

THE PALIMPSEST

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New Year's Day in Iowa

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light,
The year is dying in the night,
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow,
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

ALFRED TENNYSON

The first month of the year has but one holiday of note and that one owes its existence to the calendar-makers. New Year's Day is the birthday of chronicled time.

It is the oldest of all the holidays observed in Iowa, surpassing Christmas itself in antiquity. A year can be considered to begin on any date. The custom of celebrating the first day of the year by some religious observance appears to have prevailed among most ancient nations. Long before the Christian era the Jews, the Egyptians, the Chinese, and the Romans, although differing as

to the time from which they reckoned the beginning of the year, all regarded New Year's Day as one of special interest.

The Roman year originally began with March, but when Julius Caesar reformed the calendar he made the year begin on January 1st, a day held sacred to the two-faced Janus, who was supposed to look backward upon the old and forward into the new year, with a careful regard for both. The Romans exchanged gifts and greetings, offered sacrifices to Janus, and tried to regulate their conduct so as to be assured of happy days during the ensuing year.

Errors of the Julian calendar were corrected by Pope Gregory in 1582 and his calendar was adopted by nearly all Christian countries throughout the world. The Gregorian calendar moved the first New Year's Day under the new system ten days forward, to correct the error in time that had accumulated over sixteen centuries. England did not adopt the Gregorian calendar until 1752, 170 years after it was established. By that time there was a difference of eleven days. The Russians and Greeks, however, continued to use the old style, or Julian calendar, a much longer time. Soviet Russia adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1918. The Jews observe their New Year between September 5th and October 5th, the fifth of September being the first of ten penitential days ending with the Day of Atonement.

It was long the custom of the President of the United States to hold a reception for the general public on New Year's Day. George Washington held open house the first New Year following his inauguration and continued to do so during his eight years in office. A Pennsylvania Senator penned the following in his diary on January 1, 1791: "Made the President the compliments of the season; had a hearty shake of the hand. I was asked to partake of the punch and cakes, but declined. I sat down and we had some chat. But the diplomatic gentry and foreigners coming in, I embraced the first vacancy to make my bow and wish him a good morning." William Howard Taft is said to have shaken hands with about six thousand White House guests on New Year's Day in 1910. The White House reception was suspended by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on January 1, 1934, because it was difficult for him to remain standing in the receiving line.

The celebration of New Year's Day was quite generally observed by the first settlers in the Black Hawk Purchase. The yellowed pages of our earliest Territorial newspapers reveal the first day of the year as one of rest, entertainment, religious observance, and festival recreation. New Year's calls and New Year's balls, church services, oyster suppers, and boisterous celebrations, the holiday songs of carollers and joyous sleigh-riding parties, feasting and general carousing, all formed

a part of the holiday scene. Editors were disposed to look back in retrospect on the Old Year with mingled feelings while peering hopefully into the future. While extending the season's greetings to their patrons they usually did not forget to call attention to the fact that many were in arrears on their subscriptions or advertising.

New Year's Calls

One time-honored New Year's custom was the New Year's call. It was quite common for the ladies of a pioneer community to remain at home on the first day of the year and keep open house for the men of the community. The gentlemen made short calls and took slight refreshments at each stop. Usually the hours between 10:00 A.M. and 4 P.M. were considered proper for such calls.

A Sioux City editor was delighted with the "pleasant and agreeable" manner in which the ladies received their gentlemen callers on New Year's Day in 1859. "The tables spread before us," he declared, "were dressed out with as much profusion and taste as can be found in New York or Boston, and the ladies that presided over them have won hosts of friends. A happy New Year to all of them!" The editor was pleased to note that despite the unalloyed enjoyment New Year's Day in 1859 passed with little drunkenness.

The ladies who served as New Year's Day hostesses were sometimes rewarded with more than a mere "Thank You" in the local newspaper.

The "rougher sex" of Sioux City clubbed together and kept "open house" for the ladies on the Monday following New Year's Day, 1859. To learn first hand how the ladies were entertained a local editor visited the "sumptuous apartment" decorated for the occasion "without regard to expense." He was met at the door by a porter in "spotless linen and shirt collar of huge dimensions" and ushered into a room where the bachelors were seated "demurely smoking their pipes." The table center was graced by a large cabbage labelled "fruit cake" from which slices were cut with a cross-cut saw. Suspended over the table from the ceiling was a large bologna sausage which swung lazily back and forth like a huge pendulum. A jelly cake proved to be a cold buckwheat cake. Turnips were served from a silver fruit dish as "Bungo apples" and raw onions were freely distributed with butter. Amid a numerous array of wine bottles, the editor discovered one containing ink which was highly recommended as "Ethiopian wine from the Black Sea." Pipes and tobacco also entered into the entertainment and for dessert a bottle labelled "Castor Oil" was produced.

The homes of Dr. William R. Smith and Charles K. Smith were among those open to the young men of Sioux City. Doubtless such hospitality afforded many newcomers a means of widening their circle of friends and business associates. Public officials and office seekers, as well as

business and professional men, might gain many friends on such occasions.

It was fashionable to serve a favorite punch to New Year's callers — a custom introduced by the Dutch into New York. This custom gradually spread to other parts of the country — and many excesses developed as gay young blades hired carriages and dashed from one home to another for the sole purpose of hovering over the free punch. Because of such abuses the New Year's call was finally abandoned or at least limited to an exchange of visits by intimate friends.

The reaction against serving drinks at these open houses was already gaining headway in Iowa before the Civil War. The influence of the temperance crusade was manifested in Davenport as early as 1857. "A petition is in circulation for signatures," the *Davenport Gazette* declared on December 24th, "the signers pledging themselves not to keep intoxicating beverages of any kind on their tables next New Year's Day. We heartily endorse this movement, and hope the rule will be so general that the exceptions may be considered as anything but complimentary to the guests of the day."

