

## RECOLLECTIONS OF BUSY YEARS

The story I am about to tell reaches back almost to pioneer days. In the southeastern part of the State the work of pioneering was over, and Iowa was settling down into fixed ways of living and doing. The prairie farms were all taken up and improved with fences and buildings of all sorts. A full school system had been developed with schoolhouses two miles apart. Roads were fenced, largely with rails, towns had been located, churches had been built, and stores were being operated by experienced traders. Some of the woods were still commons where cattle roamed at will. The people were simple, God-fearing, industrious, devotedly attached to education for their children and to the Republican Party. The echoes of the Civil War were still distinctly heard. There were no railroads, no telephones, no electric lights, no meat shops, no drugstores, no factories. This is the setting.

As I write, the palimpsest of memory gradually emerges from the dim past and begins to take on the figures and colors that were laid on even before memory began. The original inscriptions have been overlaid many times since with new scenes, experiences, and ideas, but as the pages multiply the original images become more vivid and the experiences more real. Long forgotten thoughts take form and come clearly into view, evoked by repeated efforts to recall them, by what chemistry we know not. It has sometimes been startling to observe how one fact evokes another until the whole background stands out clear and vivid in the light of memory.

A story is like a river. It changes its course, the depth of its channel, the scenery along its banks. This story

started as an autobiography. As it progressed the conviction deepened that it would convey but little meaning without the background. That background was a small town in eastern Iowa and its surrounding farms. It was there I was born and lived as a boy and young man. Rural scenes and environment molded my mental habits and ways of living to a far greater extent than I realized at the time. Those first fifteen years fixed the pattern of the story.

#### HILLSBORO

The place in which I was born was a village named Hillsboro, in the Middle West, in Henry County, Iowa, to be exact, and the time was June 27, 1863. There was no conjunction of planets to herald my arrival, so far as I have ever heard, nor did the signs of the Zodiac portend the happening of an important event. Indeed the event was unnoticed at the time except in the immediate family circle and has remained so largely to the present time.

My early life was spent in this little village. As I look back it appears to me now as a typical village community, and the home in which I appeared as a typical home of the time and place. The Middle West of that time had a flavor and character all its own which could not be mistaken for that of any other section. It had its broad, open spaces, prairies interspersed with woodland. It was exclusively a farming community.

Looking back from the height of years I think I can appraise the picture with a fair degree of accuracy. All of the life of the village and its immediate surroundings for the first fifteen or twenty years of my life I saw, more or less intimately. I knew every man, woman, and child within a radius of five miles. I have endeavored to restore in these pages the long-buried flavors (if flavors can be buried and resurrected) of the little town, its setting, and its people.

Of course an accurate reconstruction of a whole cross section of our western life is impossible, even to a native of the region. What defies any but the most skilled writers are the overtones, the sidelights, the shadows, the faint illuminations which contribute so powerfully to the final impressionist effect. Too often facts which are wholly true give a totally wrong impression. The facts may be foreshortened or distorted by the personal equation. The medium through which they reach the eye often obscures their real character.

One must not, of course, ignore the rôle of those novelists who take rural scenes and characters as the background for their stories. Nor do I deny that in many instances fiction is truer than bare history. The soul of a people or an epoch may be embodied in imaginary characters more vividly and, if the author is a genius, more accurately than in a mere recital of facts. Yet my thesis remains. For the novelist must delve into these historical sources if he is to do more than spin a web out of his own consciousness. The social historian will read and digest the prosaic facts of the prairies if he expects to re-create their soul.

Iowa is by nature an agricultural land. Nature fixed the conditions of its soil, climate, and geographical position in the Mississippi Valley. No more could Iowa escape the inherited qualities which determined her destiny than a man can escape his stature, the color of his hair, the contour of his hands. As an integral part of this rich agricultural domain the vicinity of Hillsboro had its destiny fixed long before the white inhabitants appeared. There was a rolling prairie with numerous sloughs and small creeks; timberland good only for pasture and fuel; severe winters; hot summers; and at times an excessive rainfall.

The soil varied greatly in fertility. It was thin and clayey on the hills, black on the flat prairie, with all gradations between. This made farming an art as well as a science. The settler's plow immediately rendered the soil subject to erosion and the floods of spring carried great waves of boiling black mud down Mud Creek and the two Cedar Creeks. How much potential wealth has poured down into the Mississippi and the Gulf from the Iowa prairies has never been computed.

Early explorers describe the Iowa prairies as starred with wild flowers in the spring and summer, presenting a most pleasing appearance. The wild grass furnished abundant pasturage and, what was quite as important, kept the soil from washing. It is probable that up to the time of settlement and cultivation Iowa soil retained the richness in which it had luxuriated since the last glacier sullenly retreated toward the north, some seventy-five thousand years before.

Standing on these prairies one's gaze swept over a broad landscape bounded only by the horizon. A traveler from the East, attempting to be facetious, once said: "One can look farther here and see less than in any other place in the United States". The statement is libelous not only in fact but as poetic license. The prairie is not level nor is it destitute of interesting and distinctive marks. Dotted all over it, even in pioneer days, were modest farm homes usually nestling in a grove of pines or maples. Big red barns sheltered the stock during the long winters. Cattle browsed in the pastures and on the wooded hills. Sloughs sought the little creeks which in turn ran to the larger creeks and rivers. Along the streams were high hills, sometimes precipitate bluffs. Wherever there was water there were native trees, groves of oak, maple, hickory, ash, cottonwood, birch, and sycamore, which often were veri-

table forests. Occasional walnut groves furnished lumber for furniture and inside door and window casings.

We may not subscribe wholly to this economic determinism but that there is some truth in it cannot be denied. It is hardly conceivable that Hillsboro could ever have become other than a rural village. It was not located near a river or any large body of water. Its forest contained only a limited supply of marketable timber. There were no minerals, if we except a coal mine or two which possessed only a small vein of coal, not sufficient to warrant exploiting at any great expense. The only resource of the town and vicinity was its soil and that was adapted only to farming.

The town became one of the numerous primary markets characteristic of the section. Farmers' produce came to town and goods brought in for retail were distributed to the surrounding farm homes. Exports were hogs, cattle, sheep, wool, and occasionally corn, oats, and hay. Imports were groceries, dry goods, boots and shoes, a small amount of men's clothing, schoolbooks, and a limited amount of furniture. This made up the ebb and flow of the community life from season to season. Summer and fall saw great quantities of meats and grain go out to the hungry city populations. Fall and winter brought in the needed supplies for the modest wants of the village inhabitants.

First settled about 1840, Hillsboro was, in the years following the Civil War, a long straggling village of one main street which contained the stores and shops, with a few side streets which had once been of some importance. Just a short half block to the north of this main street, and separated from it by a row of two or three houses and gardens, was the public square. At first this was a bare plot of ground. Afterwards it was set out with soft maples and now serves as a park. Shade and a band stand give

a suitable setting for all the civic celebrations, such as the Fourth of July and old settlers' reunions.

Whether by design or mere chance this park is in the very center of the village, yet far enough away from Main Street to escape the noise of traffic. In its original condition this square was the scene of all the blackman, baseball, and other games which every generation of boys has played since the days of ancient Greece.

At the north of the square and facing it was the old stone schoolhouse. Originally built and used as a store this historic structure was a two-story building, with one room below and one above. Recently it has been torn down. In my boyhood days its huge bulk filled the village youngsters with awe. Later it seemed tiny and antiquated. The lower grades met in the room below. How proud children were when they were promoted to the upper room.

A splendid school was carried on in this old-fashioned, inadequate building. The rooms were small, with plain seats and no teaching apparatus except a blackboard, but a succession of able teachers from 1870 to 1880 made the school notable. Students ambitious for academy and college had unusual facilities for that day. In addition to the common branches there were advanced classes in algebra, physical geography, natural philosophy, and higher arithmetic. In those days there were few high schools. Academies supplied intermediate instruction between the public schools and colleges. Every ambitious boy or girl planned to attend some academy one or more terms. Only rarely did one get as far as college.

Unusual teachers came at an opportune time in my early school life and helped to fill me with enthusiasm for advanced study. Little in that direction was needed, however, for my father and mother, both former teachers, were passionately devoted to education and equally determined

that their children should have its advantages. My three sisters, after completing all that the village school could offer, attended Howe's Academy at Mount Pleasant and two of them spent some time in Whittier College at Salem. All of them became successful teachers in the public schools.

#### HOUSES

The village residences were almost universally frame buildings. A very few log houses were built at first but they gradually disappeared. All lumber had to be hauled from Fort Madison, a thriving lumber market on the Mississippi River thirty miles away. Logs cut in Wisconsin and Minnesota were floated down the tributary streams to the Father of Waters and thence in great rafts to the lumber depots such as Dubuque, Clinton, Muscatine, Burlington, and Fort Madison. Here giant saw mills worked them into lumber of the sizes needed for the building of thousands of homes, barns, and outbuildings throughout eastern Iowa.

There never was a brick house in Hillsboro. One of stone, originally a store, then turned into a school, was the one in which I studied reading, writing, and the other elementary branches. Houses were mostly small, with only one story. A few boasted an attic or second floor bedrooms. The architecture was simple. Houses were mostly rectangular, with no bay windows and few verandas. Monotony was the word which described the outward appearance of the town, a monotony forced by poverty and frontier conditions.

#### COMMUNITY LIFE

What kind of people lived in this quiet village, a mere eddy in the social currents of that day? The people of Hillsboro and vicinity were for the most part immigrants

from Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. My father came from Ohio, my mother from New York through Michigan and Illinois. Most of the settlers were of English, some of Yankee stock. They were all Protestants, mostly Free Will Baptists, with a sprinkling of Congregationalists. The latter soon faded out and Methodists and Christians came to take their places. Three churches were enough to furnish spiritual sustenance for the town and surrounding territory. The people were preponderantly Republicans in politics.

Modern scientific discoveries made but little impression on their beliefs. They accepted readily enough such inventions as the telephone and automobiles when these appeared. They strongly favored good schools. Their morals were neither better nor worse than those of like rural communities. There was gossip, the usual lapses from virtue in spite of a stern social code. Every one knew every one else's business, family life, beliefs, financial condition. There were few family secrets or skeletons hid from prying eyes.

The community tempo was necessarily slow. No large business enterprise existed. Even the reputed wealthy, few in number, became such rather by careful living than by shrewdness or business ability. Their wealth would be considered only a modest competence today. On Saturday afternoons farmers came in to do their weekly shopping, bringing eggs and butter and taking back calico, sugar, coffee, boots, and miscellaneous groceries. On other days, especially in summer, the town presented a leisurely appearance. In winter men cut and hauled the year's fuel and butchered a hog, a beef animal, or a sheep for meat. Every woman made her own soap from lye and grease. There was not a piano in town, or a furnace, or a piped water supply. Living was essentially plain and primitive



yet quite comfortable. As children we never missed the luxuries the cities afforded, or felt we were discriminated against in this world's goods or comforts.

The village, with its two hundred residents, nestled in a rural landscape. There were rich fields to the west and south. On the north and east the ground was broken. On one side forest came up almost to the town. Two miles to the north, running through dense woods, flowed Big Cedar Creek. To our boyish eyes it was a magnificent stream and in summer it afforded us a deep hole for swimming. A milldam backed up the water to the depth of twelve to fifteen feet. Progress has done away with the mill and the dam has long since disappeared.

The woods seemed to us interminable. Carefully we followed familiar footpaths to the swimming hole, fearful of losing our way if we strayed to the right or left. Bears were supposed to inhabit the remoter depths of this forest which stretched unbroken to the far northwestern corner of the county. Out to the west was a broad prairie. Here agriculture flourished and the farms were highly improved. Countless prairie chickens made their home in the grasses. Many times I have pitched hay and bound and threshed golden grain on this fertile stretch of prairie. It was here that I earned much of the money which paid my way through college.

