BIOGRAPHY.

LUCIUS FAIRCHILD.

Lucius Fairchild, the present Governor of Wisconsin, is one of the marked and representative men of the Northwest. He came from that "Western Reserve" in Ohio which has contributed so much of population and intelligence to his adopted State, and from a parentage marked by strength of character, and by a certain hospitality and largeness of nature. Born at Franklin Mill, in Portage County, Ohio, December 27, 1831, he resided at Cleveland in that State from an early age until 1846, when he came to Wisconsin, and, with the other members of his father's family, shortly after found a home at Madison, the beautiful capital of that State. Soon the newly-discovered gold region of California attracted enterprising spirits, and the restless energy of the youth of seventeen drove him to the land of promise. In March 1849, with an ox team, he started from Madison, in company with others from that vicinity, for a journey across the Plains. He remained in California until the summer of 1855, most of the period being spent in the mountains, leading the hard and rough life of a miner; whose severe toils finally yielded him a reasonable degree of financial success. Various business occupied his attention after his return to Madison, in 1855, until the fall of 1868, when as the Democratic-candidate, he was elected Clerk of the Circuit Court for his County. The duties of this office he discharged with great acceptance, his promptitude, energy and business habits being no less conspicuous than his courtesy towards attorneys and others doing business in the Court. In the autumn of 1860 he was admitted to the Bar.

In the spring of 1861, after the surrender of Fort Sumter, the subject of this sketch was one of the first who hastened to the defense of an imperrilled country. He enlisted promptly as a private in the "Governor's Guard," a well-known independent company of Madison, which was among the first to tender its services under the President's first call for three months' troops. Elected captain of this company, which was assigned as Company K to the First (three months) Regiment of Wisconsin Volunteers, he declined the position of lieutenant colonel, offered him by Gov. Randall, not feeling himself qualified by military knowledge or training for that office. The Regiment served its three months, from June 9, 1861, in Eastern Virginia, where, on the 3d of July, it skirmish-
ed at Falling Waters with a part of Joe Johnson's force—a skirmish remembered only as one of the earliest of the war, and the first in which Wisconsin troops were engaged. In August, 1861, President Lincoln appointed Fairchild captain in the 16th Regulars, and about the same time he received from Gov. Randall a commission as Major in the 2d Wisconsin Infantry, which had been in the battle of Bull Run, and was then in Washington. Accepting both appointments, he was the first officer of the regular army to receive a leave of absence to serve with a volunteer regiment. Shortly after, he was appointed Lieutenant Colonel of the same regiment, having declined the colonelcy of another, tendered him by Gov. Randall Col. O'Connor of the Second being in poor health, Lieut. Col. Fairchild commanded the regiment most of the time. It rapidly improved in discipline and efficiency, and acquired the reputation of being one of the best regiments in the service. With the 6th and 7th Wisconsin, and 19th Indiana, it formed a brigade first commanded by Gen. Rufus King of Wisconsin, and which afterward, under Gibbon, won an enviable fame. As a part of the First Division of the First Corps, it took part in nearly all the great battles and campaigns of the Eastern army, except those of the Peninsula, under McClellan. To write its history would be almost to write the history of the war in Virginia. In 1862 they participated in the movement on Manassas, and subsequently formed a part of the Army of the Rappahannock under Gen. McDowell. After spending some months, first in the neighborhood of Fredericksburg, and then in the abortive attempt to intercept Stonewall Jackson in his retreat from the Shenandoah Valley, they were sent, late in July, to feel the enemy gathering in front of Gen. Pope, and after a successful skirmish, and a march of eighty miles in three days, returned to their camp at Falmouth. Engaged during the early part of August in supporting a successful movement for cutting the Virginia Central railroad, in the course of which duty they repulsed and drove Stuart's rebel cavalry. They had hardly obtained a couple of days repose before they were called to take part in the movement of the army of Virginia, under Pope, which had just fought the battle of Cedar Mountain. Retiring with that army they had successive skirmishes with the enemy at Beverly Ford on the 19th, and at White Springs on the 28th of August. On the evening of 28th, while moving from Gainesville along the Warrenton road towards Centreville, this brigade encountered Jackson's famous division. (which was moving westward from Centreville to form a junction with Longstreet,) and fought it single-handed for an hour and a half. It was perhaps in this battle, (known as that of Gainesville,) that Gibbon's brigade won the proud title of "The Iron Brigade of the West." While marching by the flank, the 2nd Wisconsin in advance, it was attacked by a
Battery posted on a wooded eminence, which was situated on the left. Advancing promptly upon the battery, it encountered the rebel infantry emerging from the woods. Here for about fifteen or twenty minutes, while awaiting the arrival of the rest of the brigade, it is said that this regiment sustained and checked the outset of the whole of Jackson's brigade. The other regiments came rapidly up, while the enemy was also reinforced by at least one additional brigade, and in this unequal contest Gibbon's command maintained their ground, until, at nine o'clock, darkness put an end to one of the fiercest conflicts of the war. Most of the time, Gen. Gibbons states, the combatants were not more than seventy-five yards apart. Here Col. O'Connor fell mortally wounded, and Lieut. Col. Fairchild had his horse shot from under him. His regiment, which went into the fight with only four hundred and forty-nine men, lost more than half of them, killed or wounded. During the next few days occurred the second battle of Bull Run, where lack of harmony and combined effort on the part of our military leaders resulted in a retreat of our exhausted and discouraged forces at the end of the second day, while troops enough to have secured an easy victory lay within easy reach of the battle-field. The Iron Brigade, being in McDowell's corps, did not reach the scene of battle until near the close of the first day. The next day the 2d, being reduced by battle and sickness to 150 muskets, was temporarily consolidated with the 7th Wisconsin, and took part in the fight on the right wing, under the command of Lt. Col. Fairchild, all the other field officers of both regiments being either killed or wounded. Upon the failure of the left to hold its ground, compelling the whole force to withdraw, "Gibbon's Brigade writes an eye witness, "covered the rear, not leaving the field until after nine o'clock at night, gathering up the stragglers as they marched, and presenting such an unbroken front that the enemy made no attempt to molest them." Lieut. Col. Fairchild's regiment was the extreme rear, and himself the last man to leave the field, and cross the stone bridge. Soon after, he was made Col. of the Second, to date from August the 20th.

