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The Scrap-Books of a Quiet Little Lady with Silvery Hair

In his preface to *The Life and Times of Samuel J. Kirkwood*, Mr. H. W. Lathrop speaks of Governor Kirkwood's "faithful wife" who had from time to time during his official life gathered from the public press facts relating to him "and treasured them up". Whoever remembers Mrs. Kirkwood during the almost thirty years that she outlived her distinguished husband knows that no one could improve upon Mr. Lathrop's description of her attachment to her scrap-books. She loved them; she planned for them; and she "treasured them up".¹

There are evidences that these scrap-books were often loaned to staff correspondents and special feature writers; and in his biography of *Samuel Jordan*

¹ It was after her death in her one-hundredth year, that these scrap-books were added to the Kirkwood Collections in the library of the State Historical Society of Iowa, through the kindness of Mrs. Kirkwood's nephew, Mr. C. S. Lucas of Iowa City.

Kirkwood, as published in the *Iowa Biographical Series*, Mr. Dan Elbert Clark tells of his gratitude to Mrs. Kirkwood who "generously placed valuable materials at the writer's disposal", and in his notes and references he makes mention of the "small" and the "large" Kirkwood scrap-books.

Both of the scrap-books are of the "Mark Twain" type, with columns of gummed lines to which the clippings are attached. The small book of one hundred pages with two columns to a page was apparently made up first and contains about two hundred and forty clippings, ranging in length from three lines to nine pages. The large book — more intimately associated with Mrs. Kirkwood during the extraordinary one score and ten years above the traditional allotment of three score years and ten that were meted out to her — is a volume of one hundred and forty-eight pages with three columns to a page and contains approximately four hundred clippings. Between the leaves of both books are scattered loose clippings and other memoranda to the number of one hundred and thirty pieces, covering a period from 1863 to 1921.

It appears that Mrs. Kirkwood had always been "quite a hand to save the papers". Sometimes she clipped news or editorial paragraphs relating to her husband and laid them away, usually without dates or data indicating their source; sometimes she preserved the entire paper or the page containing a marked paragraph; and occasionally the date, the

name of the town in which the paper was published, or other memoranda were written in pencil on the margin. "A scrap for my scrap-book", reads one marginal note written in her ninety-seventh year. Here and there bits of the handwriting of Governor Kirkwood and of Mr. Lathrop appear — showing the interest of the Governor and his contemporary biographer in the collection.

Such marginal notes as "An extra copy of the paper containing the sketch", "From Lizzie", "J. M. H.", "For Aunt Jane", "For your collection", and the presence of many duplicates bespeaks the interest of friends and relatives. Eleven copies of the newspaper story of Mrs. Kirkwood's ninety-third birthday are preserved in the large book and loose clippings. Now and then an item is blue-penciled — apparently by the editor who sent the paper. Some of the articles bear the corrections of an experienced proof-reader. One of the untrimmed clippings has attached to it the printed notice of a clipping bureau — which might have been a voluntary contribution, or possibly Mrs. Kirkwood sought such assistance in collecting materials for her scrap-books.

Before pasting the clippings in the scrap-books, Mrs. Kirkwood as a rule cut away folio lines and marginal memoranda, though sometimes she wrote in pencil between the columns the name of the newspaper from which the item was clipped. Seldom, however, are there any dates — except as they occur

in the body of the clipping. But with a little study, two-thirds of the items are easily identified; and they represent one hundred and seventy-five different newspapers. Of this number one hundred and ten are Iowa papers, while the sixty-five papers published beyond the borders of the State range from New York City to San Francisco. About ninety-seven per cent of the clippings relate directly to Governor Kirkwood. One wonders whether there is in existence in Iowa another such collection of the opinions of the public press of a given period on any one subject.

