

## WILLIAM B. ALLISON AND IOWA SENATORIAL POLITICS, 1865-1870

By *Leland L. Sage\**

Just as the Civil War was ending in triumph for the Union cause, a rather inglorious but significant chapter in Iowa senatorial politics was beginning. The roll call of names involved reads like the membership list of Iowa's Hall of Fame: James W. Grimes, James Harlan, Samuel Jordan Kirkwood, George G. Wright, James F. Wilson, John A. Kasson, William Boyd Allison, and many others of secondary standing. Senator Grimes was nearing the end of his career; of the remaining names on the list, Allison would outstrip all in the race for office and fame. And yet Allison found no easy path to victory.

In 1865 William Boyd Allison was a relatively obscure Congressman from the Third District of Iowa. Later panegyrists were to assert confidently that he had greatly helped Lincoln in winning the war and saving the nation — a remarkable claim in view of the fact that he did not begin his congressional service until December, 1863. His first-term committee assignments were unimportant, and he was not a pro-Lincoln or Conservative Republican but a staunch Radical affiliated with such other Radicals as Edwin M. Stanton, Kirkwood, Grimes, and Wilson. In 1865 his record would not reveal anything outstanding, and yet there were personal qualifications that brought his name prominently into the list of those considered for senatorial honors in that year.

A good word picture of him at this time is the following description, written by "Linkensale," an Iowa correspondent in Washington, whose articles were widely published in Iowa newspapers:

Mr. Allison of the Third District is the youngest man of the Delegation. He looks like a man of brain, energy and backbone. If he

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be not a clever fellow, in the best and highest sense of that phrase, there is no sense in looks. He has so much of the milk of human kindness in his nature that if one had lost his reckoning in a great city and should see Allison in a crowd of a dozen men, he would walk straight up to him and tell him of his perplexity — so good natured is the very phiz of the member from the Dubuque District. He is almost always smoking, and evidently enjoys his Havana hugely. The only unmarried man of the delegation, he is, of course, the best dressed man. He is a good speaker, a fine lawyer, an entertaining conversationalist, an indefatigable worker, and an adroit politician. He will do honor to his District, and the State.<sup>1</sup>

The year 1865 offered a tantalizing temptation to a man as ambitious as Allison. The evidence shows that he wanted to run for the Senate in that year, but he accepted the advice of his true friends and thus saved his career. One false step here and his whole future might have been ruined. The setting of the drama is rather simple. In March, 1865, Senator James Harlan announced that he would resign from the Senate in order to accept appointment by President Lincoln as Secretary of the Interior.<sup>2</sup> The obvious sequel would have been for Governor William M. Stone to appoint ex-Governor Kirkwood (the leading Republican in Iowa, after Grimes and Harlan) to serve until the forthcoming election by the legislature in January, 1866. This would have given Kirkwood a natural advantage in the contest for the remaining years of the "short term" and for the succeeding full term as well. Governor Stone at first gave every indication that the appointment

<sup>1</sup> "Linkensale" [Lurton D. Ingersoll] in *Muscatine Journal*, reprinted in *Cedar Falls Gazette*, Jan. 15, 1864.

<sup>2</sup> The resignation was effective May 17, 1865. Shelby M. Cullom, *Fifty Years of Public Service* (Chicago, 1911), 135, says Harlan's appointment was due to the intercession of Bishop Matthew Simpson of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This reference is strengthened by the fact that Harlan had been a student at Asbury (now De Pauw) University, Greencastle, Indiana, at the time that Simpson had been president. See Johnson Brigham, *James Harlan* (Iowa City, 1913), 17, 30, 33, 36. Harry J. Carman and Reinhard H. Luthin, *Lincoln and the Patronage* (New York, 1943), 311, say that Elijah Sells, auditor of the Treasury Department, gave "powerful backing" to Harlan. They also say that President Lincoln conferred with Governor Yates and Senator Trumbull of Illinois "and others" regarding Harlan. They further point out that Harlan had come to have very close relations with the President: at the Second Inaugural he was Mrs. Lincoln's escort; Harlan's daughter, Mary, was often escorted by Robert Todd Lincoln, whom she later married; Harlan was at Lincoln's side when he made his last public address from the White House on April 11. Elijah Sells, an Iowan and a prominent fellow Methodist, had changed to the Post Office Department about the time the Harlan appointment was in the making. He was later rewarded by Harlan with appointment as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Southern Agency.

would be forthcoming as a matter of course. Days lengthened into weeks, however, and the long-expected announcement did not materialize. To add to the confusion and excitement, Secretary Harlan soon tired of or saw the hopelessness of his position as a cabinet member under Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson, from whom he was poles apart in politics. Rumors that Harlan wanted to return to the Senate began to float around.<sup>3</sup> His new interest was believed to be in the long term that would begin on March 4, 1867, leaving the remainder of his former term to someone else.

As the days dragged by almost every politician in Iowa, including Allison, was suspected of being an aspirant in the contest that was pretty much Kirkwood against the field. Governor Stone did not appoint Kirkwood, seemingly because his own fortunes demanded withholding the prize to use it as a trading point in securing votes for his own renomination for governor. Finally, Stone turned against Kirkwood outright.<sup>4</sup>

With all of this high and low politics in the air, it would have been very easy for Allison to slip into the contest on the grounds that the fortunes of his friend and benefactor, Kirkwood, were so uncertain. This was apparently what he almost allowed to happen. A letter to Kirkwood from Allison's own mentor, Jacob Rich, gives a view of the matter. Rich was the recently retired editor of the Independence *Buchanan County Guardian* and just beginning a long career as the chief strategist for the Grimes-Kirkwood-Allison faction of the Republican party. He wrote Kirkwood in March that the Dubuque *Times* had just "come out flowingly for Allison." He blamed this on W. S. Peterson, editor of the *Times*, who had induced newspapers in Delaware County and in Independence to follow suit. "All the best and wisest men" were for Kirkwood, not Allison, he continued. Shubael P. Adams, a Dubuque Republican, claimed that the movement was a "trick" started by another Dubuque Republican, E. C. David, but that it had no strength. Rich then continued:

<sup>3</sup> Howard K. Beale, *The Critical Year, A Study of Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction* (New York, 1930), 64, 99-106, analyzes Harlan's dubious ethics in remaining as a member of Johnson's official family long after a difference of viewpoint had developed. Professor Beale's interpretation of Harlan is strengthened by a consideration of the Iowa senatorial politics involved in his actions.

<sup>4</sup> Dan Elbert Clark, *Samuel Jordan Kirkwood* (Iowa City, 1917), 305-306. The story is given in the same author's *History of Senatorial Elections in Iowa* (Iowa City, 1912), 132-42; also, see W. M. Stone to William Penn Clarke, No. 127, *William Penn Clarke Correspondence* (Iowa State Dept. of History and Archives, Des Moines).

And not, you will understand, because we have anything against Allison. He is a splendid fellow, has made us a good representative, and is very popular with us. In almost anything else he could have the most cordial and earnest support of all of us. I would run my legs off to serve him in almost anything else, and others who are for you, and against this movement, would do the same. . . . I wrote Perkins, of the Cedar Falls Gazette, and he has come out for you instead of Allison, as Peterson requested. . . . If I thought Allison would really tolerate this movement, I should think it best for you to come up and do a little work, but otherwise it would not be necessary. . . .<sup>5</sup>

Kirkwood's correspondence reveals his awareness of Allison as a potential rival. Alonzo B. F. Hildreth of the Charles City *Intelligencer* was one of the most trusted leaders of this period. On March 27, Kirkwood wrote him of his interest and hopes for success:

It has for some time been understood that the Union men of your part of the State desire that their wishes shall be potential in the Senatorial question. . . . The resignation of Senator Harlan has precipitated the question, and I learn that my supposition and belief are both correct. Some of your people prefer Mr. Allison, basing their preferences mainly upon his locality. Others prefer some one else, although he may be outside their particular locality.

Kirkwood added that he did not want to tell Hildreth how he should vote, but hoped for his support.<sup>6</sup>

This letter from Kirkwood, which by the way is a perfect example of this type of political correspondence designed to feel out the sentiment of the leaders, elicited a long response from Hildreth. On April 1 he replied that he had just returned from Chicago, had stopped over in Dubuque, and had met Allison who had also just arrived.<sup>7</sup> Allison had assured him that the use

<sup>5</sup> Jacob Rich to Kirkwood, March 12, 1865, No. 958, *Samuel J. Kirkwood Correspondence* (Iowa State Dept. of History and Archives, Des Moines). W. S. Peterson, sometime editor of the *Dubuque Times*, retired from that position on January 18, 1866. See Cedar Falls *Gazette*, Jan. 19, 1866. Shubael P. Adams and E. C. David were prominent Republicans in Dubuque but not consistent supporters of Allison's political ambitions. Concerning Jacob A. Rich, see George E. Roberts, "The Career of Jacob Rich," *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, 13:165-74 (April, 1915). Henry A. Perkins and his more famous brother, George Douglas, were publishers of the Cedar Falls *Gazette* until 1866 when they took over the *Sioux City Journal*.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Aldrich, *The Life of Azro B. F. Hildreth* (Des Moines, 1891), 393-4.

