The PALIMPSEST

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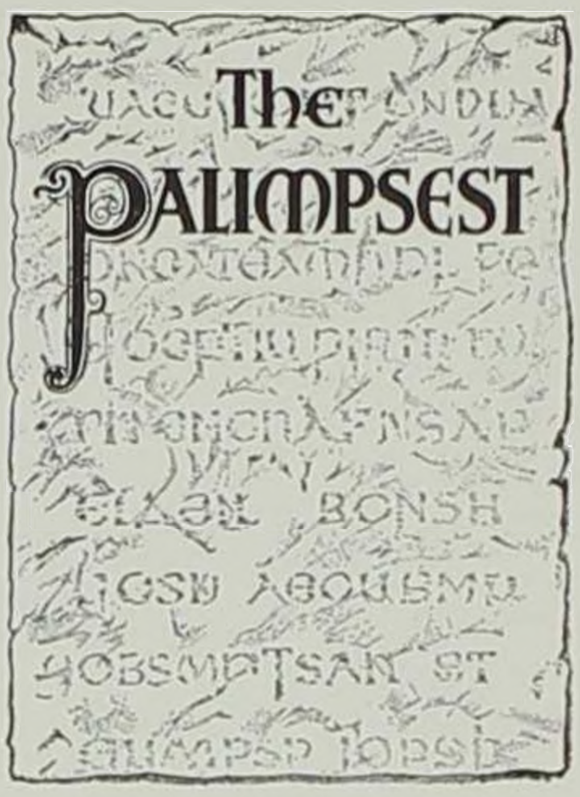

The Meaning of Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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Back — Outside: Reproduction of George Caleb Bingham Paintings.
Top: Stump Speaking.
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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

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Newspapers - - Chroniclers of History

Newspapers are the richest single source of Iowa history. Within the columns of the average Iowa newspaper one can find valuable clues to the political, economic, religious, educational, social, and cultural life of Iowans from the date when the first newspaper was printed at Dubuque in 1836 down to the present.

Births, marriages, and deaths are frequently (although not regularly) recorded by the pioneer editor. The arrival of steamboats and stage-coaches, the coming of the telegraph and railroad, the construction of roads and bridges, the building of churches, schools, manufacturing plants, and homes, the advent of the telephone, the gas light, the fire department, the county fair, all are faithfully chronicled. Circuses and carnivals, theaters and lyceums, spelling bees and sleighriding parties, wolf hunts and fishing parties, these and a host of others clearly reveal the life of the people.

Prior to the Civil War the average well-established 4-page Iowa newspaper devoted about one-

half of its columns to advertising, about one-fourth of its space to filler (short stories, essays, and poems taken from other newspapers and periodicals), and the remaining one-fourth to editorials and national, state, and local news items. The latter varied considerably, depending upon whether or not a political campaign was in progress, or some other great event of national or international significance was clamoring for editorial attention.

While a good deal of this news material found in the typical pioneer newspaper came from straight reporting, some of it was highly colored, particularly when the political pot was brewing. At such times it would be necessary for the historian to view both sides of a newspaper account objectively, whether it was a description of an Iowa farm by "Maggie May" or a rejoinder by some irate farm wife. The same would be equally true in recording the political campaigns of 1860 in Iowa. One would not get a true picture of Samuel Ryan Curtis by reading only Democratic papers. Nor would one form a fair opinion of Chester C. Cole by reading the Republican papers. Somewhere in between these Republican and Democratic accounts one might find a fairly accurate appraisal of these men. Both, history later proves, were destined to become great personalities in Iowa history.

A famous Greek scholar was accustomed to say

that a single newspaper published in the age of Pericles (had that age produced any such phenomenon) would, if handed down to us, be a better index to Athenian life and manners than can now be found in any existing memorials of the Grecian civilization. This remarkable observation was made in the Census of 1860. It is still true today.

