

Academy which for years was as a rock in the desert to those seeking relief from the intellectual barrenness of frontier life. Certainly Iowa history is not fully appreciated or our writers would not have wandered so far in quest of materials.

Myth and tradition have been called the primal bases of history; but one need not go to ancient Greece or Rome to find them. About the Iowa country cluster innumerable legends of the Indian tribes that at various times dwelt within its borders. In the beautiful legend of Minnewaukon, for instance, may be found a theme not less interesting than the story of Ellen of the Isle. Akin in its capabilities of romantic rendition is the legend reciting the origin of maize. In this legend we are told that maize was early bestowed as a sacred gift upon the Indians of the Sac and Fox tribes. For centuries, it is said, the region of eastern Iowa was the scene of its timely and mysterious bestowal. This myth may, in large measure, account for the tenacity with which these peoples clung to the Iowa country as their home.

Again, there is the story of Mascoutin, the "Isle of Fire", which stood in the superstitious Indian mind as the visible evidence of the Great Spirit's wrath. To-day it still bears a name indicative of its legendary past. What scenes were enacted here in the presence of "this magnificent and terrible spectacle" of the Creator's power, when periodic fires swept across the island consuming all vegetation, none but a romancer's mind may conjure up. None but a true artist could visualize such scenes as here oftentimes cowed the Indian hosts of the Upper Mississippi. Hard by, we are told, lived a great medicine man who kept the sun, moon, stars, and fire shut up in a box. A raven, long the guardian genius of the tribe, caused itself by enchantment to be transformed into human shape, and as such became a great favorite with



the old Indian magician. He was denied nothing. One day upon asking to examine the precious box it was given to him, the lid was soon pried open by over-curious fingers, and the heavenly bodies at once assumed their proper places in the firmament. The thoroughly frightened raven, taking again his birdlike form, snatched a coal of fire and brought it home as a peace-offering to his tribal ward. Thus was brought to earth that priceless boon to man, that invaluable possession of the Great Spirit — Fire.

With what reverential fear and awe must the Dakota warrior have ever looked upon Pilot Rock. Riven in twain by the hand of the Great Spirit it long stood as the symbol of barbarian adoration in the valley of the Little Sioux and there it still remains — a reminder of a vanished race. Even more weird and fantastic are the traditions that envelop the Painted Rocks of the White Breast Fork of the Des Moines River. Tinted with the brush of the Master Artist in glowing colors, barbarian curiosity never ceased to speculate upon their beauties and meaning.

Ages ago, tradition tells us, Iowa boasted a culture which had passed away perhaps centuries before the coming of the white man. To-day, on Tomahawk Island near Eddyville and at various localities along the Mississippi and confluent streams one may pause and dream of a past civilization which is still as much of a riddle as that of the Sphinx. One may still find in many localities in the State constant reminders of a paleolithic or neolithic age to which legend is our strongest tie. Lacking a better name we call the people who developed this culture "mound builders". Tradition gives them a fascinating history, but anthropology still speculates as to who they were.

When visiting the museum of the Davenport Academy of Sciences, rich in its memorials of the stone age in Iowa and adjacent States, one can but wonder why Iowa's anthropol-



ogists journey to far-away Arizona, Yucatan, and Peru, seeking to unravel there the mysteries of the past, when here at home is a romantic past fully as interesting in the possibilities of its revelation, though not so stupendous in its material remains, as can be found elsewhere in the western world. Here, waiting the touch of a master hand, is a wealth of material capable of imaginative development.