<sup>7</sup> This statement, together with a newspaper story that Allison participated in the Lincoln memorial exercises at Dubuque on April 20, gives fairly good evidence that

of his name was without his knowledge or consent, and, after conferences, had promptly notified Stone that he was not a candidate. Hildreth's own idea was that Stone was merely playing a game, pretending to want the gubernatorial renomination, but actually desiring the Senate place for himself. He suspected Stone of wanting to appoint someone to fill the vacancy who would not be a candidate for the long term, leaving that open for himself. After comments on the strength of the north and south factions in the state's politics, Hildreth admitted that the Dubuque influence was strong in his district but that the "rural" leaders were tiring of the city's domination of the district. "They now have every good Government appointment but one, drawing salaries to themselves . . . of thirty or forty thousand dollars. And yet Dubuque City and County never voted the Republican ticket!" Editor Hildreth put the substance of this letter into an editorial just five days later. "There can be no doubt that Governor Stone had decided to appoint Col. Allison to the Senate for the purpose of securing votes for himself, for that office. That game [is] being blocked. . . ." <sup>8</sup> This would seem to indicate that in Hildreth's mind, Allison was the kind of appointee that Stone could safely put in without fear of rivalry for the long term.

It is only fair to add that at this same time Stone was writing to Kirkwood, reporting that he had seen the charges of the David conspiracy and the statements which accused Stone of being a party to the "movement." Stone ridiculed the whole idea, denied that he had made any promises, and assured Kirkwood that he was in no conspiracy. <sup>9</sup>

That Kirkwood took seriously the Allison prospects for the appointment is to be seen in the following letter to him from Jacob Rich:

Yours of the 29th ult. came to hand two or three days since. You argue with me the point respecting a concession of the short term to Col. A[llison] in case he recd the appointment. The case is hardly a practical one, in view of the action the Colonel has taken, but still I want to say a word about it. I did not see, Governor, how we could concede the short term without conceding away all our arguments. We did not urge your claims because you were a cleverer, more social, more companionable fellow than

Allison was not in Washington at the war's end and at the time of Lincoln's assassination.

<sup>8</sup> Azro B. F. Hildreth to Kirkwood, April 1, 1865, No. 961, *Kirkwood Correspondence*; *Charles City Intelligencer*, Apr. 6, 1865.

<sup>9</sup> Stone to Kirkwood, March 30, 1865, No. 960, *Kirkwood Correspondence*. Stone repudiated the story as given in the *West Union Record*, edited by Andrew J. Felt.

Allison, for we dont think you are. Nor because we liked you personally any better than the Colonel, for we dont. Nor because our interests, disconnected with the general interest, would be better served by you than him. You know the Colonel's excellent social characteristics, and know, also, that we could depend upon him for having our local interests subserved. But the ground we took, the only ground that we could take, the ground that it was our pride and strength to take, was that your selection was best for the public interests, for the State, and for the Nation. That at this time, particularly, it was incumbent upon us to put into such positions, the ablest, most practical men we have. In this was our whole argument, our whole strength. We could not concede to anyone else a portion of the time to be filled, without conceding this away. If Mr. Allison was the proper man for two years — for these two years to come, pregnant with great questions — he was the proper man for a longer term. If you should be in the Senate for six years from 1867, you ought to be there for the intervening time to 1867. . . .

I like Allison, Governor, as well as you, or any one, and I'm anxious that this whole matter should be fought right here, on his account. I knew it could not be best for him, and I wanted him to know that there was a good deal of uncertainty about it, so that he would not go into it at all. I knew that a good way to make him feel this, was to let him know that you were in the field for the short as well as the long term. I was afraid that a concession of the short term, with the appointment, might with the possibility of success for both terms, induce him to go into the contest. . . . And of one thing I am well satisfied, namely, *that the prompt and active efforts made by your friends*, has kept the Colonel out of the field and in that much simplified the contest, and made surer your success. . . .<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately we do not have Kirkwood's answer, but the contents must have been satisfactory, judging from Rich's reply. Writing on April 10, he says: "I was much pleased to have yours of the 6th tonight. . . . I am told confidentially that the *Dubuque Times* will be out for you within a few days, probably through Allison's influence. . . ." <sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Jacob Rich to Kirkwood, April 4, 1865, No. 964, *Kirkwood Correspondence*. Italics added. A short excerpt from this letter is given in Clark, *Kirkwood*, 307. The constant reference to Allison as "Colonel" may perplex the reader. It is an allusion to Allison's appointment in 1861 as an aide to Governor Kirkwood. He was given a title of "Lieutenant-Colonel of Volunteers."

<sup>11</sup> Rich to Kirkwood, April 10, 1865, No. 965, *Kirkwood Correspondence*.

The fight for the senatorship dragged on through the summer months. John A. Kasson, Representative in Congress from the Fifth District, was frequently mentioned for the office. Another candidate informed his friends of his willingness to accept the office, though admitting his lack of optimism. This timid soul was William Vandever, a prewar Congressman who had left Congress to enter the service. Now a brigadier general, Vandever apparently had a hard time in coming to a full realization of the changes in political fortunes since the days when he had left for the wars. If he now expected to return home and receive the acclaim and rewards of a hero, he soon found himself disillusioned. "A week or more ago," Rich wrote to Kirkwood, "I received a letter from Gen. Vandever dated Goldsboro, April 1st, on the subject of the Senatorship, and the General desires it understood that he is a candidate and wants me to write him as to the prospects." Vandever had also written to William Penn Clarke, but without betraying any such high hopes.<sup>12</sup> Rich's opinion of Vandever's chances was outlined in another letter to Kirkwood:

Your letter, enclosing that of the Gen. is this moment at hand. I am glad to find my ideas so much in accord with yours. . . . I have no idea that Vandever could secure any strength. Allison is infinitely more popular and what Allison could not do, Vandever can have no show of accomplishing. Bemis, Hart and myself will probably go to the Convention, perhaps others. I think we can influence the Dubuque delegation to a judicious course. . . .<sup>13</sup>

This "judicious course" undoubtedly meant the giving up of Allison and the support of Kirkwood.

Kirkwood had letters of support from Judge George G. Wright, Peter Melendy of Cedar Falls, and Annie Wittenmyer, Iowa's gift to the nursing corps, who now wrote from Washington with great political realism, urging Kirkwood to defeat Stone's renomination for governor so that he could not use that office as a steppingstone to the senatorship. For that matter, Stone wrote the famous "virtual promise" letter to Kirkwood on June 2. He would make the appointment, but not until after the convention.

I do not think it advisable for you to be at the State convention,

<sup>12</sup> Rich to Kirkwood, Apr. 30, 1865, No. 971, *ibid.*; Vandever to Clarke, *Clarke Correspondence*.

<sup>13</sup> Rich to Kirkwood, May 16, 1865, No. 973, *Kirkwood Correspondence*. George W. Bemis and L. W. Hart were Buchanan County legislators and politicians. Bemis was a representative in the 8th General Assembly, Hart in the 10th and 11th.

as it would help to give color to the assumption that there is a bargain and sale between us, and sway the friends of *other* gentlemen against me. . . . You will be Senator and I Governor again, if our friends understand each other, and are *prudent* and *discreet* in their management. . . .<sup>14</sup>

Far more important, to Kirkwood, was the assurance received from Secretary Harlan in July. Not yet an openly avowed candidate, Harlan wrote:

When I received yours of the 28th ult. I intended as soon as I could have sufficient time, to write a full statement of my understanding of the position of parties likely to come in competition with you for the office of Senator. . . . I therefore now write to say that as far as I know, my friends will support you for that place, and I do not doubt your election. I am not sure, however, but I would like to swap places with you after you have grown a little tired of a seat in the Senate, and feel like taking a little recreation in running after thieves that have been burrowing about this Department, and living under its protecting aegis in the states and territories. How would you like it? Please write me fully, frankly and if you choose in confidence. . . .<sup>15</sup>

A cabinet place and a senatorship were just two trifles to be traded back and forth at pleasure! Harlan may have written with a partial sense of humor, but before long he was showing his hand. On September 3, Jacob Rich reported to Kirkwood that he and Allison had gone to see the Secretary and both believed that he would now run for the long term. He added that Vandever was at home and a candidate but without strength; he had become "terribly obnoxious to pretty much everybody in Dubuque." As for Allison, he "assures me constantly that he has no aspirations and no hopes, and seems earnest enough for you. *I can't find that any one encourages him. . . .*" Another report on Harlan came from no less an observer than Senator Grimes, who wrote on September 27: "Harlan is here [Burlington] though I have not seen him. I am inclined to believe, from what I hear, that he wants the long term, that [Fitz Henry] Warren wants the short term. . . . I think it of vast importance that you go into Allison's district before election."<sup>16</sup>

The attitude of John A. Kasson is colorfully described by Charles C.

