

## THE BURLINGTON, IOWA, APPRENTICESHIP OF THE KANSAS POET EUGENE FITCH WARE, "IRONQUILL"

By *James C. Malin\**

Three states, Connecticut, Iowa, and Kansas, share in the production of Eugene Fitch Ware, the man who became best known as "Ironquill," and only to a lesser degree as "The Philosopher of Paint Creek," a maker of rhymes — possibly, a poet. By profession he was a lawyer. Before settling definitely into that classification, however, he had had several quite successful short bouts with journalism. He did not escape politics altogether. Associated with Fort Scott, Kansas, 1867-1893, Ware joined one of the major law firms of the state, Gleed, Ware, and Gleed, and moved to Topeka in 1893. President Theodore Roosevelt selected him, in 1902, for sacrifice in the thankless position of Commissioner of Pensions, where he served until the end of 1904. Unlike some people of talent, Ware possessed a sense of humor which was sufficiently objective to keep himself in perspective — six feet tall, and six inches square at twenty, and a lot squarer later. But, at no time did "The Philosopher of Paint Creek" suffer from delusions of grandeur.

### THE SOLDIER AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

The parents of Eugene Fitch Ware (1841-1911), Hiram Belcher Ware, and Amanda Melvina Holbrook, were married April 4, 1840, at Hartford, Connecticut. Both were representatives of seven generations of their respective families living continuously in New England. Their removal to Burlington, Iowa, a Mississippi River town, during the mid-1840's was the first break in the New England chain of Eugene's ancestry. In religion, the family tradition was Congregationalist. The occupational tradition was urban, that of skilled artisan, not New England farmer, the grandfather being a cooper, Hiram was a leather-worker, after a period as sailor, and

\*James C. Malin is professor of history at the University of Kansas at Lawrence. This article is a condensation of two chapters of a projected book on Eugene Ware, a Kansas poet, lawyer, and politician, who spent his formative years in Burlington, Iowa.

Eugene served an apprenticeship in his father's trade. Eugene's formal education, acquired in the Burlington public schools and at the academy at Denmark, Iowa, included some Latin, Greek, and French, and German from a private tutor. More informal education was experience acquired in the literary societies then popular, and in the Burlington Zouaves, a military company. The Ware family read two New York papers, the *Weekly Tribune* and the *Independent*. Hiram Ware appears to have been an extremist on the slavery question, an inveterate inventor, but quite impractical. Amanda Ware followed many of the food fads of the day, but appears to have been practical. According to Eugene, her philosophy was: "Never look back. Don't worry over things you cannot help. Do your best and let the balance go."

Another aspect of Eugene's education was the fact that he grew up in a Mississippi River town, with its orientation on New Orleans, and with all the associations of that water connection with the outside world prior to the railroad age. If his reminiscences are reliable, one of the major formative influences upon small boys growing up in that environment was an ability to fight their way to social standing in a boys' world. His own skill in that department, he insisted, won him a place, at the age of nineteen, in Company E, the Burlington company of the First Iowa Volunteer Infantry, a ninety-day regiment that fought through the summer of 1861 in southwestern Missouri. Returned belatedly to Burlington, August 31, after mustering out at St. Louis, Ware soon re-enlisted in the Fourth Iowa Cavalry, and in the latter part of 1863 was transferred as a commissioned officer to the Seventh Iowa Cavalry, which patrolled the upper Platte route to the Rocky Mountains and kept the telegraph to Denver in operation. The regiment was assigned to Fort Leavenworth in the spring of 1865. During the summer of the same year, Ware was on a special mission on account of the Indian troubles in the vicinity of Fort Smith, crossing twice southeastern Kansas, the country with which his later life was to be so closely associated. The regiment was mustered out at Fort Leavenworth, Eugene Ware, Captain, May 17, 1866.<sup>1</sup>

With a birthday anniversary coming up May 29, the period of his

<sup>1</sup>The principal source for Ware's early life is his book, *The Lyon Campaign in Missouri. Being a History of the First Iowa Infantry* (Topeka, Kansas, 1909); his Great Plains experience is in his book *The Indian War of 1864* (Topeka, Kansas, 1911).

military service, five full years, included his twentieth through his twenty-fourth years. At twenty-five he was returning to civilian life and a decision about a vocation in a peacetime world. He could resume the harness business as a skilled artisan, starting at the bottom, a relatively mature man, but with no experience in civilian responsibilities appropriate to his age. Yet, as an army officer, he had been accustomed to carry rather heavy responsibilities of a military character — in directing the activities of other men in the army way.

The American Civil War was a profound experience for the generation of young people who participated. Four years of hostilities subjected an uncommonly large proportion of that age group to a remarkably uniform indoctrination in the few simple emotional precepts upon which war propaganda focused. Since it was a civil war, many of these generalizations involved issues of morals and loyalty, and were applied with intolerance.

The Union veterans returned to a civilian world that was being transformed physically by science and technology — a society being mechanized by steam, steel, and science — and reconstituted intellectually and spiritually by these same forces. If these latter aspects were not momentous for all during the latter part of the decade of the 1860's, at any rate they were for those endowed with a capacity to think and act independently, and they were potentially a challenge more fundamental than the war itself.

The American Civil War was a war of national unification comparable to the wars of national unification of Germany and Italy during the decade of the 1860's. For all three unified nation states the task of the generation following these wars was the consolidation into centralized power of the results of the victory on the battlefields. Whether or not these consequences were good or bad, they were inescapable facts. Similarly, the science, technology, philosophy, and theology that were transforming and reconstituting the society and culture of the United States had their origins in Europe, particularly in Great Britain and in Germany.

The conventional evaluation of the Civil War stressed the moral aspect of abolition of slavery and the patriotism that preserved the Union. Yet both the downfall of slavery and centralization of political power at Washington were in the making without the war. In many respects the war confused rather than solved the real issues involved in those associations. The bitter political controversies about the Negro and about reconstruction of the South, in the form made so familiar to readers of conventional United States

history, were used conspicuously as excuses, not reasons, for measures looking to the centralization of government and of all other aspects of power in society as well.

The first four lines from an unidentified Burlington poem, under the title of "History," were eminently correct:

The fate of nations, like a mighty sea,  
Is full of hidden whirlpools, rocks and graves,  
And he is blind that in their destiny  
Sees but the conflict of the wind and waves.<sup>2</sup>

That something of the broader view of the significance of reconstruction after the American Civil War and the parallel European wars of national unification was shared in Burlington, Iowa, itself will come out in its proper place.

#### BURLINGTON TAKES NOTICE

To what kind of Burlington was Captain Ware returning? The editor of the *Hawk-Eye*, May 2, 1866, thought that there was "a great deal of philosophy for these times in the following: 'A man is apt to think that his personal freedom involves the right to make his fellow men do just as he pleases.'" Possibly that was not irrelevant in a nation "preserved" by "blood and iron." Nor was the Lincoln Legend to be ignored. It was already in the making. The *Des Moines Register* had suggested that Lincoln's birthday be celebrated as a national holiday. The *Hawk-Eye*, February 10, 1866, had approved: If Washington's birthday, why not Lincoln's — "the Father of this country," and "the Preserver of his nation."

The city of Burlington was still agitating the improvement of the Public Square which continued "a disgrace to the city." The young men were interested in a library association, organized in January, 1866, which rented rooms and started a collection of books: "Our city has long felt the need of this moral engine, and its absence has given room for the introduction of evil influences which have been productive of great harm and hindrance to the moral culture and intellectual development of the young men of the community." Support was solicited for the Young Men's Library Association. The reading room was ready for visitors in April. For reasons not explained, the president and vice-president resigned in June and new officers were chosen.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Burlington *Daily Hawk-Eye*, Jan. 5, 1866. (Hereafter cited as *Hawk-Eye*.)

<sup>3</sup> *Hawk-Eye*, Jan. 31, Feb. 27, 28, Mar. 15, Apr. 12, 28, June 28, 1866.