Those days were much nearer to pioneer times than they are to the present. The country was fully settled and improved and seemed to us old and established, yet Iowa had been open to settlement only forty years when I began the study of algebra. Immigration came in waves like great tides. People were hungry for land and were led westward by possibilities of financial betterment in a virgin wilderness. The frontier still stretched out to the far western horizon. Many a covered wagon loaded with emi-

grants I have seen pull through our village or leave their homes on the way to Kansas. Life was stern and realistic yet unlimited possibilities seemed to open out before the hardy people of that generation.

As I sit at my desk now, with a radio on one hand, a piano and victrola on the other, with central heat and running water and all the appliances of an ingenious and inventive age, it seems almost a dream to open the book of the past and live over again the scenes and events of that day, so completely have living conditions been transformed.

The people of that day were for the most part plain and ordinary. Few towered above the rest in ability. Their aspirations were not high, their ambitions were modest. Like the people in Gray's "Elegy" they plodded their weary way along the road of life. They traveled little. The roads were poor and largely undrained. Two citizens attended the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia. One had even been to Europe—a noteworthy event. There was little crime, almost no poor relief. Yet the people were for the most part poor. They had few books, no library. The only women's clubs were the ladies' missionary societies of the various churches. The weekly newspaper, mostly political, afforded their only intellectual food and pastime. Church socials and ice cream parties were their social recreations.

Each winter the churches put on a revival. While it was in progress everything else—parties, dances, spelling bees—was taboo. The whole village went in for religious excitement. The old-time revival, now but little more than a memory, was an event by itself. Orthodox views prevailed and the people gave themselves up to a frenzy of religious emotion, convinced that the safety of their immortal souls depended on their reaction to the evangelist's

appeal. For three or four weeks salvation was the only theme. The next world became of paramount and very real importance. Sermons on hell and the Biblical mode of baptism, the necessity of repentance, and the efficacy of faith, were followed by exhortations to make the great surrender and accept Christ as a savior. Most people in the community were swept into the current of emotion; many converts joined the church and former church members renewed their zeal. Unfortunately many of these later allowed their ardor to cool and backsliding was common. The emotional impulse often outruns the will. Good intentions are not always translated into deeds, a fact as true in palaces as in cottages, in cathedrals as in chapels.

Immersion was regarded in the largest church of the town as the only scriptural mode of baptism. The ceremony was usually performed in the summer time at a running stream two miles from the town, but in the winter other arrangements must be made. I myself as a boy of thirteen was immersed during one of the revivals in the dead of winter in the local mill pond. On the morning of the ceremony a large square was cut in the ice which was several inches thick and there as the triumphant singing of "Shall We Gather at the River" floated out over the winter air the numerous candidates, girls as well as boys, women as well as men, plunged into the icy water at a temperature near zero. There was no shelter on the bank so as they came dripping out of the water they were hurriedly wrapped in blankets by solicitous relatives and carted off as best they could to their respective homes. I remember that I ran with chattering teeth and dripping garments without any other covering to my home two blocks away before I could get into dry clothes. No ill effects followed. Those who submitted to this dangerous ordeal were regarded with admiration by their friends.

An incident which might have become serious occurred at one of the baptizings in Big Cedar. Just below the dam across the sometimes turbulent stream the water was shallow but had quite a current. One lovely Sunday afternoon Elder Newbold, then an old man, was taxing his strength and endurance with a number of candidates. One of them, Mrs. James Watson, a highly respected farmer's wife, peacefully folded her hands across her breast as she was tenderly lowered into the water. But here the preacher's strength failed. As he painfully brought her to the surface the old lady slipped from his tired arms and peacefully floated down stream on her back, her numerous clothes keeping her on the surface and a benign and unruffled look on her trusting face. The memory of those folded hands and trusting countenance has remained with me through all the years. Of course there was no real danger. The water was shallow and numerous friends came swiftly to her rescue.

Contrary to the usual order of things there was no village philosopher, wise in the ways of the world, who dispensed his wisdom to all who would listen. There were no idealists, if we except the very young. Most pioneers were of the earth, earthy. They smelled of the soil. They knew the practical, necessary things — the weather, rain, common plants, and animals. They knew good livestock, Poland-China hogs, Short-horn cattle. In a crude way they studied markets, though the cities were far away. The daily market reports could not reach them so they did not scan rising and falling prices with feverish activity.

A few of them had dimly heard of Shakespeare and Byron, still more of Longfellow. But literature as such did not interest them. There were no theaters, no dramatic plays, with the few exceptions of wandering amateurs. Occasionally an organist or a group of singers came along

and excited a temporary interest. The intellectual and artistic horizons were exceedingly limited.

A drab picture, you say. Such a conclusion would be hasty and misleading. For all was not dreary, or commonplace, or sad. There was as much real happiness here as on Fifth Avenue or in Mayfair. Youth is always exuberant in spirit. It looks on the world through rose-colored spectacles. It sees only beauty, the bright side of things. It believes in the realization of dreams — that the world is plastic to the touch.

Our village was no exception. There was hearty laughter, eager zest in sports, willingness to learn, a patient bending to daily tasks. If times were hard, they would soon be better. In winter the fires burned cheerily. In summer the whole thought of the village was bent on crops, on the perennial processes of planting and harvesting. Fourth of July was joyous. The county fair in August and the old settlers' meeting in September were resplendent with corn and pumpkins, friendly greetings and happy faces. If the world was unfriendly these people refused to acknowledge it.

And so the years came and went — dry seasons, with grasshoppers and chinch bugs, wet seasons, with sodden fields and sullen skies, when the earth looked drab and cheerless. There was a series of wet summers when it was impossible to plow the corn, which was consequently smothered by weeds. A financial depression at the same time made living difficult. There were many foreclosures, much grumbling, much emigration to more promising localities. Yet through it all most people retained their courage and optimism.

There came a day when things took a turn. It was the dawn of a new era of invention and mechanical development. First came the telephone, then the electric light.

The railroad reached Hillsboro in 1882. We began to be conscious of being a part of the great world outside. Heretofore we had been a little rural eddy. Now we were out in the stream, though still far from being in the rushing current of modern life. Soon daily newspapers began to arrive in small numbers. The post office, heretofore kept in a private residence as a matter of economy, was moved to a separate office. A drugstore came to town. There were also furniture and undertaking establishments. A dentist set up shop. The two stores became five. A new, much larger, schoolhouse was erected, and a high school was established. A bank was organized. The churches were rebuilt. Gradually the tempo changed. A hard-surfaced road made travel easy, automobiles and filling stations multiplied. The new day had come; Hillsboro stepped proudly forth to take her place in the passing parade.

The English writer, W. H. Hudson, in his interesting travel book *Afoot in England*, tells of his experience in some forty villages in Wiltshire, England:

If each of these small centres possessed a scribe of genius, or at any rate one with a capacity for taking pains, who would collect and print in proper form these remembered events, every village would in time have its own little library of local history, the volumes labelled respectively, *A Village Tragedy*, *The Fields of Dulditch*, *Life's Little Ironies*, *Children's Children*, and various others whose titles every reader will be able to supply.

The same comment with different names of places may be made of the villages of Iowa and the western prairies; the same life histories repeat themselves, with only those minor variations due to different geographical settings. Every community has its tragedies, occasioning the most breathless interest at the time and gradually being laid away on the shelf of memory to fade at length into tradi-

tions without personal or family interest. Hillsboro was no exception. Births and deaths, marriages and divorces, families moving in and moving out, some housewife reduced by extreme poverty to taking in washing, some mother going insane from religion, through ill health, or from isolation and hard work, these and many other incidents helped to make up the checkered history of the community. If a boy went off to college it was a village event. If a girl became proficient in playing the organ the people made her the church organist or chorister. Some young people rose to be schoolteachers and thereby became noted above their associates. Everywhere there were women overburdened by children, men crippled by rheumatism, farmers grumbling about prices or the weather.

In all this diversity of misfortune and trouble, of privation and toil, there was but little grumbling at the ways of Providence. There were wonderings why certain things should be permitted to occur, chiefly the deaths of children and very good people. But there was no doubt that God really existed and that he exercised a fatherly care over his children. In all the history of the community through a period of perhaps sixty years there was but one known atheist. He was a good man but he was regarded as decidedly odd—it did not occur to any one to inquire into his reasons or to argue with him. How any one could deliberately doubt God's existence was beyond conception.

These people believed literally that every hair of their heads was numbered; they had never heard of eastern allegory and Judean figures of speech. If a death occurred, "the Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away". "The Lord willed it". The Lord sends afflictions to punish disobedience or disbelief. He can be prevailed on to help his people out of their difficulties. Prayer was regarded as a sure means of securing this help, either in

financial operations or in any doubtful project. If the corn needed rain the churches appointed a day of prayer. If it rained too much they appealed to the Almighty to stop the storms.

If John Smith lost a horse he had done something for which the Lord sent this as a punishment. Life was a constant effort to obtain Divine favor for each undertaking. If an event turned out successfully the Lord was given credit for it; if unsuccessfully, you had not prayed with sufficient faith. Every day the heavenly books were posted by an omniscient bookkeeper, who set down each good deed on the right side of the ledger and each bad deed on the debit side. Sometimes you were in the black and sometimes in the red and thus the balance played back and forth. The result was uncertain until death, hence exhortations to live the good life continued every Sunday and especially at those seasons of refreshment known as revivals.

Every event of your life was determined by the direct will of God. It was God who sent you children, made the potatoes turn out well, put the blight on the orchard trees, and caused the roan mare to sicken and die. Likewise if one of the family was sick it was not because some physical law had been violated, it was a dispensation of Providence. When you commenced a journey prayer was offered to the Heavenly Father to keep the wheels safe on the rails and the weather pleasant. People followed literally the text of the Bible which they considered inspired and they supplemented their beliefs with all the odd notions gathered from pagan rites and superstitions or from an abysmal ignorance of natural law.

It must not be inferred that this belief in the power of prayer to bring rain was universal. There was much questioning and many shakings of the head among the more



critical members of the community when an official call to prayer was broached. Experience showed too clearly that certain physical conditions had to be present, regardless of men's attitude or wishes. Theoretically nevertheless it was held by the church and thoroughly believed by the more primitive-minded that the prayer of the righteous availeth much, even in the matters of rain and drouth, of chinch bug depredations, and an early frost on the corn. The Lord had omnipotent power, why should he not respond to his children's cry in the hour of emergency?

The idea of universal, impersonal law was unknown, although the wheeling of the planets under the law of gravitation was admitted, if the question was ever asked. Law is unfeeling and these people needed something warmer, something more directly personal. They must feel the human touch or the divine touch made personal in order to brave the ordeals through which they must pass. Given this personal contact with the Divine they could endure earthly trials, assured that beneath them was a mighty arm which would ultimately rescue them out of all their troubles. Thus was human life made a part of a grand scheme which embraced the whole creation. In this scheme man played the central part. He was a participant in a drama which included skies and earth, which began with Adam and would end only when the heavens were rolled up as a scroll.

Something which the present generation finds it difficult to picture has gone out of the rural life of America. It was an atmosphere of simplicity, of quietness, of satisfaction with or at least submission to things as they were. We had a good school. We hoped, not too strongly, for a railroad, a wish fulfilled in 1882. At one time we even had a newspaper, a poor, temporary thing of course, for who was there to advertise and how could subscriptions sup-

port it? Our churches, Baptist and Methodist, for a time Congregational, were entirely satisfactory. It never occurred to us to want or expect a preacher trained in a theological seminary. Most of the preachers were well suited to the constituency. The Methodists sent their aspiring young ministers or their worn-out old ones. The Baptists occasionally had a man with some native ability, though not a real scholar, and with just the right touch of evangelistic fervor.

