The Palimpsest

JUNE 1930

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH
Superintendent

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials 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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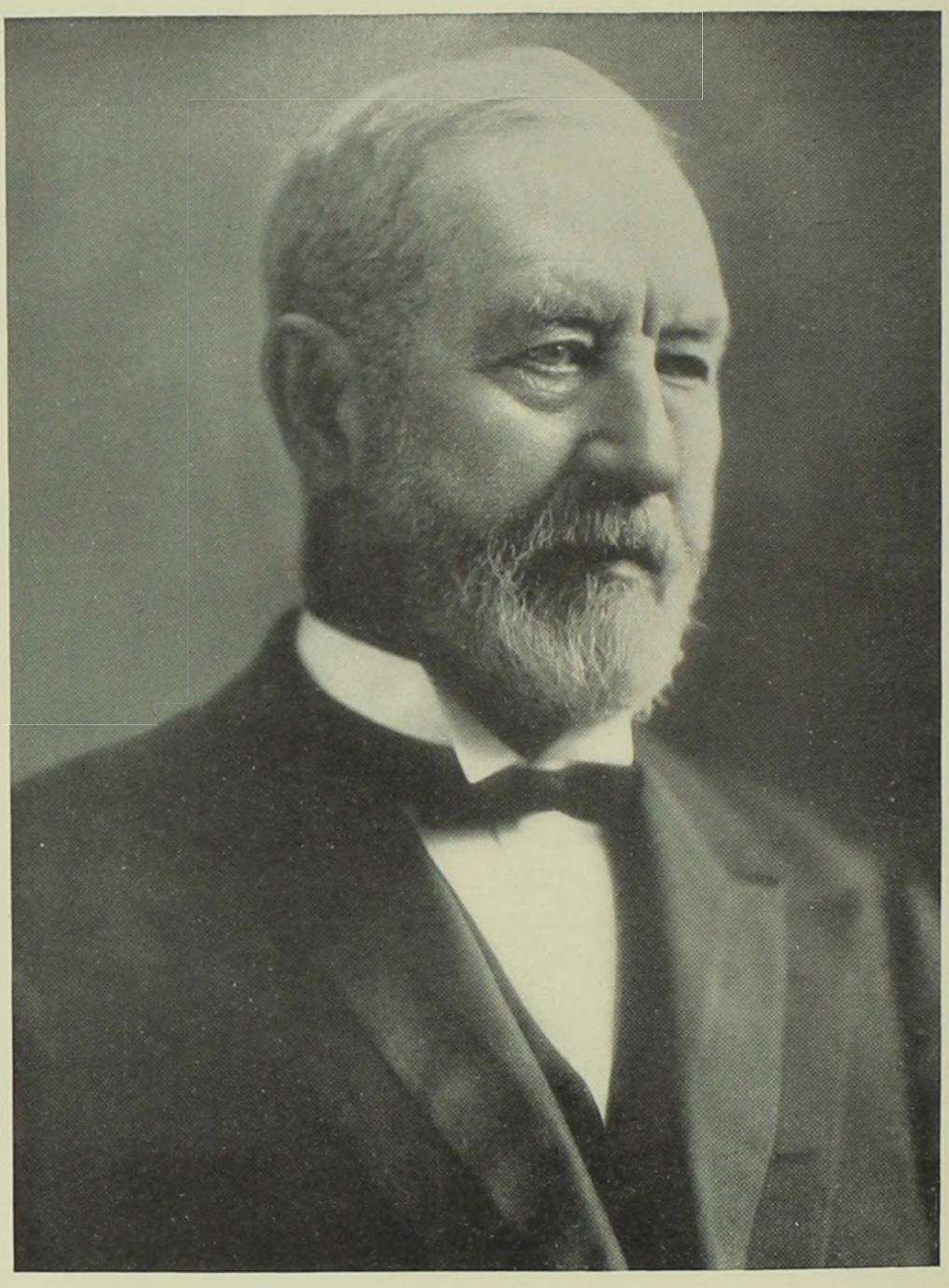


HENRY WALLACE

THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

VOL. XI ISSUED IN JUNE 1930 NO. 6

The Iowa Homestead

There were two rather unusual things about the first of Iowa's three most important farm journals: it had its origin in Wisconsin; and its founder was one of the few pioneer experimenter-editors who conducted their own little experiment stations and wrote up the results of their investigations. Much that Mark Miller wrote for his farm journal was the result of research in his own back yard.

Miller was born on a New Hampshire farm. There he followed the usual farm routine until he was eighteen years old, when he became interested in the printing trade. Before moving to Wisconsin he had published papers in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. In 1855 at Racine, Mark Miller, bookseller, publisher, and experimental agriculturalist, established the farm journal which had the unwieldy title of the *Wisconsin and Iowa Farmer and Northwestern Cultivator*, forerunner of *The Iowa Homestead*,

which for more than seventy years was a leading influence in Iowa and midwestern education.

After a short time at Racine, Miller decided that Madison would be a better place for publication and moved the plant and paper there, from whence it was issued in monthly pamphlet form. Later, in 1856, realizing that there was a heavy tide of emigration from eastern States, Miller decided that Iowa was a better field and moved his plant again, this time to Dubuque where he re-christened the paper the *Northwestern Farmer and Horticultural Journal.* The paper was issued weekly from Dubuque until 1861. As Iowa seemed to be the heart of the new western agricultural region Miller decided that the State capital was the logical location for the publication of his farm journal. Late in 1861 he moved his equipment overland by horse and wagon to Des Moines and established an office in the basement of a building on the site of the old Kirkwood Hotel.

In January, 1862, appeared the first issue of *The Iowa Homestead and Weekly Northwestern Farmer.* That Miller intended the paper to be devoted to Iowa is indicated by an editorial comment in which he said: "It is generally conceded that Iowa needs and will have a paper devoted to farming and horticultural interests within her borders, and that shall be adapted to her interests."

During the first year of its founding the *Homestead* urged better grades of wheat, eradication of

Canada thistles, drainage, and irrigation. As early as January, 1863, the editor was emphasizing and upholding agricultural schools. In an article, "Agricultural Schools and Agricultural Journals", he emphasized the need and value of agricultural journals and agricultural colleges in elevating agriculture to the same plane that was occupied by the legal, divine, and medical professions. "There are no institutions more important to an agricultural people", the article stated, "than agricultural schools and colleges."

In 1863 the paper passed into the hands of H. W. Pettitt, as business manager, but Miller continued as agricultural and horticultural editor. When Pettitt died in the summer of 1864 the heirs sold a half interest to Frank Palmer, who had recently sold the *Iowa State Register*. In 1869 Palmer sold his interest to Dr. Sprague and William Duane Wilson, who became editor and publisher. J. M. Snyder, a son-in-law of Wilson, was also admitted to the firm.

During this year the paper published articles on steam plowing and purebred live stock, and urged farmers to form mutual organizations for improvement. General Wilson devoted his energy to organizing the Grangers throughout the State, a movement which was then in full swing.

