During the last quarter of the nineteenth century a number of editors of note lived and worked in our Hoosier state whose names were household words in their own sections while several men were well known throughout the commonwealth. Each one of them came to be so closely identified with the journal over which he presided that mention of one immediately suggested the other. In the capital city, the name of John C. New brought to mind the Indianapolis Journal and Samuel E. Morse the Sentinel. The Fort Wayne Sentinel and E. A. K. Hackett; the Terre Haute Gazette and William C. Ball; the Evansville Courier and John Gilbert Shanklin—in each case the man and his newspaper were in a certain sense synonymous. So, too, in the extreme north end of the state, was John B. Stoll and his South Bend Times. Mr. Stoll outlived all of the others listed. Like them he wielded a great influence for many years and his utterances were greeted with respect far and wide. For some years before he died, he was styled the Nestor of Indiana journalism.

John B. Stoll was born in Wurtemburg, Germany on March 18, 1843. Several months before his birth, his father was drowned in the River Nurg. He left a rich landed estate, but his wife married again and in the course of a few years the estate was squandered by the second husband, leaving the mother and son, then ten years old, in poverty.

The mother had heard that America offered better opportunities than her native land, so she decided to emigrate and, crossing the Atlantic, located in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Two years later she died leaving her son to make his way alone. He worked at anything he could find to do to support himself
and finally secured employment in the office of the Harrisburg Telegraph. There he not only thoroughly mastered the printer's trade but became an omnivorous reader. His education in the schools of Germany was very meager. Besides that, he had to master a new language when he came to this country, which was an additional handicap for him. However, his ambition knew no bounds and he was determined that no obstacle should stand in the way of his advancement. By making use of all of his spare time in study he overcame the disadvantages of his early life and by the time he had reached his majority he was a well educated man.

At an early age he became interested in politics. His study of history and government gave him a keen insight into the questions which were then uppermost in the public mind. He identified himself with the Democratic party and before he was of age sat as a delegate in the convention which nominated Stephen A. Douglas for the presidency. At that time he became an ardent admirer—almost a worshipper—of the "Little Giant" and remained so until the untimely death of his idol.

In 1863 he became the owner of a newspaper, the Middlebury (Pennsylvania) People's Friend. A little later he disposed of that publication and bought the Johnstown Observer. His apprenticeship had brought to him a complete mastery of the mechanical department and his diligent study and wide reading had given him a vast fund of knowledge which equipped him for editorship. In both of those Pennsylvania communities he wielded a wide and steadily growing influence. About the time that he embarked in journalism on his own account, he was united in marriage with Miss Mary F. Snyder, a descendant of Simon Snyder, one of the early governors of the Keystone state. She was a splendid type of genuine womanhood who proved a true helpmeet to her husband for half a century.

Obeying the teachings of his hero, Stephen A. Douglas, at the opening of the Civil War, young Stoll gave himself heart and soul to the Union cause, continuing to do so as long as that struggle lasted. After the war was over, he concluded that better opportunities for advancement in his chosen vocation could be found farther west and he came to Indiana in quest of a location. He selected the thriving town of Ligonier where he established the Ligonier Banner, putting out his first issue on May 3, 1865. The era of so-called reconstruction was one
of bitter political controversies and Stoll became one of the fighting editors of that time. He espoused the cause of President Andrew Johnson in the strenuous conflicts between the Executive and the “Jacobins” in Congress. The latter were led by Thaddeus Stevens, Benj. F. Wade, James Ashley and others. Although published in a country town the Banner was widely read and its vigorous editorials wielded a potent influence throughout northeastern Indiana. Its every issue severely arraigned those individuals who trampled upon the policy that had been formulated by Abraham Lincoln for the restoration of the Southern states to their place in the Union—a policy which Andrew Johnson was faithfully endeavoring to carry out. As Mr. Stoll had in his Johnstown paper vigorously upheld the war for the maintenance of the Union under the Constitution, he now just as vigorously opposed the assaults that were being made upon the Constitution. Could the reader go over the files of the Banner during those memorable years, he would become thoroughly informed concerning the odious carpet-bag era in the South and the nefarious methods which were employed by the majority in Congress to uphold the adventurers from the North who were plundering the southern people.

