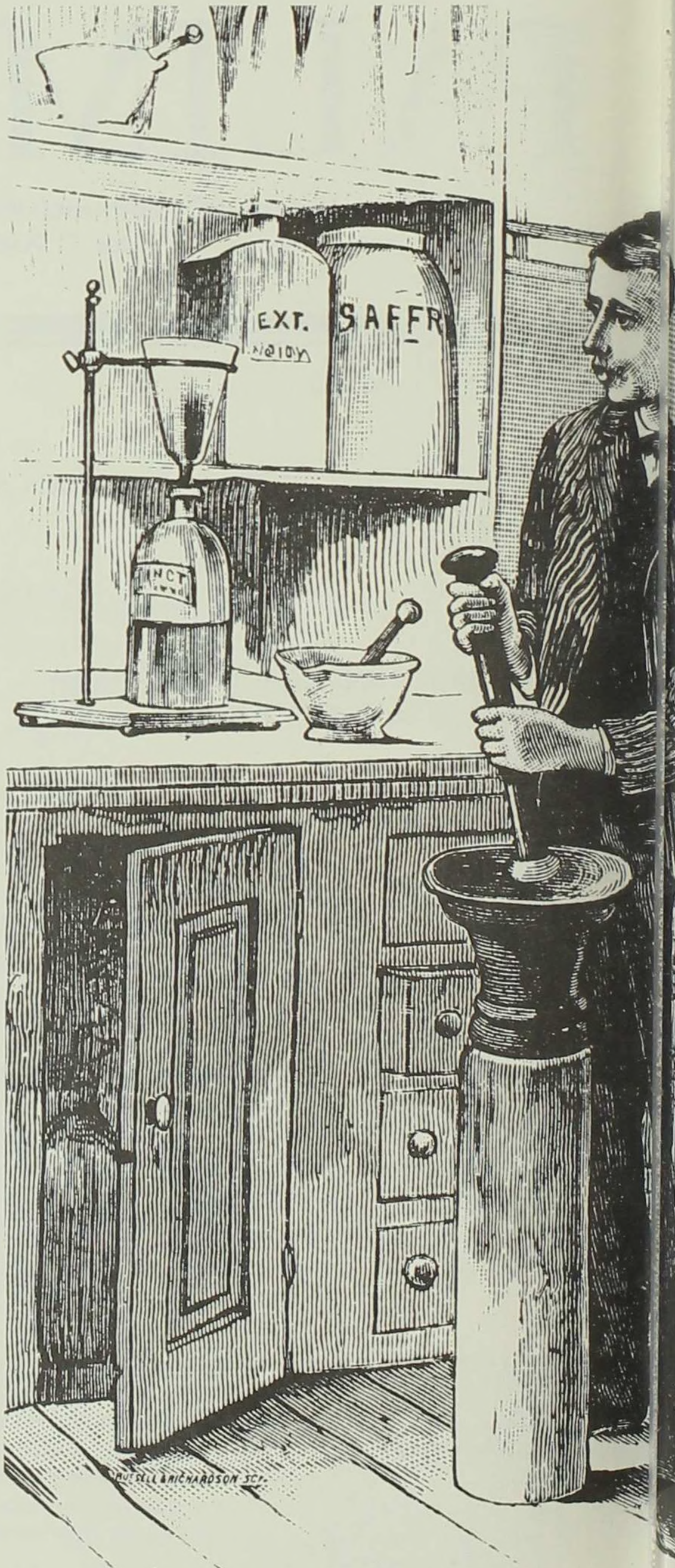