Singing was quite popular. The churches usually had choirs, the Baptists always, the Methodists after their fight over installing an organ, which caused a great deal of bitterness at the time, and almost a break. Many a Sunday afternoon all the Sunday school children met in one of the churches for a "sing". Gospel hymns and songs were sung with fervor and gusto, and with some little attempt at interpretation. Prior to the advent of organs, the leader used a tuning fork. We used to look up to him as a marvel of musical knowledge and his deep bass voice always commanded attention.

In the winter there were spelling schools in the neighboring rural schoolhouses. Often we went in a bobsled with the thermometer at zero to attend these popular entertainments, boys and girls closely cuddled together for warmth under piles of comforts. The snow in winter and the slowness of transportation kept us within the limits of the village except on special occasions.

Fourth of July celebrations were great occasions, and also county fairs. These attracted crowds from as far away as ten to twenty miles, great distances in those days. In the latter seventies we took up baseball. The first baseball game at which I was a fascinated spectator was played on the public square in Hillsboro. To a small boy who enjoyed it with open-eyed admiration it was a marvelous

spectacle. I still remember the multitudinous score, 54 to 63. Later the game became organized, gradually assuming its present status. The boys of the village went into the game eagerly and became quite proficient.

Boys and girls of course eyed each other at school and church with curiosity and bashfulness. No doubt in this sophisticated age their ways would seem crude and coy but they were serious enough to the youngsters of that day.

The life of the little village, such as it was, was a life of action. There was little opportunity or inducement for a life of contemplative thought. No public library tempted the curious mind to delve into the treasures of art or history or literature. The private houses did not shelter any collection of books worth the name library, perhaps a volume of Longfellow's poems or Scott's *Lady of the Lake*. It was the latter which was my introduction to poetry. There was not even a house in the neighborhood with wide-spreading lawns and ample halls, backed by comfortable wealth, and inhabited by people of culture, to give a glimpse of that leisure which is so essential to the cultivation of taste in intellectual pursuits.

The people, all of them, had to work hard for a living. There was no time, even if there had been inclination, to indulge in any but the most practical studies. Reading and arithmetic were practical, hence were pursued strenuously. But the schools even when they began to teach algebra and natural philosophy offered no courses in literature or history, other than that of the United States. They confined themselves strictly to the bread and butter studies, not so much through a philosophy of pedagogy, as from sheer necessity.

#### THE POST OFFICE

I have said that the post office was kept in a private residence. This statement is to be taken literally. My

father had been appointed postmaster at Hillsboro in 1867, before I can remember. All of my conscious early life therefore was spent in a post office. The daily mail of that time was of very small volume, consisting of a few letters each day, and on Thursdays large numbers of weekly newspapers. With the advent of the railroad and telephone the mail increased greatly. But even then for many years the salary of the postmaster was so small that a separate office could not be afforded. The government paid nothing for rental purposes. The post office was kept therefore in one corner of our living room.

The office consisted of a tall desk divided up into pigeon holes, one for each letter of the alphabet. When a patron of the office called, sorting out his mail sometimes required a great deal of work, but the patronage did not justify individual boxes. These came later when business increased and daily newspapers and some magazines necessitated additional space.

My father continued as postmaster for twenty-seven years, until he was replaced by a Democrat in President Cleveland's second term. At the time of his retirement he held the record for length of service in Iowa.

Every member of our family performed the duties of postmaster. I cannot remember when I did not help put up mail and hand it out to patrons. My mother and sisters did the same. Whichever one was for the time unengaged waited on customers. There were no office hours. We were on duty from early in the morning until the last farmer had done his trading and left town. Quite often this was late, especially on Saturday evenings. On Sundays also it was customary to hand out mail when a patron called for it, though this practice was not encouraged.

One can well imagine that we came to know intimately every man, woman, and child in the town and surrounding

country, as far as the service reached. Every piece of mail had to be called for and delivered to the persons entitled to it. The strictest care and accuracy were required and became a habit. It was good business training. Moreover the handling of mail received from and mailed to every part of the country was a first class lesson in geography. The reading of the weekly newspapers became a regular habit. The Toledo *Blade* featuring the famous Petroleum V. Nasby (David Ross Locke), the St. Louis *Globe Democrat*, and the county papers were our constant food.

For many years Hillsboro was not on a railroad and the mail was brought over a Star Route. This began at Salem, six miles to the east, and finished at Bentonsport, on the Des Moines River, sixteen miles to the southwest. The carrier made this trip each way daily. It was a full day's work for the roads were often heavy and, in the winter, rough. A horse and sulky was the usual mode of conveyance. Two other offices were supplied by this daily mail service, Utica and Pierceville. The latter has disappeared from the map. Utica has lapsed into a crossroad village, receiving its mail from a modern rural mail service by automobile. The coming of the mail carrier was a matter of daily interest, amounting on certain days almost to excitement. It was the one daily diversion for the village. There was disappointment if letters or papers did not arrive as expected.

After two or three moves, our home was established in the geographical center of the village and on the main street. For twenty years this was the village center of attraction. Somewhat remodeled the house is still standing.

In the latter days of my father's postmastership the business had grown and he secured a small building in the business center for the office. This required the establish-

ment of office hours more in keeping with modern methods. It also made the duties more onerous, for some one must be in constant attendance. The office registered letters and later was authorized to issue money orders. This was proof that the Hillsboro post office had grown and that we were becoming sophisticated. We passed out of the primitive stage and took our place as an up-to-date fourth class post office under the aegis of Uncle Sam.

#### WORKING FOR WAGES

I have spoken of the prairie and of the work which I did there. Some account of how a growing boy in such a rural setting as that of Hillsboro worked and earned money may be of some interest. The story necessarily involves a description of the social and economic conditions of the community.

It must be remembered that this was purely a rural community. Outside of the two hundred people who lived within the village every one was engaged in farming. Most of the people in the town were largely dependent on farmers for their support. Since there were no manufacturing industries the surplus labor of the town had to find its market in the country. Every summer in harvest time a group of boys and men worked as farm hands, going together from one farm to another to harvest the grain and hay.

Before it was light on Monday morning, in the months of July and August, a number of boys and young men would leave home and walk to their place of work in the country. If the weather was fair the long summer days were spent either in binding grain after the harvesting machine or in pitching hay. Self-binders had not yet made their appearance. The grain was cut and dropped in bunches. These must be picked up and bound into bundles,

using wisps of straw as bands. Usually four men could bind as much as the machine would cut. This was hot work, requiring some skill if one was to do his share. By the time I was fifteen I could "make a hand" in binding oats or wheat, working with men of long experience.

It was necessary to use every daylight moment to save the grain with the slow moving machinery of the period and the large amount of hand labor still required. Harvesters were in the field soon after sunrise and worked, with an hour for dinner, until almost sundown. After that there were cows to milk, hogs to slop, and the horses to feed and bed down for the night. It was not uncommon for farmers to work in the fields and in choring fifteen or sixteen hours a day. As soon as the chores were done, the tired boy would fall into bed and a dreamless slumber until at the first faint streaks of dawn he would be roused with great difficulty for another grueling summer day's work.

Iowa weather is really hot in July and August. The sun blazed down on the open fields with pitiless disregard of human flesh and blood. Men would be wet with sweat but the work must not falter; the hay must be stacked or put under cover before the next rain. Oats must be bound and shocked and later stacked. The work went on at such a slow pace, measured by present day standards, that harvest was a process lasting many weeks. Today, with our improved machinery it is all done in a few days. Cutting oats with a self-binder is completed in three or four days on the average farm, and threshing usually in a single day. Whereas the farmer now has his grain all cut and threshed and sometimes marketed by the first of August, leaving that month for the fairs and incidental work on the farm, we spent the two hottest months in cutting and stacking the grain, and September and often October in threshing, with slow, cumbersome threshing outfits.

Today the thresher is all but automatic. It separates and cleans the grain, weighs it, and delivers it to the auto truck; blows the straw by a movable blower wherever wanted. Deliver the unthreshed grain to it and watch the machine casually and a steady stream of grain is soon ready to be hauled to the bin or to market. Combines, drawn by tractors, may cut and thresh the grain in the fields. In the old days it was different. The thresher was run by horse power. Most of the operations — cutting bands, measuring the grain, carrying it on your shoulders to wagon or bin, taking the straw from the machine by the aid only of a pitchfork and distributing it by hand around over the big stack — required hard, disagreeable, and often dirty work.

To a boy fresh from academy or college, harvest was for the first few days a torture. Hands were soft, backs became sore from stooping. A man still living in Mount Pleasant in 1943 worked with me in the harvest field sixty years ago and saw my hands bleeding after the first day's work in binding oats. But soon the cracks were healed and the back adjusted itself to the unaccustomed exercise. Often have I wondered at my persistence in those days. But I had to work. It was either work or no college. And that was unthinkable. I would as soon have thought of losing my hope of Heaven as not to have a college education so deeply ingrained was the idea.

At thirteen I began as a farm hand at eight dollars per month. At that age I did not know how to bridle a horse and when I learned to do so had to climb on the manger to reach up to the horse's head. How would two cents an hour for sixteen hours per day of hard labor, walking and driving a team and harrow over newly-plowed ground, appeal to the laborers of today, who sometimes justly regard their lot as a hard one? The most I ever received was



eighteen dollars per month through the farming season, with a dollar a day for special work during harvest. Out of this meager wage enough must be saved to pay for board, clothes, and books in the winter at the academy.

One summer when I was about fifteen the wife of one of the two storekeepers of the little town fell desperately sick and was bedfast several weeks. In his extremity the husband employed me to run his store. Though wholly without experience I assumed the task. At first I did not know how to tie up a package or measure off a yard of calico. Actual practice was my only teacher. The proprietor came in occasionally to look things over but the work and responsibility were mine.

The daily sales were very small. How I could have managed if business had been rushing I do not know. The long summer days were lazy and sleepy. An occasional customer broke the tiresome monotony. Some needy farmer would bring in a crock of butter, usually already rancid, which would be dumped in a tub of water as the best place to keep. From this it would be doled out in melted lots to consumers. There was no ice. Eggs must be counted and put in the crates for the huckster to gather up and carry to market. The shelves held bolts of calico of various bright colors and muslin, mostly unbleached. These made up the chief sales of dry goods. Sugar, roasted coffee in pound packages, salt, crackers, and cheese were the principal groceries.

My wages were a mere pittance but so were the profits. Indeed the merchant must have lost money that summer, in spite of an overhead reduced almost to the vanishing point. All the selling, bookkeeping, and ordering goods, sweeping out, and everything about the store were carried on by a single green clerk. The result was a travesty on the storekeeping even of that day.

One other general store somewhat larger was all the town could boast. That was at the other end of the business district, a whole block away. Between the two stores was a blacksmith shop, where the village boys looked in wonder at the flying sparks. Farther west was a livery stable and wagon shop. A harness shop and a carpenter shop completed the business houses. These were sufficient to supply all the wants of the town and surrounding country.

There came a day when somewhat better pay was received. When I was eighteen, a special dispensation from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction permitted me to teach before I reached the legally prescribed age, and I secured a country school at thirty-five dollars per month for the winter term of five months. A second winter at the same wages in a different school completed my country teaching. The net for each winter was about a hundred dollars. This, supplemented by farm wages earned in the summer, enabled me to attend school the following year. And so through my entire academy and college career, work and attending school alternated, year by year. It was slow and unsatisfactory, but youth was ambitious, persistence strong.

Most of my farm work was done just at a time of transition. The inventions which have greatly lightened the drudgery of farm work were still in the future or were just beginning to be used. The self-binder reached us only my last year on the farm. A hay fork, operated by horse power, lifted the hay from the wagon and deposited it in great lumps in the haymow, where with great exertion, in stifling heat without ventilation, it was distributed by hand as evenly as possible. Out in the field a hand-operated, horse-drawn rake piled the hay up in long windrows and from these it must be pitched by hand to the wagon.

