

## EARLY DAYS IN KEOKUK.

There is no man, I take it, that is not proud of being an Iowan. All men, and women too, have, or should have, a love for their early associations and their early homes, but there is no Iowan that does not feel more proud of his adopted, than his native, state. And I hold that all this state greatness is the result of the foundation laid by the "old settlers," and more particularly the "old settlers," of Keokuk, up to about 1850, when civilization first began to require a police force to preserve order and watch them. Up to that time the "old citizens" managed their own affairs in their own way. At that time almost all the citizens had nick-names—names that were more appropriate to their characters than their real names, such as "Sweet William," "Doublehead," "Heels," and others, not so pleasant to repeat. "Sweet William" kept the "Rapids Hotel," the leading hotel of the place for many years. Sweet William and wife were true noble Christians; they not only kept hotel, but they had the only livery stable, the only dray, and the only water cart, in the town. The livery stock was two horses,—Boreas, named after the steamer of that name then running to Keokuk as a packet, and which could be heard for miles before her arrival. Boreas had the heaves, but did duty as dray and water cart horse. Sometimes he would refuse to draw his load; on such occasions Sweet William would *talk to him*, insisting that he had fed on oats that morning, and that it was very ungrateful in him not to work fairly. Boreas would, generally, after such talks, do his duty. Arab was the saddle horse, and was named Arab because he was supposed to have all the bad qualities of an Arab steed; he was small of body, but long-legged.

Amongst other things to make it amiable at Keokuk about this time, was the removal of Hummer from Iowa City to Keokuk, to establish his new zion that was not to be consumed at the last day, and the pleasant uncertainty of the title to the "Half-Breed Tract." Some Boston friend of Alfred Hibbard, of Des Moines county, commissioned H. to go to Keokuk and

look after his interest as one of the owners of that tract. Hibbard got to Keokuk in the evening, and stopped at the Rapids. At supper there was a full table, a large part being the officers and crew of a steamer that had frozen up a few miles above the rapids, and the crew had left and were on their way to St. Louis. Soon after setting down at the table, the steamboat mate commenced a quarrel with a pale, weakly, Morman, who was then working for Charley Moore, a Blacksmith. Moore took up the quarrel, and, with his chair knocked down the mate. This was a signal for a general free fight. The table was overturned, Sweet William prayed and begged, but the fight went on, until Moore, Devil Creek Bill Clark, and other of their friends, drove from the house the steamboat party. Hibbard, escaping to his room, locked and bolted the door and slept. Just at daylight he was aroused by hearing loud talk in the street. On looking out, he saw Dan Hine with a shot gun presented at Moore, and threatening to shoot him, Moore quietly standing, advising a true shot if one was made. Capt. Ad. Hine and other friends interfered and took off Dan. Hibbard then went to the stable to look after his horses, but he found the stable door open, and his horses gone. Sweet William at once saddled Arab, and Hibbard pursued. Eight miles above town he overtook his horses, but in getting down from Arab the saddle turned, and Arab dashed from him, kicking up, down, and all other ways; this started his own horses, and they ran so that he had to follow them eight miles farther before he overtook and captured them. Arab got home safe, minus the saddle. Hibbard got back for late dinner, but that is the last night that he has ever stayed in Keokuk. Up to my latest dates from him, he had not even walked on shore in that town from a steamboat, and the Boston friend had to get another agent to look after his land.

About this time, a tooth carpenter from New York city, by the name of Shotwell, put out his shingle, probably the first shingle of the kind put out in the territory. Shotwell, of course, stopped at the Rapids. He had a fine suit of black, suitable to Broadway, but not exactly such as was then worn

in Keokuk. He had been a spoiled child of good fortune, as he assumed, was greatly offended at the want of refinement, good manners, and good society around him, and let no opportunity escape for letting the people know it. Tooth carpentering was then in its infancy in Keokuk; added to that, Shotwell's manners, he soon became strapped, and his suit thread-bare; in fact, he was soon without money to provide the liquor necessary to maintain the dignity of so important a personage, and he would occasionally join gentlemen in a social glass when scarcely invited.