Ware's return from Fort Leavenworth to Burlington, following his discharge from military service, May 17, 1866, was not recorded in the local press. Burlington had its share of local poets, but one wonders about "Sunday Evening" whose opening stanza follows:

Sometimes in looking at our life,  
 We catch its goodly purpose gleam,  
 But ere we read the meaning well,  
 It fades, and all again is dream.<sup>4</sup>

And then came a dialect "poem" whose originality, imagery, and language suggest the possibility that it was Captain Ware's creation inspired by his return to the River Town —

Owed to Ye River

O magnyfishent stream! Thou art  
 The biggest peace of water hereabouts  
 Vizzible to the naked eye of man!  
 Day in, day out, thou keepest a goin by,  
 Porin thy mity torrent into the gulph,  
 Up an down an roun thy hevin buzem, ships  
 With wheals and paddels go a salin,  
 And gease, an little gease, (which air goslins)  
 An little boys (which air not) go swimmin  
 In thy most placid wave!

O mity crick!

Thou are older than the oldest citizen  
 Of Burlington, or any other man, —  
 Thy billoes have been a bulgin here  
 For sentoorys past, an in thy vast deap,  
 Fishes, both big an small, hev growed, an lived,  
 An carried on thair scaly bizness, an tadpoals  
 Devellupt into the ufoneus phrog!  
 Thou are wider'n a man cood reach acrost  
 In a hole year. Thou are also very  
 Useful. Dogs an cats an cattle stop to drink  
 At the edge, an go aweigh smilin an happy,  
 An men dip barrels full, an buckits full,  
 To wash thair darty close, or sprinkle  
 The dusty streets. Men, an wimmin, an children  
 Shall speak a blessin for thee. An at nite —  
 Pray 'scuse me if I ventur here a little

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, July 1, 1866.

To gro enthooziastikie — at nite,  
 When the transpicious kanopy, the mune,  
 An stars, an plannits, Mercury, an Venus,  
 (Which was a woman wunst and loved a yuth,)  
 An Marz and Komits, with brite caudalities  
 Kum shinin in thair sweet yung bashfulness,  
 (All cept the mune, which is not greatly yung,)  
 Old river how they rejoovinate thy sole!  
 Thair silvery beams slide greasily down  
 Into thy glidin waters, and go playin  
 At hide an seek with mermades  
 An the other mades that live among  
 The mussel shells, (akordin to phabel,  
 Which is not strictly troo.) Then, sumtimes,  
 The yung fokes take thair botes, an sail,  
 As tis a most convenyent time to talk  
 All kinds of nonsense, muneshine, stars,  
 An sich — an they go a singin round,  
 But not to be compaired, in the musikle line,  
 With the elegant dyapazzins of the Phrog,  
 (Which last, concerning it, we spoke of before,)  
 That charms the mermades an mermisses,  
 An acts in the kapassity of ole Neptoon.  
 Mississippi, farewell! Feelins deep  
 Crowd on us fast — too deep, too fast to utter;  
 Keep a glidin on — don't stop because of us,  
 We wouldnt detain thee for a minnit,  
 From enny of thy lawful biznesses,  
 Or else the people of the Crescent City  
 Wood hev no water to mix with thair whiskey.  
 Which wer a grevus loss.

River, farewell!<sup>5</sup>

The first explicit reference in the *Hawk-Eye* to Captain Ware's presence in Burlington was concerned with his public initiation into the intellectual and educational activities of the city. A "Card" addressed to Ware, dated September 8, 1866, signed by five names in behalf of several others requested him to lecture "on the manners and customs of the red men of the far West." The reasoning upon which the invitation was based is of interest: "As this is a period of our national existence when the matters of a public nature are of the greatest moment and interest, and when we are ap-

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, July 7, 1866.

parently on the eve of having trouble with the aborigines of the continent," such information was desirable. Aware of his tour of duty of more than a year on the upper Platte River, the card continued: "We make this request, knowing as we do, your great ability, and long experience on the frontier, among the different tribes." What a difference in qualifications was registered here, compared with the teenager of 1861 whose distinction lay in his skill with his fists. Two days later, Ware accepted the invitation, which was "unexpected," — "I will deliver a few remarks in that feeble manner which will be so in consonance with the insignificance of the subject." The time and place set were Mozart Hall, September 14, the admission charge was 25 cents, the proceeds to go to the YMLA. Further advertising emphasized his experience as Captain in the Seventh Iowa Cavalry, and "his originality of thought, [which] leads his friends to anticipate a rich treat in this his first literary effort." Of course, such a designation of "first literary effort" ignored his participation in the prewar school and literary society exercises.

In reporting on the lecture, the critic first emphasized his own background as a qualification for his evaluation — the reading of "John Jewett's narrative of the Indians on the western coast, Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, and many Indian stories and legends, but we were highly entertained with the Captain's address. His illustration of Indian dialect, habits of life, mode of warfare, courtship, &c., all done [*sic*] credit to the speaker. We hope the YMLA will call him out again."<sup>6</sup>

The YMLA had as its second lecturer, October 2, the poet-humorist John G. Saxe, and invited a local personage for the third in the series, but the candidate declined. A correspondent signing himself "Amuccus" begged the man to reconsider: "The course of home lectures so auspiciously opened by the admirable address of Capt. Eugene Ware, we all hoped would be continued by our other talented young men, and thus keep up an interest that Capt. W. has so generally awakened." Even the public solicitation failed, however, and Captain Ware was prevailed upon to give a second lecture: "the subject to be 'Nothing.' We need not urge our readers to attend, as the mere announcement will be sufficient to fill the hall." The *Hawk-Eye* complimented Captain Ware for his acceptance of the invitation to deliver a second lecture and urged the public to respond and thus encourage others to fall in line, and to provide the city with a series "such as no other city has

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 1866. On account of a mix-up in Mozart Hall engagements, the lecture had been postponed one day.

had, furnished by young men of talent from its own midst. . . . show that it honors its own sons, who are as gifted as those in a 'down East' town, or anywhere else." The proceeds from this lecture were to go to the "Ladies Parsonage Society of the Division ME church," and following this announcement came the argument: "This will induce a larger attendance of those of the more utilitarian school, who look to the good rather than the pleasure which grows from these entertainments." The Sunday morning *Hawk-Eye*, October 21, teased curiosity: "Nothing. — If you wish to know all about it, go and hear Captain Ware to-morrow evening at Mozart Hall." Tuesday's paper, after the event, evaded the real issue by resort to the threadbare formula: "A small but highly intelligent audience" heard Captain Ware's lecture on "Nothing." "The subject of his carefully prepared manuscript occasioned surprise to his audience, as he proceeded gradually to unfold the theory of the indestructibility of force and the fact that there is no such thing as 'Nothing.'" Obviously the critic was not overflowing with enthusiasm, for he concluded: "Viewed as a dissertation upon a scientific subject, it could not but interest all thinkers upon scientific subjects."<sup>7</sup>

Ware had delivered both the first and the last of the home lectures — Indians and science. But regardless of the lack of interest in Burlington about science, the lecture on "Nothing" was of some importance to the record of the course of Ware's education. Unfortunately, the reporter did not elaborate on the content of the lecture, leaving the historian under the necessity of speculating in the most general terms about the probabilities. Although not altogether new, the theory of the conservation of energy had received a fresh and significant restatement in 1848 in Germany by the youthful Hermann von Helmholtz. This gave it a new currency in all circles interested in the theoretical bases of science.<sup>8</sup> Vague as the descriptions were, the conservation of energy and the atomic theory as they were being popularized in the two decades following 1848 probably furnished Captain Ware with his lecture material. Subsequent developments would appear to fall in with such an assumption.

#### WARE BREAKS INTO PRINT

With the next item, the historian is again on solid ground. The *Hawk-Eye*, November 10, 1866, contained the following paragraph in the "Locals"

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 4, 6, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 1866.