Of the 222 newspapers established in Iowa prior to 1860, only 104 remained when the census was taken that year. Partisan politics during the 1850's was an important factor in this high mortality rate. The time which most editors devoted to politics, public printing, and county seat fights diverted their attention from their writing and led them to invite capable local citizens to make contributions. The letters of "Sojourner," "Maggie May," and "Farmer's Wife" illustrate a form of writing which often was more important than the editorials. The two combined, however, are rich sources of Iowa history.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Stumping Iowa in 1860

Iowa has been the battleground for many heated political campaigns since it achieved statehood in 1846. Some of these campaigns have been exciting, and none more so than that of 1860 when Abraham Lincoln won a quadrangular presidential campaign against Douglas, Breckinridge, and Bell.

A distinctive feature of the campaign of 1860 was the vitriolic manner in which newspapers maligned opposing candidates and praised their own favorites. Objectivity was virtually unknown in those early days, the abolitionist crusade having dulled the sense of proportion for most editors and readers. The Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Dred Scott Decision, Bleeding Kansas, and Squatter Sovereignty, these were issues which set neighbor against neighbor and brother against brother.

The Republican party was very young in 1860. It was born in 1854, ran its first presidential candidate in 1856, and won the presidency in 1860. It was intensely nationalistic, denounced secession, frowned on slavery, and opposed its extension. Its platform in 1860 favored a protective tariff, a transcontinental railroad, a homestead law, a na-

tional bank, and more liberal naturalization laws.

The Democrats in general were opposed to these measures. The Baltimore convention that nominated Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois for president pledged the party to stand by the Dred Scott Decision or any future Supreme Court decision that dealt with the rights of property in the various states and territories.

At the state level the Dubuque *Herald* of June 13, 1860, urged the Democratic State Convention to "nominate statesmen" and not "mere politicians" or "second rate men" who commanded neither the "confidence of the party" nor the "respect of the people." Most Democratic papers agreed with the Sioux City *Register* of July 21 in its endorsement of the standard-bearers as well as the platform adopted. "Never was there a better opportunity for redeeming Iowa than at the coming election. The Democracy have undertaken the work with a will and an energy that give favorable indications of success. Let every Democrat gird on the armour, and enter the battle resolved to do his whole duty — and we have no fears for the result."

Although the presidential campaign absorbed most of the attention of the press the heated debates in Iowa between Samuel Ryan Curtis and Chester C. Cole were widely reported. Curtis was the Republican and Cole was his Democratic opponent for Congress from the First District, which

comprised thirty-nine counties, stretching from the Mississippi to the Missouri in southern Iowa. In contrast to the seven debates held between Lincoln and Douglas in Illinois in 1858, Curtis and Cole agreed to fifty-four debates, beginning at Keokuk on August 21 and ending at Pella on October 27. The Curtis-Cole debates of 1860 are an outstanding example of political stump campaigning in Iowa.

For sheer excitement the campaign of 1860 was likened by contemporaries to that of 1840 when William Henry Harrison broke the back of the Jacksonian Democrats in his famous Log Cabin Campaign. The Dubuque *Herald* of May 30 was fearful lest the Republicans repeat the tactics employed by the Whigs in the 1840 "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too" campaign.

> In 1840 every species of humbug and tomfoolery which could be devised was resorted to by the opposition to the Democracy, to get up an excitement and deceive the people. Log cabins and hard cider ruled in all their political gatherings. . . . But we think twenty years have made the people of the United States sensible of the folly of such efforts, and that so far from a repetition exciting any influence on the election, all sensible people will scout the party and the candidate who think such appliances necessary to elect their candidates.

In 1860 large mass meetings were held that were all-day affairs, starting with parades in the morning, speeches in the afternoon, and a torchlight procession at night by the Douglas "Hick-

ories" or the Republican "Wide-Awakes." Floats depicted Lincoln, "The Railsplitter," or praised Douglas, "The Little Giant." Frequently, at joint debates, the two parties vied with each other to see who could get up the highest pole. At the Curtis-Cole debate in Bloomfield, the Republicans were said to have raised a pole 147 feet high, 50 feet taller than the Douglas pole. The Lincoln pole at Ottumwa was said to be 200 feet in height. The claims which both sides made as to the height of some of their poles are open to question. At any rate there is much evidence to support a contemporary report that more speeches were made in 1860 than in all previous political campaigns combined.

