

Comment by the Editor

THE TERRITORIAL CENTENNIAL

The year 1838 was important in the political history of Iowa. For three hundred years destiny had been pointing toward the Great Valley in the heart of America. Spaniards had come seeking gold and precious jewels; Frenchmen with dreams of empire had taken possession of the land that extended beyond the boundaries of their explorations; British soldiers had fought for control of the fur trade and won a continent, only to lose it to their American cousins. In a single generation the frontier of settlement moved across the old Northwest Territory and beyond the Mississippi. Everywhere the pioneers took with them the political institutions of free people. As population increased, new Territories were created and States were formed. A century has passed since the Territory of Iowa was established.

Though politics made 1838 significant in Iowa history, the birth of the Territory was not the only event that illuminated the manner and purpose of life among the early settlers. Up the Mississippi and across the prairies of Illinois came hundreds of pioneers — farmers, merchants, lawyers, doc-

tors, preachers, miners, surveyors, carpenters, blacksmiths, and speculators — all contributing to the character of frontier society and affecting the trend of public affairs. Men and women with high hopes and superb courage were busy taming the wilderness of forest and prairie, clearing the ground and laying the foundation for a better culture than their own. Many of the noblest achievements of later years had their origin in the vision and labor of those indomitable people.

In recognition of the contributions of the founders of the Territory to the political, social, industrial, and cultural welfare of Iowa, every number of *THE PALIMPSEST* in 1938 will be devoted to the history of the commonwealth a hundred years ago. Politics will inevitably play the leading rôle in the drama of 1838, but other interests and occupations will have prominent parts. Month by month the character and scenes of a century ago will occupy the stage of printed pages, to the end that the ancestors of Iowa may live again in the minds and hearts of the present generation.

J. E. B.