The first of January, 1858, dawned "clear and pleasant" with the Christmas mud sufficiently compact to admit of easy pedestrianism. As a consequence there was an increased number of New Year's calls and few people were without visitors

whether or not they kept open house. To avoid the embarrassment of unexpected visitors the Davenport editor called attention to a "new idea" in Moline whereby those intending to keep open house published a card to that effect in the morning paper. Most Davenport stores were closed, presents "flew thick and fast, and, with the exception of the fire in the morning, no accident occurred to mar the harmony of the day."

The temperance pledge mentioned by the Davenport editorial was apparently not without effect. The editor commented on the presence of a drunken man, well-dressed, apparently respectable and intelligent, on Farnam Street and added: "He had made too many 'calls' — at the saloons — the only place, we believe, where liquor was 'set out' on that day."

Similar reactions against the too free quaffing of New Year's drinks could be noted in other towns. In 1867 an Iowa City editor expressed little regret at the passing of the New Year's call in that town.

The custom of New Year's Calls seems to have gone very much into disuse with our people. It is well it is so if the former attending custom of treating to wine or stronger drinks were to remain with it. Many a young man has been lured from the path of sobriety by the New Year's glass, tendered by the hand of beauty. Such a tender compels many a young man to yield. We hope that custom at least will cease to be observed.

Dances and Balls

Dances and grand balls were common New Year's Eve entertainments. In 1853 a "grand ball" was held at Iowa City on New Year's Eve which was attended by a "goodly proportion" of the legislators of the State of Iowa. A correspondent of the *Davenport Gazette* declared the lawmakers were "carried away with the loveliness of the Iowa City belles, and their wonderful power over the muscles of their toes and heels, and lower extremities (vulgarly called legs) which they so happily exhibited in the mazy dance," that they forgot to make their appearance in their respective places in the House on New Year's morning. It happened that the Senate had succeeded in adjourning from Friday preceding New Year's Day until the following Monday but the House had obstinately defeated the same motion — determining to work on the first of January.

Many of the members failed to put in their appearance on New Year's Day and the Sergeant-at-arms was sent out to round them up. When the Speaker of the House sought to find the reason for their absence none of them mentioned the New Year's Ball. Their excuses in the main included — a bad night's rest; the servant girls were out of tune and they had failed to secure their breakfast in time; the porter had taken away their boots and failed to return with them; or they had simply overslept. Since many of the men were in such a

condition that legislative work was impossible the House agreed by common consent to adjourn until the following day.

In 1857 citizens of McGregor were informed as early as November 25th of a Grand Masque Ball to be held on New Year's Eve under the sponsorship of the German residents.

The arrangements are all made, a splendid Band of Eight Musicians are engaged, and despite the Hard Times, we expect an exhibition of Fancy, Good nature, and Good feeling that will put the city in a good humor till next spring. Come now, Choose the characters you wish to personate, get your "rig", give the wink to your lady love and as the teacher said in the whistling school "prepare to pucker."

And "pucker" they did! A large portion of the citizens of McGregor turned out on the eventful night attired in the costumes of an Hungarian general, a Swiss countryman and a Swiss lieutenant, a Prussian Hussar and a Prussian peasant, a Spanish knight, a Polish Jew, an Austrian lieutenant, a Turkish officer, a count of the sixteenth century. J. Walter was attired as Ring Master *Hans Snigglefritz* and P. Walter represented the Clown *Jacob Schneider*. The ladies were costumed in the styles of central and southern Europe — belles from Austria, Bohemia, France, Germany, Turkey, the Tyrol, Spain, and Switzerland caused many an onlooker to think he had been transported back into one of those "old Baronial castles" he had read about in his youth.

The easy integration of native Americans and foreigners on the Iowa frontier was demonstrated at this ball. According to A. P. Richardson, the McGregor editor:

The Germans are not partial to Cotillions and "our folks" are partial to scarcely anything else. Whether the dancing was well or ill done we cannot judge; those who decide such points assure us that the Music was enrapturing and that the Polkas, Waltzes, Schottische, Gallopades, &c., &c., were faultless in execution. We managed to get a most liberal share of human comfort out of the proceedings, and if loud expressions of applause in the Hall or equally significant expressions of gratification throughout the town may be regarded, it will be safe to say that McGregor, on New Year's Eve, was as happy as it possibly could be had the Millenium itself arrived. The party was large, the dresses were got up in excellent taste and many of them quite expensive. The whole appearance wore a European character that rendered it extremely interesting to such of the company as had not before witnessed any representation of the kind. . . . We must not omit to state that a German retired actor named Beck was present, and that at the request of the audience he repeated in excellent style some most eloquent passages from Kotzebue's play of "The Stranger."

There were, of course, many "side shows" in McGregor that night.

Nectar in quantities sufficient to befuddle all the gods that Olympus ever saw; in bowls too, of such modern, unique, and at the same time necessary construction as to put to blush all the goblets of antiquity. Songs, anacreontic and homeric, comic and africanic, funereal and trium-

phant; Wit — with wings brightened by the spray of sparkling Catawba, bedizzened with the effervescing jets of the best of all *shams*, PAGNE, or burnished with the more solid extract of antique bourbon — flowed in mellow unrestraint from the labial orifices of the happy company. It seemed as though the worshippers of the wise Minerva, the tuneful Apollo, the quick-winged Mercury and the “jolly god of grapes” had all agreed upon a mass meeting to celebrate the death of the old, and the birth of the New Year.

Toasts were drunk with remarkable unanimity, songs were sung with enthusiasm if not in harmony, as McGregor sought to forget the panic year and welcome in 1858.

While McGregor was reveling in general merriment, a more somber note was struck at Dubuque where the *Express and Herald* of January 3, 1858, expressed concern over a riot between Germans and Irish on New Year's Eve. It seems that the Germans were holding a ball at the Western Brewery Hall when several Irishmen put in an appearance and proceeded to make themselves “pretty free” with the dance. In the quarrels that followed, Thomas Gainor was killed and his brother Philip mortally wounded by gun shot. Two other Irishmen were severely injured by “glass bottles” or other sharp missiles. Several Germans were arrested for murder and the rioters promptly brought into court.