<sup>14</sup> Stone to Kirkwood, June 2, 1865, No. 979, *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Harlan to Kirkwood, July 18, 1865, No. 995, *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Rich to Kirkwood, Sept. 3, 1865, No. 1014; Grimes to Kirkwood, Sept. 27, 1865, *ibid.* Italics added.



Nourse, not altogether an objective observer in view of his belief that Kasson had knocked him out of a district attorneyship in favor of Caleb Baldwin. He closes a long letter to Kirkwood in this vein: "Kasson has not returned. He will not be an *open* candidate but will be on hand to play McCawber in case there is any close contest about it."<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, Stone had won renomination for the governorship, and at the election in October had been re-elected by a 16,000 majority. This was a considerable decline over his vote in the 1863 election, which he had won by a 38,000 majority. The state of alarm among Republicans over the post-war turn against them is evident from comment by one of their leaders, Colonel George Cartie Tichenor of Des Moines. Colonel Tichenor was a Kentuckian transplanted to Iowa, a War Democrat who had come over into the Republican party "with flaming sword," to use his own flamboyant expression that so perfectly expresses his personality, and he had acquired a position as aide-de-camp on the staff of General Grenville M. Dodge. Like Jacob Rich, Tichenor was just now beginning a long career as a scout, reporter, and manager for the Grimes-Kirkwood-Allison wing of the party. He wrote of his disappointment in the decreased Republican vote in the elections of 1865 and the need for hard and shrewd work if the party's program were to be saved.<sup>18</sup>

Stone had not lived up to his "virtual promise" to Kirkwood to appoint him for the short term, so it became evident that both short and long terms would be decided upon by the General Assembly in January, 1866, uninfluenced by the effect of an appointment. Allison gave Kirkwood one of the last reports he received before the senatorial election finally took place. Writing from Dubuque on November 4, he says:

As to senatorial question I have nothing of special moment that is new. The quid nuncs have many speculations on the subject. It is believed here that Gen'l Vandever is a candidate, and I think Brush is for long or short term. I think most of those elected [to the state legislature] in my district are for you. . . .

Hubbard I see is announced but I am well satisfied it is without his consent. I have heard also that Gen'l Warren is a candidate for the short term. My own impression is you will have no diffi-

<sup>17</sup> Nourse to Kirkwood, Oct. 21, 1865, No. 1031, *ibid.* Charles C. Nourse was a distinguished attorney of Des Moines. Caleb Baldwin was an attorney from Council Bluffs.

<sup>18</sup> Tichenor to Kirkwood, Oct. 24, 1865, No. 1034, *ibid.*

culty if Mr. Harlan is not a candidate. If he is I think he might become formidable. Some of our papers are talking of a Northern [Iowa] man, which could be well enough if we could unite. But I think this not possible from what I learn. I would be glad to know how matters look below & what your information is. Will Gov. Stone appoint? It might be important to have a full representation [in Congress] in the beginning, as from present appearances the earnest men ought to be in full force in both branches. I expect to leave about the 21st. I would like very much to see you but cannot come to Iowa City. Let me hear from you. . . .<sup>19</sup>

Shortly after Allison wrote the above letter, the rumors that Harlan actually was a candidate for the long term gave way to certainty. By late November it was generally accepted that Harlan and his friends were working for the senatorship. Kirkwood's chances for the long term immediately declined, since Harlan had a strong and loyal following throughout the state.

Another new factor in the race was the promotion of the candidacy of General Grenville M. Dodge by some of his former staff members. The political genius of Colonel Tichenor began to emerge at this time; another leader of the future, Colonel Cyrus C. Carpenter of Fort Dodge, also began to capitalize on his military connections by going in for politics. Both of them urged General Dodge to run for the Senate. Carpenter was apparently trying to head off General Vandever, Tichenor to get revenge on Kasson. Another who had strong leanings toward Dodge was Herbert M. Hoxie of Des Moines, United States Marshal for Iowa and now holder of a Credit Mobilier contract. In reporting to T. C. Durant, the railroad promoter who was much interested in Iowa and Nebraska politics, Hoxie estimated Harlan's strength to be the greatest, Kirkwood's next, and after them Kasson and Hubbard with rank uncertain. "General Dodge would be strong and I think with proper effort could come in if Harlan should not be elected on first ballot, which he cant be. . . . I want to see you before I do much in the Senatorial matter."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Allison to Kirkwood, Nov. 4, 1865, No. 2477, *ibid.* Asahel W. Hubbard of Sioux City was Congressman from the 6th District. Professor F. A. Brush was sometime faculty member and president of Upper Iowa University, Fayette.

<sup>20</sup> Carpenter to Dodge, Dec. 1, 1865, *Dodge Personal Biography*, II, 442; Tichenor to Dodge, Nov. 13, 1865, *ibid.*, 437; Tichenor to Dodge, Nov. 29, 1865, Box 11, *Dodge Papers*. Tichenor says of Kasson: "He treated me shabbily and I shall pay him off at all hazzards [sic]." Hoxie to T. C. Durant, Dec. 21, 1865, Box 11, *Dodge*

Jacob Rich was so confident of Kirkwood's election that he wrote Kirkwood that he had gone to Washington to accept a clerkship which Grimes had obtained for him and which Allison wanted him to accept.<sup>21</sup> Another Kirkwood supporter, Shubael P. Adams, was Allison's Republican rival in Dubuque. He wrote to warn Kirkwood to expect a "General Conference of the Methodist Church in Des Moines about the time the Legislature meets," an obvious dig at Harlan's supporters among Methodist preachers.<sup>22</sup>

Kirkwood's greatest assurances came from no less a leader and pillar of strength than Senator Grimes himself. In a series of letters from Washington, Grimes informed Kirkwood of the pro-Harlan efforts being made from that center and furnished him with facts for use in his campaign, although holding him to secrecy as to the source of the information. Some letters were sent from Burlington, the home of Fitz Henry Warren, a strong Harlan man and also a strong Warren man. The letters began in September and continued until the election in January, 1866. A few sentences chosen from each letter will illustrate the attitude of Grimes. Early in October he wrote:

I am not sure that there is to be an effort on the part of the gentleman named to secure the long term. I have discovered no evidence of it since I wrote you. I hear from all quarters that you are the "coming man" & I think there can be no trouble about your election. . . . See every member possible and not only secure their pledges but prepare their minds to resist the machinations of F. H. W. [Fitz Henry Warren] who will be sure to propose all sorts of trades, & *dickers* with everybody. . . . Make no trade with any mortal. The people are for you for both the long & short term and insist upon having both. . . . Do no fail to have

*Papers.* The *Grenville M. Dodge Papers* are at the Iowa State Dept. of History and Archives, Des Moines.

<sup>21</sup> Rich to Kirkwood, Nov. 21, 1865, No. 1081, *Kirkwood Correspondence*. Senator Grimes was chairman of the Committee on Naval Affairs. It is of great value in the appraisal of Allison to note this tie-up with Grimes. Rich was elated over the job, with its pay of \$6.00 per day and the opportunities it afforded for instruction in national and world affairs.

