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The PALIMPSEST

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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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FROM A PAINTING BY GEORGE P. A. HEALY

VINNIE REAM

THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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From Plastic Clay

The Civil War was over. Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, was still the man of the hour. On his face were lines drawn by the pencil of sorrow, grief, and great sympathy.

It was Vinnie Ream — later Vinnie Ream Hoxie — who was to give perpetuity to the face and form of Abraham Lincoln as she saw him toward the close of the war. For a half hour every day for five months he sat in a room at the Executive Mansion while she fashioned the statue that stands in the rotunda of the national Capitol.

Vinnie Ream was born at Madison, Wisconsin, in September, 1847. Her father was a government surveyor and while he was engaged in surveying, Vinnie was learning primitive life in Wisconsin — sleeping in log cabins and playing with papooses. Later, Robert Ream was appointed to survey the western part of Missouri, and his daughter Vinnie,

then eleven years old, went to school in Columbia, Missouri. There at Christian College she was taught to be a "lady". To many people she lost all claim to that title when she busied herself with that most unfeminine art — sculpture.

After two years in Missouri, the Ream family moved to Washington, D. C., where Vinnie obtained a clerkship in the Post Office Department. It was a year later that she stopped one day in the office of Clark Mills, a sculptor, whose last work was the casting of Crawford's colossal statue of Liberty, which crowns the dome of the Capitol at Washington. The artist tossed his girl visitor a piece of clay with the half-jesting command: "Do a portrait of me!" Thus accidentially discovering that clay shaped itself almost naturally in her hands, she began earnestly to study the art of sculpture. It was a brave venture, for later, having developed this natural bent, the words of Carl Schurz, spoken of Vinnie Ream, "she is not only a woman, but something more", were, in social circles, words of condemnation, not praise.

Her academic education was of short duration. Whatever she knew, she learned from travel and from people with whom she came in contact through her work. According to the critic, George Brandes, whom she met in Italy, she was acquainted with only English and American writers. Shakespeare and Byron were her favorite poets.

In her own field, however, she worked with such

diligence and concentration that she plumbed the depths of her art. In a statement over the signatures of President Andrew Johnson, General U. S. Grant, and other national officials, including the Senators and Representatives of the United States, Miss Ream was appraised as "a most worthy and accomplished young lady" who possessed "rare genius in the beautiful art of sculpture."

She worked with ease and rapidity. "Her facility in modeling in clay is extraordinary", declared a critic in the New York *Evening Telegram* in February, 1877. "I have never seen a sculptor who could compare with her in the rapid formation of a likeness. When she began the bust of Judge Waite she had in front of her a standard, an iron wire with prongs and a tub of moist clay. Within a couple of hours she had built up in rough the whole fabric of the bust, modeled the shape of the head, and produced an accurate profile. On the following evening she rounded off and expressed one side of the face, and almost completed the coarse modeling of the other side."

It was in July, 1866, that Congress directed the Secretary of the Interior, then James Harlan, to contract with Miss Vinnie Ream for a life-size model and statue of the late President, Abraham Lincoln, to be executed by her at a price not exceeding $10,000, one-half payable on completion of the model in plaster, and the remaining half on completion of the statue in marble.

This charge was duly executed. Lacking many of the qualities that make a portrait attractive and impressive, the artist's subject nevertheless had to be portrayed to meet not only the expectations and approval of national officials, but the criticism of the American people as well.

She was the first woman from whom a statue was ordered by the United States government. On the subject of women sculptors, an article in the Iowa City *State Press* voiced the feminine opinion so prevalent in contemporary tea table talk. Miss Ream, says the angry communication, "worked up the susceptibilities of Congressmen in order to get the appropriation of $10,000." That was all the more surprising because "she is a young girl, about twenty, a Washingtonian, believed to have been in sympathy with secession throughout the war, has only been studying her art a few months, never made a statue, has some plaster busts on exhibition in the Capital [perhaps the spelling is indicative of the merit of the criticism], has a pretty face, with a turn up nose, bright black eyes, long dark curls and plenty of them, wears a jockey hat and a good deal of jewelry, sees all the members at their lodging or the reception room in the Capital, urges her claims fluently and confidently, sits in the galleries, in a conspicuous position, and in her most bewitching dress, while those claims are discussed on the floor, and nods and smiles as a member rises and delivers his opinion on the merits of the case, with the air of

a man sitting for his picture, and so she carries the day over Powers, Crawford, Homer, and who not? What are fame and success as an artist, talent, genius and all that sort of stuff, when compared to black eyes and long black curls? Her bust of Mr. Lincoln, now on exhibition at the Capital, is the worst representation of his head that I have ever seen. It is in the face so bad as to be a caricature, and one suspects that the object is to make a national caricature of our martyred President, as Miss Ream is a pupil of Clark Mills, who is so violent a secessionist that he took sick and kept his bed for several days when the New York riots were suppressed by the military, and he will probably make the statue contracted for with his pupil. How Senator Trumbull came to be entrapped into supporting the measure is one of the mysteries of the age. He evidently is a poor judge of works of art, and wishes to encourage American genius."

Five thousand dollars paid to her on the completion of the plaster model — "a faithful resemblance to the original" — and the many expressions of favorable criticism (in letter and in the press) constitute the testimony of Vinnie Ream's ability. "Rendered *con verita*", wrote Luigi Majoli from Rome on October 31, 1870.

Of the official inspection of the model, the editor of the Washington *Evening Star* wrote on January 7, 1871, "there was a sudden hush in the buzz of conversation" as workmen prepared to lift the veil.

"It must have been an anxious moment to the courageous little sculptor, and to her personal friends present. Could it be that the fragile, youthful figure standing there, pale and anxious, and rendered more child-like in appearance by her petite form and wealth of Dora-like curls, had made a success where so many older sculptors — Brown notably and recently — had failed? Was it possible that at her age, and with her slight experience, she had made a statue of Abraham Lincoln fit to be placed in the Capitol of the nation? And then there was the formidable array of Illinoisians present, familiar with the living Lincoln, and prompt to detect a defective literal representation, however good the work might be artistically. The veil was raised slowly, disclosing first the base, bearing the simple words ABRAHAM LINCOLN; then the well-remembered form; and finally and essentially, the head of the Patriot Martyr. There was a momentary hush, and then an involuntary, warm, and universal demonstration of applause gave the verdict of the distinguished and critical gathering, and assured the artist that her work was to be set down a success. There was another pause, while a more deliberate view was taken; and then another, and another round of applause confirmed and rendered final the involuntary decision from the first impression. And then everybody turned to where the little sculptor-girl stood, a little in the rear with glad tears in her eyes, and congratulations were poured

in upon her from all quarters, official and unofficial; the Illinoisians present being foremost in expressing their satisfaction with her representation of the man they revered. The expressed opinion of Senator Trumbull and others from that State was that the statue gives that thoughtful, benignant expression familiar to those who knew Mr. Lincoln best, and which was best worth perpetuating in marble."

According to another newspaper correspondent, the "head and features are forcibly, yet truthfully modelled; the hair boldly managed in flowing masses as by the skill of experience; and the expression of sadness mingled with benevolence is touchingly portrayed, well conceived and appropriate to the expression and meaning of the statue." Moreover, the "figure is well poised, standing firmly and naturally". The masses in the cloak, "happily arranged to give breadth, as well as dignity to a very tall and meagre figure" are managed so artistically as to lend manliness to the subject. "Indeed there seems a unity of idea and design expressed throughout the work, and an absence of those conventionalities which are so often visible in the productions of those who have derived their ideas of Art principally from the schools in which they study."

