

ANNALS OF IOWA.

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT.

THE LAYING OF THE CORNER-STONE.

In many respects the laying of the Corner-stone of the Iowa Historical Building was the most important and extraordinary event that has transpired at the capital of our State. It was important as a final and decisive step in the inauguration of a new policy in our educational progress—a new departure from the course pursued during our first half-century. As a State we had been content to speak proudly of our "history," but to leave the details not only unwritten, but to perish from the lack of any effort to preserve them. We boasted of the hardihood, enterprise and courage of our pioneers, who left their eastern homes and pushed out into the wilderness to contend for the soil with the retreating Indians and make for themselves homes, but we were content to let all knowledge of their actions fade out of existence, leaving their memories to perish. So we also boasted of the patriotism and valor of our soldiers, but beyond the meager information contained in the records of the office of the Adjutant General we had little data, nor did we give any encouragement to perpetuating the history of their glorious deeds.

This event was a most extraordinary one, not only from the deep and wide-spread interest which it elicited, but from the character of the assemblage which came together from all parts of our State. It was said at the time, when the fact was known, that every county in the State was represented. The great audience included hundreds of our foremost people—pioneers, soldiers, statesmen, clergymen, educators, journalists and business men—an assemblage, the equal of which in high intelligence, wide culture and representative character has never been seen in Iowa. Certainly

the occasion which could bring such people together must have been one of great significance and importance.

Brief mention may properly be made here of those who participated in the ceremonies attendant upon the laying of the Corner-stone. With the exception of our distinguished Governor, they belong to the now yearly contracting circle of Iowa pioneers:

Governor Leslie M. Shaw was born in Morristown, Vermont, November 2, 1848. In his early childhood his father settled on a farm in the town of Stowe where he grew up to his majority. During this time he attended the common schools, and later the People's Academy at Morrisville, Vermont. At the age of twenty-one he came to Iowa and entered Cornell College, at Mt. Vernon, where he graduated in 1874. In 1876 he graduated from the Iowa College of Law, at Des Moines, and located for the practice of his profession at Denison, Crawford county. Up to this time he had been dependent upon his own exertions in obtaining his collegiate and professional education. He taught school, sold nursery stock, and worked in the harvest fields, to earn money to pay his way. After his settlement in Denison, he devoted his efforts to the practice of law, to banking and dealing in real estate. He is understood to have been very successful. In 1898 Simpson College, at Indianola, conferred upon him the degree of LL. D. He also received the same degree from Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, in 1899. Gov. Shaw has been for many years a Methodist, and has three times been sent as a lay delegate to the General Conference of his church. He was the largest contributor to the founding of an Academy and Normal School at Denison, and has been from its commencement president of the Board of Trustees. He is a trustee of Cornell College, and has in other ways been actively identified with the cause of education. His career in public life is familiar throughout the northern states. He "made a point in history" which will live while Iowa remains a State when he laid the Corner-stone, and he performed a most graceful act in giving a reception in the evening to which hundreds from all parts of the State were invited to meet Honorable Messrs. Harlan and Kasson.

The following persons assisted Gov. and Mrs. Shaw in receiving the guests: Hon. Messrs. John A. Kasson and James Harlan; U. S. Senator William B. Allison, U. S. Senator and Mrs. John H. Gear; Col. and Mrs. D. B. Henderson, Hon. and Mrs. J. P. Dolliver, Hon. John F. Lacey, Hon. Lot Thomas, Hon. Thomas Hedge, and Hon. Smith McPherson (representatives in congress); Ex-Gov. and Mrs. William Larrabee, Ex-Gov. and Mrs. Frank D. Jackson and Ex-Gov. Francis M. Drake and his daughter, Mrs. Henry Goss.

