

**John Williams Avirett**



## JOHN WILLIAMS AVIRETT

**A**VIRETT, JOHN WILLIAMS, editor, was born at Goldsborough, Wayne county, North Carolina, July 23, 1863, and has lived in Cumberland, Md., since March 12, 1884. He is the son of James Battle and Mary L. D. (Williams) Avirett, daughter of the late Philip Williams, of Winchester, Virginia, the foremost lawyer of the Valley. His father, a man devoted to the South, is a minister in the Episcopal church, and was chaplain under Stonewall Jackson and General Turner Ashby in the Confederate army, burying Generals Ashby, Richard and Turner and being with Jackson in his last moments. Mr. Avirett traces his ancestry to John Alfred Avirett on his father's side, a Huguenot from Provence, France, who settled on New River, Onslow county, North Carolina. His grandfather Avirett gave all he possessed to the Confederacy, and was one of the most trusted of President Davis' advisers. He died in 1870, in Winchester, Virginia. On his mother's side were Pierre Williams, who sat as judge in the Court of the Queen's Bench, in England; John Dunbar, M.D., of Dumbarton, Scotland, who, coming to America, settled in Baltimore; and his grandfather, Philip Williams, who lived in Winchester, Virginia, was a distinguished lawyer and prominent member of the Episcopal church.

In his boyhood, Mr. Avirett lived in the country, where he took keen interest in horses, guns, and dogs. He did some work on a farm, hauling his products to the Washington market, and in the meanwhile prepared for the navy, working in the Washington yards and the preparatory school at Annapolis, but, on account of imperfect eyesight, was disqualified from pursuing that course of life. The influence of his mother's character for good upon his life was strong. In reading he made a special study of mechanics, and also enjoyed the works of Cooper, Macaulay and Scott. His education was acquired in the Shenandoah Valley academy, at Winchester, Virginia, at the Emerson institute, where he was a schoolmate of the Blaines, Blairs and Lees, in Washington, District of Columbia, and finally at Annapolis, but he gave up his college life for the navy.

He began active life as engineer for Crosby S. Noyes, editor of the Washington "Evening Star," on his farm in Montgomery county. In 1884 Mr. Avirett went to Cumberland as a shipping clerk for the R. D. Johnson Milling Company, which position he held until promoted to the offices of secretary and treasurer of the same company, which he held for many years, resigning to become manager of the Millville Milling Company, of Jefferson county, West Virginia, owned by the late Governor Lowndes. These mills he modernized and made successful. He served on the governor's staff, with the rank of colonel, for many years during the terms of Lloyd, Jackson and Brown.

Mr. Avirett is editor of the "Evening Times," the "Alleghanian," and other papers, which he has owned since 1884. From 1900 to the present time he has been State Game Warden of Maryland, having been reappointed by Governor Warfield for four years, from 1904. He says that, "devoted to mechanics I sought the navy. Failing in that, I responded to a natural desire for influential work, adopted journalism as a profession, and for twenty years have followed it." For sixteen years he has been connected with the National Guard. He was the first newspaper man to reach Johnstown at the time of the Flood, and was involved in the Homestead troubles with Hugh O'Donnel. During the Coxe army episode he shadowed Brown and Coxe from Brownsville, Pennsylvania, to Washington, reporting their movements to the marshal of the District.

Mr. Avirett has endeavored to increase the fish and game supply of the state by coöperating with the United States Fish Commissioner and the Game Protective Associations, and he has established a Maryland Department of Game and Fish Protection, with offices at Cumberland and Baltimore, and an assistant warden, besides having numerous deputies throughout the state. In this work Governors Smith and Warfield have been deeply interested. In accepting his resignation, in April, 1905, which was tendered owing to ill-health, Governor Warfield said; "I regret that your health is such as to prevent you continuing your public duties, and I wish, in accepting your resignation, to assure you of my personal regard and high esteem for you.

"You have placed your branch of the State Government upon a very high plane of efficiency, and the work you have initiated will lead, I am sure to good results."

He is a member of the Elks; the Eagles; the Royal Arcanum; the Heptasophs; the Mystic Chain; and a number of life and accident insurance companies. In politics he is a Democrat and he was a faithful lieutenant of Senator Gorman. In religious faith he is a member of the Protestant Episcopal church. He is greatly interested in the Western Maryland Hospital, which he has done much to establish and maintain. His wife has been vice-president of the hospital for fifteen years. For exercise he turns to hunting, riding, and salt water sports, or work. On October 29, 1890, he was married to Sarah Donnell Roemer, of Wheeling, West Virginia, a gifted musician. They have had three children, two of whom are living, a son and a daughter. Mr. Avirett's advice to young men is: "Take care of your health, and do things promptly. Get in touch with the people, and do all you can to help them. Be true to your friends, grateful for favors, always mindful of the day of small things, and remember that upon concentration depends success."

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