<sup>22</sup> Adams to Kirkwood, Dec. 2, 1865, No. 1097, *ibid.* As to Harlan's connections with and support from the Methodists of Iowa, it is important to note the frequent allusions to the subject in this campaign, years before the topic would become sensationally publicized in the "Newman Letter" episode of 1871. In addition to his connections with Iowa Wesleyan College at Mount Pleasant, Senator Harlan had been chosen to preside over the centennial celebration at New York City of the existence of Methodism in this country. See Cedar Falls *Gazette*, Feb. 9, 1866.

a large outside delegation of your friends at Des Moines . . . and let as many of them be military men as possible. . . .<sup>23</sup>

About a week later — earlier than most newspapers carried the news of Harlan's candidacy — Grimes wrote:

It is now quite certain that Mr. Harlan is a candidate . . . for the long term. It is so given out by authority. I suppose you have heard that the Hawkeye [Burlington newspaper] has been bought by Beardsley, Postmaster at Oskaloosa & proprietor of the Herald & Edwards also Postmaster at Mt Pleasant & proprietor of the Home Journal. They paid a large price (\$17,000) and the understanding is that it was bought in Harlan's interest, both the proprietors are Methodists & the Methodist church is his strong card & always has been. . . . Now my good friend, "stir your stumps" & go into view. I have no hostility to Harlan — I advised him not to leave the Senate, but when he did leave it & voluntarily pledged himself to you & thus induced you to become a candidate for his succession I think fair play entitles you to the place.<sup>24</sup>

Two weeks later Grimes had further information on Harlan:

The indications now are that Harlan will not leave the cabinet. Johnson is acting better since the Oct. Election & will not be so desirous of getting rid of him & some others & Harlan evidently thinks so for he has just bought one of the very best houses in Washington & paid \$30,000 for it. It seems to me that he would have hardly made so large an investment in property of that kind if he had not felt that he had a pretty long lease on office in Washington.<sup>25</sup>

By December the picture had changed again:

[Harlan] evidently has his heart set upon being returned to the Senate & is moving heaven & earth to accomplish that object. I have let him know exactly what I think about it. Sells & two or three Methodist preachers are traversing the state in his behalf at this moment. Between us he seems to be beside himself. . . . My

<sup>23</sup> Grimes to Kirkwood, Oct. 4, 1865, *Kirkwood Correspondence*. This and the several letters following are reprinted in "Letters of James W. Grimes," *Annals of Iowa* (third series), 22:469-504, 556-88 (October, 1941, January, 1942). This letter appears on p. 578.

<sup>24</sup> Grimes to Kirkwood, Oct. 12, 1865, "Letters of James W. Grimes," 579. "Beardsley" is misspelled as "Bamsdley." Dr. Charles Beardsley became a leading citizen of Burlington and of Iowa. See Benjamin F. Gue, *History of Iowa* . . . (4 vols., New York, 1903), 4:300.

<sup>25</sup> Grimes to Kirkwood, Oct. 28, 1865, "Letters of James W. Grimes," 580.

fears are that a rally being made of the Methodist Church in his behalf it may eventuate in a split of our party, but should that be so, I cannot but regard Harlan as responsible for it. I regret this *imbroglio* very much for I have always been & am yet a friend of Harlan, and under ordinary circumstances would support him, but I could not honorably do it were I in Iowa after what occurred between us last spring. . . .<sup>26</sup>

On the eve of the election in January, Grimes wrote the most revealing letter of all:

The delegation in Cong. stand about this way. All are against Harlan. All but Kasson were for you when last heard from, but each one of them has a hankering for the place & fancies that in some event or other he may be the possible man. But no one of them gives attention to any ambitious aspirations & when they left here all professed to be friendly to you with the exception before stated, though no one of them cares to speak very loud on the subject on account of the tremendous patronage of the Interior Department.

It is amusing to read the Iowa Harlan newspapers. So far from the Department being forced upon him, he sought it & he desired me to urge his appointment upon the Presdt. I did so [and] urged every possible reason for it & it was to me the Presdt. made the promise that he should be appointed. *It was when I communicated to him the Presdt's. reply that he told me he & his friends would support you for his successor.* I am now reluctantly constrained to believe that he never intended to do so & that he only desired a place in the cabinet in order to strengthen himself for a re-election by its patronage. There are divers facts all tending to draw me to this conclusion. I confess myself deceived in Harlan. I always thought him a straight forward, guileless man of fair ability & of respectable standing, who, though he might not do any extraordinarily wise things, would not do any very foolish things. He is now the topic of conversation here. He has bought & paid \$30,000 for a house, it has not cost less than \$12,000 to \$15,000 to furnish it & it will cost \$20,000 a year to support it. Every one is asking how Harlan became rich so suddenly & the inquiry is accompanied by all sorts of grimaces, winks, nods & gestures. But all these things & many others you have heard from others.

The idea that is attempted to be propagated that he is not a candidate from choice but is made such by his friends is the worst nonsense in the world. You of course understood that. It is due

<sup>26</sup> Grimes to Kirkwood, Dec. 2, 1865, *ibid.*, 581-2.

Harlan that I should say that I do not believe him, notwithstanding all that is said about him here just now, to be a dishonest man. In my opinion his wife has been playing the fool & betraying him into follies that his own judgment must condemn. I hear it said that she has been speculating with cotton agents & as their partner & I am inclined to think it to be so. Sells has been here four or five weeks but carefully avoided me. His son is deeply interested in Indian contracts in his superintendency it is charged & not denied. Cooley professes to have insisted that he should withdraw from the partnership, but he is doubtless as much interested as ever. I think Wilson takes the same view that you do. I shall show him your letter when he returns."<sup>27</sup>

A few days later Grimes wrote again:

Wilson [James F. Wilson of Fairfield] has just returned to Washington & I have handed him your letter to read. He has no idea of being a candidate against you & authorized me to say so to you. All of the members in Cong. from Iowa so far as I can learn are of the opinion that Harlan ought not to be a candidate and I have had no hesitation in saying always that good faith if nothing else should restrain him. The pressure in his behalf proceeds from the patronage, present & prospective of the Interior Department and is used by Indian agents, Indian contractors, office holders & office seekers of one kind & another. The letters we see published in the Iowa papers giving an account of the public demand that he should be returned to the Senate proceed from two or three clerks in his employ & are laughed at here as being most excellent jokes.<sup>28</sup>

Another interesting letter is from a new recruit to the Grimes-Wilson-

<sup>27</sup> Grimes to Kirkwood, Jan. 2, 1866, No. 1136, *Kirkwood Correspondence*. Elijah Sells, Sr., was Secretary of State in Iowa from 1856 to 1863. Elijah Sells, Jr., became a superintendent of an Indian reservation by appointment of Secretary Harlan. "Cooley" was Dennis N. Cooley, Allison's law partner but later rival and opponent in politics. He became Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1865 on Harlan's recommendation. (See *Andrew Johnson Papers*, Book 66, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress.) "Wilson" is James F. Wilson of Fairfield. Brigham, *James Harlan*, 215, refers to Grimes's suspicions of Harlan but does not do justice to the extent of the accusations made by Grimes; neither does he mention the suspicion of Mrs. Harlan and of Elijah Sells, Jr., and Cooley as Indian contractors. I cannot avoid the conclusion that Brigham glossed over the matter and left it with this statement: ". . . but [Grimes] believed it was due the Secretary to say that in his opinion the charges of dishonesty which this purchase [of the house] had occasioned were groundless." Careful comparison will show that this is not what Grimes said.

<sup>28</sup> Grimes to Kirkwood, Jan. 7, 1866, No. 1139, *Kirkwood Correspondence*, and "Letters of James W. Grimes," 586-7. Wilson's favor to Kirkwood in not running against him was returned by Kirkwood in 1881-1882.

Kirkwood machine, one Colonel David B. Henderson, a real hero just returned from the wars. He had lost a leg at Shiloh, but this had not prevented him from re-entering the army for a second hitch of service. Colonel Henderson, now a young attorney in the Dubuque office of Bissell and Shiras, began his career as a lawyer-politician by reporting to Kirkwood on one of his (Kirkwood's) minor rivals, a certain Professor F. A. Brush of Fayette, sometime president of Upper Iowa University. Henderson pointed out that all north Iowa should concentrate its support for Kirkwood; also, he reported that "Col. Allison" had written him that all Washington believed Harlan to be a candidate for the long term. This is the first concrete evidence of the functioning of the political partnership of Allison and Henderson.<sup>29</sup>

Kirkwood's own claims were stated in a letter to General Grenville M. Dodge, written on December 16, 1865:

I have intended writing you for some time. . . . I am a candidate for the U. S. Senate and would be glad of your support. I understand from Mr. Clark who saw you at St. Louis, that your first preference would probably be for Mr. Kasson. I think Mr. Kasson cannot be elected and that the "fight" will be between Mr. Harlan and I. I think Mr. Harlan should stay where he is. He left the Senate voluntarily. He can be of service to the State where he is and another can fill his place in the Senate. Why should we loose [sic] the benefit of having a cabinet minister from our State merely to enable him to go back to a place he voluntarily abandoned. I say nothing with regard to Mr. Kasson for two reasons: 1st, I suppose from what I have heard you prefer him, and 2nd, he and I are not on friendly terms.<sup>30</sup>

Thus we see pretty nearly the whole picture of Iowa Republican politics in the postwar period taking shape over this senatorial contest. Grimes, Kirkwood, Wilson, Allison, Henderson, Dodge, Rich, and Tichenor were in one camp of Republicans; Harlan, Warren, Clarke, Cooley, Sells *et al.*, were in the other. John Adam Kasson, in many ways the ablest of them all, was never wholly accepted by either faction but usually was forced to favor the Harlan group because ultimately he was totally repudiated by the other camp. The above-quoted letter from Kirkwood to Dodge indicates that Gen-

<sup>29</sup> Henderson to Kirkwood, Dec. 12, 1865, No. 1121, *Kirkwood Correspondence*.