The "tragic era" followed the death of Abraham Lincoln. Even the little improvised studio of Vinnie Ream in the basement of the national Capitol had a part in the intense drama that culminated in the impeachment of President Johnson. Vinnie

herself flitted across the stage. Senator E. G. Ross had a room in the home of Vinnie Ream, and politicians, big and hard, were pressing her to reveal the vote of Ross in the pending trial. Miss Ream was not strong. She did not enjoy politics, and though later she was often visited in her studio, never in the manner in which she was thus hounded. In Italy suitors were to give her little rest, but in Washington politicians were driving her into hysterics.

Not long after the impeachment fiasco, Vinnie Ream left for Europe for further study with particular reference to the completion of her statue of Lincoln. It had yet to be finished in marble — snow-white marble from the famous quarries of Carrara.

As a train was about to start from Florence to Rome, one day in the fall of 1870, a girl in her twenties, with brown eyes and brown curly hair, guitar case in her hand (she accompanied her own singing), entered the carriage. She spoke in English to a fellow traveller of visits in London, Berlin, Munich, Florence, of acquaintance with Gustave Doré, the French artist, Franz Liszt, and Cardinal Antonelli. It was Vinnie Ream on her way from Carrara where she had been superintending the shipment of one of her works. Before Carrara she had been in Paris, studying under Bonnat, and then in Rome, under Majoli.

Her chance acquaintance on the train with George

Brandes, Danish author and critic, grew into friendship in the short time she stayed in Rome. Though Vinnie was "the first specimen of a young woman from the United States" that the critic had seen, he was greatly impressed with her as a type of the American girl. Her talent he thought more pictorial than plastic, but spoke of her nevertheless as a true artist, possessing an uncommon will and capacity for hard work. "There was the very devil of a rush and Forward! March! about her, always in a hurry". Her day in Rome was typically occupied with visits from as many as twenty-five people, opening mail, sittings with the American painter, George P. Healy, and work on Antonelli's bust, besides attending to household affairs.

If she was vain, she was at the same time ingenuous. When she was teased by a friend about all the time that he had wasted in her company, she retorted, "People do not waste time with their friends."

"What do I get from you?" he asked.

"Inspiration," was the laughing reply.

In 1878 Miss Ream married Richard Leveridge Hoxie of Iowa City, then a first lieutenant in the Engineer Corps of the United States Army. He had been well-drilled to obedience. When he proposed marriage to Vinnie Ream, he was commanded to "wait until my statue is finished". By the intercession of Mrs. Farragut, however, the marriage was consummated sooner than Art had dictated.

Subsequently the Hoxies lived in Washington, while Iowa City saw them in the summer months. The home in Iowa was called "Vinita", the name first given a town in Oklahoma by Boudinot, a Cherokee Indian, in honor of Vinnie Ream.

Following the ceremony of unveiling her Lincoln statue in the national Capitol on January 25, 1871, she was commissioned to make a statue of Admiral David Farragut. It was cast from bronze of the propeller of the *Hartford,* the Admiral's flagship.

Her list of works is long and impressive, including statues of men of national repute, among them two Iowans — life-size figures of Samuel J. Kirkwood and James Harlan. Since 1914, the year of her death, there stands over her burial place in Arlington Cemetery "The Muse of Poetry", a statue of her own making.

As one looks upon the features of the likeness of Abraham Lincoln in the rotunda of the national Capitol, recalling all that he stood for, we remember also this, that he by his own unaided efforts had risen from obscurity to the highest position in the nation. And therefore, Senator Trumbull has said, it is fit that his features should be transmitted to posterity by one, who, like him, had nothing but her hands and her head to urge her forward — Vinnie Ream.

Marie Haefner

George H. Yewell

Just one hundred years ago (January, 1830) was born in Harve-de-Grace, Maryland, an artist long to be remembered and loved — George H. Yewell. His seventy-five years of active production in the field of art, both in Europe and America, entitle him to serious consideration.

Artists, seldom understood, sometimes neglected, will likely, sooner or later, be explained, usually to their surprise, and perhaps to their dismay. But an artist must first discover himself. How else can he hope to be discovered by others?

In 1841 the village of Iowa City, numbering about nine hundred souls, was at most only a sketch of a capital. But it was a sketch with life. The new capitol building was still unfinished. The Legislative Assembly brought politics and business in the winter, and the occasional steamboat created excitement for the summer. To this prairie metropolis came George H. Yewell, aged about eleven, and his widowed mother from Maryland. Relatives had written them of the good financial prospects of the new town.

We learn very little of George Yewell during the first years in his new home. That he attended school seems certain since he possessed many school books, all of which gave amusing evidence of an extra-

curricular activity. To this boy from the East every blank space of rough brown paper meant an invitation to sketch. He loved to draw, particularly the interesting western characters whom he saw everywhere about him. Indeed, this new capital, teeming with political feuds, violent discussions, and buzzing legislators afforded a rich field to a budding cartoonist. The townsfolk who saw his rough charcoal sketches were amazed at the ability with which, at a single casual glance, he caught the features of a subject. His exaggerations and his pointed ridicule continued to amuse even the subjects of the sketches. The admiration of the legislators for the boy's ability and his friendship with them grew apace.

In 1848 the "Hummer Bell" episode furnished material for sketches which were later to play an important rôle in the life of the artist. Young George Yewell, like almost every one in Iowa City, was familiar with the gossip concerning the mystery surrounding the theft of the bell from the Presbyterian Church. In seven forceful drawings he related the main incidents of the story. Each sketch was given a title, and a story, cleverly detailing the events in Biblical language, appeared below. These sketches give evidence of marked ability in characterization and indicated the yearning of an untrained hand for drawing. To select these particular episodes required a distinct sense of humor.

There may be many of Yewell's early sketches in the older homes of Iowa City. One other, which is

preserved in the library of the State Historical Society, is interesting as a technical example of the cartoons of 1850 and illustrates the influence of training acquired during the year before its execution. It is called "Don Jose and the Knight of the Black Steed". The caricatures of Judge LeGrand Byington and Judge Joseph Williams are striking likenesses, the situations in the picture are full of humor, and the details of accessories are accurate.

In speaking of this period of his life, Yewell explained that "certain rude political and local caricatures, the work of my youthful pencil," attracted the attention of Judge Charles Mason. Some of the "strong exaggerations of character and ridiculous situations" appealed to his native sense of humor.