<sup>8</sup> Howard and Valmi Gruber, "Hermann von Helmholtz: Nineteenth-Century Polymorph," *Scientific Monthly*, 83:92-9 (August, 1956).



column: "If the author of the semi-prosaic, semi-poetical, didactic and moral essay entitled 'The Lovist,' will furnish us his name his document will appear in print. Otherwise it goes to the repository of all anonymous communications — the scrap basket." The author of this peculiarly described piece overcame his timidity sufficiently to gratify the editor, and "The Lovist" was published, November 11, 1866, but without any identification of paternity. Had its author not later claimed it publicly as his brain-child, the piece would probably have remained as anonymous as hundreds of other such local "poems?" printed in the country's newspapers. It is Eugene Ware's first positively identified poetic production, thus far discovered by the present writer, to appear in print. The argument might even be advanced with a show of justice to the author that the "poem" should have remained an orphan. In that case, however, the historian would have been deprived of a document of no slight value to the study of the education of Eugene Ware. But here is the original *Hawk-Eye* version of the "poem":

#### The Lovist

Oh, Burlington! Oh Burlington,  
A story I will tell,  
About an in-di-vidu-al,  
Who loved a maiden well.

More than that he adored, admired, worshipped, devoted, gloated and floated, over and around her: revered, revered, venerated, respected and honored her, and one of his favorite remarks was that he had her dear image frescoed on the purest pannel of his memory.

This fell-u-er, a letter wrote,  
And sealed it with a seal,  
To tell how feelingly toward  
This maiden he did feel.

This letter partook of the nature of a billet doux, an epistle, note, "a very few lines," a communication, ode, apostrophe, sonnet, missive, sapphic, poem, lyric, a metrical address, a rhythmical versification, something like this:

He said, said he, it idle is  
For me to ever start  
To paint in one short idyl,  
The idol of my heart.

He said she was his idol, ideal, doll, statue, grace, nymph, duck,

dearest, seraph, fairy, "his own," his maiden, young lady, youthful female and adolescent, juvenile, feminine charmer.

A carpenter of teeth was he,  
A den-tist, and I'm told  
That in his den, he often said,  
That teeth were his "best hold."

He had an ether-ial way of getting them out; he yanked out wisdom and eye teeth, snatched out cuspids and bicuspid, exterminated grinders, abruncated molars, and smollixed incisors, in short, his motto was "pro bono publico!" for the public's bones.

And when the miss, the missive read,  
This maiden sentimental,  
She said, said she, if he gets me  
It will be acci-dental.

She went back, acidulated, passed, couldn't see it, throwed off, declined the proposal, desired to be excused, denied the soft impeachment, and contravened the declaration on the grounds that [the difference between?] a plug-ugly and an ugly "plugger" was very slight, and she accordingly "jerked" out the following:

"Who knows, but ere the orange blossoms  
wither on my wreath,  
What pre- and for-cepts you may throw  
Into my very teeth."

This sarcasm, derisive remark, sneer, reproachful expression, satirical observation, scornful utterance, taunt, gibe, contemptuous reflection, scoff and disdainful declaration, had the following effect:

When this young man he heard of this,  
He did begin to cry;  
He stopped a drawing of a tooth,  
And went and drew a sigh.

And as there was no chance of basking in the sunlight of her smile, nor to smile in the sunlight of her basquine, he said he had nary not no nothing more to live for.

He done took sick, and tried, alas,  
To neutralize in vain  
The pain he felt, by wrapping up  
Within a counter-pane.

But it wouldn't work; he tried to die by an effort of mind, but his constitution was stronger than his will, so he got up and went down town, having for a while no "modus operandi" marked out, finally

He went and bought a dag-u-er  
 And then to end his woes,  
 He went and plunged it in his chest,  
 Which was half full of clothes.

And then he went and got a pass,  
 And took the evening train,  
 For climes where golden fortunes are  
 "Extracted without pain."

When Ware claimed this orphan publicly for the first time in the second edition of *Rhymes of Ironquill* (1889) it was not given a bath and a new suit of clothes, only its face was washed (it was still dirty behind the ears) and its clothes were patched here and there:

The Lovist  
 A true story

Look here, you gentle reader,  
 A story I must tell,  
 About an individual  
 Who loved a maiden well.

[He admired and adored her — doted and gloated and floated; one of his favorite observations was, that her dear image was frescoed on the skylight of his soul.]

He wrote one day a letter,  
 And sealed it with a seal,  
 To tell the girl how feelingly  
 Towards her he did feel.

[This letter partook of the character of a rhythmical communication; it might have been called an ode, or an apostrophe, or a sonnet, or a piece of versified vacuity, or iambic inanity — but it wasn't poetry.]

The young man said — "It idle is  
 For me to ever start  
 To paint in one short idyl  
 The idol of my heart."

[What the adolescent young maniac wanted to paint her for nobody will ever know. He called her his ideal, idol, doll, his fairy, seraph, duck, nymph, grace, and he showed other surface indications of having the old complaint in its most frightful form.]

A carpenter of teeth was he,  
 A den-tist, and I'm told  
 That in his den he often said  
 That teeth were his "best hold."

[He was "bad" on eye teeth, yanked out cuspids and bicuspid, snatched out grinders, exterminated molars and abolished incisors without pain or delay. His motto was, "*pro bono publico*" — for the public's bones.]

But when the miss the miss-ive read,  
 The maiden sentimental,  
 She said, said she, "If he gets me,  
 It will be acci-dental."

[She told this, in confidence, to a young lady friend, who put on her hood and rushed right off and told the young man, so as to make him feel happy. He asked the young lady to intercede for him. She did so, but the "charmer" simply responded:]

"Who knows, before the orange blos-  
 soms wither in my wreath,  
 What irony and iron he  
 My throw into my teeth?"

[The "mutual" friend saw that the embassy was a failure, and so she waited all the forenoon until her mother went out to saw some wood to get dinner with; then she skipped down to see the doctor and make him feel pleasant. She told him all, with usual embellishments — she not only gave him the "text," but also an elaborate appendix, with notes, index and glossary.]

And when the young man heard of it,  
 He then began to cry;  
 He stopped a-drawing of a tooth,  
 And went and drew a sigh.

["Why," said he, "this sarcasm, this scornful utterance, this taunt, this sneer, this gibe? I have," said he, "nary — not — no — nothing to live for."]

He done took sick; he tried and tried  
 To neutralize, in vain,  
 The pain he felt, by wrapping up  
 Within a counter-pane.

[But it wouldn't work; he tried to die by an effort of the mind, but his mind was too weak — his constitution was stronger than his will. This was before the tonic action of phosphorous on the brain was discovered. He tried whiskey, but it never affected him

— it never found his brain; it went skirmishing through his system and wore itself out trying to find some ganglionic nodule to work on. He consequently recovered next day sufficiently to go down town.]

And then he bought a Bowie knife  
With which to end his woes;  
Then went and plunged it in his chest,  
[Which was half full of clothes;]  
Then went and bought a railroad pass,  
And took the evening train  
For climes where golden fortunes are  
"Extracted without pain."

This production might be discussed in a number of ways, but comment is directed only to the author's procedure. The alternation of verse and prose afforded Ware the opportunity to explore all the possibilities of synonyms contained in the current dictionaries, but in addition, he included all the slang terms then current, and, one might add appropriately, printable. All who are interested in dating slang should take notice. All these ephemeral slang terms were edited out of the book version. Furthermore, as was the custom of the time, and possibly of his age in relation to his delayed literary experimentation, Ware indulged in puns and related manipulations of words and phrases. This was an excellent discipline in word discrimination and vocabulary building. He was integrating the written English language and the oral United States slang into a single written medium of communication. Thus from the beginning of his practice of rhyming, Ware exemplified the folk process in action, which gave to his literary career its most distinctive character. This particular feature of his writing gave point to a comment of 1902, when he was appointed to the office of Commissioner of Pensions: "Those who have read magazine poetry for years will understand why the eastern papers are so bitterly attacking Ware's rhymes. Ware's poems can actually be understood."<sup>9</sup>

For reasons not now apparent, Captain Ware did not return to the artisan harness trade, but drifted instead into journalism. The date is not available, but whether or not before or in consequence of his lectures and his "poem," "The Lovist," the editor of the *Hawk-Eye* gave him an opportunity to try his hand at newspaper work. As he told the story later, he rapidly assumed

<sup>9</sup> Wichita (Kansas) *Daily Eagle*, Apr. 20, 1902.

responsibility and virtually became editor during the winter of 1866-1867.<sup>10</sup> Although without signature, the original Ware way of using language would seem to identify a number of early items printed during that period as his own. Later, his identity as "local" editor became explicit.

