

BOOK REVIEWS  
OF  
IGNATIUS DONNELLY'S  
*DR. HUGUET*

Four short, contemporaneous reviews of Ignatius Donnelly's novel *Dr. Huguet* are posted here. They were published in Minnesota newspapers in 1891. The most scholarly study of the novel by Professor John R. Bovee of St. Cloud University was published in the Summer 1969 issue of *Minnesota History*, the quarterly journal of the Minnesota Historical Society.

A lawyer was a frequent villain in romance novels of this period, and not surprisingly one appears in Dr. Huguet's melodrama. His name was "Charles A. Buryhill." Here is how Donnelly introduces him:

Indeed, it always seemed to me that he regarded those about him in a sort of rapacious way, very like a man-eating tiger who drools a little at the mouth as he contemplates a group of unconscious Hindoos he is about to spring upon. So when Buryhill looked at his fellow man it was as if his softly working mouth tasted the pleasant flavor of *property*.<sup>1</sup>

Not mentioned in the reviews is the man who was the model for "Lawyer Buryhill" — Charles J. Berryhill of St. Paul. Admitted to the bar on August 29, 1881, he became active in political debates over "the silver question" in the mid-1890s. During the presidential campaign of 1896, he substituted for Congressman James T. McCleary, who represented the Second Congressional District, at a meeting of opponents of free coinage of silver in Redwood Falls. Here is an excerpt from an account of the meeting in the local newspaper:

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<sup>1</sup> Pages 43-44 (italics in original).

## SOUND MONEY CLUB GOES

One With 200 Members  
Organized at the Opera House  
Monday Evening

Charles Berryhill of St. Paul  
Delivers a Pointed Address  
on the Money Question

. . . .

The speaker was introduced by Chairman Patterson, who explained briefly Mr. McCleary's absence, and who said that Berryhill was the Congressman's equal on explaining why this government should not adopt the free and unlimited coinage of silver.

And then before the audience arose the speaker of the evening—the villain in Ignatius Donnelly's *Dr. Huguet*, Donnelly giving the name as "Charles J. Buryhill" and using Mr. Berryhill as the villain of his plot all because Mr. Berryhill was the only lawyer that has ever made Donnelly pay a judgment. Mr. Berryhill is on the sunny side of life—a man of pleasing countenance, wearing only a mustache. He commenced his speech by a eulogy on Congressman McCleary. He stated that he was a man of National reputation—a congressman who honored the district and whom the district would continue to honor, a man than whom no other more deserved the suffrages of the people of this district.<sup>2</sup>

The text of *Dr. Huguet* is posted separately in the "Literature" category in the archives of this website. The book reviews follow:

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<sup>2</sup> *The Redwood Gazette*, August 27, 1896, at 1. Berryhill is not listed in the Index to Martin Ridge's *Ignatius Donnelly: The Portrait of a Politician* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1962).

1.

John R. Bovee, "Doctor Huguet: Donnelly on Being Black."

41 *Minnesota History* 286-294  
(Summer 1969)

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A link to Professor Bovee's review of *Dr. Huguet* is here:

<http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHistoryMagazine/articles/41/v41i06p286-294.pdf>



2.