Sprague, Wilson, and Snyder kept the paper until May, 1872, when they sold out to Governor B. F. Gue, who invested $5000 for the purchase of a new press and other necessary equipment and material.

In December of that year, Governor Gue, then one of the leading Republicans in Iowa, was appointed pension agent, and resold the paper to Dr. Sprague and General Wilson.

For a time the paper was published under the name, *The Western Farm Journal*, shriveling meanwhile until it was only a small leaflet seven by nine inches in size. In 1880 Governor Gue re-purchased the journal and plant for $1500, the paper then having a circulation of not more than four hundred copies. Having decided to devote his life to publishing, Gue improved and enlarged the plant. He revived the former title of "Homestead". As an inducement for subscriptions he prepared a "Farmers Manual", which he issued as a premium. This manual contained a varied selection of agricultural information. Indicative of the vigor with which Governor Gue revived the paper were the five thousand new subscribers who were added within a year. Three years after he had regained control of the property, Gue estimated its value at $25,000.

Changes in ownership and management during the next few years tended to reverse the fortunes of the journal. In 1883, J. H. Duffus, then publisher of the *Daily Iowa Capital*, bought the *Homestead* and chose as editor-in-chief, Henry Wallace, a man who was to become one of Iowa's most colorful and influential agricultural journalists. A short time before, when B. F. Gue was editor, Wallace relates, he was invited to the home of C. F. Clarkson, publisher

of the *Iowa State Register,* where an Agricultural Editors' Association was formed, and plans were made for the formation of the Farmer's Protective Association, which he says successfully routed the barbed wire trust from Iowa.

"Uncle Henry" Wallace had been a United Presbyterian minister for twenty-five years, but broken health forced him to give up his chosen profession. After he had regained his health the old preaching instinct reasserted itself, but this time it was to preach the gospel of better agriculture, first in the Winterset *Madisonian* at the request of its editor, later in his own paper, the Winterset *Chronicle.*

Wallace was appointed editor of the *Homestead* without being consulted. Duffus, the new publisher, wrote Wallace: "I have bought all the stock of the *Homestead* and have elected you editor. Send on your copy." Wallace, supposing that his editorship was only a temporary matter, sent in what he thought was suitable editorial matter for the *Homestead.* After two or three weeks he decided to go to Des Moines to find out whether or not the appointment was temporary. Here Duffus and Wallace agreed on a salary of five hundred dollars a year. Under Wallace's editorship the paper flourished. Duffus, thus encouraged with the success of one enterprise, went deeply into debt to buy the Des Moines *Capital,* which turned out to be such a bad investment that he finally had to turn over half of his *Homestead* stock, and later sold the paper.

It was in the winter of 1884–1885 that J. L. Brown, then Auditor of State, invited James M. Pierce to come to Des Moines and look over the *Homestead* plant with a prospect of buying. The account of his father's assumption of control of the *Homestead* is given by Dante M. Pierce, who eventually succeeded his father as publisher of the *Homestead*. "At that time my father was owner and publisher of three country newspapers in southern Iowa and northern Missouri. . . . These three papers were the Hopkins (Missouri) *Journal*, the Taylor County *Republican*, of Bedford, Iowa, and the Osceola (Iowa) *Sentinel*.

"Despite the condition in which he found the property, my father became imbued with the belief that the *Homestead* could be revived and could be made of invaluable service to Iowa farmers. Accordingly, he invested every penny he had in the property, using his credit to the limit also." Brown was associated with Pierce in the enterprise.

Pierce had asked Wallace if he would continue his services to the paper, and the remuneration was discussed. "Uncle Henry" Wallace relates that before stating his salary requirements he asked Pierce how much he had paid for the *Homestead*. When Pierce replied, "twenty thousand dollars", Wallace said, "That's eight or ten thousand too much. You can't afford to pay very much salary under those circumstances; so I will continue to do the editing at $10 a week; but in case you make it a success I shall

want the privilege of buying stock when the time comes."

Dante Pierce tells the story of his father's hard struggle to revive the *Homestead* after the purchase in 1885. "The property was greatly run down. The paper had been conducted by various men, in various places, under various names; yet through it all, in all these vicissitudes, ran the warp and woof of service to the farmers of Iowa and adjoining states.

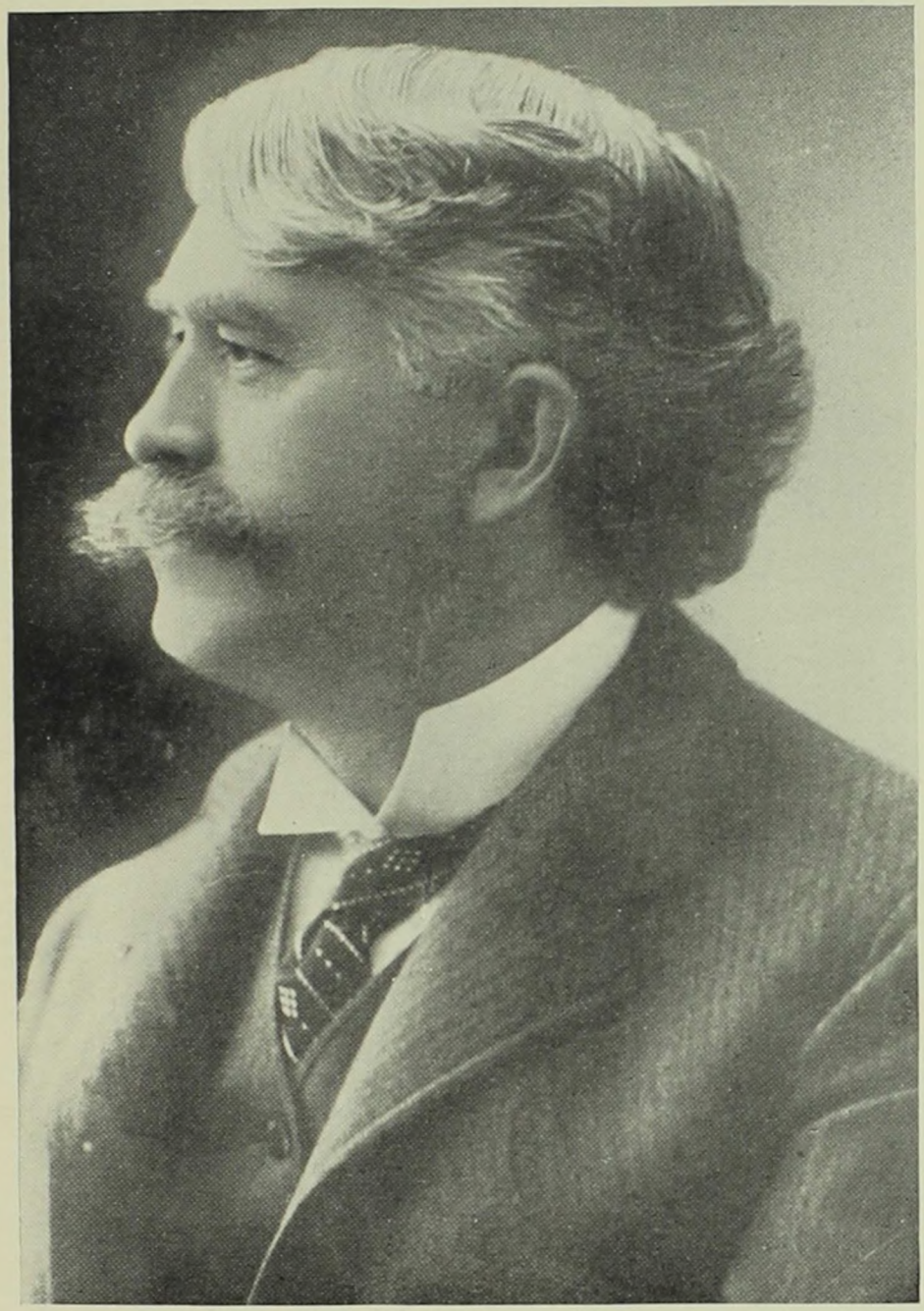
"There was little that was visible to the naked eye of the casual onlooker in *The Iowa Homestead* of March 23, 1885. . . . The type was set in the office of one of the daily newspapers of Des Moines, the paper was printed there. The condition of the finances of the new owner did not admit of the ownership of a desk, a safe or even the usual office furniture of a printing plant. The purchase price went for the 'good will'.