Even if these are not Ware productions, they sample the type of writing that was conspicuous in upper Mississippi Valley newspapers of the time. Ware's apprenticeship in newspaper writing took place in this atmosphere, and unlike so many young people ambitious to write, he did not treat the commonplace with contempt. Here was his experimental laboratory.

One "local," possibly Ware's, "Love One Another," ran as follows:

Let each one strive with all his might  
To be a decent man,  
And love his neighbor as himself —  
Upon the golden plan.

And if his neighbor chance to be  
A pretty female woman,  
Why, love her all the more — you see  
That's only acting human.<sup>11</sup>

Another production, "Love Without Nonsense," was in prose with emphasis on contemporary slang. Moll and Bill — he "axed," she said she "was in," Paw said take her, glad to get rid of her. Bill would be soon. Went to magistrate, but Moll changed her mind; both went home. No nonsense. Not like this in novels.<sup>12</sup>

The Burlington Collegiate Institute was referred to locally as the University. Its literary organization, the Eonadelphian Society's (eternal brotherhood) activities were reported in the press, the December 4 Festival being treated with a half-hour long poem by Dr. Harvey, one of his best efforts in that line, according to the scribe. "Local" visited classes there December 20, just prior to the dispersal of the 95 students for Christmas holidays. Christmas week brought its "Santa Claus" poem, "written by one old bachelor and carefully scanned and approved by another." New Year called for a "Carriers' Address," in poetic form, mentioned in the city column but not printed in the paper. It must have circulated only as a broadside, or may

<sup>10</sup> Eugene F. Ware, "History of the Sun-Gold Section," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 6:296-7 (August, 1937).

<sup>11</sup> *Hawk-Eye*, Nov. 24, 1866.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 29, 1866.

have been printed in the weekly edition, but no copy has been found. Suspicion points to Captain Ware as the guilty party, but more of that later.

Under a headline: "Lectures here don't pay," the Eonadelphian Society advertised its lecture series, four delivered, and the fifth scheduled for the following night, January 4, 1867, with two more to come. The occasion for the headline was a disagreement with the "Carriers' Address" of New Year's Day which had so declared, but the lecture advertisement insisted that the author of that document "is mistaken, lectures here do pay." Possibly, if the lecturer on "Nothing" was also the author of the "Carriers' Address," he might have been prejudiced.<sup>13</sup>

In view of Ware's characterization of his mother's philosophy, the choice of the poem, reprinted February 15, 1867, from *All the Year Round*, may have reflected her resignation:

Be not swift to take offense;  
Let it pass!

Anger is a foe to sense;  
Let it pass!

Brood not darkly over wrong  
Which will disappear ere long;  
Rather sing a cheery song —  
Let it pass!  
Let it pass!

Strife corrodes the purest mind,  
Let it pass!<sup>14</sup>

But possibly there was more in this poem and its associations than meets the eye. In 1875 Ware printed a poem of his own, "The Text," later renamed "The Granger's Text," which carried the refrain at the end of its five stanzas:

Smooth it over and let it go.

Whether or not Ware's, a local of March 20, 1867, appeared on what had come to be accepted as his page, and the writer was not willing to "Let it pass!" Juvenile delinquency had become a problem in postwar Burlington. Some ten to twelve-year-olds had been in court, and the judge warned their parents that if brought before him again they would be sent to jail. The

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Dec. 4, 11, 12, 21, 23, 1866; Jan. 1, 3, 1867.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 15, 1867.

The Vision of the Future reviewed each of the objects of present denunciation, in all their potential glory. But the Public Library!

My brain with boards and vellum soon was reeling;  
Books, charts, and pamphlets rose up to the ceiling —  
Quaint volumes rare, ripe for the bookworm's feeding.  
Refreshing ones fit for a lady's reading.

Possibly, some of the "strong minded" among the aforesaid "ladies" rose up in denunciation of the insult in the last line quoted above, but, if so, the male-controlled newspaper did not print it. "Reconstruction" had not gone that far.

During the first four months of 1867 the young people of Burlington enjoyed themselves, immensely, in a "controversy," pretended or real, over rival literary organizations, metals as instruments of culture, and other things important only to their private lives. The *Hawk-Eye*, thanks to the fortuitous circumstances that put Captain Ware, one of them but inexperienced, in the role of editor, temporarily in charge, served as a forum. And a good time was had by all — unless it was the young man of the "smiling blue orbs."

A communication dated December 31, 1866, opened this phase of the farce:

As a lady and a gentleman were passing up one of our principal thoroughfares, their attention was attracted by the antics of an individual who appeared to be cutting and thrusting at an unseen enemy with a wooden sword and exhibiting other signs of violent passion, they very naturally supposed he was protracting Christmas or anticipating New Year. While they were endeavoring to solve the mystery, an urchin politely informed them that he was only a member of the Golden Hour, rehearsing his part. They thanked him and passed on.<sup>16</sup>

Evidently the author of the communication was known and the fact that he had recently visited Europe afforded the opening thrust in the reply to "the gentleman of the smiling blue orbs":

We are sorry to see that an observation on European manners had not abated the inquisitiveness of the gentleman of the smiling blue orbs. We regret he has been putting them to such a bad purpose as peeping behind the curtain at what he facetiously terms the antics of a member of the Golden Hour.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 3, 1867.



The gentleman may rest assured his curiosity will never serve as a passport to that select circle, although it may some day prove a short road to his final hour.<sup>17</sup>

The owner of the "blue orbs" jumped at conclusions about the identity of the author of the reply, was "intensely indignant" and pursued his victim "with a shelalah." The editor observed, however, that the identification was in error and admonished: "Woodman spare that tree." It was then that "Z" explained to the public what it was all about; the history of the Golden Hour Literary Society, originated by the ladies to aid the YMLA. "The fruition in part of the prophetic vision of our native poet is surely near — Burlington moves. . . . The object of the association is intellectual, moral and social culture." A public exhibition was to be given soon. Next, in satire upon the Golden hour, "Histrionicus," unregenerate, obviously not among the select, described his rival organization, "The Brass Minute Association," which, if his version was not the figment of the imagination constructed for the purpose, "came together last evening, like poor relations to a funeral, without a call. A permanent organization was effected." Their theatrical program called for heavy tragedy men, and two were selected, then "A scene shifter was borrowed from the Golden Hour, a selection of plays [made], which for the sake of novelty were taken from Shakespeare." Also, to be different no doubt, and to disillusion everyone about any suspicion of imitation, a public entertainment was to be given "for the purpose of furnishing Burlington with city railway cars."<sup>18</sup>

The next move in the YMLA enterprise is not easy to evaluate. A correspondent wrote the editor, reviewing the history of that organization, pointing out that the first annual meeting had been due the first Tuesday in January, 1867, but had been postponed. The organizers, a dozen young men, had wanted a place to spend their time better than "billiard saloons and drinking hells and other amusement." They had helped themselves and had not received the support they had "a right to expect, but they were told they had not asked for advice — a pilot — and would now have to make the best of it. . . . they now call upon you to aid in the reconstruction." Toward this end, the writer invited all interested, whether or not members, to attend the adjourned annual meeting, elect officers, and plan a program of action. The young ladies also were invited. One of the latter replied, ques-

