

“SECTION 18. This act to take effect and be in force, from, and after its passage.

“(Signed.)

“JAMES M. MORGAN,

“*Speaker of the House of Rep's.*

“S. C. HASTINGS,

“*President of the Council.*

“Approved June 10, 1845.

“JOHN CHAMBERS, *Governor.*”

(To be continued.)

A SCENE IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF IOWA.

BY ELIPHALET PRICE.

Ken Few individuals are aware of the many ludicrous and amusing scenes that were wont to transpire almost daily in the land office at Dubuque, during the early period of its location at that place, which are to be attributed to a want of a knowledge of the laws of congress regulating the disposal of the public domain, and prescribing the metes and bounds of its subdivisions by ranges, townships, and sections. There perhaps has been no person who has ever acted in the fiduciary character of register of that office, who was more esteemed and more extensively acquainted with the settlers upon the public domain than Colonel Thomas McNight, being one of the early pioneers of Dubuque, who had realized, in common with the first settlers of the country, many of the hardships and privations incident to a frontier life. His sympathies and friendship in consequence, were always warmly enlisted upon the side of the settler, whenever the entry of his home was threatened by a speculator, or endangered by the grasping desire of a neighbor to extend the area of his possessions. His social qualities, politeness, and good humor, always secured for him a visit from the farmer whenever business brought him to town.

It was in conformity with this established custom, that we called upon the Colonel one day, at his office, soon after he had entered upon its duties, for the purpose of ascertaining the number of notches placed to our credit by him upon a shingle, while seated upon a bur-oak stump in Main street, officiating as umpire of a shooting-match, in the summer of 1834. The Colonel having seated himself in his arm-chair, with his head thrown back upon the support of his locked hands, and eyes tightly closed, was about entering upon the consideration of the subject, when we were interrupted by a low rap at the door.

"Walk in," said the Colonel, stepping forward with his usual politeness, chair in hand, towards the door, which was already opened sufficiently wide to admit, by a sideling movement, the exact and entire physical proportions of Larry McDermot, a native of the Emerald Isle, who, for the first time in his life, found himself standing bolt upright in a land office, grasping with both hands a little sealskin cap, the rim of which glided through his fingers with a rotary velocity that seemed to account for the loss of much of that grizzly, bristling, character, which it doubtless was wont to have in by-gone days. The profuse locks of sandy hair which swung from the eaves of his forehead, with a slight curl at the ends, waved to and fro as he sidled across the room, cautiously surveying the apartment, and occasionally casting a suspicious glance over his shoulder at a highly colored map, that hung against the wall directly in his rear. Notwithstanding the evidences that surrounded him of the fact that he was in the land office, still there was a doubt seemingly existing in the mind of Mr. McDermot, for immediately approaching the Colonel with a low bow, he observed,—

"Your sarvant, Sir, an' is this the land office?"

"Yes, sir," said the Colonel.

"Well, thin, it's Larry McDermot I am, an' will yez be tilling me if the thray acres is intered, down in the big ravane, where Dinnis O'Driscdel an' meself mowed hay las' year for the Widdy McCormick's cow, jist forninst Bryon O'Shay's

claim, that it was afore he parted with it to Billy^v McGrath for a bit of hoorse?"

"What are the numbers of your claim?" observed the Colonel, turning over his township plats.

"Och! an' isn't yerself that should be knowing the numbers better nor I, when yez kape the land office, and have the rading of the books and the maps, and the likes o' that; an' do yez think it's the likes of Larry^v McDermot that's a big fool to be tilling the numbers of his land to every chap that would be wanting to inter a dacent place?"

The Colonel, who was somewhat familiar with this kind of customers, very good naturedly set himself to work to find out the whereabouts of Mr. McDermot's claim, and recollecting that Mr. McGrath had recently made an entry, he turned to the register of the same, and found that no land in its vicinity had been entered. Accordingly, Mr. McDermot was informed that the "thray acres in the big ravane" were unentered.

"Well, thin, it's plased I am to be knowing the same, an' if it's a drap of the crater that ye'd be taking this mornin', it's Larry McDermot that 'ill be paying for the same," said our hero.

