

Henry Clay "Dirty" Dean

by SUZANNE BEISEL

The life of Henry Clay Dean is possibly one of the most colorful in Iowa's history. This unique man was so unusual that tales about him are innumerable. Stories about him have been passed along for the past century and have undoubtedly been modified and perhaps over exaggerated. It is, therefore, often hard to separate fact from legend in discussing him, but, whatever—it is colorful.

"Presently a silence fell upon the grumbling audience. A figure appeared on the wide carpetless stage. Hardly a dozen people recognized him . . . in foxy shoes, down at the heels; socks of odd colors and damaged trousers, relics of antiquity and a world too short, exposing some inches of naked ankle; unbuttoned vest, exposing a zone of soiled and wrinkled linen; shirt bosom open, bob-tailed coat, which left four inches of the forearm unprotected—the figure moved gravely out upon the stage and paused dreamily inspecting the house. Finally he flung the vest after the coat and then for an untimed period stood there, like another Vesuvius, spouting smoke and flame, lava and ashes, raining pumice stone and cinders, shaking the moral earth with intellectual crash upon explosion, while the mad multitudes stood upon their feet in a solid body answering back with a ceaseless hurricane of cheers, through a thrashing snowstorm of waving handkerchiefs. When Dean came they thought he was an escaped lunatic, but when he went they thought he was an escaped archangel."

This was Henry Clay Dean as Mark Twain saw him. Lecturer, minister, orator, writer, politician, lawyer, "Dirty Dean" was one of the most colorful men Iowa has ever claimed. With his individuality and unconventionalities he could be called an 1870 "beatnik."

Dean was a stout man of medium height. He became quite plump in his later years and had abundant black hair, a rather dark complexion, deeply set eyes and small hands and



HENRY CLAY "DIRTY" DEAN

feet nearly like those of a woman. He earned the nick-name "Dirty Dean" because his clothes were never clean and always shabby. He hardly had the appearance of being the brilliant orator and intellect that he was.

He was born of English descent in 1822 in Pennsylvania. His grandfather was a bodyguard for George Washington and was a descendant of Henry VIII. His father was a stone mason with a moderate income.

Henry attended common schools and started working at an early age. He studied constantly and was almost a walking library with books always tucked in his pockets and cap. Math came to him by instinct, but by the time he was 12 years

old, he couldn't find a teacher who knew more about the subject than he did.

He became an expert with a hammer and trowel when he helped his father as a stone mason. At the age of 13, he, along with his two brothers, helped his father build a storehouse. Each took up his own corner and when Henry finished his, he threw down his hammer and tools and jumped off the scaffold declaring that he would then try some other way of making a living.

He attended Madison College in Pennsylvania and simultaneously taught school. Shortly after, he kept books for a manufacturer and in turn used his employer's large private library. Here, Henry earnestly studied the law and theology. He was a student of the Bible and was very well read, especially in the classics. In his twenties he became a Methodist Minister and was assigned to a circuit in Virginia. It was said that when he was four years old, he memorized a long Negro sermon which he delighted in delivering to crowds whenever there was a tree stump available on which he could be placed. His audiences were always amazed at his memory and power of delivery and were the same some 20 years later in Virginia.

Dean's reputation in the pre-Civil War camp-meeting, circuit rider days, grew quite rapidly. His sincere and eloquent appeal brought many to the church and his pulpit powers had no peer. In spite of his slovenly appearance, the Reverend reputedly had excellent diction, depth of thought, a brilliant imagination and a remarkable force of illustration.

While in Virginia, Dean went one Sunday to Washington City and asked one of the ministers there if he could preach in his church. His dress was hardly becoming to a minister and he was therefore denied the use of that pulpit. Dean triumphed, however. He obtained a very old rundown church, which, at the hour of his service, was packed with congressmen, legislators, department heads and leading citizens of the city. His reputation had obviously preceeded him.

Dean never ceased to surprise his congregations. An old preacher once said, that he heard Dean making so "powerful a prayer" at a camp-meeting that it seemed "heaven and earth

were coming together." The preacher had a sudden urge to see what Dean looked like while making such a "supreme effort," and surprised he was upon opening his eyes to find "the great man praying mightily while deliberately tying his shoe."

