

Yesterday in STAMPS: Who Was Charles Magnus?

by Raymond Marsh

(From STAMPS Magazine, February 12, 1949, with images added)

To the American people in the period from the eighteen twenties to the eighteen eighties, life was just as intense and absorbing as it is to us today. In our day almost at the minute of occurrence, the news is spread by movies, radio, newsreels, pictorial dailies, Sunday supplements and photographs. No commercial devices of this sort assisted the spontaneous spreading of information in the earlier period.

The evolution of illustration in the United States may be summarized by the following:

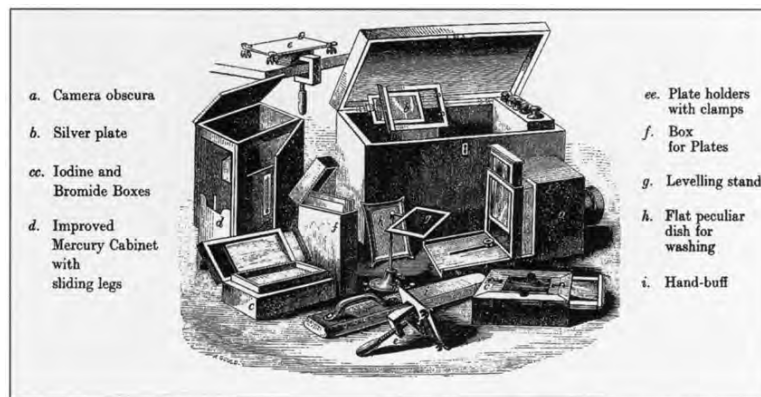
1818-
1819—
Litho-
graphs.
“One
Stone
Impres-
sions.”

1839—
Daguerre's
invention (right) be-
came known.¹

1843—Brady
opened Daguerreotype
Studio (right).

1851—Rosen-
thals began produc-
ing Chromo-Litho-
graphs.

1853—Laing had



1. From <http://www.photohistory-sussex.co.uk/dagprocess.htm>

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in complete operation an exhibit in chromolithography at The Crystal Palace, Industry of All Nations Exhibition, New York City.

1855—Brady turned to photography.

1867—Sarony opened his photographic studio.

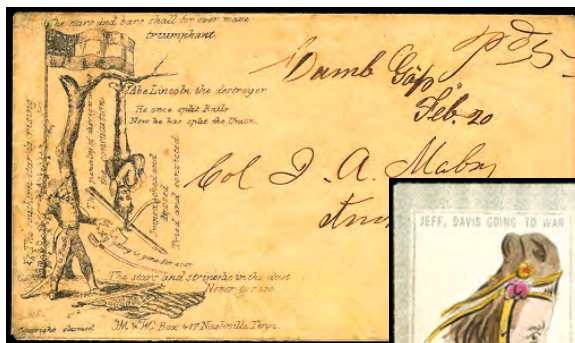
From the time of the American painter, Bass Otis, 1818-1819, down to the decline of the lithographic art, by reason of the development of better media, in the eighteen eighties, lithographers mirrored the life and times of the period in all its phases and forms. Pictures on envelopes, cards, stationery, song sheets, magazines, weekly and monthly, etc., made by lithographers told the news and illustrated the important and crucial events. In many instances, lithographers illustrated the history of the times in more reliable and comprehensive form than some historians wrote it.

The conflict of economic and political ideas which brought on the War between the States, and the news and events of the war resulted in a perfect flowering of the old lithography.

The political campaign which brought Lincoln to the Presidency was extremely bitter.

Lithographers and printers hit a “pot of gold” during it by producing a huge volume of campaign envelopes and stationery, some of which displayed the heights of political venom, bitterness and caricature. Immediately

after the Fort Sumter event, patriotic material appeared in many forms.



Above, a “Hanging Lincoln” cover; right, a Jefferson Davis “Jackass” cover—turn it upside down to see why it is so-named.



The intense feeling which existed between the North and the South expressed itself in the appearance of thousands of different Patriotics in the post offices. They were an expression of a people full of thoughts of Fort Sumter, Bull Run, Gettysburg, and hospitals filled with human wrecks.

They culminated in one of the greatest addresses in human history, unappreciated at the time: The Gettysburg Address, by Abraham Lincoln, Nov. 19, 1863.