Stoll’s work on the Banner not only satisfied Democrats but it soon attracted the attention of Republicans, who felt the effects of it. They began to lay plans to tempt the fighting editor to leave his party, join them, and man one of their organs. The late Hiram Iddings of Kendallville, a personal friend, invited Stoll to call at his office in that city on a certain day for an interview. The journalist at that time, held a minor office in the internal revenue department of the government and had occasion to visit Kendallville every week on official business. He timed his visit that particular week so that he would be able to comply with the request of Iddings, having not the least idea of the purport of the interview. When he arrived at the appointed place, Stoll found with Iddings a number of the Republican leaders of Noble county. They proposed to him that he should become editor of the Kendallville Standard, the leading Republican paper of the County, at that time a prosperous publication. They offered to buy the paper and turn it over to him free of cost on his part if he would come to Kendallville and take charge. He replied to them substantially in these words: “Gentlemen, should
the time ever come when I see fit to join the Republican party, I will do so of my own free will and without any financial inducements whatsoever.” He then bowed himself out of the room. The negotiators were fairly stunned by his abrupt refusal, for they seemed to feel that the offer would be one that he could not resist.

A year or so later Stoll was visited in his own office by an emissary of Senator Oliver P. Morton who made him a still more tempting offer. This time the young editor was offered the old Fort Wayne Gazette, again without cost to himself. Besides, the Senator, who was the absolute dictator of the Republican party in Indiana, offered to obtain for him an office, a mere sinecure, which would have paid him a handsome salary. The acceptance of the offer would probably have trebled the income derived from the Ligonier Banner, but again Stoll gave a peremptory refusal. He was told afterwards that his refusal to accept that offer was a great disappointment to Senator Morton, who was not accustomed to have his requests turned down and who was not over scrupulous as to the methods which he employed to accomplish his purposes.

Not only did Mr. Stoll establish a reputation as an able and fearless editor but he also became widely known as a public speaker. In every campaign for many years he spoke in every section of the state. His services on the stump brought him in contact with all of Indiana’s Democratic leaders and he was acknowledged to be the peer of any of them. For years he was on intimate terms with Thomas A. Hendricks, Joseph E. McDonald, Daniel W. Vorhees, David Turpie, William S. Holman, Joseph A. S. Mitchell, and many more of the outstanding Democrats of the state. When momentous questions of party policy were discussed his counsel was frequently sought. In 1872 he was nominated for auditor of state and after a thorough canvass was defeated by 273 votes. That was the year of the Greeley fiasco when many Democrats, disgusted with the endorsement of the Liberal Republican ticket, stayed away from the polls. But two men on the Democratic state ticket were elected that year and their election was due to their personal popularity throughout the state. These two were Thomas A. Hendricks, for many years the idol of the Indiana Democracy, who was chosen governor, and Milton B. Hopkins, one of the leaders in the Disciples’ Church, who was re-elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction.
Defeat did not cool the ardor nor did it diminish in the least the loyalty to the Democratic party or Democratic principles of the militant editor. The off-year campaign found him again on the stump battling as valiantly for the state ticket as he had done when he was a candidate. In the Presidential campaign of 1876, the centennial year, he reached his climax as a campaign speaker. An ardent admirer of Gov. Samuel J. Tilden, in complete sympathy with the party's platform and thoroughly believing in the need of a change from an administration which even many of the Republican leaders acknowledged to be notoriously corrupt, he threw himself into the canvass with all the ardor of a crusader. The writer of this sketch, then a small boy, saw and heard him that year for the first time when he spoke at a night rally in Goshen. Another speaker of the evening was Major C. H. Shriner of Pennsylvania, with whom Stoll had become well acquainted before he left the Keystone state. The speakers were introduced by Llewellyn Wanner, a young lawyer, also a Pennsylvanian who had located in Goshen two years before. Those were the first campaign speeches which the writer ever heard and they made on him a deep impression. On thing in particular is still remembered and that is the striking contrast between the two speakers—Mr. Stoll, slow, careful and deliberate, as if weighing every word that was spoken; Major Shriner, fiery and impetuous, dealing sledge hammer blows right and left. Two years later Stoll was nominated for Congress and ran against the Hon. John H. Baker of Goshen, who was then serving his second term. Although Baker was re-elected, his antagonist gave him a lively race reducing his majority of two years before.

Mr. Stoll, then twenty-six years of age, was the principal mover in establishing the Northern Indiana Editorial Association which was organized in 1869. He was its first president, serving six years. Among those who were active in the organization during its earliest years were A. B. Miller, publisher of the South Bend Tribune; Charles L. Murray and W. A. Beane of the Goshen Democrat; Daniel McDonald of the Plymouth Democrat; Dr. J. H. Rerick of the LaGrange Standard; C. O. Myers of the Kendallville Standard; Reub Williams and A. Hossler of the Warsaw Northern Indianian; C. H. Chase of the Elkhart Review; Englebert Zimmerman of the Valpariso Messenger; and J. P. Prickett of the Albion New Era. Mr.
Stoll was the last survivor of this notable group. In 1881 he helped to organize the Indiana Democratic Editorial Association which still survives and which includes all of the leading Democratic editors of the state. He attended all of its meetings for many years and remained a member until his death.