The idea of bringing the clippings together in scrap-books, however early conceived, was apparently not carried out until after Governor Kirkwood had retired from public life. While the small book contains items dealing almost entirely with Governor Kirkwood as Secretary of the Interior and with "political gossip" and "editorial speculation" regarding "The Next Senatorial Term", here and there in the early pages a reference to his nomination as Representative to Congress from the Second Congressional District (1886) slips in, revealing the fact that the scrap-books are a backward look over a sunny track. Perhaps it was the wealth of material dealing with this period that led Mrs. Kirkwood to begin the first book with the clippings pertaining to the Governor's position in President Garfield's Cabinet; and it may have been her intention to work backward from that period.

That Governor Kirkwood had often been urged to write his autobiography and had thought very seriously of so doing, we learn from various clippings in the scrap-books. "We have been urging Gov. Kirkwood for years to write a sketch of it" (the famous council of the war governors of the North), reads a clipping from the Des Moines *Register*, "and he has always promised to do it, but in the hurry and crowded occupation of a busy life he either forgets it or is unable to find the time to do it. But if he does not do it pretty soon we shall sue him for breach of promise Such men as he owe a duty to the Commonwealth to preserve such things to its future record and renown, and it is hoped that he and several others who like him were prominent in early Iowa and during the war, will at least preserve such facts to the future Iowa in some form, either by way of autobiography or otherwise."

It may have been with this thought in mind that Mrs. Kirkwood began the first scrap-book. In the end Governor Kirkwood seems to have compromised on the autobiography by assisting Mr. Lathrop in compiling *The Life and Times of Samuel J. Kirkwood*. This book was published in 1893 and Governor Kirkwood died on September 1, 1894. On the flyleaf of the first scrap-book is a column of figures written by Mr. Lathrop referring to certain pages where clippings are marked for special attention. It is the belief of those who knew him best that this was done under the guidance of Governor Kirkwood.

The clippings relating to Governor Kirkwood's position in the Cabinet and his seat in the United States Senate overflow into the large scrap-book; but the hand that "treasured them up" is less certain, and as early as the twenty-fourth page there creeps in the first indirect reference to the death of Governor Kirkwood in an *Interesting Historical Paper* reprinted from the May number of the *Western Reserve Law Journal*. In the unorganized mass of material which fills the remaining one hundred and twenty-four pages of this book, in the duplicated clippings, as well as in the many pages of newspaper reports relating to the death of the Governor, one reads the story of a great sorrow; and one realizes, too, that only a great love could have given the "faithful wife" who "treasured them up" the strength and the courage to go forward with her clippings.

Little by little whatever she had gathered found its way into the large scrap-book with little regard to time or subject matter. Here, for example, are complete newspaper reports of Governor Kirkwood's speeches (one as old as the Civil War and some as new as the campaign in the Second Congressional District in 1886) with a sprinkling of newspaper comment and expression of popular sentiment regarding the Governor in the seventies and eighties. Here also are long sketches of his life and public career, with a wealth of tribute, reminiscence, and anecdote. Some of these were

written in the twilight of an honored age and others when the two generations who had "loved and honored him as no other man" bowed their heads and said, "What a strange Iowa it is without Kirkwood".

"Kirkwood, like Lincoln," reads a sketch in one of the Chicago papers which apparently was issued shortly after Governor Kirkwood's death, "was largely indebted for his wonderful popularity to the promulgation by those who knew him best of numerous anecdotes and pleasantries which never failed to win the love and confidence of his fellow-men. Ex-Gov. Kirkwood belonged distinctively to that type of public men, now rapidly passing away, which was bred to hardship and adventure, and which shared the ruggedness and self-reliance characteristic of the generation in which they lived."

Anecdotes regarding Kirkwood appear to have been great favorites with the public press. One newspaper would print a story, which would remind a second paper of another; and these reprinted would call forth new ones. Sometimes these anecdotes were gathered together under the heading of "Kirkwoodiana" or "Kirkwoodisms" which were copied in whole or in part in the newspapers of California, Maryland, New York, Ohio, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, and Georgia.