On another occasion while Dean was preaching, he apparently had a tight shoe which was irritating his foot. He endured it awhile and then, without pausing in his sermon, took out his pocket knife, opened it, stooped over and cut a slit in the offending part of his shoe like it happened everyday.

During a revival meeting, Reverend Dean was walking up and down the aisle exhorting penance, when he stopped short as if he had suddenly remembered something of great importance and said, "You all know that good man, our old friend Uncle Johnnie Spencer, the best man God ever made. Well, he lost a horse and wanted I should tell you of it and give you a description . . ." After fully describing the horse, expounding upon its value to Mr. Spencer, and urging that the congregation look for it, Dean went back to praying.

2. The Reverend had very strong opinions which he never hesitated to keep to himself, even during his sermons. During one camp-meeting in a town where several rowdies had lived it up the night before, he started his speech saying, "I have often wondered why God sends bad men to Hell, but I have made the discovery, and that is he sent them there simply to torment the devil."

It was often quite obvious that Dean was vain and loved to have his efforts praised and applauded. Talking to a friend after a sermon he once said, "Gee, what did you think of that sermon? Don't you think I got hold of and preached it well?" Remarks like this were not at all unusual.

When in Keosauqua, he preached on anti-slavery, one of the best speeches he had ever given. After the service Dean leaned over to a friend and said, "Didn't I give them hell?"

He came to Iowa in 1850 and temporarily located in Pittsburgh on the Des Moines River in Van Buren county. He also lived in Keosauqua, Muscatine, Middleton and finally settled in Mt. Pleasant in 1856 with his family and remained there until 1871. He brought with him his Virginia-born wife,

Christiana Margaret. They later became the parents of six children.

In 1855, Dean was honored by being elected Chaplain of the United States Senate for the first session of the 34th Congress. He received the office through a friend of his, Senator George W. Jones of Dubuque. Jones talked to the Senate only a short time before Dean was unanimously elected.

During his tenure Dean gained the admiration and confidence of the senators by giving short, but eloquent prayers. Many eminent theologians had been in the contest for the Chaplaincy and many were as much surprised as they were disappointed when Dean won. A Washingtonite asked Dean, "How in the world did you ever do it?" Dean replied, "I just prayed Hell out of 'em."

Dean was a strong believer in the power of prayer, but didn't believe in prayer in politics. "Not once has the Great Almighty ever interfered in the politics of a hairy nation."

As the tempest which led to the Civil War was growing, Dean's opinions became more radical and he still didn't hesitate to let them be known. He opposed slavery vehemently, even though he sympathized with the South a great deal. Anti-slavery tones began to appear in his sermons. The Methodist Church became greatly involved with the war and divided, with the greater part remaining loyal to the union. At that time, Dean severed his connection with Methodism, feeling that affiliating with either faction would be aiding crime. He then turned to local preaching, lecturing, and public speaking, particularly on political subjects.

He became involved in politics through a rather odd incident. In younger years he was a member of the Whig party, but in the fall of 1854, he attended a Methodist conference in Dubuque which modified his future. It was the custom then to have those attending the conference be the guests of prominent citizens in the town and Dean was assigned to stay with George W. Jones, Democratic U. S. Senator. Mrs. Jones was a wonderfully hospitable lady and always maintained a good table which pleased the guest a great deal. After the conference had been in session for a few days, the Know-Nothings,

having been secretly organized in Dubuque, became very active in obtaining the names of the Methodist ministers and initiating them into their order and Dean's name was included on their list. After he had been elected and the time had been appointed for his initiation, one of the over-zealous ministers told brother Dean that as he had been elected a member of the Know-Nothing organization, it was not proper for him to continue to be the guest of and accept the hospitality of the wife of George W. Jones, who was a Roman Catholic. Dean was an enormous eater and the suggestion that he should give up his nice boarding place greatly offended him. He denounced the suggestion and denounced the Know-Nothing organization in most uncompromising terms.

On the following Sunday he openly rebuked "Know-Nothingism" from his pulpit. Jones and other important democrats who heard him were quite impressed by this and since Dean had openly opposed slavery and favored protective tariff they thought he would be good for the Democratic Party.