The Irish invaders were described by one editor as “peaceable” but when an Irish prosecuting at-

torney exhibited "undue partiality" for his countrymen he was quickly censured.

The Germans are a peaceful people and the Irish are notoriously fond of a little excitement even though it may promise a broken head or two, or some other equally pleasant result. The Gainors and their noisy companions had no business at the ball, and if we were a jury-man we would be slow to convict any man who was repelling an attack upon his castle. This assumption on the part of a mob "to break up" what they cannot participate in, to come prowling round your house with tin horns and bells, &c., &c., is practiced too much in our country, and the sooner it is stopped — no matter if there is a rioter killed occasionally — the better will it be for decent people and for blackguards also.

Dubuque could, however, celebrate New Year's without a riot — as was evidenced by the grand masquerade at Turners' Hall on the evening of December 31, 1859. "Early in the evening," declared the *Dubuque Herald* of January 11, 1860, "there was a gathering together of the odds and ends of all creation. In crowds flocked in devils, angels, queens, slaves, Zouaves, Mexicans, Niggers, ladies, gentlemen, soldiers, priests, monks, et cetera, together with a 'working majority' of nondescript characters, who bore not the remotest resemblance to anything in the heavens above or the earth beneath. There was a glorious jam — a mash of hoops, a treading of corns, a charge of elbows, a Babel of tongues and an odor of lager, positively unique and overpowering. There was

'fun alive' till daylight — a rich blossoming of wall-flowers, rare tetes-a-tetes in sly corners, dizzy whirlings, and twistings, and intertwinings, by the motley crowd, glorious oysters and toothful quails by Walter, sour Rhein Wein at '10 cents a schoppen' at the bar, interminable gallops and clumsy quadrilles — a rush, crowd, jam, confusion, uproar, babbling, to which the confusion of Babel was a Quaker Meeting in full blast."

The smallest communities enjoyed their New Year's celebrations and were frequently assisted by residents from the larger towns. In 1858 citizens for miles about helped celebrate the opening of Barr's Hotel at Monona. Large numbers from McGregor assisted the new landlord in the "splendid affair." "The Ball at Monona must have been a protracted one," a McGregor editor noted, "as three of our nice young men N. F. and W. started there on Thursday evening and they did not get back till Sunday!"

Church Services

A more solemn aspect to the observance of the New Year is recorded in the numerous church services. Few days offer a better opportunity for preaching and moralizing. Clergymen generally looked backward dubiously into the past and forward optimistically into the future. Perhaps no preacher has jolted his congregation quite as much as did that McGregor minister who, as 1935 drew to a close, placed the following notice on his

church bulletin board: "HAPPY NEW YEAR: *Where will you be 100 years from now?*" Iowa newspapers and radios were quick to flash the greeting throughout the State — to family gatherings at home and to those thousands who disported raucously at the theaters, dance halls, road houses, and night clubs.

Pioneer Sunday schools frequently had special New Year's programs. A Dubuque sojourner at Iowa Falls was impressed with the model manner in which the Methodist and Congregational sabbath schools held a joint festival at Colburn's Hall on New Year's Day in 1859. Appropriate decorations and banners caught the eye of "T. J." as he entered the hall. A table that fairly groaned under the burden of "substantials and delicacies" was not overlooked. Appropriate choir music, happy festival songs, and the distribution of gifts to the children, and two "short but pertinent" addresses closed a program that gave "new impetus" to the "noble and self-denying labors of the Sabbath School" and was "worthy of the imitation of all, upon similar occasions."

The colored folks of Anamosa held a New Year's Jubilee on January 1, 1873. It began with a parade, headed by the Clinton Martial Band, from the depot through the principal streets to the old city hall where the celebration was held. The afternoon program consisted of two sermons and singing by the colored Sabbath school. Sup-

per was served from five to seven o'clock. In the evening Alexander Clark (colored) of Muscatine gave an address while the Heuston family entertained with several songs.

Preachers were frequently greeted with a surprise party on New Year's Eve. Abundant food was spread out for all who attended; sometimes a fine suit of clothes or a substantial purse added to the joy of some hard-pressed clergyman. At Dubuque in 1860 a surprise party for the Rev. C. Billings Smith proved to be one of the most prominent social events of the season. "Early in the evening his house was forcibly taken possession of by a crowd numbering from 30 to 300, which completely jammed every apartment of the parsonage. Crinoline was omnipotent — it blockaded the stairway, expanded in the halls, clouded the kitchen, overspread the parlors, wedged the passages, was everywhere grand, rotundant, expansive. One or two pleasant episodes varied the general pleasantries of the gathering and at a reasonable hour crinoline and its opposite departed, pleased with the gracious reception and the success of the undertaking."

Alms Giving

Among the favorite New Year's events were the numerous oyster suppers held by churches, lodges, and various other groups. On December 31, 1864, an oyster dinner was held at the Oska-loosa City Hall, the proceeds of which were to

be used in behalf of the families whose main support had been lost in the Civil War. The dinner was "largely patronized" and "heartily enjoyed" by all. A "Card of Thanks" was inserted in the *Oskaloosa Herald* by the wives and widows of soldiers for all who had exerted themselves by work or contribution in making the oyster dinner a success.

Des Moines had a unique "association of ghosts" who chose New Year's Day as a fitting time to render aid to the poor and needy.

