

of Union refugees who had come thither for protection. Wherever "red tape" interfered with efficiency or the prompt discharge of duties, he disregarded it wholly, finding his justification in the unquestioned merit of his transactions. He fairly won promotion by skill and bravery in battle, and the only reason why it was not awarded to him was his lack of deference to mediocrities in high places.

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### THE VALUE OF NEWSPAPER FILES.

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Since the Historical Department was organized in 1892 the writer has occasionally had to defend the effort to accumulate and preserve files of Iowa newspapers. Several good people have expressed fears that these papers would so accumulate as to become a great burden. This is doubtless true, unless adequate space and cases are provided for them. But since the Hon. George E. Roberts, Director of the United States Mint, compiled in the summer of 1896 a great statistical and historical pamphlet—the demand for which reached 160,000 copies—from these newspaper files, there has been less objection to them. It has curiously happened that some of the gentlemen who have most seriously inveighed against this branch of the State Historical Collections have come to the rooms day after day to consult files of newspapers! On such occasions—their eyes having been pried open—they have indulged in complaints that Iowa has not had more of these resources of historical information. It would have been so convenient to find what they especially wanted!

But reference to examples in other communities and countries may serve to justify the very limited work which has been done in this State as well as to smooth the way for its enlargement. Wisconsin and Kansas are striving to secure files of all the newspapers, periodicals, books and pamphlets published within their borders. This fact the writer has often printed in these pages and elsewhere. But just now we have read something of this branch of historical collecting as carried on in the British Museum under the

wise direction of Dr. Richard Garnett, C. B., one of the greatest living specialists in bibliography and library building. Dr. Garnett was lately interviewed and what he said is published in the *London Bookman* for March. In the matter of newspapers here is what Dr. Garnett said:

What to do with the newspapers is still a serious problem. We tried the expedient of tying them up in bundles, but that did not answer, and we have had to revert to the system of binding them.

In view of the vast number of these publications it seems almost beyond belief that it is still found practicable to preserve in the library of the British Museum every book, pamphlet, periodical and newspaper published in the United Kingdom, saying nothing of hundreds or thousands from abroad. But says Dr. Garnett:

We have destroyed a considerable number of imperfect duplicates, and given away a large number of valuable ones, *but at least one copy of everything that issues from the press is kept. Every provincial newspaper will be worth five hundred times its present value five hundred years hence.*

The italics are ours.

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### "THE SONG OF IOWA."

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The following poem which is sung to the air "Der Tannenbaum"\* ("My Maryland"), was written in 1897 by Major S. H. M. Byers of Des Moines, author of the well known war-time song, "Sherman's March to the Sea." It requires time to settle the fact whether such a song possesses the mysterious elements of permanence—whether it shall be accepted by the people as the highest expression of their tastes and patriotic feeling. Upon this we cannot venture a prediction. Suffice it to say, that its reception thus far has been most cordial. It is sung in hundreds of schools and drawing-rooms throughout the State, and has been repeated at public meetings and other occasions times innumerable. The author may be heartily congratulated upon its general acceptance up to this time. He may also indulge a very rea-

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\*"Der Tannenbaum," the old air to which this song is sung, was a popular German students' song as early as 1819. It had been a Volks song long before that, even. During our Civil War, the Southerners adapted it to the song, "My Maryland."

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