

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 a hundred years I've seen yon sun rise over the mountain forests, pass through floating clouds, and bathe his golden plumage in the mists of the ocean.

Each year rising upon lands more 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 he travel 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.

AMELIA BLOOMER.

BY JOHN H. KEATLEY.

IT is a difficult task to attempt the biography of a lady, and much more so when that lady's life has furnished such an abundance of material as makes the duty of selecting more delicate and discriminating. The subject of this sketch has filled a prominent and useful place in public affairs for many years, and accomplished much in the revolution that has marked the pathway of the past two decades.

Amelia Bloomer, with her husband, Hon. D. C. Bloomer, has been a resident of Council Bluffs for many years, and during that time they have formed many pleasant and endearing attachments. Her maiden name was Amelia Jenks, and her birthplace Homer, in Courtlandt county, in the State of New York. Her mother

being a member of the Presbyterian church, she, at a very early age was taught those cardinal principles of Christianity which have clung to her and molded and shaped her opinions ever since. Her education, aside from that obtained at the fireside, was acquired in the district schools as they existed in those days. The lesson of self-reliance was learned by her at an early period. For a short time previous to marriage she was a teacher in the public schools of her own neighborhood, and in that capacity absorbed that interest in general education which has developed one of the angles of her many sided and noble character. Her heart has always been with the free schools of the country, and her interest in the same began when there were few of these institutions in the land. In 1840 she became the wife of D. C. Bloomer, and with him took up her residence in Seneca Falls, N. Y., where they remained until the fall of 1853. In 1842 Mrs. Bloomer became a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and has ever since remained a sincere and devout communicant of that religious society. In girlhood, almost, she took an active interest in the temperance movement that then began to crystalize under the name of "Washingtonians," and besides giving aid and comfort to the temperance cause with energetic effort, she devoted much thought to the question of the abolition of slavery. Her husband, at that time, was the editor and publisher of a Whig newspaper, but strong anti-slavery sentiments frequently found their way to the public through its types. The young wife, full of her own convictions of the right, was timorous, and hesitated to try her pen as a writer. Her husband, however, induced her to make the attempt, and gradually her hand grew steady and firm until in a few years her style, grace, and force as a writer, were recognized. In these years her habits were retiring and reserved. She naturally shunned publicity, but gave utterance to her convictions, after mature deliberation, in the hope that her thoughts might be of use to her people. In

January, 1848, she commenced the publication of a temperance newspaper called the *Lily*, and for six years, she alone, with success and energy managed its columns. Five years of the time at Seneca Falls and one year in Ohio, whither she and her husband had removed. During the last year of the existence of this journal the health of Mrs. Bloomer sensibly declined, owing to the frequent calls upon her for lectures, to which she always responded. It was impossible for her to make excuses, and finally she and her husband resolved to seek a retreat in western Iowa, in anticipation that many years would elapse before the excitements that had surrounded them would be able to reach them again. In this they were disappointed, for only a few years brought them, though on the frontier, into the midst of these excitements again. Her paper had ample encouragement and reached an one time a circulation of four thousand, which in those days was seldom accomplished by any of the public journals. Started as a temperance organ, it gradually became the advocate of the enfranchisement of women — not in its Woodhull-Claffin sense, but in the education of the sex, and in the giving to them such rights in law as would protect them against the arbitrary dictates of those who call themselves men. The *Lily* was the first newspaper in the country that took the advanced platform of Woman's Rights, and that has shaped much of recent legislation to the detriment of the lords of creation. Reform in dress was one of the ideas seized by Mrs. Bloomer. In her journal she advocated a style that has never been adopted except by a few. Before us is a well executed engraving, made in 1851, as she appeared in the once famous Bloomer costume. She is of medium height. From the neck to waist the dress and sleeves are plain, and such as are worn usually by women of moderate taste.

The skirt reaches a little below the knee. A full pantalet gathered in ruffles over the top of the shoe is all that constitutes the Bloomer costume. In speaking of

the cut from which we have taken our ideas, the editress herself says that the picture was taken from a deguerreotype, and goes on: "In the main it is a very good representation of our dress, though not as perfect a one as we hoped for. The artist has failed to show the trousers to as good advantage as we could wish. Of the face we will say nothing. Those who know us can best tell if there is any resemblance, and those who do not know us can imagine it to be a correct likeness if they choose. * * * * It matters but little as we are not ambitious to show our face to our readers; all we seek is to let them see just what an 'immodest' dress we are wearing, and about which people have made such an ado. We hope our lady readers will not be shocked at our 'masculine' appearance, or gentlemen mistake us for one of their own sex."

To make these statements at that time took a great deal of nerve. It foreshadowed an innovation of our established customs, and appealed to a higher order of moral courage than we ordinarily see. The curious frequently ask us, "Does Mrs. Bloomer still wear the dress which bears her name?" She does not. When her health and the weather permit, she may be seen taking her drive in the plain and ordinary dress of those of her own sex. She has a very pleasant home circle, and the parlors of the Bloomer family are frequently enlivened by the young people of the city who take delight in meeting Mr. and Mrs. Bloomer under their own roof-tree.

To say Mrs. Bloomer has been a remarkable woman would be inadequate. Before us is a copy of the New York *Herald* of February 9th, 1853, containing a *verba tim* report of a speech she delivered in that city on that evening, the eloquence of which would honor many a man who attempts to court the favor of Hermes. It is impossible for her to be idle. When the Woman's Suffrage Society of Iowa was organized she was its Vice President, and at its second meeting its President. Ever since she has been in the front rank of the movement,

ready and willing at all times to aid the cause in every respect, and never shrinking from duty. During their residence at Mount Vernon, Ohio, she was associate editor of the *Western Home Visitor*, a weekly literary journal of extensive circulation. In the spring of 1855, she and her husband moved to Council Bluffs. In the winter of 1856, she addressed the Legislature of Nebraska on the subject of the right of woman to the ballot, and the territorial House of Representatives shortly afterwards passed a bill giving women the right to vote, but it failed in the Council. If we had the time and space we might multiply interesting incidents in the life of this extraordinary woman. Want of both compels us to desist. She has never been blessed with children, and though not a mother herself she has always had an adopted family of little ones around her to give tone to her warm and generous heart. She and her fond husband have traveled the rugged path of life together for many years, and seem to live for each other. Both are highly respected by all who know them. Both are regarded in their declining years as having contributed greatly toward the advancement of the interests and prosperity of their adopted state, and of the city of which they, at an early date, became inhabitants. The hope of their friends is that they may live long together to enjoy that peace that comes from a consciousness of having tried to discharge one's duty.

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