Still angered at those who dared to suggest that he refuse the hospitality and excellent meals of the Jones', Dean entered the political canvass for the Democratic Party. In 1854 he went to Virginia and campaigned for Henry A. Wise, gubernatorial candidate who was being opposed by the Know-Nothings. He was elected and Dean's new career had begun. He retired from the pulpit completely and continued his life solely depending upon his power of oratory and radical ideas.

Dean had definite likes and dislikes, and since he couldn't hold his tongue he often got into trouble. There was never a middle of the road with him. He took sides and campaigned vehemently for his remedial concepts of current issues. In a series of letters to Sen. George A. Wise during the last half of the 1850's, Dean stated his opinions on several pertinent governmental problems. His firm beliefs are sternly stated in his own words, "Let no one advocate whiskey selling . . . let nothing be said in defense of slavery . . . I oppose the new constitution (1855) . . . I am opposed in principle to all banking . . ."

Concerning banking, Dean wrote further, "If I were a member of the State Legislature I would oppose all banks, they

are villainous in their conception. They will ruin and enslave the laboring classes anywhere. These poor fools are legislating upon liquor selling, against adultery, against Bawdy Houses—and at the very same time are legislating into being banks and brokers and other money thieves which grasp into their powers the business of the Country—make panicks and drive thousands to drinking to drown their sorrow, and thousands of others by their ill gotten gain engage in dissipation, and the banking system is the father of all these enormities. The bankruptcy of this country is the result of banking. I have thoroughly investigated this question and at great length elsewhere, but as a moral question I oppose it. Paul says, 'The love of money is the root of all evil,' so banking is the foundation of all fraud and swindling. The true doctrine is this—If any man wants to give his note and anybody wants to take it let him do so, just as we do in any case of credit. So if any company trading wish to, let their notes go and let that be the last of it. What right has the state to give character to business companies and virtually endorse their notes as their charters always, and then let the companies or banks break without remedy or redress the moral effects are awful."

Dean had been interested in politics since he was 16 years old though he never cared to hold political office. In 1860 he continued his "hobby" when there occurred a split at the Democratic National Convention. The southerners nominated Breckenridge for president and the northerners nominated Stephen A. Douglas. Dean advocated the cause of Douglas and delivered a series of brilliant speeches in his behalf. He believed that the election of Douglas would avert the approaching Civil War and that it would open the way for a compromise of sectional differences.

In 1868 he labored earnestly to prevent the nomination of Salmon P. Chase for the presidency by the Democratic National Convention, and in the delivering of his speech against Chase, ruined a rosewood table upon which he stood. The next day his attention was called to the ruin he had wrought and he replied that the table was worth less than the Democratic Party in which he believed he had saved by preventing the nomination of Mr. Chase.

During one of his campaign speeches, a member of the audience cried out to Dean, "Mr. Dean, I didn't think political speeches convince anybody or amount to much in the way of converting voters."

Dean responded, "Young man, if the preachers were to quit preaching, the Christian religion would parish from the earth."

The audience laughed, embarrassing the young gentleman, but he came back, "You can lead a mule to water but you can't make him drink."

Dean replied, "Hold his head to the trough until he gets thirsty and he'll be mighty apt to drink."

During his political campaigning, Dean upheld his name, "Dirty Dean," by appearing in the same dirty ragged clothing. On one hot evening he spoke in his shirt sleeves, collar unbuttoned, one suspender slipped from his shoulder and hanging at his side, and both of his shoes untied.

Of his personal appearance, he said, "Alcibiades greatly diverted the people of Athens and set their tongues to wagging by cutting off his dog's tail with a butchers cleaver in the public market place. I have succeeded quite well with my dirty shirt."

On another occasion when asked about his dress he replied, "I have adopted this dress so as to put myself near the common people. I seek for knowledge at the fountain, and when I ask a working man a question dressed as I am, I always get an answer."

Dean was once asked where he resided. He replied that he had no residence. When asked why, he said, "A man is supposed to reside where he had his washing done, and since I never had any done I have no residence."

When the Civil War came, Dean was continually scorned. He openly opposed the war and every Republican newspaper in the state abused him for it. He was against secession of the state and did not favor coercion as the best means of restoring the union. He believed that statesmanship and diplomacy could better adjust the difference between the two sections.