And how the Iowa newspapers and the Iowa people loved these Kirkwood anecdotes! They deal with the Governor's public service and political

faith, with his horse, his mill, his farm, his dress, his manner, and his personal appearance. They deal with his ability as a public speaker, his sharp repartee, his grim sense of humor, his Lincoln-like gift for apt and homely illustration, and his fearlessness in the expression of opinion. And they deal with his prophetic wisdom, his sense of fair play, his absolute integrity, his faith in the State of Iowa, and his hold on the affections of the common people. It is not surprising that many of these anecdotes found their way into Mrs. Kirkwood's treasure books.

Scattered throughout seventy-eight pages, mingled with items on the "Old Man Eloquent" in action and "The Rustling of the Leaves of Memory", are many columns filled with the reports of the birthday anniversaries of Governor Kirkwood, ranging from his seventy-sixth birthday, when he "is in good health and with a mental vigor unabated" and is urged by the public press to write his autobiography, to his eightieth anniversary which is reported as "A Notable Day" when a few of his intimate friends met in a body and without public demonstration found their way quietly to the Governor's residence.

Many clippings of various lengths and from various sources tell the story of "The Surprise Party" which occurred less than a year before the Governor's death when friends from all parts of Iowa met under the leadership of Hon. Buren R. Sherman

“to make him a social call” at the Kirkwood home. It was a beautiful thought, beautifully carried out; and it was said after his death that this tribute gave the Governor greater happiness than did any public honor in his long public career. “It speaks volumes of praise for the man”, said the Chicago *Inter Ocean*, “when in the midst of a great political campaign, with every man fighting for his own political faith as though the salvation of the country depended upon it, the people, without regard to party differences, unite in an old fashioned surprise party to do honor to ex-Governor Kirkwood of Iowa, as they did at his home in Iowa City last Wednesday.”

Under the headline of “Goodness is Greatness” a note sounded in the speech of Judge Wright received State-wide publicity with much newspaper comment. “Without praise”, said Judge Wright when addressing the venerable War Governor on this occasion, “I can say that you are the emphatic exemplification of the fact that goodness is greatness; and whether one rules, or plows, or sows, doing one’s duty is goodness”. Upon which one newspaper comments: “Of all the eulogies of the War Governor that have been written and pronounced, the words of Judge George G. Wright are the purest gold. ‘Goodness is greatness’ . . . Place it on his monument. Repeat it to every college student, to every school boy. Send it on the wings of the wind, ‘Goodness is greatness’ ”.

Here and there in the last third of the large scrap-

book — added apparently long after the clippings which recorded “Iowa’s Sorrow”—are full newspaper accounts of the unveiling of the Yewell portrait in the Capitol at Des Moines when Governor Kirkwood was “too feeble to be in attendance to hear the words of praise which his old associates were about to bestow upon him”. Likewise there are reports of the exhibition of the portrait in Iowa City where for “forty-eight hours, hundreds and hundreds gazed in admiration and veneration upon that dear and familiar face looking out from the frame of gold”. It is recorded that Governor Kirkwood admired the picture very much, but insisted that “It is better looking than I am.”

Through the entire collection of clippings in the scrap-books runs the theme of the Civil War. Only a few of the references to the great conflict are actual snapshots; but there are a multitude of flashbacks in reminiscences and anecdotes of, and tributes to “Iowa’s Old War Governor”, in reports of G. A. R. reunions, Memorial Day celebrations, and in the ever present reference to the war in the speeches of Governor Kirkwood. This habit of referring to the Civil War was sometimes deplored in Democratic papers as “waving the bloody shirt”—to which Governor Kirkwood was wont to reply (as he did in a stump speech in Indiana) in such language as the following:

“Now, my friends, I have a profound respect for the bloody shirt. [Loud cheers.] I sent to the field

from my own State of Iowa 50,000 as brave men as ever marched. Many of them wore the bloody shirt before they returned home. [Cheers.] Many of them were buried in their bloody shirts, and never came home. I say that the bloody shirt, to me, symbolizes patriotism as pure, and devotion to duty as earnest, and courage as splendid as this world has ever seen. [Enthusiastic cheers.] I say to you that I have seen men, living and dead, wearing the bloody shirt, the lachets of whose shoes no Northern man who sneers at it ever was or will be worthy to unloose. [Renewed cheering.] I have a profound respect for it, and I have a profound contempt for the spirit that will urge any Northern man to sneer at it. [Great applause.]”

