



Very Truly Yours  
John C. Black.

~~Chicago Law School, the University Club, the Chicago Athletic Club, the Club  
and the Beta Phi Pi, a college fraternity.~~

John C. Black.—As a distinguished member of the bar, as a statesman of prominence, on the lecture platform and in Grand Army circles, General John Charles Black is so well known that he needs no introduction to the readers of this volume. His career has conferred honor and dignity upon the profession and civic organizations with which he is associated, and there is in him a weight of character, a native sagacity, a far-seeing judgment and a fidelity of purpose that commands the respect of all.

General Black was born in Lexington, Mississippi, on the 27th of January, 1839. His parents were Pennsylvania people, and his father died in 1847. In March of the same year the son came to Illinois,—being then only eight years of age,—and has since been a resident of this state, living at different times in Danville, Champaign, Urbana and Chicago. For four years he was in the military service of his country.

Prompted by a spirit of patriotism he volunteered on the 15th of April, 1861, and as a private soldier and non-commissioned officer served with the Eleventh Indiana Infantry. He afterward became colonel of the Thirty-seventh Regiment of Illinois Volunteers, and brevet brigadier general. Until the 15th of August, 1865, he remained in the army that fought for the perpetuation of the Union, and was absent from the front for only one month, during which time he was recruiting a company for the field and while suffering from wounds. He was twice wounded and his injuries resulted in the incapacitating of both arms for many years.

At the time he joined the army General Black was pursuing the work of the junior year in college, and by his own labor was meeting the expenses of the course. Upon his return from the south he took up the study of law, and is now a practitioner at the bar of the various state and federal courts, including the United States supreme court. He first opened a law office in Danville and subsequently engaged in practice in Champaign, where he soon secured a lucrative and extensive patronage, being for some time in command of one of the largest law practices in central Illinois. During this time his fitness for leadership and his comprehensive understanding of the political problems of the day gained him prominence in the Democratic party, of which he has long been a staunch adherent, and he was frequently engaged in labors for the advancement of the party's interests. On the 7th of March, 1885, he was appointed by President Cleveland to the position of commissioner of pensions and continued in that office until March 27, 1889, when he tendered to President Harrison his resignation.

On the 29th of May, 1889, General Black took up his abode in Chicago and resumed the practice of law, his marked ability, wide legal lore and accuracy in the application of judicial principles to the points in litigation securing to him a distinctively representative clientele. His party, however, was not content that he should devote his talents entirely to the law, and in 1892 he was nominated a candidate for congressman at large. Elected in the fall of that year,

he served from the 4th of March, 1893, until December, 1894, when he resigned in order to accept the position of United States district attorney for the northern district of Illinois, to which he was appointed by President Cleveland, and to which he qualified January 12, 1895. He, until January, 1899, occupied that office, and he has maintained a general practice, in both the state and federal courts. He has successfully conducted some of the most important cases ever heard in those courts. The essential qualifications of the truly great lawyer are his,—comprehensive knowledge of the principles of jurisprudence and familiarity with the long line of decisions, careful preparation of cases and the logical assembling of the points in evidence, combined with a clear, cogent and forceful presentation of the case to judge or jury. He has, too, a full appreciation of the allegiance which he owes to the majesty of the law, and realizes that the duty of the lawyer is to aid the court to arrive at just conclusions, and no member of the profession is more careful to conform his practice to a high standard of professional ethics.

General Black is also an orator of ability, and under the adornments of rhetoric is the substratum of deep thought and earnest purpose which never fails to hold the attention of his auditors. Three of the speeches which he delivered while in congress attracted general attention, one on the Hawaiian question, another on the subject of pensions, and a third delivered on the occasion of the presentation of the bronze statue of General Shields by the state of Illinois to the United States. The General is frequently called upon to address public assemblages on matters of importance and general interest. At different times he has delivered addresses on John Marshall, on U. S. Grant, and on Abraham Lincoln, and on the 23d of April, 1888, he addressed the Iroquois Club in a most pleasing manner on the subject of Triumphant Democracy. His prominence in Grand Army circles is shown by his election, in the spring of 1898, to the position of department commander of the Illinois G. A. R. He has also been elected commander of the Illinois Commandery of the military order of the Loyal Legion of the United States.

In 1867 General Black was united in marriage to Miss Adeline L. Griggs, who has ever since been to him a wise and encouraging companion and helpmate. To them have been born four children: Grace, now the wife of F. B. Vrooman; John, a promising attorney; Josephine L., who died at the age of six years; and Helene, who completes the family.

Such in brief is the history of one of Chicago's representative citizens. Popular among his army comrades, accorded recognition for his high legal talents, admired for his splendid oratorical ability, and esteemed for his genuine worth,—this is the summary of the life and character of General John C. Black.