Measured in terms of 20th century campaigning one would seek far to find editors who castigated their opponents as viciously as in 1860. The initial debate for the Congressional rivals of the First Iowa District opened in Keokuk on August 21, 1860. A "tolerably large crowd," including quite a number from the country, met in the shade of the Estes House to hear Colonel Samuel Ryan Curtis of Keokuk match wits with his Democratic adversary — Chester C. Cole of Des Moines. The following biased appraisal was made of the two candidates by the *Des Moines Valley Whig* — the Republican paper in Keokuk.

Mr. Cole opened in a speech of an hour. — Mr. Cole has had a month or more to prepare himself for this can-

vass. He has been highly vaunted by the Democratic papers, and something extraordinary was expected from him. Did he meet the public expectation? He has the advantage of a clear, sonorous and emphatic enunciation, and speaks right along without hesitation or repetition. So far, good. But how as to his *matter*? We were surprised, and then on reflection *not* surprised, to find that he had been anticipated by Hornish, Craig and Dean. He stole Republican thunder and tried to turn it against us. He was for the Pacific Railroad, the Homestead bill, the declaration of Independence, the inalienable rights of man, the largest liberty, the right of self-government, and against "the *accursed* institution of slavery," while we Republicans were just the reverse, and in favor of the dissolution of the Union. Such was the material and the drift of his speech, and it is needless to say that, although he did as well, perhaps, as any Bobtail Democrat *can* do, he disappointed public expectation. He produced no effect, but, on the contrary, exposed so many vulnerable points that Col. Curtis easily turned the tables upon him, and demolished him in a very short time.

We doubt if he will persevere very long in telling how Hannibal Hamlin voted against the Homestead bill. If he does not revise that part of his speech, and substitute something better, his case must be desperate indeed.

Col. Curtis spoke for an hour and a half in a most animated and able manner, and elicited frequent and hearty applause. Mr. Cole replied for half an hour, and showed the weakness of his own side by a feeble endeavor to ridicule Col. Curtis' connection with the Des Moines River improvement.

If Mr. Cole does no better, and wins no more laurels in other parts of this district than he has done here, he will make a very poor run! In fact, he would run better by staying at home and not running about at all.

Frequently editors printed the contributions of partisan readers. Thus, a writer to this same Keokuk paper who signed his name "Sojourner" made the following typical report.

> I had the pleasure of hearing Curtis and Cole open the Congressional campaign, on Tuesday. Cole was represented as a great man, — a great orator making the argument and wearing the dignity of a statesman, — and he was expected to demolish his adversary with the first breath of his nostrils. He came; he talked; he went, and his fame went with him. His first speech was fair; his last was the merest specimen of a lawyer's pettifogging. This was nothing new to those who knew him, for at the bar he has always developed the same means of accomplishing his ends. I have frequently heard him address courts and juries, and I never heard him address himself to the great truths involved, but always to the clap-trap and humbug that candid, great men discard.
>
> Col. Curtis made a straightforward, manly speech, full of good sense, and well adapted to enlighten people on the issues of the Presidential struggle.

As the two men stumped through southern Iowa, violently partisan papers, both Democratic and Republican, praised their favorite candidate and bitterly excoriated his opponent. Objectivity was lost sight of in the heat of the forensic contest. On September 1, 1860, the *South-Tier Democrat* of Corydon reported that fully one thousand citizens (including some 50 or 60 ladies) filled the Christian Church to its utmost capacity, leaving numbers standing outside for want of room. According to the *Democrat:*

The discussion was opened by Mr. Curtis in a speech of one hour, which was occupied almost exclusively by making "charges" against the Democratic party, and boasting of the mighty deeds he had done in the Halls of Congress and the plains of Mexico. Mr. Cole then addressed the assembly in a speech of an hour and a half, and taking up the position and assertions of Mr. Curtis *seriatim,* so effectually riddled and demolished the sophistry and special pleadings of his competitor by the record, that we really felt sorry for him. Mr. Cole has fully met the expectations of his friends, and we are satisfied that they will rally to his support and elect him by a heavy majority to represent this District. His speech is said, by many, both Democrats and Republicans, to be the most effective ever delivered in Corydon.