There were a number of wet seasons, when the rains descended for many successive days. Tiles for drainage were unknown. The fields were sodden, the sloughs and streams overflowed their banks. In the interval between heavy showers our time was spent in fixing the rail fences or trimming hedge rows. When the sun returned there was a feverish struggle to clean the corn rows of the fast-growing grass and weeds, sometimes by plow, quite often by hoe.

This was life for a town boy in the late seventies and early eighties. We knew nothing better or other. Occasionally, however, during intervals of employment, we played baseball on the home grounds or in neighboring villages. For some two or three years I was a member of the local team. It was great sport as it is today, even from the side lines.

I had no conception of course as a boy of the effect rural life was to have in the shaping of America. It was a bounded horizon in which my early years were enclosed. The smell of the soil was too close, too primitive, to be analyzed in its relations to the sum total of society. Moreover a knowledge of city life was denied me, for up to the time I was sixteen the largest town I had seen was Burlington, with some twenty thousand people.

All through my boyhood we were taught that America was indisputably an agricultural nation, destined so by nature and that this character was permanent and unchangeable. Not for a moment could we imagine the America of today, a land of vast cities and of shrinking rural populations. We could not hear the clanking of machinery, or see the furnace fires that now glow without ceasing. It is a characteristic of each age that it sees its social conditions as fixed, likely to persist throughout the future. Individuals are prone to the same astigmatism.

## SCIENCE AND ART

I have but very little recollection of the bird life of the village and surrounding country. There must have been many birds of the usual varieties, and most of these I must have seen in the course of the fifteen years I lived in their midst. But I made no study of them or their habits, their feeding, their young, their migrations. No one ever called my attention to their beauty or their usefulness. Indeed little was known of the part birds played in the promotion of production. Their value to the farmer was at that time unrecognized.

That some of these birds were beautiful I know. Some of them were regarded as enemies, to be dealt with summarily on every possible occasion. A few common facts like these could not but obtrude themselves on the consciousness of a growing boy but that is about as far as the matter went. A detailed study or knowledge of birds was supposed to be reserved for the few who made that their business, or for those whose tastes were looked upon as more or less odd. The modern scientific spirit which demands an intimate study of every thing, whether living or inanimate, had not yet developed or at least had not reached our village.

I now realize with sorrow the failure to take advantage of countless opportunities to study birds and their modes of life. There was enough leisure on Sundays and holidays, on vacations, and even when at work in the fields, to accumulate a mass of most useful information. But my tastes never ran in that direction. So when I observed a woodpecker hammering away on a tree, it never occurred to me to inquire just how he knew his prey was inside at that particular point. I saw many ant hills but had not the faintest notion of the marvelous collective life of the ant communities and their advanced architectural skill.

Bumblebees were a pest in the clover, especially in haying time when they would sting the horses, sometimes causing runaways. But it had never been hinted to me what part they played in fertilizing plants or flowers. All snakes were regarded as enemies to be feared, with nothing to their credit. Generally they were all classed alike with the few rattlesnakes which were greatly dreaded.

There was no study of or consideration for animal life, outside of farm animals used for profit. William Savage, an old hermit, lived in the woods a few miles away and was a veritable storehouse of information on squirrels and birds, many of which he drew and painted in their natural colors. His collection in time became a valuable and noted one and finally became an exhibit in the museum of the Department of History and Archives at Des Moines. A few of us ventured into the forest to visit his hut with its marvelous paintings. But for the most part he was a recluse and lived a solitary life. His tastes were so much out of the ordinary that he was regarded as decidedly queer.

Of course I knew nothing of the basic facts of botany. No one in the village had ever been introduced to the scientific classification of plants and hence had no conception of what the science was really about. Plants were ugly or beautiful, flowers or weeds, useful or noxious. Every farmer was a sworn enemy of Canada thistle, sour dock, and cockleburs. Grass was all right in the meadow, but it was a pest in the corn. It took all the weapons the farmer possessed — plow, hoe, mower — to keep down button weeds, milk weeds, jimson weeds, and tickle grass. No one asked about the families to which these belonged, or how to root them out by scientific means. Farmers were intense pragmatists, and to their credit be it said that the empirical methods they employed usually worked. Indeed

in some cases these have never been improved upon, with all our poison sprays and seasonal cuttings.

Nor did we know anything of astronomy. That eclipses could be predicted we knew, but we had not heard of binary stars or of sun spots. We had heard of the solar system but had no conception of the immensity of space or the configuration known as the constellations. We knew less than did the Chaldeans 4000 years ago who were on intimate terms with Arcturus and Orion and who framed a calendar based on nightly observations of the desert skies without instruments which was a startling approximation to present day time measurements.

We never heard of Kepler's laws of planetary motion, or of Galileo's discoveries of the moons of Jupiter. The majestic movements of the heavenly bodies in obedience to universal and immutable law excited in us no awe, for we did not realize that law determined these phenomena. We supposed, what we knew of them, that they existed as originally set in motion by an all-wise and all-powerful hand.

But in spite of this lack of knowledge we lived efficient and fairly satisfactory lives. Indeed there was very much the same lack in even highly educated circles. It is difficult for us to realize how much of our present day knowledge is of recent growth. It is a common observation that the last fifty years has added more to the general stock of useful facts than all the centuries before. So we were not quite so benighted as the story might suggest.

I do not recall any emphasis on or even any attention directed to beauty as such, to the healing and humanizing effects of beautiful things. No doubt sunsets were as thrilling then as now, yet they did not appeal irresistibly to the deeper instincts and emotions. And I am impressed that this was true of most of the people, else I would have

heard something from some one of the magic of red clouds and arching rays of sunlight.

And what is true of the evening skies is largely true of other natural sights and sounds. The morning warbling of countless birds, and chattering of squirrels, the rumble of the thunder, the whole orchestra which nature occasionally rolls into a grand symphony of music and colors, passed by for the most part unnoticed. I do not think the people were wholly deficient in aesthetic appreciation, but they had not yet awakened to its meaning or its possible value in full and rich living. For that matter there was but little emphasis at the time on the function of beauty in even the most advanced intellectual circles. We were intrigued with the most thrilling process of conquering a continent and had not as yet acquired the leisurely mode of life or of appraising life's values which is so necessary to the cultivation of beauty in its many forms.

This does not mean of course that we were insensible to the changes of the weather or seasons or of occasional extraordinary occurrences. It means only that these were taken as in the natural course of things, as the child takes for granted its parents, home, school. They just were, and needed no explanation, no apologies, and no special admiration. They were not a part of the educative process.

#### DEATH

I believe it was the poet Horace who first said "Death knocks at every gate."

Over to the south of Hillsboro, something like a quarter of a mile, is the cemetery. This serves for the entire surrounding country and is becoming decidedly populous. It is perhaps two acres in extent and lies on a hillside gently sloping toward the east. It is surrounded by a substantial fence, with an ornamental gateway.

Here the "rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep," my father and mother among them. Few names are known beyond the immediate vicinity. Just the village worthies with their wives and children, farmers, storekeepers, teachers, laborers, in a wholly democratic and classless community. Modest memorials mark their last resting place; no striking stones, a few becoming more ambitious as times are better and more wealth accumulates. One slightly taller than the others, yet only six or eight feet high and yellowing with age, is the marble to commemorate Lt. Col. Joseph Newbold, who was killed in 1864 in a Louisiana battle, and whose remains rest in that Southern State.

Funerals were for the most part held in the churches, occasionally one at the deceased's residence. There has never been a funeral home in the town and only part of the time an undertaker. The bells toll as the procession approaches the church, one stroke for each year of the decedent's life, the usual prayers are said, the same pattern of songs, such as "The Old Rugged Cross", a word of biography, and then a eulogy. Faults are omitted, virtues emphasized. An air of impressive solemnity grips the audience, who appreciate for a fleeting moment the deceased's virtues, then turn quickly to every day duties, for death is familiar to all. It is so common that it excites only passing attention. But for the time being all think with bated breath of the final tragedy that will come at last to all. Practically all have a triumphant sense of immortality, aroused and intensified by funerals, and an assured future of bliss in fadeless heavenly mansions.

#### FATHER AND MOTHER

My father and mother are worthy of a somewhat careful description. I did not realize it then but as I look back



with the eyes of a wider experience they strike me as having been quite unusual persons. As nearly unbiased an appraisal as is possible under the circumstances convinces me they were really leading citizens in every sense of the word.

Both came of sturdy, long-lived ancestry. My father died at eighty-one; my mother lacked only three months of reaching ninety. They were both strong and enjoyed unusual health. I do not remember that either ever had a serious spell of sickness.

My father was born in Ohio in 1823. His maternal grandfather, whose name was Allen, was a soldier in the Revolutionary War, according to family tradition. His paternal grandfather came from Germany. The name is German, though it has been many generations since the Galers left German soil.

A schoolteacher for many years, a one-time justice of the peace, and postmaster for more than a quarter of a century, my father possessed a most remarkable reasoning mind. He comprehended easily the most abstruse questions in politics, and in social relations, and even in religion although he never argued religious matters. His mind was clear, well balanced, not easily swayed by emotion or prejudice, always taking a calm and judicial attitude. He was of course a Republican and often served as delegate to the county conventions which were then much more important than they have become since the primary system was adopted. Nominally he was a Baptist, though I do not remember that he ever took a part in any of the church activities. He was of equable disposition and temper, very seldom growing angry even under provocation. He was passionately devoted to education for his children and encouraged them in every way possible to pursue advanced studies.

One faculty unfortunately he did not possess — that of making money. He could analyze a business proposition and see how others succeeded, but he had no faculty for executing plans. As a result he always remained a poor man. He accumulated a modest home but no store of money or other property. A pension for service and injury in the Civil War rendered his old age free from want and care.

My mother on the other hand possessed quite opposite characteristics. She was full of energy, of initiative, of executive talent and foresight. She, too, had been a teacher. She possessed an active brain, and an unusual sense of humor. Partly Irish by inheritance her wit was spontaneous and unstudied. She was born in New York in 1822. Her maiden name was Terrell and her mother's family name was Kellogg.

An excellent housekeeper she set a remarkable example of thrift and industry to her children and in addition took an active part in the affairs of the community, in which her leadership was gladly acknowledged. For forty years she taught the adult Bible class of the Baptist Church, consisting of some of the most intelligent men and women of the community. Nor did she confine her teaching to the narrow line of biblical texts. Life in its broader aspects appealed to her and furnished her with inspiring illustrations.

For many years she did fully as much work as my father in conducting the post office and in this was assisted by all her children as they reached sufficient age. The post office was strictly a family affair as far back as I can remember.

My mother insisted on cleanliness and it is quite astonishing to me now to reflect how nearly she followed and how far in advance she anticipated many more recent sani-

tary regulations. With but scanty household equipment, measured by the conveniences of today, she kept the family in good health and never do I recall any lack of good wholesome meals well cooked.

I have always thought my mother a most remarkable woman. Had she been a man she would have made a mark for herself in whatever capacity she might have chosen to labor. Up to within a week of her death she was eagerly interested in what was going on in the world, in politics where she was an ardent Republican, in science, and in useful inventions.

In September, 1909, the town of Hillsboro put on an ambitious homecoming celebration. The committee on speakers asked me to deliver the address. I remember my old mother sat on the platform near me at the time. She was then eighty-seven years of age. It was about the last and among the most interesting of the various homecomings held in our small community.

#### HOWE'S ACADEMY

I entered Howe's Academy on December 1, 1878. My father loaded up a wagon with odd pieces of furniture which could be spared at home, together with some firewood, and drove over to Mount Pleasant, a distance of seventeen miles. At that time this was a long and slow trip, taking over four hours. The roads were poor and the team of farm horses traveled slowly with a lumber wagon.