In 1882 concluding that he would like to engage in the publication of a daily, he sold the Ligonier Banner, which was a weekly, and bought the Elkhart Democrat. This journal he published for something over a year, changing its name to the Monitor. For some reason he was not satisfied in Elkhart, so he sold his paper to W. H. Norton, formerly of the Goshen Democrat. At that time an opening in South Bend presented itself to him. The Times Printing Company had been organized a year before, had taken over the South Bend Herald and changed its name to the Times. The enterprise was about to fail when the Democrats of that city asked Stoll to take over the paper. He bought part of the stock and several of the stockholders presented him with their shares giving him a controlling interest. Eventually he came into full possession. He founded the daily edition but continued to publish also a weekly edition for more than a quarter of a century. The South Bend Times soon became the Democratic organ of the north half of Indiana, while its editorials were quoted not only all over the state but throughout the Middle West. After a long, hard struggle the enterprise became financially profitable.

After Cleveland's first election to the presidency, Stoll became an active aspirant for the office of public printer at Washington, fully expecting to receive the appointment. In fact it is said that the appointment was promised him, but for some reason E. C. Benedict of New York was selected in his stead. His failure to receive this mark of favor was a bitter disappointment to him for a time, and had something to do with his change of attitude toward affairs political. While he continued to give his party active support in every campaign, his editorials became less fiery. Years afterward he told the writer, who was a member of his editorial staff, that this circumstance led him to resolve that never again would he be a candidate for any political office either appointive or elective, but that he would give his undivided interest to the publication of his paper. He added that this change of attitude toward public office proved altogether for the best, as the close attention which he gave to his publishing business brought him
better financial returns than office holding could have done. It also brought contentment instead of anxiety since he could feel that he was under obligations to nobody but could pursue his own course without fear or favor.

That the editor of the *Times* still wielded a potent influence in the Democratic party in Indiana was evidenced by the part he played in shaping the campaign in 1890. After the Republicans nominated Milton Trusler, master of the State Grange, for Secretary of State, the highest office to be voted for that year, Stoll concluded that it would be the part of wisdom for the Democrats to nominate a farmer for that position, provided the right kind of a man could be found among the tillers of the soil. Meeting his old friend Senator Daniel W. Voorhees in Indianapolis shortly after the Republican state convention, he suggested that this would be the wise thing to do. The Senator agreed with him and said that he knew a man who fully measured up to the requirement, mentioning Claude Matthews, a prominent farmer and stock raiser of Vermillion County. Upon returning to South Bend, Mr. Stoll wrote an editorial proposing that Mr. Matthews should head the ticket. The editorial was quoted in many of the Democratic papers of the state, and the suggestion was very favorably received. After giving the matter due consideration, Mr. Matthews consented to let his name go before the convention. Mr. Stoll, Senator Voorhees and a number of other prominent Democrats used their influence in his behalf both before and in the convention and he was easily nominated. He proved to be a strong candidate and at the election in November defeated his farmer rival by a handsome majority.

In 1888 and again in 1892, Mr. Stoll supported Mr. Cleveland for the presidency, but not with the old enthusiasm of 1884. From that time on his support of his party's ticket was more or less perfunctory. Although he had been an advocate of bimetallism for years, for some reason or other he did not take kindly to the free coinage of silver as advocated by William Jennings Bryan, giving only nominal support to Bryan both in 1896 and 1900. He was on the ticket for elector-at-large in the former year. In 1904 he gave hearty support to Judge Alton B. Parker, only to see his party go down in crushing defeat. In 1908 he again supported Bryan, this time with more enthusiasm than in either of the Nebraskan's previous campaigns. This was the last campaign in which he partici-
pated actively, as he sold the Times in 1912. He continued as editor for a year or more, then severed his connection with it entirely.

