

BERRY R. SULGROVE, JOURNALIST.

[These sketches from the *Journal and News*, of Indianapolis, were published at the time of Mr. Sulgrove's death, which occurred February 20, 1890.]

From the Journal.

BERRY R. SULGROVE was born in Indianapolis March 16, 1827, and was the oldest child of James and Katherine Sulgrove. His first schooling was at the age of five years, Miss Clarissa Ellick, who taught in the old Baptist Church at the corner of Meridian and Maryland streets, being his teacher. He received the rudiments of his education in the different private schools of the city, there being at that time no public schools here. In 1839 he entered the old County Seminary, on University Square, which was conducted by James S. Kemper, and continued his studies there five years. He then entered his father's harness and saddlery shop, and learned that trade. This was in 1844, when Henry Clay and James K. Polk were opposing candidates for the presidency. In 1847 Mr. Sulgrove entered Bethany College, West Virginia, then under the presidency of Alexander Campbell. His principal collegiate course covered branches which he had studied at the old seminary, and he was enabled to graduate in one year, notwithstanding the fact that three months of that period were devoted to teaching. There were five departments in the college, and he secured first and second honor in each. He was "first honor man" of the college, taking those of all departments—the first time such a circumstance had ever happened in that institution. He made his graduating speech in Greek.

In 1848, returning to his home in this city, he began the study of law, with the late Oliver H. Smith and Simon Yandes. After three years he formed a partnership with John Caven, afterwards mayor of the city, and they practised together until the winter of 1854-'5. He then, with the late John D. Defrees, took editorial charge of *The Indianapolis Journal*. He had previously written much for the press, having contributed considerable matter over the *nom de plume* of "Timothy Tugmutton" to vari-

ous publications. In 1850 he wrote sketches of the constitutional convention for *The Locomotive*, then published in this city. He next contributed to *The Hoosier City*, a small paper published by young men then connected with the *Journal*, and also wrote considerable matter for the columns of the last-named paper. This preceded the time of his regular connection with the paper.

When Mr. Sulgrove first became connected with the *Journal* he did work now divided into a number of departments—writing leaders, general news items, local matter, convention and meeting reports, as well as copying telegraph news after the old style. He inaugurated the system of covering the night's news for the paper of the following morning, and introduced the first verbatim reports ever used by the local papers. At this time he frequently worked nineteen out of twenty-four hours. In 1856 he bought sufficient stock in the paper to give him a majority of the shares. He sold out in 1863, intending to go to Europe, but was prevented and continued as editor of the *Journal*. In 1864 he accompanied Morton and McDonald through the State in their joint canvass for Governor, reporting the discussions for the *Journal*. He served later as Governor Morton's private secretary. In 1866 he returned to the editorial charge of the *Journal*, in which he continued for several years afterward, and with intervals he had been connected with the paper nearly twenty-five years. He took service with the *News* when that paper was established, and continued with it until ill-health precluded his doing further literary work.

Mr. Sulgrove was one of the most remarkable men this city and State have ever known. As an editorial writer during the war he wielded an influence in the West that was second to none, and he was from first to last the mainstay and adviser of the great War Governor of Indiana. While modestly keeping himself in the background, he was ready with his opinion and counsel when asked, and they were always weighty. He was sometimes likened to Horace Greeley as a journalist, but the comparison hardly did Mr. Sulgrove justice, for, with the brilliancy of Mr. Greeley, he was never eccentric, but always steady and mature, no politician ever being led into blunders by following his counsel or leadership. In his youth he was a Whig, but on the foundation of the Republican party was one of the first to

lift the standard of the new party, and, with his ready pen, gave utterance to the sublime sentiments of freedom.

While in his later years Mr. Sulgrove wrote for several papers, and on a variety of subjects, it was a noticeable fact that he would never write anything he did not thoroughly believe, and especially was he conscientious upon political topics, and never at any time would he write except from a Republican standpoint. As to versatility, he could, at a moment's notice, write upon almost any topic. A publisher once had a cut representing a covey of quails. Mr. Sulgrove was shown the engraving and asked if he could write something to "fit it." He at once sat down and wrote an article upon the quail and its habits, gathered from his own observation, together with a number of anecdotes and incidents of this bird, that would have done credit to the research of a Wilson or an Audubon. As a matter of fact, no naturalist has, in the same number of lines, ever written so entertainingly and, at the same time, so instructively, and the article, or pieces of it, were for years floating about in the various papers and magazines of the land.

