



BENJAMIN F. GUE.
1828-1904.

Pioneer settler, Scott county, Iowa, 1852; Legislator, 1858-64; Lieutenant-Governor, 1866; U. S. Pension Agent, (Iowa and Nebraska), 1872-80; Journalist and Historian in later life.

ANNALS OF IOWA.

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT.

DEATH OF BENJAMIN F. GUE.

This sad event came as a sudden shock to the circle of his immediate friends in this city and elsewhere throughout the State, and elicited expressions of profound regret wherever he was known. He called upon the writer of these lines on a business errand, on the 1st of June last, just before noon. He was the seeming embodiment of health and was congratulated upon his fine appearance. Five hours later he was stricken with heart failure or apoplexy and in a few minutes had ceased to breathe.

While he was a modest and unpretentious man, whose life was a quiet one, he had filled a large measure of public usefulness. He came to Iowa in the midst of the great anti-slavery movement which resulted in the civil war, thoroughly imbued with the free-soil sentiments which prevailed in the north. He had also grown up with very practical ideas relating to the laws which govern towns, or townships, and counties. He was qualified by nature and education to become a prominent and useful citizen. When he came into the Iowa House of Representatives in 1858 the New Constitution had but recently been adopted and there was a necessity for much legislation to conform to that new charter of our rights. His conception of these matters seemed to be intuitive. He possessed the intelligence and the force of character required to make him conspicuous in the radical majority.

The outbreak of the civil war also called for the services

of patriotic and able men. Those who survive from that period will recall the fact that Mr. Gue was one of the foremost representatives in the 7th and 8th General Assemblies, and a leading senator in the 9th and 10th. While he served in the House there occurred one of the most prolonged and earnest contests that have marked our legislative history. The issue was upon the adoption of a representative system of county government in place of the old county judge system which centered all local authority in one man. He was one of the champions of the supervisor system, concerning which he had brought clear and positive ideas from the State of New York. In the war legislatures, in providing for raising, provisioning and arming troops, he always earnestly sustained the recommendations of Governor Kirkwood and Abraham Lincoln. In the founding of our common school system, in the work of securing friendly legislation for the Agricultural College, the State University, and the Normal School, few men had such well defined and positive ideas. Later on, strenuous efforts were made by unprincipled speculators to acquire large tracts of swamp lands in the northwestern part of the State. Gue, with others, fought this effort, which was simply stealing, until they were overborne by numbers.

Mr. Gue came into the State Historical Department with the writer at its organization, July 1, 1892, remaining until 1896. The indexes of the early volumes of *THE ANNALS* show a record of work highly creditable to him as an editor, while important volumes of the proceedings of the Pioneer Law Makers' Association were more largely due to his efforts than to those of any other person.

Mr. Johnson Brigham, in our Notable Deaths, has paid a deserved tribute to Mr. Gue's high character and invaluable services, leaving little to be added here.

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