Smarting under the scathing and withering review of his position and policy on the Pacific Railroad Bill, and the knowledge that Mr. Cole had satisfied the thinking portion of the assembly, by proof from the record, of the falsity of his charges, Col. Curtis arose to finish the 30 minutes allotted him. That he was furious and desperate was evident to all in the house, — so much so that he could scarcely speak. The 30 minutes was occupied entirely by defending his course on the railroad bill, and it needed it.

The powerful Democratic *Iowa State Press* of September 5, 1860, was hopeful that Iowa would at last be redeemed from the "fanaticism and fraud" which had enthralled the state since 1856 when the "Juggernaut" wheels of James W. Grimes had defeated the "gallant game-cock State of the North-West" and instituted an almost literal "Reign of Terror." According to the Democratic *State Press:*

The omens are auspicious indeed, for a fair and decisive victory; a victory which shall wipe all stains from the escutcheon of the Hawkeye State: assign to Iowa a front rank in loyalty to the Union; leave Governor Kirkwood as the sole and last incumbent of a State office, and send the gallant Samuels and no less gifted Cole, to represent a sovereignty which has long been the butt of contempt and the victim of *mis*representation upon the floors of the Federal Congress.

At the height of the campaign the opposing parties were resorting to campaign techniques which smack of Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana in our own generation. At Adel, for example, the Wide Awakes and the Invincibles were out to escort the speakers to the stand. At the conclusion of the debate, according to a report to the *Iowa State Register,* the Democratic chairman caused a furor when he presented a vase of artificial flowers to Mr. Cole. But the Republicans were not to be eclipsed.

When he [the Democratic chairman] got through with his artificial performance, a bevy of beautiful girls showered down on the Colonel an avalanche of natural flowers, almost covering his person. He gathered them up and made a graceful acknowledgement of the compliment amid shouts of applause. In the evening torchlight processions and speeches were the order. The Wide Awakes have an excellent officer and did up their work in fine style. — They sang half a dozen songs at Curtis's quarters, assisted by the ladies. Fire-works and fire-balls ended the display of the Wide Awakes. Curtis had the crowd night and day.

The Montezuma *Republican* was delighted

with the outcome of the Curtis-Cole debate in Poweshiek County. According to the editor:

> In him [Curtis] we saw the noble attributes of a man, the intelligence of a Representative and the dignity of a statesman. The gallant Colonel poured down upon the luckless head of his wily competitor such an avalanche of reason, logic and common sense that it was thought he would not attempt a reply. He held the vast audience in breathless attention during the entire hour and a half, except as interrupted by frequent outbursts of thundering applause.

When Congressman Curtis met his challenger at Bedford a host of Taylor County citizens turned out to hear them. In accordance with the rules of speaking there were two chairmen — one elected from each party. J. H. Turner represented the Republicans and D. Dale was Democratic chairman. By this time the joint debate had been widely heralded in the press, and masses of people eagerly thronged the streets of Bedford to hear Cole and Curtis discuss "the true principles and positions of the political parties." The *Taylor County Tribune* of September 6, 1860, declared:

> . . . About 1 o'clock a delegation from Mason Township came into town headed by a wagon drawn by eleven yoke of oxen. On the wagon were two men mauling rails in representation of Abraham Lincoln. We believe Mr. McCloud was the prime mover in this affair, for which he deserves much credit.
>
> The discussion was opened by Col. Curtis who spoke one hour in defence of Republicanism, and proved to the complete satisfaction of every true and reasonable man,

that the principles of the Republican party were in strict conformity with the principles of the founders of our government. He proved conclusively that no party till within the last few years, ever claimed that slavery existed anywhere except where protected by local law; that the slavery question had long since been settled; that in 1852 both parties, Whigs and Democrats, agreed that the question of slavery should no more be agitated — that that should be the "Finality."