The furniture, which was all I was to use during my two years at the Academy, consisted of a cookstove, a table, two old chairs, a lounge which served as a bed, a strip of rag carpet, a kerosene lamp, and a few plain dishes and pots. With these I set up housekeeping. I did my own cooking. My menu, for it could hardly be designated as menus, consisted of potatoes, boiled with their jackets on, mush and

milk, bread, butter, with occasionally meat and a pie from the bakery. There were no tomatoes or other fresh vegetables. Occasionally my mother sent over a cooked chicken which lasted several meals. There were no dainties or extras of any kind. There was no variety. Why I escaped sickness with such monotonous fare is to be wondered at. But I was a robust youth, used to hard work on the farm and in the timber and to playing ball vigorously when not otherwise engaged. So all of those two winters I ate voraciously of this simple but abundant food and thrived on it.

My rooms were the two front rooms on the first floor of the old frame building housing the Academy, just west of the main front entrance. There was one large, plain room in front almost bare of furniture, and a smaller one to the rear, used as a kitchen. I had no heating stove. The winters were severe and sometimes it was difficult to keep warm with only the cookstove to supply heat. Several other students roomed in the building, doing their own work as I did mine.

It was the custom then for students to buy a sack of flour and employ a woman who lived nearby to bake loaves of homemade bread, a matter of considerable saving. Nearly all the students of the Academy rented rooms in private houses and did their own cooking. "Hiring board" was beyond the means of all but a favored few.

There was a special reason why I took rooms in the Academy building. I had engaged with Professor Seward C. Howe to do janitor work in order to pay tuition and room rent. Without this help it would have been impossible for me to attend more than a few weeks at a time. My parents were unable to assist with money and all I had been able to save would soon have been exhausted. The above arrangement left only clothes, books, and meager board to be supplied. A single suit, said to be all wool, costing seven and

a half dollars was the only suit I purchased while in the Academy. I had no overcoat until I was sixteen years old, and then only a very cheap, shoddy one. My schoolbooks I bought mostly secondhand.

I do not know why I was fortunate enough to secure the janitorship, for there were many applicants. The work consisted in sweeping the floors daily and making the fires for the large assembly room and the two smaller recitation rooms. There were in all six large, hungry heating stoves and the amount of coal they consumed in twenty-four hours was amazing. This had to be carried in buckets from the coal house outside the main building, through long halls and up a flight of stairs to the schoolrooms on the second floor. In the severest weather I had a helper.

The assembly room extended across the entire north end of the large wooden building, with windows on three sides. It was a difficult task to heat it comfortably. Before daylight each morning I made fires in these stoves, tended them till they warmed the room, and then left the scuttles full of coal for use through the day. In the severest weather these had to be replenished before night. I was responsible for the comfortable heating of the rooms, which required not less than two hours of hard work each day.

This was the physical setting. How did I find time for schoolwork after the long daily grind of janitor service and the cooking of three meals a day? There was plenty of time. One must remember the voracious intellectual, as well as physical appetite of a youth of sixteen. Every hour was occupied. Eleven studies were carried at one time, ranging from "Word Analysis" to Latin and geometry. All were equally interesting and delightful. From each one in turn I derived the purest enjoyment.

All the branches of mathematics were easy. Grammar included the analysis of Young's "Night Thoughts" and

Milton's "Paradise Lost". Elocution introduced us to the dramatic passages in Shakespeare. One by one the classic Latin authors were devoured and soon I was in a class by myself. I recall sitting on the big platform with Professor Howe and reading daily page after page of Latin, until I had gone through, not only the usual Caesar and Virgil, but also Sallust, Livy, Horace, and Cicero. Altogether in twelve months I almost committed the Latin grammar to memory, and I translated hundreds of pages of Latin prose and poetry. At the end of this period I had done most of the freshman work required in college, so that I was able easily to complete the Liberal Arts course in the State University in three years, with creditable marks. My two winters in the Academy were filled with the intensest intellectual work and feverish activity.

During this period I found time to attend all the best lectures and entertainments which came to Mount Pleasant. In no sense was I a recluse or a bookworm. There was a literary society with weekly meetings in which I took an active part. But I never learned to dance and so could not qualify in what was for many of the students their chief diversion.

During the winter months I seldom paid my parents at Hillsboro a visit. But in the better weather of the spring and fall I occasionally did so, leaving Mount Pleasant on Friday afternoon and returning Sunday afternoon. As there was no railroad the trip must be made overland. Of course I had no conveyance. The distance was seventeen miles and while the roads were usually in fair condition there was not much travel between the towns except on special occasions such as the county fair or the annual political conventions, all of which were held in the summer. It happened, therefore, that for the most part I was compelled to walk and walking seventeen miles even in good weather

is not exactly a delightful occupation. Walk as fast as I possibly could, I could make only four miles an hour, and the last few miles were very wearisome. Nevertheless I made the trip frequently and occasionally was fortunate enough to secure a ride part of the way.

One of these trips was the occasion of a near tragedy. It was in February, 1880, when I was returning to Mount Pleasant after attending the wedding of my sister, Ella. The roads were very muddy and I was riding part of the way with a neighbor in a wagon. On the hills we usually walked in order to lighten the load. While on one of these hills about two miles south of Oakland I lost my pocketbook. It had in it all the money I possessed, the munificent sum of six dollars. I discovered its loss too late to return for it and so entered Mount Pleasant without a cent. The amount was small but with no clothes, books, or tuition to buy I could have managed to exist several weeks on that sum of money.

This was my last year and I was finishing my college preparatory work, hence was very loath to stop school. So I went to Professor Howe and, stating the facts, asked if he could furnish me with some extra work. He was kind enough to point me to his woodpile. In those days he burned sugar tree cordwood, of which there was then an abundance in the country. Every winter hundreds of cords of this fine hardwood were sold on the streets of Mount Pleasant, thereby denuding the hills of their original covering.

The wood came in large sticks and must be sawed in two twice with an old-fashioned bucksaw. The price was munificent — fifty cents per cord. The work, needless to say, was hard and slow and required a lot of muscle. But when at the end of a week of odd times snatched from school duties I had finished a cord and received fifty cents in cash I felt rich.

Thus the rest of the year was spent. I finished at the Academy that spring, without a cent of debt. In addition to the mental discipline, I had acquired a rigorous physical discipline which, though not always welcome, served me well in after years.

When I came to the Academy at the age of fifteen I began keeping an account of my expenditures. At first this consisted mostly of my living expenses, including schoolbooks, tuition, and entertainments. It was purely a matter of curiosity, to see how much I expended in the course of the school year.

Gradually the custom developed into a habit which continued from year to year and has been kept up till the present time. For over fifty years I have an account of everything I have spent. Of course, in later years, business expenses were kept separate. So it comes about that I have a record of what I have spent for personal and family expenses, in many different account books. Not only dollars but every nickel or penny spent for a lead pencil, for books for my library, for groceries, clothes, travel, furniture, ice cream, theater entertainments, are set down, itemized, and dated. I have never found any one who had kept accounts of this kind over such a long period of time. Most of my friends who are aware of this idiosyncrasy express astonishment that I have been able to persist through all these years and in all the various situations in life. It is not so difficult, however, when the thing has been thoroughly systemized. At my elbow in the office is my account book and when a payment has been made I instinctively reach for this book and make the entry. When away from home a small account book preserves the record till I return.

The interesting thing to me about this is the comparison which it affords of prices at various periods, as well as



changes in dress, fashion, and modes of living. A few instances may serve as an illustration. The only geometry I ever possessed, minus the cover and a number of leaves, was bought at a secondhand bookstore for ten cents. At that time the plays of Shakespeare were published in small separate paperbound pamphlets at three cents each. Most of these found their way into my library. Paperbound copies of George Eliot's and Thackeray's novels were purchased at ten cents each.

On the occasion of the wedding of my sister Ella, heretofore referred to, I indulged in quite an extravagance and made her a present which cost fifty cents. What it was does not appear and my memory is silent on the subject. Curtains for my room in the Academy building stood me at twenty cents, a spool of thread was five cents, two neckties were thirty cents, a summer coat cost seventy-five cents, a pair of pants \$1.75, a pair of boots \$3.50, and a lamp shade five cents.

The historical value of these and other figures shown by my accounts is problematical, but it is indisputable that here is an authentic source material for prices of such articles as appear in these pages, for the periods covered. The ink is well preserved, the writing legible. The range of articles is, of course, limited. Yet such as they are they open a window into the social and economic conditions which have prevailed where I have lived or traveled.

#### AT THE UNIVERSITY

I cannot remember the time when it was not taken for granted that I should go to college. My parents constantly talked of it and gave me all possible encouragement, short of financial help which they were unable to afford. Mental attitudes and ambitions of parents are often decisive in fixing careers for their children.

I was perhaps not ten years old when the question as to

which college I should attend was seriously considered in our home. There was a study of catalogs, of curricula, and the comparative advantages offered by different schools. One matter was soon regarded as settled. Sec-tarian schools were out of the running. My father had acquired, I never knew how, a definite and determined dis-like for denominational colleges. With this guiding prin-ciple the choice in the Iowa of that period was practically narrowed down to the State University. Harvard and all other eastern schools were too expensive and far away. Iowa City became inevitably my college home.

On January 1, 1881, I entered the State University at Iowa City, with advanced freshman standing. I had had more than the required Latin, but lacked a year of German, at that time required for entrance to the Liberal Arts course. This latter I made up by special study in the Iowa City Academy, of which I was later to become the principal.

To a youth from a small town, the University buildings were very impressive, a college course not only highly de-sirable but profoundly formidable, and the professors ex-ceedingly wise and learned. There were President Josiah L. Pickard, with his long, gray beard and patriarchal de-meanor, who taught "Political Economy" and usually con-ducted chapel services; Professor A. N. Currier, a small, bearded man, a wizard as a teacher of Latin, whose stac-cato questions kept his pupils always on their toes; Pro-fessor Samuel Calvin, bearded, reserved, sarcastic, de-manding much of his pupils, a great teacher of geology; Professor T. H. McBride (later spelled Macbride), then only thirty-three years of age with a long, flowing beard, the teacher of botany. With unusual powers of language and a persuasive magnetism he could control with a look of his eye and a flash of rhetorical sarcasm. Few were the

pupils who were bold enough to take chances on incurring the displeasure of either Calvin or McBride.

Most remarkable of the entire faculty in many ways was Professor C. A. Eggert who occupied the chair of German and French. Born in Germany and a graduate of a German university, he was typically German in appearance, manner, and scholarship. Of all the faculty he was the most learned, with the possible exception of Professor Gustavus Hinrichs, also European-born and educated, who was then teaching chemistry.

Professor Eggert was profoundly versed in history and in European literature and philosophy, as well as in his own special subjects. He could lecture on any of these subjects and frequently did so in the classroom to the astonishment and delight of his pupils. For some reason, perhaps because of my admiration and love for the German classics, I was frequently invited to his home in the eastern part of the city. There, on Sunday afternoons, I would listen for hours to his brilliant conversation on European philosophy and culture. My courses under him, including two years in German and one in French, in themselves constituted a liberal education.

The University at that time was small and insignificant in point of numbers, buildings, and equipment, compared with what it has since become. The total number of students was only some six or seven hundred, including the professional schools of law, medicine, and dentistry. There was no thought then of the scores of departments, special courses, bureaus, research sections, graduate school, and various more or less "practical" courses which have since been added at great cost of operation and maintenance. There were not over eight or ten buildings, most of them old and dingy, and with very limited equipment in the way of library, museums, and apparatus.