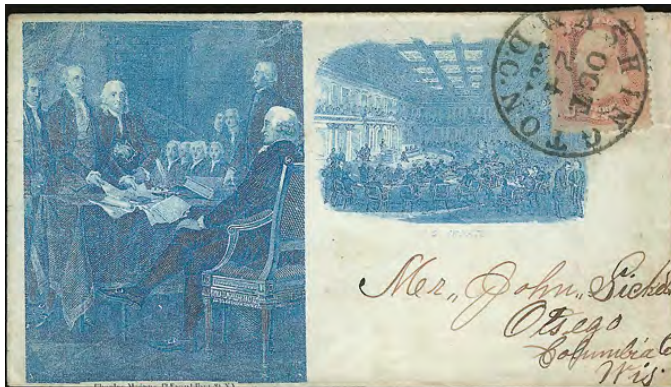
Ten sentences and only about 275 words. Few remember what the orator of the day, Edward Everett, said, but all the world knows Lincoln's ten sentences.

"C. Magnus" and/or "Chas. Magnus," most often of 12 Frankfort St., New York City, occupied a top rank in the printing trades during and after the period just considered.

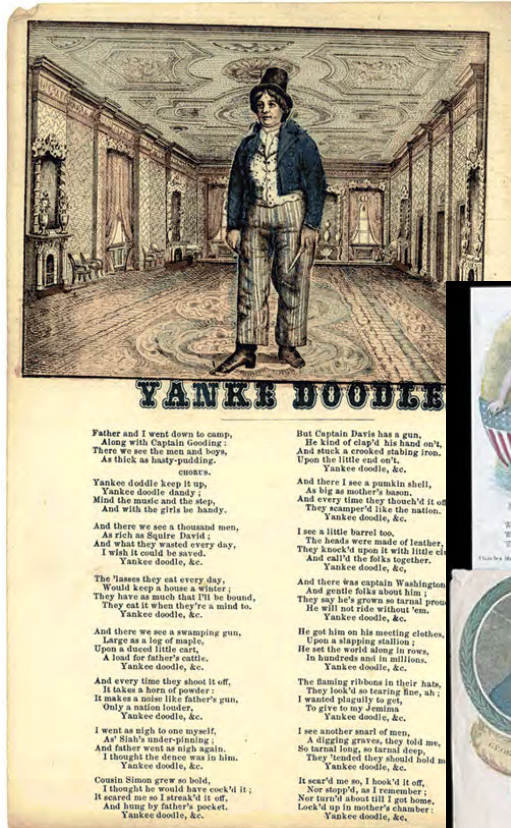


Central Park at Fifth Avenue & 59th Street, 1886

3¢ rose (Sc. 65) tied by "Washington D.C. Oct. 24, 1861" c.d.s. on cover with blue Magnus two-panel Signing of the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Senate



Every print collector, every song sheet collector (see page 4), every postal stationery collector, and almost every stamp and cover collector, is familiar with the name of Chas. Mag-



"Yankee Doodle" song sheet

Below, a Magnus multicolored letterhead view of Rochester, N.Y., that was carried in a Magnus George Washington portrait cover to Lisbon, N.H. in 1862.



"Washington. D.C.", a view of the city looking north, featuring the Washington Monument as originally planned by Robert Mills.

nus, but a very limited few can

supply definite, reliable answers to the following questions: Who was Chas. Magnus? Where did he come from and when? What did he look like? Was he married? Did he leave children? What was his specialty in the publishing business? What prompted his business actions? When and where did he die?



Left, map of lower Manhattan up to 34th St. on the west side and 51st St. on the east side, topped by a view of New York city and harbor, Trinity Church and lists of churches, hotels and places of amusement.

Below, Map of New York State.



Chas. Magnus, salesman, newspaper publisher, designer, lithographer, printer, engraver, stationer, map maker, book dealer, was a

perfect “Jack of All Trades” in the printing field for fifty years or better, and during and after the period when lithography really flowered to the full. His products, colored or uncolored, may have been lithographed or chromo-lithographed, or made from steel or copper plates, or wood cuts, or they may have been just plain printed.



Left, unused Camp Scene patriotic cover from a series of designs taken from photographs, from a set of 20 different numbered views printed in bronze ink.

Right, multicolor Camp Scene patriotic cover, same series of designs as above, but these have hand applied colors applied.