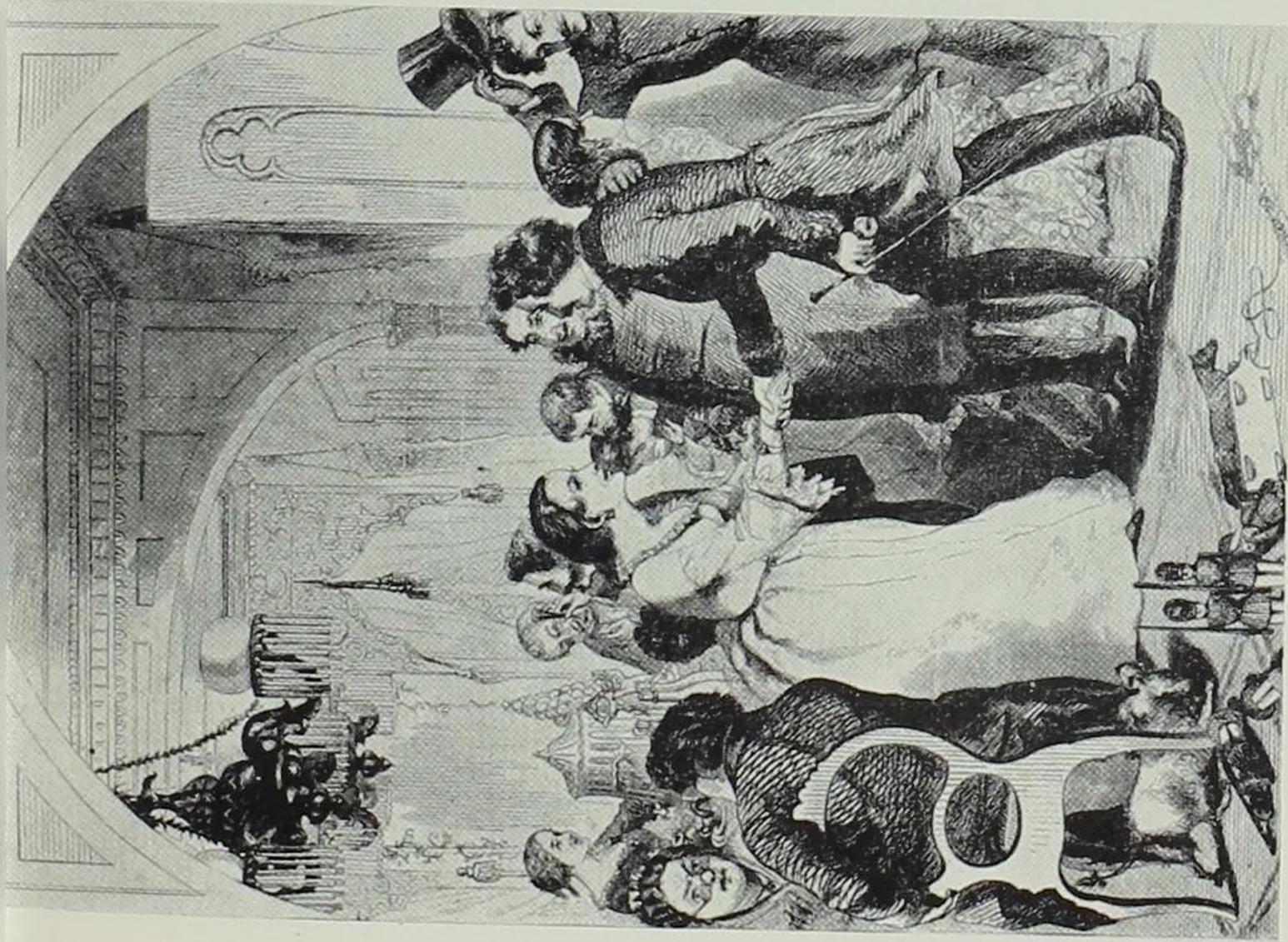
They come out at midnight on the first of the new year, in ghostly dress, and this they have done for several years. Their business is to supply the poor and needy with food and clothing and all is done in so mysterious a manner that no one knows who the nocturnal visitants are. On last New Year's morning at least a thousand dollars worth were found on the door steps of the poor in various quarters of the city and a hundred dollars was deposited with Mrs. West, the President of the aid society, the unknown ghosts filing into her parlors and their leader placing the parcel in her hand, but not uttering a word.

Sleighbing Parties

Sleigh-riding parties were in order on New Year's Day whenever the weather permitted. In 1848 a Davenport editor expressed delight with the snowfall of December which averaged about twenty inches in depth. The sleighbing, he thought, was never better than that enjoyed by Davenporters during the Christmas-New Year