And yet the instruction was of a high order. The professors were men of ability and did most of the teaching. There was an eager, intellectual activity and ferment on the part of most of the students. Attending college was at that time chiefly for purposes of education. It had not yet become four years of pastime or a joy ride or social diversion. We had a few intra-college football and baseball games and an athletic floor, but no intercollegiate contests. All athletics were a sideshow and occupied little time or attention. There was practically perfect attendance and serious attention to lessons. In all the great essentials of a liberal culture the University gave as excellent facilities, with as good results, as have been attained with all the vast array of buildings, apparatus, books, museums, and specialized instruction of these later years.

The University occupied a commanding position on the brow of the hill overlooking the Iowa River. The official college song well expresses this:

Oh Iowa! calm and secure on thy hill,  
Looking down on the river below.

The campus, close to the business center of Iowa City, was a beautiful greensward set with trees, many of them symmetrical elms and noble oaks. On this campus was held the military drill which was required of all men except seniors. The central building was the former Territorial and State Capitol, with its much admired architectural proportions and noble dome. I have since seen many of the great buildings of two continents but cannot remember one whose rooms could boast of more perfect proportion and symmetry than the two legislative chambers on the second floor. This building contained the administrative offices of the president and secretary, and several classrooms. My courses in Latin, astronomy, biology,

geology, and political economy, and later the law course, were taken in this historic structure.

The progress I made in these courses has often excited my astonishment as I look back over the record; the full four years' course I took in three years. Not only did I have plenty of credits for graduation, but my grades were sufficient to secure me a place on the graduation program, at that time a coveted honor. My course was that leading to the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy and included mathematics up to and including analytical geometry, two years of Latin, three years of German, one year of political economy and English literature, two courses in history, and one each in mental and moral philosophy, international law, comparative philology, and the English constitution. This required four full periods of recitation daily, whereas three was the regulation number.

Severe as this course was supposed to be it represented only a part of my intellectual activities. During my first term I became a member of Irving Institute, one of the two men's literary societies then organized, the other being the Zetegathian. I entered enthusiastically into the work of this society. During my senior year I appeared on the public programs eleven times, twice with orations and the remaining times in debate. The training thus received I have felt to be of incalculable value in after life. In addition I represented the society in the valedictory oration of the annual public exhibition, one of the three special honors competed for by members.

Perhaps the most significant of my extra curriculum activities, measured by benefits, was the outside reading which I carried on. There was then a University Library of perhaps twenty-five thousand volumes and browsing in it was a special delight. Here were works on science, history, philosophy, art, education, poetry, and general litera-

ture. My reading was systematic and my tastes catholic. During these years I read a good-sized history of each of the leading nations of the world from China to Peru; the leading works of all the great poets from Homer down; the great philosophers, including nearly all of Herbert Spencer; leading essays, orations, religious literature; most of the novelists, Russian, German, and French as well as English and American.

In my senior year at the University I obtained third place in the local oratorical contest. The winner of the first place, Carl Pomeroy, took the first place in the State oratorical and also the inter-State oratorical contest that year.

My first public speech had been made at Salem on the Fourth of July, 1881. It was a very anxious experience. Later in that year, in September, I gave an address on "The Nobility of Labor" at a township affair held at Taylor's or Wheatley's Grove three miles west and one mile north of Hillsboro. It seemed to me a very important occasion since it was my introduction to public speaking.

I have always had a somewhat unusual memory and could memorize passages of both prose and poetry very readily. These usually remained in my memory without effort and even today I can quote long passages extending over hours at a time without any apparent mental effort.

An illustration of my memory is a speech I made at Salem to the Odd Fellows' county reunion held in 1904. I was invited to make the address of the day on Thursday and the reunion was to occur the following Tuesday. I wrote a forty-five minute address and committed it to memory within that period of time and delivered it verbatim.

Living conditions among the college students of those days require a brief description. On account of the pov-

erty of most students, Iowa at that time having but few rich people, the prevailing tone of living was one of economy. There were no luxurious groups. The nearest approach to these were the three men's fraternities and the two sororities, but these were quite modest in their mode of living. None of them had a separate chapter house. There were none of the luxurious appointments and liberal, not to say sumptuous, ways of living which are sometimes seen today on the campus.

Most of us boarded in clubs, voluntary groups operated on a coöperative plan. A dozen or more students would buy all the provisions as needed. A woman with a house in a convenient neighborhood would be employed as cook and meals were prepared and served by her as directed, at a moderate charge for her services. We could thus determine the kind and cost of board to correspond with our purses. Naturally there was some variation in these clubs. The student could select one that conformed to his tastes or pocketbook. Only the wealthier students engaged regular board in private families. These were looked upon with some envy by those of us less fortunate, as we thought.

I recall that board during my three years at the University cost me from \$1.75 to \$2.25 per week. The food was abundant and well cooked, but was plain and with few fancy dishes. Usually we had boiled meat and potatoes, occasionally other vegetables, bread, butter, jelly, and pie. There was just enough variety in kind and method of cooking to prevent loss of appetite. On the whole we kept in good health and enjoyed our meals, which was proof enough that the fare was suitable.

Room rent cost me from fifty to seventy-five cents per week. To secure this rate one must have a roommate. We supplied our own fuel and lights. Wood was burned in stoves, there being but few furnaces in homes where students were kept.

Our clothing, too, was modest. I had one every day suit for school wear and one for Sunday. These were of wool and of good quality, but we had not yet reached a point where tailored clothes were dreamed of as a possibility.

Three dollars a week for board, room, fuel, and light, thirty dollars per year for clothes, twenty-five dollars for textbooks, and small sums for incidental expenses including tuition made a total of about \$250 per school year. Two students from each county were allowed to enter at a cost for tuition of only \$25 per year, and I was fortunate enough to be a representative from Henry County during all my college course. In my senior year the cost amounted to \$300. A few of the students spent as much as \$400 or \$500, depending on the state of pater's pocketbook.

It can be seen from this picture that living was on a very modest scale and yet we had plenty of pleasure. On Friday nights when the literary exercises were held we relaxed and gave the evening over to entertainment, interspersed with singing and dancing among those so inclined. On Saturdays we played ball or rowed on the river or roamed the hills around the city for botanical specimens. Sometimes we took our hammers and spent the day in the quarry on the west side of the river looking for fossils. The hills beyond the river had at that time but few houses and did not belong to the University.

In another place I have related my struggles to earn money with which to attend college. My earnings were so small and the cost even in those days relatively so high that I almost failed in the desperate struggle. Often I was so discouraged that I nearly gave up in despair. At the end of each college year I came out in debt, not a large amount but a formidable one. Before the deficit could be made up another school year had begun. Thus it was that I was compelled to stay out of college every other year.



With farm labor at \$18 per month and my salary as a teacher at \$35, the net savings were not sufficient even with this gap intervening. But somehow the debts were paid. The last deficit was made up after graduation out of my earnings as a teacher in Howe's Academy. A venture in raising oats in Montana by irrigation in the summer of 1884 was comparatively more remunerative, the net for the six months' labor being about \$250.

What would have been the result had I wavered and fallen by the wayside I have often wondered. Without a college education and degree the pathway might have been slower and more arduous than it has proved. The ways of life are difficult at best. And while a college degree is not as important as it has been regarded in some quarters this slight difference might have been momentous in the final outcome. The way was long, and full of extreme labor and hardships. Looking back over a period of fifty years the effort has seemed worth while. At any rate I have no regrets.

#### TEACHING

For a short time when I was fifteen I entertained the notion of the ministry. At twenty-five I could have been quite content to become a teacher of economics in college, but there was always a sort of settled conviction that my ultimate destination was the law. To study law, however, requires both time and money and when I graduated from college I was in debt. Even when this necessary preparation has been made, acquiring a legal practice is usually a slow process. There is a proverbial starving time for the young lawyer without influential friends or money and I could look forward to no other experience. Money was a necessity and in some way money must be obtained.

The inevitable and only interim occupation was that of

teaching. It was with eagerness therefore that I accepted Professor Howe's invitation to be his assistant in the famous Academy at Mount Pleasant, although teaching was practically a new experience and I had had no adequate preparation. The two winters I had taught in country schools were almost valueless so far as teaching young men and women in Howe's Academy was concerned, but at twenty-two I found myself installed as first assistant to Professor Seward C. Howe, the principal. With the practice and traditions of the school I was of course fully familiar.

At first my work was an experiment. Some of the students were older than I was; some thought to have sport with the young teacher. But in three months the experiment was at an end, the problem mastered. Interest grew and even enthusiasm began to develop. From that time on there were no problems of discipline. Activity was intense. In reaching this plane I called into play all my resources, not only of college studies but of general information. Fortunately, rather wide reading supplemented the knowledge gained in the classroom. It was this fund of knowledge which enabled me to interest pupils and which gave them confidence in their instructor. The result was gratifying and much beyond expectations. Not only did the pupils work hard and earnestly but I was favored with extreme personal loyalty.

Never have I worked harder. Without intermission except an hour for lunch my teaching ran every day from eight to four. Arithmetic, algebra, geometry, Latin, German, physics, botany, civil government, history, word analysis, and physical geography were among the subjects I taught with several classes in some of them. It was a varied and exciting program. Many of the classes were large, from twenty to a hundred. The pupils were eager

and full of ambition, but varied much in ability and application. Handling huge classes in arithmetic was a hard physical and mental task; the mere work of attracting and holding attention required intense effort and an art in managing such diverse minds. Half-hour recitations, fourteen a day, were the rule during the greater part of the forty weeks, without vacations, which made up the school year.

The school was, at that time, at its flood tide of popularity and the numbers were large. Beginning in September with thirty, the enrollment ran up to two hundred and fifty in January and February, gradually diminishing to forty by June. It had been the policy of the school to form new classes as additional students arrived, to suit the varying tastes and degrees of preparation. Naturally the number of classes became very large in the winter months.

The key to success in teaching lies in thorough preparation and mastery of every subject. In addition to the broad range of studies I pursued in college I prepared carefully each night the recitations for the following day. I knew the subjects thoroughly and was thus enabled not only to save time in teaching but could make the recitations more interesting. Rarely did I have an inattentive or uninterested pupil.

My work in the Academy lasted two exciting and satisfying years. During this period I also took part in the intellectual life of the town. At that time the Ladies' Library Association was a high grade literary club, made up of the most intelligent and cultured people of Mount Pleasant, both men and women. Their meetings, held every two weeks, were the occasion for carefully prepared papers on the important topics of the day, and were delightfully refreshing. One year I served on the program

committee of the club and twice I read papers which were cordially received.

Lyceums occasionally brought celebrities to town — lecturers, concert groups, actors. Entertainments of this kind were much more common before the days of the movies and radio. Iowa Wesleyan College too had its commencement programs which usually brought Methodist bishops to the little city.

There was, of course, a county teachers' association which held monthly meetings for professional advancement. It occurred to me that an educational column in the weekly newspapers of the county would spread and unify educational interests and I proposed the establishment of such a column. I was at once elected its editor and for two years I conducted it, giving general educational news and suggesting improved methods of teaching. The Mount Pleasant *Journal* and *Free Press* opened their pages for the column. I derived much pleasure from this service.

The time came when I was ambitious to have a school of my own. Service as an assistant had been pleasant but I wanted to be my own master and try my abilities independently. The opportunity came in 1887 when I was made president of the Southern Iowa Normal School at Bloomfield. This was a private institution, founded by public-spirited citizens to improve local educational conditions. There was a respectable building in a pleasant residential section of Bloomfield, but no endowment. No rent was charged. Whatever I could make from tuition after the payment of running expenses was to be mine. The prospect was only moderate but I esteemed freedom and opportunity more highly than anything else. To an individual of twenty-four money is subordinate to a chance to work and realize dreams.