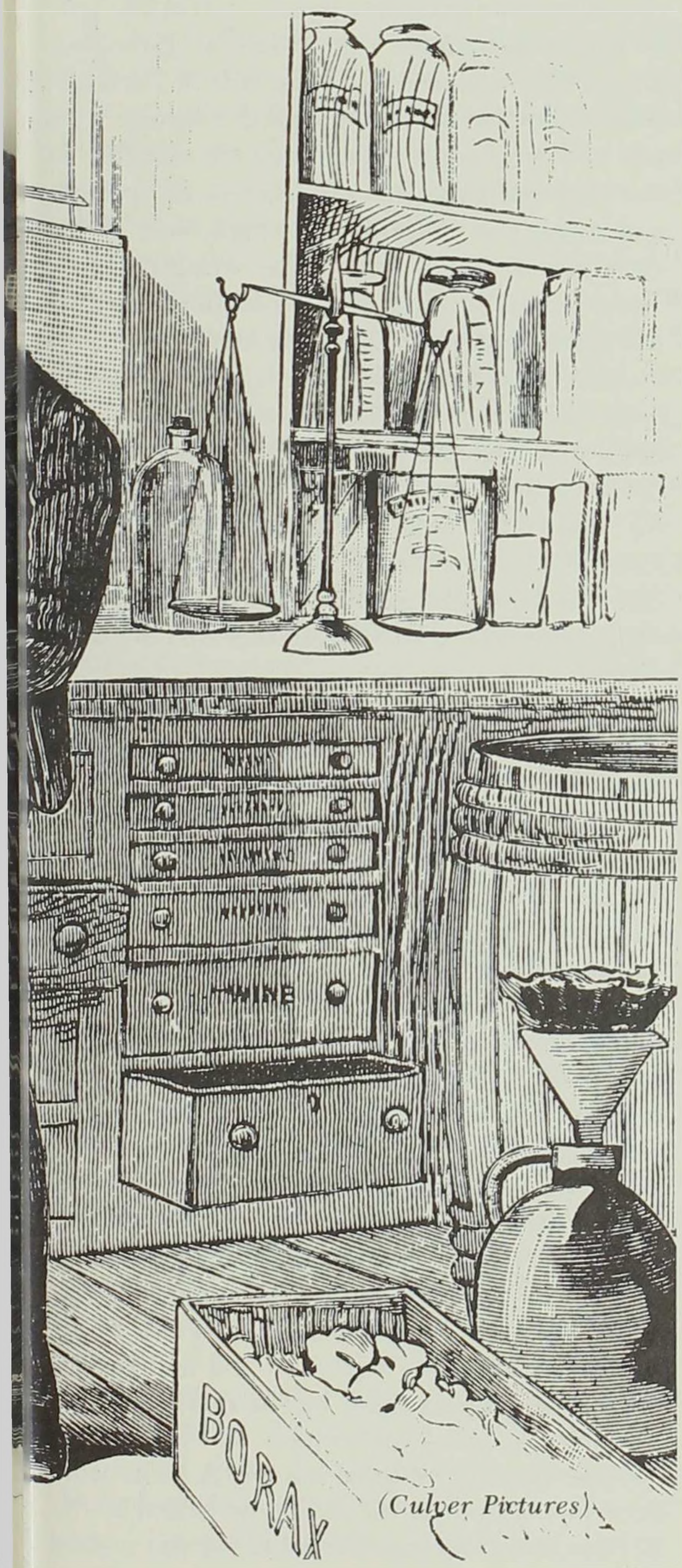
MEMOIRS OF A COUNCIL BLUFFS DRUGGIST