He therefore disliked anyone who favored war. He denounced Seward and Stanton because he felt they wanted war, not to preserve the union, but to humiliate the South and

its leaders. He also spoke against Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln and denounced the war as being unconstitutional, unholy and inhuman.

During the heat of the battle, Dean spoke in Davenport. The first draft had just been ordered to reinforce the Union armies. The hall was filled with "copperheads" and Dean gave forth with a bitter denunciation of Lincoln's administration. A little group of Republicans sat in a corner of the hall, among them Hiram Price. In his speech Dean stated, "There is a singular resemblance between Claudius Nero and Abraham Lincoln. Nero put Christians to death under false pretenses to gratify worshippers of the pantheon: Lincoln corrupted one part of the church to engage in warfare with the other part, and burned 1200 houses of worship; mutilated graveyards; dragged ministers from their knees in the very act of worship; tied them up by their thumbs; had their daughters stripped naked by Negro soldiers under command of white officers."

When Dean finished his venomous speech, Hiram Price sprang upon a bench, his loyal heart quivering with indignation and his voice rang out, "Mr. President, may I be permitted to reply to Mr. Dean?"

"No," shouted Dean, "We want none of your black abolition speeches here. The meeting is adjourned, boys. Let's go," and he started for the door followed by his friends.

Hiram Price shook his fist at the retreating crowd and exclaimed in a voice that rang out like a bugle blast, "Henry Clay Dean, I will give you ten dollars if you and your gang will hear me ten minutes in reply to your infamous harangue."

The stampede didn't stop. Dean and his group left without reply.

In Keokuk, Dean gave one of his anti-Civil War speeches which was quite distasteful to the militia men in the area. As he returned to his hotel afterwards, some dark forms appeared from a dark alley and took him into custody. He was hurried to a cliff in the tall bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River. All were silent and the frightened Dean gazed pitiously around at the determined avengers, but found no compassion there. He raised his head—"No speech," said the captain,

aware of the danger of Dean's tongue. "Just a short prayer Dean, and then to the fishes."

"Thank you," said the condemned man, as if impressed with the soldiers magnanimity. "I have no speech to make, nor will I even take up your time to pray. I have only this to ask." He began fumbling in his pockets, and seemed perplexed a moment as if something had been mislaid. He then brought out an old fashioned Barlow knife and leather pocketbook. "This knife, Captain," he said, "I would have sent to my little son



CHRISTIANA H. DEAN

back on the old farm. I promised to make him a kite when I got back with it but—well, I don't want to disappoint the lad, you know. He'll be expecting me tomorrow and will be down at the gate. Excuse me, comrades but I love the boy—I can't help it." The voice grew husky and the man under the sentence of death turned and looked out over the great river. Some of the men shifted around to the rear.

"It's childish, I know," resumed Dean turning his face to-

ward the soldiers. The captain took the knife sheepishly. "Now, this book contains an old picture of mine and some verses; maybe a dollar or two, also. I don't expect you'll think it's of much consequence, but the dear angel back home—my wife, gentlemen—the sweetest, truest, gentlest woman that ever blessed the life of a man; I can see her now as she kneels beside her couch, praying to the God of the fortunate to guard her husband and bring him safely back to the old roof-tree where we've shared each other's trials and joys these many years. There we've stood beside a cot which the death angel hovered, and where we walked arm in arm through the clover fields to garland the grave of our dead. This is all I can send her, . . . but she'll prize it beyond the gift of kings. She'll—why where are your men captain? Come! I'm ready."

During Dean's appealing last request for his wife, the militia men had, one by one, retreated, leaving the orator alone with his captors' leader. "Oh, they got tired and went home," said the Captain wearily.

"Dean," he went on, "if you and the devil ever meet, my sympathy will entirely be with the gentleman of the forked tail." The crisis had passed.

When the war was over, Dean went back to Keokuk to give a lecture. He started out his lecture by calmly giving his first impression of Keokuk, then suddenly, he turned and shot his hand out at the audience and in a great voice thundered, "Everyone of you is a immoral bit that has dropped from the heavens. I will pray to a just God to have mercy on your souls." This fairly withered the audience and he went on quietly with his lecture for two hours. He told afterward that he had been waiting 30 years for that opportunity.