From Harper's Weekly



New Year's Day Visiting in New York



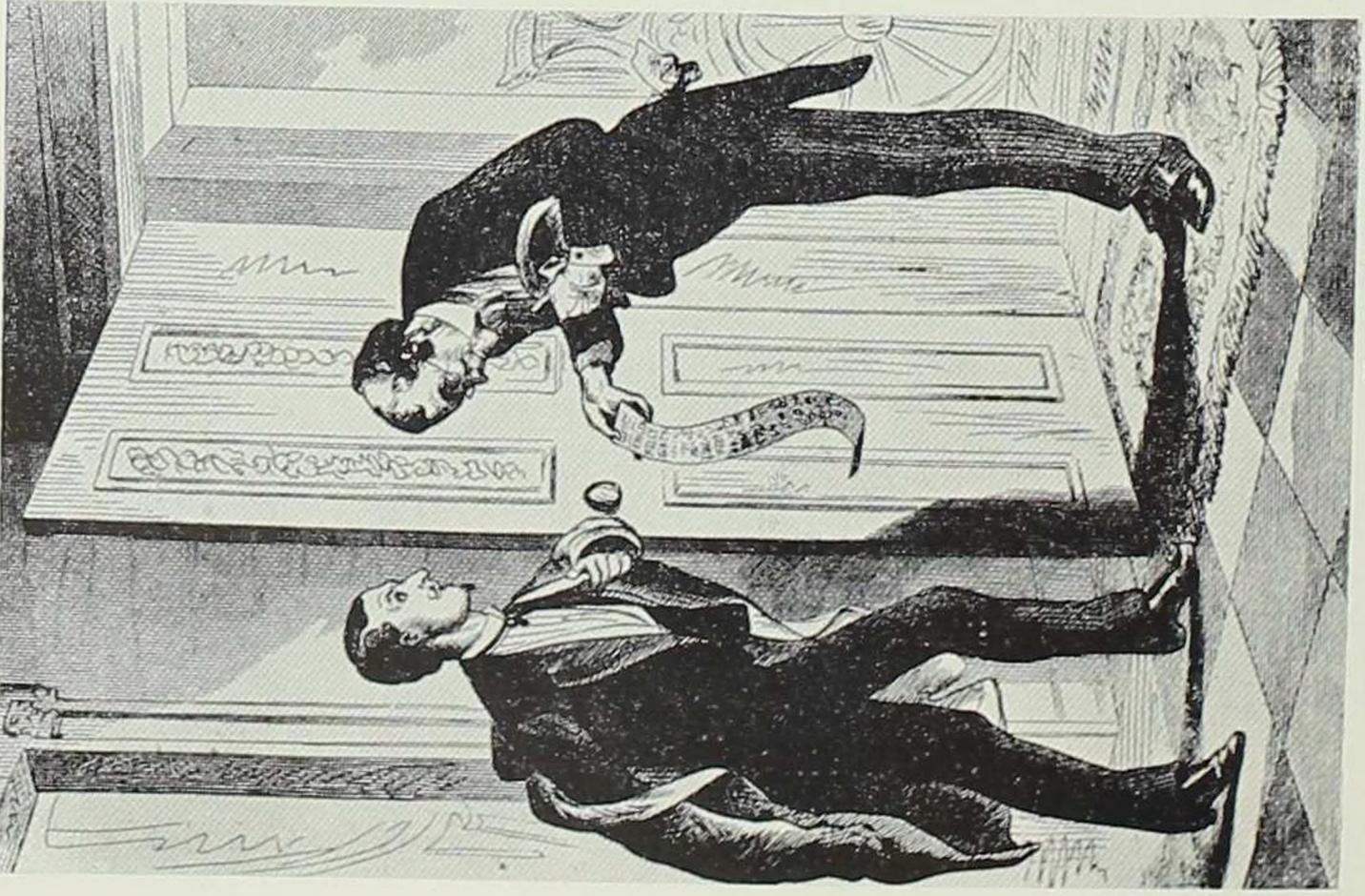
From Godey's Lady's Book

New Year's Day in 1865



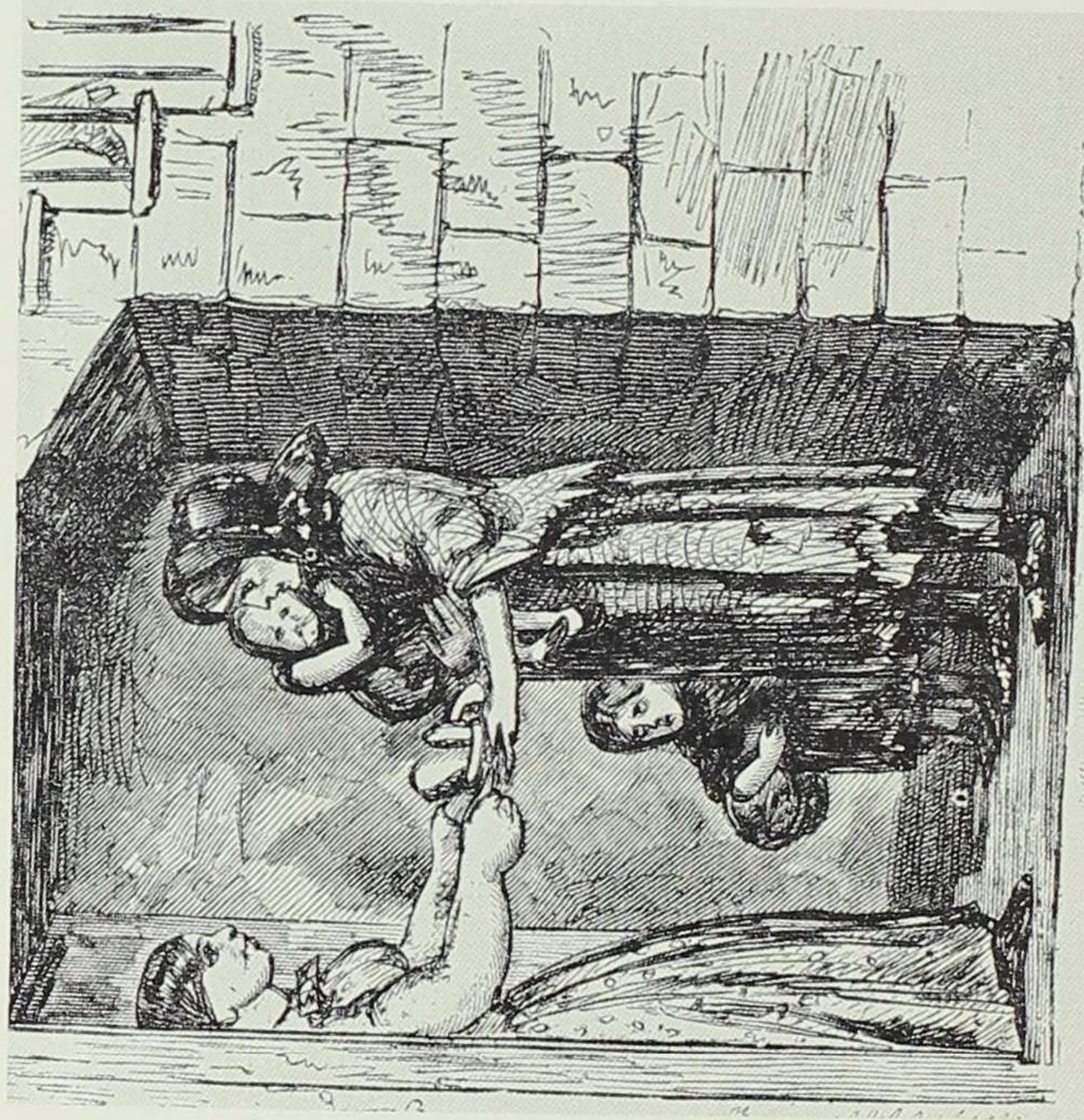
From *Godey's Lady's Book*

New Year's Day in 1872



From Harper's Weekly

A New Year's Call



TO THE AREA.