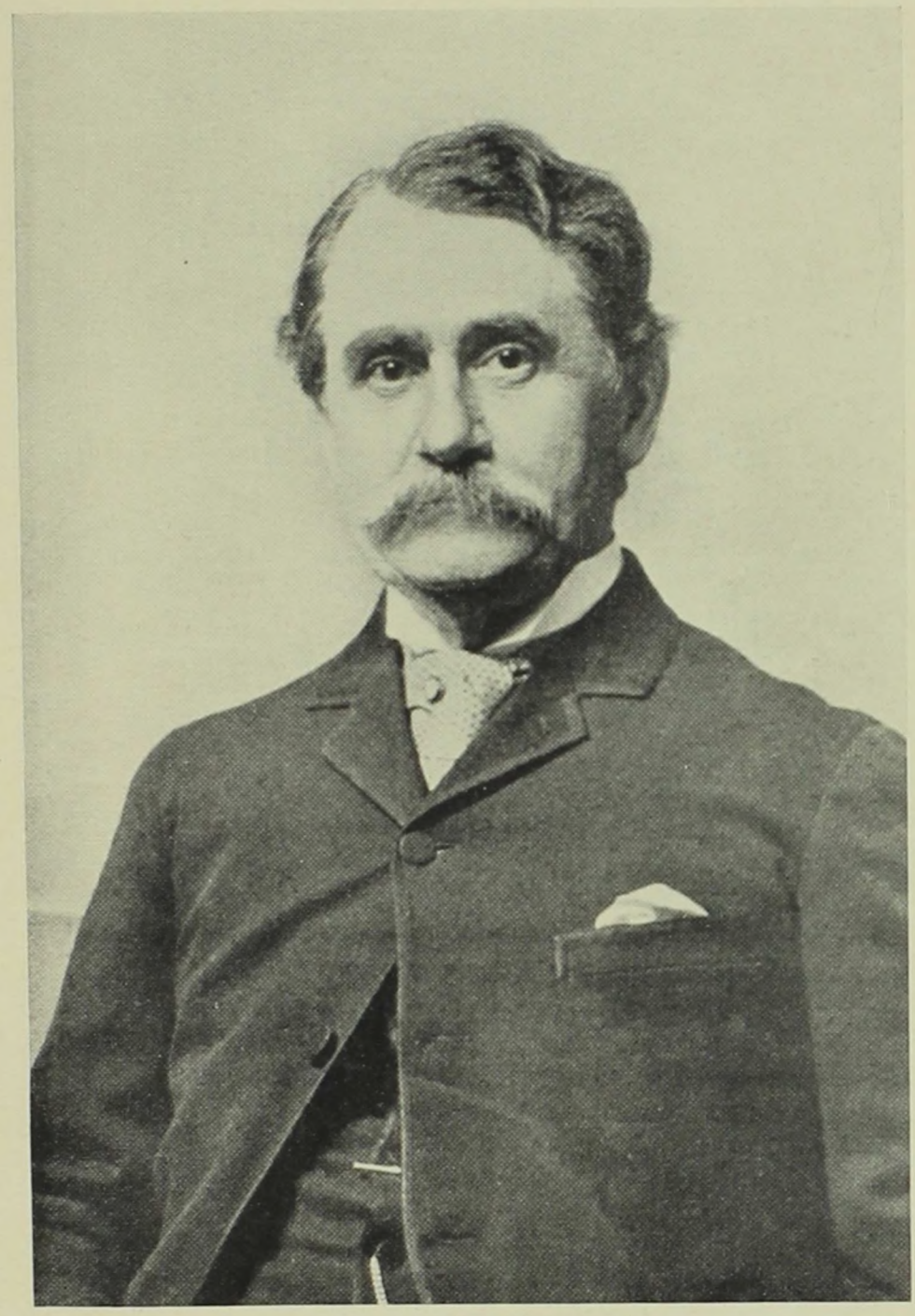
A little later in the same year, 1848, Judge Mason invited the artist to call at his hotel with some of his drawings. If Edison should leave a similar request for an Iowa youth to-day, the boy could not be more thrilled than Yewell was. Possibly it was a commission to do some sketches! Perhaps he was to be invited to Burlington! George Yewell was a product of a pioneer community and, though nearly eighteen, he had none of the self-confidence and sophistication of a youth of that age in 1930.

This lad, still in the rough, but fine and sensitive to the finger tips, waited in wonderment at the appointed hour. With the introduction over, however, he found himself talking at ease with a most friendly and understanding gentleman. To his own surprise

he confessed his secret ambition to become a painter. The Judge was interested. Looking over the sketches, he asked for some more which could be taken to Washington. Artists were to be interviewed and advice obtained on the boy's talent. George Yewell knew that, though months might pass, he would not be forgotten.

Almost two years passed. With no means of support save that which he himself supplied, the lad was kept at work. The long winter evenings and leisure moments were the times in which he really lived. Then he drew and drew, using whatever materials or subjects were available. Every moment was given, he wrote, "to drawing and painting in my erratic and unskilled way." These were years of youthful ambition and hope, criss-crossed with a growing uncertainty, unbelief, and a longing for advice and encouragement.

Then one day an incident changed indecision and doubt to a positive determination that was to carry him far. George Yewell would be a real artist. "In the summer of 1850," he wrote, "the American Art Union of New York appointed Mr. Joseph T. Fales one of the honorary secretaries, and sent him copies of all the engravings they had issued up to that time. These he placed upon the walls of his office in the Capitol Building, he being, at the time State Auditor. I spent many a summer afternoon dreaming over those engravings. The large one, from Coles' "Voyage of Life", where the aspiring youth



GEORGE H. YEWELL

in the boat grasps the rudder in one hand and stretches the other forth eagerly toward the bright cloud-temple in the sky, awoke all the latent love for art in me, and made me resolve to become a painter.''

When indeed had such an opportunity been provided? Certainly few works of art had accompanied these brave folk as they trekked across the wind-swept prairies of the Great Valley. The art of reproduction was itself little understood. What an education even this must have been for this rustic, pioneer boy. Others had done, were doing; — perhaps he could do also. The very barrenness of his experience made his faith greater.

Following close on the heels of this inspiring occasion — almost as if to test the decision — came news. Early in 1851, Judge Mason called at the home of young George and told him of his visit to the eastern artists. The months of waiting were rewarded; the decision of the Washington critics was most gratifying. The Judge, assured of talent on the part of his protégé, offered at once to make inquiries in New York concerning schools, costs, and teachers.

''I fully appreciate the difficulties in your way,'' he wrote, ''but they are not insuperable.'' Besides, ''a residence of a few years in the east'' would be necessary ''to enable you to develop capabilities which I think you possess.'' Judge Mason's interest was further shown by his many investigations

and talks with prominent men on the subject of art schools. He ascertained for the boy complete details about instruction at the Academy of Design, the possibility of free evening instruction, and how much his other expenses would be.

Now indeed came problems. First of all the ambitious artist had no money, in pocket or in prospect. Neither had many others. Travelling itself, particularly to the inexperienced, was fraught with hazards unknown to-day; besides it was expensive. A saving trait predominated in these pioneer characters, however. Neither old nor young were known to make complaint of privations common to all. Certainly this lad's experience had taught him to regard hardships as unavoidable and to accept them cheerfully. Men were fairly equal socially and the gifted among them were held in great respect. In the spirit of trust and faith young George went unhesitatingly to his many friends for the money necessary for the trip and the first winter. Letters of introduction, small contributions, and promises of more when needed were given him cheerfully on every hand.

By this time Judge Mason had made Yewell his own special protégé. His faith seemed unlimited, and he set his heart upon the complete fulfillment of the boy's ambition. Letters of advice and suggestions were followed by the offer of fifty or a hundred dollars in advance for some "specimens of your skill as an artist after you have attained that

excellence to which you aspire". How sincere was the Judge's concern! Was there anything to do but go and, once there, make good? The trust of his friend depended upon it.