In the battle of South Mountain, on the 14th of September following where the Iron Brigade so gallantly carried the strong centre of the enemy at Turner's Gap, Col. Fairchild was in command of his own regiment. Detained in hospital by sickness during some of the subsequent days, he was unable to return to the field until the latter part of the day of the great battle of Antietam on the 16th, where his regiment lost ninety-one of the one hundred and fifty men engaged. It was after these two battles that Gen. McClellan declared these "equal to the best troops in any army in the world."

After taking an active part in the unfortunate battle of Fredericks-
burg under Burnside and the subsequent "Mud Campaign," Col. Fairchild, with men of his own and other regiments, made two successful expeditions down the Potomac in February and March, 1863, gathering up horses, mules, contrabands, provisions and prisoners. When the Army of the Potomac, under Hooker, advanced to the unfortunate field of Chancellorsville, the Iron Brigade, (to which had been added the 24th Michigan, and which, even then numbered only 1,500, crossed the Rappahannock, at Fitz Hugh's Crossing, in pontoon boats under a galling fire; and then, charging up the heights, carried the rebel rifle pits by storm, capturing about 200 prisoners, thus rendering it possible to lay the pontoon bridges. Arriving at the battle-ground near Chancellorsville early on the morning of May the 3d, Col. Fairchild was called by Gen. Wadsworth, his Division commander to serve on his staff, and did so. At Gettysburg, as the Iron Brigade, early on the first day of the battle, engaged in the desperate conflict on Seminary Ridge, the 2d Wisconsin in the advance, lost, in less than half an hour, 116 of the 300 men engaged; and there Col. Fairchild fell, with his left arm shattered so that amputation near the shoulder became necessary. From the Seminary at Gettysburg, (extemporized into a hospital) he was transferred to the home of the excellent Professor Schaffer, in the village, where he received the tenderest care and nursing. By means of this, with skillful surgical attention, and the strength of his constitution, he recovered sufficiently to return home. While thus recruiting his health, with the desire and intention of rejoining the army, (having been recommended by all the Generals under whom he had served for appointment as a Brigadier-General,) the Union Convention of Wisconsin, much to his surprise, nominated him, with great unanimity and enthusiasm, for the office of Secretary of State. A lifelong Democrat, the unqualified and earnest support he had rendered, both by word and deed, to the Government, the self devotion and passionate patriotism, rising above all personal and party views, which had marked his course from the commencement of hostilities, rendered him an object of eminent confidence and affection on the part of those who tendered him the nomination. And, amid the perils which then seemed to encompass the Government, at the North as well as at the South, it was urged upon him by influential personal friends, that in his disabled condition, he could serve the National cause more effectively by accepting the nomination than in any other way. Having been appointed Brigadier General, he resigned that position and his rank in the regular army, and was elected Secretary of State. After serving in that office with eminent acceptance for two years, he was, in 1865, nominated, without opposition in the Republican Union Convention, for Governor. His inaugural address, in January, 1866, outlined, in a bold emphatic manner, the conditions on which alone the recently rebellious states
should, in his judgment be allowed to resume their functions in the Union. Whether his views were correct, it is not the office of this article to consider; but certainly the leading ideas of that "reconstruction policy" which Congress has since sought to enforce, have seldom been delineated, or their necessity urged in a more clear, vigorous and compact manner.