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 4, 1867.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 5, 1867.

tioning the genuineness of the invitation, which should have been written in the name of the officers of the YMLA over their own signatures. That form of public announcement was then forthcoming. The outcome was not encouraging, as only about a dozen young men turned out. But the reporter for the meeting described the proceedings satirically, and may not have been a good guide.<sup>19</sup>

Whatever the merits of the YMLA, the auxiliary society's activities appeared to thrive. Possibly girls, not books, were the inspiration. At any rate, in the press, "Amicus" turned out a poem, "The Golden Hour":

The Golden Hour

Time, to the wise more precious far than gold  
Seems naught but brass when fool's dull eyes behold;  
And, show by actions mean and visage sour,  
They envy those who prize each "Golden Hour,"  
A sterling coinage they would fain destroy,  
By an admixture of their base alloy;  
But metal pure by honest use kept bright,  
With no vile compound, ever will unite.  
Eclipsed beneath the local blaze of light  
The spurious sinks into oblivion's night  
"Histrionicus!" pray list to common sense,  
Truth substitute for shallow brained pretence  
Or find some perch where kindred owlets flit  
And solid granite will pass for wit.<sup>20</sup>

Such a challenge did not want for acceptance, "Iamacus" singing the praises of the metal brass and the rise of man through the Brazen Age. Gold was useful only for ornaments and show, this partisan insisted, and praised brazen trumpets and guns. "Amicus" was a perfectly good Latin word meaning friend, but his brassy opponent's pen-name "Iamacus" was broken down into its component plain United States words and accordingly the rebuttal was addressed "To 'I am a cus.'" The "poem" was rather long, but the first eight lines are necessary to later developments:

To "I am a cus"

Degenerate son of these aspiring times  
Why to base metal prostitute thy rhymes?  
Dost thou in this shrewd town expect to pass  
For sterling coin thy counterfeit of brass?

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 8, 10, 13, 16, 1867.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 8, 1867.

Thou subterranean animal — thou gopher —  
 Unconscious of the precious ore of Ophir,  
 Into the stream of thy doggerel litter throw —  
 There, like blind pups, to seek the shades below.<sup>21</sup>

Two metals had now had their turn, when a third called for a hearing. If the writer is to be believed, a third literary society, "The Silver Hour," had been organized, and a "poem" in praise of silver bid for acceptance — silver — voices, hair of the aged, stars, notes, laughs, rays, streamlets, moonbeams, showers, snow-flakes, dew-drops, cords, clouds, etc. Another exchange between Amicus and Iamacus followed, when a fourth rival entered the lists, "Steelocrat," with a "poem" of 27 four-line stanzas:

Of metals of all kinds  
 There's none that in our minds  
 Is more useful than steel  
 And in its possession security we feel.

The uses of steel were recounted, but gold was "now-a-days flighty," brass was difficult these days to distinguish from gold. But "Domesticus," who would have none of this controversy over metals — directed this warning to his fellow "cuses" — "find a Domestic Hour before you are old."<sup>22</sup>

In his capacity as "locals" editor, Ware had acted, as it were, in the role of moderator over the exchanges of views, poetic and otherwise. Possibly, behind the scenes, he had done more. But late in April, that is, April 21, a Sunday, without title or indication of authorship, he summed up the whole metals rivalry in seven two-line stanzas — which were later to be acknowledged under the title "Printer's Ink" ("Printer' Zink"):

Once spoke a tutor to his pupils: "Name  
 The metal that doth cover men with fame."  
 Out spoke the pupils in a chorus: "Steel,  
 Before the others doth the sceptre reel."  
 "Wrong," said the tutor, "Try again to name  
 That metal that most honors men with fame."  
 Again in chorus spoke the pupils, "Gold  
 For it can buy, and honors all are sold."  
 "Wrong," said the sage, "that metal try to name  
 That gives the most of honor and of fame."

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 11, 1867.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 1867.

They all were silent: then spoke one, "I think  
The greatest one of all is Printer' Zink."

"Right," said the tutor, "It doth never fail  
To make the nations tremble and turn pale."

After some verbal editing this poem appeared in the *Rhymes of Ironquill*, 1885 and later, with an eighth stanza:

Then shouted the students, in chorus, "Right —  
The World most honors that which has most might."

At that time a prefatory note revealed the persistence of the punning habit: "As Samuel hewed A-gag to pieces in the presence of the king, so we would like to hew one to pieces in the presence of the 'Wild, Wild West.'" A further comment may not be out of place at this point. In his long poem, "The Short Haired Poet," read before the Kansas Editorial Association at Fort Scott in 1874, Ware elaborated the theme of the role of Editor and of the Press.

But in Burlington, 1866-1867, all this had been done in behalf of the YMLA, and it had all been entertaining, but an editorial on April 16, 1867, admitted the results had not been tangible. Whether or not Ware's verdict, or that of the publisher, the alternatives were pointed out:

Those who try to "freeze out" billiard saloons and euchre clubs, and not furnish any substitute, will find that they can't do it. Young people will pass their evenings somewhere, and "home influences," when a person has no home, are not very potent. Who can get up a plan for a Burlington library?

#### TABITHA JONES

February's poetical diversion took a new turn when Tabitha Jones's plea was heard — where was her elder sister Betsy's beau? Tabitha's mother said she, Tabitha, could not have a beau or marry until her turn. Local urged anyone knowing the whereabouts of the missing person to hasten to make it known. Promptly came the information from "C" that Betsy's beau had last been seen going up the hill, unwillingly. In Burlington, "the hill" meant a place of confinement for violation of law — jail, calaboose, hoose-gow, jug, clink —

But when his term expires, dear one,  
 He'll make up for the past.  
 Then, on you and Jerry Brown,  
 Or any other Jerry,  
 Your naughty Ma'll no longer frown  
 To break your heart with *nary*.

In nine four-line stanzas Tabitha rejoiced at the news: dawn at last; Betsy happy, as her beau, whom she had rejected, threatened "to cut his throat, or hang himself, or have a jolly spree." Betsy was happy that he had chosen the last, and so were Tabitha and Jerry, who now might marry. But she warned "C" not to "hint of any other Jerry":

Or call her dear and dear one  
 In such a tender tone,  
 She'll have him understand at once  
 That she has a Jerry of her own.

To keep the ball rolling, the Sunday *Hawk-Eye*, February 24, printed by "request" a poetical "pop-the-question" puzzle from the Council Bluffs *Nonpareil* — one "which has come down from the school days of 'the oldest man.'"

I thee read see that me;  
 Love is down will I'll have  
 But that and you have you'll  
 One and up and you if.

A suitable reward for the task well done was promised by Editor Ware: "Some of the young ladies who never saw it — may, if they solve it without help, call on 'Mr. Local' for a boquet." Promptly, Tabitha Jones claimed the reward. To follow all the by-play, her communication must be reproduced in full, including Ware's insertion in parenthesis as "Dear Local," of a correction in the salutation:

Mr. Editor — (That should read "Dear Local") — Here is the solution of your pop the question puzzle:

I love but one  
 And that is thee  
 Read down and up  
 And you will see  
 That I'll have you  
 If you'll have me.

There now Jim the solving's done,  
 I did it almost right away,  
 With nary help from any one,  
 Now, please, sir, that boquet.  
 [Signed] Tabitha Jones

Ware appended his reply in rhymed prose, a form he was to use more than once — for what reason is not certain:

[A Boquet for Tabitha Jones]

Soon the weather will be moister, and then, like a Blue Point Oyster, spring will pour out warm and lovely, genial, vernal, and serene. When at last it strikes its focus, by some magic hocus pocus, out the primrose and the crocus, on the meadows will be seen. Then, when all the birds are vocal, in the blazing sun-light focal, out will step ye little local for ye flowrets on ye lea, and he'll take 'em, and he'll shake 'em, and from twig and stem he'll brake 'em, and into a boquet make 'em, and he'll forward them to thee.