Besides the Rapids hotel, citizen Brown had started a little tavern in the side-hill, the lower floor used as a dram shop, and the hotel above. A little tailor got leave to put up a board in one corner of the bar-room for a shop; there was hardly room to sit on his three-cornered board. One evening Brown gave a party, and while the dance was going on above, Captain Dierdoff, a merchant, and now living in Oregon, and Captain Add. Hine, came in to take a drink; Shotwell walked up to join them; Dierdoff turned upon him, and being a powerful man, he took hold of S.'s coat and literally tore it from him. The little tailor, seeing a big man on a little one, jumped from his board to separate them, when Hine gave him a lick and push that sent him back under his bench. Captain Spence Ball, a sort of Hercules, the son-in-law of Brown, hearing the row below came rushing down, swearing that if there was any fighting to be done, he wanted a hand in it. The little tailor crawled out from under his bench, and said to Ball, "You can take my hand, sir, if you want to; I am satisfied." This little speech was the fortune of the little tailor. The tooth carpenter left. I have not heard of him since, and it was many years after before a successor put out his shingle.

When the city was incorporated in 1844, the city council established a wharfage tax, and made "Citizen Brown" wharf-master. Brown had a man of all work about his house,—a little Irishman by the name of Tommy Walker. Tommy was short-legged, and talked through his nose, but was faithful and honest in all things. There was nothing like a wharf; not a

dollar had been expended to make a landing, by the city, or individuals. The only place a boat could land at low water, was at the mouth of Main street, where a bar was made by the wash from the hill. The first taxable landing, after the passage of the wharfage ordinance, was a little raft of lumber, from Wisconsin, owned and run by a perfect specimen of a long, gangling, bony, Yankee, from Maine. The raft was the result of a winter's lumbering. It was poor lumber, and poorer sale, at that day. The wharfage was *five bits*, a rather formidable sum for that time. Tommy Walker was sent to collect the tax. The lumberman, with many and hard oaths refused to pay. Tommy went to <sup>v</sup>Munger, a lawyer, and one of the city fathers, for advice. Tommy said the raftsman might not "mean to fight, but he talked badly." Munger and several of us went down with Tommy to secure the "five bits." The money was paid under bitter protest. Tommy, with proud satisfaction at his success, walked on shore, holding the money, all in silver, in his palm, and turned to take a last look at his vanquished enemy. This enraged the raftsman, and when he opened his full batteries, and such swearing has never been excelled, even in Keokuk, winding up against the Irish in general. When he stopped from sheer exhaustion, Tommy, in his nasal tone, holding up the money, said: "Permit me to say to you, sir, that I appreciate this money much more than I do your language." This was too much for the raftsman; he broke for Tommy, when, if ever short duck-legs were made to do duty, they were on that occasion. Tommy had about twenty feet the start, and he made his employer's door by a neck. On the raftsman's return to his raft we all gave him a wide berth. I think that Yankee raftsman has not been in Keokuk since.

The first church that was organized in Keokuk was of the true blue <sup>v</sup>Presbyterian, organized about 1843. John Anti-<sup>v</sup>christ was the principle man in the church, religiously and financially. Sweet <sup>v</sup>William and <sup>v</sup>wife were members. An Englishman was the minister. The church was not large, but made up in general cussedness what it lacked in numbers. John Antichrist had the only ox team in the town, and had a

monopoly of the heavy hauling, as Sweet<sup>v</sup> William had of the livery, dray, and water-cart business. John<sup>v</sup> Antichrist had formerly lived and kept hotel near Matty<sup>v</sup> Van Buren, and has often shown me his books, with a charge of twenty-five cents against Matty for night's lodging, still unpaid. John was not exactly a lawyer, but was always in the law. He could not have enjoyed his Sunday prayer if he had missed a law-suit during the week. His law-suits were about all conceivable things, and with all classes of persons, not sparing his brother church members. Finally, when the great debt of nature could be put off no longer by demurrer or special pleading, John made a will leaving forty acres of land adjoining the town, to the first<sup>v</sup> Congregational church that might be organized in the town. This will furnished food for the lawyers of Keokuk, and kept John in remembrance for many years, and, may be, up to date. The land became very valuable, and the Congregational church was organized, but I think the lawyers got more of the proceeds of the land than the church has. Good Sweet William and Aunt<sup>v</sup> Nancy have gone home to a happy reward from all of their troubles in the "Rapids," and with "Boreas," and "Arab." And I am sure that John Antichrist had troubles enough here below to last for all time to come; and, besides, he was one of the kindest and most accommodating neighbors, and best of citizens, except you had to law with him occasionally. He would loan you money at any time to get to sue you for it, and then loan you the money to pay the cost. Poor John! there are none such left. The good old days of Keokuk are gone, never to return. Houses then did not need to be locked; tools were safe to be left over night where you had used them in the day; goods could lay on the wharf untouched. But, alas! civilization has changed all this. Refinement and the police go hand and hand.

T.

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