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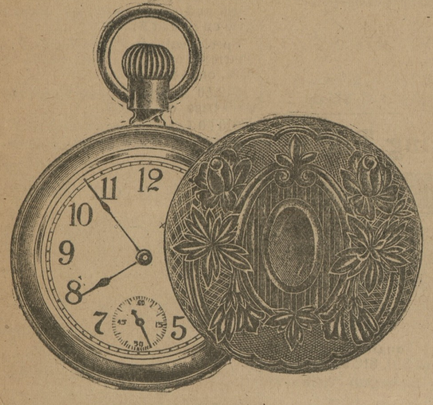
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THE NINTH DECADE OF A WANDERING BOY

(Written especially for the KENT NEWS.)

It had become time that we settle our election contest. The committee on elections had held several meetings. The sub-committee had made their report and count of the votes in St. Mary's county. Dr. Lynch claimed that he was elected over Asa Lawrence, according to the report of the sub-committee We found that Capt. Lawrence was elected by seven votes. Dr. Lynch insisted that he should have a hearing before the committee, and then afterwards the committee met down in the old canal office, and Capt. Lawrence had as his counsel Peran Crane, and I suppose most of our old people know who Paran Crane was. He had been in the Confederate army and came back to his native county and found that the Republican party was in the ascendency and soon allied with them. Mr. Lynch had for his counsel Asquith, a prominent attorney from Annapolis.

We had the evidence before the committee and the arguments to argue the case. Attorney Crane commenced his argument in favor of Capt. Lawrence. Dr. Crane, who was under the influence of "kill-me-quick," jumped up and called Crane a d— liar; he also had a pistol, and as we all knew what a desperate man Lynch was under the influence of "kill-me-quick," we disappeared. I don't remember that we ever had another meeting, and Lawrence was seated with a majority of seven.

Now the next contest of election was from Calvert county. Joseph Wilson, a very prominent lawyer of Calvert county, claimed that he was elected over Kalthenial Duke, a Republican. The sub-committee had counted the votes and their conclusion was that Wilson was elected, but it seemed that a majority of the committee was not in favor of seating Wilson. We had two reports—a majority and a minority report. So the latter part of March, as we could get no meeting of the committee, we decided the seat was vacant. Poor old Mr. Dukes had been there all winter, and there is no doubt that he lessened somewhat the supply of "kill-me-quick." So we sent the old man home, I think, four or five days before we adjourned. So Joseph Wilson was the candidate for the election the next year. He was one of the best and ablest men of Calvert county, and he was elected by a great majority.

Now, I must say something about Capt. Lawrence. He is the only member of that Senate (with me) living. Lawrence was brought here by General Birney to establish a Freedman's Bureau in the southern counties of Maryland.

Now I must say something about the President of our Senate. He was a very large man, weighing over 250 lbs. Now comes a red letter day for our President, a terrible day, snowing and blowing. The Senator from Anne Aundel county had appealed against the decision of the President. This was something very rare indeed, so that the ayes and nays were called, and our worthy President got every vote except one. That day we were to take dinner with the Governor, so we adjourned a little early. The President could not find his hat, somebody had taken it out of his room. He therefore sent his private secretary, who was Oliver Wood, whom some of our old citizens may remember, to his room for another hat, and Wood brought him back an old straw hat. This made the President very indignant, and he discharged him at once. Then in the storm we went to the hotel to get dinner, and in the afternoon went to take dinner with the Governor. Our President seemed to have indulged in too much champagne. The storm still was raging, and finally it came time for us to go back to the hotel. It fell to my lot that I should go with the President to the hatel. We didn't get far before the raging blizzard blew off the President's hat, and I went after it; he also lost his wig. I hunted and found them, shook the snow out of the wig and put it back on his head and carried him safely back to the hotel.

Capt. Ford and I now had a great many petitions that the question should be referred to the people whether "kill-me-quick" could be sold in our county or not, and to give the people a right to vote upon the queston, of course the "kill-me-quick" in Baltimore city and every county in the state would send out their lickers There was a young man living in Chestertown, keeping a clothing store in the Kent House. A young and good looking fellow whom I knew very well, finally left our town after doing good business here and went to that town on the Susquehanna River opposite Spesutia Island and went into the "kill-me-quick" business, the people from that place sent him down to talk with me in regard to the petition I had from my county. He came down to see me and I said "who are you?" "I am Benn Strouse, who use to sell you clothing." I said to him, "Have you got the dropsy." He said, "No." I asked him "what business are you doing?" He said, "I keep a saloon." He weighed about 125 pounds when he left here, now he weighs over 250 pounds. He said to me, "dont let those people have Local Option in Kent Co., if you attempt such a thing it will ruin you politically. And I said, "if the people want such a thing, I shall attempt it." I can almost see that fellow now as I am going over this piece in his deplored condition. I bid him good-bye, and before the next session of the Legislature he was gone. He had a friend who would come to our town, he also went to that town on the Susquehanna River and made a considerable amount of money and within the last three years, I think he committed suicide. "Kill me-quick" and a race track makes a notorious town, and I often feel sorry for one of my best friends and I have hoped for the time to come when I could vote for him for governor, but it looks to me this way, that he and I have seen our way and should be satisfied and be ready when we shall be called from hence.

Now, Capt. Ford and I had always been acting as regulars. They had just an even constitutional majority, so we served notice on the regulars that if we could not do what our constituents wanted us to do we thought we had better go away. So they agreed—that is, the leaders of the party agreed—that we would have a meeting and talk over whether we should pass our local option bill of 1876.

Now the understanding was that we would have a State bill that would satisfy our people. It was so published in the papers, and the "kill-me-quick" fellows came from all over the State to oppose it. We wanted to see what would happen. We found that we could not get a constitutional majority. I think there were two hotel men in the Senate and they had some influence, and most of the young men were afraid to offend the "kill-me-quick" people.

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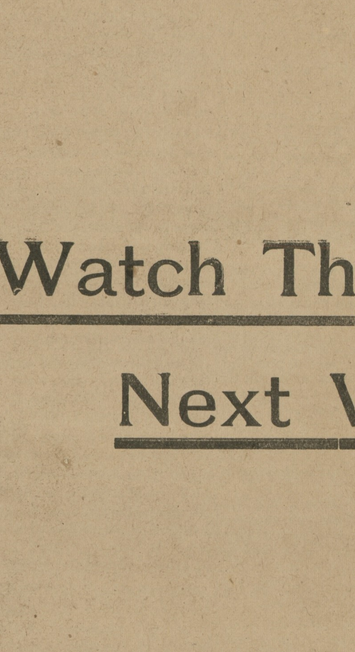
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