"For the first few years my father did all manner of labor. He assisted in preparing much of the 'copy', writing the words out slowly (the 'hunt and peck' system it is facetiously called now) on an old decrepit typewriter. Afterwards, he set the 'copy' up in type, by hand. . . . At night he kept the books. When the time came to go to press, my father fed the papers through it and ofttimes ran the folding machine. When this was done, it was no unusual thing for him to mail the entire issue of the paper himself, unaided. . . . I can remember my father (he was a large man, towering six feet two

inches) kissing my mother goodbye in the early morning, to work all day and often well into the night, then to come home and tell the family of the day's struggle to make the paper bill, the weekly pay roll. . . . They must have been hard and, often bitter days for him, but he was cheerful and full of service to others always."

For ten years the *Homestead* was under the leadership of Pierce and Wallace, with Pierce looking after the business and Wallace doing the editorial work. During this time Wallace bought stock in the company until he owned approximately one-third interest. Wallace had a comparatively free reign with the editorial policies of the paper for a number of years. He took a particularly active interest in getting sound agricultural courses started at Iowa State College. When offered a professorship himself, he declined and helped to get James Wilson for the position.

For several years the *Homestead* prospered, and the company acquired the *Wisconsin Farmer* and the *Live Stock Indicator*. Everything seemed bright, until the coöperative creamery controversy began to cause a rift among the partners. Along about 1890 coöperative creameries were being established in many communities, and the *Homestead* received many inquiries regarding the advisability of starting more. After investigating the matter, Wallace became convinced that many of the coöperative projects were being promoted by unscrupulous sales-



JAMES MELVILLE PIERCE

men who had creamery equipment to sell, and that these salesmen were promoting coöperatives that never could succeed. Wallace then wrote a strong article exposing and condemning these practices, which brought a sharp disagreement with Pierce, who, according to Wallace, contended that he was hurting the advertisers in the *Homestead*. Wallace was finally forced to modify his editorial policy.

In 1894, while Wallace was in Europe for his health's sake, there was considerable discussion about a proposed increase in freight rates. From a chance conversation he learned that, while Iowa newspapers were protesting against the increase, the silence of the *Homestead* was being considered an asset by the railroad officials. Upon his return to the United States, Wallace proposed to take up the cudgels to fight the proposed increase, but his partners would not permit it. Rankled by the restriction, Wallace realized that it was time for him to "get out", but he decided to wait until he was fired — as he was in 1895, to become editor of the paper which for years was a powerful rival to the *Homestead* and in 1929 absorbed it.

Special "Farmers' Institute" issues of the *Homestead* were inaugurated in 1896 and were run monthly for several years as supplements to the regular issues. These special issues of the *Homestead* contained exclusively articles on farm problems written by practical farmers. As many as a hundred to a hundred and fifty farmers participated

in these open forum discussions through the medium of the *Homestead*. Later the special issue was abandoned and the "Farmers' Institute" was made a weekly department.

In 1913 James M. Pierce began giving his personal opinions on current topics in the *Homestead*, under the title, "Publisher's Views on Topics of the Times", which, although understood not to have been written by Mr. Pierce personally, probably represented his views. This department of the paper, a rather striking revival of personal journalism, soon became one of the most prominent and widely read parts of the paper. Within a few months after it was started the department was given the most prominent position in the front section. Here the publisher championed the causes of the farmer which he deemed worthy of support, and gave his views on political, social, and economic questions. One of the first comments appearing in this department was a commendation of President Wilson's Mexican policy, a position which won praise from many Iowa readers.

During the World War, in his "Publisher's Views", Pierce favored prohibition, opposed drafting farmers, favored increasing crop production, favored government ownership of railroads, and urged farmers to buy Liberty bonds to support the war. Through the war years, however, he had the courage to stand fast against the war-time hysteria which affected so many Americans. Opposing as he

did the drafting of farmers, he pointed out many inconsistencies and injustices of the local draft boards and, while urging farmers to buy Liberty bonds, he continually decried the high-pressure methods used occasionally to sell bonds to farmers. At a time when other editors were "falling in line" with atrocity stories intended to stir up the populace with hatred of Germans, Pierce attempted to portray the fundamental human qualities of the Germans, and to show how German people were just as kind and warm natured as those with whom they fought. When a cry went up that Bremer County was a hotbed of pro-Germanism, the *Homestead* pointed out that Bremer County showed the largest per capita enlistments and purchase of Liberty bonds in the State.

In 1920, Pierce, through his personal department, began the fight for the nomination of Smith W. Brookhart for United States Senator in preference to Senator A. B. Cummins. Irked by Cummins's gradual withdrawal from the liberal ranks, his growing conservatism, and particularly his part in framing the Transportation Act of 1920, Pierce vigorously championed Brookhart as the farmers' candidate for United States Senator. When Brookhart failed to get the nomination in 1920, Pierce warned that it was but the beginning of the fight. Two years later Brookhart was nominated in the June primaries, and Pierce won a victory, although he had not lived to see it. James M. Pierce died on No-

vember 1, 1920; and Dante M. Pierce, his son, succeeded him as publisher of the *Homestead.*

James M. Pierce, who for almost forty years controlled the destinies of *The Iowa Homestead*, had begun his life work as the chore boy on a country-town newspaper. In due time, his son Dante relates, he bought the paper, paying for it with four steer calves which he had fed through the winter. During much of the time that the *Homestead* occupied the old building at Third and Locust streets in Des Moines, the elder Pierce was publishing also the *Wisconsin Farmer*, the *Farmer and Stockman*, the *Farm Gazette*, and the *Homemaker*, in addition to conducting the largest job printing plant in Iowa. After twenty-two years in the four-story home at Third and Locust streets, more space was needed, and in 1913 a fire necessitated rebuilding plans. The present seven-story home of *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead* is the result.