Since the beginning of recorded history, at least, the friendship of man for man has been a potent factor in shaping the social and political trend of the world. Well-known is the Biblical story of the friendship of David and Jonathan. Classic times offer its counterpart in the pledged sacrifice of Damon and Pythias. Equally dramatic, in the annals of early Iowa, was the more than brotherly devotion of the Kettle Chief for Julien Dubuque. Not even death could part this red man and his white companion, for it was the Kettle Chief's frequently expressed wish that he should lie in death by the side of his friend. And thus they lay until a day when a community, inconsiderate of the ancient friendship, erected a tribute shaft to the memory of Julien Dubuque and left unmarked the grave of his loyal and devoted savage brother. Even stronger in the fervor of its mutual devotion and sacrifice was the friendship of Chief Wapello and Agent Joseph M. Street. A visitor to the old burial-ground at Agency City may yet see their graves side by side.

Another man's devotion to the cause he loved made it possible for Iowa's Territorial capitol building at Iowa City to stand to-day as a model of the classical style of architecture. The storms of three-quarters of a century have only served to accentuate its beauty. It still remains as a memorial of a brilliant Milanese mind — that of Father Mazzu-



chelli, Dominican monk, priest, missionary, architect, and educator. Unassuming and faithful he served in the "fever-haunted wigwam, the crowded pest-house, in the mine or on the river" and died alone, deserted and unshrived. Of him it has been said that "he was of gentle birth, delicate, simple, democratic, loving, confidential, mild-mannered, a second St. Francis of Assisi in the Mississippi Valley".

Scarcely less romantic is the story of the brilliant architect of the beautiful capitol building at Des Moines. Nurtured beneath the sunny skies of France and trained in its schools of art and design, Picquenard early espoused the cause of spiritual and intellectual freedom and became a prophet of the nineteenth century renaissance. Protesting vehemently against the social abuses of his day he fell into disfavor. An ungrateful and despotic government forced him into a voluntary exile from the land of his childhood which he loved so well. Turning to America as a haven of refuge from the social and political storms of the Old World, he cast his lot with his fellow-countrymen of Icaria. Rapidly he rose to favor and fame as an architect of the first rank. He has long since gone to his rest, but as enduring monuments to his genius stand the capitol buildings in Springfield, Illinois, and in Des Moines, Iowa.

To only a few characters has it been granted to fill a romantic niche in history. Such an one was the noted Indian leader, Black Hawk, whose troubled career was as full of interest as was that of any old-world hero. He was sage, philosopher, and patriot, as well as a polished orator, a true prophet, and a redoubtable warrior. Harassed by the onward march of a civilization which he could not understand, he yet firmly stood his ground. Tortured in soul by the treason of fellow-tribesmen and the westward extension of the frontier, who can fathom his agony of mind when he



came, as was his daily wont, to look westward across the Great River toward the setting sun, from the watch tower of his fathers? Forced by the strategy of a merciless, superior culture to abandon the beautiful and charming valley of his ancestors, he reluctantly retired to the appointed reserve on the banks of the lower Des Moines. Deposed, broken in spirit, and deserted by most of the members of his tribe, his few remaining years were spent as a recluse. Here, on October 3, 1838, passed away one of the greatest military commanders and strategists the red race has produced. Little wonder is it that as his life drew to its close he should have complained: "What do we know of the manners and customs of the white people? They might buy our bodies for dissection, and we would touch the goose-quill to confirm it, and not know what we were doing. This was the case with me and my people in touching the goose-quill the first time."

Eons ago Iowa lay at the bottom of a broad, shallow sea in a sub-tropical clime. Upon this sea-bottom grew a rich crinoidal life of "wondrous beauty" and "rare delicacy". Carpeting the ocean depths with a lavish yet fragile luxuriance such as the world has seldom if ever seen in any epoch these "stone lilies" or "feather stars" slowly swayed back and forth in response to the motion of the ocean waves. Changes came and the waters of this great interior sea receded. Centuries passed away and the fauna of diluvian times became the "stone lilies" of a later age.

