

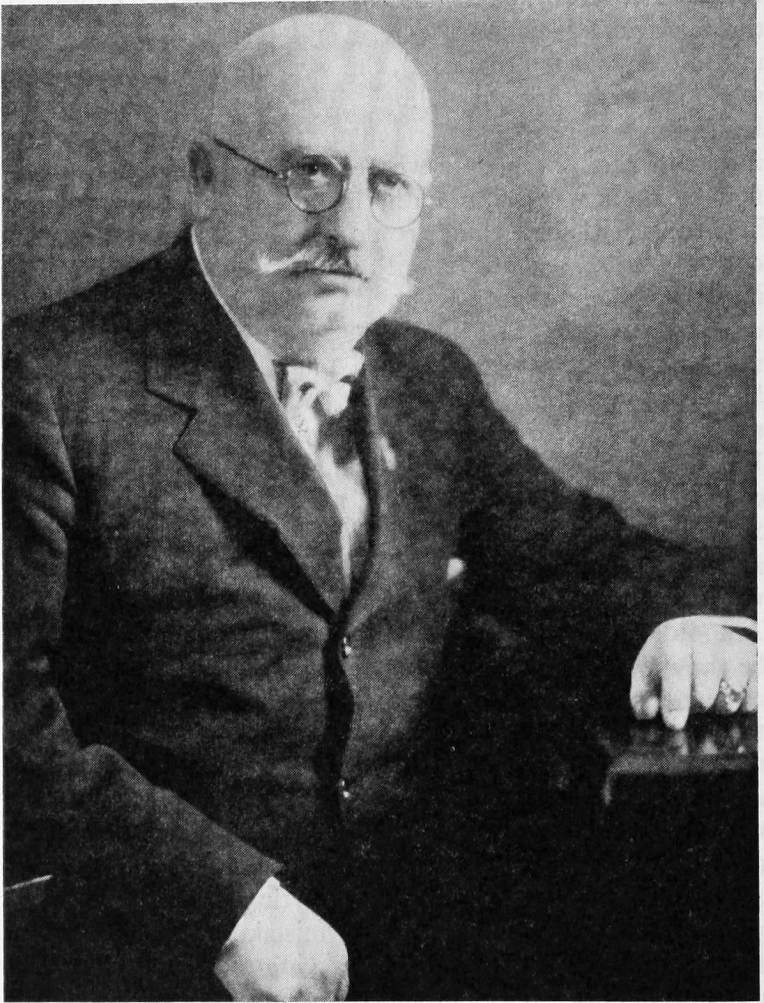
GOVERNOR HUNT --- A PERSONAL APPRECIATION

BY SAMUEL L. PATTEE

When one with no better opportunities than thousands of his fellow citizens raises himself to prominence by his unaided efforts, his career leads to both admiration and enmity. In writing of such a career it is difficult to follow a middle ground. The tendency of the friend is to over-praise. One like the writer who was well acquainted with George W. P. Hunt, though not so intimately as some others, and perhaps not intimately at all, may perhaps better appreciate and express the character of one to whom he sustained that relation. Of Governor Hunt's career from his arrival in Arizona to his death it is not the purpose to speak, except as incidental to a consideration of the character of the man himself, and the lasting impression he has made. Naturally his early history in this Territory and State caused him to view matters of public interest from the standpoint of the ordinary citizen rather than as one who had attained wealth or prominence. Naturally his sympathies were with those who were endeavoring, often with difficulty, to raise themselves, and to lay a foundation for their children to raise themselves to a higher and better position in life. To him there never was the forgotten man, because to him the lower the citizen chanced to be in social or material scale the greater his effort for his betterment.

The Territory of Arizona during the first years of his residence here was semi-colonial in government and limited in possibility for advancement. Governor Hunt sought the

only field available to accomplish anything in the way of improvement of conditions in the Territory, the legislative, though that had limitations that impaired its complete effectiveness. He was a member of the different houses of the territorial legislature for several terms. He saw, and in those days often discussed, the weaknesses of the governmental system then prevailing. Too often members of the legislature were the representatives of certain interests rather than of the people who elected them and they justified by their works the faith that the interests had placed in them. Still some things could be done, occasionally without opposition, sometimes with vigorous opposition, toward improving conditions and to do away with what seemed unjust or unfair. His legislative career was devoted to this idea and while he accomplished much less than he hoped, he was always the foremost in advocating what he believed to be measures for the better government of the Territory. His opportunity came with statehood. Membership in the convention which was to frame a constitution for the new State was accorded to him by the people of his home county almost as a matter of course. The presidency of that convention came almost by unanimous consent of his colleagues. The old form of government was passing and what should be the new was the uppermost thought of all, but especially of the man who was to preside over the deliberations of the body which was to formulate and present for approval that new form of government. He realized the necessity of fixing in the fundamental law of this State the rights of the people at large to govern themselves and not to bind themselves too closely by hard and fast provisions to either the institutions of the past or to anything that would prevent the elimination of whatever mistakes might be made. He realized the truth of the old saying that what was radical yesterday will be conservative tomorrow. The history of the Parliamentary Reform Bill and other measures, the justice of which no man would think of questioning, was familiar to him. The result of the efforts of himself and his colleagues who entertained similar views can be seen



George W. P. Hunt.

in the constitution that was subsequently adopted. When the question came up who was to be the head of the new State government, the minds of the citizens almost instinctively turned to him and he was chosen as the first governor of the State. His efforts in that office were to carry into effect those things that were laid down in principle in the constitution and to destroy the old time discriminations and injustices. Though his sympathy was always with what is so frequently spoken of as the "underdog" he never failed to appreciate that all citizens had rights, that extremes were dangerous, and that fairness to all, though it might not suit the extremists on either side, was necessary to bring about the prosperity and happiness of the people of the new State.

His special interest in the cause of education is appreciated by everyone familiar with his career. He was determined that the children and youth of the new State should have the opportunity that had been denied him to obtain an education, and if possible a higher education, and as far as possible at the public expense, and his every effort was directed along these lines. Often in discussing this subject with the writer he expressed his realization that everyone could not be educated into a high career, but that everybody, no matter what his walk in life might be, would be the better for whatever education he could acquire, and that the duty of the State required that the utmost effort within its means should be devoted to that end. Naturally he made enemies, but equally naturally he made a host of friends. He acquired a following of devoted friends who adhered to him in all his numerous political campaigns and who never wavered in their support of both him and his deeds. His character was such, and the respect in which he was held was such, that the vast majority of those friends and adherents were not selfish. They believed in Hunt, believed in his honesty of purpose, believed in his sterling integrity and believed in the ideas that he advocated.

He was not, to most of his acquaintances, a particularly companionable man. He had an abruptness of expression

and a disinclination at times to express either dissent or approval of those who advocated certain views. This may have risen from a natural taciturnity or from a disinclination to form or express an idea until he had thoroughly considered the subject of it. When he did make up his mind there was no hesitancy in announcing his views. Once he formed a friendship he reposed the utmost confidence and trust in the friend, though at times that confidence was abused; but the great majority of those who believed in him maintained that belief as long as he remained on earth. It would be difficult to express in words the reason which actuated the friendship and devotion toward him of so large a number of people. We can only say with Cicero that "something, I know not what" endeared him to a large percentage of the citizens of his State and that confidence never weakened, and whenever he became a candidate for the office he held so long, those friends and adherents came to his support without request and almost as a matter of duty.

Governor Hunt was a leading part of the governmental system of the State of Arizona. He might almost be said to be the State itself. His loss is irreparable, but his efforts, his acts, his principles and the things he stood for have gone into this State and in the language of Webster "there they will remain forever."