The duties of his office have been performed by Gov. Fairchild in a manner entirely to the satisfaction of the people, excepting of course the party opposition evoked by his views on national affairs. The briefest account of his gubernatorial career must not omit to mention the intelligent earnestness and zeal with which he has sought to promote the educational interests of the State. He has devoted an unusual portion of his time to the personal visitation of penal, reformatory, benevolent and educational institutions of his own State. When travelling beyond its limit he has endeavored to make himself acquainted with like institutions in other States, that he might learn what improvements were practicable at home. He has repeatedly urged the establishment of an additional State school, viz: one for the education of the feeble-minded; and in all the existing institution his presence is ever welcomed by officers and inmates as that of a friend. In 1867 he was renominated without opposition, and re-elected and is now serving his second term. At Chicago, during the last summer, he was called upon to preside over the deliberation of the National Soldiers' and Sailor's Convention.

Such, in outline, is the career of a man who, at the age of thirty-seven, has filled for two years the second, and for three years the first Executive office in his State.

The following delineation of character has been taken from a writer who is intimately acquainted with Governor Fairchild. I have no doubt but that the description is correct. In my biographical sketches, I only state facts, but do not pledge myself to approve or disapprove of the political views of any individual about whom I write. In every state of the Union there are, and ever will be, two political parties opposed to each other. This state of things is good for the people; as one party will keep the other in check. If the executive in office administers justice, no fault can be found with him by either party. Governor Fairchild has been and is, a strong supporter of his party, but in his administration of the laws, which govern the people, he knows no political party, and only consults the general interests of the State.

It is impossible to describe in words a human face so that one who has never seen it can form any definite idea of it. The description may be true but it fails to express the very things which make the face different from every other. Equally impossible is it to delineate in words a human character so that a stranger shall form a true notion of it. The
nicest analyst of mind and soul, and the most vivid word-painter, will probably feel the most keenly that he has failed in the attempt. The subtle aroma of individuality escapes in the effort. Yet, as this sketch of a life would be thought incomplete without some attempt to describe the man, we will try it With blue eyes, light hair, and a light complexion, and a face, manner and voice indicating decision and character so plainly that no man can mistake, with a frame of medium size, but firmly knit, active and powerful; with a mind not so much addicted to letters or learning as to the strenuous activities of public or private business, yet actuated by a genuine respect for literature, art and science, and those whose tastes tend to their cultivation; not given to subtle speculations, but simple, clear, just and decided in his general views of men and things; direct and positive of speech, and at times, especially when busy, curt, and with a soldierly bluntness which men do not dislike; destitute of all cant and affectation, and entirely free from the deceptive arts of the demagogue: unfit for diplomacy, as diplomacy is generally understood, and entirely unqualified for any position in the circumlocution office; happy and conferring happiness in his domestic relations, displaying in his own home a simple and hearty hospitality.* with a dislike for mere conventionalities, which comes to him by inheritance; a stanch friend, and, when called upon to be an enemy, as free from malignity as from concealment and fear, a good neighbor, and good citizen; quick to sympathize with misfortune in practical ways, and to help forward generous thoughts and plans; not a member of any christian church, but with advancing years and experience of the struggle and discipline of life, a more and more earnest believer in those grand ideas of Divine beneficence and human duty on which he understands christianity to be based; a true Democrat; a radical believer in giving to all men the best chance that society can give; thoroughly patriotic, with marked executive ability; intelligent, prompt, energetic and incorruptible in the discharge of public duty—such, if we understand him, is the man before us. Whether he shall hereafter be called to serve the commonwealth in public position, or amid the throng of eager aspirants for office, he shall find that for him “the post of honor is the private station,” he has done and suffered too much, and in doing and suffering has made himself too much of a man, ever to be less than a distinguished and honored citizen of the State whose annals he has adorned in war and peace, and of the country he has helped to save.

*) If hospitality and other good social qualities are hereditary, Governor Fairchild possesses them in a high degree, as his father was known to be kind, open-hearted, generous and hospitable, to which qualities the author of this work can bear testimony, having enjoyed the friendship of that estimable gentleman and partaken of his hospitality.