"I left Iowa City", wrote Yewell, "on the morning of October 4, 1851, and traveled by stage coach to within thirty miles of Chicago, making the remainder of the journey by rail, arriving in New York on the morning of the 9th." He was received as a pupil by Thomas Hicks at the same time "entered the antique school of the National Academy of Design," and settled himself down to "a winter of serious study". He found living quarters "in an old-fashioned brick house on the corner of Mulberry Street" where he obtained "good homelike board and lodging for the modest sum of two dollars, sixty-two and one-half cents per week."

To George Yewell the experiences of the first winter were thrilling. He learned how little he knew and what he must first learn before embarking irrevocably upon the career of an artist. He made friends and became acquainted with the work of the popular artists of the day. And always his friend, the Judge, cheered the dark periods with kind, fatherly letters. How subtle was the man's encouragement! He complimented the lad upon his attainments and urged him on by affirming his own belief in a brilliant future for him. Nor was he to concern himself too greatly over expenses, for funds would be secured.

Five years of study in New York under Thomas Hicks gave the student a well-grounded foundation in drawing at a period in American art when good draftsmanship was the first essential. Clever brush work and color emphasis were yet to be realized in American art. The detailed realism of this training never entirely left Yewell's painting. Though he was to live through unbelievable earthquakes in the field of art, he remained a steadfast master of accurate delineation.

At this time study in Paris was regarded as essential for a well rounded education in painting. An artist despaired of attaining rank or recognition without a European experience. The young man worked unceasingly toward this study abroad. In 1856 Judge Mason again evidenced his entire confidence in the artist by sending him abroad and financing his study at the famous atelier of Thomas Couture, an eminent painter of the day.

His tutor was then working upon a large mural painting commissioned by the French government. In his letters to Judge Mason, the youthful student described this picture with considerable enthusiasm. This led to the well meaning but injudicious suggestion that Yewell attempt a similar painting for the national Capitol.

"Not unconscious of my inexperience, yet with my youthful ambition fired by the greatness of the occasion," wrote Yewell afterward of his first great disappointment, "I decided to make a bold attempt

to secure a government commission, if possible, and then make all my studies bend in the direction of the subject I might choose, wisely deferring the painting of the large canvas to a future day. After long deliberation I chose for my subject "The First Prayer in Congress", and wrote to Judge Mason to get for me whatever description there might be of the event".

The drawings for the mural were made and submitted to the American committee in Washington. But Yewell was inexperienced in mural painting; he was very young for such a project. Besides, he must have met competition with well-known and mature artists. Failure was certain. He himself quaintly remarked later, "Too presumptuous, I had sailed high, and the sun, for which I had aimed, had melted my waxen wings and let me down."

But his benefactor in Iowa bridged the hour of discouragement by placing the failure upon the choice of subject rather than on ability. "You would do better with a wilder, western subject", he wrote, and suggested the first treaty for the Black Hawk Purchase.

The art students of Paris in the middle of the last century were required to do a great deal of copying from famous masters at the Louvre. There they absorbed color theories and technique in painting which, in some cases, remained with them always. The influence is distinctly traceable for many years in the work of George Yewell. Seven of the

copies made "from very beautiful paintings by modern French masters", in 1858, found their way to Iowa. They seem to have been passed proudly around among friends and displayed at Davenport, Iowa City, and Burlington. One, a copy of a new and popular picture by his master, Couture, "The Falconer", was enthusiastically admired everywhere. Judge Mason wrote, "I am very much pleased with your paintings. They show great improvement."

A little over ten years from the time the youthful pioneer had left the prairie, he was given the coveted honor of a "position in the Salon of Paris". In 1862 this honor was followed by his election as associate of the National Academy. He had definitely arrived. At thirty-two George Yewell had become one of America's foremost artists in Paris, and, what was equally important, he had given abundant proof that the faith of his friend was not misplaced.

Six years passed, leaving in their wake little or no information of the activities of the artist. America was torn by war. Judge Mason was in deep trouble and frail health. His other friends were lost in war and politics. Occasionally Yewell visited America, and on one of these trips he married Miss Louise Coast. Some paintings of very fine caliber were done in Iowa during these years.

In 1867 Italy rivalled Paris in the interest it held for the art students of the world. The element of color was coming to the fore. Rome and Venice had

produced great colorists. George Yewell was not one to be satisfied to have his hopes only partly realized. Thus he ensconced himself in a studio in Rome with friends from Europe and America almost constantly with him for eleven years. Art was passing through tremendous changes. The very foundations of the old school were being shaken. The new colorists in their fury shocked the older members. The marked indifference to form — the "dots" and "commas" and "splashes" in the technique of the new element — caused comment far and wide. Violent discussions occurred, but the artist from Iowa remained impervious to it all, painting reverently, serenely, honestly, as he had learned. Was he not to live long, to see many strange, disturbing influences in art arise high only to crash to oblivion?

The paintings made in Italy during those eleven years present a definite period in the art of Mr. Yewell. They were strongly realistic at first, showing stronger brush work and more color and atmosphere with the passing years. Perhaps the influence of Titian and Turner is traceable. It would seem not unlikely, since Yewell painted much from these works, making some very noteworthy canvases. The numerous sketches done around Perugia in the summers show a strong freedom of handling and simplicity of composition. They throb with an unobtrusive beauty of warm sunlight and rich bronze shadows. One of the finest of his many carefully

executed and highly finished interiors is now treasured in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. It is "The Interior of St. Mark's, Venice." The picture "Santa Maria della Salute, Venice," has a position of honor in the Louisville Art Gallery, while a second "Interior of St. Mark's" is owned by the Wordsworth Athenaeum at Hartford, Connecticut. Mr. Yewell has caught with superb sensitiveness the spirit of mystery and reverence and woven into it details of a beautiful architectural tracery.

At this time (1867), etching in the field of art was making a worthy plea for recognition. One would expect to find some nice work from the hand of one so well trained in draftsmanship. One is not disappointed. There are many privately owned etchings, particularly of buildings, which rank well with the works of later artists. Old doorways, shadowy entrances, and porticos have furnished the subjects for works of a fine and poetic touch.

In 1875 Yewell visited Egypt, spending the entire year in and around Cairo. Again, he made sketches that sang with the dry, hot atmosphere of the desert. Large paintings were also accomplished, and the two examples shown at the Iowa Memorial Union in Iowa City present street scenes in Cairo. The warm light falling on the perfectly drawn buildings and the shadowed streets, rich in dark blues and wine reds, remind one of Venetian painters of early times.

What caused Mr. Yewell to leave these inspiring

fields in 1878 and return to New York can only be surmised. History reveals that New York realized in 1876 an unprecedented appreciation of fine art, stimulated perhaps by the Centennial Exhibition. Artists in the city with foreign training were reaping rich benefits. There was a renaissance in religious and mural painting. The group of painters who startled the world with their color and technique had withdrawn from the old academy and formed the new "Society of American Artists". Most important, the field of portraiture in New York had a rich and powerful clientele.

The old brick building at 51 West Tenth Street could tell a thrilling story. It still stands almost within sight of Greenwich Village. The bleak, cold walls and the dark, silent halls of the old building gave no hint of the life behind the closed doors. There, however, studios of famous painters, hung with rich tapestries from far lands and deep-toned paintings in elaborate frames of gold, old silver, and lustre, made the visitor forget. There, too, throbbed an existence — unconscious of time, of food, of life itself — dedicated to painting. In some rooms the atmosphere teemed with emotion: success had come, and recognition.

