



very faithfully yours,
Charles Aldrich.

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CHARLES ALDRICH.

BY JOHN M. BRAINARD.

The founder and curator of the Iowa State Historical Department was born October 2, 1828, in the town of Ellington, Chautauqua County, N. Y., son of Stephen and Eliza (Nichols) Aldrich. He was of the ninth generation from the immigrant ancestor, George Aldrich, of Derbyshire, England, who arrived in Boston, Mass., November 6, 1631, the genealogical line since being: (2) Joseph, (3) Samuel, (4) Peter, (5) Sylvanus, (6) Stephen, (7) Stephen, and (8) Stephen, the last named being the father of our subject. The father was a blacksmith in early life, afterwards a merchant, lumberman and farmer. He was a kindly, impulsive, energetic and well-informed man. He had been honored as county supervisor and justice of the peace upon the organization of the town of Cold Spring, Cattaraugus County, N. Y., in 1838. The mother died in 1880 at the residence of her daughter, Mrs. Jane Aldrich Lee, at Olean, N. Y., whither Charles in 1882 sent the remains of his father, who died in Iowa, and the parents sleep side by side, in the shade of towering pines, in the beautiful cemetery by the Allegany river. Stephen Nichols, his grandfather on his mother's side, had been a sailor, visiting many portions of the globe, and ended his days as a farmer, at Broadalbin, N. Y. The maternal grandmother was Lucy (Kennicott) Nichols, of whom we have no particulars save that she was a Kennicott, an aunt of Robert Kennicott, the distinguished western naturalist.

His elementary education was such as the common schools afforded, and at sixteen he attended Jamestown academy for a year, but his real education began in June, 1846, when he entered the printing office of the *Western Literary Messenger*, published by Clement & Faxon, in Buffalo, N. Y. In this office he served an apprenticeship to the printers' art, and after working in the villages of Attica and Warsaw, N. Y., and Warren, Pa., in June, 1850, he established the *Cattar-*

augus Sachem, a weekly newspaper, at Randolph, N. Y., which he conducted one year. A file of the *Sachem* is in the Iowa Historical Department. Removing to Olean, in the same county, he established the *Olean Journal*, which he conducted five years, and then returned to the home farm in Little Valley, where he remained until he removed west in 1857.

It was in June of this latter year that he set up in modest office the *Hamilton Freeman* at Webster City, Iowa. The press, type and office fixtures had been hauled across the country from Dubuque, over the prairie roads and through sloughs "without bottom." The prospect—a republican paper in a village of 200 inhabitants, the county all told having but 1,500, and the official patronage in the hands of the democrats—was not the most encouraging to one with less vigor and confident hopefulness. He came quite naturally to be a republican for he was a freesoiler long before his majority.

At the age of nineteen he was chosen secretary of the first freesoil—anti-slavery—convention held in Cattaraugus County, New York. It was in the midst of the discussion of the slavery question, and words were not minced on the frontier in political contests. This result, to the *Freeman* and its patrons, justified the venture, and party lines were soon readjusted on a more satisfactory basis. Subsequently Mr. Aldrich was connected with the publication and editing of the *Dubuque Times*, *Marshall County Times*, and as a writer for the *Chicago Inter Ocean*, and many other papers.

He has served the state in five of its legislatures. He was chosen chief clerk of the House of Representatives in 1860, 1862, 1866 and 1870, and was elected a member of that body by Hamilton County in 1881, serving in the session which began in the following January. It was during this session that he introduced a bill to prohibit the issuing by the railroads of free passes to public officers. This bill was favored by two or three of the leading companies and opposed by others. It became the exciting topic of the session and was hotly debated on the floor of the House and in the newspapers. Mr. Aldrich's remarks in its defense were copied by the leading journals throughout the country, from New York to

San Francisco. No speech of any Iowa man has ever had so wide a circulation. But the bill failed to become a law. This topic was discussed by Mr. Aldrich and the late Judge N. M. Hubbard, of Cedar Rapids, in the *North American Review* for January, 1884.