<sup>30</sup> Kirkwood to Dodge, Dec. 16, 1865, may be found in *Dodge Personal Biography*, II, 444, in *Dodge Papers*.

eral Dodge had not yet fully made up his mind to "ditch" Kasson. After all, Kasson was still a member of Congress and could be very useful on occasion.<sup>31</sup> Kasson's own position is stated in his letter to General Dodge of January 12, 1866:

Yours of the 7th is rec'd. I am not a candidate for Senator since Jan. 1st. From the moment you were announced I foresaw no success for the West [i. e., the "western slope" as the southwest corner of Iowa was frequently called by its inhabitants] with a divided front. If our party does not moderate its tone, as against the President, we become divided, & our supremacy is lost for years to come. I have not one word or act to retract. My action has been for the best interest of party & country, as the future will show. . . .<sup>32</sup>

On the eve of the election the anti-Harlan people were still hoping for some turn of fortune that would enable General Dodge or any anti-Harlan or anti-Kasson man to emerge as the winner.<sup>33</sup> But such was not to be the case. Harlan was the choice of 63 members of the legislature for the long term; Kirkwood could get only 42, and A. W. Hubbard 12. Kirkwood and his friends had to be consoled with a whopping vote of 80 for the short term. The learned editor of the Cedar Falls *Gazette* commented that this result should be pleasing, as Harlan was "a bold radical and therefore a fitting representative of an Iowa constituency," a comment that was echoed years later by the first professional historian to study this subject. In his judgment, "There can be little doubt, however, but that the result was eminently satisfactory to a majority of the Republicans of Iowa, for James Harlan had won for himself great popularity by his course in the Senate during the momentous years preceding the Civil War."<sup>34</sup>

The crucial point that was not sensed by these commentators was the role of the Harlan-Kirkwood contest as a divisive factor in Iowa Republicanism. From this time forward there was to be a struggle unto the death, politically speaking, until one faction or the other had triumphed. Kirkwood was only

<sup>31</sup> Statement to the author by Professor Edward Younger whose biography of Kasson will be published by the State Historical Society of Iowa. The author wishes to express his deep gratitude to Professor Younger for the privilege of reading his manuscript.

<sup>32</sup> Kasson to Dodge, Jan. 12, 1866, Box 12, *Dodge Papers*.

<sup>33</sup> Caleb Baldwin to N. P. Dodge, Jan. 11, 1866, Box 12, *ibid*.

<sup>34</sup> Cedar Falls *Gazette*, Jan. 19, 1866; Clark, *History of Senatorial Elections in Iowa*, 142.



a symbol: the real contest was between the Harlan faction on the one side and on the other a faction that will have to be called the Grimes-Kirkwood-Wilson-Allison-Dodge faction, with General Grenville Mellen Dodge quickly developing as the "boss" and Jacob Rich and George C. Tichenor as the managers. To this group we may conveniently refer henceforth as "Dodge & Co."

This factionalism was not as clear in 1865-1866 as later, but it can be seen in the anti-Harlan comments in the Grimes letters, quoted above, and in the following "battle report" made by Tichenor to his superior, General Dodge. Only the most pertinent sentences can be given here, as the letter is a very long one.

The senatorial contest is over and Harlan is elected for the long term and Kirkwood for the short. A most unfortunate result especially as far as Harlan is concerned and one that might have been easily avoided by timely action. Had Kasson withdrawn two weeks before and you been placed on the track with your friends to work properly you could have been elected almost unanimously. As it was, Kasson kept himself on until the *very hour of the caucus*, and of course by so doing, kept your name from being presented and your friends from doing one thing for you.

This [Fifth] District was ready to unite in a body on you but could not do so while Kasson claimed that you would not be a candidate against him. And although it was claimed three or four days before the caucus that the District would refuse to present Kasson yet he did not formally decline or recommend the support of any other man, hence, the District was left to go by default. And the representatives as a general thing as a choice of evils, voted sullenly for Harlan.

Thus has Kasson's course *defeated you and elected Harlan*. Harlan only beat Kirkwood in fact by eight votes. These votes were from this District as Harlan got 15 out of 21 votes of the District. So you see this District decided the contest and had it been united on you the vote would have been at a deadlock and after two or three ballots you would have had Kirkwood's and Hubbard's entire vote and much of Harlan's. *This I know*. You stood with twice the popularity with the members of either Harlan or Kirkwood. With things as they were, we did all we could for Kirkwood, but with this town and Kasson's influence against him and the bribery and promises made by Sells and others for Harlan, we could do nothing. . . .<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Tichenor to Dodge, Jan. 14, 1866, Box 12, *Dodge Papers*.

Dodge's army status also came into the political discussions. Apparently Dodge's original intention was to leave the service in January, 1866, but on January 14 he telegraphed Kasson to see General Grant and the President and arrange a postponement to April 7, the effective date of his resignation, giving personal reasons. Kasson quickly arranged the matter as Dodge wanted it. Not even Dodge's lieutenant, Tichenor, much less the general public, was aware that Dodge was arranging all this to suit his own convenience, actually to facilitate his transfer from the army to the employ of the Union Pacific Railroad as Chief Engineer. It appeared that he was being released, whereas other Iowa generals such as Samuel R. Curtis and John M. Corse were being retained. Dodge answered Tichenor's inquiries with a full explanation, to which Tichenor responded as follows:

I have your letter . . . and am much gratified to learn the facts in regard to your muster out. There was a universal surprise & indignation here of your many friends at it. Especially as Curtis & Corse were retained. Curtis was here at the time . . . & blowed [sic] like a steam engine over it, trying to create the impression that you did not stand, as your friends pretended, in favor with Grant, Sherman & the authorities. He did not say so directly but by inuendo. I took pains to nail all such impressions. . . .

I am almost confident that Harlan sought to have you mustered out in time to operate on the senatorial question for I know that many of his friends here during the contest did all in their power to disparage you. Kirkwood is posted on this fully and will fight for you night & day in anything and for anything you may ask & with him you can whip all opposition that Harlan or his friends can bring. . . . Write Kirkwood freely. . . . I can if you desire have a resolution passed in the Legislature endorsing your Indian policy and recommending that the control of Indian matters be transferred from the Interior to the War Department. Such a resolution should also be passed in the Nebraska & Colorado Legislatures and if possible in the Missouri General Assembly. . . . Curtis, Harlan & others of that stripe see that you are growing into a popularity in the state that threatens to be disastrous to them & they will injure you if they can — but just keep cool — see that your friends are posted and you are all right. *You have more friends and more valuable friends than you can imagine — more than any man in the State from the Army.* . . .<sup>36</sup>

Thus we see that Tichenor, using suspicion rather than proof, was culti-

<sup>36</sup> Tichenor to Dodge, Jan. 23, 1866, *ibid.*

vating a prejudice in Dodge's mind against Harlan which Kirkwood had already initiated. Harlan's biographer, Johnson Brigham, admits the senatorial episode was the beginning of the break with Grimes and Kirkwood; the account as given here expands the scope of the conflict. Brigham admits of only one possible misdeed on the part of Harlan: he erred in forgetting his promise to Kirkwood, ". . . if, indeed, he had definitely promised to support Kirkwood for the long term." He says he was told by Charles Aldrich that Kirkwood was motivated in part by animosity toward Elijah Sells, Harlan's manager, who had incurred Kirkwood's displeasure during the war. Brigham brushes aside the charges of Harlan's reliance upon Methodist support; Kirkwood's biographer, Dan E. Clark, gives little space to the case against Harlan.<sup>37</sup>

The senatorial election of January, 1866, was only a part of the exciting and crucial developments of that year. Iowa politics in the remainder of 1866 well illustrates the description, the "critical year," with its struggle for power between Radical and Conservative Republicans,<sup>38</sup> but this was only one phase of such politics in Iowa. The primary struggle was a contest of pure factionalism — a raw struggle for power — between the Harlanites and "Dodge & Co.," neither camp being able to complain of the other's Radicalism. This struggle, in which the Harlanites were momentarily victorious in 1866, was destined to go on until Harlan was personally defeated in 1872 and forever after denied any political reward, any share however slight in the distribution of elective offices. During the next twenty-five years he more than once aspired to be governor or senator, but the door was always shut in his face. It might be added that one of the counts against General James B. Weaver in 1875 was his pro-Harlanism; this contributed to his defeat followed by his ultimate departure from the Republican party.<sup>39</sup>

In 1866 four of the six members of the Iowa congressional delegation were considered acceptable to "Dodge & Co." At least they were not seriously opposed within their own party. These were James F. Wilson, Hiram Price, Allison, and Asahel W. Hubbard. John A. Kasson, for all his amenability to Dodge's wishes, was deemed insufficiently Radical, and yet no less an opponent than Dodge himself was required to deprive Kasson of re-nomination to Congress in 1866. The other Congressman who was denied a re-

<sup>37</sup> Brigham, *Harlan*, 221, 372, note 301; Clark, *Kirkwood*, 303-310.