For over twenty years following 1878 visitors found in one of these studios a quiet, cultured gentleman with friendly eyes and a welcoming smile, an artist recognized at home and abroad, the friend and confidant of many fellow craftsmen. He was

George Yewell, the prairie youth, chiseled, sandpapered, and polished for forty years in some of the world's most exacting workshops. With the ripened judgment of years, he discussed, and quite likely dismissed in calm disgust, the "New Society" men, the new schools and techniques. The memory of his generous afternoon teas in his studio lingered long for many. In 1880 came a crowning honor in his career: he was elected to the rank of "Master of the National Academy".

The distant prairie State was to do its part in honoring one of its own. By 1900 the State of Iowa owned nine portraits of its illustrious characters by George Yewell. The paintings of Governors Chambers, Lowe, and Kirkwood; General G. M. Dodge, Theodore S. Parvin, Judge Charles Mason, Judge John F. Dillon, and Judge George G. Wright may be seen at the Historical, Memorial and Art Department Building in Des Moines. A portrait of Governor Lucas, a clean, direct, and forceful piece of work, hangs in the library of the State Historical Society.

When the General Assembly of Iowa appropriated $800 in 1892 for a portrait of Kirkwood, Governor Boies selected George H. Yewell to execute the painting. "Mr. Yewell spent considerable time during the summer of 1892 in Iowa City," wrote H. W. Lathrop in his biography of Kirkwood, and the old war Governor "sat for his picture in the little office at his own home that contained his library and where he had prepared many of his best State pa-

pers. The painting received its finishing touches in Mr. Yewell's studio in New York City, and when completed it was sent to Iowa City and was exhibited for a couple of weeks in the rooms of Close Hall, where it was seen by Gov. Kirkwood's old friends and neighbors who had known him for a third of a century and who pronounced it a perfect likeness of him whom they had known so long and so well." And Yewell himself wrote of the work, "I regard the head and face purely as a work of art, in many respects the best I have ever painted."

The last twenty-five years of Yewell's life were largely spent in the painting of portraits. Famous men honored him with their commissions. Rest from the winter's arduous labors was found during the summers on Lake George. There, when over seventy years of age, the master painted some of his most delightful sketches. But at last came trouble: the close and painstaking work of so many years began to harm his sight. Even then, for ten years, he continued to paint, though almost totally blind. He died in 1923, at the age of ninety-two, revered and honored.

Over forty of Yewell's paintings have been presented to the University of Iowa. The list is impressive, and representative of all of his years of original painting. And among the pictures are some excellent copies from Paul Veronese, Titian, and Van Dyke. The complete collection is valued at approximately $18,000.

All of Yewell's painting shows adherence to the standard of Realism. All of it shows skilled draftsmanship. With few exceptions it is low in color tone. Warm, rich shadows are contrasted with mellow, distant lights. His small landscapes express more individuality, are broader, and climb higher in key. His portraits are true examples of the older school. Always, it is claimed, they are perfect likenesses. They are never sharp, hard, or over-done in technique, and have a quiet dignity, with force and character.

No one should overlook his small sketches and landscapes. They rank high in poetic feeling and quality of painting. A very interesting early picture shows the west campus of the Old Stone Capitol in winter. One other picture, a sketch of "Terrill's Mill" painted in 1862 or 1863, is one of the most beautiful of the collection. The quaint old building caught in western sunlight, the delightfully rendered autumnal foliage, the river, and near-by human figure make a bit of lovely poetry in color. A visit to these paintings will cling in the memory like haunting strains of organ music heard at the hour of sunset.

Mildred W. Pelzer

J. N. Ding

Two women, it is said, were once discussing the claims to distinction of their respective cities. "Well, anyway", said the woman from Milwaukee, "everybody knows that Ding, who makes cartoons for the Milwaukee *Journal*, is the most famous cartoonist in the whole world."

"Why, my dear", said the second woman, "of course Ding is the best cartoonist there is, but he lives in Baltimore. He has a cartoon in the *Sun* every day."

A similar claim might be made by residents of more than one hundred cities in the United States, but, as a matter of fact, J. N. Ding lives in Des Moines, Iowa, in a modest but comfortable home, with a rock garden and swimming pool in the back yard. His name, when he is not making cartoons, is Jay Norwood Darling.

The middle name is apparently reminiscent of his birthplace, for he was born in a Congregational parsonage at Norwood, Michigan. The date was October 21, 1876. To his life in a minister's family in various towns and cities of the Middle West, Mr. Darling attributes much of his sympathetic interest in folks. Problems of members of the congregation were often discussed, and Jay and his brother were encouraged to give suggestions and assistance.

A gradual expansion of interests, however, may be noted. A random survey of the *Register* in the summer of 1907 shows cartoons on politics, employment, sports, Russia, Roosevelt, the Peace Congress, the North Pole, crops, economics, a bank inspector, spring weather, boys going fishing, railroads, smoke, lawn mowing, a man keeping house, athletics, the Haywood trial, a college graduate looking for work, train schedules, mosquitoes, Standard Oil, Hearst, an excursion, and the Des Moines city government. The inclusion of cartoons dealing with domestic problems may have been due to the fact that in October, 1906, Mr. Darling married Miss Genevieve Pendleton of Sioux City. The fact that there were some twenty cartoons dealing with municipal government in a few weeks is evidence of Ding's interest in the affairs of the city in which he lived, an interest he has never lost.

In the summer of 1911, Mr. Darling accepted a position as cartoonist on the staff of the New York *Globe*, and it appeared that here was another example of the wisecrack that great men come *from* Iowa. For almost two years Ding lived in New York. Then he returned to Des Moines, explaining that in the great city he was losing vital contact with people and nature. On March 30, 1913, the Des Moines *Register* published a full page welcome to the returning cartoonist. Ding's cartoons have been an ever popular feature of the *Register's* front page ever since.

COURTESY OF J. N. DARLING

J. N. DARLING

Since 1917, however, the New York *Herald-Tribune* has headed a syndicate of over one hundred newspapers which buy the drawings of the Iowa cartoonist. These represent all sections of the United States and include such influential publications as the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, the Kansas City *Star*, the St. Paul *Pioneer Press*, the Baltimore *Sun*, and the Milwaukee *Journal*.

Under the first contract, Mr. Darling was to live at least four months of the year in New York. But Ding did not like living in the great city. In an article in *The American Magazine* of July, 1919, he told why he preferred Des Moines to New York. "So far as making cartoons is concerned," he said, "I cannot see that it would make a bit of difference whether I live in New York, Des Moines or Mozambique. The days when my cartoon 'falls' in the baking, any place would seem disagreeable — and would be quite a little more disagreeable for my being there, too. And the days when I do 'ring the bell' I could be happy any where".

What really attracts Ding to Des Moines is the comradeship of the community life in the smaller city. "Out West", he writes, "we have to get our sea food canned. But rather canned sea food and fresh friendships than canned friendships and fresh sea food! When you boil all the superfluous water out of life, and sugar off, if you haven't gathered a goodly residue of friendships and affections, you aren't going to have very much sweetness left in the

kettle." Life in the crowded, indifferent city he characterized by the following story.

