

Comment by the Editor

THE HERITAGE OF THE PAST

The alpine mountaineer, intent upon gaining the summit of a lofty peak, will nevertheless halt ever and anon in his upward course and, leaning upon his staff, will look back over the trail he has followed. How altered the prospect appears from above! The pine-clad ravine far below that seemed so dark and forbidding has become a soft, rich valley of sunshine. And yonder icy lake, which an hour ago mirrored in vivid splendor the enticing heights beyond, has been transformed into an azure gem in an emerald setting.

It is well that a people should sometimes pause and take thought of their bearings. In the tumult of a busy world there is danger lest the promise of the future prove so alluring that all account of the past be forgotten. Perspective is essential in any walk of life. He who does not occasionally look back into his yesterdays will lose his sense of progress, for he will not know that his viewpoint has changed. And the people of any Commonwealth who have no time to contemplate the course of events that have shaped their destiny rob themselves of their heritage of experience and the inspiration of former achievement.

Nor are the vital elements of history always found in great events. It is a curious fact that the true story of commonplace matters is often elusive. Everyone knows that there were Indians in Iowa, but how many can tell who they were or what were their habits. Was Iowa named for a tribe of those Indians? How shall the name of the State be pronounced? And what are the mottoes that reveal the ideals of the Hawkeyes? Such information is important in the life of a people, for the knowledge of such things, if widely diffused, is a basis of community consciousness and Commonwealth loyalty. Who shall deny that the first Iowa folk-song expresses an instinct for unity?

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