He showed clearly that all laws made by the territories of Kansas and Utah should be submitted to Congress for their approval or rejection; and our fore-fathers, foreseeing the evils that was destined to spring from that abominable curse — (Slavery), set bound to its territory in the formation of this government. That our forefathers declared in their wisdom, that neither Slavery nor involuntary servitude should extend north west of the line of the Ohio River. He showed that the Republicans were in favor of the admission of Kansas as a State, with the Constitution she presented, but was kept out by the Democrats because it did not have a slavery Constitution, and compelled to return to its territorial existence. — He showed that the Republicans were in favor of a Homestead bill, such as would most enhance the interest of our country, and best meet the appropriation [approbation?] of the people. This bill was defeated by a Democratic President, and now lies dormant in the Senate, not being able to pass it over his head. His speech was a masterly argument . . .

Col. Curtis is well known throughout the U. S., as being one of the most industrious workers in Congress. He has long been laboring for the passage of a Pacific Railroad bill, locating a road from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean, and we confidently believe he will complete that measure during his next term of Congress, to which we will elect him this fall.

Mr. Cole then followed in a speech of an hour and a half; and in justice to him we will say that he makes a *very good Democratic* speech. He speaks easy, but has injured his voice during the discussions. He labored hard to present his party in a favorable position, but his labors have all been lost, for he indulged so much in misrepresentations and inconsistencies that it gave a very unfavorable aspect to the whole speech. He interested the audience with some very pathetic anecdotes, but among which he entirely forgot his "Cow and Calf story," which we would liked very much to have heard. We attempted to keep an account of his falsifications, but they came so fast, and of such an astonishing nature that we were entirely thrown off the track and compelled to listen in astonishment to the little inflated biped. He said that they, the Democrats, were not in favor of protecting slavery. This, we believe was as much astonishing to the masses of the Democrats, as the Republicans. Does not the Fugitive Slave Law protect Slavery? Does not the Dred Scott Decision protect and extend slavery? Does not the Squatter Sovereignty extend, and if extend, protect slavery? Do you (Democrats) not claim protection by the Constitution of the United States, claiming slaves to be property, and as such, entitled to the same protection as other property? This, we think, was not wise, was not consistent in the speaker, although as much so perhaps as many other assertions, and as the Democratic party.

His positions were so absurd that they need no other proof than their own statements. He had the audacity to say that Mr. Curtis, in his hour speech, said nothing but *Negro;* that every Homestead bill that was defeated was by Republicans, &c., &c. He really thinks that the people can govern themselves much better than they can be governed even by *him.* Well, we won't dispute that; but we mean to let the people know that they are not going to

have him for a governor or official director, but one who has already been tried — who has always held up the banner of Freedom, and fired up the engine of the Pacific Railroad, and assisted in putting forward the car of "Free Homes for Free Men" — CURTIS. Not content with arguing principles, he had to make an assault upon the political character of Mr. Curtis, but did not succeed in his attempt. Oh, yes! he is in favor of a Pacific Railroad, too; but Iowa has built her own roads, and if California wants a Railroad, from the States, let her build her own. That is the kind of a Pacific Railroad he wants, and will labor for if elected.

The discussion was concluded by Mr. Curtis who spoke half an hour, perfectly annihilating the "Cow and Calf Cole." — He not only proved Cole's assertions to be incorrect and unjust, but exposed to the audience some of the corruptions of the administration in appropriating money for election purposes.

We have not time nor space to enter into a more lengthy report of the speeches, as it is now time to go to press, but if any man will refer to the Covode Investigation he can see how the money has been expended for electioneering purposes.

The discussion was interspersed with some choice music from the Band and Republican Glee Club; and in justice to Mr. Cole, we will state that he payed strict attention to the Glee Club, and looked as though he would like to join it, or at least a *part* of it.

Now Democrats, we appeal to your judgement — lay aside your party prejudices, and decide for which of these two men you will vote this fall. If you are freemen, vote for the champion of Freedom; but if you desire Slavery, why then you have got the man to express and carry out your principles and desires. — COLE.