In 1869, doubtless through the good offices of his abiding friend, the late Hon. J. B. Grinnell, Iowa college conferred upon him the degree of A. M. In 1883 he was one of the founders and is still a member of the American Ornithologists' Union. He is also a member of several state historical societies.

In 1883 Mr. Aldrich started for the Holy Land with his friend, Jacob M. Funk, of Webster City. They traveled in England, Ireland, Belgium, Germany, Italy and France, but went no further east than the city of Naples on account of the cholera, which had begun its march across Europe. Mr. Funk came home two weeks in advance of Mr. Aldrich, who then visited the Channel Islands, Winchester, Selbourne, Canterbury, Stratford-on-Avon, Oxford, Cambridge and Birmingham. He had the good fortune to hear sermons on Martin Luther by Spurgeon, Canon Farrar and the then Archbishop of York. He also heard an eloquent sermon by Cardinal Manning and was kindly received by Cardinal Newman. He crossed the Atlantic twice later on but did not go beyond England.

Mr. Aldrich has devoted much time to the work of securing just and necessary legislation for his state. We will enumerate briefly a few of these measures: In 1858 he secured the passage of a law for the publication of the session laws in two newspapers in each county. In this work he had the hearty support of Cyrus C. Carpenter, afterwards governor; of James F. Wilson, who became one of our United States senators, and of Captain Thomas Drummond, the brilliant Iowa journalist, who was killed at the battle of Five Forks, Va. This law was repealed some time in the seventies, but it had served a good purpose while it was on the statute book. The change in county government (1860) from the old county judge—autoeratic, and often corrupt or inefficient—system,

to boards of supervisors, was due to the advocacy started and continued by him. The publication of the proceedings of the boards of supervisors, the lists of county expenditures and the sheriff's sales of real property were secured by laws drafted by Mr. Aldrich. He drafted and secured the passage of the Iowa law of 1870, which protects from wanton destruction the harmless and useful birds. Of this pioneer measure he has always been very proud. It still remains in the code of Iowa, though slightly amended. In the session of 1882 he introduced and secured the passage of the bill which gave to Judge James W. McKenzie's widow a continuance of his salary for some months. McKenzie was a soldier who "waved the answer back to Sherman" from Allatoona to Kenesaw. He had died while in office from the effect of his army service. He also introduced a bill providing for a state board of pardons, which passed the House but was not reached in the Senate. Up to this session neither House had ever had a legislative calendar. Mr. Aldrich introduced a resolution directing the adoption of this sensible and altogether indispensable custom, but it was pounced upon and fought by sundry economists with more than ordinary bitterness. He secured its reference to the committee on rules, and taking a roll call explained the measure to members individually, promising to pay the expense of printing if, after a week's trial, the House should discontinue the morning calendar. As members promised to stand by this experiment he checked their names. When a majority was secured he got the resolution reported back, but "without recommendation," so cautious and "conservative" was the committee. When it came up it was passed and the appearance of the first morning calendar made the custom a permanent one in Iowa legislatures. The Senate provided for a morning calendar two or three days later, and that excellent measure of true economy continues as a fixed custom to-day. In old times Iowa official publications were only bound in sleazy paper covers. In 1862 Mr. Aldrich secured the adoption of a measure which, after some experiments, resulted in the permanent binding of our public documents. He drew up the program for securing the repeal of

the old "Granger law" of 1874, and the substitution of the commissioner or Massachusetts system. This law passed in 1878 and is yet on the statute book. Upon the publication of *Poole's Index to Periodical Literature* he urged upon the board of State Library Trustees, and advocated the idea through the press, of beginning at once a collection of the magazines of this country and England. This work proceeded slowly at first, but he persisted in his efforts until it became the settled policy of the State Library, and the collection is now one of the largest in the United States. It is one of those acquisitions of which every Iowan may justly feel proud.