From his earliest childhood his powers of observation were wonderfully keen, and continued in full exercise all his life. He was a great walker, a close student of nature, and was always seeing things in the fields and woods. As a boy he was full of life, a rover of the woods and a saunterer by the streams. He and General Lew Wallace were boys together, and it is said that they lay in White river all summer. From the time that he began to go to school, through the old Marion County Seminary and at Bethany College, he was looked upon as an Admirable Crichton, knowing everything, able to do anything. In the early days of Indianapolis he was looked upon as the orator of the town; at the same time he was the head of a company of Thespians of no mean merit, and a little later on was the captain of the Marion fire company, in the days of the old volunteer service.

There seemed no limit to his knowledge, and his acquisitions were in all manner of fields. His memory has for nearly half a century been the talk of the town. It was said that he never forgot anything he had ever seen or heard. He carried tables of election returns about in his head and when called upon could tell how any county went and frequently could surprise a ques-

tioner by giving the exact vote in some obscure precinct. One of his feats of memory quite surprised Professor Mitchell, the noted astronomer, who delivered a lecture here when this place was young. Mr. Sulgrove was present, heard the lecture and gave the *Journal* a full report of it. He did not have a scrap of paper to take a note, and the figures of the lecture were given with absolute accuracy. This was before the art of stenography had come to the West, but with such a verbatim memory short-hand would appear to be unnecessary.

Mr. Sulgrove went to Europe with Governor Morton in 1866. At Paris, sitting at dinner with a number of distinguished gentlemen who had called upon Governor Morton, a discussion arose about a quotation from Horace. Governor Morton himself was not interested, as he made no pretensions to scholarship of that character, but a couple of British gentlemen were much in earnest about the matter. As the discussion did not seem like coming to an end, Mr. Sulgrove, begging their pardon, asked to set them right. He not only gave the quotation, but quoted a half a page or more of the matter of which it was a part, and the Britons looked upon the quiet gentleman, who had so unexpectedly displayed such scholarship and memory, in wonder. At Rome, where he made a long sojourn, he was known as "the learned American." He appeared to acquire the Italian language in a few weeks, and spoke it readily, even with the rabble of the place, mastering even the *patois* of the fruit-sellers, fishermen and beggars. The sculptor, Rogers, who had lived in Rome twenty years, met Mr. Sulgrove there. Speaking of the wonderful acquirements of the man, he said he found Mr. Sulgrove, who had just arrived, knew a great deal more of Rome, both ancient and modern, than he did.

There was a vein of humor in Mr. Sulgrove's conversation, which at times appeared in his writing. One of the best examples of this, coupled with satire, a weapon he seldom used, was given in an editorial, many years ago, the *Journal*, in which he dissected a then recent speech of Hon. Daniel W. Voorhees. The article bore the heading, "The Oratorical Rooster," and the writer began with narrating that in his youth he was the happy possessor of a most remarkable rooster. This chanticleer was possessed of two legs of unequal length, one being a pre-

ternaturally short leg and the other a supernaturally long leg. "When he stood upon his long leg and scratched with his short leg," the article continued, "he fell short of the object scratched for; when he stood upon his short leg and scratched with his long leg he went beyond the object scratched for." With this beginning, he took up Mr. Voorhees's speech and dissected it, paragraph after paragraph, with running comments, adding here and there, "Here he scratched with his short leg" and "there he scratched with his long leg," making the application in a way that caused the article to go through the party press from one end of the State to the other. Mr. Sulgrove dearly delighted to have a foeman worthy of his steel, and for that reason, in the days when personal journalism was indulged to greater length than now, he was always more than pleased to have a tilt at Mr. Hendricks or Mr. McDonald. Withal, he was so genial and bore so little personal rancor that not the bitterest Democrat held any abiding enmity toward him. He was, despite of his great attainments, perhaps because of them, the most modest of men, firm in his friendship, and of the finest and tenderest sensibility. The death of George C. Harding, ten years ago, struck him with great force. He could not nerve himself to go to the funeral, nor even to come to the office where they had so often met and talked, for many days afterward.