This, however, did not terminate his work in journalism. Almost to the day of his death he was writing for one paper or another every day. For a year or more he had charge of a magazine called The Editorial, published at South Whitley by Frank B. Mine. Mr. Stoll did some of his best writing for this periodical, besides selecting all of the other matter that went into it. The magazine never paid its publisher financially and after a little less than two years it suspended publication. For the next several years, Stoll furnished a column of editorial comment for the Kendallville News-Sun, under the heading “Observed and Noted”. Still later he prepared a column every day for about two years for the Indianapolis Star under the caption, “From the Watch Tower”. In all of these publications he discussed current issues. Matters political were included but not from a party standpoint. In fact during the last ten years that he owned the South Bend Times, there was little party politics in its editorial columns except during campaigns. He did not take the active part on the stump after 1884 that he had taken in former campaigns. This was due to a large extent to increasing age, since he felt that he could not endure the strain which strenuous activity in campaign work entailed. Besides, age had mellowed him to a considerable degree and he no longer retained the taste for fighting which had earlier influenced him. This almost alienated some of his old political associates who felt that he ought to continue to be the fighting Democrat that he was while editing the Ligonier Banner. It seems to the writer that his critics misinterpreted his attitude and his motives. The change which naturally came with changing circumstances and added years was considered by them as total indifference to his party’s welfare and sometimes almost as party treachery. By them he was looked upon as a sort of Democratic “mugwump.” Naturally this became known among Republicans and they began to entertain hopes that Stoll would eventually come over to them and make the Times a Republican paper. While no offers were made to buy him as in his younger days, one of his personal friends on the other side of the political fence once ventured to ask him what stood in the way of his becoming a Republican. This awakened for the moment at least his old time party loyalty and his
reply was characteristic of the days when he so vigorously fought the battles of the Democratic party. He said there were three momentous acts of the Republican party which he could never forget or condone: the first was the impeachment of Andrew Johnson for trying to carry out the reconstruction policy of Abraham Lincoln; the second was the enfranchise ment of the Negroes at a time when they were not fit for the exercise of political rights; the third was the "stealing" of the presidency from Samuel J. Tilden after he had been fairly elected. These three acts, he declared, would forever preclude him from affiliating with the Republican party. That reply convinced his friends that while he might not be in complete accord with his own party particularly with its leaders, he was as far as ever from being a Republican.

During all of the years that he owned and edited papers, Mr. Stoll was also active outside of his editorial work. His campaign services for many years have been mentioned. In addition he served in various other capacities. For six years he was a member of the school board at Ligonier, and for nine years he later held a similar position in South Bend. In both cities he served faithfully and labored for the best interests of the schools. Having enjoyed little in the way of school privileges when young, he was determined that the youth of a later generation should have the best that could be provided for them. Although almost entirely self-educated, he could meet on a common level the best educators of the land. Besides, he was in demand on many occasions, outside of political meetings, as a public speaker. He appeared frequently before various organizations, his addresses covering a wide range of subjects. For a number of years he was invited to speak at farmers' institutes and, while he had never lived on a farm a day in his life, he had studied farm problems along with other things and was able to deliver addresses that were helpful to the tillers of the soil. His long experience on the stump had trained him to think on his feet and his wide and varied reading together with a retentive memory enabled him to speak on almost any subject at a moment's notice.

Some time in December, 1898, he was invited to deliver an evening lecture at the Elkhart County Farmers' Institute in Goshen, the subject assigned to him being, "Interdependence of City and Country". He accepted the invitation and appeared at the appointed time. Some time before the evening
session, several friends including the writer called on him and the other visiting speakers at the hotel for a little chat. As we were all starting for the opera house, where the Institute was being held, some one of the company asked Stoll what he was going to say. His reply was, "I haven't the slightest idea". Yet, when his time came to speak, he delivered one of the best addresses of the entire Institute. He always spoke slowly and deliberately and was sometimes prolix, but he was an able orator and, when he became well warmed with his subject, eloquent. No matter what was the subject upon which he spoke, his speeches were instructive and interesting and he had no difficulty in holding his audience.

I wish to add here a personal word concerning my relations with John B. Stoll. In 1899 I accepted a position on his editorial staff, which I held for nearly two years. While in this position, I had an opportunity to become well acquainted with him. Going from my father's farm into his office, with no experience in newspaper work except as an occasional contributor to the Farmers' Guide for several years previous to that time, he gave me a training which could scarcely have been obtained anywhere else. He always held before me high ideals of journalism and impressed upon me the desirability of conducting a clean newspaper. My connection with him as associate editor was always pleasant. I should not have left my position but for the fact that what seemed to be an excellent opportunity to engage in the newspaper business on my own account presented itself at Warsaw. When the offer came I conferred with him concerning it. He then told me that, while he disliked to part with my services, when an employee of his had an opportunity to engage in business which promised him an advancement, it had always been his policy to advise him to embrace that opportunity. Our separation was the most cordial and he always took an interest in my welfare both while I was engaged in journalism and after my return to the farm. When I was conducting the LaGrange Democrat-Call, which was the last paper I owned, and he was writing for the Indianapolis Star, he frequently quoted from my paper and commented upon my writings in his column. I could not but feel flattered at this recognition from one who held so high a place in the newspaper world. Although he was many years older than I, so much older and so much more capable that I
always felt myself a boy in his presence, the warmest friendship existed between us from our first acquaintance. I never failed to visit him when I went to South Bend and those visits were most enjoyable to me. I shall never cease to be grateful to him for the splendid training and the helpful advice he gave me when I was associated with him in the office of the South Bend Times. After his death in 1926, tributes to his memory appeared in the press throughout Indiana. All of the editors realized that a giant among them had fallen.

H. S. K. B.