In spite of Dean's gross appearance and gruff manner, he was basically a kind man. Those who knew him said he never forgot a friend or a face, never forgot to repay a kindness and bore no enmity toward man. Toward a trusting friend who was his ideal of a gentleman, his devotion was unswerving. To his neighbors and friends he always kept open house and his hospitality was marvelous. Dean once said, "Treat everyone as a gentleman should be treated, but let the ivory handle of your revolver be in sight."

His eccentricities kept him from being accepted by the best of society, though many of this class were among his friends. He despised their rules and was, therefore, never completely accepted by them, but he remained loyal to some.

Most of Dean's speeches were very strong and fiery throughout political campaigns and during the Civil War, but his tenderness did show forth once in a while. It is said that at one time he gave a speech which was the warmest and tenderest tribute to womanhood ever heard at the time. These were rare, however, during 1861.

Dean was called a friend of traitors and a rebel sympathizer. In 1863 he was on his way from Illinois to Keosauqua to attend a meeting of the Democratic party. He stopped in Keokuk, not knowing that the only Republican newspaper there was demanding his arrest, and went to a friend's home. At the time there were about one or two thousand soldiers in the Keokuk hospital and Dean's arrival in the city was soon known to them. About dark that evening, 100 or more of the patients who were able, formed in rank and marched to the home where Dean was visiting. They called him out and marched him to the center of main street, formed a circle around him and prepared to hang him. Dean, frightened, said, "for God's sake don't murder me," and told the men he had a wife and children that needed him.

A soldier then proposed that before any permanent harm be done, Dean should be taken to the office of the provost marshal and searched for Rebel papers which he was thought to have been carrying. He was taken to the guard house and searched, but they found nothing on him that would implicate him. For safety, the soldiers placed him in the guard house for two weeks.

Dean wrote quite descriptively of this experience:

"The tone of the press [Republican paper which wanted him arrested] reminded me of the bulletins issued in the dark alleys of Paris or the hand-bills posted on the front of the buildings early on each morning, containing the death warrant of some intended victim of assassination in the most terrible days of the French Revolution."

He described the guardhouse; "On the floor at the farther

end of the room lay a gang of rowdies, who were snatched up for infesting a low brothel in the purlieu of the city. Very near them was a group of reckless rounders, reeking with drugged liquors, infuriated with madness, belching forth oaths and howling obscene songs, compared with which the jovial scenes of Billings Gate and Fishmarket are chaste and modest. This body of ruffians was placed for safe keeping in the Guard House until the whiskey had died out on their brain, and its putrid fumes began to poison the atmosphere for a full city block in every direction around. Intermingled with the others were deserters, escaping hardships and duties of the armies, together with rebel prisoners arrested on their way back to take up arms against the Government. These two classes of gentlemen were holding a philosophical argument, discussing the special merits of their respective armies. There were here confined men who had committed rape, horse thieves, watch thieves, murderers, and traitors, in a common nest huddled together. To add to the interest of this society, every evening the Patrol Guards would gather up their beastly drunk and tumble them in. At about 9 o'clock that night the roll was called and those most able-bodied and desperate were locked in chains together. Then the whole crowd would break out in one long, continuous, hideous yell compared with which the howls of the gang of half starved prairie wolves is musical and melodious.

"For 14 long and loathesome dreary days and nights, I was confined in this nameless place. Sometimes I would go to the window for a draught of pure air, only to catch the flood of dust that went through the streets, and was breathed into my nostrils until my lungs became so suffused that I could scarcely inhale or exhale the air, and my tongue became so enlarged at the palate that I could with difficulty swallow my food. The prisoners ate after the soldiers, and complained very much of their food. I received my meals regularly from Mrs. Redington, a kindhearted Democratic lady of great intelligence and worth, whom even mobs could not deter from doing her duty.

"Through the day, the prisoners, to give exercise to their limbs, would romp and play like wild horses, until the building would tremble at its base. The long loss of rest made me

faint on each returning evening for the quiet of 2 o'clock until 4 o'clock in the morning, which promised the only quiet which could be enjoyed even for sleeping in the pandemonium. All this I patiently endured for the sake of the truth.