With no other knowledge of the man than that revealed by the headless and dateless collection of clippings “treasured up” by “his faithful wife”, one would learn that Governor Kirkwood’s devotion to the Union was the great passion of his life, that the agitation for the extension of slavery called into play all his latent force of character, that he followed out the issues of the war to their bitter end, and that he watched and worked with intense interest and passionate earnestness throughout the period of reconstruction. From a reading of these clippings one can easily understand the echo and the re-echo of the “right side and the wrong side in that bloody contest”, and the voiced distrust of the “dominating element” of the “wrong side”.

Said Governor Kirkwood in a Memorial Day address years after his retirement from the Cabinet: "I want you to teach your children and teach them to teach their children and their children's children to the end of time, that in that fierce struggle which cost so much you were right and they [the South] were wrong. . . . They believed they were right, they were earnest and sincere in believing that they were right, but they were wrong."

That there was a period when the charm of Kirkwood for the masses was a powerful factor in Iowa politics, no one who reads the testimony of the one hundred and ten Iowa newspapers represented in Mrs. Kirkwood's scrap-books can doubt. It was a factor that had to be reckoned with by the politicians — a sustaining, perplexing, or irritating factor depending upon the viewpoint. Long after the Governor had said of himself that "my time for such work is past", the persistent Kirkwood influence manifested itself in such newspaper stories as "A Reporter has a Chat with Hon. Samuel J. Kirkwood", "Interview with Iowa's War Governor", "Governor Kirkwood on the Situation", "Governor Kirkwood on the Judgeship", "Governor Kirkwood on the Pound Bolt", "Governor Kirkwood on the Temperance Question".

Fragmentary and in a style that is careless and often crude and on occasions somewhat mixed as to facts, the press clippings of Mrs. Kirkwood's scrap-books tell a beautiful story of Iowa's admiration and

love for Governor Kirkwood, and of the Old War Governor's faith in and devotion to the young Commonwealth.

"Kirkwood belongs to Iowa". "No man can serve Iowa as Kirkwood can". "We are for Kirkwood first last and all the time". "Old Sammy carries his Senatorial seat with him — So his tailor says". "If Kirkwood wants it, the rest can hang their aspirations on the weeping willow tree". "The people of Iowa can *trust* Samuel J. Kirkwood, and they *know* they can trust him". "There is more hard meat underneath the rude shell of his exterior than there is in a dozen of your soft-shells who mistake noise for argument and self confidence for ability". "Iowa farmers are not willing that the Old Man Eloquent with his uncouth but sterling honesty and war-tried patriotism should be succeeded by anyone but himself". "We want the Old War Governor kept there until the Great Reaper comes after him". "No man has ever been such a popular idol to Iowa people". "We say the people of Iowa can make him a candidate if they want to, and that there is no power in Iowa which can stop it". "Kirkwood is the choice of the *people* and not the creature of a ring". "The common people of this State will see to it that their choice is respected, regardless of the tricks of a few very small politicians". Such, without retouching, are a few expressions of confidence in "The Old Man Sensible" by "nine-tenths of the people of this State"; and

one gathers that the periodical popular outbreaks of "Kirkwood belongs to Iowa" and "We want Kirkwood" often brought consternation to those who were ambitious of "standing in his shoes", or "getting his seat", or "wearing his mantle".