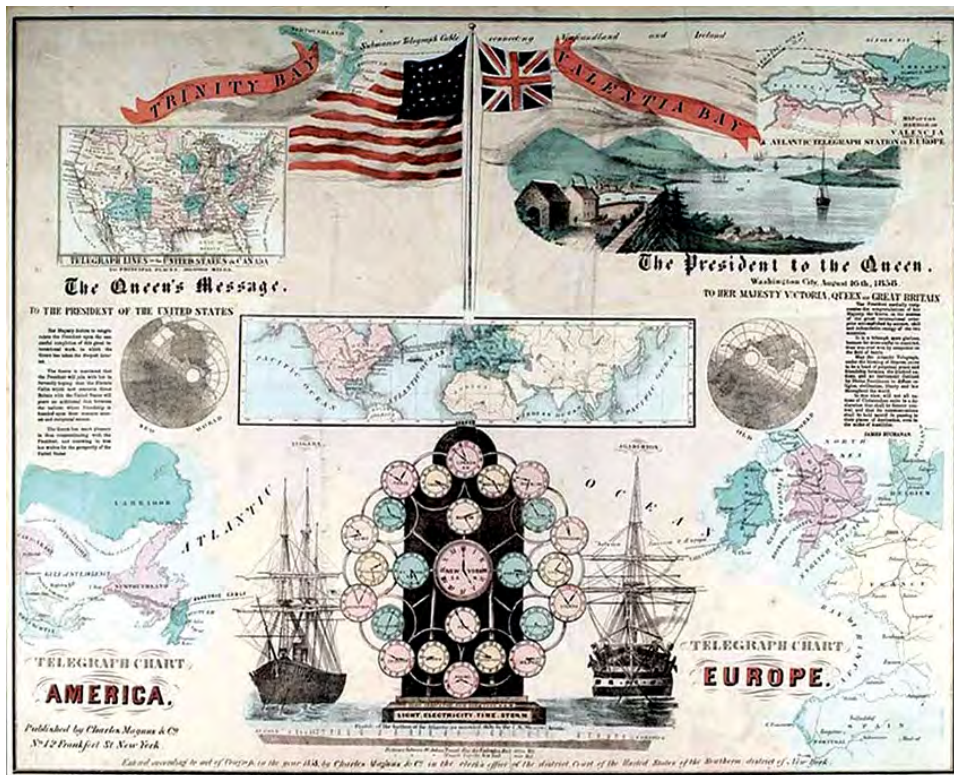
Kimmel's "Outbreak of the Rebellion in the United States 1861" lithograph, created circa 1865.

Many of them were hand-colored to a degree of perfection unsurpassed at the time, with the possible exception of a few items, maybe thirty or thirty-five varieties, made by Kimmel, of Kimmel & Forster, 254-256 Canal St., New York City.

Magnus's large sized print "The Depression of 1858" in four illustrations shows the fat rich man turned into the starved skeleton. His "Bowling Green" (page 7) is a perfect example of lithographic letter heads. His "Celebration All Over the United States in Honor of Ocean Telegraphing," 1858 (page 7), large size, on thin paper,