Men in the *Homestead* printing plant recount how the elder Pierce had a driving energy which kept the wheels of his large printing plant humming. He was what men know as a shirt-sleeve executive — one who, when emergency demanded, could take off his coat and go back into the shop to work side by side with his employees. These stories are still tradition among the men who used to work for and with him.

Dante Pierce continued the personal column, "Publisher's Views on Topics of the Times",

started by his father, and endeavored to carry out the policies of his father. Under his leadership the circulation of the *Homestead* rose approximately 15,000. Nine years after his father's death, Dante Pierce, wishing to devote his time to his other business interests, including publication of the *Wisconsin Farmer*, sold the *Homestead* to the Wallace Publishing Company, and the consolidated journal was named *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead.* The circulation of the *Homestead* in the year before consolidation was 165,000 — a long way from the struggling farm paper with a few thousand circulation that was taken over by James M. Pierce and his associates almost half a century ago.

C. R. F. Smith

Wallaces' Farmer

Nobody knows exactly when *Wallaces' Farmer* began because nobody knows exactly when "Uncle Henry" Wallace conceived the idea of becoming a writer. Perhaps his early training on the Westmoreland County farm in Pennsylvania, where his father, John Wallace, was one of the good farmers of the region, had something to do with it; and no doubt his preaching experience before and after the Civil War was a contributing factor.

The first trends appeared when he was living in Winterset, Iowa, and managing his farms over in Adair County. He was the last living member of his family, seven brothers and sisters and his mother having been carried off by that dread disease, consumption. Henry Wallace also contracted the disease and for a while his recovery was very uncertain. Acting on doctor's orders, he began living outdoors and drinking large quantities of cream and milk. The prescription worked a miracle and the old fire of pulpit days came back.

Henry Wallace, as a rejuvenated man, developed a love for the farm with its wholesome outdoor life. As with all farmers, he had much time in which to observe and think. Here was a life that he liked, but it had certain drawbacks over which farmers seemed to have insufficient control. Many questions must

have gone filtering through his alert mind during the late seventies on those Adair County acres. As he was a man of unusual education and possessed of a keen intellect, we may readily assume that he came to certain definite conclusions on the general farm situation of that day.

In a speech at Winterset on the Fourth of July, 1878, Henry Wallace aired his views on the nation's financial troubles. The Winterset *Madisonian* thought well of the speech; another local paper denounced it. The Wallace name gained prominence.

To him who has the will to express, it is but a step from speaking to writing. Not long after the Fourth of July speech, "Uncle Henry" accepted an invitation to become agricultural editor of the *Madisonian.* Here was an outlet for his thoughts inspired during odd hours on the farm. In effect, his writing career was thus begun. On trips down the long dusty road to Winterset, behind the steady clop-clop of his team, he took note of farmers and their farms, of crops and live stock. Certain ideas and questions came to him; they were reflected on the agricultural page of the *Madisonian.* But this was not for long.

Wallace bought the fagged-out Winterset *Chronicle.* More than an outlet for his writings, it was a success. Four hundred subscribers grew to fourteen hundred. The farmer-preacher-writer became more prominent. In 1883, J. H. Duffus, without the usual consultation, appointed him editor of *The Iowa*

Homestead, published at Des Moines. Again he accepted.

Then followed the change of *Homestead* ownership from J. H. Duffus to James M. Pierce and another person. The new owners retained Henry Wallace as editor and agreed to sell him some of the stock. The paper thrived under new management. Wallace was a prolific writer and made many friends. James Pierce once remarked upon the ease with which his editor worked. "Writing just runs out of him," he said. However, the smooth course came to an end in 1895 when Wallace left the company in a disagreement over editorial policies.

It is a matter for idle speculation now as to what "Uncle Henry" would have done next had it not been for the journalistic tendencies of his two sons, Henry C. and John P. The eldest, Henry C. Wallace, had lent strong arms to work on the home farms. During the brief *Chronicle* ownership, he had learned the tricks of a "printer's devil", and incidentally the irresistible smell of printer's ink. In 1885, just after he had turned nineteen years old, he entered the Iowa agricultural college at Ames to learn the "something more" a farm boy should know.

About two years later a tenant decided to leave one of the Wallace farms. Henry C. left his junior work unfinished, was married to Miss May Brodhead, and took over the tenantless farm. For five years, from 1887 to 1892, he managed to skimp a

living with hogs at $2.75 a hundred and corn at the fire-wood price of ten to fifteen cents a bushel. At home evenings and on slack days, he wrote things about farm life. These articles published in farm papers caught the eye of Dean Henry of the Wisconsin Experiment Station. Urged by the dean, Henry C. went back to finish his college work. His reward was a job as assistant professor of agriculture in the dairy department at Iowa State College.

In the meantime John P. Wallace had entered college and was working his way through.

The Department of State did a great thing for Iowa agriculture in 1893. N. B. Ashby of Cedar Rapids was appointed consul to Dublin, Ireland. Ashby, in order to meet the emergency, sold to H. C. Wallace, his brother-in-law, and C. F. Curtiss, associate professor of agriculture at Ames, his agricultural paper called the *Farmer and Breeder*. Started at Iowa City in 1875 by Don Donnan as a consolidation of *The Northwestern Stock Field and Farm*, the *Farm Journal and Livestock Tribune*, the *Iowa Stockman and Farmer*, the *Iowa Farmer and Stockman*, the *Western Stock Journal*, and the *Western Stock Raiser*, it had about run its course when Wallace and Curtiss bought it.

Perhaps a little dubious about their purchase, Curtiss and Wallace moved the property to Ames and set up shop above a down-town store. Soon they were cranking out a small semi-monthly publication headed "Farm and Dairy" — more in promotion of

the college agricultural department than anything else. John P. Wallace, who had been keeping books and doing stenographic work at the college, was sold a third interest in the publication and was appointed to look after the advertising, a position which at that time consisted of visiting widely-scattered business firms and live-stock breeders. He was often gone for weeks at a time, but mailed in advertising copy regularly.

Meanwhile "Uncle Henry" left the *Homestead* and most of his ready capital. Being a minority stockholder, he was not able to persuade the others to turn his stock into cash. There were days of restlessness and indecision. His sons beckoned to the thumping little paper at Ames. The elder Wallace hesitated. He was fifty-nine years old, the age at which most men retire, but — somehow the boys' proposition looked good. At least it was an opportunity to talk to the farmers of the State. The deal was closed and he became editor-in-chief; H. C. resigned from the college staff and became manager and editor, and J. P. kept his original position as advertising manager. The elder Wallace agreed to do his writing in Des Moines and mail it to the sons at Ames. The next issue of the paper came out headed "Wallaces' Farm and Dairy", with the statement that it was "an independent agricultural journal for middle western farmers".