"These prisoners treated me respectfully and kindly underneath all their infirmities and misfortunes. Within many of these poor fellows there was a great fountain of the pure milk of human kindness still flowing, and a tender sensibility, affection, for home, and family, and God. I duly recognize their sympathy, and addressed myself to its relief, and spent my time writing letters for unfortunate husbands to their wives who were left in cabins without food or raiment, except as it was earned by mothers at the wash-tub or in the boiling sun. Children wrote to their disconsolate parents trembling on the verge of the grave. A wild frolicsome fellow who had grown sad, talked to me of his black-eyed Mary of the frontier, her playful eyes, her sweet voice, and the last pledge of love he had made to her before leaving for the wars. When he spoke, ever and anon a tear would sparkle in his eye, and the innocence of childhood arise in his countenance, checked for a moment by his unfortunate condition, as the floating clouds obscure the light in its passage over the sun. There were other fellows arraigned for grave offenses, against God and liberty, law and order, whose cases I assisted to prepare for court. There was no amusement other than the place itself. Our only theatrical enjoyment was the outburst of fine Irish wit entirely refreshed by such whiskey as would never have found a place in Ireland.

"This place had a chaplain, of whom the prisoners knew just nothing at all; as innocent of human nature as it warrants as an Englishman's mastiff is of the common law of the land. He never spoke to the prisoners of their real spiritual wants, or assisted them in making their condition happier. Yet, I am told and upon the subject have no doubt that he drew his salary regularly. I left the place with many fond feelings for the inmates. I tried to impress each of them with the conviction that whilst any man be a prisoner, the prisoner should not forget that he is still a man."

After nearly two weeks in the prison, his wife came to Keo-

kuk. He obtained a parole of honor to go to the hotel with her in order that she might take care of him, for his health had slipped considerably. During his stay at the hotel, Dean wrote the following letter to a friend of his.

"My Dear Friend:

Received your letter today for which I am greatly obliged, and I am indeed very much indebted to your son for his kindness in giving me the numbers of Mr. Hamilton's tax receipts. I will be glad to reciprocate the favor at any time here after.

"In regard to the charges against me, having done no wrong I of course fear no Evil. All the purjury all the criminals all the liars and mischiefmakers this side of Hell cannot point to any act of mine in conflict with the government of the United States. So with that regard I am perfectly contented. What they intend to do I impress no inquiry, I am now on parole at the Billings House. I am not well and have a serious threatening of intermittent fever. My wife is also here and is quite unwell and has been for several days. To gratify personal spite I have to board myself and wife at the hotel besides supporting my family in Mount Pleasant and being deprived of my regular business and its profits—this state of things would annoy many men, myself it does not annoy. I am resolved to do right and bear myself as a true man through safety and danger through life and death. I would be sorry to hold by so feeble a tenure the friendship of my friends as to desert them when danger is most imminent and be deserted by them in return.

"The Prisoners Guard and all will bear me faithful witness that I have maintained my integrity as a Democrat and a man even in the filth of the Guard House. These are the things that try our manhood and having tried prove them effectually. The great principles which have founded our government supported our liberties and made us men are not now in the hour of peril to be deserted but rather more than ever to be maintained in their truth beauty and indestructibility."

During his stay at the hotel, Billings House, Dean was unconditionally released from the guard house. He was not well. He was forced to slow down his pace a great deal, but con-

tinued to lecture, write, and even practice law a little. He once said of his health, "Oh it is only fairly good, but I never have a doctor and never take medicine. When I don't feel well, I just take a little cream of tartar—that cools the blood."

In 1869, he wrote a book entitled *Crimes of the Civil War*. In it he restated his beliefs and described the guard house where he was kept. ". . . the central idea of a military prison was to make it as nearly the essence of Hell as was possible . . . In this they made a capital success . . . the room used for the military prison was 16 feet wide by 45 feet long with enough taken off the side to make room for a flight of stairs. In this room the more permanent personnel consisted of some 50 men of almost every conceivable grade, gathered from every rank of society and charged with every manner of offense known to the laws of God and man."