Two weeks later the editor of the Council Bluffs

Nonpareil had a brief chat with W. S. Graff of Glenwood, who had just returned from a canvass of the southern tier of Iowa counties. Since both the *Nonpareil* and Mr. Graff were ardent Republicans, it is not surprising that "flattering news" should be reported on the prospects of their candidate.

The Colonel is doing much better on the stump than his warmest admirers predicted, while Cole is invariably disappointing public expectation. Cole, like Dodge [Augustus C. Dodge], has been sadly overrated by injudicious friends; he has been magnified into a second Webster and another Calhoun; while his efforts on the stump indelibly stamp him a weak pettifogger and makeshift politician. He makes the most extraordinary efforts to sustain the "character" of the Democratic managers assigned to him, but his "efforts" invariably result to his own chagrin, and to the discomfiture of the "unwashed." His political wiring in and wiring out, presents such a strong contrast to the straightforward, plain and manly bearing of Col. Curtis, that the joint canvass, which, in the opinion of sagacious and ardent Douglasites, was totally to rout and use up Col. Curtis, is everywhere resulting in his favor. Men of sense are not wont to mistake glibness of tongue and chicane for statesmanship, as Mr. Cole will learn to his sorrow on the 6th of November next. — Hurrah for Col. Curtis, the able champion of Western interests.

Election day arrived and voters of the First District cast their ballots. Both sides claimed the victory, but as the days passed and the reports trickled in the victory of the Republicans gradually was assured. At Keokuk, where Curtis and

Cole had started their debate, the *Des Moines Valley Whig* of November 19, 1860, was particularly jubilant. According to the editor:

> The Locofoco press of this district opened the canvass on the brag game; they magnified and glorified Cole as an eloquent orator, a powerful champion of Democracy, and a veritable giant; they besmeared him with fulsome eulogy, and bespattered Col. Curtis with foul abuse; they represented in all their papers at each succeeding discussion that Cole had "skinned," "crushed," and "annihilated" Curtis. As the result of the discussion in almost every county it was boasted that Cole had gained scores and hundreds of votes and was bound to be elected by an overwhelming majority.
>
> We said in the outset that this terrible bull of Bashan would turn out a harmless calf in the end, and so it has proved. The "skinners" are flayed, the "crushers" are "squelched," and Col. Curtis has a majority five times as large as that of 1858.

What does history say of Samuel Ryan Curtis and Chester C. Cole who sought to represent the First Iowa District in Congress and who (depending upon the political point of view) were either paragons of virtue or unmitigated scoundrels?

Samuel Ryan Curtis — the Republican and winner — was born in Ohio in 1807, graduated from West Point in 1831, served with distinction in the Mexican War, and in 1847 came to Iowa. Curtis settled at Keokuk where he maintained a law office and practiced engineering. He was

chief engineer of the Des Moines River improvement and also served as a civil engineer in railroad construction in Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa. In 1856 he was elected to Congress from the First District and was seeking his third term when he campaigned against Cole in 1860. Curtis resigned in 1861 and became the first colonel of the Second Iowa Infantry. He was the first Major-General from Iowa, the only one who commanded an independent army, and one of the ablest and most brilliant officers on the Union side. Curtis died suddenly of a heart attack at Council Bluffs in 1866. He was buried at Keokuk where an equestrian statue was raised to honor him.

Chester C. Cole, the Democratic candidate and loser, was born in New York State in 1824. He graduated from Union College and the Harvard law school. After practicing law in Kentucky, Cole came to Iowa in 1857 and became one of the most successful Des Moines lawyers. He was an unsuccessful Democratic candidate for the State Supreme Court in 1859 and was defeated by Curtis for Congress in 1860. After the attack on Fort Sumter, Cole was one of the first prominent Iowa Democrats to declare for the Union, and left the party with other notable Democrats when the diehards refused to follow suit. In 1864 Republican Governor Stone appointed Cole to the Supreme Court and he was twice elected by the people for

six-year terms, resigning in 1876. Cole became Chief Justice of the Iowa Supreme Court in 1870. He was active in establishing a law school at Des Moines in 1865 which afterwards was moved to Iowa City to become the Law School of the State University of Iowa. One of the ablest lawyers in Iowa, Cole was for several years editor of the *Western Jurist*. He was also editor of a new edition of Iowa Law Reports. Judge Cole was one of the most active promoters of the Soldiers' Orphans Home. He died at Des Moines on October 4, 1913.