In this more recent day came Charles Wachsmuth. Broken in health, he was forced to forego his life's ambitions at the early age of fourteen. With a courageous heart he forsook his native German land and boyhood aspirations and came to America where, he was told, his physical vigor might be regained. Advised to seek out-door exercise he turned to the investigation of fossil marine life in the lime-



stone deposits of southeastern Iowa, making his home at Burlington. He labored indefatigably and enthusiastically in quarry and ravine. The world of science learned to know and appreciate him, while lavishing academic honors without stint upon him. Later he was joined by Frank Springer who, like himself, had learned to read in Nature's all but closed book the story of by-gone ages. In collaboration these enthusiastic workers produced what has been called "the grandest scientific and philosophic offspring ever conceived in Iowa". Yet it has been said that "a distant state less slow to perceive the spark of genius" snatched from Iowa "the one great honor of a century". Thus while Iowa was engaged in material development the appreciation and enterprise of the State of Massachusetts gave to the world of science the most remarkable and monumental work on American crinoids ever written.

But the history of Iowa has not been illumined alone by the romance of legend and the achievements of individual lives. The story of the years that are gone has been largely tintured with commercial and industrial romance. Thirty years ago the traveler bound east or west, in crossing the great Father of Waters at Clinton, would have seen piles of sawed timbers covering the entire river front, while banks of logs lay inside their booms for miles and miles along the shores. To-day this picture is a mere memory. Here or there may be seen scattered piles of worm-eaten, weather-stained lumber — the only suggestion of a time when Clinton made millionaires, who exacted their tribute from the far-away pine forests of Minnesota and Wisconsin. In days now long since gone the river swarmed with huge rafts manned by turbulent river drivers whose magic touch controlled the course of acres upon acres of logs.

The untamed Goths of the river steered their rafts by day,



but drank and rioted by night in the towns along the stream which were theirs by right of physical conquest. But from their perilous labors came the fruitage of a later time when fine homes began to dot the prairies of Iowa. While the river front, not only at Clinton but also at Davenport, Dubuque, and Muscatine, was "rife with the scream of rotary saws" mechanical changes came and the life made so familiar by Ralph Connor in his tales of the far northwest receded gradually into Iowa's past and was seen no more.

Although the soil of Iowa has never been stained with the blood of civil strife or foreign invasion since the coming of the white man, this region did not escape unscathed during the years of border conflict and civil war. It was the part of the people of Iowa to witness in a neighboring State the bloody prelude of the turmoil in which they were later to participate at points far removed from their Iowa homes. But there were instances in which the struggle was brought closer to their own doors.

While abolitionist enthusiasm was sweeping across the New England and Middle States with all the rancor of the impending conflict, Iowa was offering sanctuary to the strange and erratic individual whose chimeric plans were to stir the nation to its depths and to precipitate more than any other one thing, the most terrible civil strife of modern days. Sheltered by an Iowa community opposed to war, John Brown planned, with the impracticability of a dreamer the raid upon Harper's Ferry. Iowa had many times been his refuge, whether fleeing from the wrath of Missouri slave-drivers or Kansan "border ruffians". Here he recruited his little company of odd characters, theorists and idealists, who regarded their leader as a being inspired. From Iowa they went upon their ill-fated mission. To Iowa the few survivors returned, fleeing the wrath of an aroused South.



No wilder dream has ever been embodied in romantic fiction than this venture of John Brown and his devoted followers.

To the forests fringing the streams of southern Iowa came the "Copperheads" of Missouri during the ensuing period of internecine civil war. Despised for their convictions and treacherous undermining of Unionist loyalty, they remained a constant target for vituperative attack. Refusing their moral support to the North they also denied their physical assistance to the South; and thus they remained a source of constant irritation. A spark only was needed to produce an explosion.

