

## CHAPTER V.

### Incidents in President McKinley's Career—Gallant Exploits on the Field of Battle—Daring Feat at Antietam—Always True to His Pledge.

THE boy, who afterward became President, was originally intended for the ministry, and it was said that his mother confidently looked forward to his becoming a bishop. Probably he would have realized her ambition had not fate willed that he should become a lawyer. He received his first education at the public schools of Niles. When he was nine years old the family removed to Poland, Ohio, a place noted in the State for its educational advantages.

Here William was placed in Union Seminary, where he pursued his studies until he was seventeen, when he entered the junior class, and could easily have graduated the next year, but that unremitting application to study undermined his health, and he was forced to return home. At these institutions he had been especially proficient in mathematics and the languages, and was acknowledged to be the best debater in the literary societies. He had early manifested strong religious traits, had joined the Methodist Church at the age of sixteen and had been notably diligent in Scriptural study.

As soon as he sufficiently recovered his health he became a teacher in the public schools in the Kerr district, near Poland. At the outbreak of the Civil War he was a clerk in the Poland post office. At a war meeting convened in the Sparrow tavern he was one of a number of boys who was so fired by the patriotic enthusiasm of the occasion that they promptly stepped forward and enrolled their names as intended volunteers in the Union army.

Proceeding with them to Columbus, William McKinley enlisted as a private in Company E, of the Twenty-third Ohio

Volunteer Infantry, June 11, 1861. This company was destined to become one of the most famous in the war. Its field and staff included William S. Rosecrans, Rutherford B. Hayes, Stanley Matthews and others who afterward achieved eminence in military or civil life. It was engaged in nineteen battles and of its total rank and file of 2,095 men, 169 were killed in battle and 107 died of wounds or disease. Despite the hardships, privations and perils to which he was exposed, his constitution gained in health and strength during his four years' service. He participated in all the early engagements in West Virginia.

His first promotion, to commissary sergeant, occurred April 15, 1862. As Rutherford B. Hayes afterward said: "We soon found that in business and executive ability he was of rare capacity, of unusual and unsurpassing capacity, for a boy of his age. When battles were fought, or a service was to be performed in warlike things, he always took his place. When I became commander of the regiment, he soon came to be on my staff, and he remained on my staff for one or two years, so that I did, literally and in fact, know him like a book and love him like a brother."

#### HOT WORK AT ANTIETAM.

The company was with McClellan when they drove the enemy out of Frederick, Md., and, on September 14th and 17th, engaged them at South Mountain and at Antietam. In the latter battle Sergeant McKinley, in charge of the commissary department of his brigade, performed a notable deed of daring at the crisis of the battle, when it was uncertain which way victory would turn. McKinley fitted two wagons with necessary supplies and drove them through a storm of shells and bullets to the assistance of his hungry and thirsty fellow soldiers. The mules of one wagon were disabled, but McKinley drove the other safely through and was received with hearty cheers. "From Sergeant McKinley's hand," said President Hayes, "every man in the regiment was served with hot coffee and warm meats, a thing which had never occurred under similar circumstances in any other army in the world."

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For this feat he was promoted to lieutenant, September 24, 1862.

A greater exploit was that which he performed at the battle of Kernstown, near Winchester, July 24, 1864, when he rode his horse, on a forlorn hope, through a fierce Confederate fire, to carry Hayes' orders to Colonel William Brown, and thus extricated that officer's command, the Thirteenth West Virginia, from a perilous position.

On July 25th following he was promoted to be captain, and on March 14, 1865, received from the President a document which he valued above all the other papers in his possession. This was a commission as major by brevet in the Volunteer United States Army "for gallant and meritorious services at the battles of Opequan, Cedar Creek and Fisher's Hill," signed "A. Lincoln." This was just a month before the assassination of the latter. On June 26, 1865, he was mustered out with his regiment, and returned to Poland, with the record of having been present and active in every engagement in which his regiment had participated, and in performing with valor and judgment every duty assigned to him.

#### ADMITTED TO THE BAR.

He at once began the study of the law, first in the office of Glidden & Wilson, at Youngstown, Ohio, and afterward at the Law School in Albany, N. Y. In March, 1867, he was admitted to the bar at Warren, Ohio. He settled at Canton, which ever afterward was his home, and soon attracted attention as a lawyer of diligence, sobriety and eloquence. Though the county was strongly Democratic, and he was an uncompromising Republican, he was elected one term as prosecuting attorney. He threw himself into every political campaign with all the energy of his nature, and his services were so highly valued that he spoke more frequently in his county and district than even the principal candidates on the ticket. When Rutherford B. Hayes ran for the Governorship of Ohio, against the Greenback candidate, Allen, McKinley was an eloquent and passionate advocate of honest money and resumption.