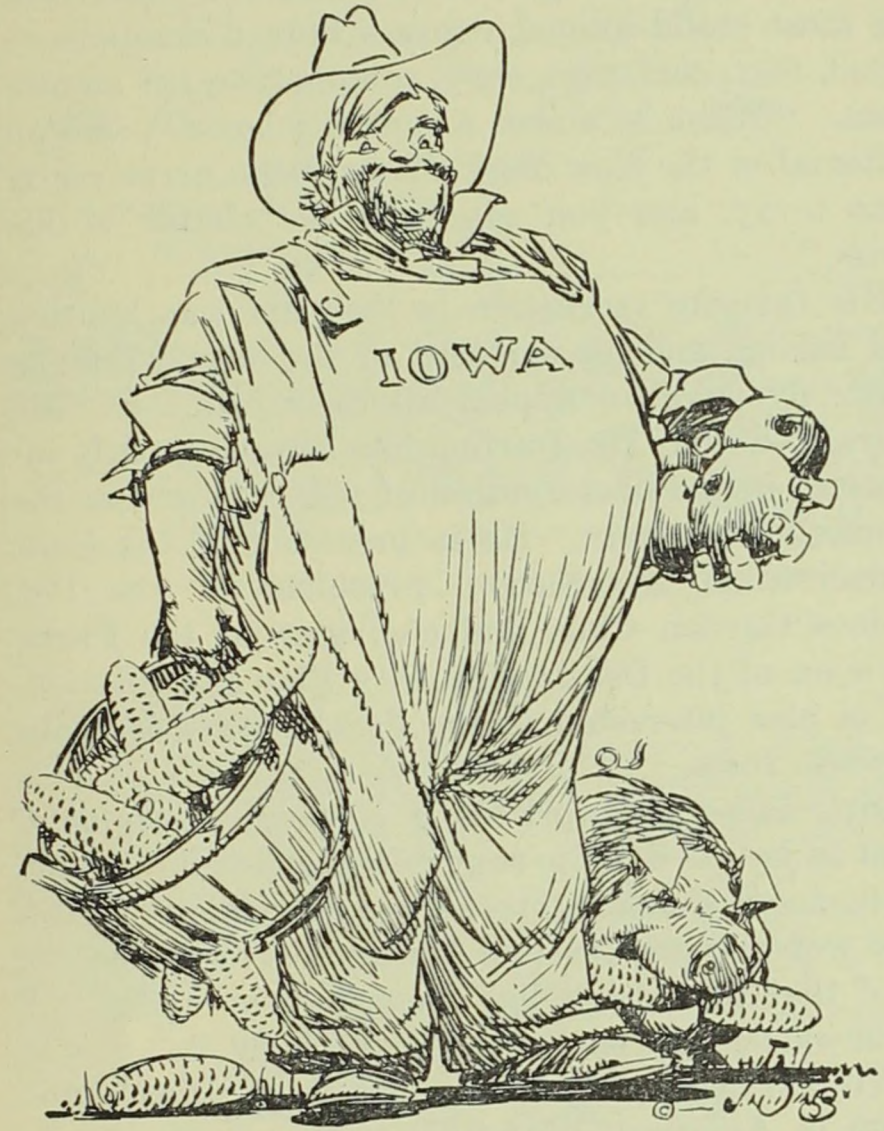
"There is a coyote from the windswept prairies of Nebraska that now lives in ease and luxury in New York City.

"He has a furnished apartment, servants, trained nurses for his children, aristocratic neighborhood, fine view overlooking the park, and the best of meals served from a nearby community kitchen.

"I suppose he is the most distinguished and noticed coyote in the world; but when he dies of fatty degeneration of the heart or of apoplexy from too much food and too little exercise, they'll just go out and catch another to take his place."

So J. N. Darling now spends most of his time in the Middle West. That he has succeeded in making for himself a place in the hearts of his neighbors, and readers as well, was evident during his illness in 1925, when thousands of letters and telegrams of inquiry were received at his office and newspapers all over the United States printed editorials of good wishes.

Farm life is one of Ding's special hobbies. On the outskirts of Des Moines he has a small farm and he often rides out in the morning to see his cows. This interest is reflected in his cartoons of Iowa farm life. Father Iowa, in overalls and straw hat, carries baskets of corn from the bulging cribs. Mother Iowa, rotund and smiling, proffers pans heaped with doughnuts. Horses, cows, calves, pigs, and chickens