In addition to his book, many of his speeches were published and put into pamphlet form and were in great demand. Among his more famous speeches were: "Mistakes of Ingersoll," an answer to Ingersoll's "Mistakes of Moses," "The Old Senate," and another speech given in 1876 for the literary societies at the college at Mt. Pleasant commencement week.

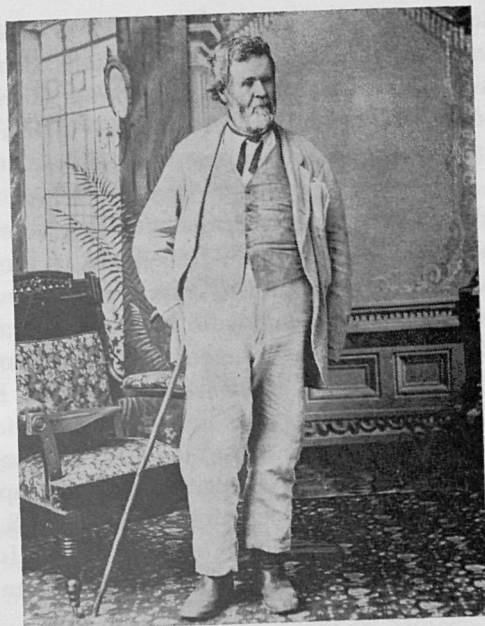
There was much excitement for the latter speech. All of the members of the societies were especially anxious to have the affair staged in good style. They planned to have all of their officers seated on the platform and Dean was supposed to be introduced by one of the presidents,—but Dean said, "I live here and the people know me, I don't need an introduction and don't want any other preliminaries. Leave the whole affair to me. I'll be there on time and introduce myself." When the hour came the large hall was full of people, but not a soul was on the platform. Suddenly, Dean entered by a side door and amid much cheering and hand clapping stepped up on the stage where, without pausing a step, he took off his slouchy hat and sailed it several feet away into the air onto a chair, turned to the audience, and without a formal bow or even a nod of his head, began by saying, "Someone has said that a public speaker should have something to say and say it boldly, not caring whether his hearers agreed with him or not and that is exactly my mood today."

As a criminal lawyer Dean was considered successful, but in many ways he wasn't. He had no formal training and only studied law on his own when he was young. He was usually hired as a defense lawyer and rarely bothered with legal technicalities, depending mainly upon the general principles of law.

It is said that he was connected with the more important cases in the Mississippi Valley. His appeals to the court and jury for lenience in construing the law and the evidence for mercy in rendering judgment were inanswerable and usually effective. His arguments were ingenious and his eloquence inapproachable. He reached the hearts of jurors and brought up the most tender points for consideration in his clients' cases. He would often melt the court to tears and win the sympathy of his audience. If fraud or deceit was ever attempted by his opponent, he exposed it immediately. A June, 1958, edition of the Centerville *Iowegian* stated, "no attorney in Iowa in his day saved more men from the penitentiary or from execution than Dean."

Dean once said to someone, "My mind is like a tar bucket, if anything gets into it it sticks." He was right, for his memory was indeed outstanding. A judge once related that he and Dean were associate counselors in the trial of a certain murder case and that after the evidence had been taken, Dean sat up all night preparing his plea, writing it out in full. As they started to the courtroom the next morning he said to Dean, "You are forgetting your manuscript," but Dean carelessly replied, "I don't need it." The judge said that in spite of having lost sleep the previous night, Dean made a great speech that day in court and that what was more remarkable still, it was almost word for word as he had written it.

Dean was hired for the defense in the case, *Iowa vs. Q. D. Whitman*, which was tried in Union County, Missouri in 1875. To combat the indictment of murder in the first degree, Dean pointed out to the court the previous good character of the defendant, the reliability of his witness, the total lack of premeditation before the commission of the crime and the hereditary taint of insanity in the accused. Although Whitman was convicted, he was given a sentence of 7 years in a penitentiary and was pardoned after serving about two years.



HENRY CLAY DEAN IN HIS LATER YEARS

In another case, Dean was called to defend a merchant who was said to have murdered his clerk. While Dean was in his hotel room before the case, a lawyer friend of his visited him to give him some tips on packing a jury. The friend's suggestion insulted Dean and he replied, "you can't get me to try to pack a jury. If a man is innocent, I can clear him with any jury that has common sense, but if he shall be proven guilty I don't want to clear him."