The scrap-books are a veritable storehouse of evidences of the truth that Kirkwood, in spite of the fact that he was forty-two years old when he came to Iowa, had been thoroughly assimilated by his adopted State and really "belonged". From the day he took up his residence in Johnson County the State's interests and problems were his; and when speaking in the East or in the West his statistics and his illustrations were largely drawn from Iowa, with many a fond reference to "what we think about it in Iowa".

"In the country where I live, which I wish to remark is the finest State in the whole Union", said Kirkwood in 1883, "we are rearing the typical American, the western Yankee, if you choose to call him so, the man of grit, the man of nerve, the man of broad and liberal views, the man of tolerance of opinion, the man of energy, the man who will some day dominate this empire of ours".

In the same speech he adds: "You must know that the true Bostonian's sun rises behind Plymouth Rock, stops for a time over Faneuil Hall in Boston, and sets near the mouth of the Hoosac Tunnel. But when we get him out here, and knock a little of the nonsense out of him, and rub the varnish off, we find him to be made of true, tough, solid fibre under-

neath, and by no means a man of veneer. He turns out a pushing, energetic and useful citizen”.

Nor is this scrap-book history of her distinguished husband without its record of Jane Clark Kirkwood, the “faithful wife”, who had from time to time during his official life gathered from the public press facts relating to him “and treasured them up”. One of the early clippings in the small book reads: “At the Saturday reception of Mrs. Garfield, her only one, Mrs. Kirkwood, who occupied her assigned place in the receiving line, was singled out as ‘Grandma Garfield’ by some who were superloyally anxious to pay respects to as many of the family as possible. This was not entirely agreeable to a well-preserved matron of 60, and she repudiated the honor with proper feminine spirit”. In the forty years to be granted her after this “Saturday reception”, Mrs. Kirkwood never lost the “snap” revealed in this clipping. When the photograph of Mrs. Kirkwood, which is used as a frontispiece in this number of *THE PALIMPSEST*, was taken for the State Historical Society of Iowa in what was then her ninety-eighth year, it was the privilege of the writer to accompany her to the photographer; and one of the delightful memories of that occasion is Mrs. Kirkwood’s repudiation of one of the photographer’s proofs because, she said, “it makes me look like an old lady!”

“Mrs. Kirkwood, the wife of the Secretary”,

reads a clipping from the New York *Tribune*, "is described as a quiet little lady with silvery hair, who has been comparatively little in society." Commenting upon this characterization an Iowa newspaper declared that "this is the way that snobdom affects to patronize a lady superior in every respect to any of its component elements. The 'quiet little lady with silvery hair' has been 'in society' all her life. There has never been a day that she has not mingled with respectable people; and these compose the highest and the best society. Mrs. Kirkwood is able, by virtue of her character, to confer honor upon any company in Washington. That dissipated mixture of good, bad and indifferent people which at the Capital is called 'society' might well be proud should Mrs. Kirkwood condescend to patronize it."

With the memory of the golden wedding anniversary more than a quarter of a century old and with the shadows lengthening to the eastward, there was little for Mrs. Kirkwood to add to the scrap-book history save newspaper references to herself. Newspaper headings had grown bolder and blacker since the days when she figured in the public press as one of the "Queens of the Cabinet", and generous half-tone cuts from photographs of herself had taken the place of the etchings from India ink drawings that were copied many times in the eighties. Many late tributes to her and through her to the memory of "Iowa's Grand Old Man" are to be found under such headings as "Widow of the Old War Gov-

ernor"; "Mrs. S. J. Kirkwood Honored by the Twenty-second Iowa"; "Old Settlers' Picnic — Mrs. Jane Clark Kirkwood Present"; "Mrs. Kirkwood Nonogenarian"; and "Mrs Kirkwood One and Ninety".