In the valley of Shekagua or Skunk River in Keokuk County had settled such a band. Heavily armed at all times they assumed toward their unsympathetic Northern neighbors a hostile and menacing attitude. In return the Unionists about them were ever on the alert to detect any overt act of disloyalty. Each side, as it were, stood at bay. The crisis came when a Unionist Republican meeting was called to be held at South English. The "Copperhead" element responded by calling a meeting of their supporters at a place near by. Upon the day appointed, August 1, 1863, the "Copperhead" or "Golden Circle" party moved north across Keokuk County to the designated rendezvous near the English River. A more beautiful midsummer day than this had never dawned upon the quiet and self-complacent community of South English. The drowsy little village became upon this day the "Lexington" of the forces opposed to "Copperheadism" in Iowa. Answering the call to personal defense, the rustic community, so heedless of distant storms, became at once a seething cauldron of loyalist wrath in the presence of nearby peril. No border skirmish was ever more dramatically staged and fought than was that of the attack of Iowa's loyal sons upon the Tally Band. In a very short time the little old tavern of the village became the



storm center of the gallant and patriotic villagers' wrath, while the blood of southern sympathizers was made to flow as a long delayed expiation for wrongs committed. Many events immortalized on the pages of European and American history are less worthy of commemoration than is this episode known as "The Skunk River War".

The desire to gain religious, political or economic freedom has always been a dominant motive among human beings. In obedience to this impulse man has made frequent pilgrimages to remote and relatively unknown lands. Answering its call Abraham moved out from Ur of the Chaldees, the nomadic Asiatic barbarians overran and devastated Europe, and Columbus discovered America. Its never-ceasing demands have sent peoples north, east, south, and west, girdling and re-girdling the globe. Thus it happened that Iowa at various times became a haven and an asylum for persecuted peoples. Much of the romance of Iowa history clusters about the singular religious, economic, and political communities which at different times sought homes in this State.

More than sixty years ago a strange cavalcade might have been seen wending its toilsome way across the prairies of Iowa. Hundreds of religious enthusiasts were making a pilgrimage to their new land of promise in the Far West. Braving hunger, storm, and the perils of the plains, nearly every member of the party pushed before him a little hand cart containing all of his worldly goods. Willingly each individual trudged on in order to reach his goal — the beautiful and to him heavenly valley of Utah. Hundreds perished, hundreds gave up in sheer despair, while other thousands reached the hoped-for goal. Preceding them by only a brief interval, Brigham Young and the faithful members of the parent community fled across Iowa from Nauvoo



to Kaneshville (now Council Bluffs), leaving behind them a well-marked trail which later guided thousands of other emigrants on the long journey to Oregon or California.

Nearly coincident with the flight of the Mormons across Iowa was the arrival of other groups of people seeking release from the religious and economic tyranny of revolutionary Europe. Revolting against oppression in the home land, these people came from socially disturbed France, from religiously torn Germany, and from politically unsettled Hungary.

Devoutly believing that the day of revelation had not passed away, and that the social unrest of the period was directly traceable to the avarice of man, a little community of kindred souls had grown up in Germany in an effort to combat the evil tendencies of the times. Buffeted by more than a century of social and religious conflict, its members finally fled from the land of their nativity. As the English pilgrims turned from Leyden in Holland to the untried regions of the New World, so the Inspirationists turned to America as a refuge. From the quiet and simple existence of the Old World peasant or villager they turned to a life of trial and hardship on the American plains. Willingly they took up the new burden, confident they would not find it too heavy to bear. Settling first in New York, after a short time they found conditions in that locality unsuited for the realization of their religious ideal. From thence they journeyed to Iowa, and here they are to-day — a bit of eighteenth century German life in the midst of twentieth century Iowa. At the Amana colonies may be seen a unique people, freed from the cares of the world, simple and faithful in ideals, unspoiled, industrious and noteworthy as the only truly successful and self-sufficing communistic society in the United States. Still to a considerable extent isolated from the distracting tendencies of the day, these True Inspira-



tionists pursue the even tenor of their ways — a devout and industrious folk.