The high honors won by Samuel Ryan Curtis and Chester C. Cole prove how unwarranted were the attacks made upon them in the campaign of 1860.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Farming in 1866

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Pioneer newspapers are rich in agricultural as well as political history. On May 4, 1866, "Maggie May" wrote a letter captioned "Happy Farmers" to the *Delaware County* (Manchester) *Union*. It presented such a negative view on farming that a reply captioned "Farmers' Comforts" was promptly penned by a "Farmer's Wife" and printed in the *Union* of June 1, 1866.]

HAPPY FARMERS

I was tired of the old, lonely house opposite my east window — annoyed by the noise of the builders on the south lots, and disgusted at the proximity of the barn on the north side; so I concluded to leave care and trouble and rest a little while with Brother Carter, who is a farmer, and consequently (according to the papers) one of the happiest of mortals.

It took but two days to prepare for my journey; and I forgot all about the noisy carpenters and dismal house, as I, in imagination, feasted on Farmer Carter's "fat things," and wandered like a thistle, into every pleasant nook and corner in his neighborhood.

Wouldn't I have the freshest eggs and the sweetest butter for breakfast? And then didn't the farmers always have lambs, and pigs, and turkeys by the dozen, and chickens innumerable?

And who ever read of a farmer's wife that

didn't have the very whitest of bread, the sourest of pickles, and the best of fruit? There was the garden sauce, too. Oh! I should have a delightful visit, I knew. I started; I arrived at sister Mary's gate; I wished to go into the house, but how could I? First was a broken, patched-up gate, hanging over a mudpuddle; then four yards of five inch mud; next a pile of wood, beyond which I saw the backs of three little pigs, that were seeking delicious titbits in the bottomless mire.

I stood still in perplexity. I wondered if sister Mary's folks had wings, or whether they walked on stilts. Presently, a little boy came round the corner of the house, picked up a long board and came toward me, saying, "I guess the mud's pretty deep there," and down came the board, spattering my new cloak with mud and water. "There's a bridge for you now," said my champion, as he opened the gate, and bravely walked over the board to prove it trustworthy. I followed with fear and trembling, and safely landed on the chip-pile, from which I surveyed the next mudpuddle and my guide, wondering what would come next. "This is the way," he said, and I followed, stepping (at the risk of breaking my neck) on sticks, stones, and bits of board, until we arrived at the back part of the house. We entered a room filled with rubbish and grain of various kinds, through which we stumbled into the next apartment. This I soon found to be parlor and kitchen all together.

Sister Mary greeted me warmly, and I know she was glad to see me. She presented half a dozen boys and girls to be kissed by aunt Maggie, and I went through the operation bravely, although I could not help wishing that they had washed their faces first.

Sister soon said it was time to get supper, and sent Tommy to get some wood, and Harry to look for eggs to make a custard, "For," said she, "I sent every one I had to town this morning." The tea-kettle was set on the stove, and a little three-years-old baby stuck his finger down the spout. Mary went into the rubbish-room and returned with a plate of fat salt pork, (I had a barrel full at home,) which she put to freshen, remarking that "Joseph had been talking of killing a pig for a week or two but had been so busy that he hadn't got at it yet."

Harry returned with one egg, saying that he "couldn't find any more, and guessed Smith's dog had been sucking the eggs, for he saw him running up the road."

Supper was ready, and we sat down to a plate of fried pork, a saucer of flat, flabby pickles, and a few little radishes that were "remarkably strong for their size."

Sister Mary said she was intending to bake some pies and cakes yesterday, but the baby was so cross she couldn't. I told her I was tired of such things, and had come into the country for greens. She laughed and said her "garden didn't amount

to much, for the bugs and worms took everything as fast as it came up."