From Harper's Weekly

Alms for the Poor

season of 1848-1849 and did much "to make amends for the deficiency" of the previous four or five years. That same season, a Burlington citizen declared that sleigh bells were jingling merrily to the "utter destruction of all the horse flesh that can be pressed into the service."

A Sioux City editor reported delightful weather and excellent sleighing in 1861, turning that town's streets into the "liveliest" thoroughfares the editor had seen for a long time. That same year the Dubuque "Governors Greys" appeared on Main Street at ten o'clock, New Year's morning, in two large sleighs each drawn by four horses. "The first vehicle contained the Germania Band, while the second and larger one held some thirty members of the company. They made quite an imposing appearance as they went down the street, with colors flying and with strains of inspiring music."

Editorials

A study of the New Year's editorials published during the past century would provide a comprehensive picture of the history of Iowa and the nation. Measured in terms of population growth, and of agricultural, financial, and industrial expansion, editors had much to be thankful for, although the general tone of their comment was not infrequently spiced with boastful claims and frontier optimism. Particular pride was taken in the many educational institutions springing up

throughout the State. Partisan politics flared up in many a New Year's editorial, particularly during the abolitionist crusade, the Civil War, and the Reconstruction period. In addition, wars and rumors of war, panics, plagues, pestilence, floods and droughts, as well as keen interest in the international scene were usually recorded in the New Year's editorial.

The season's greetings also afforded editors an opportunity to remind readers and advertisers that an auspicious time had arrived for the settling of unpaid debts. "We offer the compliments of the season to our kind patrons," declared a Burlington editor as the year 1837 drew to a close. "A happy, thrice happy new year to them all, and may they live to enjoy many more such, and the last always the happiest. . . . The New Year is the time to take a retrospective view of the past, and if errors have been committed, the time to adopt a new course, guarding against the evils which have fallen upon you during the past. It is a period of no small interest to us, and one at which we shall adopt new rules that may interest others." The editor thereupon called on all subscribers and advertisers to pay their subscriptions and square their accounts.

In 1852 the *Davenport Gazette*, while wishing all its readers a Happy New Year, editorialized on the significance of the New Year greeting to all ages of men. The "prattling child" lived in

the "passing hour" and had no idea of the significance of the term. The "romping boy" upset the chair as he burst into the room with his greeting — thoughtless, bent on fun, hopeful of receiving a present, and entirely oblivious to such cankerous human afflictions as famines, plagues, pestilence, and oppression. The youth entering with the dignity of manhood, was adjured to be moderate, and ever on the guard against the evils that surrounded him. The middle-aged man came into the room with his firm and self-confident step, his smiling face "banishing the wrinkles that the stern realities of the world" had placed there. His family has been made comfortable through his labors and his children awaken hopes for future greatness. "Finally, comes the aged man with his HAPPY NEW YEAR, to receive the kisses of his grandchildren. Kind old man, he exists the monument of a well-spent life — the grave has no terrors to him — it is the door of entrance into the mansion of his Father — into that blessed above upon which his hopes have long been stayed."

In 1860 the *Dubuque Herald* offered the customary New Year's salutations to its readers. "This day," the editor pointed out, "is generally observed as a kind of holiday or festival-day, and as it happens on Sunday, to-morrow (Monday) will be observed for making the usual calls and enjoying the usual festivities." After pointing out that no paper would be issued over the holidays

the editor wrote a special farewell to the parting year:

GOODBYE. — To-day closes up the year 1859 — it is his dying day. Well, goodbye old fellow! We all had considerable fun with you, and a few tears. You've dug the earth from beneath the feet of many loved ones, and they have disappeared forever. You've opened the portals of love for the ingress of many a child-life, have cemented some new bonds, sundered others, expanded crinoline, spun earth one year nearer the end, hung John Brown, defeated Mahony, and performed other operations mean, beneficial, and otherwise. Farewell! we'll attend your wake, and stand not sadly by your Bier. (if its lager) Peace to the eternal rest to which you betake yourself — may your successor leave us all fatter, richer, happier, kinder and better. So mote it be!

New Year's Day provided an excellent opportunity for editors to cast vitriolic barbs at men of opposite political views. The Dubuque *Herald*, the most powerful Democratic organ in Iowa, bitterly opposed the Civil War. The editor had not shed a tear at the passing of John Brown. After four long and bloody years his attitude had not changed. The year 1865, he wrote, has been "crowded with glory and shame, the glory of hard-won victory, the shame of conquest. In it magnanimity has struggled with vengeance, and each has had its trophies, the former in the generous forgiveness of enemies, the latter in the brutal putting to death of conquered foemen and prisoners. It has been signalized by the defeat and

dispersal of rebel armies seeking a disruption of the Union, and by the attempt of the conquering party to accomplish what they have affected to fight against. With it depart the grand opportunities of men to become statesmen and patriots, and as it gives place to a better year, so they must give place to better men."