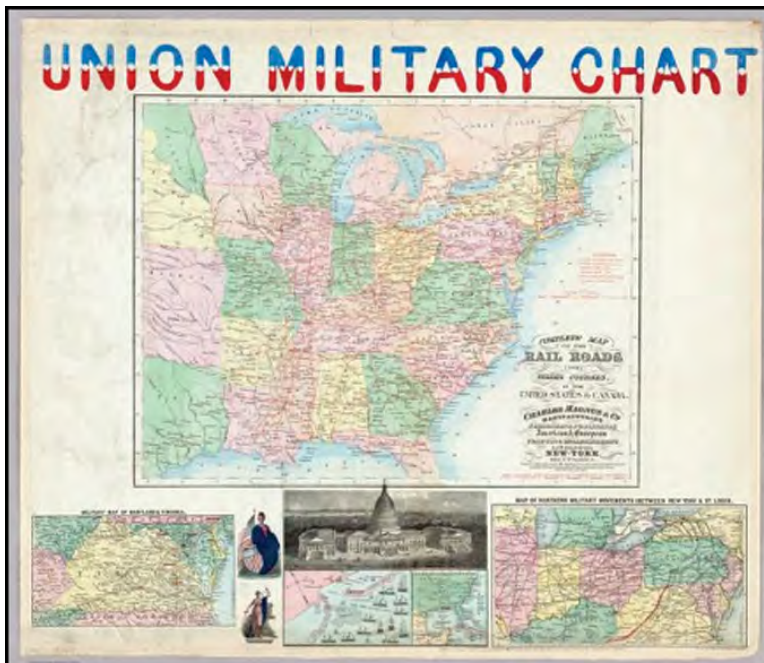


"Bowling Green" hand-colored lithograph



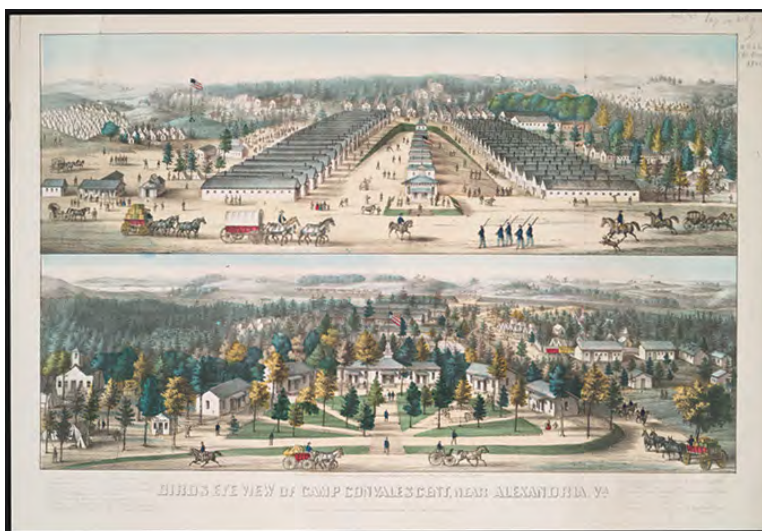
"Celebration all over the United States in Honor of Ocean Telegraphing, Sept., 1858"

tells a very complete story. Everything is in the print, all ready to be mailed in an envelope for twenty-five cents. This is one of the rare events Currier & Ives missed completely, but which Magnus caught in full blast. His "Union Military Chart with Hardee Tactics" (page 8) tells another story which would require a small pamphlet if it were to be described.



“Union Military Chart. Complete Map Of The Rail Roads And Water Courses In The United States & Canada.” A group of five full color maps and a view of the U.S. Capitol, plus two female figures. The largest map is the Complete Map of the Rail Roads..., which shows the eastern United States with all the railroads in operation and projected.

Nearly all of the Magnus illustrations, colored and un-colored, are clear, accurate and to the point. They tell the stories of Civil War events, customs, dress, appearance of buildings, camps, hospitals, battles, personages. His



*“Birds eye view of Camp Convalescent, near Alexandria, Va.”,
1863, hand-colored lithograph*

Pictorial lettersheet with vignettes of Niagara (left to right, top row first):

“Niagara Falls. American Side.”

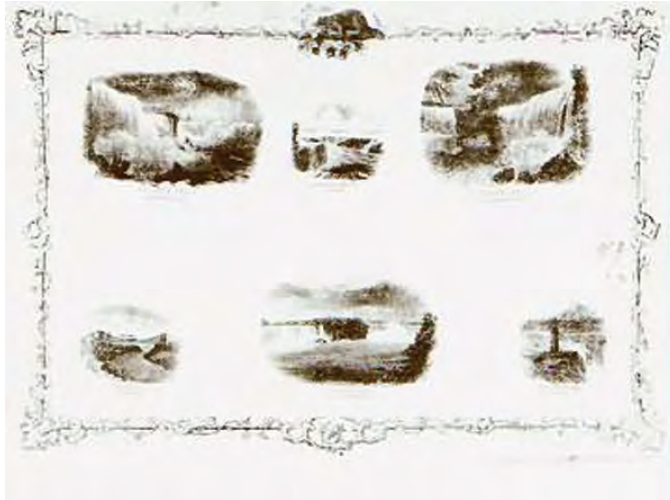
“Niagara Falls. Canadian Side.”

“Suspension Bridge. Niagara.”

“Niagara Falls. from a Photograph.”

“Terrapin Tower. Horse Shoe Falls.”

Steel engravings, hand colored.



“Niagara Falls, American Side.”

This “deluxe” souvenir print uses the same image as is engraved on the letter sheet. On another Magnus publication, the 1861 “Union Military Chart,” (page 8) is printed the following advertisement for these prints,

“Look At our Mount Vernon Souvenir and Original Engravings of over 100 American Cities and Scenes, National Buildings &c. executed in Oil Color Printing, on Bristol Board, black, gold & silver Border. Price 25 Cents each Picture.”

