

row hawks were noticed fitting about the domes and pillars of the State House. When cold weather came they disappeared, doubtless migrating to a warmer clime. They reappeared in their old haunts about the 10th of March following. Simultaneously with their return, the chattering of the sparrows diminished, in many places ceasing entirely, and observers were quite certain that this was due to the presence of these birds of prey, which are so keen and active on the wing.

There were many nooks and corners about the State House grounds and buildings where the sparrows were in the habit of roosting. It was noticed that they ceased to come to many of these places, and that there were indubitable signs of the presence of some larger bird which was occasionally heard during the night. On several mornings quills from the wings of sparrows were also scattered about under these perches. More than this, the sparrows wholly disappeared from more than one locality in which they had become a nuisance—a fact which has been noticed in other towns in our State. It was at once obvious to any one who studies the habits of the birds that the tragedies among the sparrows were due to the presence of screech owls which came to these localities in the night, during the autumn and winter. Evidently those who dislike the sparrows—as most persons do where these birds are too numerous—should cease to make war upon the gamy little owls and the predaceous sparrow hawks.

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### NEW PUBLICATIONS.

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*History of Iowa from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century. Four Volumes. Illustrated. By Benjamin F. Gue. Vol. I, "The Pioneer Period," pp. XXIII, 397; Vol. II, "The Civil War," pp. XVIII, 423; Vol. III, "From 1866 to 1903," pp. XII, 531; and Vol. IV, "Iowa Biography," pp. XVIII, 325. The Century History Company, New York City, 1903.*

In these four handsome volumes, former Lieutenant Governor B. F. Gue has brought together the fruits of his labors for many years past in various fields of our State history. As indicated in the title, the contents of these volumes relate to, 1st, the pioneer history, 2d, civil war, 3d, our history since the war, and finally biographical sketches of notable Iowa men. The general plan of this history includes the following distinctive features: An account of the geological or physical history of the State; a narrative of the careers of our Indian tribes; a record of the exploring expeditions in the Mississippi valley between 1673 and 1836; a narrative of the pioneer life and adventure and of the evolution of civil government from the claim club regulations to written constitutions; the formation of the early political parties and conventions; and a history of the slavery agitation. All of these features are included in the first volume. Then, follow accounts of the part taken by Iowa in the civil war, the development of our educational institutions, industries and commerce, sketches of the history of the individual counties of the State, and a

directory of the public officials, territorial, State and national, from the first civil government established in the territory to 1903. In the fourth volume are short sketches of the lives of over 400 men and women who have taken a greater or less part in the life of Iowa.

No small portion of the contents of these volumes, particularly the narrative from about 1850 down to recent years is in the nature of an autobiography. Mr. Gue entered the General Assembly of Iowa in 1858 and for a quarter of a century he not only saw at close range much concerning which he writes but he actually helped to shape the course of events. Thus there is here and there a special vividness in his accounts because he describes men and events, conditions and causes that were truly a part of his life. He saw them and was a part of them himself. In his description of pioneer days, of the daily life of the cabin and the prairie in the new State, there is a realistic vigor and aptness of expression that come only with personal knowledge. Many chapters stir the reader's blood as he courses along the narrative. The trials and hardships of the pioneers, their struggles with forest and stream, with fire and beast, with Indians and depredators, with speculators and promoters—these things show us the stuff out of which our splendid State has been builded. The same characteristics are especially noteworthy in his narrative of the anti-slavery agitation and of the episodes of John Brown's relations to Iowa. But Mr. Gue suffers from the defects of his virtues. The very fact of his complicity in much of the history of which he writes often blurs his vision and perspective. He frequently fails to distinguish the forest from the trees and underbrush. The reader is now and then bewildered by thickets of details and miscellanies.

Somewhat contrary to expectations, Mr. Gue has given us, not so much a history of the State, but (as he himself describes it) "a cyclopedia of general information pertaining to Iowa." His volumes while they give us to be sure a continuous narrative of the development of the State are characterized largely by a great assortment of varied information rather than by close analyses of social and political conditions and tendencies and a synthesis of the results of minute studies into the State's history. His volumes are crowded with all sorts of facts and data extracted from divers sources, chiefly from public documents and official records that are beyond the reach of the general reader and ordinary student. Owing to this fact that the author had the lay reader chiefly if not wholly in mind, these volumes are without specific references to sources or citations of authorities where one may find the chapter and verse for important assertions. This circumstance, while it makes the narrative much more congenial to the general reader, constitutes a drawback that hampers its use by students and scholars.

Mr. Gue has profusely illustrated all four volumes with reproductions of photographs of most of the important landmarks, scenes and noteworthy men and women of the State. Some of the scenes are very interesting and instructive. Generous tables of contents in each volume and an extended index renders the text readily searchable. For many years doubtless this history will serve as a book for ready reference to men and measures in the history of Iowa.

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