In sharp contrast to this Copperhead editorial, the editor of the Oskaloosa *Herald* was inclined to make his New Year's greetings the vehicle of a prayer of thanksgiving that the American Union had been preserved. The buoyant youthfulness of the Iowa frontier and its ability to recover from the physical as well as the spiritual ravages of Civil War may be seen in his final wish — the speedy arrival of the Iron Horse at Oskaloosa. His editorial read in part as follows:

With this number we bid our kind friends and patrons adieu for 1865. Ere the *Herald* reaches you again, the wheel of Time will have completed another revolution, and 1866 will be with us. The year now slowly dying, has been fraught with events of great interest and moment to all. Since its advent, we have learned that Republican government was not a failure; that the American people were able to govern themselves, and we have demonstrated to the world the fact that

"*The land of the free, and the home of the brave,*" was not a mist the first adverse wind of fortune should disperse, but a structure built upon a solid foundation, to which the downtrodden and oppressed of all lands might look for sympathy and support. — The glad tidings of

Peace have been proclaimed throughout the land, and millions of hearts made to rejoice. It witnessed the death of our beloved Chief Magistrate slain by an assassin's hand. For four long years had he stood at the helm of the Ship of State, and guided it safely through every storm and peril, only to yield up his life for the cause, when the breakers were passed and still water reached. Ties have been severed; and new responsibilities assumed. Many who were present one year ago have passed to "that bourne from whence no traveler returns"; many who were then absent upon the tented field have returned victorious to their homes. — In the "dim and silent future," when the snows of many winters shall have changed the young and blithesome to mature and sedate, all will look back with reverence and pleasure to the year when FREEDOM and RIGHT were proclaimed more powerful than Anarchy and Oppression. Kind friends we wish you a HAPPY NEW YEAR. May '66, looming up in the future, bring in its train as many pleasant memories as '65, receding in the past, has left us, and we sincerely hope and believe that ere another year shall pass over our heads, the whistle of the locomotive on the Iowa Central Railroad will be heard, as, with a long train attached, it comes thundering into our town.

Sometimes Iowa editors gave special prominence to letters written by readers who caught something of the New Year's spirit. The year 1873 was a memorable one in both Iowa and American history as the following paragraph from a resident of New Hartford to the Cedar Falls *Gazette* reveals: "The Old Year is about to take his place among the ex-years. Congress, if they ever get back from the holidays, will probably re-

tire him with a pension, and a land grant of every alternate section from here to the moon. As Josh Billings says: 'This is terrible if true.' But we wonder if the coming year will be as prolific of 'Credit Mobiliers,' 'Salary Grabs,' 'Panics,' and 'Misappropriations,' as was '73.'

A resident of Jackson Township in Jones County was inclined to view 1874 through rosier glasses. The first day was warmed by a genial sun, he pointed out, farm prices were the best in some years, dances, oyster suppers, and social enjoyment had prevailed throughout the holidays. The mistakes of 1873 could be "turned to good account" by those willing to learn. The holidays had not passed without their "revising influences" on Jones County residents. "Roast turkey, pork, mince, and other favorite pies, Yorkshire puddings and such other condiments — digestible or otherwise — each have graced the tables in accordance with the ability and skill of the getter up. Old associations and friendships have been renewed, new acquaintances formed, and it is to be hoped that many of the jarring differences which may have existed between neighbors have been buried with the dead year."

Probably no New Year caused more comment than that of 1900 and 1901. The great theme of editorial speculation at that time was which year should be considered as the start of the 20th century. Did it begin on January 1 of 1900 or 1901?

There were many arguments, but few decisions. In a special cartoon the Cedar Rapids *Gazette* also indicated that in 2001 men would still argue over whether the twenty-first century had just begun or was already a year old. As a matter of fact the argument could have been settled by consulting English and American reference works which agree that the first century began on January 1 of the year one, so the twentieth century began with January 1, 1901, and the twenty-first century will begin on January 1, 2001. But there will, no doubt, be arguments.

Many editorials tended to look back over the century to show what mighty strides had been taken since the days of Jefferson and Hamilton. In the field of invention alone the Cedar Rapids *Gazette* showed that such commonplace things as steamships and steam railroads, electric vehicles and street cars, telegraphs, and telephones, photographs and phonographs, electric lights and kerosene lamps, illuminating gas and cooking ranges, steam presses and steam threshers, typewriters, sewing machines, public water supply in cities, sidewalks and sewers, were all unknown when John Adams was President in 1800. Local prospects were not forgotten. A special editorial recounted the good things of 1900 and looked forward to what the expenditures by the railways and the cereal company would do for Cedar Rapids in 1901.

Carriers' Addresses

The annual "Carrier's Address" is another interesting sidelight on New Year's Day celebrations in Iowa. On January 6, 1838, the *Iowa News* printed a 24-stanza "Carrier's Address" which touched on everything from the scientific marvels of the time to international affairs, unpaid subscriptions, and the shortage of women on the frontier. The following verses, selected at random, are typical:

Kind Patrons all I bring to you
Again my annual rhyme,
And promise to be very *short*,
In such a "*pressing*" time.

Science is irradiating
The human intellect,
And BRANDRETH'S Pills are curing all
Of every age and sect.

And steam is pushing all "ahead,"
But Oh! "Magnetic power!"
Will drive us on a thousand miles
In less than half an hour.

Whilst *Chemistry* is blowing up
The blunders of the past,
Phrenology peeps through the brain —
The rogues are caught at last!!

With every kingdom of the earth,
In peace we still remain.
But wars are raging in the realms
Of Canada and Spain.

And may the Patriots of the north
 Succeed — like *us* be free.
 May they, as did Columbia's sons,
 Cry, "Death or Liberty."

Subscribers all, A B C D,
 Pay up now for the "News,"
 For January has set in,
 And I lack wood and shoes.

DuBuque can boast of many *beaux*
 But girls are rather "*few*" —
 Come, Yankee damsels, "right ahead,"
 To get — to get ——. Adieu.

The first "Carriers' Addresses" were printed in the paper, usually in the first issue in January. Later a separate sheet or stiff cardboard placard contained the "Address." Finally the address was discarded for a calendar, which the carrier brought around each New Year. The boy usually paid the newspaper a nickel for the calendar, carried a supply around on New Year's Day, and looked for anything from a dime to a dollar in return. The writer delivered these New Year's calendars to the hundred-odd subscribers on his *Dubuque Telegraph-Herald* route for five consecutive years beginning in 1911. After paying for his calendars he netted about \$12 on an average — a good return for a route which had no wealthy people and which counted only one fifty-cent tip.