Five years ago, *Wallaces' Farmer* celebrated its thirtieth birthday. Only one of the original foun-

ders, John P. Wallace, was present. "Uncle Henry" had died in 1916; Henry C. followed him in 1924. There was a review of events and biographies. "Uncle Henry" in the years that had followed 1895 became one of the best known of agricultural writers and speakers in the country. In coöperation with "Tama Jim" Wilson, then professor of agriculture at Ames, the other experiment station professors, and the railroad companies, "Uncle Henry" in 1896 helped organize a "better dairying" demonstration train. Out of this successful effort grew the "seed corn train" and the "good roads train". Mr. Wallace accompanied all of them and made many talks on various agricultural subjects. He consequently became a very popular personality among Iowa farm people. Of course, this was no detriment to his thriving farm paper.

One day along in the early nineteen hundreds, "Uncle Henry" made a deduction while looking over some rather arid literature which had been issued to his Sunday school (he always taught a Sunday school class). The careless preparation of this material must have irritated him severely. A few weeks later he announced to readers that the "Sabbath School Lesson would be started on trial." If they did not like the lesson after three months, the department would be abandoned. However, at the end of three months, the department continued very full of life. "Uncle Henry's" vivid and practical illumination of Bible times and characters made a

great hit with the readers. It has been continued to this day.

Editorials from the beginning have been strong and practical. Hard-headed farmers delighted in Wallace's stand against Colonel Pete Hepburn in the fight over railroad monopolies. With equal relish, they followed his opinions that the Philippines should have been freed at the close of the Spanish-American War. Dozens of other editorials with an earthy smack to them built up a remarkable following.

"Uncle Henry" took five trips to Europe, which gave him a valuable background for his editorial dealings with the agricultural situation at home and abroad. In 1908 he was appointed to serve on President Roosevelt's famous Country Life Commission which made detailed and significant investigations into rural life in America.

Farm folks liked him for his sincerity, clear vision, and earnest desire to make rural life the very best in all existence. "Uncle Henry" had the faculty of understanding common people and working for their welfare. Somehow he found the language to convey his feelings and beliefs to them. A vast populace mourned when he died in 1916.

The son, Henry C. Wallace, did not finish his greatest job. Death intervened on October 25, 1925, when Wallace was Secretary of Agriculture in the Coolidge cabinet. He was scarcely fifty-eight years old, a little short of the age when his father began

editorial work on *Wallaces' Farmer*. There are many who will say Secretary Wallace gave his life to his work. He came to the cabinet in 1921 after a happy period as head of the editorial staff of the paper, but in the middle of a trying agricultural deflation. Prices of agricultural products were sinking to the depths. Huge debts assumed in the balmy period of high prices faced thousands of farmers. Secretary Wallace so keenly felt their position that he worked as a man loaded with all their combined troubles.

He fought for marketing work in the United States Department of Agriculture and was largely responsible for the creation of the department's Bureau of Agricultural Economics; he defied the interests headed by Albert B. Fall which sought to remove forestry to the Department of the Interior and to gain control of Alaska; he enforced the packers and stockyards act and grain futures act in the face of bitter opposition; he worked toward raising the limit on farm land bank loans and the intermediate credit system.

While editor of *Wallaces' Farmer* from 1916 to 1921, he was actively identified with the creation of the office of Iowa State Commerce Counsel, equalization of railroad rates on farm products, modification of the government's conservative policy on the consumption of live stock products during the World War, and the prophecy of damage to agriculture when the Federal Reserve Board began its de-

flation program in 1918. He was for seventeen years secretary of the Corn Belt Meat Producers Association, a most active guardian of the live-stock feeders' interests in the Middle West.

All these things are credited to Secretary Wallace, but they are likewise the whole cloth of the contemporary history of *Wallaces' Farmer*. All of them were talked about repeatedly and found sympathetic ear in the editorial columns. It may truthfully be said that a good deal of the success of the journal is due to the activities of its owners beyond and above the immediate task of editing.

After the father and son came the grandson, Henry A., son of Henry C. Wallace, born on an Adair County farm and prominent while still a Des Moines high school boy because of his unusual experiments with corn breeding. Naturally practical, skeptical, and quizzical, he watched carefully back in 1902 while Professor P. G. Holden of Ames told a group of boys at the *Wallaces' Farmer* publishing plant how to judge seed corn. The gathering had been arranged by "Uncle Henry" who had conceived the idea while at a similar show in Illinois. Certain boys at the Illinois show had excelled their fathers in seed corn exhibition and Wallace was so pleased that he bought up a quantity of good seed corn, distributed it to boys in Iowa, and later had them exhibit their best seed ears.

In judging, Professor Holden picked symmetrical ears as ideal. Young Wallace wondered: "Were

they really the best producers?'' Holden laughingly told him to try them out, thus to satisfy his inquisitive head. Where most boys would have forgotten, H. A. Wallace faithfully planted Holden-judged ''poor'' and ''good'' seed and discovered his hunch was right. Production was not in proportion to appearance.

The corn belt is richer for this juvenile experiment because it was the beginning of a varied and interesting era of corn breeding. H. A. Wallace, as much as any other man, is responsible for the development and popularizing of hybrid corn. Like his father and grandfather before him, he does many practical things outside of his editorial office. The findings give him support for his editorial contentions.

Stacked about his office in the *Homestead* building in Des Moines are books and pamphlets relating to education, history, economics, animal husbandry, field crops, weather, and genetics. He ventures far in the field of economics, aided by his mathematical intuition. He is well known for his statistical studies and is credited with the development of the corn-hog cycle correlation. In brief, he has made statistics, market prices, and seasonal trends mean something to the lay reader.

There are others deserving along the line. The editorial staff in late years has included several feature writers and a number of contributing editors who supply special stories on leading agricul-

tural enterprises. Donald R. Murphy, managing editor since 1921, is responsible to a large degree for improvements in the magazine's content and appearance. Of a natural literary bent, he has been quick to see the cultural possibilities in farm life and has influenced editorial copy in that direction. The aim is to encourage a greater enjoyment of farm life as well as to teach the growing of more bushels per acre and more pounds of pork per hundred pounds of feed.

Journalistically, the magazine has had a steady development. The little publication called "Farm and Dairy" had its shortcomings in typography and layout, but a surprising amount of practical information was packed into its twelve by eighteen-inch pages of four columns each. There was no appealing cover picture nor feature stories, but the readers probably did not mind because other journals were little better. Unabashed, the ambitious publishers offered their semi-monthly issue at fifty cents a year or on a club subscription rate at twenty-five cents a year.

After three months, a Chicago firm offered an attractive sum for a large contract of advertising space. It was a great temptation for the Wallaces, especially when it is understood that H. C. worked many a night over the type cases to avoid depleting their bank-roll by hiring the necessary help. They were convinced that the paper would grow and refused the offer. Months afterward, they saw the

wisdom of their move; space in the paper in the meantime had multiplied in value due to increases in circulation and would have been a decided bargain for the Chicago agency had it been sold at the low rate offered.