Beyond the ninety-third birthday there are no more anniversary items pasted in the scrap-book — not because Mrs. Kirkwood had lost interest in her clippings: the book was full. So the record of those remarkable birthdays that carried her so close to the century mark joined the loose clippings of the Civil War period, letters that she apparently had hesitated to put into the company of printed matter, a black and gold funeral card announcing the death of Governor Kirkwood, a full front page on the work of Vinnie Ream Hoxie with special reference to her statue of Governor Kirkwood in the Capitol at Washington, notices of programs at the Kirkwood School in Iowa City, a newspaper story of her Red Cross work at the age of ninety-six, an account of the totem pole at Seattle, and verses relating to the Kaiser.

And finally the last eight pages of this treasured record are filled with notices of the deaths and of the funeral services of relatives and friends. Brothers and sisters who had shared her experience in the timber-cleared country of pioneer Ohio, old neighbors and friends who had helped to rear the young State of Iowa, business and professional associates of an early elder day whose interests were inter-

woven with her own — Mrs. Kirkwood had outlived them all!

The Mansfield, Ohio, law office, and the Coralville, Iowa, mill were now memories of three score years and ten; the old "Concord stage" that wallowed through the snowdrifts between Iowa City and Des Moines was only a tale of long ago; the "Queens of the Cabinet" of the Garfield administration had passed into history these many years; the beloved adopted soldier-boy, had he lived, would have been a man of seventy-eight years; a generation of men and women had grown up about Jane Clark Kirkwood since the observance of her own golden wedding anniversary. What wonder that the yellowing fragments of the scrap-books that opened the gate into such a wondrous land of memories were counted among the most precious treasures of her life!

It is with a feeling of reverence that one replaces the loose clippings and closes the scrap-books. Like the Old War Governor they, too, belong to Iowa.

Whatever may have been her motives, Mrs. Kirkwood has in her scrap-book clippings bequeathed to us a rare album of pictures of the "Great Commoner of Iowa", the "Genius in Homespun", the idol of a people for two generations. Here is something to tempt artists born in Iowa with "the divine fire in their souls".

Pictures of the dust covered miller, with his trousers stuffed into his boot tops and a shockingly bad

hat on his head meeting the elegant General Augustus Caesar Dodge in a series of debates which "were second only in importance to the joint debates between Lincoln and Douglas the previous year in Illinois." What could be more picturesque than the "ox-cart" episode!

Pictures of the newly elected War Governor, not over careful in his attire, stumping the State and pleading with passionate earnestness for men, money, aid, and "one united effort to save the government in this time of peril".

Pictures of a dominating figure in homespun during those dark days when "Iowa had not a surplus dollar to its credit" and when his task as a loyal Governor "exacted the highest form of patriotic faith, a patience that would not be overcome by any difficulties, a perseverance that could not be impaired, a knowledge of men that would permit him to influence them under the most unfavorable conditions, an ingenuity, a faculty of invention which would be always present and ready to meet and satisfy the most exigent demand, and a constitution that would bear up under incessant strains, both mental and physical".

Pictures of the meeting of two great commoners, Samuel J. Kirkwood, as Governor of Iowa, and Abraham Lincoln, as President of the United States, when the harassed commander-in-chief of the army and navy asked "What can we do for your State?" and the loyal Governor of the young Commonwealth

of Iowa replied, "The question is not, Mr. President, what you can do for my State, but what my State can do for you." Two great commoners between whom there was said to be "a mental and moral as well as a physical resemblance". Two giants of their day, developed by "the noble alchemy of toil". Men who sprang from the people and knew them and sympathized with them; who comprehended their wants and their tendencies; and who reaching the heights of political preferment yet ever kept in closest touch with them.