——FROM IOWA AND PROUD OF IT——

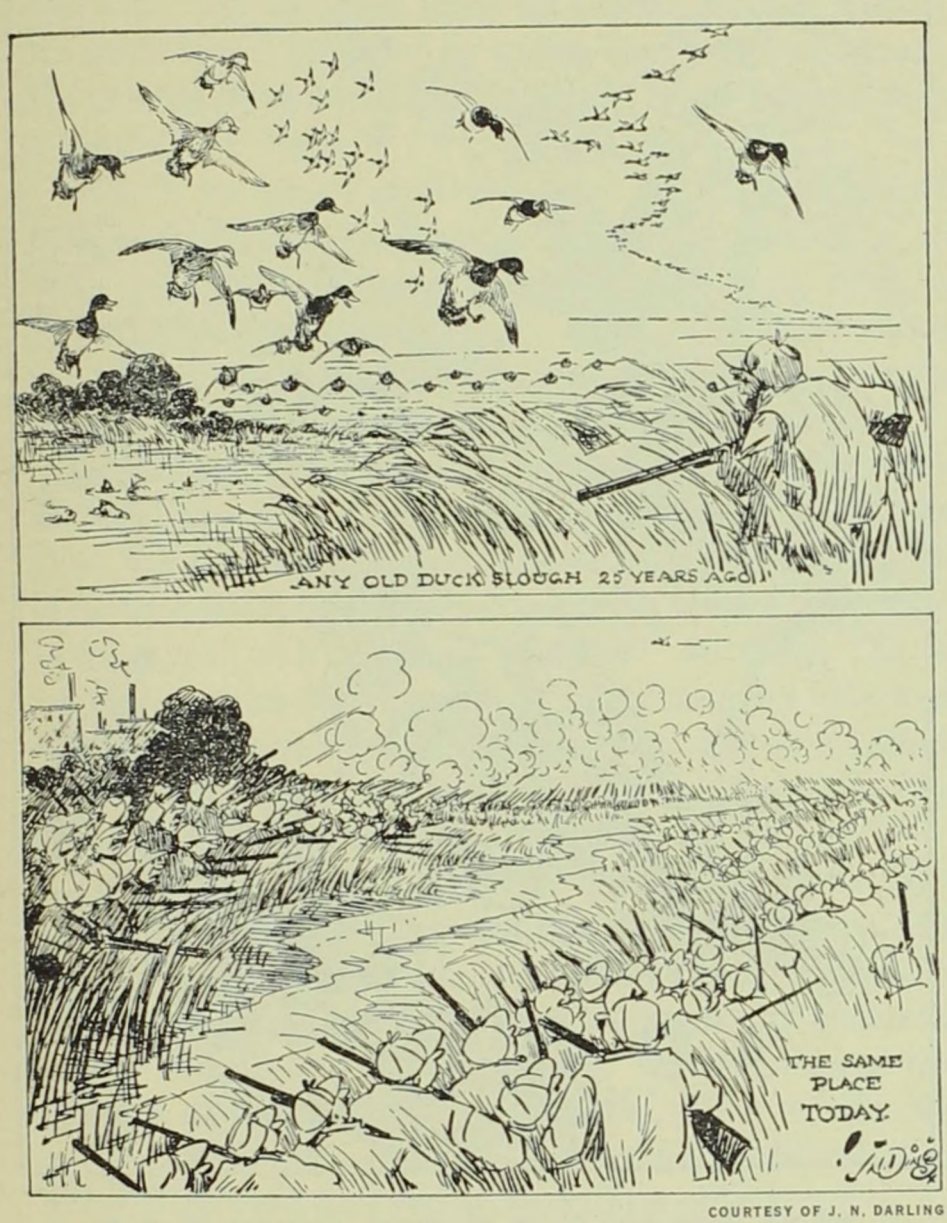
COURTESY OF J. N. DARLING

grin comically. Ding's clever pencil can make even the most stolid animal express human emotions — greed, fear, contempt, envy, complacency, or amusement. "When he makes a runaway horse", said an editorial in the New York *Times*, "the horse really runs away, and you can hear the clatter of his hoofs."

His favorite recreation in the past was hunting and fishing, and his cartoons of the days when the ducks fly have an appeal all their own. Of late years, however, Mr. Darling has become greatly interested in the preservation of wild life and in the promotion of parks. He is president of the Iowa Conservation Association, president of the Des Moines Garden Club, and chairman of the Parks Division of the Des Moines City Plan Commission. He is also interested in the development of State parks in Iowa.

Ding takes his work as a cartoonist seriously. That is, he has definite convictions and believes that his cartoons should express these principles. Asked how wet newspapers like his dry cartoons, he replied that they don't like them, but, he added, "I never change my cartoons for any body."

William Allen White once wrote of Ding's position in American life: "There is art, great art, Ding's art. For nearly a quarter of a century, with growing vogue, Mr. Darling has impressed himself upon the spirit of America. He stands well among the leading men of his profession who shape public



COURTESY OF J. N. DARLING

WHY IT SEEMS ABOUT TIME TO BEGIN TALK OF CONSERVATION

COURTESY OF J. N. DARLING

WE DO HOPE THE WILD FLOWERS APPRECIATE HOW ARDENTLY WE LOVE THEM

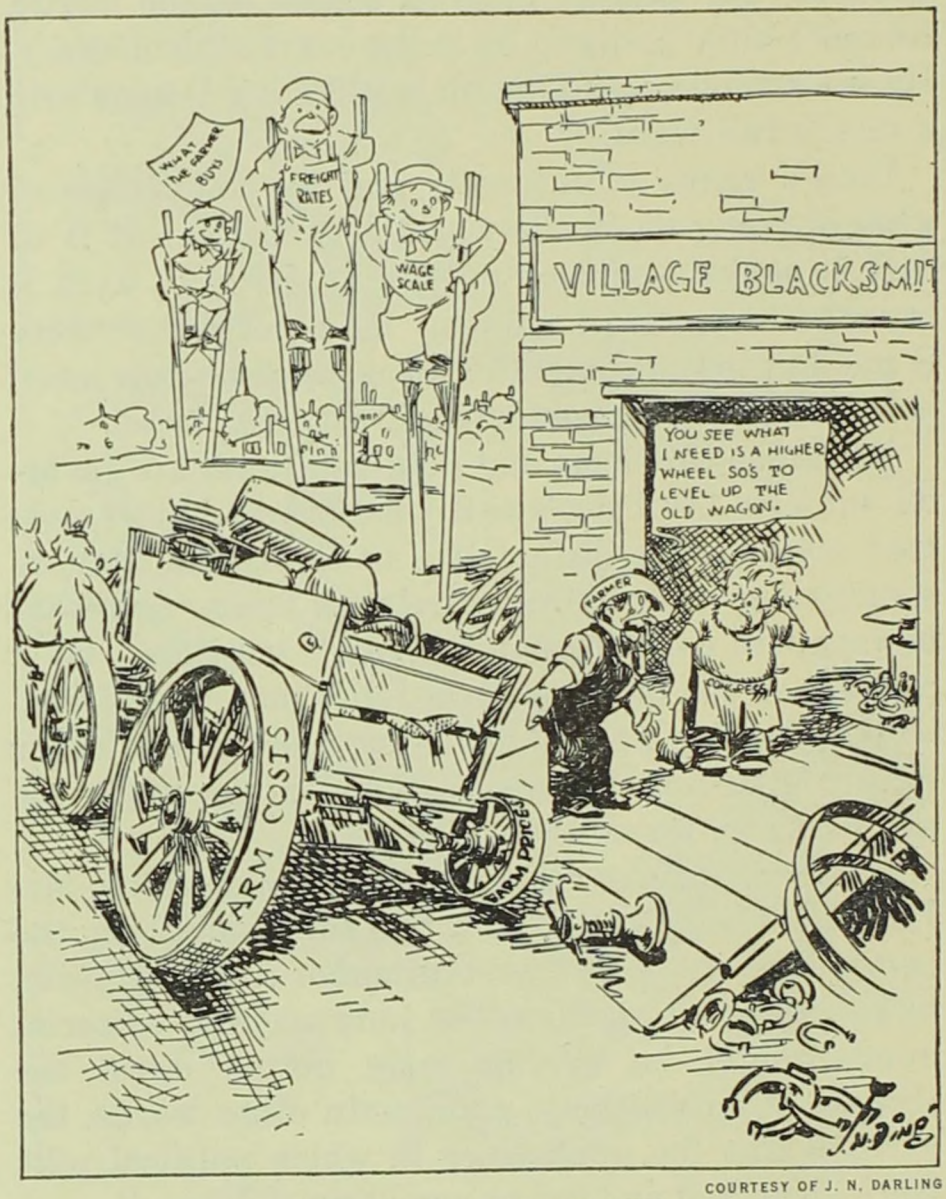
opinion. He handles lines as others handle words. No mere hired jester is he in the court of democracy. He is councilor, speaking up to old King Demos with a man's full right."

Ding's range of interests and his knowledge of what is going on in the world is amazing. It is as easy to make a cartoon every day, he says, as it is to make only one in a week. He asserts that there is no limit to the number of ideas a person may have, if he has sufficient contacts and uses his brain.

Economic problems and political issues are favorite subjects for Ding's cartoons, but he knows, too, that most people do not like to think and that instruction must be interspersed with humor and what newspapers call "human interest" subjects. So a cartoon on the tariff or farm relief may be followed by one showing a small boy going fishing or a father grimly guarding his neckties and socks while the son packs up for college.