<sup>38</sup> Beale, *Critical Year*, *passim*.

<sup>39</sup> Sage, "Weaver in Allison's Way . . .," *passim*.

nomination was Josiah B. Grinnell of the Fourth District. Whatever the reason or reasons, it was definitely not the one advanced by his biographer, namely, the refusal of Grinnell to fight back when attacked by a Kentucky Congressman, General Lovell H. Rousseau, in Washington.<sup>40</sup> This could not have been the reason, because the attack did not take place until several days after the district congressional convention had nominated Judge William Loughridge of Oskaloosa by a vote of 88 to 69. Loughridge's speech of acceptance emphasized two points: his intense Radicalism, and his readiness to resign whenever anyone might find fault with his policies.<sup>41</sup>

The next few years in Allison's political career reveal his increasing stature as legislator and businessman. In his second term in Congress he was appointed to the Ways and Means Committee, by common consent the most important in the House. Here he had a chance to associate closely with the ablest men in the House and in all the governmental circles in Washington. The House had a membership of some 200 at this time, in contrast to the present 435, and it was possible to know intimately many of the members if one were so inclined, and Allison certainly was so inclined. He was a consistent supporter of all basic Reconstruction legislation, but most of all he was an expert and tireless "leg man" for promoters of railroads. Just where the line should be drawn between proper and improper activity in this area it would be hard to say. Undoubtedly the ethical standards of those days were not high. Allison was up to his ears in this kind of work, and his papers show that he was an investor and speculator as well as a mere public-spirited agent for others.

Among his closest associates and frequent correspondents were Henry L. Stout, Platt Smith, F. W. H. Sheffield, R. A. Babbage, Rufus E. and Julius K. Graves, all bankers and railroad promoters of Dubuque; Samuel Hooper, Boston financier and fellow-Congressman; Oakes Ames of Credit Mobilier fame; Morris K. Jesup, a heavy investor in the units that became the Illinois Central Railroad from Dubuque to Sioux City; and John I. Blair of the

<sup>40</sup> Charles E. Payne, *Josiah Bushnell Grinnell* (Iowa City, 1938), 231. See also, Cyrenus Cole, *A History of the People of Iowa* (Cedar Rapids, 1921), 380, and *Iowa Through the Years* (Iowa City, 1940), 315, where this same error is repeated.

<sup>41</sup> Oskaloosa *Herald*, June 14, 1866, tells of the convention; the succeeding weekly issue tells of the Rousseau attack. For extensive notes on these articles I am indebted to Miss Kay Kilpatrick of Oskaloosa. L. F. Parker, "Josiah Bushnell Grinnell," *Annals of Iowa* (third series), 2:249-59 (January, 1896), refers (p. 257) to the Rousseau assault on Grinnell but says nothing of its effect on the loss of the nomination. Parker was Grinnell's floor manager at the convention.

North Western.<sup>42</sup> Allison is said to have been offered the presidency of the Illinois Central and the managership of the Jay Cooke interests in Washington. He was the president of the Dunleith and Dubuque Bridge Company that built the bridge still used by the Illinois Central in crossing the Mississippi, and he negotiated with Andrew Carnegie for the steel used in that project.

In only one area was he at odds with the majority of his party: he was definitely a moderate in his tariff views. In these years began the friendship and intimate correspondence with such economic liberals as David A. Wells, Edward A. Atkinson, Horace White, and Whitelaw Reid, the kind of economic and political liberals who later helped to form the Liberal Republican party. Truly, Allison was able to win and keep friends in both camps of Republicanism while maintaining his own Radicalism beyond doubt.

His renomination to the House in 1864 and 1866 seemed to come without a question; in 1868 he was mildly tested by a local rebellion led by his own business associate, Julius K. Graves, an insurgency seemingly explainable only in terms of Graves's own insatiable ambition and illusions of power based on his rapidly growing railroad and mining fortune. The rebellion was easily beaten down; neither this nor later political differences were ever allowed to alter their personal and business relations.

In 1868-1869 Allison and his colleague, James F. Wilson, came dangerously near real trouble in their mixture of business and politics. Briefly stated, it was charged that the two used their influence to secure a change in the route of the Sioux City & Pacific Railroad. The original chartering act called for a continuation of the road in a westerly direction until it would intersect the Pacific Railroad running from Council Bluffs. By their activity, Allison and Wilson secured permission to run the line south and southeasterly from Sioux City, on the Iowa side of the Missouri River, until it intersected the John I. Blair road at California Junction, just west of the town of Missouri Valley; thus, the Sioux City road would act as a feeder to the Blair road instead of developing the country beyond Sioux City, as the original route would have done if used, and the road would not follow the most direct route to the point of intersection with the main line to the Pacific, as the original law specified.

<sup>42</sup> Allison's associations with these men are indicated by many letters in Box 5 of the *William B. Allison Papers* (Iowa State Dept. of History and Archives, Des Moines).

At first glance this may seem to have been an act of service to Iowa as against Nebraska and therefore deserving of gratitude from Iowans. But the key question was, why did Allison and Wilson work to secure the change of route? Were they unselfishly serving Iowa or were they serving someone else — for a price? It happened that both men were stockholders in the Blair road; it was now charged that they had been given the stock by John I. Blair in return for their services. Both men indignantly denied the charge in the closing days of the 40th Congress, Allison going so far as to name his assailant as Lewis A. Thomas of Dubuque, whom he contemptuously dismissed as an Independent Republican candidate against him in 1868 who had received only 149 votes.<sup>43</sup> Blair was quoted with great finality, as if he were an impartial witness, to the effect that each man had regularly subscribed to stock purchases and had paid the installments due. A famous contemporary journalist, "Gath," fulminated against the two, especially Wilson, whom he called the "singed cat," but without much success. Allison had already been safely re-elected to Congress for a fourth term, and Wilson had voluntarily made way for a new candidate in 1868. Strange to say, the matter was never officially investigated, but it was a great talking point against Allison in 1871-1872, when he was campaigning against Senator Harlan. Allison later testified in the Credit Mobilier hearings of 1873 that he had been under fire in 1868, both for the nomination and the election, for mixing his railroad activities with politics and therefore he had surrendered his Credit Mobilier stock so as not to add that to his difficulties. The only court that ever considered these charges against Allison was the electorate of Iowa, and it had a full opportunity to canvass them over and over as he stood for re-election for his six terms in the Senate. This court of public opinion, acting indirectly, to be sure, through the legislature, held him not guilty. Thus might he feel well vindicated. Charges of this nature were still being hurled against him as late as 1906 in one of the famous muckraking "Treason of the Senate" articles by David Graham Phillips.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Neither man ever denied that he had used his influence to get the route changed. *Congressional Globe*, 40 Cong., 3 Sess. (Feb. 23, 1869), 1466-7.

<sup>44</sup> George Alfred Townsend ["Gath"], *Washington Outside and Inside* (Hartford, Chicago, and Cincinnati, 1873), 400-454, a reprint of some of Gath's post-Civil War correspondence, gives a very critical view of Allison and Wilson. The 1871 charges are best followed in the Burlington *Hawk-Eye* and the Sioux City *Journal*. The "Poland Report," *House Report No. 77*, 42 Cong., 3 Sess. (Feb. 18, 1873), 304-308, contains Allison's testimony about his purchase and return of Credit Mobilier stock. On "Gath" see C. D. Abbott, "George Alfred Townsend," *Dictionary of*

By 1869 a new situation had arisen in Iowa politics. Senator Grimes had gone to Europe in search of health. His vote against the conviction of Andrew Johnson had destroyed his position of leadership in Iowa and had brought down upon his head attacks more vicious than those against the President. His term in the Senate would expire in 1871; the stroke which had sent him abroad for rest and convalescence made it almost a certainty that he would not again be a candidate. Since the legislature that would meet in January, 1870, would elect a Senator to succeed Grimes, his resignation before his term had expired would mean that the lawmakers would again have the task of choosing two men — one for the unexpired term, one for the regular term. Thus the short and long term problem of 1866 was to be repeated.