The ownership of the school was vested in a board of trustees and it was by them that I was employed, at first for one year. At the end of the year I was elected for two years and later for a three-year period. I did not stay out the full six years, however, but resigned in February, 1892, to take charge of the Iowa City Academy.

My work at Bloomfield was pleasant. I was my own master, employed my assistants, drummed up students, collected the tuition, and paid the bills. I also taught classes nearly all day and trained students in debating and for oratorical contests in the evening. The same varied repertory of subjects came to me of necessity and I taught every subject in which my assistants did not specialize. The courses included not only those required as University preparatory but the usual freshman and part of the sophomore year in college. We trained teachers for the public schools, mostly those in Davis and adjacent counties. The school won a reputation for sound, thorough scholarship, and for inspiration to ambitious youth.

Some of the same methods I had learned in Howe's Academy were employed; there was the same arrangement of classes for different pupils, the same freedom of choice, the incessant urge to work hard and master the appointed task. One thing was different. Regular commencement exercises were held annually. In time the addresses delivered at these programs became quite a feature in the cultural life of the community and gained for me something of a reputation. Some of these addresses have been preserved. It is interesting to note after these many years their subject matter, style, and the present day aptness of many of the ideas.

The Iowa City Academy, to which I transferred in 1892, was an old institution, founded to prepare students for the University. Situated in Iowa City and at one corner

of the University campus, it was admirably located for that purpose. It had been ably staffed and had an enviable reputation throughout the State as a preparatory school. Several generations of students had done their preparatory work there and it had been done well. I myself had taken German there. Medical students came there to learn a little Latin for their scientific nomenclature. Law students bravely tried to follow the sonorous sentences of Cicero and the legal phraseology of Ulpian. Bright students lacking opportunity and backward students trying to brush up for difficult courses came from the University and mingled with students doing regular academic work. Northwestern and northern Iowa furnished more than their share; they were numerically inferior only to the contingent from the immediate vicinity of Iowa City.

Here again I taught a varied list of subjects. My predecessor warned me against attempting certain favorites of his, especially literature, lest my work might suffer by comparison. But I disregarded his warnings since I reasoned (quite rightly I think) that if I could not succeed in these studies my work must inevitably go down in failure. I never had occasion to regret my decision.

My teaching while at the very doors of the University was interspersed with attendance at lectures in the law school. For years I had been reading law assiduously at odd times; now I took several regular courses. In June, 1893, I passed the bar examination before the Supreme Court at Des Moines and was admitted to practice.

It was time to drop the Academy. The rising tide of high schools supported at public expense was making it increasingly difficult for secondary schools, relying solely on tuition, to live. Fortunately there was a well-established commercial college at Iowa City. I sold the Academy to

the owners of the commercial college and the two schools were merged. I left at once the delightful city where I had spent so many profitable years and the occupation in which I found unalloyed delight. July 1, 1893, found me at Mount Pleasant, embarked on my future lifework as a lawyer.

#### THE LAW

It would be impossible in this short sketch to set out anything like an adequate history of the various experiences that have arisen in the course of a law practice of more than fifty years. This practice has consisted very largely of individual cases and individual advice and counsel given to an innumerable number of persons, each one embodying a different fact situation. Some of them have been exceedingly interesting; some were merely routine; some have been full of sadness and disappointment to the persons involved. To explain these would be to enter into a thousand minute details which would be uninteresting to any except the immediate characters.

My law career began on July 1, 1893, at Mount Pleasant, Iowa. I entered an office which had been engaged in the abstract work and the business at first consisted largely of real estate loans and abstract work. Almost at the very first I began to attract a law practice and within the course of a year or two had considerable business along that line.

From 1893 to 1897 the country went through a very serious financial depression. It was not so profound or serious or far-reaching as the slump that began in 1929 but it ruined a great many good people. During that period there was a strong demand for farm loans in our county which was almost exclusively an agricultural county of about eighteen thousand population with Mount Pleasant as the county seat. Mount Pleasant had few factories

or business enterprises outside of farming and allied businesses such as farm machinery. Nearly all the merchandising consisted of supplying food, clothing, and supplies to the inhabitants of the small towns and the farming community.

The financial operations of the county were comparatively small and loans accordingly were in small amounts. Farm loans were considered extremely desirable and we made large numbers of these, always taking first mortgages on good farms as security or in some cases on town property. For all of these loans we required abstracts of title and we did a large business in preparing these abstracts. During the course of twenty-six years our office turned out almost six thousand abstracts. This work required great care in the examination of the records and an extremely large amount of detail work in writing up the records of various tracts of real estate. The combined work of making loans and abstracts was very profitable and we soon had the largest business in the county.

My brother-in-law left the firm in 1897. From that time on I conducted the business alone until my son, Paul B. Galer, joined the firm in 1913 and business was conducted from that time on under the firm name of Galer & Galer until his death in 1932. The abstract business was closed out in 1919. Two grandsons, Roger S. Galer, Jr., at present in military service, and Benjamin A. Galer, who is county attorney of Henry County, are now members of the firm.

I soon acquired a considerable probate business and have during this long period handled more than a thousand estates and guardianships. I have also tried a good many cases in court, chiefly civil cases, as we did not cultivate criminal practice. The total business amounted to large proportions and our income was quite generous for a



number of years, especially during the World War and for a few years thereafter.

It is a strange panorama which passes through a lawyer's office. Like a moving picture the scenes melt and dissolve, the actors change, and new vistas constantly appear. Some days we are in a fierce battle in the courtroom, where people, motivated by ambitions and passion, struggle for money, power, or revenge. At times lawyers conduct a hospital for people who are financially sick. Family secrets are bared where divorces are sought or wills made. These secrets are sacredly kept. How many closet skeletons come to light — wild and disobedient sons, wayward daughters, unfaithful husbands, false friends.

Young people borrow money to buy a home or a farm and start life with bright prospects. Old people sorrowfully sign a mortgage in a vain attempt to salvage something for the last days. Children speak of parents with bated breath as the will is read. A father bails his son out of jail and pledges his last savings to keep that son from a worse fate. Every contingency of human life sooner or later displays itself. Usually it is the seamy side of life, for people stay out of court as long as possible. Lawyers are looked upon as doctors — to be employed only in emergencies.

#### RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Something should perhaps be said about the effect of college studies on my intellectual and religious beliefs. Although reared in a small village community and in an orthodox church, with few books and a limited outlook, I was not entirely ignorant of what was going on in the great world of thought outside. Especially had I heard and read of the scientific discoveries which shook the world of that time with doubts of the traditional religious doctrines, but these controversies had had no marked effect

on my own beliefs. I recognize, however, that they had prepared the way so that my mind was open to whatever truths might be encountered in my way through the sciences and the advanced thought of the day. How the news percolated down into Hillsboro I am unable at this time to recall. The fact remains, however, that I was no stranger to the new voices heard throughout the world, though not recognizing at that time their full significance.

My oldest sister had imbibed some of the later theories. My father was of a decidedly liberal cast of mind. And my mother, though clinging in name to the old views, had an open mind which placed no obstacles in the way of the fullest liberty on my part to interpret scientific facts for myself.

How it came about I hardly know. Many people I have known told me that the impact of the new and startling announcements in geology, astronomy, biology, and biblical criticism produced a shock which profoundly affected their feelings and their sense of religious values. Many became frankly skeptical and some avowedly irreligious. I was not affected that way.

It was a time when the intellectual world was profoundly agitated. The revolutionary new doctrine of evolution had been announced but a few years before my entrance into college and the world was rocking with acrimonious debate. The entire foundations of Christianity, foundations laid in apostolic days by the fathers of the church and cherished by many generations of devout believers, seemed to be crumbling. Admit the truth of the evolutionary hypothesis, asserted many religious leaders, and all was lost. The high priests of orthodoxy and the pious souls steeped deeply in the emotional phases of Christian doctrine waged bitter warfare against the doctrine of evolution and against science in general.

To add to the consternation in the orthodox ranks biblical criticism had boldly announced that the Bible, far from being infallible and inerrant, was full of historical and scientific mistakes, that some of its ethical standards were low and many of its notions of God far below the enlightened standards of modern thought. All the powers of the church and the resources of argument were used to counteract this new and dangerous heresy, the most revolutionary and dangerous since Copernicus published his *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium*.

I did not at the time realize that this controversy caused by the publication of *The Descent of Man* was but ten years old. I observed the struggle, sensed its importance, and fearlessly plunged into the study of the involved sciences. Accepting then, as I always have since, the truth wherever found regardless of its implications I soon believed in, then became an ardent advocate of, evolution. Every newly-learned scientific fact tended to confirm it in my opinion. How it could be doubted, in its general terms, I could not understand. If facts contradicted religion, religion must rearrange its postulates and accommodate itself to the facts. And as one branch of science after another added to the proof, as geology supported biology, and astronomy corroborated both, as biblical criticism brought convincing proofs that the Bible was a collection of purely human documents the advocates of traditional beliefs fought a rapidly retreating and losing battle.

The result of these world-shaking debates is well known. Science goes on its way and religion has reassembled its forces and rearranged its lines. My only purpose in recalling this period of *Sturm und Drang* is, of course, to set out its reactions upon myself personally.

Fortunately for me, as I have always regarded it, there

stood across from the main University entrance on Clinton Street, in Iowa City, a small brick church with a slender tower which stood for the liberal faith. Originally Universalist it had been abandoned by that denomination and later was taken over by the Unitarians. This became my spiritual home while I was in college. The minister at that time was Reverend Oscar Clute, an able man, who in spite of an unfortunate voice, commanded respect for his clear and well-matured opinions. The congregation was small, consisting of a few resident families and a number of students. It was a mission church, maintained in part by contributions from the American Unitarian Association, which still follows the policy of maintaining a church near the great institutions of learning.

I became a regular attendant at this church, in full sympathy with Unitarian doctrine. During my senior year I sang in the choir. A fine volume of collected British poems was presented to me by the church at the time of my graduation.

My later years have been spent in the active service of the Universalist Church. Perhaps a word of explanation for this change would be in order. One explanation lies in the fact that between Universalist and Unitarian doctrine there is no essential difference. The second is the fact of geography. It has so happened that wherever I have lived since college days there has been no Unitarian church. At Bloomfield where I lived five years there was a struggling Universalist Church but I never joined it. At Mount Pleasant, one of the oldest Universalist churches in the State has preserved its identity and a precarious existence. Here I found a congenial home. The two churches have always been to me interchangeable. It has been a matter of great satisfaction that I have lived all these years in a city where there has been a liberal church.

I have thus been able to be honest with my own convictions. And I have done something along religious lines, which perhaps has been worth while.

My service in the field of church activity began in 1915 with the opportunity to serve Lombard College as a trustee. Lombard was a Universalist school, struggling under difficult financial conditions. For fifteen years I served as trustee, the last ten as president of the board. Meanwhile, in 1919, I was elected president of the Iowa Universalist Convention and later in October of that year, president of the Universalist General Convention. These positions opened up opportunities for church work of a lay character in many different directions. I cannot recall how many committees, commissions, and boards I served on, or how many addresses I made before conventions, associations, and banquets. They were numerous enough to require a large amount of energy and some degree of ingenuity to meet the varied requirements. It was a time of intense intellectual activity and great enjoyment.

My official position introduced me to the entire field of church activities and to the most intelligent and cultured church people. My two presidential addresses were well received and published at convention expense. I gave one of the addresses at the sesqui-centennial of the church at Gloucester, Massachusetts, in 1920. Perhaps the commencement address at Lombard in 1919 on "The New Individualism" was my most carefully considered and best literary effort. The opinions it contained are substantially those which I still entertain.

In 1927 I became president of the National Federation of Religious Liberals and served for four years. This required trips and addresses in various parts of the West and South and led to very agreeable contacts.