Tabitha's "few lines" in acknowledgment, reprimand, and admonishment, were laid over for a few day but were as follows:

To Mr. Local

Now, "Mr. Local" please don't get  
 Your tender feelings out of gear,  
 And have a raving spell and fret  
 Because I didn't call you dear.  
 Indeed I never thought that you  
 Would get yourself in such a worry,  
 And take such pains to show it too;  
 I only thought of dearest Jerry.  
 Yes, for I know that Jerry Brown  
 Would get his feelings out of gear,  
 And go a raving up and down  
 If I should dare to call you dear.  
 Well, that is just the reason why  
 I didn't dare to call you dear;  
 Now that you know, please won't you try  
 And get your feelings into gear.  
 Then shall I wait right patiently  
 Until the time again shall come,  
 When "little flowerets on ye lea"  
 Will all be bursting into bloom.

Tabitha Jones

That ended the exchange of pleasantries — except that it didn't. On March 15, some two weeks had elapsed when Ware issued a friendly warning to fellow editors:

Very frequently in picking up copies of remote exchanges, we still come across stray waifs of Miss Tabitha's poetry still copied and re-copied and presented to readers, who do not know who Tabitha Jones is. Now we wish to say to those outside of the city that Miss Jones writes *exclusively* for the Burlington Hawk-Eye, (don't you Tabitha?) and for no other, (also Steelocrat and Domesticus). To all of which we must give the moral advice, "Do write."<sup>23</sup>

Selected from his rhymed paragraph, about the bouquet for Tabitha Jones, and rewritten in 1873, Ware produced the following as a part of a poem entitled "A Romance":

On the shores of Yellow Paint,  
After winter, cold and chill,  
When the springtime strikes its focus,  
By what magic hocus-pocus  
Come the primrose and the crocus,  
On the meadow and the hill?

#### PUNS

This Tabitha Jones sequence had whiled away another six weeks of the winter, but other things became mixed into the spring madness of that season. If puns are the lowest form of wit, then Captain Ware, his friends in Burlington, and indeed his whole generation must be written down definitely as low-brow — but they had a good time. The term pun as used here must be recognized as including conundrums, and various forms of play on words, whether or not strictly according to the formalism of a dictionary definition of a pun. Whatever their defects, these young folk were not cursed by any deadly virus of academic or intellectual formalism. In abbreviated version, this is how Ware enlivened the locals with the saga of the "cowslips" up Jefferson Street. An Iowan had bought a cow in Illinois, but "the cow shed many tears on leaving the parental cowshed," and only with great difficulty was persuaded to depart. After crossing the river into Burlington she again resisted, "and a rope was hitched around her horns and tied to the endgate of a wagon, drawn by two little mustangs."

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 3, 5, 8, 24, 26, Mar. 1, 2, 15, 1867.

The little animals started up Jefferson street, and the obstinate bovine squared out her feet, braced herself, and let them pull her up the street. The effect produced was something like a gang plow. The cow slips here and there but still the procession moves on. These cowslips were not the *primula veris* or cowslips of the meadow, but a succession of quadrupedal cow slips that finally brought the overtaken mustangs to a halt. The driver jumped out of his wagon and began to extemporize adjectives of the most exotic brilliancy, but still the cow did not cower. All in vain the efforts of the mustangs — there was one drawback, and that was the cow.

A crowd gathered and all kinds of methods were proposed. Finally some sensible man untied the rope from the wagon and the cow went on in the most quiet and amicable manner.

---

Why is a Local like a growing child. Because he picks up in-formation.

---

Someone sends us the following miserable and atrocious conundrum. Why is a person galloping his horse up a hill like another person carrying a young lady a little dog? Cause he's taking a gel-a pup. We propose to publish the author's name in our next unless he will leave town.

---

A man by drinking much rye Sunday became ri-otous, was taken before Esquire Dodge, and on account of his hil-arity, was taken out on the hill. He was brought before his honor yesterday morning and tried. The Esquire told him that getting drunk was a fine thing. He paid it, and "liberty, that priceless boon," was his.

---

Hell hath no fury like a woman corned. . . . [This reappeared several years later in another context in the *Fort Scott Monitor*.]

---

A man getting up yesterday morning said it was the first Rose of Springtime.

---

When you kiss a billet-doux that you have just received from your sweetheart, why is it like the nightmare? Because its the inku-bus. The man that wrote that was sun struck yesterday.

---

A pretty girl and a wild horse are liable to do much mischief,



for the one runs away with a fellow's body, and the other runs away with his heart. — Exchange.

K-rect, by the one jolted — by the other jilted.

---

The *Transcript* says they are to have an aviary full of wild birds. Our city has a knave-iary full of wild "birds" already.

These are only a part of the fare that was printed during March and April, 1867.<sup>24</sup> Two conclusions may be appropriate at this juncture against the time of further reckoning. The young Captain demonstrated in his punning the point made in the "puffs" for his lecture on Indians; "his originality of thought," which made even the most prosaic local take on a fresh and sometimes unexpected appearance — on occasion endowing reality with a startling clarity quite existentialistic in objective amoral perspective. Secondly, this propensity for manipulating language, more than mere punning, was a characteristic which he did not outgrow. At best he used it significantly; at worst, during his late years often it became an empty cleverness that was frequently in bad taste, detracting from a well-earned reputation.

#### THE SPRING POETRY CROP

In the *Hawk-Eye*, March 10, 1867, Ware recorded "four rhythmical compositions written by a new, fresh, crop of Burlington poets" — all on the same subject — "She was beautiful — professed great attachment for me — corresponded for several years (or many months) — adored her — absent short time — came back — perfidious one — engaged . . . love her yet — gone forever." As literary critic, Ware pointed out that:

Some of these pieces are literary centipedes, having more feet than they know what to do with in some of the lines, and some lines so frightfully catalectic that ideas and feet are both left out. We don't wish to publish them, because outsiders would get a bad idea of Burlington girls (to whom there are none equal), and they would also think it was a bad place for idiots. We would advise each of the parties to live on gruel until the middle of April, and then go to Colorado. It is very funny, but no less true, that when a person finds that his "idol" has "gone back on him," he immediately gets poetic, writes outlandish silliness, and dashes to the nearest printing office to have it set up in type. Besides, we've got a lot on hand that we wrote ourselves, that we haven't worked off yet. All communications on other subjects will be cheerfully received,

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Mar. 9, 13, 19, 24, Apr. 2, 5, 24, 27, 1867.

whether in prose or verse. Authors having unpublished poems in our waste basket will be allowed to come up and pick them out.

On March 26, Ware commented on a further accumulation of verse: "In our local column will be noticed several rhythmical contributions from Burlington writers. Several remain over to be published in our next." In fact, three issues were required to work them off. A "Tale of a Possum," in Latin, from Wheaton (Illinois) College, drew this explanation: "Some of the Latin is rather original, but it requires only a moderate familiarity with that language to get a tolerable understanding of the 'lingo.'" None of this stream of rhymes resembles Ware's own output unless it might have been "The Prairie" from the German:

Thou broad expanse, horizon gert and lone,  
 The traveler views thee with a shrinking dread;  
 Shrubless and void in undulations thrown,  
 Thou seemest nature's empty hand outspread!  
 The vein-like runnel rippling in its bed,  
 The tortuous trench that checks the burdened wain,  
 The intersecting trails wore by the tread  
 Of sable herds and Spring's dissolving rain —  
 These are the lines that work, with tracings grand  
 The furrowed hollow of this giant hand!<sup>25</sup>

Shortly afterward another poem of six eight-line stanzas, entitled "The Worn Out Font of Type," regardless of authorship, requires attention:

The Worn Out Font of Type  
 I'm setting by my desk, George;  
 Before me on the floor,  
 There lies a worn out font of type  
 Full twenty thousand score.  
 And many months have passed George  
 Since they were bright and new.  
 And many are the tales they've told —  
 The false, the strange, the true.