In 1862 Mr. Aldrich locked up his newspaper office and entered the Union army. He was made adjutant of the Thirty-second Iowa Infantry and served as such for eighteen months, when he resigned and returned to Iowa. Soon afterwards he was preparing to re-enter the service as major of the Tenth Iowa Cavalry when orders came discontinuing the organization of that regiment. Subsequently Gen. M. M. Crocker tendered him a position on his staff, as he was about to proceed to his command in the department of Arizona, but he was obliged to decline because of private business.

As indicating his natural bent in the direction of historical affairs, it may be recalled that while a resident of Webster City he aroused public interest and secured the placing of a beautiful brass tablet in the new court house, commemorating the names and deeds of the Company (C) contributed by Hamilton County to the Spirit Lake expedition of 1857. In 1894 the legislature appropriated the funds to erect a monument to mark the spot where the massacre began, and Governor Jackson appointed Mr. Aldrich a member of the commission which had charge of the work. Another legislature provided for the erection of a monument near Sioux City to mark the grave of Sergeant Floyd, a member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, who died there in 1804, and was the first American soldier buried in Iowa soil. Mr. Aldrich was a member of the Floyd Memorial Association, which brought the subject to public attention. In 1872 he was appointed by Gov. Cyrus C. Carpenter a member of the commission to investi-

gate and report upon the titles of settlers in the Des Moines valley who had lost their homes by adverse decisions of the United States supreme court. They continued in office until the early part of 1875, their labors resulting in the passage of an act by Congress for a new commission and a report to the general government. Mr. Aldrich was appointed by President Grant as the Iowa member of this commission, whose recommendation for relief passed the House, but failed in the Senate. In the year 1875 he was a member of the United States Geological Survey under Dr. F. V. Hayden, which was engaged that year in Colorado, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico. His letters to the *Chicago Inter Ocean* were widely read, often copied and very interesting. Father Boren, the pioneer miner in the La Plata Valley, Colorado, and the discoverer of Boren's Gulch, named a mountain for Mr. Aldrich. The name "Mount Aldrich" is recognized in the United States geological reports.

For the past eighteen years the Historical Department of Iowa has engaged the chief attention of Mr. Aldrich. It is his development and will remain his most enduring monument. It had its origin in a taste acquired in early youth for the collection of autograph letters, portraits and other personal mementos of distinguished persons, living and dead. In 1884, when this had grown to considerable magnitude, he tendered it to the State. It was accepted by the trustees of the State Library, with the condition that it should have suitable cases, to be kept separate from other collections and that he should be permitted to make additions to it from time to time. He has devoted much time and means to increasing and caring for this "Aldrich Collection," and devised the cases in which the material is kept. These cases have been adopted for like purposes in libraries and other collections. They are superior to those containing the great collections in the British museum.

In 1892, upon Mr. Aldrich's showing to the legislature, that body established the Historical Department, and gave it room in the capitol building. Its development was of slow growth at first, it is seldom that the public's appreciation of the higher things of life keeps pace with the wider views of their

promoters; but in 1897 the legislature made an appropriation of \$25,000 with which to erect a building and purchase the grounds therefor. After a site was bought the executive council deemed the amount too small to erect a suitable building and decided to await the action of the next legislature. During this period the campaign of popular education went on and the legislature of 1898 appropriated \$30,000 more for this purpose. New and much larger grounds were secured and one wing of the building, which when completed will cost \$300,000, was commenced in 1898 and is now occupied by the Historical Department. The educational value of this great work is fully recognized. It is collecting and saving from destruction the material from which the history of the State will be written sooner or later, its walls are adorned with portraits and marble busts of many of its distinguished citizens are to be placed in the art room. A museum of articles mainly illustrating the pioneer conditions of the State is a very interesting feature and is viewed by thousands of people every year. The department is collecting and preserving early and current files of State newspapers and periodicals, so useful for purposes of reference. In connection with the department there is published a quarterly, the *Annals of Iowa*, through which the public is brought in touch with the work of the institution.