Iowa politicians did not languish in a state of masterly inactivity while awaiting definite word on Grimes's intentions. That restless soul, Colonel Tichenor, was the first to raise the question of the succession. In his most forthright style he sent a letter to his chief, General Dodge, which was at once an invitation and a challenge.

Is Jim [James F.] Wilson going to make a fight for Senator [?] I see *your* name mentioned in a number of papers. . . . Judge Wright [George Grover Wright of Des Moines] is a *very* anxious candidate and as our nominating convention meets in a few days I want to know your wishes. We can control the legislative nominations in this county if necessary but I don't care to make a fight against Wright unless you or Jim Wilson are interested. I can also do something in the matter of legislative nominations in Guthrie, Dallas, Greene, Adair & several other counties but have no relish for the work unless it be to serve you or Wilson. . . . I tell you that if Jim Wilson is going to be a candidate for Senator he had better see to it that [General John M.] Hedrick is not appointed Special Mail Agent unless he pledges himself in writing to support him. . . .<sup>45</sup>

It was under these circumstances that Dodge, prodded by Tichenor, wrote two letters to Wilson. Just what Dodge said is not and can never be known because the Wilson Papers were not preserved. The contents of his letters

*American Biography*, 18:616-17. Wilson later happily reported to Dodge that Townsend's contract with the *Chicago Tribune* would soon expire. For the David Graham Phillips' article, see *The Cosmopolitan*, 41:627-32 (October, 1906).

<sup>45</sup> Tichenor to Dodge, Apr. 14, 1869, Box 16, *Dodge Papers*. General John M. Hedrick of Ottumwa was for many years editor of the *Ottumwa Courier*. Gue, *History of Iowa* . . . , 4:124-5.

can be easily reconstructed, however, from the wording of Wilson's reply. Allison might well have thought of this as the most important letter ever written by or about himself.

I have a taste now of the independence of private life and I don't think I will give it up soon. I will not be a candidate for the Senate. Can you get Tichenor to stick a few pins for Allison [?] I don't think we ought to send an inexperienced man to succeed Grimes. . . .<sup>46</sup>

In view of the tenor of the entire Dodge-Wilson-Allison-Tichenor correspondence, it is easy to supply the line of reasoning running through Wilson's mind. The term, "inexperienced man," would be readily understood by all of "Dodge & Co." An "inexperienced" man meant one who knew nothing about putting through Congress the plans and projects of Iowans and their friends; one who had no contacts with the Chief Executive and the Departments and no facility at making them; one who knew nothing about keeping a watchful eye on the Supreme Court.

Wilson was the perfect man for such work and was the natural choice for senatorial spokesman for "Dodge & Co." He had had a distinguished career in the House since 1861 and easily stood first in the Iowa delegation. A study of the speeches made by the members from Iowa shows that he stood head and shoulders above any other Iowan of the sixties except John A. Kasson. A brilliant lawyer, he had served on the Judiciary Committee and had helped to draft the Thirteenth Amendment. He had also helped to draw up the articles of impeachment of President Johnson and had served on the House Board of Managers during the trial. He had had much experience as a railroad promoter and investor and was one of the government directors of the Union Pacific Railroad; he was a bank president and a large buyer of securities; last, but not least, he was an effective writer and a forceful stump speaker. All in all, there was not an abler man in Iowa politics.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> James F. Wilson to Dodge, Apr. 22, 1869, Box 16, *Dodge Papers*.

<sup>47</sup> Professor Earle D. Ross of Iowa State College has done an excellent sketch of Wilson in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, 20:331-3. His original manuscript dealt with Wilson's career in much greater detail than appears in the published form. The brief biography of Wilson that appears in the *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1927* (Washington, D. C., 1928), is strangely full of errors and reads like a caricature of the real man. The new edition, *1774-1949* (Washington, D. C., 1950), contains material furnished by the author and to the best of his knowledge the statements are correct. Richard N. Current, *Old Thad Stevens* (Madison, Wis., 1942), facing p. 289, has a picture of Wilson and the other members of the



In contrast to the modern methods by which a nomination is secured in a direct primary or in a party convention (as of 1954, forty-three states use the former and five the latter), nominations were then regularly made in a party caucus. Furthermore, whereas a senator is now chosen in the general elections, at that time he was elected by the General Assembly, each house voting separately and their journals then being compared. This election as a rule followed shortly after the caucus. Both nomination and election usually took place early in the session of the Assembly; in the case of Iowa, this was in January. In a one-party state, such as Iowa happened to be by an overwhelming margin, nomination by the party caucus was equivalent to election. Therefore, the real contest was within the party, and this usually brought out the worst aspects of factional fighting. If it be true that there is no war so bitter as civil war, no quarrels so fierce as family quarrels, then by the same logic no politics is so bitter as factional politics. In their zeal to win, men would stop at nothing to do or say, regardless of the fact that such words might later boomerang on the party if proved to be true or on the maker of the statements if proved to be untrue.

The management of a senatorial campaign was something akin to the fine art of conducting a military campaign. There was a definite set of procedures that must be followed in proper and delicately timed sequence. First, each candidate must write letters feeling out the prominent local leaders of his party. In such letters the prospective candidate would not openly declare himself to be in the race but would ask for an expression of attitude toward himself if later he should decide to make the contest. One who received a satisfactory number of favorable replies or who was not otherwise discouraged would finally begin the active effort to have legislators favorable to himself elected in the October elections. This meant that the candidate and his manager would have to write hundreds of letters in their efforts to encompass the victory. A few key leaders had to be cultivated, from the precinct caucus up to the county conventions that would choose the party nominees for the legislative positions. After the October elections a furious fight would follow, until the January session began, each candidate trying to win and hold the votes of as many legislators as possible. What went on during this period was usually known only to God and the men directly involved.

Board of Managers for the House in the trial of President Andrew Johnson. This is a Matthew Brady photograph.

The most unfavorable feature of this business was that a powerful candidate for the Senate could fill the legislature with a large body of unfit or disinterested members who had been chosen and assisted more for their loyalty to their leader than for their qualities as lawmakers for the state. On coming into the session, the senatorial election was the first item of business; that disposed of, the legislators must stay on for the remainder of their terms, performing duties for which they might have neither fitness nor inclination.

Returning to the thread of the narrative in April, 1869, we find that the popular Iowa correspondent, "Linkensale," was writing that if the senatorial election were held then, the choice would be made from four possibilities: Allison, Judge E. H. Williams of Clayton County, George G. Wright, or James F. Wilson.<sup>48</sup> It seems to have been taken for granted, even this early, that Senator Grimes was not available for another term. Jacob Rich, who was closer to the scene and to the men than "Linkensale," sized the situation up as follows in a letter to Kirkwood:

I suppose [Governor Samuel] Merrill will be renominated without opposition. The Senatorial fight will be the most exciting, and just how it will turn out I do not pretend to be able to fathom. I shall be where I shall not be able to take any part in it. I think the North will be pretty well united for Allison, if he should be in the field. Are you not playing into the hands of Mr. Harlan and his friends and your enemies, in going for Wright? It looks a little that way to me at this time.<sup>49</sup>

Thus it seemed early in May to this acute observer. It is well to note that on this date, May 10, 1869, Rich (a member of the Grimes-Kirkwood-Wilson-Allison wing of the party) is clearly recognizing and indicating that James Harlan was the man who must be eventually beaten by that faction. About the same time a letter from Tichenor to Dodge pointed out that John A. Kasson was another enemy who must be undermined.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Cedar Falls *Gazette*, Apr. 23, 1869, reprint from *Chicago Post*.

<sup>49</sup> Jacob Rich to Kirkwood, May 10, 1869, *Kirkwood Correspondence*. It seems contradictory to learn that Kirkwood was not aligned with his protege, Allison. Actually, it is in keeping with Kirkwood's sturdy independence; furthermore, he was obligated to Wright, who had supported him in 1865-1866. See Wright to Kirkwood, Apr. 16, 1865, No. 967, *ibid.* Samuel Merrill had been elected to succeed Stone as governor in 1867 and was renominated for a second term in 1869. Gue, *History of Iowa . . .*, 4:187-8.