The publishing plant was moved to Des Moines in 1896, six months after its origin, and the paper was changed from a semi-monthly to a weekly. As more advertising flowed in, Questions and Answers, Washington Letter, Hearts and Homes, Horticulture, Poultry, Hogs, Dairy, Livestock, and other departments swelled in size. First full-page cover pictures were introduced in the latter part of 1900. In 1902, the paper was increased in size to as much as twenty-eight pages per issue.

One of the first feature articles was printed in the Thanksgiving number of the same year. The big land boom of that period brought in much land advertising. By 1906 a number of college men were writing small articles, but the small unobtrusive one-column heads remained. In 1908, the two-column box heads began to appear over the feature stories. A wealth of pictures, many poor ones, were scattered through the magazine. By 1919, a Farm Engineering Department, a Boys' Corner, and Markets had been added. By 1920, there was a Voice of the Farm, in which letters, agreeable and disagreeable, sent in by subscribers were printed. The Service Bureau was created in 1921 to function against farm thievery and fraudulent practices and to answer inquiries.

Jokes, localized first-run fiction, and a full-sized boys' and girls' section came in 1924. The Odds and Ends feature, signed by the editor, Henry A. Wallace, was installed in 1925 as an informal wind-up on the editorial pages. The Master Farmer movement was introduced in Iowa in 1926 by *Wallaces' Farmer* and has been continued every year since. A resumé of the journal's physical changes reveals that the true magazine style has been developed since 1919. More feature stories have been distributed through the front part of the book.

The rapid growth of *Wallaces' Farmer* is indicated by its circulation figures. In the beginning, friends throughout the State raised hundreds of club subscriptions, and friendly letters from the business management brought in many more. The circulation curve kept an upward slant. In the decade preceding consolidation with the *Homestead,* the number of subscribers more than tripled.

John P. Wallace, the only one of the original founders of *Wallaces' Farmer*, is in charge of the directing force of the Wallace Publishing Company, as its president and general manager. He has become familiar with and interested in every department of the business during his more than thirty-five years experience. Once a month he writes a personal message which is published on a Boys' and Girls' Page, a favorite department of his. Henry A. Wallace and James W. Wallace, sons of Henry C. Wallace, who serve as editor and assistant manager,

respectively, and Ross Wallace, son of John P. Wallace, serving as advertising manager, work with their general manager in publishing the magazine. Each of the younger generation of Wallaces has two sons — which augurs a continuation of the Wallace regime for years to come.

In 1930, after thirty-five years, *Wallaces' Farmer* is still a strong Wallace organization. But it is more than that; it is *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead.* One day last fall, middle westerners were surprised to hear that the two leading farm papers in Iowa had merged. Dante M. Pierce, owner and publisher of *The Iowa Homestead*, had sold his big establishment to the Wallaces. Both had publications which served Iowa and surrounding States; one was willing to buy and the other was willing to sell; result, a merger.

To-day out on West Grand Avenue in Des Moines a new name-plate adorns the front of a white terra-cotta building, the home of *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead*, serving agriculture under "Uncle Henry's" motto, "Good Farming — Clear Thinking — Right Living".

ARTHUR T. THOMPSON

The Meredith Publications

It would have been a bit difficult to imagine that "Uncle Tommy" Meredith's wedding gift would result — a short quarter of a century later — in an Iowa publishing house whose publications travelled into every State of the Union, whose circulation totaled in the millions.

And it would have been just as difficult to believe that the nineteen-year-old newlywed — whose wedding "Uncle Tommy" commemorated with his rather remarkable gift — in the little more than half a century of life vouchsafed to him, would rise to become one of the nation's leaders in government, agriculture, and business.

It is rather necessary to tie together the publications and the life of Edwin Thomas Meredith from the time when, as a sixteen-year-old boy, he came to Des Moines to matriculate in Highland Park College, until the day of his death thirty-six years later. They are inseparably woven. Mr. Meredith, for all the time he spent in public life, was inseparably bound to the company he founded — to the publications he created, nursed, and brought to success.

Ed Meredith left his father's farm near Avoca, Iowa, when he had completed the work offered by the little one-room rural school. As a student at Highland Park College, he waited on tables for a time,

then started to work for his grandfather — well known in middle Iowa as "Uncle Tommy" Meredith — the violently partisan publisher of the *Farmers' Tribune*, a county farm paper whose purpose was to serve the cause of Populism.

The *Farmers' Tribune* was not what could be called a success. It could not even be called a business. It approximated charity, for "Uncle Tommy" had kept it alive for many a year by the simple expedient of adding, each year, to his capital investment. "Uncle Tommy" could afford to humor his hobbies: he was a well-to-do retired farmer.

In the *Tribune* plant, young Ed Meredith was general assistant to everybody. He helped in the print shop, helped in the composing room, helped in the office. He learned a great deal about a great many things associated with the workings of a publishing company. And before Ed had finished his first year at Highland Park College, "Uncle Tommy" asked him to spend all of his time on the *Tribune*. "Uncle Tommy" was getting old. Soon Ed was bookkeeper, then he helped conduct the correspondence, then sold advertising.

When Ed was nineteen, he married, and "Uncle Tommy" gave to the newlyweds this dying paper, the *Farmers' Tribune*. Ed Meredith and his wife had no capital, no resources — nothing but an unquestionable belief in Ed Meredith's ability, a tremendous amount of enthusiasm, and the swift energy that translated vision into actuality.

Ed told his mother that the days were gone in which the *Farmers' Tribune* had been a county farm paper, that he proposed sending a sample copy of it to every farmer in the State of Iowa. His mother thought her son was crazy. But the champion of Populism was turned into a non-partisan farm paper, with a circulation State-wide in extent. In a small way, the *Farmers' Tribune* became a paying proposition during the years following 1896. Meanwhile Ed Meredith had visions of a greater farm paper — a publication whose influence would extend beyond the boundaries of a single State. He was even then turning over in his mind the idea upon which *Successful Farming* was founded.

An important element in Meredith's genius as a publisher was his ability to sense what people of the upper Mississippi Valley wanted in a farm journal. He realized that American agriculture was not national in character, that soil and climatic conditions made various types of agricultural practice necessary in different sections of the country. He saw the farmers of the South growing cotton and tobacco, he recognized that on the Pacific coast an orchard type of agriculture was rapidly developing. Different from both of these was the dairy and truck farming of the East. And still different was the diversified farming of the Middle West where corn and small grains were grown and fed to cattle, hogs, and sheep. The farm magazine which concentrated its editorial comment on the problems of one type of

agriculture ought to be most successful, and of all regions the Middle West seemed to hold the best promise for that kind of journalism.