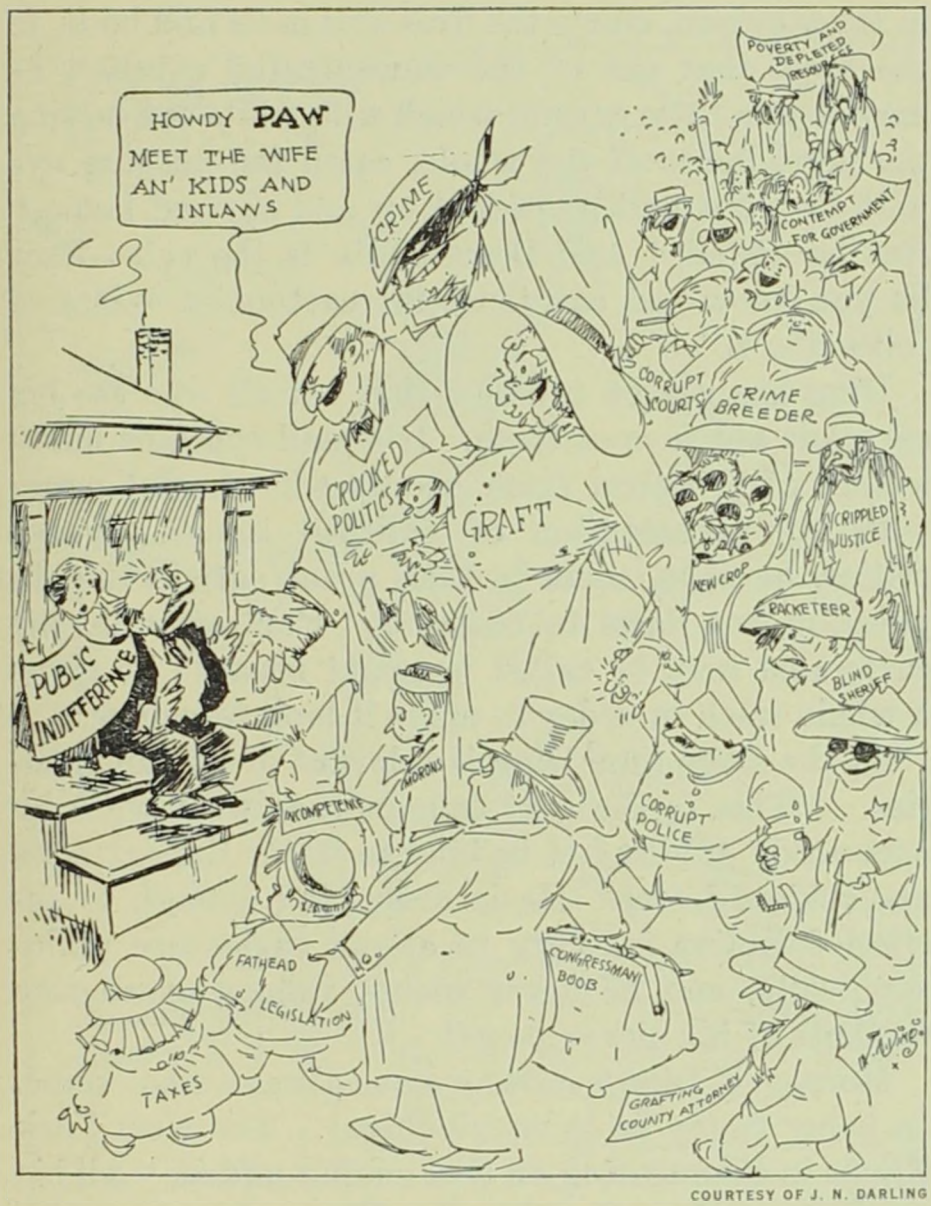
In discussing the rôle of the political cartoon, Mr. Darling once said: "I fancy that in its inception, the cartoon set out to be a sort of humor-coated capsule, by means of which the sober judgments of editorial minds might be surreptiously gotten down the throats of an apathetic public. In other words, the cartoon was the applesauce in which political pills were immersed and fed to unwilling children."

The cartoonist, he said in a radio speech, "absorbs all of the information, facts and emotions of passing events he can hold and daily puts himself



COURTESY OF J. N. DARLING

AS THE FARMER SEES IT



COURTESY OF J. N. DARLING

A HOMECOMING MAY BE A GOOD THING NOW AND THEN TO GET ACQUAINTED WITH OUR OFFSPRING

in the stewpan, starts the fires and boils and boils, in the hope that out of the concentrated solution he may coax a little crystal which will, while embodying the ingredients of the whole, catch the passing eye with its glint and be picked up and carried home." But he added, "And there again is the rub. How do you know you can trust the cartoonist — lots of folks don't."

Ding has reason to know that not all who see his cartoons approve of them. His mail contains many letters of criticism from people who do not agree with his presentation of political issues. These critics, he says, seem to take great satisfaction in pointing out flaws in cartoons. For example, the cartoonist may be called ignorant because he gives a whale teeth in order to make it look ferocious.

At the same time Ding is tolerant of human frailties. "This is the only human race we have", he once said. "Why not be kind to it?" His cartoons are seldom bitter. He is even kind enough to respect feminine inability to accept caricature philosophically, and he never makes women characters the butt of his clever pencil.

Moreover, Ding's cartoons are always wholesome. In being funny he is never vulgar. The New York *Times* in commenting on this quality added, "All his work is so clean that its cleanliness escapes notice — it is taken for granted."

Another characteristic of Ding and his cartoons is optimism. Indeed, he insists that any one who

COURTESY OF J. N. DARLING

THE LONG LONG TRAIL

can write can become a cartoonist if he tries hard enough. This is probably only a manifestation of Mr. Darling's modesty, but he sincerely believes in the efficacy of ambition and effort, and in the opportunity of American life. There is nothing of the cynic in Ding.

In 1924 he was awarded the Pulitzer prize for the best cartoon printed in 1923. This cartoon, which appeared in the Des Moines *Register* for May 6, 1923, consisted of four panels. Three of them represented poor boys who had become famous while the fourth showed young people idling on the street corner. Underneath was the caption, "But they didn't get there by hanging around the corner drug store."

It is this combination of ideas, convictions, philosophy, humor, and optimism which give Ding's cartoons their universal appeal. He insists that he is not an artist, for art, he says, is the expression of pleasant emotion — and Mr. Darling is something of a critic when it comes to art — but all of his drawings express ideas effectively and if we smile at them so much the better. Some of his cartoons — notably the one representing the death of Roosevelt and some of those pertaining to nature — have a poignant beauty which makes them really artistic, in the more critical meaning of the term.

Ruth A. Gallaher

Comment by the Editor

THE NATURE OF ART

Whoever perceives beauty and truth is an artist. Without the sense of inherent design, the skill of creation is futile. No matter how facile a person may be in the use of brush, chisel, or pen, the result of his effort will be ugly and wrong if his comprehension is feeble or his vision is faulty. Art exists as much in the understanding as in the expression of things that are vital and right.

Life, and all that life can promise, seems as transient as the seasons. The law of existence is change. Yet in the universe of men and things, essential harmony prevails, as if some fundamental order or design controls the evanescent realities of time and place. Amid ephemeral confusion, truth and beauty may be found — the ever-present symbols of eternity. When all else seems inconsequential, then the symphony of concord proclaims the permanence of verity, as a lighthouse indicates the land.

Art is the discovery of eternal truth and beauty, and the method of art is selection. From the dross of circumstance, the artist gleans the precious gold of character. Whatever is typical and true he sees in terms of beauty, but the abnormal he ignores.

From the colors of the rainbow he derives the substance of vitality, solid bronze and flawless marble supply the tangibility of form, and sound is recomposed to represent emotion.

Being the expression of reality, art acquires the quality of permanence from the subjects it portrays. When time and change have swept away the life of former years, the statues and the pictures still survive. If the story of the past is to endure, it must be told in truth and beauty.

J. E. B.

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