All Souls' Hospital," and as his back was exposed in a light room, it is very likely that the flesh was still sensitive to the extent that it could receive the impression of a crucifix from either a cross around a nurse's neck or a painting or carving on a nearby wall. As it was a Catholic hospital it is presumable that crucifixes were abundant, and that the image on the back is a reproduction of one of them.

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