Mr. Aldrich has labored to develop a sentiment in favor of republishing such of the early laws of the territory and State as have been long out of print. The first volume (1838-1839) has been issued, and at this writing (July, 1902) the second is in press. The department has also issued the following historical works: Census of 1836, two handsome pamphlets; Hon. Irving B. Richman's *John Brown Among the Quakers and Other Sketches*; the hitherto unpublished journal of the special session of the territorial legislature of 1840; and Shambaugh's *History of the Constitutions of Iowa*. He has also published five Biennial Reports of the Historical Department. It has been found necessary to reprint a few numbers of the *Annals*, the editions having been exhausted. Mr. Aldrich hopes to publish Capt. F. E. Landers' *Historical and Geo-*

graphical Atlas of the United States, and a second and revised edition of Judge Fulton's *Red Men of Iowa*.

On July 29, 1851, Mr. Aldrich was married at Knowlesville, N. Y., to Miss Matilda Olivia Williams, who was born August 8, 1836, in Dansville, N. Y., and died in Boone, Iowa, September 18, 1892, the family having removed there in 1891. Her parents were Aaron and Olivia (Nichols) Williams. Her grandfather, Stephen Williams, had been a soldier in the revolutionary war and was seriously wounded in the battle of Trenton, December 26, 1777, losing an eye and afterwards the other through sympathetic affection. He was blind fully half his life time. She was in full sympathy with all her husband's ambitions, was well and widely known throughout the State, and sincerely mourned at her death. She was a member of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and a lover of the birds. Mr. Aldrich was married a second time November 12, 1898, to Miss Thirza Louisa Briggs, of Webster City, a lifelong friend of his first wife. Their home in Boone is an ideal one, a center of rest and pleasure to their old friends.

Mr. Aldrich's mental equipment is most versatile, with the faculty of immediate concentration upon the subject in hand, and untiringly persistent to its end. His style of writing is concise, lucid, with a dash of quaint, applicable humor and excellent powers of description. There is no straining for high-flown expressions. He has always too much to say thus to waste space. In disposition he is a maker of friends and loyal to them when secured. His enemies, if he has them, are managed by letting them alone, though in his newspaper days the editorial belt may at times have been ornamented with distinguished scalps. He is fond of the society of young people, to whom he has long been helpful in many ways. In religion he is liberal, believing the best expression of faith is in deeds of charity and in sympathy with suffering humanity, rather than in creeds and dogmas. His life has been an illustration of this thought, for most of his work has been done without pecuniary reward. May he live many years to continue this helpfulness.

Boone, Iowa, 1902.

At the request of my friend, Hon. Charles Aldrich, I prepared the foregoing sketch for publication in a *Biographical Record of Boone County, Iowa*, published by the S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, Chicago, 1902. There are seven more years of accomplishment whose facts are detailed in the main in the publications of the Historical Department of Iowa, but it seems appropriate to add another personal characteristic, now that the subject of the article is numbered with "the lost but not forgotten," one which might not be in good taste while he was with us. This endowment will be readily recognized by his intimate friends, but we do not recall having heard it pronounced by any speaker or that it has appeared in published obituaries. It was "his unvarying tenderness to all animate beings!" Those who knew him only in editorial contests, as an army officer, in the administration of duties for the public, etc., would not suspect its existence. But at home, at leisure in the forest or on the prairies, in walks and drives, no one of the Creator's children looked into his face for sympathy and turned away disappointed. The dog and the cat, the horse and chickens, the four-footed denizens of the forest and field—we can almost aver the "birds of the air"—knew him by the name of "Friend!" School children, those unerring judges of our inner life, wrinkled their faces in smiles when this, their friend, passed them upon the highway. So it was that the trees, the barn, and like places within his grounds, carried small boxes for the birds, an opening for the cats, and a shelter for "Towser," which were unclosed summer and winter. To him who understands no further note is needed.

J. M. B.

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