The body of the poem catalogued the events that had been printed — horror, tempest, wreck, murder, earthquake, suicide, crop failures, defaults, boilers bursting, steamboats snagged, riots, duels, robberies, floods, fires, accidents, births, marriages, deaths.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, Mar. 26, 1867.

I can't pretend to mention half  
 My inky friends have told,  
 Since shining bright and beautiful,  
 They issued from the mould —  
 How unto some they joy have brought,  
 To others grief and tears,  
 Yet faithfully the record kept  
 Of fast receding years.

Even though "The Worn Out Font of Type"<sup>26</sup> may not be his, in verse of acknowledged authorship, Ware used a similar idea, simplified in "The Telegraph Wire," date not determined.

During this round of early spring verse Ware did work off one of his own that is identifiable beyond question, entitled "YUMGAPRTXI." Such a name for a poem required an introduction, or at any rate some explanation:

Burlington is having a season of unexplained prosperity. The weather is airy and bracing. Vice and crime have absolutely ceased to exist; dogs decline to fight; horses positively refuse to run off; accidents will not happen although surrounded by the most fortuitous circumstances; no drunkards infest our midnight streets; no pickpockets seek adroitly to draw untold ducats from our pockets; no midnight burglars enter dwellings and carry away quantities of priceless "swag;" everything is in a state [of] the most fearful morality. In view of such a painful absence of crime it became soon apparent that something must be did. Up in the attic lay an old neglected machine, badly used and out of repair. We went out and bought a globe valve, run some Babbitt metal in the boxing, raised the gauge to 180, let the steam on, run the belt from the tight pulley to the counter-shaft, pointed the machine at the river and said there's your subject, with the following result:

## YUMGAPRTXI

## 1.

The time has been, when fetterless  
 And free,  
 Commercial navies  
 Floated to the sea.

The time has been  
 When fleets did fleetly ride,  
 On peerless river,  
 On thy pier-less tide.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, Mar. 31, 1867.

When from the icy origin  
 Direct,  
 Thou sought'st the tropics  
 With thy tide unchecked.

Float on,  
 Float on, Majestic and superb.  
 May ill be-tide them, if  
 Thy tide they curb.

Re-  
 sistless river, through the laughing land,  
 Thou sweepst with  
 A current great and grand.

The same alike amid the  
 Northern pines,  
 The same amid the cypresses  
 And vines.

Thou scornest those  
 Who would thy current chain;  
 Thou fling'st thy reckless  
 Wavelets to the main

Above the waves  
 No piers appear to peer,  
 For with thy tide  
 Men fear to interfere.

Thus be it ever in thy after  
 Annals,  
 That none shall dare to vex thy  
 Deep wrought channels,  
 With chamfered piers,  
 Or locks with timbered pannels.

## 2.

The time has been,  
 That on thy banks were hurled  
 The tidal billows  
 Of the olden world.

Oh Commerce! Commerce!  
 Grandly are you crowned;  
 Once beat your iron trident  
 On the ground.

And ere the echo of the  
Blow is done  
The brick built cities  
Tremble in the sun.

Beat down your trident  
When the sea surf raves,  
And snow-white navies rise amid the waves.

And when  
You touch your trident in the strand  
The cities maritime  
In clusters stand

Oh! bird-eyed commerce, from thy height sub-  
lime,  
Though [thou?] overlookest  
Every sea and clime.

As well thou see'st  
Where thy southern sails  
Are driven, riven by  
The tides and gales.

As where thy northern steamers  
From their track  
Both beat the wild winds  
And the wild waves back.

Oh, commerce, when  
You turn your power away,  
The Kingdoms crumble,  
And the States decay.

And blocks Titanic,  
In the sands lie drifted,  
To show how Empires fade  
And realms are rifted,  
When from the soil,  
Thy trident has been lifted.

3.

Oh, happy River,  
Thus upon thy banks  
The solid cities  
Rose to rapid ranks.

Commercial jewel  
 Of the happy West  
 The ORCHARD CITY was  
 The first and best.

At Burlington  
 The GOLDEN HOUR was then  
 Thy *Golden* — moraguelatizevoxirbjorumt  
 Jqalzurmitegruyofunctrimovilt.

Closed for repairs.<sup>27</sup>

Several features of this poem identify it as Ware's, although he never acknowledged paternity. The invocation to Commerce (Business), and the use of Neptune's trident as the basis for "cities maratime" and sea power reappear in later poems. The first of these ideas was used in three poems, "The Carriers' Address" of January 1, 1868, the "Short Haired Poet" of 1874, and the "Corn Poem" of 1876. The lines

The brick built cities  
 Tremble in the sun,

were used in modified form in 1868 and in 1871 in the "Carriers' Address" and in the poem "Fort Scott," which was revised into the short poem usually referred to as "O'er Sunny Kansas." Furthermore, the phrase "The Solid Cities" was later to be the slogan applied to Fort Scott — "The Solid City."

Ware was taken to task for the rhymes he was printing, whether or not his own, but offered to consider even the critic's verses:

Dear Local: 'Tis the very worst of crimes  
 To jingle nonsense under the garb of rhymes —  
 To dress bad English up in poorer verse  
 Is simply murder — and what sin is worse!  
 The maxim hath it that the gods despise  
 A middling verse of all beneath the skies;  
 Then what resentment must their eyes suffuse  
 When they behold an effort of thy muse?  
 And you I fear will share their just temptation  
 To visit me with righteous indignation;  
 So with these mitigating trifles up in view  
 I'll grind you out a yard or two.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, Mar. 16, 1867.

As editor, Ware added this note: "The above comes with no further explanation. Was it omitted, or was that all? Send us the 'pome.'"

He had ideas of his own about the writing of poetry and evidently had been making a study of what the standard authorities offered. These he recast in his own "original" language, fully peppered with puns:

CHIGNON poetry waste-basketed. Subject too antique. Lines of poetry should be gram as well as ryth-matical — symmetrical as well as metrical. They should not have redundant feet like a centipede, because too many feet is a bad feat-ure. Spondees shouldn't be compelled to act as trochees, nor dactyls be compelled to "sub" for iammbuses. When the machine is started, the length of the lines should be fixed and spaced off like tape lines, so that they won't reel off any longer than required. Before the piece of poetry is *entirely* finished the author should select some subject to write upon. Read Quackenbos' Rhetoric, pps. 400, 423 inclusive, and try again. Would make these few suggestions personally if we knew your name. Allow us to close with a quotation in regard to the potation — there, that's a rythm — of Castilian spring water:

"A one horse poet is a one-horse thing,  
Spring in, or taste not, the Pierian spring."  
Smith.<sup>28</sup>

After such a disquisition on poetic principles, what should any respectable editor have done with this frayed out fragment, whether his own or treasure-trove? —

#### Ode to the Nigras Circumbendibus

It passed in beauty  
Like the flowers that spring  
Behind the footsteps  
Of the winter king.  
It passed in beauty like a fairy troop,  
It passed in beauty like a plate of soup.  
  
It passed in beauty  
Like the clouds on high,  
That drape the ceilings  
Of the summer sky.  
It passed in beauty like the lightning's flash,  
It passed in beauty like a dish of hash.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, Apr. 14, 1867.

It passed in beauty  
 Like the waves that reach  
 Their jeweled fingers  
 Up the sanded beach.  
 It passed in beauty like a rocket hurled,  
 It passed in beauty like a doughnut curled,  
 It passed in beauty like the tender plants,  
 It passed in beauty like the cook's bright glance.