Such were the ideas upon which *Successful Farming* was founded in 1902. All of the editorial space was devoted to the problems of the diversified type of agriculture as practiced in the Ohio, upper Mississippi, and Missouri river valleys, and to the problems of the midwestern farm home. Mr. Meredith had recognized that there could be no separation of the farm home and the farm business. Agriculture is a mode of living.

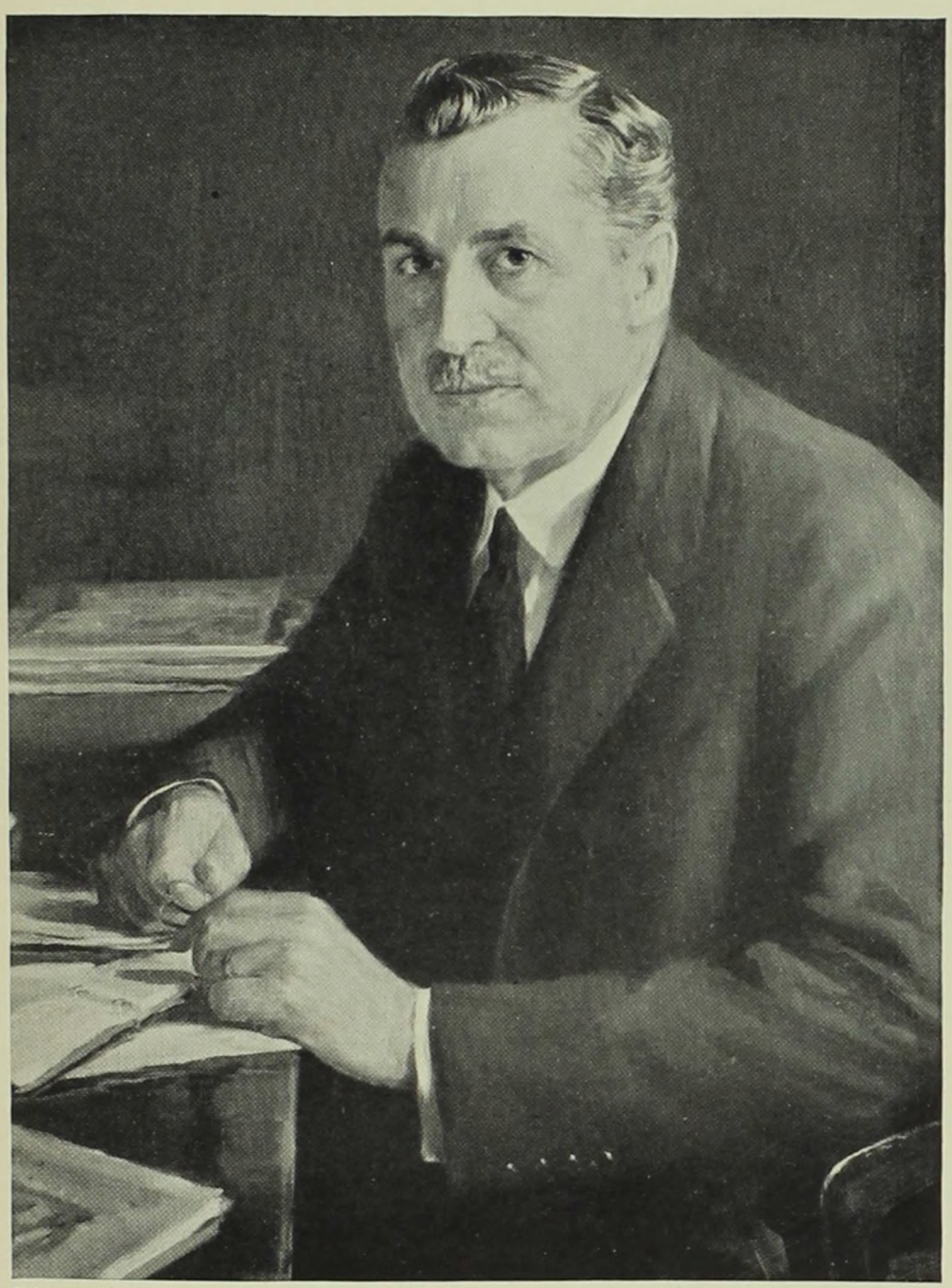
"Herewith we present our readers with the first copy of *Successful Farming*", wrote the editor in the introductory paragraph of Volume I, Number 1. "There is plenty of room for a live, up-to-date farm paper whose object is the discussion of farm matters employed in making farming a success. We intend to live up to the title of our paper by sending to our readers each month such information as will be helpful to them in carrying on the many duties, on the farm and about the home. We want our paper to stand for successful farming in the truest sense of the word and shall strive in the different departments to discuss in a concise and practical manner the various subjects under consideration. Discussions, inquiries and contributions are solicited. In this way we can get acquainted with our readers and better see their needs."

Friendly, practical, concise *Successful Farming*

was launched in the spirit of helpfulness. The *Farmers' Tribune* was sold two years later, so that Mr. Meredith could devote all of his time to the publication of his own creation.

In a period when "truth in advertising" was not generally emphasized by papers of this type, the editor of *Successful Farming* announced: "We believe that every advertisement in this paper is backed by a responsible person. But to make doubly sure, we will make good any loss to paid subscribers sustained by trusting any deliberate swindler advertising in our columns and any such swindler will be publicly exposed." That appeared at the top of the editorial column of the first number. Not long afterward, the guarantee was made even more positive: "If you purchase any article advertised in Successful Farming, whether you buy it of the local dealer or directly from the advertiser, and it is not as represented in the advertisement, we guarantee that your money will be returned to you."

Paid advertising was not accepted in *Successful Farming* until the paper had a circulation of 100,000 — a circulation large enough to command an advertising rate of fifty cents the agate line, seven dollars the inch. Tobacco and liquor advertisements were refused, as they had been by the *Farmers' Tribune*, and Mr. Meredith was in the van of those who fought the bad advertising practices of the cure-all nostrum makers. He refused to carry their advertising in the columns of his papers.



FROM A PAINTING BY R. W. GRAFTON

EDWIN THOMAS MEREDITH

The policies adopted early in the life of *Successful Farming* are still part of the Meredith Publishing Company's book of rules. True it is that farming methods have changed — the tractor has come, the combine is cutting harvesting costs, automobiles and hard surfaced roads have linked the farmer and his family with the town — but the fundamental problems remain as they were thirty years ago. The size of the magazine has grown, the circulation has leaped, the advertising revenues have increased enormously, but the present policies still comply with the original declaration.

Not long after *Successful Farming* had proved to be successful Mr. Meredith began to plan a companion magazine that would serve the home lovers of town and city as *Successful Farming* served midwestern farmers. His object was to print a paper that would devote all of its editorial space to the multitude of problems that faced the home-maker. There were many magazines that helped the housewife, but husbands and fathers are just as interested in developing the home as are wives and mothers. Most home magazines serve equally well the wife that lives in an apartment and the one that lives in a house. His magazine would have a wider appeal. Home building articles would be practical for average people.