Meanwhile, in 1871, he had married Miss Ida Saxton, a leading belle of Poland, Ohio. It was a love match in its inception; it remained a tender and beautiful idyl to the very end. Indeed, no public man was ever a nobler exponent of all the domestic virtues than McKinley. His mother worshipped him, his wife adored him.

It was in 1876 that he announced himself a candidate for Congress. The sitting Representative, L. D. Woodworth, with Judge Frease, and other prominent Republicans, three of them from his own county, were his opponents for the nomination.

The Stark County delegates to the Congressional Convention were elected by a popular vote. McKinley carried every township in the county but one, and that had but a single delegate. In the other counties he was almost equally successful, and the primaries gave him a majority of the delegates in the district. He was nominated on the first ballot over all the other candidates.

#### OLD POLITICIANS ASTONISHED.

This sudden rise into prominence and popularity naturally gave the old politicians a shock. Here was a new and unknown factor in the politics of the district. He had been accorded an opportunity which to them had seemed hopeless, had accepted and won recognition. It was soon discovered that he had not only come into the politics of the district, but that he had come to stay. For fourteen years after this event he represented the district of which Stark county was a part; not the same district, for the Democrats did not relish the prominent part he was playing in Congress, and gerrymandered him three times, the last time (in 1890) successfully.

The first attempt to change his district was made as early as 1878 by the Democrats, who, by gerrymandering the county, put him into a district that had 1,800 Democratic majority. McKinley carried it by 1,300 votes. In 1882 he had another narrow escape. It will be recalled that 1882 was a bad year for Republicans. The New York State Convention resented President Arthur using

his influence to nominate his Secretary of the Treasury, Judge Folger, for the Governorship of that State. The party was also torn up in Pennsylvania. Grover Cleveland was elected Governor over Judge Folger by a tremendous majority, and General Beaver was defeated in Pennsylvania by a then comparatively unknown man, Governor Pattison. That year McKinley's original district had been restored, and he was seeking a "third term," something not accorded its Representatives. He had strong opposition for the nomination, some of it rankling until the election, and that, with the popular discontent temporarily prevailing, brought his majority down to eight votes.

Mr. McKinley's congressional career was marked by industry and executive ability. He early showed that he was a pronounced protectionist of an extreme sort. In the theories of Alexander Hamilton and Henry Clay, which to those statesmen seemed fitted only to temporary conditions, Mr. McKinley in those days seemed to read a permanent policy in which American prosperity was indissolubly involved.

#### UNDERSTOOD THE SUBJECT.

He had faithfully pursued a course of study in political economy which had stored his retentive memory with facts and figures bearing upon the protectionist side of the question. These bare bones he re clothed with palpitating flesh, in a spirit of truly altruistic and partistic pride, and in the firm belief that he was benefitting alike his fellow citizens and their common country. His utter sincerity, the charm and dignity of his manner, the apparent logical weight of his arguments and the simplicity with which they were worded captured his audiences not only on the stump, but in Congress.

His unflinching courtesy won him friends even among those whom he could not convert. A signal instance happened on May 18, 1888, when he yielded his place on the floor of the House to allow the moribund Samuel J. Randall to conclude a speech interrupted by the call of time.

When, as a member of the Republican National Presidential

Convention of 1884, he was placed on the Committee of Platform, it was he that was selected to draft the tariff planks. He went to the Convention as a Blaine man. Foraker fought desperately for Sherman. After the third ballot had been taken, and the hall was in confusion, with the Sherman forces clamoring for adjournment, McKinley arose, and in a short speech rallied the Blaine men, beat the effort to suspend and so helped materially in the selecting of his candidate on the next ballot.

He emerged from this convention with a national reputation. In the convention four years later he was a marked man. He was now pledged to Sherman. But, as in 1884, it soon developed that the nomination for Sherman was impossible. A compromise candidate seemed inevitable.

#### LOUD CHEERS FOR M'KINLEY.

There were whispers of disloyalty even in the Ohio delegation. Rumor was busy with McKinley's name. The night before the balloting began he made the round of States' headquarters and earnestly pleaded, even with tears in his eyes, that none of the delegates should vote for him. Next day, on the sixth ballot, a Cincinnati delegate disregarded this plea. He cast his vote for McKinley. There were resounding cheers throughout the hall. The next State on the roll cast sixteen votes for McKinley. The cheers were renewed with greater volume. It looked as if the scene of Garfield's nomination in 1880 were to be repeated, and that the convention would be stampeded for McKinley. Instantly Mr. McKinley leaped to his feet. He made an impassioned appeal. He reminded the convention that he was pledged to John Sherman.