Less happy, because of the ultimate failure to realize its ideal of social reform, was the Community of Icaria. Founded during a period of social and political chaos in France, the strangeness of its moral precepts earned the displeasure of the "Citizen King", Louis Philippe. Seeking to escape the cruelty of opulence, as well as the "grape-shot and ruin" incident to the tyranny of an intemperate time, these pilgrims of a later day likewise fled from their native land. Chance carried them to Texas. Following a period of almost untold privation they removed to Missouri. Finding conditions here unsuited for the furtherance of their social projects they passed on to the "dead city" of Nauvoo. Well received at first, the strangeness of their teachings quickly aroused antipathy; and once again they assumed the burden of another and, for most of them, a final pilgrimage. At Corning, Iowa, they at last found rest and liberty to realize their ideals. But the community's life was stormy, for its social principles were untrue to the best in man and its ranks were rent again and again by the storms of divisive strife. Failing to preserve harmony of communistic endeavor, the members at last resolved upon dissolution. Thus in 1896 in Adams County "expired the last dying embers of one of the greatest and most unusual socialistic enterprises the world has ever known."

Probably no people in Europe, ancient or modern, have had a more glorious and thrilling story than have those folk who, in Caesar's time, were known as the Nervii. Undaunted, they contended with the legions of Caesar upon the one hand and with the barbarian hordes from the east upon the other; and emerged from the unequal combat unconquered. Although trampled under the feet of advancing foemen again and again, they have never been subdued in spirit.



Each time they have risen and, gathering strength from every crushing blow, have stubbornly resisted bruising by the tyrant's heel. To them these unequal contests have ever been as threads "woven in to give the cloth" of their lives the needed "color and strength". Their little land has always been the home of liberty and independence of thought and action. Charlemagne, the conqueror of more than fifty peoples, declared them free "as long as the wind blows and the world stands." Untouched by the levelling influence of mediaeval church thought and the horrors of the Inquisition, as well as by the bloody terrorism of the Duke of Alva, they emerged into modern times with the same ideals as of old, still offering sanctuary to free political and religious thought. Still free, the nineteenth century found them unaffected by the menacing fury of the revolutionary tempests. But a day not so happy soon dawned. Church and State became as one — an apparent expedient of absolutism unsuited to the ideals of this people, among whom the shibboleth of Church and State separatism found a rich soil in which to grow. Unreconciled to the new conditions and perceiving no immediate opportunity for betterment in Old World tendencies, the party of discontent resolved upon migration. They, like their fellow-sufferers of Icaria and Amana, came to America; and some of them found their way to Iowa during the middle years of the past century. Thus Pella was established and settled by the freedom-loving Holland separatists. Here they, like their French and German contemporaries, have found the needed freedom to solve their destiny as they see the problem; and to-day their quiet and even lives speak well for the romantic endeavors of the past.

But Iowa has not lured the social and religious enthusiast alone. The religious ascetic, with all the severe austerity of



his self-denial, has found in Iowa an atmosphere admirably adapted to the performance of his mediaeval penance. While Europe was sinking into the black night of political disruption preceding the dawn of present-day liberalism, the Monks of the Silent Brotherhood were seeking in America that peace of soul so essential to the practice of the tenets of their faith. Thus their messenger, in search of physical and spiritual peace, came to Iowa. Near Dubuque he found his ideal — a spot sequestered and far removed from scenes of conflict. Here came the disciples of his ascetic faith. They remain to-day, unruffled and untouched, while political, social, and economic conflicts agitate the people of the outer world. Pledged to perpetual silence, to unremitting physical toil, and to intensive religious devotion, they quietly labor on day after day and year after year. No one may know the stories of tragedy and romance which are here concealed from the knowledge of the world.

Thus, although the events of Iowa history may seem to have been relatively unimportant in the annals of the nation as viewed by the casual and superficial observer, it may readily be seen that one need not go beyond the bounds of the State to find abundant materials for romance. Only a few of the many dramatic incidents and features of Iowa history have been touched upon. There are scores of other episodes equally worthy of being transformed by the touch of a master hand into a series of fascinating stories of Iowa history.

THOMAS TEAKLE

DES MOINES IOWA