

"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

results, with the Central Bank and the stave factory he and his brother Anthony started, now owned by Mr. Carey, and his part in the management of the Peru railroad, as it was then called, little need be said, as they illustrate merely the uncontrollable energy of his nature.

In 1861 he was appointed by President Lincoln government printer. He held the office until Johnson, angered at some criticism of his, removed him. Congress made it a senate office, and he was reappointed in thirty days. He held it until 1869, when his opposition to Grant and enmity to the late Senator Morton afforded them an occasion which they improved by turning him out. At the coming in of President Hayes he was appointed again to the same place, which he held until about last February, declining health compelling his resignation.

This framework of a life seems plain enough, but as every one's skeleton is the same, the difference in appearance being the filling in of the flesh, so in this life there was a side, which those who knew him best saw most of, that made it an inspiration. It was all the difference there is between an existence which floats with the current of affairs and a life driven by the force of an unconquerable will toward the goal of a lofty ambition. He was a natural political student and had the gift of political management, and the associates of his early days speak of his rare sagacity and his untiring energy. He was a general business man for his party here, which, during the whole time of his editorship of the State organ, the *Journal*, was in the minority. He was chairman of the State committee at one time, and always, those who worked with him say, the adviser and general conductor of affairs. He could unite two or three antagonisms into a common purpose, and when there were factional or personal differences Defrees was called in to smooth them out and restore good feeling. He had the keenest sense of humor, which his pluck and ceaseless activity were ever ready to carry into anecdote or practical joke. When the three hundred volunteers went to the Black Hawk war, arriving at the scene of action only to find the war ended, Defrees, then editing his paper at South Bend, saw the comical side of it, and came out with a sketch of what they didn't do, calling them the "Bloody Three Hundred." The fun hit so hard that most of the three hundred were ready for

blood indeed, and they went to the young editor's home and called him out for the purpose of ducking him in a pond. He came, but instead of apologizing, ridiculed and defied them without stint, until in admiration of his pluck, and in shame for a hundred or two against one, they withdrew.

His energy from his earliest days was remarkable. His newspaper at South Bend was the first one in northern Indiana, and at every turn of affairs he was seeking something new, some improvement. "Progress" seemed to be his watchword. He was the first man in Indiana to use steam to drive a printing press; the first to use a caloric engine for the same purpose; the first to see the value of the Bullock printing press and encourage the inventor; the first to use the metallic stitching machine for book-binders; the first to use the Edison electric light.

His faith in progress and human kind, and his restless energy which halted at nothing, permeated and colored his whole life. It supplied for himself the deficiencies of early systematic training. What the experience of the printers' trade and the acquisitions of a young law student might give in the way of knowledge, it may be imagined were of themselves barren enough. But to him these were the keys with which he might unlock learning's storehouse. Books were his delight. He overcame the lack of a classical education by a thorough study of translations, and the lore of Greece and Rome was his familiar acquaintance. He was especially fond of history, and there were few classical works in this line, ancient or modern, which he did not know. He was a deep political student and particularly knew the political history of his own country as few know it. He was an unwearied student and thus as the years went on he became equipped with all the mental outfit of a gentleman. He had a correct literary taste and was as quick to discern genius or special talent here as in other things. He wrote with a perspicuity almost such as Horace Greeley's was, and with a terse Saxon force and direct "drive" at the purpose in hand, rare in these days. Those who were near to him, or came in contact with him in the direction of affairs, he acted upon with the characteristic qualities of his nature. He left his impress. He was an influence, and many there are who can rise up and call

him blessed, in the memory of the chaste and elevating force that influence was.

He was a man of the rarest courage; a courage that seemed to have no weak side, mental, moral or physical. The furthest possible remove from a brawler in his nature, an acquaintance with him never failed to make it plain that he would fight on call. This coupled with the knowledge that he was a "dead shot" with a rifle, perhaps conspired to make a career among the turbulent scenes of politics singularly free from personal disturbances. Of his mental courage, his never failing faith in the power of attainments has already spoken. His moral courage, as is shown forth in a life free of dross as few lives are, was rare indeed. He had the loftiest sense of honor, and the hottest anger and bitterest contempt for a dishonorable, dishonest or mean thing; and condemnation of such leaped to his lips in a moment, for he had all the "quickness" of the nervous temperament. But so patiently did he work for its control, so thoroughly did he conquer himself, that in his later life few knew from the calm exterior the rage that took hold of him at the sight of a wrong or meanness. His integrity was flawless. He had not merely the heart to mean rightly, but the head to do rightly, and in his daily walk and conversation he was truth and honesty incarnate. This is the testimony of those who knew him as he lived among them. The writer knew him in a personal and household way also, and so knowing him he knows of his unvarying sweetness, his cheeriness that brightened intercourse and his encouragement constantly to lofty ideals and noble deeds.

All his life Mr. Defrees had not been a professor of religion, but if religion is a life he was one of its noblest exemplars. Last June he joined the Congregational Church at Washington, and took the sacrament. He was then unable to leave his room. Before and since then he was afflicted in a way that no medical skill could control, and for months he suffered as let us hope few of us may suffer. There was little bitterness of physical agony that he did not endure. His prayer was to die.