Hon. Azro B. F. Hildreth was born in Chelsea, Vermont, February 29, 1816, and grew up on his father's farm. He learned the trade of a printer in a newspaper establishment in his native town and afterward worked as

a journeyman for J. S. Redfield, a well-known New York publisher—the first publisher of Edgar A. Poe's collected works—during the early fifties. In the year 1856 he purchased an outfit for starting *The Intelligencer*, and shipped it to Charles City, Floyd county, Iowa, where he began its publication on the 31st day of July. This was the handsomest paper of its time in the State of Iowa. It was Republican in politics, carefully and judiciously edited, a clean, excellent journal in all respects. He continued its publication up to 1870, making it one of the most influential weeklies in the State. Some years ago Mr. Hildreth gave his complete files of *The Intelligencer* to the State of Iowa. During the year 1858 he was elected a member of the Board of Education, a body which was abolished by act of the Tenth General Assembly. He became quite well known through his efforts to build up the State University. He introduced the provision for the education at that institution "of both sexes, upon equal terms." This measure met with powerful opposition, but was adopted and has remained in full force ever since. He also represented the Fifty-fourth District in the Tenth General Assembly. Since retiring from his newspaper work he has been engaged in several branches of business, in all of which he has been successful, having acquired a generous fortune. The schools and public library of Charles City have always found in Mr. Hildreth an active, generous friend. At the age of eighty-three years he is still active in business and apparently as useful and energetic as in middle life.

The Rev. Dr. William Salter was born in Brooklyn, New York, November 17, 1821. He was educated at the University of New York, the Union Theological Seminary of New York City and the Theological Institution at Andover, Mass. He came to Burlington, Iowa, in 1843—one of the "Iowa band" which has become illustrious in the religious history of the State. He preached two years as a missionary in Maquoketa, but on the 15th of March, 1846, became the pastor of the First Congregational church of Burlington. He has remained there ever since, and under his ministrations his church has become one of the strongest in the State. Such a continuous pastorate, with a cultured and critical congregation, is one of the severest tests which any man could undergo. But it is a proud thought with his wide circle of devoted friends, that he has continued to meet the highest expectations in the points of ability, versatility, and eloquence as a preacher, while the administration of his general and social pastoral duties has been in the largest degree successful. Aside from these considerations, which have endeared him to "a whole cityfull," he has written more Iowa history than any other man in our State. His "Life of James W. Grimes" (Appletons, N. Y.) is the most important work in Iowa biography that has yet appeared. It seems destined to a long life. He has also written briefer biographies of Henry and A. C. Dodge, Gov. James Clarke, and Major-General John M. Corse, and has frequently contributed articles of permanent interest and value to our historical magazines. He has published a "Church Hymn Book," and many pamphlets of a religious character. His life has been an industrious one, filled with earnest labor for

his fellow men. It seemed most fitting that he should be invited to a prominent participation in the laying of the Corner-stone.

Hon. James Harlan was born on a farm in Clark county, Ill., Aug. 26, 1820. Four years after his birth his family migrated to Indiana, where they made a home in the midst of a dense forest. Tradition says that James became an excellent farm hand, and was his father's chief assistant in clearing the land and making a home. He mainly educated himself after attaining his majority, graduating from Asbury University, Indiana, in 1845, with the highest honors. He settled in Iowa City, in 1846, where he engaged in teaching, as principal of Iowa City College, which was succeeded by the State University. In 1847 he was elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction on the Whig ticket, and held the office one year. In 1853 he was chosen president and professor of mental and moral sciences of the Iowa Wesleyan University at Mount Pleasant, remaining in this position until 1855, when he was elected U. S. Senator as a Whig. His seat was declared vacant on a technicality, Jan. 12, 1857. Five days later he was re-elected for the term ending in 1861. He was re-elected for the term ending in 1867, but resigned in 1865, having been appointed Secretary of the Interior by President Lincoln. He was again elected to the U. S. Senate in 1866, taking his seat March 4, 1867, and serving until the end of his term. Mr. Harlan was one of the leading senators of his time, and his record, as shown in his carefully-prepared and exhaustive speeches, has seldom been equaled. When Charles Sumner and Carl Schurz assailed the policy of President Grant on the San Domingo question, Mr. Harlan was chosen by his colleagues to reply. This speech was considered the greatest forensic triumph in that body since the reply of Webster to Hayne in 1832. It was quite impromptu, for it was late at night, in the midst of other duties, that a number of the foremost senators called upon him and informed him that he would be expected to speak in defense of the President. Readers whose recollections go back to those days will remember that his speech was the leading event of that Congress. Among his associates in the Senate at different times, were Cass, Douglas, Seward, Fessenden, Sumner, Edmunds, Mason, Slidell, Benjamin, Schurz, Crittenden, Trumbull, Jefferson Davis, Bayard, Grimes, Henry Wilson, and many others of the highest class. He, too, was always mentioned as one of the great senators—the peer of the ablest men in that body. From 1882 to 1885 Mr. Harlan was presiding judge of the Alabama claims commission. Since his retirement from public life he has lived quietly at his home in Mount Pleasant. While he has authorized no statement to that effect, it has come to be understood that he is engaged in writing his autobiography. It is certainly to be hoped that this is true, for scarcely another man in our State is so well qualified to present a picture of private and public life in early Iowa and the west. His long residence at Washington also gave him an acquaintance with the leading men of the nation for the past fifty years, and with hundreds beyond the sea. Mr. Harlan, since the death of Hon. George W. Jones, of Dubuque, has been the second senior surviving ex-senator of the United States, and has outlived all others who were members of the senate when he entered it in