Ten years after the establishment of *Successful Farming*, a small advertisement appeared in that publication asking for subscriptions to a new maga-

zine. Circumstances interfered with the plans, the war came along, Mr. Meredith was drafted into the service of the national government, serving on the Board of Excess Profit Advisors, as a member of the Industrial Conference, and finally as Secretary of Agriculture in 1920 and 1921, so that it was not until the summer of 1922 that the first issue of *Fruit, Garden and Home* made its appearance. Two years later, the name was changed to *Better Homes and Gardens.*

Mr. Meredith and his associates aimed to develop a circulation totaling in the millions, but friends in the publishing business and in the advertising field frankly asserted that hopes were running away with judgment. For *Better Homes and Gardens* carried not one line of fiction, not one line of fashions. How could such a publication reach a circulation in the millions?

On January 1, 1926, *Successful Farming* passed the one million mark. For years, its advertising rate had been based on a circulation guarantee of 850,000. And it was just two years later that *Better Homes and Gardens* passed the one million mark. Here was a strange phenomenon in the publishing world — a magazine dealing with only one subject that grew in the course of six years to a circulation that exceeded a million. In 1929, the circulation guarantee was 1,150,000; in 1930 it was 1,375,000.

The fact that *Better Homes and Gardens* was a specialized magazine made its growth even more

unusual. Editorially, the magazine carried only stories of gardens, of home building, of interior decoration, child care and training, foods, and books. There was so very little that could attract the family that lived in the apartment — that could appeal to the single man or the single woman unless he and she were planning to be married very soon. For *Better Homes and Gardens* believes in the individual house for the American family, believes in the family community of interest. It is edited with the object of interesting every member of the family. Both *Successful Farming* and *Better Homes and Gardens* are crusading periodicals; not "crusading" in the common use of the word, but crusading in the fact that they have definite objectives which they keep constantly in view.

When Ed Meredith was a boy on the farm, he was given a pig —a pig so sickly and runty that there was no excuse for putting it into the feed lot. He bottle-fed the young porker, cared for it, fattened it, and grudgingly sold it. A small incident, a passing matter to the father, but an incident that later had a great influence on a national movement.

Successful Farming was concerned with the movement of farm-reared boys and girls to the city. It believed that no definite means were being widely promoted to interest the farm boy and girl in farm life. The sickly-pig episode of Mr. Meredith's boyhood remained in his mind, and years later gave impetus to what is now the national Boys and Girls

Club movement. A $200,000 loan fund was established from which the farm boy or girl could borrow money to buy the pig, the calf, the seed, or whatever it was that interested him. The money from the loan fund enabled the farm boy to have property rights, to possess something of his own. *Successful Farming* asked only that the parents sign the note as evidence of their consent to the venture, that the county agent sign the note as evidence that the boy or girl was identified with the local Boys and Girls Club organization, and that one or two of the local business men sign the note as evidence that the money would be spent for the purpose for which it was intended. It was specifically stated in the note that no financial obligation was incurred by any of the signers except by the boy or the girl.

Within three months of the foundation of the loan fund, more than ten thousand separate negotiations had been started and most of them had been completed. Nor did the influence of the loan fund stop with those who borrowed from it. Hundreds of letters were received during the first three months alone, saying that because the parents or the local banker had seen the offer, the boy had been given his animal or had been permitted to borrow the money from the local bank.

Successful Farming felt, too, that rural education needed help. Country schools were teaching agriculture, though satisfactory textbooks were not available. Agricultural practice was changing too rapidly.

In this emergency a well qualified teacher was employed to prepare each month a series of lesson plans that would help rural school teachers. These lesson plans, based on *Successful Farming* as a textbook and printed in the form of a monthly magazine, "Rural Schools Bulletin", are mailed free to school teachers on request. Fifty thousand teachers, each year, avail themselves of this service.

Better Homes and Gardens recognized the necessity of interesting the younger generation in the home and the garden. In 1929 it started the establishment of Junior Garden Clubs of America — laid out the method of organization, the club work, and the club programs. Within a year, there were more than six hundred clubs with a membership of ten thousand. The Junior Garden Clubs have divisions that interest children four, five, and six years old as well as boys and girls fifteen and sixteen years of age. It has its publication, "The Junior Garden Club Supplement", its awards, its activities.

It was but twenty-eight years ago that the young Ed Meredith founded *Successful Farming*. It has been only eight years since the first issue of *Better Homes and Gardens* appeared. When E. T. Meredith died on June 17, 1928, his two publications had a combined circulation in excess of two and a half million. He had built in Iowa one of the largest, most respected publishing firms of the nation.

PETER AINSWORTH

Comment by the Editor

JOURNALISTS OF DISTINCTION

Sometime the intricate story of Iowa journalism will be told. It will be a tale of romance — if struggle against tremendous odds, devotion to high ideals, sincerity of purpose, and ultimate triumph constitute the substance of romance. The narrative will be crowded with picturesque characters — editors violently partisan and others delightfully whimsical; oracles of wisdom and idealists more poetical than practical; stylists who regard a dangling participle as a crime and to whom a split infinitive is positively painful; evangelists with a cause like temperance, free silver, or the suppression of rag weeds; natural-born humorists who would rather be witty than right; and shrewd fortune hunters with a talent for profits.

Among the dramas of newspaper biography many tragedies will be discovered, though happy endings are also common. The lives of some remarkable Iowa papers span three-quarters of a century and the climax appears to be still in the future. On the vast stage of Iowa journalism many rôles have been enacted and the repertoire of publications has included almost every kind of journalistic enterprise.

Of all the different types of journalism, none has

been more significant than the papers intended for farmers. Down through the years the agricultural press has maintained such high standards of service and such intelligent leadership that it has won a place of preëminence in the field of technical journalism. Not a step has been taken in the amazing progress of American agriculture that the farm papers have not urged. Better living conditions, greater crop yields, and finer produce have resulted mainly from the influence of these journals — the guiding stars in the development of improved husbandry. And in the forefront of periodicals devoted to the interests of country people are the Iowa papers. For more than a quarter of a century, Des Moines has been the agricultural publishing center of the United States.

It is not a mere coincidence that among the score or more of noted agricultural journalists, a third are Iowans. From his farm in Keokuk County, James H. Sanders was called to the editorship of the *National Live Stock Journal* and, with the aid of his son Alvin, brought that Chicago paper to a position of high regard during the seventies. In 1881 they established the *Breeder's Gazette* which has attained international prestige. As editor of *Farm and Fireside*, Herbert Quick set a new literary standard for farm journals and gave rural education a cultural impulse that has had an extraordinary influence. But in Iowa the names of Henry Wallace, James M. Pierce, and E. T. Meredith have been

household words these many years. Whatever they have advocated has been accepted as agrarian gospel. To the vision and courage of such leaders — men who often stood alone in their ideas of improving agriculture — the rural progress of this State is in a large measure due.

J. E. B.

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