Not without dramatic quality is the scrap-book story of the nomination of Kirkwood as "Governor against his will"—a story of an anxious moment when the conservative delegates in a Republican State convention faced defeat by the supporters of General James B. Weaver. Suddenly, to the surprise of friends and foes, "a man of kingly stature with hair and beard flowing long and white as snow, arose in his place, secured attention from the chair and with hand uplifted, said with impressive force: 'Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of this convention, I present for your consideration as nominee for governor that grand war governor of Iowa, Samuel J. Kirkwood' ". And when asked by what authority use was made of Kirkwood's name, the man of snow white hair and beard "again arose with uplifted arm and said in tones that reached every nook and corner of Moore's old opera house, 'I nominate

Samuel J. Kirkwood by the authority of the great Republican party of Iowa!’ ” In the wild enthusiasm that followed combinations fell apart, alliances disintegrated, and the nomination was allowed to stand.

On to Washington the scrap-books take us with the Old War Governor as a United States Senator, when “there were no momentous National issues at stake”. The clippings of this period picture the Senator from Iowa as a man who generally wore a “suit of clothes that could be bought new for \$20 and would not fetch at a second hand store more than one-fourth that sum”, but whose “off-hand” speech on the army appropriation bill was “a gem of legal and political oratory”, giving to its author “national prominence”.

Another clipping of the same period pictures the man rather than his clothes: “Perhaps the Governor gained something from his appearance, his manner, the mold in which he was cast. There is a benignity about a strong, rugged, sincere face which carries as forceful an impression as words. It was that quality which lent effectiveness to Webster’s words; it is that colossal truthfulness which glorifies the homely features of Lincoln. Gov. Kirkwood was cast in a large mold. Early toil had developed his muscles, expanded his chest, bronzed and wind-beaten his cheek, brightened his eye, and at the same time had plowed furrows in his brow and hewed out the rough lines of his face. Thus when he spoke to

men — in that slow, deliberate, earnest way of his — what was said took on a certain penetration due as much to the man who said it as to the truth his words carried with them.”

With one-half of their contents relating to Kirkwood's position in the Cabinet the scrap-books tell the story of Iowa's "Genius in Homespun" as Secretary of the Interior during President Garfield's administration. Without dates or headlines and with some confusion as to sequence, the clippings of the time give every phase of his appointment — praise and criticism, political gossip, newspaper "fire works", and "Vox Populi". There are many verbal pictures from original negatives (without the flattering manipulation of the retoucher's pencil) of the "stalwartizing" of President Arthur's administration, of Iowa's "style of Republicanism" and unbounded faith in "old-fashioned honesty", and of the "practical common-sense" of that "grand representative of the great State of Iowa — the Old War Governor".

Here is an early pen portrait by a staff correspondent of the New York *Tribune* entitled "The Secretary and his Office": "Secretary Kirkwood carries his sixty-eight years lightly, and can do more hard, close work in a day than most men of forty. He has a strong, shrewd, kindly face with high cheekbones, deep wrinkles and heavy eyebrows. A remnant of whisker is allowed to escape the barber high up on each cheek. The gray does not yet domi-

nate over the brown in his hair. His clothes look as if a village tailor had constructed them under strict orders to pay no attention to fashion-plates and to make them ample, strong and comfortable. The big slouch hat which he wears on the street must be a veteran of many contests with wind and rain on the Iowa prairies. Its owner never minds the shape it gets into when he swings it upon his head, takes his stout stick and strides out of his office. You would say, seeing him go by: 'What a fine specimen of a substantial, intelligent Western farmer'. This farmer-looking man carries a vigorous, practical brain under his felt hat, and a warm heart under his loose sack coat. He has played a great part in the building up of the magnificent young State of Iowa, was her Governor in the stormy war time, has represented her many years on the floor of the United States Senate, and is now at the head of the most exacting and laborious of all the Government Departments. I predict that he will succeed in his new position as he has in the many others he has held."