1855. He is one of less than half a dozen now living who had seats in that body before the presidency of Abraham Lincoln. That the aged statesman may still be spared many happy and useful years is a sincere wish prevalent throughout our State.

Hon. John A. Kasson was born in Charlotte, near Burlington, Vermont, June 11, 1822. He graduated second in his class at the University of Vermont in 1842, and studied law at Worcester, Mass. Coming west he first settled at St. Louis, but in 1857 removed to Des Moines. From that time until the present he has been almost continuously in the public service. Among the most important positions he has held are the following: special examiner of the state departments of Iowa, 1858; first assistant postmaster general, 1861-63; U. S. postal commissioner to Europe and to the first international postal congress, 1863-67; member of congress, 1863-67, 1873-77, and 1881-84, having been six times elected; member of the Iowa legislature three terms, 1868-73; U. S. minister plenipotentiary and envoy extraordinary to Austro-Hungary, 1877-81; envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to Germany, 1884-85; special envoy to the Samoan conference at Berlin, and chairman of the United States commissioners, 1889; president of the interstate centennial commission (Philadelphia), 1887; U. S. representative at the international Congo conference at Berlin, 1884-85. While in congress he strongly advocated protection of our national industries; secured an amendment to the bankrupt law saving the homestead of the debtor for his family, and was the author and reporter of the act legalizing the metric-decimal system of weights and measures in this country. While in the post office department he formulated the plan for securing international uniformity, simplicity and cheapness in postal intercourse. The result was the establishment of the postal union of the present time. He negotiated the postal treaties now existing with Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Italy and Germany, securing the reduction of the rates of postage about one-half. In 1870-71 he made an extended tour throughout southern Europe, Egypt, the Holy Land, Syria, Turkey and Greece. At the present time Mr. Kasson is special commissioner plenipotentiary for the negotiation of commercial conventions with foreign countries, and member of the British-American joint high commission for the settlement of differences with Canada. In 1890 his Alma Mater, the University of Vermont, conferred upon him the degree of LL. D. While Mr. Kasson has been honored with the highest confidence of several of our Presidents from Lincoln to McKinley, and has rendered the nation services which place him in the highest rank of American diplomats, he is held in especial esteem at his old Iowa home for his eminent social qualities, and for his successful effort in securing the erection of the present Capitol. In 1870 the Capitol was an old, rickety building, not exceeding in its dimensions the one room in the new edifice now occupied by the State Library. Opposition to the new building was at once powerful and bitterly unreasonable. It was denounced as a "corrupt job," and the State was alleged to be filled with "barefooted women and children" who would be still further crushed to earth if this extravagance was

undertaken! So powerful was this opposition, so well organized and so ably led, that Mr. Kasson only secured the passage of the bill by two majority. (The writer, as chief clerk of our house of representatives in 1870, called the roll on the passage of this measure, and therefore speaks from personal knowledge of the events of that time.) It seems scarcely credible today that so wise a proposition, one so clearly dictated by public necessity, and one destined to become so thoroughly approved, could have been fought with such intense bitterness. The obligation the people of Iowa are under to Mr. Kasson for securing this magnificent edifice, for the accomplishment of this grand step in the progress of our State, will not soon be forgotten. He welcomed the Historical Department at its inception, hoping that it might become "the foundation of a still larger collection in the future."