"I do not request, I demand," he concluded, "that no delegate who would not cast reflection upon me shall cast a ballot for me."

He was too evidently in earnest not to be accepted at his word. That speech turned the tide to Harrison, who was selected on the seventh ballot.

Some one told him afterward that he had done as noble a thing as ever had been known in politics.

"Is it, then, so honorable," was Mr. McKinley's comment, "to refrain from a dishonorable deed?"

At the organization of the Fifty-first Congress Mr. McKinley was a candidate for Speaker, but, though strongly supported, he was defeated in caucus by Thomas B. Reed. Appointed Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, he became the leader of the House under circumstances of peculiar difficulty, for his party had only a nominal majority, and the opposition assumed a policy of obstruction. It was during this Congress that he made his most notable speeches on the tariff question, and, on April 16, 1890, he introduced the general tariff measure which has since borne his name. The bill passed the House, and after protracted and stormy debates and repeated amendments was signed by the President, October 6, 1890.

#### CRY FOR TARIFF REFORM.

This was just before the general elections, when the Republicans were defeated, as had been generally expected. The McKinley bill, which had proved unpopular with the country at large, was held to be one of the elements of the Republican defeat. Cleveland's announced policy of tariff reform had chimed in with the popular mood. Mr. McKinley's own district, which had been fiercely contested, was carried against him. Thereupon a popular movement arose in Ohio for his nomination as Governor. It gathered such strength that the Republican convention in June of the next year nominated him by acclamation. He was elected and, in 1893, was re-elected.

Even before the National Convention of 1892 McKinley had expressed himself in favor of the renomination of President Harrison. He went there a Harrison delegate. Again he was elected chairman and again an attempt was made to nominate him over Harrison and Blaine. He pursued the same course as in the prior convention. By a masterful speech from the platform he arrested the movement in his favor and turned the tide toward the man to whom he was pledged. In the campaign which followed he was one of the most unwearied and effective of the orators who stumped the country for Harrison.

It was no fault of his that the fight was lost, save that the unpopularity of the "McKinley bill" was one of the factors which made for defeat.

In the State elections of 1894 he made a remarkable record as a campaign speaker. He not only stumped his own State, but made a tour through the West, and in a series of speeches through Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan was greeted by enormous crowds. He began his speeches at dawn, and often spoke a dozen times a day from the car of his special train, from the adjacent platforms, or in the largest halls in the chief cities along his route. On undertaking the journey he had agreed to make forty-six speeches. He made, in fact, 371 speeches in 300 towns. It was estimated that he had travelled over sixteen thousand miles and addressed over two million persons. At every point visited his party achieved enormous success at the ensuing elections, the popular branch of Congress, largely through his impetus, being carried by more than two-thirds majority.

#### THOUGHT OF THE COUNTRY FIXED ON HIM.

On the expiration of his term as Governor he retired to his home at Canton. He was universally looked upon as the Republican banner bearer in the next Presidential campaign. As the time drew nigh for the convention to meet, State after State and district after district declared for him. The Democratic party had been torn by the rise of the free silver heresy, which demanded the free coinage of silver at 16 to 1 as the necessary condition to the return of financial prosperity in the country.

The Republican party was to a much lesser degree affected by it. Nevertheless, Mr. McKinley chose to observe the policy of silence. Though frequently importuned for his views on the silver question, it was not until the Republican National Convention, on June 18, 1896, had, on the first ballot, nominated him for the Presidency, on a gold platform, that he openly avowed himself the leader of the sound money forces.

On July 10 following the threatened split in the Democratic

party was precipitated by the nomination at the Democratic National Convention, held at Chicago, of William J. Bryan, on a platform advocating the free coinage of silver. A large number of the most prominent Democrats in the country, and especially in the Eastern States, supported by a number of the most influential Democratic papers and voters, all of whom were in favor of the gold standard, refused to accept the nomination of Bryan. A majority went over to McKinley, but an influential minority gathered together under the name of the National Democratic Party, held a convention at Indianapolis on September 2 and 3, and nominated as their standard bearers General John M. Palmer, of Illinois, and Simon B. Buckner, of Kentucky.

It was generally understood that this convention and nomination were simply to enable the anti-silver Democrats who were opposed to the Chicago platform, and nevertheless could not make up their minds to vote for a Republican President, the chance to express their disapproval at the polls. The movement undoubtedly was of assistance to McKinley.

#### A CAMPAIGN FIERCELY FOUGHT,

The McKinley-Bryan campaign of 1896 was one of the most fiercely contested in the history of the Presidential elections. It was fought on the battleground of principle. There was none of the "mud throwing" which tarnished the record of other furious party engagements. Both candidates were acknowledged to be of unsullied personal character.

The silver question was practically the only issue before the country, but the interests it involved were so tremendous, the revolution it caused in political demarcations so unusual, that the emotions and passions of the voters were stirred to fever heat. The result proved overwhelmingly in favor of McKinley. He was elected to the Presidency by an electoral majority of 95 votes and a popular plurality of 601,854.

It was Mr. McKinley's good or bad fortune to assume the helm of government at a momentous, and what seemed like a perilous crisis in the national life; it was his good fortune to

guide the Ship of State to a peaceful haven. It is too early now, it must be left to the historian of the future, to decide accurately how far the triumph was due to the sagacity of the helmsman, how far to the enormous advantages which were inherent in the vessel he managed.

Two things are certain. First, the result of the war with Spain startled all civilized nations and announced that here in the Western hemisphere had arisen a new power with whom those nations must reckon in future. Second, the conduct of Mr. McKinley before, during and after the war, and the policies he had inaugurated toward our new possessions met with the approval of a large majority of his fellow citizens.

#### TRIBUTE FROM AMBASSADOR YOUNG.

When William McKinley was first named for the Presidency by the Republican National Convention in St. Louis on June 18, 1896, he was at his home in Canton, Ohio. With him was John Russell Young, our late Ambassador to China, who wrote the following story of the man who was destined to become one of the country's martyrs, and of his home life:

"It has been my privilege to take part in a ceremony that should live in history with the recent coronation of the Czar, of which so much has been written with brilliancy and color. In Moscow all the nations participated in the tendering of the crown to the monarch of an empire; the pageant is known to you all. In Canton I have this afternoon witnessed the tender of a crown even more lustrous than that of the Czar, involving, as seems to be the will of Providence, the President of the United States.

"The sun rested heavily on Canton all day. The town was in an uneasy, restless condition. The one thought was McKinley. The Major, from being an established and prosperous industry, had become a mania. The people walked about in a state of repression. There was no politics in their concern, for at Canton McKinley is not a political issue. A bright-eyed newsdealer develops a stately esteem for the Major, whose nomination among so many other things would be such a blessing to the town.

"It must be a trial to have the eyes of the world turned upon you, and this, to modest Canton, resting here upon the smiling, sheltered plains, with her all too marvelous industries and such an amount of as yet unexplained progress over which to rejoice, to suddenly become the centre of the world's eyes is a sore trial. And you went about the wholesome, contented and well shaded town, whose streets would put many an older town to blush, feeling that the air was charged with cyclonic influences and not knowing what the day might bring forth. The Major was in his pretty little home, twirling his eye-glasses and receiving friends with exquisite courtesy. Not a taciturn, but assuredly not a talkative man.

"The only change in him that I could note upon this day of his destiny was that he seemed a little better dressed than usual, a kind of wedding-day touch in his raiment. A soft breeze swept around the piazza and the sun kept watch and ward; now and then a fervent Cantonese would stop and pause and look at his home in wonder. Occasionally one more daring would approach the piazza to say that he was on the road; that he had come from Akron, Alliance or Cleveland, and that the boys were only able by medical advice to hold themselves in, but as soon as the news came Ohio would glow with carmine and fire.

#### THE OLD COMRADE.

"Now and then a veteran would hobble up, and if a little hazy in speech and gait, what matter? He only wanted to explain that he belonged to such a regiment, and if he did not have a bullet he had a ballot and would send it home as in the old days. This is the home to which the Governor brought his bride. Here his children came to him, and from here God took them away, for he is a childless man. Therefore it is a home with sacred memories.

"One could not but recall the Moscow coronation as he stepped into the modest library. You notice that perhaps the roller desk is closed. In one corner is a long-distance telephone. A bright-eyed youth, with a flush of auburn hair, whom every one calls 'Sam,' has the telephone in charge. The person at the

other end of the wire is apparently a cousin, as Sam's outside communications have a domestic bearing. It is the room of the busy man with many books—the kind of books, as you note by their character, which a busy man cares to have near him; the library of the student who means to know what he must know in five minutes.