The above was found in a chair in a Water street boarding house. It was probably written immediately after dinner.<sup>29</sup>

The last of the strictly spring greenery to be recorded — not printed — needs to be noticed because of its associations. Ware specified two disqualifications: not signed, and too long, but it had a good plot:

A handsome young man, and a pretty smart one (as his verses show) fell deeply in love with a young lady whose gentle eye, amethystine lips, sparkling wit and conversation tore in shreds his heart, so that it looked like a skein of red silk, and the young lady exerted herself so much with smiles and "sich," that the young man without a moment's hesitation, flung himself at her feet, got down on the floor in his new pair of drabs, that for the sake of rythm he informs us, were purchased at Raab's. "While at her feet and before he had risen, he asked the young maiden if she would be his'en," — but the young lady "saw it not," so said she, "No! no! with a tone that made him cower, *You do not belong to the Golden Hour.*" So now the young man after shedding "a great many tears of the purest crystal is going to slaughter himself with a pistol."

We regret being unable to give the poem in full, but the moral and one or two other lines we suppress because we won't allow the Golden Hour to be criticized so, because wherefore should we.<sup>30</sup>

All this is man made, or man-maid according to the male dispensation that ran the world. Didn't the girls of Burlington write poetry? At any rate, only Tabitha Jones succeeded in breaking through the barrier of male conventions with her bit of satire calling for "an adjustable spittoon" that was realistic social history, but certainly not Literature with a capital L. The "poem" was in six stanzas of six lines each:

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, Apr. 27, 1867.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, May 2, 1867.



## Wanted

Some Yankee genius to invent  
 A patent adjustable machine  
 For those hateful men who cannot breathe  
 Without a cud their jaws between,  
 And spit and sputter right and left,  
 Regardless quite of crinoline.<sup>31</sup>

To be sure it's putrid, but so were the habits of the men who were so badly in need of either an adjustable spittoon or a reform of their social habits. Tabitha was realistic in assuming that the former, however improbable, was more nearly within the realm of the possible.

Ware's editing of the *Hawk-Eye* did attract favorable attention and when the Council Bluffs *Nonpareil* referred to it as one of the favorite exchanges — "a live, valuable and spicy paper, and one that would do honor to any city west of Cape Cod," in pleased embarrassment the Captain replied:

— Teetotally "kerflumixed" with emotion, we can only respond in the eloquently terse and impressive language of the Arapahoe poet — "How," and say that as you are the wide-awake-est paper on the Western Slope, so will we try to be on the Eastern, and make our columns — in the high-toned language of the Muscatine *Courier* — "a concatenation of accumulated acumen," or words to that effect.<sup>32</sup>

Possibly illness contributed to the difficulties of living up to that boast, but in the *Hawk-Eye*, May 12, Ware complained of Burlington dullness:

## Oh'd by ye Local

Oh, for a crime of dark and damning guilt,  
 To make the people wilt.

Oh, for some frightful burglary or arson  
 Or stunning larcen —

(The last part of that word will be found in  
 another column, it was sacrificed to rhythm.)

Oh that they'd catch and bring some mighty thief  
 To Burlington and grief.

"Oh for a home" I sighed in days gone by  
 Now for a hom i-cide sigh I.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Apr. 5, 1867.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Apr. 16, 1867.

Oh that some wretch would fall beneath the fury  
Of the Grand Jury.

Oh that some drunken fighting pup,  
Would get knocked *down* and then beat up,  
(That is, excelled in early rising.)

The gold of Ophir, I don't Oh nor owe for  
But these big items I'm a going to go for.

Thus "The gold of Ophir" cropped out again from the Golden Hour verse. Also, here is the original version of the "Oh'd" reworked for the Fort Scott *Monitor* and published also in the second edition of the *Rhymes of Ironquill* (1889), but dropped from later editions.<sup>33</sup>

Four days later the *Hawk-Eye* contained this announcement of loss:

PERSONAL — Capt. E. A. Ware [sic], who has been engaged on the local department of THE HAWK-EYE for some time, bid us adieu yesterday, and took up his line of march for the Cherokee country in Southern Kansas, where he proposes to pitch his tent for an indefinite period. We wish him a pleasant journey and a successful career in his new home. While we regret to have him go, we can but congratulate the community in which he may locate on the acquisition of a genial, witty and warm-hearted gentleman. He took leave in the following words:

"The trees are leaving out, and I'll leave too;  
And bid you, with no more ado, adieu."

Now that Ware had "leaved out" with the trees of Burlington, the *Hawk-Eye* reverted to its cold-dishwater dullness. But what a wonderful time those young folk had had that winter of 1866-1867. One might almost say, what a wonderful time Captain Ware had given his friends. A combination of circumstances had allowed him a free hand, and all of those young people had risen to the occasion. That may not have been a good way to run a newspaper, but it paid off in long-term dividends far beyond any possible foreseeable calculations of the owners. What became of the several participants, except Ware, is not known to the present writer, and is not the immediate concern of this study, although the season's diversion may have left an indelible impression on more than Ware's life. This is documented social history of the first order of magnitude. It provides a glimpse into

<sup>33</sup> It was printed in the Fort Scott *Daily Monitor*, Jan. 19, 1903, again with the explanation about the scarcity of news.

what was going on in the minds of post-Civil War youth in Burlington, Iowa, during the winter of 1866-1867, when Eugene Ware was one of them. They and he were acquiring an education — and the record was much more informing than the "Education" of Henry Adams, for the same period. How many other localities left a comparable record? Every generation must answer the age-old questions which, to each person, are new — mating, ethics, and ultimate values, but always in a world of change.

#### CONCLUSION

Five years in the army, whether or not causal or coincidental, had surely done something to the teenager of the 1850's. Not only were flowerets for Tabitha blossoming on the lea, but so was Ware leafing out — that spring of 1867 — for new adventures in Kansas. Already he had served his poetic apprenticeship. The later myth that Ware learned to write rhymes at Fort Scott, by composing harness advertisements in verse, is nonsense, although he appears to have contributed to the legend even if he did not originate it. But the possibility must be recognized that he may have written verse prior to his *Hawk-Eye* experience. Had Ware's mind and its peculiar capacity to manipulate language laid completely fallow during his five years in the army, the years twenty to twenty-four inclusive? His army diaries and his letters to his mother may have the answer, but these documents have not been available for this study.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, if he had not found himself during those five army years, then indeed this winter of 1866-1867 was momentous.

The *Hawk-Eye* verse demonstrated several things about Ware that were already fixed so firmly that he did not outgrow them. His imagery was peculiarly associated with the River — the Mississippi at Burlington — and the river connection with the sea. His extensive knowledge of the classical languages and literatures reinforced this sense of the significance of water, commerce, and water-based power in history. Next to the river in importance, he responded to the magic of type and of the telegraph. Whether prior to his *Hawk-Eye* experience or because of it, the power of the press, both book and newspaper, was central to his thought. The telegraph was an adjunct to the press and his army duty of more than a year keeping the

<sup>34</sup> Jean Nelson, granddaughter of Eugene Ware, has informed the present writer that the letters and diaries are not among papers held by the family.

telegraph lines open across the plains had indelibly impressed upon his mind the vital role of that form of technology.

On the other hand, the railroad, the locomotive upon rails, the unique instrument invented by man for the exploitation of the interior of continental land masses, especially those inaccessible by water communications, never successfully challenged his imagination. Yet, mechanically powered land locomotion was basic to the reconstruction of society during the late nineteenth century. Fort Scott, Kansas, was a railroad town, not a river town like Burlington, Iowa, but in his later poetry, Ware idealized "the murmuring Marmaton" which flowed through it, and the nearby "raging Yellow Paint Creek."

To be sure, no one knows better than the present writer that all the prose and poetry produced by the exuberant Burlington youth, during the winter of 1866-1867, stinks. Yes, it stinks. But such completely uninhibited expression afforded the opportunity for youth to practice writing. Later, casual or causal, as the case may be, a stigma came to be associated with the love of poetry, or other art, and hypercritical pragmatic American scepticism boasted of its sophistication. However it may have been for others of the *Hawk-Eye* group, for Eugene Ware a remarkably large number of the poetic ideas which were to give his *Rhymes of Ironquill* a certain national, even international, distinction, were printed in their first crude versions in the Burlington *Daily Hawk-Eye*, during his association with that paper.