

Picturesque Character Who Will go to the General Assembly

(The following is a reprint from the Albany New Era of September 10, 1915).

No more picturesque character will occupy a seat in the next General Assembly of Kentucky than the representative from the counties of Clinton and Wayne, if the Republicans carry this district as usual and their nominee, as indicated by the returns from last Saturday's primary, is William C. Allen of Clinton County.

Mr. Allen is an old Union soldier, about 70 years of age, a Methodist preacher and is always active in politics, never failing to take a strenuous part for his favorites in all campaigns. He has made a number of races for the office of jailer, which he has held two - terms, and for Representative, the nomination for which he has won for the first time. He is variously known as "Uncle Bill," "Pat," "Preacher Bill," Allen and "Hoss Swappin' Bill" Allen.

"Hoss Swappin' Bill" refers to his horse trading procreatives a trade at which he was quite adept when jockeying was the chief pastime of the court day crowd in the county seat towns of the mountain section.

Mr. Allen grew up a poor boy without any education. He cannot write anything but his name and can only read a very little in the most rudimentary way.. Yet he has been a successful farmer, stock trader, merchant, miller, politician, public official and preacher, and has a good \$10,000 worth of this world's goods to show for his labors.

Uncle Bill's one literacy accomplishment is oratory. He says 'the man with whom he lived as a boy taught him his art. But he does not call it an art. He expresses it after this fashion: "God bless you, I never got to go to school a day in my life; but I can speak - the man that raised me learned me how to speak, thank God."

And speak he will. Everywhere Uncle Bill goes he must speak at all temperance rallies, farmers' clubs and what not. Uncle Bill never can sit still and listen to another speaker without expressing his approval or disapproval. If he approves, he grows so enthusiastic in helping the speaker out as to monopolize attention. If he disapproves, he answers the arguments in whispers directed at his neighbors, but audible to all present. Nearly every public speaker who has visited Albany, the county seat of Clinton, in the past thirty years has had this experience. Uncle Bill's friends know this is simply an uncontrollable impulse with him, but they are wondering how he will manage himself and what his fellow solons will think of him next winter when hot debates are raging in Frankfort.

To back up his oratory, Mr. Allen has a good stock of old-fashioned horse sense and an unflinching memory. I He never forgets anything, although on one occasion some years ago one of his opponents in the legislative race, another Union veteran and rugged mountain orator, referred to Allen's illiteracy, Uncle Bill replied: "Why, I've done forgot more than Old Man - ever knowed ! I can sign my name four different ways -

William Allen, William C. Allen, W.C. Allen and just plain Bill Allen. I'll tell you boys, Old Bill Allen ain't no fool, if some folks do say so.

Uncle Bill's style of oratory is striking and unusual. He is a big, raw boned, square jawed man with beard and a full head of auburn hair, but streaked with gray. He has a world of vitality and a voice of great power and reach. He can cry an auction sale all day or preach half a night and show no signs of growing weary or running down. It used to be said around Albany that when Bill Allen made an impromptu speech to a street crowd, which was about every other day in the more stirring campaigns of the nineties, that everybody in two miles of the town heard him. Uncle Bill monopolizes any street argument in which he engages and nobody else can get in a word edgewise. And nobody ever got a jibe or a yarn on Uncle Bill, but he came back with a hotter one and carried the crowd with him.

The campaign methods of this unlettered preacher - statesman, like his other traits, are necessarily out of the ordinary. He covers his district on horseback, visiting people in their homes and eating with them, praying with them and preaching among them. He holds revival meetings in a number of localities in the course of a campaign, giving more time to preaching than to political speaking, but managing to get to most of his opponents' speakings. He knows nearly every voter in Clinton County and perhaps half of those in Wayne County. He uses very little newspaper space or printed matter and depends on personal contact for making votes.

(Editor's note: Mr. Allen was the grandfather of Mrs. Josephine Allen Thrasher and J. Chydster Smith of Albany. Mr. Allen did win the election and went on as the representative from Clinton and Wayne Counties).