From the News.

Mr. Sulgrove was the first editor to appreciate the value of news. It was the custom when he took charge of the *Journal* to set up all the matter during the day, lock up the forms by 6 o'clock and leave them ready for the pressman to work off the next morning. An event occurring after 4 or 5 o'clock in the afternoon, no matter how important, never was mentioned in the paper until the second day. One night a fire occurred that was large for the town, and Mr. Sulgrove, procuring a printer or two, wrote an account of it, got it into the form, and the readers the next morning were amazed to see the report. This led to other work of the same kind, and from that time on people were not compelled to wait thirty-six hours to hear of important events.

In 1869, when the *News* was started, he became a member of the staff and has served as such ever since. He was also a contributor, more or less regularly, to other papers both here and

elsewhere, and did a great deal of work for individuals, including the writing of much of "Holloway's Indianapolis," and the entire authorship of "The History of Indianapolis and Marion County," published in 1884. On all subjects pertaining to the history, growth and appearance of Indianapolis and vicinity, as well as of the people who made the city, he was a great reservoir of knowledge, and to his pen we owe it that much that would soon be forgotten has been put into permanent form.

RECOLLECTIONS OF D. L. PAINE.

Mr. D. L. Paine, long an associate of Mr. Sulgrove, contributes this sketch:

I have known Berry R. Sulgrove somewhat intimately for thirty years, having been brought into close contact with him as compositor, proof-reader and associate in editorial work a large part of that time. He was a man of great force of character and quaint originality. While not profoundly learned in any direction, his available knowledge of almost everything was wonderful. In mind, as in personal appearance, he was unique. His friends were among all classes. He would chat pleasantly with the ignorant or vicious denizen of hell's half-acre, or discuss the precession of the equinoxes with the learned savant; sing a song to kindred company in a lounging-room, or coddle his dear old violin in his own study. He was the counselor of governors and statesmen, and the friend and associate of vagrants. He could invest a story with absorbing interest simply by his manner of telling it, or dismiss an absurd proposition in too forceful and not always polite words. The boyish, eager look in his roundly opened eyes when a matter of interest came to him, the comic expression which overspread his whole countenance in relating a joke, his quick staccato movements and nervous utterances, will be recalled by those who knew him in his prime. He was careless of personal appearance and brusque in manner, but genial, and even playful, with his intimates. Given to wide and lonely wanderings, he knew every stranded log on the river bank, and every lichen and fern-frond for miles around as familiar acquaintances.

Seated at his desk in his earlier editorial days, his knees wide apart, with his toes touching the floor in the rear of his chair,

displaying the soles of his feet, his shoulders rounded up Atlas-like, looking over his spectacles with his forehead nearly touching the sheet upon which he was tracing microscopic characters, perhaps humming a tune or whistling softly, he presented an appearance quite striking if not grotesque. His handwriting was peculiar. In the old days, when he edited the *Journal*, but two compositors in the office could decipher his chirography, and a list of the laughable blunders they often made hung upon the wall. He was given to outlandish expressions, as for instance, a valueless thing "was not worth the butt-cut of a hog-weed." In his best days his list of correspondents contained many names known to science, politics and society. He traveled for a time in Europe, and his letters, if collected, would make an interesting volume. Taken in every respect, he was the most striking figure in the list of Indiana journalists.

OTHER STORIES.

Mr. Sulgrove was constantly giving away something from his prodigious store of knowledge that was worth knowing. His acquaintances are full of stories illustrating his characteristics. Colonel Holloway, in speaking of him, said that there was nothing he couldn't do. "I can beat you shooting, Berry," he said to him once in New York, as they approached a shooting stand. But Berry hit the bull's eye three times in succession, though he shot with glasses. "Where did you learn to shoot?" the colonel asked. "I picked it up when I was a boy." He had knowledge of music and played the flute and the violin well.