In the morning Mary asked Joseph to kill a chicken for dinner, but he forgot it, and went to his plowing. After dinner, we went to the garden to gather some currants for tea, but the birds had been there before us, so we got no more than a teacupful. I asked Mary why she didn't trim the bushes and set out more. "Why, I wanted to this spring, but I couldn't get time." *Next spring,* however, she was going to see if she couldn't work in the garden a little more. We pulled some stringy-looking pieplant stems to cook with our currants; instituted a search among some tall weeds for some young onions, and returned triumphantly to find Susy screaming with terror, because the baby had swallowed a button, and Lizzy in a fit of sulks, because we had not taken her ladyship with us.

Brother Carter soon came in, and said the cattle had broken down the fence and destroyed ever so much corn, and he couldn't kill the pig that evening, for he should have to mend the fence. Then he told me how his best cow, that gave milk all the year round, had been bitten by a rattlesnake, and died in spite of doctoring; how five of his best lambs gave up the ghost, in contempt of care; how his wheat has musted and only brought half price; how his oats were so heavy that they all fell down and were half wasted, and that his best horse had

been sick, so that he could not draw lumber to build his granary, and so had to keep his grain in the kitchen. Then, after he had gone to his work, Mary told me what a hard time they had to get their farm paid for. They had worked hard, and lived on the poorest fare, to lay by enough to meet the payments, and she had sold butter and eggs, cheese, chickens and turkeys. Then some winters the chickens would freeze to death, and sometimes the turkeys wouldn't hatch. She had set out ever so much shrubbery, but it was always destroyed in the winter, and —— but that is enough. I no longer wondered that the farming community furnished more inmates for our insane asylums than any other class, but was astonished to find that my brother and sister were not candidates for one of those retreats. But then they were so hopeful. Their stock was increasing, the children would soon be some help, the farm was paid for, and now they were "going to fix up a little round the house." I returned home a sadder, but I hope a wiser woman. I found the carpenter's noise as pleasant as the squealing of pigs, an offensive barnyard as endurable as a dirty door-yard, and the clatter of loose boards and shutter no worse than the mending of wagons and plows.

MAGGIE MAY

FARMERS' COMFORTS

Mr. Editor: Having seen a communication from Maggie May in your paper depicting the happiness of farmers' wives (as she calls it) in glowing colors, I think it the duty of some one of that class to say a word in favor of themselves and their calling. I have no desire to change my position, and would say to all young ladies, they may do far worse than marry a farmer. I *know* they do not all have mud-puddles before their doors, in fact I do not know of one that has, and Maggie May might sit down anywhere in my yard and not soil her nice dress or new cloak. Neither do we go over the chips or wood to get into the house. We have nice white bread and graham bread, pickles, and as yellow butter as one can ask, a very good garden, lots of currants, rhubarb, strawberries, and live in hopes to have all kinds of fruit in time. I have plenty of eggs, and chickens to kill when I want them, and among the farmers' families of my acquaintance they are all as comfortable, and more so in some respects. Most of them are getting started now, and in time they will have larger houses and ride in their carriages.

I have any amount of flowers, and it yields me many hours' enjoyment taking care of them; and my husband is always ready and willing to assist me in any way that I ask him, and to spare a little money now and then to buy a choice flower or shrub for me. I have another source of pleasure on

a farm I could not have in town — the live stock, from the tiny chickens to the great horse. I love to go out after sunset and smooth the sleek sides of the cows, and speak to them; and have the sheep come and put up their pretty faces for a pat and pleasant word; and watch the cunning little lambs frolic, which the finest town lady could not help laughing at and enjoying. Take it all in all, there are many things worse in life than living on a farm. I do not think because one lives in the country they need not know anything. I enjoy reading as much as any one could, and nice dressing also. Town people are, many of them, like a young man in the *city* of Manchester, who made the remark about one of our neighbors in his hearing, "Oh, he don't know anything — he lives in the country." Now, my private opinion is, *that* gentleman knows more than that young man ever will know.

FARMER'S WIFE

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[The names of contributors of articles to THE PALIMPSEST are printed in SMALL CAPITALS. Places not otherwise identified are in Iowa.]