Perhaps the most famous trial in which Dean was the defending lawyer was that of the Trogdon case. A man named Trogdon was said to have committed one of the most brutal murders in Wapello County around 1867. Dean set up the plea of imbecility and was successful in securing sentence of life imprisonment, thus cheating the gallows. In the course of his argument to the jury, he pointed to the prisoner's head and exhorted about its peculiar shape. He suddenly shouted, "A defect! A defect!" in such a fashion as to convince the jury that the "prisoner was not a responsible being."

Dean's closing words in the case exemplify his powers to

win juries. "It is urged that crime is greatly on the increase. This then is the greater reason why the state should not become the greater criminal in the inhuman punishment of insane, helpless citizens. It is urged that courts have become inefficient. Then is this the greater reason that they should be just, and justice cannot inflict punishment upon insanity. It has been given out that mobs will deal death where juries refuse to inflict unjust punishment. To the wild beasts who make up mobs as all cruelty, all crime, all violence, be committed until the state, the purity of courts, the justice and supremacy of the law must be asserted as the only hope of civilization, the only possible arrest of crime and of the spirit of violence from whenst it springs."

Dean's triumph was complete. His oratory carried the day, and even rather prejudiced observers agreed that while he was not a great lawyer, he was unique, original, and sometimes both if he were inspired.

In 1871, at the age of 63, Dean bought 800 acres of land in Putnam County, Missouri, just south of Centerville, and moved there with his family. He called his farm quite appropriately, "Rebels Cove." Here he lived semi-retired, occasionally defending a criminal and now and then taking a lecturing tour. When he left Iowa it was ironishly supposed that he settled on the Missouri River, which caused an Iowan to say, "The two big muddies have finally formed a junction."

When he retired he was not extremely wealthy, but owned many thousands of acres of land. Land speculation had always been a favorite of his. All of the money he made went into land about as quickly as he made it. In fact, he rarely ever had more than a dime in his pockets.

Most of his time at "Rebels Cove" was spent reading and writing for he had an apathy for physical labor of any kind. He had a magnificent library which was the largest room in his house. In it he had some 4,000 books which were piled on tables and stacked against the walls in a double row which extended barely to the ceiling and went all around the room. The only bare wall spaces were the windows and one great fireplace, but Dean knew where every book was located. A fire in 1876 destroyed his fantastic library including the sec-

ond volume of *Crimes of the Civil War* which he had nearly completed.

At the age of 63, he had heart trouble and became an invalid and would do little but read and write. While talking to his doctor one day he said, "You see that large elm tree down there in the grove, doctor?," pointing to a tree which was visible from his bedroom window. "I've watched it grow from a tiny sprout; it has stood the assault of hailstones, hurricanes, and lightning for many years and now it towers grandly above all the rest. I've selected it as my headstone. It has been through adversity like myself, and now it seems to be resting from strife."

Not many days later while he was sitting on his veranda, visiting with friends, Dean suddenly grasped for his chest and fell dead in his chair. He had known for days that that hour was soon to arrive and as he wished, he was buried beneath his large elm.

In one of his last speeches given to the State Historical Society shortly before his death, Dean expressed his ideas about the Louisiana Purchase which was actually a tribute to the country in which he lived. "I am not old . . . yet I am older than the railroad and magnetic telegraph; older than your state. I have seen but little, yet have seen the triumph of the republic system in America . . . it will yet triumph in Europe. I have heard evil prophecies of the government and each party and statesman is restive lest the government should die with him . . .

"I have seen statesmen, soldiers, philosophers and public leaders swept down like leaves in a burning forest, yet the republic still lives, outliving them all. For more than half 100 years I have seen yon sun rise over the mountain forests, and bathe his golden plumage in the mists of the ocean.

"Each year rising upon lands beautifully adorned, a people more thoroughly enlightened and more jealous of their liberty, science more carefully studied and more thoroughly understood, each year expanding the area of liberty and extending the lines of free thought. Centuries may be traveled in his course, but he will never set upon the rights of man or outlive the government of God, which is pledged to justice, truth and liberty."

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