Once the force at the *Journal*, early in the fifties, decided to go fishing on Sunday, and, that there might be no interruption with the program, closed the forms and ran off Monday's paper at 4 o'clock Saturday afternoon. Sulgrove was in a barber-shop getting shaved when the carrier came along crying out the paper and delivering the Monday edition. "See here, Mr. Sulgrove," said some one present, "what kind of a paper is this that purports to give the Monday news in Saturday's edition?" "What's that," exclaimed the editor, and on finding what was being done he ran out into the street with the barber's tools clinging to him, overtook the carrier and compelled him to go back and gather up all the papers distributed. The fishing party was broken up.

It never seemed to be necessary for Mr. Sulgrove to consult authorities. He had everything in his head. Judge Chapman once had the editors arrested for contempt in publishing forbidden evidence in the Clem case. An able lawyer was employed by the Court to defend its course. The lawyer cited the authorities *ad libitum* and was very profound. Late at night Colonel Holloway sent for Mr. Sulgrove, had the lawyer's voluminous address read to him from short-hand notes, and asked for an editorial in refutation. This Sulgrove wrote promptly—nearly two columns—"skinning" the attorney so effectually that he came to the *Journal* next day and admitted that he had been beautifully, thoroughly and legally flayed. The accuracy of his memory has been often tested. When he was in Paris he confounded the sexton of a certain burial place by telling him that a certain noted character was buried next to such and such a tomb. "I read the description years ago," said he, and when the sexton looked, the grave was found.

Said Mr. E. H. Perkins, foreman of the *News* composing room: "Mr. Sulgrove was known by the printers all over the country. He had the reputation of writing almost as bad a hand as Horace Greeley, but this reputation was not due him. On the contrary he wrote the best 'copy' that ever came to me. It had its peculiarities, but these were offset by the absolute accuracy and infinite pains with which it had been prepared. In all my years of acquaintance with his writing I do not remember to have seen one misspelled word. He was thorough. All the printer had to do was to 'follow copy.' It was always properly capitalized, punctuated and paragraphed. He was one of the most agreeable men the printers had to do with. He never became impatient nor quarreled over mistakes. His copy was peculiar, as he wrote a very fine hand and scorned good paper. He would write on backs of envelopes, on election tickets of twenty years standing, on circulars and bits of brown paper. Sometimes he would write across the face of printed matter and this would make the copy hard on the eye for old men, but the younger men never had any trouble in deciphering him, and proof of his matter was generally the cleanest in the office. Of late, he has been writing on slips eight or ten inches long by about one or two wide. He would write a heavy leader on a bit of waste paper and never cause the printer to frown.

"I remember an incident told me by a Mr. P. When Sulgrove was editor of the *Journal* Mr. P. was a frequent but somewhat unsuccessful contributor. One day he went to the editor and remarked, 'Mr. Sulgrove, I have prepared with great care an article that I think will interest everybody, and I hope you will find room for it.'

"'Why, yes; that's all right,' replied Sulgrove, who had a cigar in his mouth. He didn't even look at the article, but crumpling it up, made a torch of it in the gas jet and quietly applied the flame to his cigar. Mr. P. was so annoyed that he said nothing and neither did the editor. 'I never could tell whether it was absent-mindedness or intentional rebuff,' concluded Mr. P., 'but I incline to the belief that it was not intended for an affront.'"

JOHN D. DEFREES.

[Obituary sketch by Berry R. Sulgrove, written at the time of Mr. Defrees's death, October 19, 1892.]

A LIFE falling short a few days of seventy-three years, the allotted span of "three score and ten" spent in the busiest activity, a year or two of restraint by reason of failing powers, eight or nine months of suffering pitiful to think of, and the record of John D. Defrees's life is closed. The outlines which marked it for the world may be briefly told. Born at Sparta, Tennessee, November 8, 1810, he was eight years old when his father moved to Piqua, Ohio. In his fourteenth year he was apprenticed to the printers' trade. After serving his time he studied law in the office of "Tom" Corwin, at Lebanon, Ohio. In 1831 he moved to South Bend, Indiana, where with his younger brother, Joseph H. Defrees, he began the publication of a newspaper. He became prominent in politics as a Whig, and was several times elected to the legislature. In 1844 he sold his South Bend newspaper to Schuyler Colfax, whom he had given a start in life, and moving to this city the next year, bought the *Indiana State Journal*, which he edited until he sold it ten years afterward. Of his connection with the *Atlas* newspaper, which was established with an eye to political rather than pecuniary