In the midst of several hundred clippings the reader comes suddenly upon two "Special Washington Telegrams" which state, among other things, that "Secretary Kirkwood can not fulfill the duties of his office", that "he does not understand how to leave all the details of the work of his Department to subordinates", that "he insists upon reading and

answering all the letters sent to him", and that, being "one of the most honest men in the world", he seemed to think "the interior department would immediately get away with his Iowa reputation for honesty if he did not *attend to every detail.*"

Commenting upon these reports the Chicago *Inter Ocean* declares that "The whole thing is a tissue of malicious fiction from beginning to end"; while Iowa papers saw in the concert of these Washington wires "a conspiracy in some quarter to break the brave old man down and drive him out of the cabinet". In the flood of these newspaper comments the Chicago *Journal* observes that "it is now well understood at Washington . . . that before the 4th of March next Secretaries Kirkwood and Hunt will yield their places to approved 'Stalwarts' who are already agreed upon by Grant, Conkling, Cameron, Logan and Co., who are the real bosses of this administration, Arthur merely doing their bidding. It is understood . . . that republican Iowa is to be punished for her refusal to go for a third term for Grant in the Chicago convention, by being left out in the cold. Iowa can stand it if the bosses can." "It is a new table", comments the Des Moines *Register* philosophically, "and the men who sit up to it must be able not only to eat the new kind of meat but say that they like it".

The tumult of special dispatches dies, and staff correspondents seek new fields. The Washington *Post* notes the retirement of Secretary Kirkwood in

these words: "It is a source of satisfaction to himself and his friends that he remained long enough in the Cabinet to verify the hopes that were entertained of his administration, and to disarm the criticisms with which certain of his views were at the outset assailed. He has proved himself an able, sagacious Secretary, above all suspicion of corruption or favoritism, and, retiring as he does by virtue of an assumed political exigency, bears with him the admiration and esteem of his fellow-citizens of all parties."

And the Dubuque *Times*, voicing the affection of the State of Iowa, declares: "Father Kirkwood is coming home. That means to Iowa, because all Iowa is his home, and all Iowa loves him as it has honored him."

Through her labor of love the "quiet little lady with silvery hair" has made a contribution to the source materials of Iowa history that is of real value; and besides, these eight hundred clippings contain much "local color" for the artist who would use Iowa materials as a basis for literary endeavor. They give us the newspaper English and the everyday speech of the time. They give us sketches that grow in worth as the pioneer becomes more and more of a legendary figure; sketches of the old campaign torch-light procession that "marched round and round the park" and of the three hour "rally" through which the "entire audience remained till

the close"; and sketches, too, of the Civil War veteran campfires and regiment reunions, where old soldiers sang patriotic songs and the bugler sounded again the "mess call" and "taps".

Mrs. Kirkwood's clippings tell us something of the independence of spirit of the Iowa people of fifty years ago; something of their confidence in their ability to do their own thinking; something of their contempt for snobbery and their distrust of the political boss; something of their liking for honest convictions and their scorn of "succotash policies"; something of their sense of the value of money, and their fear of ostentation and extravagance; something of their community pride and Commonwealth allegiance; something of their deep affection and their attachment to precious memories; something of their admiration of practical common sense and the square deal, and of their fine regard for old fashioned goodness shyly covered by brusque speech and manner; something of their homely ways and ideals; and something of their own faith in the worth of the young Commonwealth.

Here in the editorialized news and news laden editorials of the small town "weekly", where dates are often wrong and where many of the "facts" stated are not true, there are reflected with unquestionable accuracy the popular temper and the sentiment of "the times of Kirkwood"—temper and sentiment in which one recognizes the "family disposition" of the Iowa of to-day.

Such is the story of Mrs. Kirkwood's scrap-books — a collection of headless, dateless clippings. It is the story of the "Hero in Homespun" with a roughly sketched background of the young Commonwealth of Iowa. Not only did the "quiet little lady with silvery hair" compile a unique record of the life and times of Samuel J. Kirkwood, but her clippings suggest a wealth of literary possibilities in the materials of Iowa history and give added meaning to the words of Frank Luther Mott: "It requires no very strong faith, and no very robust courage as a prophet, to predict that the day of the Iowa pioneer in literature is only dawning since the Middle West possesses the natural, historical and cultural elements of background which are essential for literature."

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