The "printer's devil" of pioneer days no doubt served as the carrier for an entire town. Editors frequently wrote a warm word of support for their

"devil" as the New Year came around. "Remember," said a Davenport editor, "he tramps through the mud and rain of the summer, and the snow, and piercing winds of winter, to deposit at your doors at the earliest moment the news fresh from the press. Remember him substantially." Readers were urged to get "halves and quarters" ready as his only fee was the pittance he received on New Year's morning.

In 1865 the Oskaloosa *Herald* called attention to the annual New Year's morning visit of the "Carrier Boy" with his address. "John has been faithful in the discharge of his duty during the past year, and through sunshine, mud and rain he has been at his post. As the proceeds of the Address are *entirely* his own, we speak for him an unusually large supply of QUARTERS."

On December 27, 1866, the *Herald* noted that "John" would make his usual friendly call on New Year's Day and hoped that those who felt themselves "under obligations to the Commodore" would discharge that debt in "postal currency or — specie." John was still carrying the Oskaloosa *Herald* as 1868 loomed in view. After pointing out that John had been guilty of very few omissions, the editor declared: "Fifty-two times within the year he has made his Thursday morning call on our city subscribers, through sunshine and shadow, hail, rain, snow and wind, for which he will receive — just what you may think it worth

to bring the HERALD to your doors for so long a time. That you are generous and appreciative of honest labor we have good reason to know. John believes he will receive his reward. He will not be mistaken."

Early editors recognized that the printer's devil was poorly paid. "Our carrier, poor devil!" declared the editor of the *Iowa Standard* on January 8, 1841, "has been compelled to forego the pleasures, as well as the profits arising from the distribution of what is called the 'CARRIER'S ADDRESS.' In the early part of last week, our carrier started in pursuit of a 'poet,' one who could reduce his ideas of the doings of the past, of the present and his anticipations of the future, into jingles. One would be inclined to think that 'poets' were numerous in this land, and that there would be no difficulty in ferreting out one; but to our great surprise! on New Year's morning our devil came into the office with woe depicted upon his countenance, and informed us, that in all his rambles he had not been able to find but one 'poet,' and that he had been 'retained' by the Locofoco devil. It was now the time that the address should be issued: and what was to be done? — we knew not! At length we concluded that we would write his address ourselves, and went hastily to work at it." The editor was just halfway through writing the address when the devil of the *Bloomington Herald* arrived with his address. One glance at

the labors of a real poet caused the mortified editor of the *Iowa Standard* to consign his own efforts to the flames.

It was not until 1844 that the *Iowa Standard* printed a "CARRIER'S ADDRESS." The poetic outburst of "The Devil" that year filled the first column and a half on page one. It began thus:

Good morning friends and patrons all,
I've come to give a friendly call,
And let you know you're all alive,
And like to live, and still to thrive:
That forty-four has come indeed,
In spite of Miller and his creed.
So wipe your eyes, and dry your tears,
And throw away your silly fears;
And cast about you thro' the winter,
What means you have to pay the PRINTER.

It normally fell upon the newspaper editor to compose the "Carrier's Address" and needless to say the task sometimes went unexecuted. Perhaps as an excuse for his non-performance of this sacred duty a McGregor editor declared in 1857: "We have not seen a New Year's Address for many years that was not a rythmitical [*sic*] humbug, and as our *devil* has been having a whole week to play, he dont want to collect dimes from a good-natured public to continue the frolic." Two weeks later, however, the "Carrier Boy" of the McGregor paper thanked his brothers of the *Prairie du Chien Leader* and the *Galena Courier*

for "neatly printed copies" of their New Year Addresses.

On December 28, 1846, Iowa was admitted into the Union. It is natural that the Carrier's Address should consider such names as Henry Clay and James K. Polk, and such issues as the slavery question, the Mexican War, and the Oregon boundary dispute. On January 6, 1847, the *Iowa Standard* stressed the admission of Iowa into the Union and its relation to slavery.

From eastern hills, and western plains,
 Where'er true Freedom's genius reigns,
 The rising voice of Truth is heard,
 And millions by its might are stirr'd.
 It speaks a people's sense of wrong,
 To all the reckless Hireling throng,
 Who vilely have betrayed their trust,
 And sank our fair fame in the dust.
 Young IOWA hath caught the tone
 With added vigor of her own;
 And the first acts of our fair State,
 Will but abridge their narrow date,
 Who thought to bind her to the car
 Of "*Free-Trade*", *Slavery*, and *War*;
 Who thought their arrogant behest
 Would cause the mighty, free *North-West*,
 To cast its influence away,
 And sink in powerless decay,
 That *southern* wealth and pride might rise,
 And *Slavery* darken distant skies!

The Panic of 1857, the arrival of the telegraph, the triumph of the Republican Party through the

election of Abraham Lincoln, the compilation of the *Revised Code of 1860*, these were but a few of the events alluded to in the "Carrier's Greeting" from the Council Bluffs *Nonpareil* as the year 1860 came to a close and the nation faced the grim realities of Civil War. The concluding stanzas read:

In Railroads we've slowly progressed;
 Our weather and crops have been fine;
 In health we've been happily blest;
 And in *politics* how we still shine!
 As a Nation we've treated and feted
 The yellow-hued sons of Japan —
 How much we have gained or been cheated,
 The wise ones may tell — if they can.
 To a young English Prince we've devoted
 Full many a smile and an hour;
 And, last but not least, we have voted,
 And called a true Statesman to power!
 Now a small Southern State of "Fire-eaters,"
 Because they can't have their own way,
 Are classing themselves as "Seceders,"
 And will break up the Union, they say.

After pointing out that the *Nonpareil* would be delivered to readers each Saturday with the latest news, the "Address" pertinently concluded:

'Tis the Carrier will bring it,
 He who offers you these rhymes;
 Wishing you here, a Happy New Year!
 And craving your "QUARTERS" and "DIMES!"

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN