

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF NORTH-  
WESTERN IOWA.

BY N. LEVERING, OF GREENWOOD, MO.

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DURING the winter of 1863-4, the young men of Sioux City organized a debating lyceum for mutual improvement and the general dissemination of knowledge, many of the officers and soldiers who were quartered here at the time participating, and adding much to the interest of the society. The meetings were usually held in the Old School Presbyterian Church, which was invariably crowded on these occasions to its full capacity. Every alternate week a lecture was delivered by some one selected for that special purpose. Among the many lectures delivered that and the following winter were some that would have done credit to some of our noted eastern lecturers, and tickled the ears and called forth the admiration of the most fastidious. The genius, research, and profound ability displayed in some of these lectures was a source of pride to our citizens. I regret that I cannot now call to mind all of the different lecturers and their subjects. I will briefly notice such as present themselves to my mind, but not with the view of doing them merited justice, as my inability pleads my excuse. Rev. Stephen Phelps, of the Old School Presbyterian Church, a young man of much promise and unquestionable ability, who was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Sioux City, was among the first to lecture; subject, "A Proper Economy of our Time." This clerical gentleman was a forcible, eloquent, and flowery speaker, and invariably drew a crowded house, but on this occasion the audience was unusually large, and the lecture was a grand success, abounding with rich and wholesome advice and instruction as to a proper improvement of our time. Rev. — Eddy, of the Episcopal Church, lectured on "Poetry,"

The subject was well chosen. The speaker was a man of fine discriminating powers and flowery imagination, was an excellent reader, and his quotations were well selected, and evinced a fine literary taste. This lecture was received in a manner flattering to the speaker. J. C. C. Hoskins, the present popular postmaster in Sioux City, delivered a lecture on "Geology." Mr. H. is a thorough and polished scholar, and was complete master of his subject. His remarks were full of interest to lovers of this science. We felt quite an interest in the subject of geology, and were more benefited by that lecture than by weeks of study from books. Hon. I. Pendleton delivered one of the finest lectures of the season; subject, "Thought," which was handled in a most truly eloquent manner, calling forth the admiration and most flattering encomiums of a large and appreciative audience, whose minds were carried back with that of the speaker, to the earliest dawn of the giant mind down through the labyrinths of time, and along the golden steps of progress, to the present—from the depths of the surging deep up to revel in the starry-decked heavens—amid shining worlds and flying orbs—dashing down through the blue ethereal, to hear the rolling thunder and play with the forked lightning, and, in its onward flight, descending into the bowels of Mother Earth, exploring her geological structure, her glittering oars and fiery craters—thus embracing all of that expansive field where thought loves to roam. Hon. P. Bliss, then a resident of Sioux City, delivered an able lecture on "Natural Rights." Judge B. was an able lawyer, well skilled in legal lore; was a profound reasoner and an able jurist. He was, at this time, one of the judges of the United States District Court in Dakota, which position he soon after resigned, and removed to St. Joseph, Mo., where he still resides, and has for some years served with distinction on the bench of the supreme court of this state. I cannot well pass the eloquent lecture of John Currier, Esq., without a brief notice—subject, "Rufus Choate." Mr. C. showed himself fully competent to delineate the life and

character of this eloquent and powerful orator. The lecture abounded with glowing eloquence and sparkling wit, highly appropriate to his subject. The subjects of lectures delivered by Rev. — Zingley, W. L. Joy, O. C. Treadway, and others, is not now remembered. These gentlemen were Sioux City's most brilliant literary characters. Hon. M. K. Armstrong, of Yankton, D. T., and the present popular delegate in congress from that territory, gave a most interesting lecture — his theme, "Footprints of the Northwest." This lecture was elaborately prepared and well delivered. Mr. A. was a young man of no ordinary ability, was an able and vigorous writer, was the prime mover in founding the Historical Society of Dakota Territory, and served as its corresponding secretary for several years. He is now serving his second term in congress as delegate. Rev. S. Aughey, pastor of the Lutheran Church at Dakota City, Nebraska, favored the society with a lecture, which was a grand success as a literary effort; subject, "The Scholar's Work." The literary ability of this gentleman gave him an enviable notoriety as a lecturer.

In December, 1863, soon after Gen. Sully had established his headquarters at Sioux City for the winter, Lieut. A. Levering, his aid-de-camp, died. In the death of this officer Gen. Sully sustained a great loss. He repeatedly said that it was the severest blow that had ever befallen him during his military career. He regarded the lieutenant as one of the most accurate and thorough business men that it ever had been his pleasure to meet. The funeral services took place at the First Presbyterian Church, Rev. Stephen Phelps, officiating, who paid a merited tribute to the many virtues of the gallant dead, and eloquently eulogized his character as a brave and gallant soldier. He was buried at the corner of Pearl and Sixth streets. The following obituary was written by Capt. King, a brother staff officer, and appeared in the Sioux City journals: —

"DIED.—In this city, on the 15th instant, of congestion of the lungs, Andrew Levering, of company C, First

Minnesota Volunteers, and aid-de-camp to Brigadier General Sully, commanding district of Iowa, aged thirty-four years. Lieutenant Levering was the first man that enlisted in the defence of the Union under the first call of the president for volunteers. He enlisted on the 16th day of April, 1861, as a private in the First Minnesota Volunteers. He was present and took an active part in the battle of Bull Run, July 21, 1861, and all the battles of the army of the Potomac up to the battle of Fredericksburg. He was promoted lieutenant in April last, and immediately placed on duty on the staff of Brigadier General Sully. He was a gentleman in every sense of the term. He was kind and courteous to those under him, and his high sense of honor and unflinching attention to the discharge of his duties, won for him the confidence and respect of his superiors. Among his brother officers he was respected and beloved for his genial and social qualities, and strict integrity and gentlemanly deportment gained the confidence and esteem of all who knew him."

Lieutenant Levering was born in the city of Philadelphia, Pa. Graduated at the University of Pennsylvania in 1846. Some years after he removed to St. Paul, Minn., where he engaged in the banking and real estate business, which he followed until he enlisted as above stated. It is claimed by Gen. Sully, Capt. King, and others, that he was the very first man in the United States to enlist in defense of his country when insult was offered her glorious stars and stripes, the insignia of American freedom, and the thunderings of war threatened the demolition of her institutions. He was prompted by no other or higher motive than that of pure patriotism, as he gave up the peaceful walks of life and a lucrative business for the hardships and perils of the camp and field, and meagre pay of a private soldier. He asked no higher commission than to carry a musket, and when promoted, it was without any solicitation on his part. Pure patriotism has its reward—the names of its heroes are wreathed in a garland of glory that will last until the

extreme verge of time. About the middle of January following his death, his remains were disinterred and forwarded to his friends in Philadelphia, where they were re-entombed in the Roxborough Baptist Church cemetery, where a large number of his relatives rest, and where he had expressed a desire, a short time previous to his death, to be buried. There rests the true patriot and brave soldier.

Soon after Lieutenant<sup>V</sup>Levering's death, Gen.<sup>V</sup>Sully took up his headquarters, temporarily, at<sup>V</sup>Davenport, where he remained until spring. The General, when in full uniform, was a fine looking officer, and of a very commanding appearance, but when not in uniform, his appearance was that of an ordinary and common person, and he was frequently taken by strangers for a private soldier, or a laborer in soldier habiliments. Soon after his arrival at Davenport, the General substituted a blouse for the starry coat, his hat was rather dilapidated, and, like the balance of his apparel, there was no insignia upon it to indicate his military position. Thus attired, he strolled through the streets of the city unattended. He met with a rough and uncouth fellow, who doubtless had been revelling with Bacchus, and who mistook the General for some ordinary person, and accosted him in a very uncouth and insulting manner. The General, though a kind-hearted and social gentleman, was always quick to resent an insult. Fighting was his business — he could count his battles by the score, and was not very easily bluffed — and quickly placing himself in battle array, he planted his battery of bones between the enemy's optics, and sent him on a double-quick sprawling into the street. The General stopped for a moment to survey the field, and, apparently satisfied with the victory, quietly trudged along. The enemy, recovering his position, with the claret flowing profusely from his proboscis, he roared out: "Who the h—l is that?" When told that it was General Sully, he quietly collapsed into silence, thinking that he had caught a Tartar.

Early in June, 1864, Gen. Sully, at the head of 2,500 cavalry troops, left Sioux City on his second campaign against the hostile Indians in Dakota territory. Small detachments of troops were left to garrison the different points in northwestern Iowa and southern Dakota, but notwithstanding all this military precaution the Indians would steal into the settlements and commit depredations, and in some cases murder whole families. It was the latter part of June or first of July that the Fort Randal and Sioux City stage, when *en route* for the latter place, was attacked near Plum Creek, Dakota territory, by Indians, who were secreted behind a small plum thicket in proximity to the road. There were two passengers and the United States mail in the coach. Sergeant Teas, of the Iowa 6th regiment, who had been detailed on duty in the quartermaster's department at Fort Randal, and Mr. Brenigher, a half-breed. Sergeant Teas was sitting on the front seat of the coach with the driver, and Brenigher on the back seat. There were but two Indians engaged in this murder. At the firing Sergeant Teas fell forward against the dash-board, and expired almost instantly, having been shot through the heart. The driver leaped from his seat and escaped unharmed. Brenigher made an attempt to escape, but before he could get out the Indians were upon him. They at once recognized him, and told him to sit still and they would not hurt him—a proposition that he was not slow in accepting. The savages then proceeded to rifle the baggage, taking such articles as they wished. They took the mail, and without waiting to distribute it, threw the sacks upon the horses, which they mounted, and gave Mr. Brenigher his orders not to stir from his seat until they were out of sight or they would return and kill him; leaving him in possession of the coach they fled. The driver made his way to Vermilion, which place was at that time garrisoned by a company of Dakota cavalry under command of Captain Trip, who, with a small detachment, started in pursuit, trailing them for several miles by the mail matter that they had distributed in their flight. The troops soon found

that pursuit was fruitless and returned. Captain Trip's company was mostly made up of Iowa men who went into Dakota and enlisted. Captain Miner, of Vermilion, Dakota territory, also commanded a company of Dakota cavalry, which garrisoned Sioux Falls. It was soon after he was ordered to that place (if I mistake not) when the company, on its way to that point, encountered a small band of Indians somewhere between Vermilion and the falls. The fight was sharp and desperate while it lasted, which was but for a few minutes. The troops sustained no loss, some two or three Indians were killed, one of whom Captain Miner strung upon his sword, running it through his body. In the latter part of July or first of August, Judge —— and son, who resided at Sioux Falls, were about one and one-half miles out from the town, making hay on the prairie, when they were surprised and butchered by Indians, who were lurking in the vicinity. Not returning in the evening their friends became apprehensive of danger, and a detachment of soldiers was at once despatched to the place where they had been at work; the result was soon known,—father and son were found cruelly murdered. The next day while the soldiers were in the act of burying the dead near where they had been killed, their horses were left some rods from the graves, in charge of a few men detailed for that purpose, whose attention was drawn toward their comrades, who were in the act of lowering the coffins into their final resting places, when some of the men at the graves looked toward the horses, when, to their utter astonishment, they beheld a party of Indians beyond them, and running at the top of their speed toward the horses, which were about an equal distance from both parties. Captain Miner now thought "let the dead bury the dead," and ordered his men on a double-quick for their horses. The order was obeyed with alacrity, the men at every jump, no doubt, thinking "a horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse." The soldiers were a little too fleet for the red hounds, who, on seeing themselves beaten at their own game, faced about and fell

back as swiftly as their red limbs could carry them. The men regaining their horses quickly mounted and dashed off after the red miscreants, who, finding themselves closely pressed, resorted to a strategetic movement, which would have done credit to the most crafty military character. They headed for the swampy sloughs, over which they bounded like antelopes; their pursuers came up on the run, and their horses leaping into the mire, they found themselves temporarily fixed institutions, while the red villians made good their escape.

On the 23d day of July, 1864, the ever memorable grasshopper raid began in northwestern Iowa and southern Dakota. Myriads of these winged miscreants put in an appearance at Sioux City. They were as thick and pestiferous in numbers as the creeping lice and slimy frogs were in Egypt, in the days of God's judgment. So thick were the clouds of these little invaders that the sun was at times darkened; houses, fences, trees, &c., were literally covered with these little pests, and, in fact, the whole face of the earth; where they struck the houses they fell down in piles from one to two feet in depth. Mrs. A. Groniger can testify to the truth of this statement. At the time of their arrival she was making some calls on her lady friends. When she returned to her house she found a conglomerated mass of these little hopping invaders who had hopped in her way, but were not willing to hop out again; whereupon she notified her husband of the barrier that lay at their door, who promptly appeared with shovel in hand, which he applied most vigorously, and soon excavated his way into his domicile. Gardens looked promising, and each family felt that their wants in the culinary department from this source would be amply supplied, but, in about three hours after these little ravenous intruders entered the city, our fondest hopes in this direction were cut as short as the luxurious vegetation that was swept away like snow before the sun; within three hours not a vestige of vegetation that peered above the ground was to be seen, except squash vines,



which alone were left to wind their way. Hundreds of acres of luxurious corn, whose rustling leaves inspired the poor settler with hope, were in a few hours swept away. This was very disheartening. Many of the settlers removed their families to the states, where they spent the winter, and returned in the spring, while others were so disheartened that they never returned. The Indians who lived in the devastated district felt their loss keenly; when they viewed their desolated fields the most pitiful and touching wailings went up from every camp fire to the Great Spirit, who they thought was very angry with his red children.

Charles P. Booge, at the time of this raid, owned and resided on what was known as the Cottage Hill farm, which adjoined North Sioux City on the northwest. He had about forty acres of very fine corn completely demolished by these little gormandizers. Now Charley was a magnanimous man, on the broad gauge style, and had a heart in him as big as a bullock, and was always liberal in bestowing honor wherever it was deserving, even upon the little grasshopper. He had at this time a store in Sioux City, on the corner of Third and Pearl streets. Charley concluded to commemorate the advent of the grasshopper family, and being something of a suigeneris, he took his own way for it. He employed G. R. McDougal (who was quite a genius) to paint him a sign for his store, that the public might know where he held forth. In due time the sign appeared over Charley's store door. Mc. executed the work in strict compliance with the directions of the proprietor. It was painted on canvas about four by six feet. On it was represented a huge grasshopper, covering nearly the whole sign. In front of this hopping monster was a hunter of diminutive size compared with the grasshopper, who had his enormous right foot raised as if to rake the hunter in, who had thrown away his gun, and was making rapid strides for dear life, while his dog, with tail tucked between his legs, was at the top of his speed, and, like his master, the picture of a big scare. The work was well executed, and attracted much attention, especi-

ally of strangers, who would often inquire of Charley what it meant, when they were told that that grasshopper was to represent the father of all grasshoppers. His store was known as the grasshopper store.

It was during General Sully's campaign of the summer of 1864 that Fort Rice was erected and garrisoned by the forces under Generals Sully and Sibley. During this expedition the Indians kept at a safe distance, as the drubbing that they had received the previous year at Whitestone Hills was fresh in their memory. A few small bands, however, followed the expedition at a safe distance for the purpose of plunder, stampeding horses, and picking off straggling soldiers, and when attacked would take shelter in the ravines, which were inaccessible to our troops, but were not to shot and shells, which they found disagreeable, and regarded with fear. "Me puck-a-chee (run), me no like rotten shot," they would say. It was said that a detachment of soldiers *en route* from Fort Clark to Fort Berthold, while passing the side of a mountain, were attacked by Indians from a ravine below. The only field piece of ordnance they carried was a small mountain howitzer, which they packed on a mule, which they made a breastwork of; laying the howitzer across the back of his muleship, they poured a volley of shot into the red scalawags. The concussion was so great that it caused the mule to loose his balance, and he went whirling down the mountain toward the enemy, who, on seeing this kind of ammunition, brought their locomotive powers into full requisition. One of these Indians was afterwards heard to say, "Injin no like big gun, big gun seach-e-do (very bad) when it shoots whole jackass at Injin."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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