His offer was politely declined by the Colonel, when Mr. McDermot departed, humming to himself as he descended the stairs,—

"I earn my money where I can,
And spend it like an Irishman."

Scarcely had we resumed the consideration of matters connected with the shooting-match, when another rap at the door was answered by the Colonel, with the usual invitation to walk in. Immediately the door flew open, when in stepped Mr. Billy^v Grassbottom, fresh from the country, with a market basket swung on each arm. "Ah, Mr. Grassbottom," said the Colonel, "how do you do?—how is Mrs. Grassbottom, and all the little 'Bottoms? Really, I am glad to see you; do take a seat." "Well, Colonel, we're all monstrous well," said Billy, "except little Benny, he's got the yaller measles con-

sider'bly struck in on him, an' a smart touch of the ager; besides, the doctor says he's gittin' the pollywads in the nose. But, Colonel, that's nuthin', I'm monstrous glad to see you. I cum down in a dreadful hurry. You see, Colonel, my wife Hetty, and Deacon Ciderhead had a fall-out down to quarterly meetin', consarnin' a scripter pint, and the deacon's wife tell'd the folks over to prair meetin' last Monday night, as how the deacon was goin' to enter our milk-house, so I put out right strate, with rather a nice lot of butter and eggs. And seein' as how we're old acquaintances, Colonel, I thought it wouldn't be altogether unnateral if we could strike a swap for them there forty acres with the milk house on." "Why, my dear sir," said the Colonel, "the regulations of the land office department require that we shall take for land nothing but—" "Now Colonel, now don't mention it, for gracious sake, don't; but jest look at that there butter," said Billy, placing his basket upon the table, and removing from the top a neat white linen towel, which exposed to view the ends of delicious rolls of butter, peeping with their ornamental indentations out from beneath the cooling embraces of sundry cabbage leaves. "Now Colonel, jist taste of that thar butter," continued Billy, "if you can find a speck, or a har, or a fly's leg in't, I'll give you leave to take my hat. I don't like to say it myself, Colonel, but somehow I can't help it, there ain't a woman in old Billy Eads's settlement that can beat my wife Hetty makin' butter. Between you and I, Colonel, I reckon the only fault she has, is, she's a little too pertickler. The other day as I was startin' down to mill with a grist, she hollered out to me, and sez she, 'Bill, if you dont come back and chunk up that thar milk-house, and keep them rotten pigs o' your'n from sleepin' in there o' nights, I'll scald every one on 'em!' Well, sure enough, Colonel, when I cum back from mill there war'nt a pig on the place that had a bristle on him to raise in a wolf fight. And now, Colonel, I want you to look at them eggs; if every one on 'em ain't fresh, I'll give you leave to take my hat," at the same time, Billy having taken an egg from the basket, threw his right foot forward, while the left

was so adjusted as to operate as a prop from the rear, and having given to his hands the scroll-like character of a spy-glass, with the egg at the further extremity, he placed the magnifying instrument to one eye and held it up to the light, while the other was kept securely closed by the corner of his mouth, which was screwed down to an angle of forty-three degrees, with perhaps a fraction over. Having satisfied himself that all was right, so far as the contents of the egg were concerned, he observed, "Now, Colonel, I want you to look at that thar egg; if you see a chicken wigglin' 'round in it I'll give you leave to take my hat." The Colonel, not wishing to withhold the gratification it seemingly would be to Mr. Grassbottom to give to the character of the egg a proper investigation, at once expressed a willingness to comply with his request, and having assumed the proper attitude under Billy's direction, proceeded to inspect its interior qualities, but, unfortunately, having given a downward screw too much upon the corner of his mouth, the consequence was, the shell yielded to the pressure of his grasp, which clearly demonstrated the truth of Billy's statement, "there war'nt no chicken there," but the odor which pervaded the room fully entitled the Colonel to Billy's hat, which had previously been risked on the genuineness of the egg. Just then we thought we saw a change come over the countenance of the Colonel, like to that of Macbeth in the dagger scene, as he stood with arms extended in front, and fingers widely spread, from between which dripped the contents of the egg directly upon the shingle-preserved reminiscence of the shooting-match. In the meantime Billy had decamped with his butter and eggs, leaving the milk-house exposed to the threat of Deacon Ciderhead.

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