Among the many distinguished people present at the laying of the Corner-stone, no man was greeted with more warmth, as no speaker awoke heartier applause, than Hon. Theodore S. Parvin. It was most appropriate that this should be. He stood before the audience, *the only living representative of the first territorial government of Iowa*. His life has been almost miraculously preserved, while all with whom he was associated in the administration of Gov. Robert Lucas from 1838 to 1841, long since passed away. He spoke with the fire and the enthusiasm of a man in the prime of life. Though never robust, the burden of his eighty-two years rests upon him but lightly. While his life, as is so well known, has been largely devoted to the interests of Free Masonry—having been Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge since 1852—he is the Nestor of our Iowa historical collectors. It has been understood for many years that the largest Masonic Library in the world is that founded by Mr. Parvin at Cedar Rapids. It is the great result of his life work. Aside from its one chief specialty, it contains much of the literature of other secret societies, as well as books and documents which furnish the foundations of Iowa history. But evidences of Mr. Parvin's wonderful industry and great usefulness, his enlightened public spirit and generosity, exist in many Iowa libraries, and will long tell the story of his useful life and do honor to his memory. During its existence—from the time that it was little more than a hope—the Historical Department has had no truer or more abiding friend. His words have always been kind and appreciative and full of encouragement. More than this, he has from the first been a generous contributor to its collections.

Rev. B. C. Lenahan was born in New York City, Feb. 5, 1845. He came to Iowa with his parents in 1850. They settled in Dubuque county, living awhile in the vicinity of the Trappist Abbey of New Melleray and afterward in the City of Dubuque. He received his preparatory education in the High School at Dubuque. Later he attended St. Vincent's College at Cape Girardeau, Mo., and St. Francis Theological Seminary at Milwaukee, Wis. He was ordained as a Catholic priest in 1867. His first charge was at McGregor, but five years afterward he was stationed at Sioux City, where he remained from 1872 to 1886. In 1887 he was placed in charge of the Catholic congregation at Boone, where he still remains. Father Len-

chan is a man of thorough education, especially noted for his knowledge of the Greek, Latin and French languages, the last of which he both writes and speaks. The first missionaries who came to Iowa were French Catholic priests, and Father Lenehan was accustomed often in his childhood to hear them preach in their native language. He is a lover of books, a man of large and varied information. *THE ANNALS* for January, 1899, contained a sketch of Rt. Rev. Mathias Loras, D. D., the first Bishop of Dubuque, from the pen of Father Lenehan. He was one of the Bishop's acolytes or altar boys, and wrote of him from intimate acquaintance. The article referred to attracted wide attention in this State and was commended in the *American Historical Review* of New York City. It is the hope of the editor of *THE ANNALS* that Father Lenehan's recollections of other early Iowa Catholic Missionaries will yet appear in these pages.

COUNTY HISTORIES.

Every state at some period has been afflicted with "County Histories" of a quite peculiar type. Very few of our Iowa counties have escaped "a run" of this sort of thing. They seem incidental to certain stages of human development—like stone axes or rail fences. A typical one is before us at the present writing, and is fairly representative of a large class of these works. About one half of the volume, of something over 600 pages, purports to be a "History of the Northwest Territory," and of the State of Iowa. This, considered as a mere outline, may suffice for people who have little time to read or search for historical facts. But on the part of the editors and publishers it became a sort of labor-saving affair, for the same matter, printed from the same plates, was used in many counties. It also helped swell the volumes to quite respectable proportions. The other half of the book was mostly devoted to the county upon which the publisher determined to carry out his designs—though portions of the matter were so prepared as to be available in almost any county. Then followed a brief "Biographical Directory," in which each of the inhabitants was mentioned—if they were subscribers to the high-priced work. If they paid something more their portraits appear

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