## THE APPEAL: A NATIONAL AFRO-AMERICAN NEWSPAPER

October 3, 1891, at 2

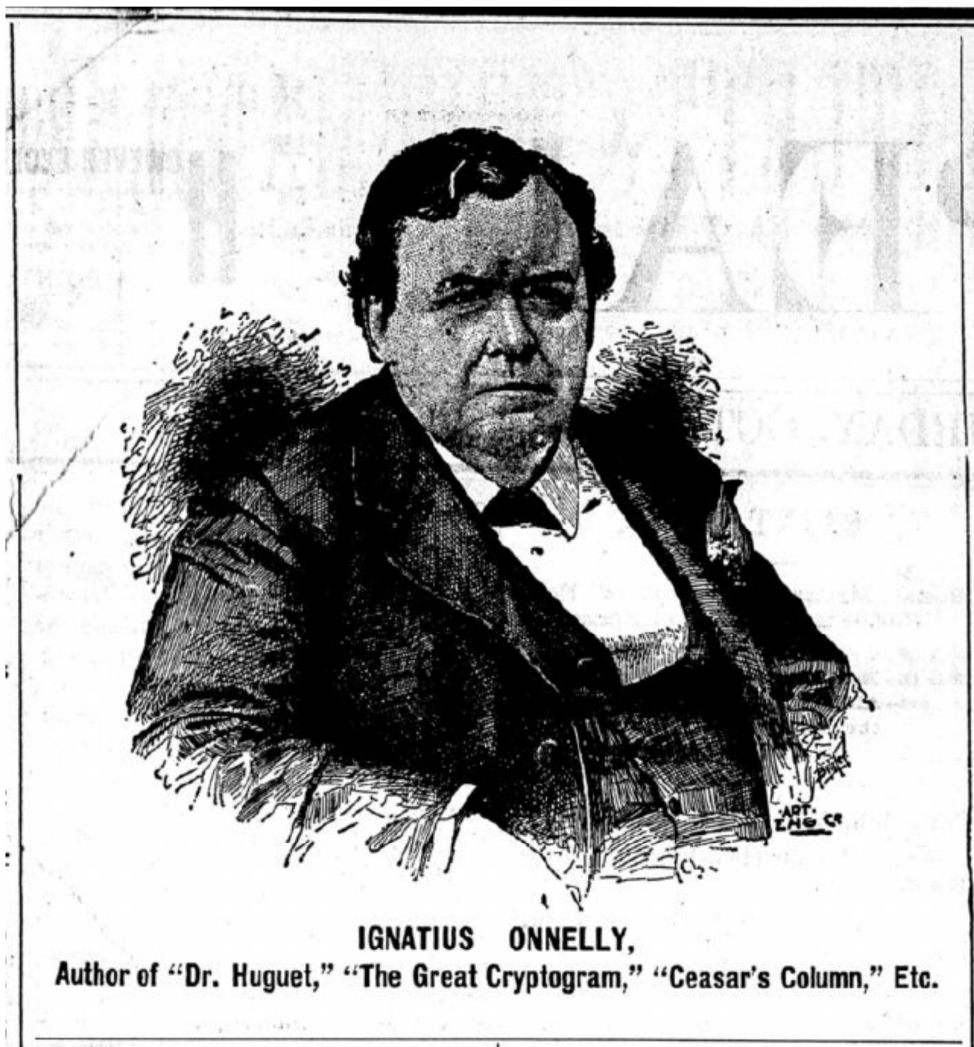
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LITERARY.

"Dr Huguet." By Ignatius Donnelly.  
Chicago, P. J. Schulte & Co, 258 Dearborn street.

Dr. Huguet is an aristocratic Southerner of French descent, possessor of a fine estate in South Carolina. He becomes acquainted with Mary Ruddiman, who attends a boarding school next door to his residence. Having been told that she is fond of books he welcomes her to his library. In the course of their conversation he finds that she not only reads the best of books but that she comprehends that which she reads and profits by it. Dr. Huguet falls in love with Miss Ruddiman and the affection is reciprocated. During one of the Doctor's visits at Miss Ruddiman's, where one of the neighbor's had assembled, the subject drifted toward the Negro. The doctor had political ambitions in which he had been encouraged by Col. Ruddiman and his daughter. However, he spoke so frankly and honestly

as to the rights of the Negro as a man and a citizen that his prospects seemed to grow less favorable.



Miss Ruddiman told him that unless he changed his ideas, he need never hope to be elected to Congress from South Carolina. She pleads with him so earnestly that he finally, though with great reluctance, gives up the championship of the Negro. Leaving Miss Ruddiman's, he goes home and in the night has a vision. He sees the head of Christ with millions of hands of Colored people raised in supplication. He is so much warned that he arises, but what is his astonishment to find that he has been transformed into a burly Negro and instead of being in his own mansion he is in a cabin. He goes into the

street and tries to run out of his black body, but in vain. In trying to reach his house he is arrested as Sam Johnsing, a chicken thief, and is laughed at when he tells the Court he is Dr. Anthony Huguet. He finally gets home to Ben, his faithful servant, who tells him that Sam Johnsing does not hesitate to take advantage of the white body of Dr. Huguet. Being highly educated and wealthy, Dr. Huguet feels that he can do a great deal for the bettering of the condition of the Colored people. The misery that he undergoes and the prejudice to which he is subjected seem almost incredible yet it is the same that is the experience of thousands of Colored people in this boasted land of the free. The doctor labors for the Negro sparing neither time nor money. This makes him obnoxious to some of the whites and they come with a mob to lynch him. He manages to escape and in course of time he is changed to his former white color, marries Miss Ruddiman and they both agree to devote their lives to the amelioration of the condition of the Colored race in America.

Ignatius Donnelly has certainly carefully analyzed the feelings of an educated refined mind when suffering under the restraints imposed by the possession of a black skin. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" gave a true picture of slavery days; "Dr. Huguet" is a true exposition of the conditions which exist today. It shows how a hellish, damnable prejudice in the Southland refuses to recognize and encourage merit if possessed by a person with a black skin.