Perhaps my most conspicuous and valuable service to

the Universalist denomination was in connection with the now historic proposal to affiliate the Universalist and Congregational denominations. The Universalist General Convention, which is the governing body of the entire denomination and holds biennial sessions, had had for many years a standing committee on interchurch relations.

During the Convention which met at Syracuse, New York, in 1925, a special committee of sixteen was appointed with instructions to take what steps might be deemed wise and practicable, looking toward a closer drawing together of the liberal church bodies. I was appointed a member of this committee.

Two or three members at once conceived the idea that this was a strategic opportunity to bring the Congregationalists and Universalists together, if not into organic union which was probably regarded as impossible at that time, at least into such fellowship that a union might be a natural and inevitable result. A Joint Statement was prepared and published with much publicity. In brief it affirmed that Christianity is a way of life, not a body of doctrine. Naturally the particular way or ways of living were not specified. Let the two bodies forget non-essentials and unite in this broad and catholic statement.

When the Joint Statement was submitted to our committee of sixteen for approval, I was the only one who refused to sign! Inasmuch as I had been president of the National Convention, and was at that time a trustee and a member of various important committees, I felt impelled to explain my position. Accordingly I prepared an article for publication in the *Universalist Leader* which appeared under date of March 10, 1927. The position I took was briefly as follows. Union or close affiliation amounting to an organic connection with the Congregationalists would put us in close contact with a denomi-

nation which outnumbered us by some fifteen to one. Our efforts would contribute but little to any joint action and anything we did would necessarily be submerged so far as any common ground or action was concerned by the greater number of Congregationalists. If the two denominations had been more nearly alike in doctrine and constituency this would not have been an objection. I knew of course that many eastern Congregationalists were almost as liberal in their theological views as the Universalists but the situation was reversed in the West where most of the Congregational churches were still quite orthodox. My objection therefore was that the small liberal group would be entirely swallowed up in a larger orthodox group and hence lose the very purpose for which they had struggled for a century and a half.

My second objection was that action of this kind would effectually prevent us from closer affiliation and possible ultimate union with the Unitarians whose theological views were almost identical with our own. It had always seemed to me absurd that these two bodies now so nearly together in belief and practice should remain separate, carrying on a complete organization and staff of officers while performing essentially the same functions in their various churches. Originally a Unitarian myself, I regarded union as ultimately a highly desirable thing.

The Joint Statement contained a proposal that a commission be established to work out a basis of affiliation between the Universalist and Congregational bodies. When it was submitted to the Convention which met at Hartford, Connecticut, in 1927, I offered an amendment that any action taken would not affect or prejudice our entire independence of action or any act looking toward closer coöperation with any other church body. This was to permit further discussions and agreements with the Unitarians if

desired. My amendment was accepted and the Joint Statement as thus broadened and modified was adopted without opposition. The amendment, however, took the heart out of the whole movement and the Joint Statement from that time on atrophied until it became a mere historical document, without force or effect.

At the Buffalo convention in October, 1931, the Reverend Frank D. Adams, in his presidential address, electrified the convention with a bold appeal for closer relations with the Unitarians. The address met with a sudden and unexpectedly favorable response on the part of the convention. Indeed it is not too much to say it was received with enthusiasm. It cheered me greatly for this was the action I had always desired.

A new committee was appointed, of which I was a member, to confer with a like committee to be appointed by the Unitarians, and was charged with the task of surveying our relations with the Unitarian body and reporting as to the feasibility of closer relations. Our committee met at Washington and discussed plans and appointed another committee which should be our contribution to any proposed future union. I was not a member of this last-named body.

The joint committees later met and decided upon what has come to be known as the Free Fellowship of Churches. The general plan has been approved by both denominations, but little has apparently been accomplished.

#### CULTURAL AND CIVIC ACTIVITIES

Books, of course, are now open to every one who has a taste for them. Even if one cannot purchase many, there are public libraries in every city, almost in every hamlet. It was not so when I was a boy, but by the time I entered college there were plenty of books available to those who really insisted on having them.



In my judgment the basis of every sound intellectual equipment of a modern man is first, history; second, at least an elementary knowledge of every science; third, as full an acquaintance as possible with the great literature in all languages. Equipped with these one will be able to find his way about in the world, to appreciate the great thoughts and deeds he meets in his journey.

In still another field — that of music and the drama — I have been most fortunate. It has long been my policy to attend wherever possible concerts, operas, plays, not only as a means of culture but for positive enjoyment. Accordingly I have heard most of the great singers of the past forty years, many of the great actors, sixteen operas, and numerous great orchestras.

I have enjoyed travel. I have visited most of the States of the union. In the summer of 1910, in company with my son, Paul, then just out of college, I made a European trip. Landing at Naples we visited Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Bohemia, Germany, Holland, Belgium, France, England, Scotland, and Ireland. Much time was spent in the art galleries, cathedrals, and museums. For more than thirty years the memories of that summer have lived in a happy glow of recollection.

During later years a part of each summer was usually spent at a summer cottage at Hingham, Massachusetts. Trips on church affairs and for other purposes were possible because my son, Paul, who had graduated from the University College of Law in 1913, was my partner in the law business. He possessed a keen legal mind and was competent to conduct the work efficiently.

In order that the record may be easily examined I have thought it worth while to set down here some of the different positions which I have held. This list does not include committee assignments of the State Bar Association,

the Universalist General Convention, Lombard College, and various civic committee assignments.

President of the Mount Pleasant Commercial Club.

President of the Mount Pleasant school board, three terms.

President of the board of trustees, Mount Pleasant Free Public Library.

Vice president of the Iowa State Library Association.

Referee in Bankruptcy, 1898 to 1904. My district embraced Henry and Jefferson counties.

President of the Henry County Bar Association, seven years.

Vice president Universalist General Convention, two years.

President of the Universalist General Convention, four years.

President of the board of trustees, Lombard College, ten years.

President of the National Federation of Religious Liberals, four years.

President of the Iowa State Universalist Convention, five years.

Trustee, Universalist General Convention, ten years.

Member of the Executive Committee, National Federation of Religious Liberals, eight years.

Elected member of Authors Club of London, 1923.

Member American Bar Association.

Member International Law Institute.

Chairman of trustees of Henry Lodge, No. 10, I. O. O. F., Mount Pleasant, Iowa, for thirty consecutive years. As such chairman I handled all of the funds belonging to the lodge, made and collected loans and made semi-annual reports covering the various financial operations. During all that period there was never a cent, either of interest or

principal, lost. I resigned after having completed the above period of service.

During the First World War I served on a number of local committees and was chairman of the Mount Pleasant 4-Minute Men and the Speakers' Bureau for Henry County.

Out of an address which I gave at the Universalist Convention at Sioux City in 1916 gradually grew a book which I had published by the Universalist Publishing House in 1921 under the title *A Layman's Religion*. In it I expressed the ideas of the address and put them in somewhat more regular form.

The next year, 1922, the Macmillan Company published a book entitled *Old Testament Law*. This grew out of Sunday school lessons in the Old Testament which I gave to my adult Bible class lasting over a period of almost a year. A somewhat detailed analysis of ancient Hebrew laws, especially as compared with modern laws on related subjects, was expanded to include a careful analysis of the entire Pentateuch. It was my purpose to include every law or priestly regulation set out in the Pentateuch, classified and arranged in accordance with modern divisions of the law. This book I have been informed is used in some of the theological seminaries as a work of reference and it has received considerable commendation.

For four years, from 1924 to 1928, my wife, Laura B. Galer, and I were joint editors of the *Universalist Helper*, a magazine published quarterly by the Universalist Publishing House for the exposition of the International Sunday School Lessons from a liberal standpoint.

#### HOME LIFE

Perhaps to round out the picture I should add that I was married to Miss Lola Goan in 1887. Miss Goan was a very successful teacher in the public schools of Mount Pleasant when I was employed in Howe's Academy. She

was long the president of the county teachers' association and in such capacity we were thrown much together.

Miss Goan was a talented woman and an interesting public speaker. She died in 1909. Our son, my only child, Paul B. Galer, became a lawyer and was my valued partner till his untimely death in 1932. In 1910 we spent a summer in Europe, visiting places of historic, cultural, and artistic interest, from Naples north through the western European countries as far as Edinburgh and from Vienna to Ireland.

In 1912 I was married to Miss Laura Bowman who was a graduate of Radcliffe College, Iowa State Teachers' College, and Ryder Divinity School. We have been the recipients of many college degrees.

Mrs. Galer is a Universalist minister and has served several charges. At present she is pastor of the Universalist Church of Mount Pleasant where she has served for the past twenty years. She is in frequent demand as a lecturer and as a book reviewer before various clubs and societies.

#### AMBITIONS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

Most people, I presume, have been in early life possessed by illusions of greatness. Partly this is the incurable habit of youth, partly the result of fairy stories told by parents for the encouragement of their children. Sometime, before life ends, opportunity will come knocking at the door and there will be wealth or office or distinction of some kind. Youth has no measuring stick for greatness or the difficulties that lie in the way of success.

As a boy I was no exception. I would, perhaps, become a great orator, a Senator, at least a prominent citizen in some field. But when middle age was coming on and there had been time to study my own abilities and deficiencies I awakened to the fact that the extreme heights were too great, the pathway too steep. The glittering

prizes of youthful imagination one by one faded away. I possessed some talent as a teacher, as a speaker, as a businessman, as a lawyer, but not extraordinary qualities. I came to realize that I might succeed only in moderate degree in some of these fields. For example, while I possessed some ability as a lawyer, both before a court and a jury, I did not have that keen, analytical mental quality characteristic of lawyers of the highest rank. I was always synthesizing, trying to discover general laws or principles from scattered facts, and this is not the type of mind needed by a trial lawyer. What a successful trial lawyer must have is the power to dissect and analyze and pitilessly pursue to their minutest subdivisions every question involved in a case. In addition he must be dogmatic and determined and firmly believe that the right is all with his client. Of course the really great lawyers possess other qualities to serve as a balance to these, which would otherwise become disagreeable and dangerous.

As an ambitious boy I had no thought of a business career. Mine was to be a profession. But when as a lawyer with a general practice in a rural community I found myself in contact with numerous business situations, I discovered an unexpected ability in a small way to understand and handle business. My judgments were usually right, measured by results.

There comes a time in the life of every intelligent being, except those most highly endowed, when the constant blows of limitation which he experiences, limitations of accomplishment if not of ability, gradually reduce his ambitions and limit his horizon. Day by day the commonplace piles up its events. "At last the vision splendid, fades into the light of common day."

Disheartening, you say? It would be if the event happened all at once. Generally it comes about over a period

of years and thus the blow is softened. Like the sand which blows from the desert and in time covers temple and town, our fondest hopes and most cherished dreams become obscured by the gently falling stream of events which make up our lives.

As the net result of conditions I became a lawyer in a small but handsome county seat in Iowa, and there I have remained through more than fifty years. They have been intensely busy years. From the very beginning my practice was large and profitable.

I acquired the habit of continuous and rapid work. Seldom have I been idle and in the busy seasons characteristic of such communities my work mounted to a feverish activity. Financial returns were satisfactory and flowed in a steady stream. I soon learned that I had nothing to fear from haunting poverty, at least while health remained. In that respect my record has been unusual. I remember only a few days out of fifty years when I was unable to be at the office through sickness. My practice has been interesting, stimulating, and satisfying as well as profitable.

Of course these remarks are not intended to give the impression that I became rich. Rather that I lived in that happy state between riches and poverty which Aristotle called the golden mean. In all ages philosophers have united in affirming that the happiest condition in life is neither that of extreme wealth nor extreme poverty, but lies along the shaded highways and pleasant gardens of the average world of men. In this happy condition it has been my lot to live and work. Riches I had no desire to obtain. Poverty never came near enough to be feared.

ROGER B. GALER