3¢ rose (Sc. 65) tied by “Washington D.C. Feb. 17, 1863” c.d.s. on cover with Magnus hand-colored two-panel design of U.S. Senate and Eagle with Shield and Snake.



works appear on covers, stationery, maps, prints, cards, song sheets, and books, and in many cases are better than some of the stories of such war correspondents as Richardson, Brown, and Knox. His famous Rose covers are most unusual and rare.



“The Presidents of Our Great Republic” black and white print, George Washington through Franklin Pierce, 1853.



“Rose of Washington” patriotic cover, handpainted three part design, free frank endorsed by a member of Congress (upper right) and posted to Plainfield, New Jersey, with “Washington, D.C./Free/ Jul 6 1861” c.d.s. (top center); also with the foldout rose enclosure printed in blue on the outside and bronze on the inside showing the numerous scenes of Washington, D.C.





*Bird's Eye View of Sixth Street Wharf, Washington D.C.,
published by Charles Magnus, 1863*

Just a glance at most of his products tells this generation what the citizens of ninety years ago were living and experiencing. He was a salesman and had made his living that way. He was a newspaper publisher and hence had “news sense.” When he began his publishing business, he knew from experience how to sell news material and how to package it and wrap it up, for sale. He knew the selling value of appearance.

Magnus’ products are famous. Philatelic students have classified and grouped them. Rarities, used and unused, have been listed and explained. Efforts have been made to total the number of varieties of impressions he produced and published. Experts have stated



*Color lithograph, “Washington Square, N.Y.”,
from “50 views of New York and Environs”*

the number is around 1,000 as compared to the figure of 7,500, published with imprint “N. Currier” and “Currier & Ives.” A rough classification of his products runs as follows: Prints, cards, maps, covers, stationery, song sheets, song books, views.

The advertisement shown on page 13 is from the back of a song book, about 1861, which shows a total of over 100 pieces of printed material which he had for sale at the time, and other items, just off the press or in preparation. Note list prices.

Search in the New York City directories reveals the following business addresses of Chas. Magnus:

1849-1851—Not listed.

1852-1853—22 N. William St.

1853-1854—Not listed.

1854-1855—Lithographer, 12 Frankfort St.

1855-1857—Lithographer, 12 Frankfort St.

1866-1867—Books. 12 Frankfort St.

1874-1875—Publisher. 550 Pearl St.

1881-1883—Publisher. 550 Pearl St.

1887-1888—Printer. 5 Chambers St.

1890-1891—Stationer, 5 Chambers St.

1897—Printer. 321 East 83rd St.

1899—Stationer. 8 Reade St.

The obituary notice of Chas. Magus was carried in *The New York Tribune*, May 6, 1900, page 7, column 4. Many of the details concerning his personal life were supplied and by his daughter, Mrs. Eleanor Walrueter, resident of New York City, in whose home he died on Thursday, May 3, 1900.

Chas. Magnus was born on March 16, 1826 in Elberfeldt, Germany. Prior to coming to this country at about the age of 25, he was a salesman for a German silk firm. This information furnished by his daughter dates his arrival in New York City about 1850 or 1851, which dates are confirmed by business addresses in the New York City Directory. Rumors and other sources have dated his arrival as the year 1847, which may be correct, by reason of the following evidence.

Shortly after his arrival, he induced several of his brothers to come from Germany, and with them, he founded the "Schnellposte" a German newspaper. The brothers conducted the business for several years with some success. When one of the brothers desired to withdraw, the paper was sold to the "Staats Zeitung," and the "Schnellposte" went out of existence.