"Dr. Huguet" should be read by every Afro-American in America.<sup>3</sup>



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<sup>3</sup> The drawing of Donnelly on page 4 is in the original newspaper column.

3.

## *THE GREAT WEST*

September 18, 1891, at 4

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Dr. Huguet.

We have not settled down to a full review of Gov. Donnelly's new book, "Dr. Huguet." It is a novel—but a work of fiction which conveys a political, and moral, and social lesson. He takes a most unreasonable, and improbable, and *impossible* circumstance as having occurred, in order to place his hero in a position to judge of the difficulties under which a black man has to struggle throughout life. This circumstance is the sudden transposition or change, of the mind and being of Dr. Huguet—an educated and refined gentleman—in to the body and surroundings of a "low-down" colored laborer, and the instant change of the colored man's mind into the body and estate of the Doctor.

The first few chapters—say 30 pages—are not so interesting to the average reader of fiction. They are splendidly written, but they are philosophical. A few readers may drop the book before reading through this heavy matter. But thereafter the book grows intensely interesting both as a *story* and as a lesson-bearer. Some of its situations are wonderful; and before the reader is one third the way through it is impossible to lay the book down until finished. The plot may make one thing of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." However, their (sic) is no resemblance except that in each two casts of characters are represented by the same person. No man can read this work of Gov. Donnelly's without being a better man after its perusal.

For sale at the Great West office, price 50c. <sup>4</sup>



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<sup>4</sup> *The Great West* was published in St. Paul. "Justice to the poor is the righteousness of God" was the banner on its front page. It was the organ of the Farmers Alliance, and supported Ignatius Donnelly. Immediately after this review came the following notice: "The circulation of the Great West is now 192,000. We speak of this as a matter of great pride."

4.

*The Hartford Weekly Examiner*

Reprinted in *The Great West*, October 23, 1891, at 4.

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One Million Copies.

Hartford, Conn., Weekly Examiner: — Since the appearance of “Looking Backward,” industrial and economic novels have become the literature of the day, so to speak. And the latest to our notice is “Dr. Huguet,” by Ignatius Donnelly. It is a book of absorbing interest. A very few pages will suffice to convince the reader that it is the production of a master-mind—a philosopher,— and better still, a humanitarian.

The evident object of the author is to show the cruel injustice and profound absurdity of caste prejudice. To facilitate this an involuntary metempsychosis, or exchange of souls, is suddenly effected between the cultured and justice-loving Dr. Huguet and a brawny, ignorant, vicious negro. The reader can imagine the terrible dilemma of the one, and comical position of the other. The Doctor is soon made to realize that the highest order of intellect, and the purest motives avail nothing when confronted by the adamant wall of prejudice against color.

Strong and vigorously written as was “Cæsar’s Column” by the same author, we think this work fully equals that in vivid description, and probably surpasses it in artistic construction. It is interlarded with gems of thought throughout, and proclaims the gospel of brotherly love regardless of race or condition.

There is another object, too, in the writing of the work. It aims to pave the way and show the necessity for the thorough union of the white and black producers alike, to combine the power of both against the Common enemy,—those who absorb the greatest part of the fruit of their toil, without any part of an equivalent in return. And most thoroughly does it accomplish the glorious purpose.

Would that a million copies might be distributed among the people of the South for whom it is especially intended. And no doubt the liberal minded and sagacious leaders of the Alliance will see the advantage of doing all that can be done in this direction.



5.

*St. Paul Daily Globe*

August 31, 1891, at 4.

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NEW BOOKS

Mr. Donnelly has added little to his literary laurels by his latest book, "Dr. Huguet." It is a story of Southern life bearing on the much-discussed race question. The soul of the hero, Dr. Anthony Huguet, after a vision of the Christ, transmigrates into the body of Sam Jobessing (sic), a brutal and wholly repulsive negro. The plot of the story is evolved from the complications arising from the soul of the white man in the negro's body, and the bestial nature of the negro in the white gentleman's body. Mr. Donnelly's two characteristics, a love of Homeric slaughter, and a wholly irrelevant fondness for long quotations and pedantic discussions, are evident in the book. It is not worthy the author of "Atlantis." Its views on the race problem, while strikingly put, are nothing new. The author merely advocates the proper education of the negro. As a novel, "Dr. Huguet" is intensely interesting if one yields to the temptation to skip a page here and there of the labored conversations. The climax is dramatic and thrilling, and had Mr. Donnelly not given us reason to expect something so much better, "Dr. Huguet" would rate as a very successful novel.