<sup>50</sup> Tichenor to Dodge, May 13, 1869, Box 16, *Dodge Papers*.

But the real worry for Tichenor was the fear that Dodge had not picked the right man in settling upon Allison. He began to bombard Dodge with a series of letters in this vein.

. . . Wilson says he will not be a candidate for Senator. He must change his mind or you must run. I feel sure either of you can be elected, but we had all fixed on Wilson. I don't think it is in "the papers" to elect Allison and the result I fear will be that Judge Wright or some other inexperienced and unfit man will be selected. We can come nearer electing Palmer, I think, than Allison although I can and will stick every pin I can for Allison if you say so.<sup>51</sup>

Tichenor's doubts continued to mount rather than subside as the weeks went by. On July 14 he wrote Dodge a long letter expressing his fear of John A. Kasson. It was a masterpiece of denunciation in which Kasson was virtually accused of being a Copperhead. Tichenor was all for fighting him to the death even if in the process a Democrat slipped in as one of the Polk County representatives — this would be better than a victory for Kasson as United States Senator. Either through coincidence or through concerted planning, Frank W. Palmer, now Representative for the Fifth District in Congress, reported to Dodge on the very same day that Kasson was working hard, Judge Wright was overconfident, and Wilson should run and save them all from a Kasson victory.

Tichenor continued to blow hot and blow cold. In one and the same letter he expressed his desire to see Dodge succeed the late Secretary of War Rawlins in President Grant's cabinet, and thus save Grant, and yet he added: "I am dissatisfied with the existing state of affairs concerning the matter of U. S. Senator. *I tell you Wright is not the man.* Can't he be appointed to that U. S. Judgeship and you or Wilson or some good man take the Senatorship?"<sup>52</sup> This from the man who was supposed to be "sticking pins" for Allison; the date was September 28, just a few days before the legislative elections!

By contrast, Allison himself was very confident, almost overconfident. During the hubbub over the War Department vacancy, he wrote to Dodge, offering to go to Washington in his behalf if Dodge desired it. At the same

<sup>51</sup> Tichenor to Dodge, May 19, 1869, *Dodge Personal Biography*, IV, 1177, *Dodge Papers*. Frank W. Palmer, editor of the *Des Moines Register*, had been elected to Congress to succeed Dodge in 1868. Gue, *History of Iowa* . . . , 4:207.

<sup>52</sup> Tichenor to Dodge, Sept. 28, 1869, Box 16, *Dodge Papers*.

time he reported on his canvass as going well. Publicly, he managed to give an appearance of resignation to fate. A friendly newspaper put it this way:

We were permitted a few days since to read a letter addressed to one of our citizens by a gentleman holding somewhat intimate relations to Mr. Allison in which his position is stated in this wise. Mr. Allison would like the Senatorship, but if it does not come to him naturally and spontaneously he is not going to break up his plans of business or pleasure and spend his time in scheming for it. He is going to let things take their course without fretting about it, and to do substantially what we hoped he would do; discouraging any log-rolling, bargaining and like questionable practices in his behalf and so far as he is concerned, let the office seek the man rather than the man the office.<sup>53</sup>

The rising power among the editors of the state, young, able James S. ("Ret") Clarkson, was throwing his weight behind Judge Wright, with Governor Samuel Merrill as a possible compromise candidate. Inasmuch as Wright was well known as a Harlan man, and Harlan was on excellent terms with the Grant administration, it is easy to see that General Dodge had challenged a formidable man when he insisted on throwing Allison into the race against Wright. Judge George Grover Wright belonged to that class of pioneers that we might well call the "aristocrats of the frontier." He came from a prominent family in Indiana, where his brother had been a leading citizen, a former United States Senator, and a minister to Prussia. George Wright had finished his course of studies at Indiana University with high honors, and after a short residence at Rockville, near Senator Harlan's old home, he came out to Iowa and settled in the interior town of Keosauqua on the banks of the Des Moines River, then the center of land sales and a "lawyer's town." Here he made an enviable reputation at the bar, and by 1860 he had risen to the state supreme court. In the nine years since, he had established himself as a jurist and made his fame secure by the quality of his opinions.<sup>54</sup>

As the end of the year came on, only Allison believed in his own chances to win. Writing from Washington, where he was on duty in the House of Representatives, he gave Dodge his opinion about various items of business then before the House, especially the currency bill, and then took up the

<sup>53</sup> *Independence Bulletin*, quoted in *Cedar Falls Gazette*, Sept. 10, 1869.

<sup>54</sup> John E. Briggs, "George Grover Wright," *Dictionary of American Biography*, 20: 551-2.

inevitable topic of the senatorial race. He was confident of victory "if we work hard." His hopes rested on the theory that Merrill would detach enough votes from Wright to keep Wright from winning on the first ballot and that would defeat Wright in the end. Allison's great confidence in the power of Dodge and Wilson to control the matter was plainly expressed.<sup>55</sup>

Tichenor came up in late December with new evidence of danger for Allison. His letter is typical of the thinking of the times and of Tichenor's own political philosophy and tactics.

I send you today the "Gazette" of the 18th in which you will find a long letter on the senatorial question in Merrill's behalf. Although it is dated "Keokuk" and signed "T.J.H." it was written at Mt. Pleasant by that little Jackass Geo. B. Corkill and was dictated by Harlan, Kasson & Merrill. Kasson has just got home from Washington where he & Walden arranged with Harlan a plan of campaign for Merrill and which Kasson thinks will, in addition to giving Merrill the long term, give him the short term — and I tell you their combination is a *strong* one. Harlan will use the Methodist Church and Merrill with Magoun and Grinnell to back him will use the Congregational Church, while Kasson will use the Episcopal Church and the Masonic fraternity.

Tichenor closed this letter by saying that he had planted newspaper articles that would give the effect of working up a sentiment for Dodge for the long term and Allison for the short term.<sup>56</sup>

The year and the campaign closed with a long letter from Allison to Dodge in which Allison reported to his field commander. This situation is paradoxical in that Allison, the nominal commander-in-chief, is actually the subordinate. The letter listed ten points on which Allison either reported his agreement with Dodge's views or gave assurance that he had carried out the instructions Dodge had given him. Therefore, in retrospect, it could hardly be said of Allison that he was letting the office seek the man.

The man who was really waiting for the office to come to him was Judge Wright. He did not extend himself even to the point of announcing a platform before the election. There is no point in making a great mystery of the victory of one of the ablest jurists in Iowa over a Congressman with only an average record and with the question mark of his railroad activities hanging over him. When the Republicans gathered on January 13 in the

<sup>55</sup> Allison to Dodge, Dec. 16, 1869, Box 16, *Dodge Papers*.

<sup>56</sup> Tichenor to Dodge, Dec. 19, 1869, *ibid.*

There is undoubtedly a great deal of truth in this interpretation of Allison's defeat. Cooley's attitude toward Allison has already been noted. Graves was just the type of businessman who would try to buy votes as he bought and sold railroads or bank stock. Allison's *bete noire* in the case, however, was Dr. Lewis A. Thomas. He had been the chief accuser of Allison and Wilson in 1869 for what he termed their services to John I. Blair. This man wielded a barbed pen which was always well informed. A long letter, anonymous but nonetheless preserved by Allison, written by someone well placed in or around the legislature, later informed Allison of the tremendous influence in the lobby enjoyed by Dr. Thomas and the great effect of his letters to the *Dubuque Times* written under the pseudonym of "Jon." The anonymous writer attributed Allison's defeat to the effectiveness of Thomas' letters and his work around the legislature, saying that Allison had no idea how bitter the feeling had been in some quarters. Anonymous though the letter might be, it was clearly written by someone who had a vast knowledge of the inside manipulations of the legislature. The concluding point of the writer and his asserted reason for writing to Allison is a warning that if he wants to win in 1872, he must take steps to prevent this kind of opposition originating right in his home town.<sup>63</sup>

So had "Dodge & Co.'s" representative lost this round in his battle for power in Iowa politics. The result was not disastrous, however. Judge Wright carried much of his judicial impartiality into senatorial politics and soon counted himself out as a factor in future political maneuvers. The real test for Allison and all his friends would come in 1872 when Harlan's own seat would be up for contest, and then it would be determined if the mantle of Grimes would be passed on to Allison or if Harlan would continue to reign supreme.

<sup>63</sup> "A Friend" to Allison, Dec. 14, 1870, Box 219, *Allison Papers*. The letter was from Fort Dodge.