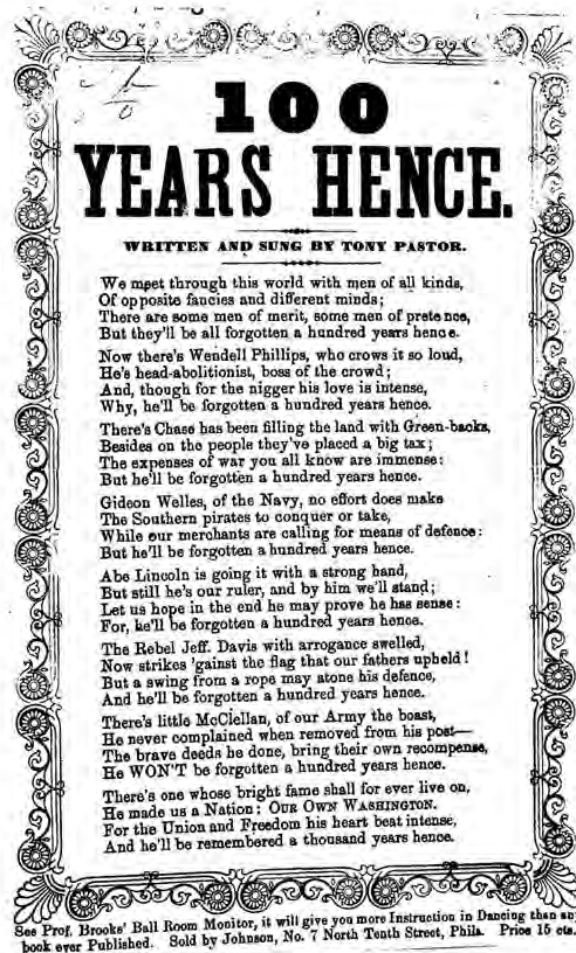
Why he and his brothers came to this country is not definitely known, but it is certainly safe to assume they left for one of three reasons or a combination thereof. First, to avoid military service. Second, to dodge German political revolutions. Third, to engage in the search for money and greater opportunities. At this particular time, many artisans engaged in the printing trade left Germany for America.

Immediately after the sale of the "Schnellposte," Chas. Magnus entered the publishing business, making a specialty of maps which he continued to publish until obliged to give up active business. During the Civil War, he made a specialty of maps of the battlefields, with pictures made on the battlefields printed on the margins. He visited the scenes of many battles in order to secure these pictures. He was one of the very few persons to whom passes were issued giving permission to visit ALL the Union Camps.

Chas. Magnus married Christina Koerner, a native of Munich, Germany, on December 31, 1854, in New York City. A number of children were born to them, four of whom were living at the time of his death. They were Julia, whose home was in Germany, Mrs. Eleanor Walter; Oscar H.; and Alvin A. Magnus of New York City. Mrs. Chas. Magnus died in 1896.

This article appears for two reasons. First, in the hope that some new readers may supply additional reliable information about the personal life and history of Chas. Magnus. Second, that unlike the personages in Magnus' Song Sheet, entitled, "A Hundred Years Hence," written and sung by Tony Pastor, with great applause, at The American Theatre, 444 Broadway, N.Y., Chas. Magnus

may not be forgotten.



**100
YEARS HENCE.**

WRITTEN AND SUNG BY TONY PASTOR.

We meet through this world with men of all kinds,
Of opposite fancies and different minds;
There are some men of merit, some men of pretence,
But they'll be all forgotten a hundred years hence.

Now there's Wendell Phillips, who crows it so loud,
He's head-abolitionist, boss of the crowd;
And, though for the nigger his love is intense,
Why, he'll be forgotten a hundred years hence.

There's Chase has been filling the land with Green-backs,
Besides on the people they've placed a big tax;
The expenses of war you all know are immense:
But he'll be forgotten a hundred years hence.

Gideon Welles, of the Navy, no effort does make
The Southern pirates to conquer or take,
While our merchants are calling for means of defence:
But he'll be forgotten a hundred years hence.

Abe Lincoln is going it with a strong hand,
But still he's our ruler, and by him we'll stand;
Let us hope in the end he may prove he has sense:
For, he'll be forgotten a hundred years hence.

The Rebel Jeff. Davis with arrogance swelled,
Now strikes 'gainst the flag that our fathers upheld!
But a swing from a rope may atone his defence,
And he'll be forgotten a hundred years hence.

There's little McClellan, of our Army the boast,
He never complained when removed from his post—
The brave deeds he done, bring their own recompense,
He WON'T be forgotten a hundred years hence.

There's one whose bright fame shall for ever live on,
He made us a Nation: OUR OWN WASHINGTON.
For the Union and Freedom his heart beat intense,
And he'll be remembered a thousand years hence.

See Prof. Brooks' Ball Room Monitor, it will give you more instruction in Dancing than any book ever published. Sold by Johnson, No. 7 North Tenth Street, Phila. Price 15 cts.

*We meet through this world with men of all kinds,
Of opposite fancies and different minds;
There are some men of merit, some men of pretence,
But they'll be forgotten a hundred years hence.*

*Abe Lincoln is going it with a strong hand,
But still he's our ruler, and by him we'll stand;
Let us hope in the end he may prove he has sense,
For he'll be forgotten a hundred years hence.*

*There's one whose bright fame shall forever live on,
He made us a nation—our own Washington;
For the Union and Freedom his heart beat intense,
And he'll be remembered a thousand years hence.*