

*"To expect purity in politics, is an iridescent dream."*

—The late Senator John J. Inwall.

# MEN OF MARYLAND SINCE THE CIVIL WAR

Sketches of United States Senator Arthur  
Pue Gorman and His Contemporaries  
and Successors and Their Con-  
nection with Public Affairs

IN THREE VOLUMES

BY

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VOLUME I



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## CHARLES J. BONAPARTE

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY AND ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE  
UNITED STATES

In many respects Mr. Bonaparte was the most unique personality in Baltimore in his day. Had he been born of obscure parentage he would probably have achieved prominence through his own inherent ability—it might almost be said genius. As it was he was born a member of a great family which had twice occupied the imperial throne of France and his name made him eminent. But the prominence for which he was distinguished in this country and for which he was especially noted in Baltimore was the unique position he made for himself by his own ability. From being locally famous for years he later became nationally famous, and Maryland was distinguished throughout the country as the residence of two famous men. They represented opposite poles in public affairs. One stood for the extreme in one way and the other represented the extreme in the opposite way. They were Mr. Bonaparte and Senator Gorman.

Mr. Bonaparte was not only the most unique personality in Baltimore; he was also the most interesting. He could draw a larger crowd to a meeting than any man in town, although he was before the public for a quarter of a century. He always had something new to say, even on time-hackneyed subjects, and what he said he said well; more than well, in fact. He had been driving away at certain public evils here for half his life and he never repeated himself. Year after year he had been attacking these evils and the men who represented them, and year by year he had surprised and delighted his audiences and the readers of the newspapers by saying new things about them, and the things he said were always biting in their forceful vigor.

In his crusade of a quarter of a century against what he considered wrong Mr. Bonaparte never wavered, nor

was he ever impracticable. He ever aimed high, but if he found he could not hit the topmost mark he fired away at the one he knew he could strike, hoping in time to be able to reach the highest. If he could not get all that he wanted, he took what he could get, even if the advance over former conditions was slight, so long as it was an advance. In this way year after year he hammered away, and those who are old enough to recall the condition of affairs when he began his crusade can easily compare the vast change that was brought about not only in Baltimore, but throughout the state. At that time it was notorious that there was no such thing here as a public conscience—there was no such thing as public morality. Later the public conscience of Baltimore became alert and watchful, at times ready to assert itself, and any attempt to manage public affairs as they were managed thirty years ago would have aroused such a protest and storm of indignation as would have driven the perpetrators out of the state or into jail. It is unfortunate that this improvement did not last longer.

To Mr. Bonaparte more than to any other man was this improved state of affairs almost entirely due—others aided him, others followed him, but he was the only one who never wavered, never lagged, was always at the front. Many of his lieutenants were beguiled away from him by the allurements of office and other sorts of preferment. Young men started out to join his crusade and for a time fought enthusiastically by his side. The hunger for office and other things, however, proved too strong for them. One by one they fell away and received their reward—and sunk into self-satisfied obscurity. But Mr. Bonaparte was never deterred; gathering others to his side, he went on with his fight. He was the only one who, to use an expression of Mr. John K. Cowen, never "bowed the knee to Baal," although Mr. Cowen himself fell by the political wayside and partook of the fleshpots of Egypt. The voice of the reforming prophet has been heard in the land ever since 1875. In fact, several reforming prophets have been heard crying aloud about

the prevailing iniquities. But the only one who, like Elijah rebuking the evils of Israel, kept up the cry was Mr. Bonaparte. And he kept his station on the watch-tower of the city night and day, and his very presence there was the most powerful deterrent to the political evildoers. When they came out into the open and their malign influence was manifest in public affairs, he never spared them. No one has taken his place.

Mr. Bonaparte was the Juvenal of Baltimore and Maryland. Like the great satirist of Rome, he held up to scorn the men who were responsible for the management of public affairs, no matter how high their social position or how exalted their public station. High and low, petty city and county officials, councilmen, members of the legislature, mayors, governors, senators, and even the President of the United States and members of his cabinet, were lashed by him until they were driven to reply; then he went back at them with more effect than ever. He always came out ahead, and those who ventured into the arena against him gladly retired, smarting and sore under the torment he inflicted on them by his biting sarcasm and incisive scorn. He "cried aloud and spared not," and whatever of reform Maryland and Baltimore had for a time over the old plundering and outrageous system was due to the persistent activity and conscientious energy of this American.

The wisest act President Roosevelt performed after the development of the postal scandals was the selection of Mr. Bonaparte to assist the law officers of the government in the prosecution of the cases against the accused officials, and there was no glossing to screen or shield anyone, no matter how high his position, or how great his influence. The bottom and top of the affair was reached, and justice obtained where there was guilt, and justice was done. And as Secretary of the Navy and Attorney General he practically revolutionized the administration of those two great departments, the effect of his work being evident there to this day.