"It is a small company, mainly old friends, classmates, fellow soldiers, in a state of tremor and anxiety as they come to witness this crowning honor to a comrade. Just across the hall several ladies have assembled, and you hear the soft echoes of merry talk. Mrs. McKinley has a few friends to share with her the emotions and joys of the day. About one, the venerable mother arrived, just in time for the luncheon, and as she pauses to greet friends you note the radiant, soft, almost triumphant smile which shows the compensation and peace that rests upon her soul.

#### CALMLY AWAITING THE NEWS.

"The cynosure of seventy millions of Americans sits in an easy chair, holding his eyeglasses, apparently the most unconcerned person in the room. The piazza is crowded with the neighbors and newspaper gentlemen. The convention is on and messages come to him over the telegraph and the telephone. 'Sam,' at his telephone, is anxious that the telegraph shall not beat him, and is pleased when the secretary reads from the yellow slip what he had announced a minute before. The news reports are brought in on typewritten sheets and read aloud. Occasionally there comes a private telegram, which the Major puts on a file and goes on twirling his glasses.

"Apart from the wedding-day look of his clothes and just a little closer compression of his lips and a touch of pallor on the forehead, the Major shows no care. He looks after his guests, quick to every suggestion of hospitality. You must have a chair, or, if you care to follow the ballots, he will hand you a form, or perhaps a glass of water would be refreshing—a quick, observant eye as to the details of hospitality.

"There are pauses, not much talk, rather the eyeglass twirl,

bits of innocent, but especially valuable, conversation thrown in now and then, but rather a tendency to silence, all thoughts bent on St. Louis and every ear listening to the telegraph tick.

"The news came minute by minute. Every stage of the St. Louis pageant was made clear. We heard the fight over the platform, retirement of the silver men, and finally the order to call the roll of the States. We hear of the speeches. Lodge is now on his feet. Depew has taken the floor for Morton. He has called the receding silver delegates erring sisters, at which there is a smile over the room. Allison has been presented, and then Foraker comes, bringing with him the McKinley crash. Some of us walked over to the telephone and heard the roar of the multitude hundreds of miles away, the noise, the shouting, the music and the singing of the songs.

#### PROLONGED ENTHUSIASM.

"Sam', at the telephone was rather impatient over this enthusiasm—his one affair that the convention should nominate McKinley. The tedium was broken by ripples of talk, remembrances of famous scenes in other conventions, when Lincoln defeated Seward, the tremendous struggle between Blaine and Grant and the similar incidents in Minneapolis. It was remembered that the usual duration of these convention blizzards was about half an hour, and watches were taken out to note how long the hurly-burly would last.

"There is an end to everything, even a convention blizzard, and in time we heard, with a sigh of relief, that the storm had gone down, and that the States were to be called.

"There were pauses when some of the votes were challenged, but little conversation. I asked the Governor during the pause when New York was being called whether votes thus far had reached his estimate. 'Rather exceeds it,' he answered, when one of the company who had been keeping the tally ventured the prediction that when the votes of Ohio were reached there would be votes sufficient to nominate the Governor. Another dwelt upon the poetic fitness of the nomination being made by McKinley's

own State. There were observations arising out of the incident, but the Governor said nothing, looking over the list and awaiting the announcement that the ballot was proceeding. Finally Ohio cast her forty-six votes, Pennsylvania following, and it was done.

"There was just a faint touch of color on the face of McKinley as some friends spoke a word of congratulation to him on this the moment of his career. He talked of some personal matters of minor import; showed no emotion and expressed no feeling, but when Pennsylvania was passed calmly took up his convention form and continued to note the vote.

"But in the meantime the gun was fired, the bells were rung and Canton knew that the bolt had at last come out of the heavens, and all of the town turned out. So I came from the Governor's house. The streets swarmed with people—men, women, children, all rushing in a double-quick to the McKinley home, everybody smiling and many cheering. The crowd was so large that it was necessary to walk in the street.

#### FLAGS, DRUMS AND LOUD CHEERS.

"Steam whistles were blowing, the houses blossomed with flags, drums were beating, every breast bloomed with a McKinley favor, the stores were closed, clubs began to march, the members shouting and crying 'McKinley comes.' It is a beautiful summer night as I write, and the town is in revelry, cannon firing, fireworks, horns blowing, the air filled with smoke and noise. Canton will long remember this day. St. Louis has crowned her eminent citizen a czar, and enthusiasm in every form, questionable or otherwise, rules the hour."

In commenting on the death of the President, a prominent newspaper supplies us with the following very appreciative estimate of his character:

"Life's work well done;  
Life's race well run;  
Life's crown well won;  
Now comes rest.

"Both the expected and the unexpected have happened. The