edited by Robert B. Stuart



The following article is from the autobiographical record of James Daniel Stuart. Born in Council Bluffs in 1860, he was the son of James Stuart and Margaret Hardie Shaw Stuart. In 1864 his mother died in childbirth, leaving James Daniel, older brother William, and older sister Margaret with their father, who was a tailor. Young James began working as a druggist in 1876 and remained thus employed in Council Bluffs until 1880, when he moved to Mondamin, Iowa to open his own drug store. In 1888 he and his wife, Annie Leonora Caffall Stuart, returned to Council Bluffs but moved again ten years later, this time to Magnolia. Here Mr. Stuart owned and operated a drug store for the rest of his working life. He died in 1938.

James Stuart's memoirs appeared originally in Saints and Sundries, *a book written by his great-grandson Robert B. Stuart and published privately in 1976.*



(Culver Pictures)

As soon as school closed, when I was sixteen, I began working for Robert McKenzie, who had a seventy-two-acre market garden and fruit farm. He was a very nice man but slaved himself from morning until night. His wife was Swiss. I worked on the market garden for $3 a week and board, while men who did less got $1.25 and their dinner each day. I have always felt that the boy or girl or woman should be paid equally with the man for the same amount or kind of work, but it has been my experience and observation that it is not done.

Across from Dad's tailor shop was a drug store first run by John D. Honn, whose clerk was Amzi M. Beardsley. We did all our drugstore business with them, and they patronized the tailor shop. Mr. Beardsley at one time had worked in a furniture factory in Horicon, Wisconsin which was his home. During a spring flood there, he had waded in the cold water all day, and a resulting chill turned to rheumatism and later a white swelling that cramped one leg until his heel touched his hip. Clamps were placed on the leg to try to straighten it out but left it crooked, so that one foot was about a foot higher than the other. Mr. Beardsley and a partner, J.D. Black, bought out Mr. Honn. Then Mr. Beardsley saved enough to buy out his partner.

Unknown to me, Dad had asked Mr. Beardsley to give me a place in his store when he next had a vacancy, and Mr. Beardsley had said he would.

Mr. Beardsley decided to visit the 1876 Centennial celebration at Philadelphia, going by way of his home in Wisconsin where a brother worked as a conductor on the Milwaukee Railroad. Mr. Beardsley left his clerk, Edward N. Monroe, in charge of the store. Ed had come from Unionville, Missouri where he had clerked in a drug store. He had had trouble with his employers there and had sued them for his wages. They wrote him at Council Bluffs to come back to Unionville, and if he would withdraw his suit they would turn the store over to

him. Ed decided to leave and wired Beardsley at Horicon to return home, which he did. Beardsley then went to my father and told him he was ready to give me a try and wanted me to begin at once. That message was delivered to me the evening of September 14, 1876 at McKenzie Gardens, and early the next morning I was installed as the only helper in the Beardsley Drugstore, at the princely salary of $3 a week.

The choice of a profession had never troubled my mind. I certainly had never thought of the drug business, but parents have pride in their children and high aspirations for their future. I had no previous experience either in a drug store or in any store. I viewed the array of dispensing bottles and jars on the shelf with awe and the Latin or botanical labels as mysteries never to be mastered. I was turned loose. I would hold up a bottle and ask "What is this?" The reply, "Find out." In answer to the question, "How?" Mr. Beardsley referred me to the dispensatory. He remarked, "If I tell you, you will forget; if you look it up yourself and read all that is said about it, you will remember."

When this position as drug clerk came to me I boarded with my brother William and his wife. He had been married the year before, September 9, 1875, to Christie A. Gamet of Mondamin. Their home was on the east side of Washington Avenue between First and Second.

I roomed in the rear of the drug store, a coop about six by eight feet. The wardrobe and bed took up practically all the floor space. There was a window in the rear, frosted glass on the south side adjoining the store, a door and the wardrobe on the west side. The east side was a brick wall. Robert and Margaret Boyd lived overhead. She was an old time Scottish midwife. . . . A rear stairway went from her room to the back lot where she had a horse in the barn.

The adjoining building to the west, along Broadway on the north side of the street, was twelve feet longer than the drugstore building, and their east window opened on our lot. This building was a gambling house, and at the time of my employment the principal game was Keno. The man who got the ball in the right place called "keno" and got all the money. This was an every night occurrence for months. In the summer time the windows were opened, and it was just as though the men were in the next room. Every time the winner yelled "keno" everyone else swore, and for a long time the noise interferred with my sleep. One gets used to accustomed noises, however, and finally I slept through it all. Even Mrs. Boyd did not arouse me one night when she pounded at the back door and rapped on the window near my bed. That was the kind of noise I had learned to sleep through. Only expected calls disturbed me, like a call at the front door of the drug store. When the thumb touched the latch I awakened.

Two doors west of the drug store was a large saloon with tables and games, and overhead there was a public hall for theater, lectures, and political meetings. Almost every night something was going on, frequently with bands of music outside to attract the crowds. The building was built by Henry Burhop. After his death it was rented, and known for a long time as Bradley's Academy.

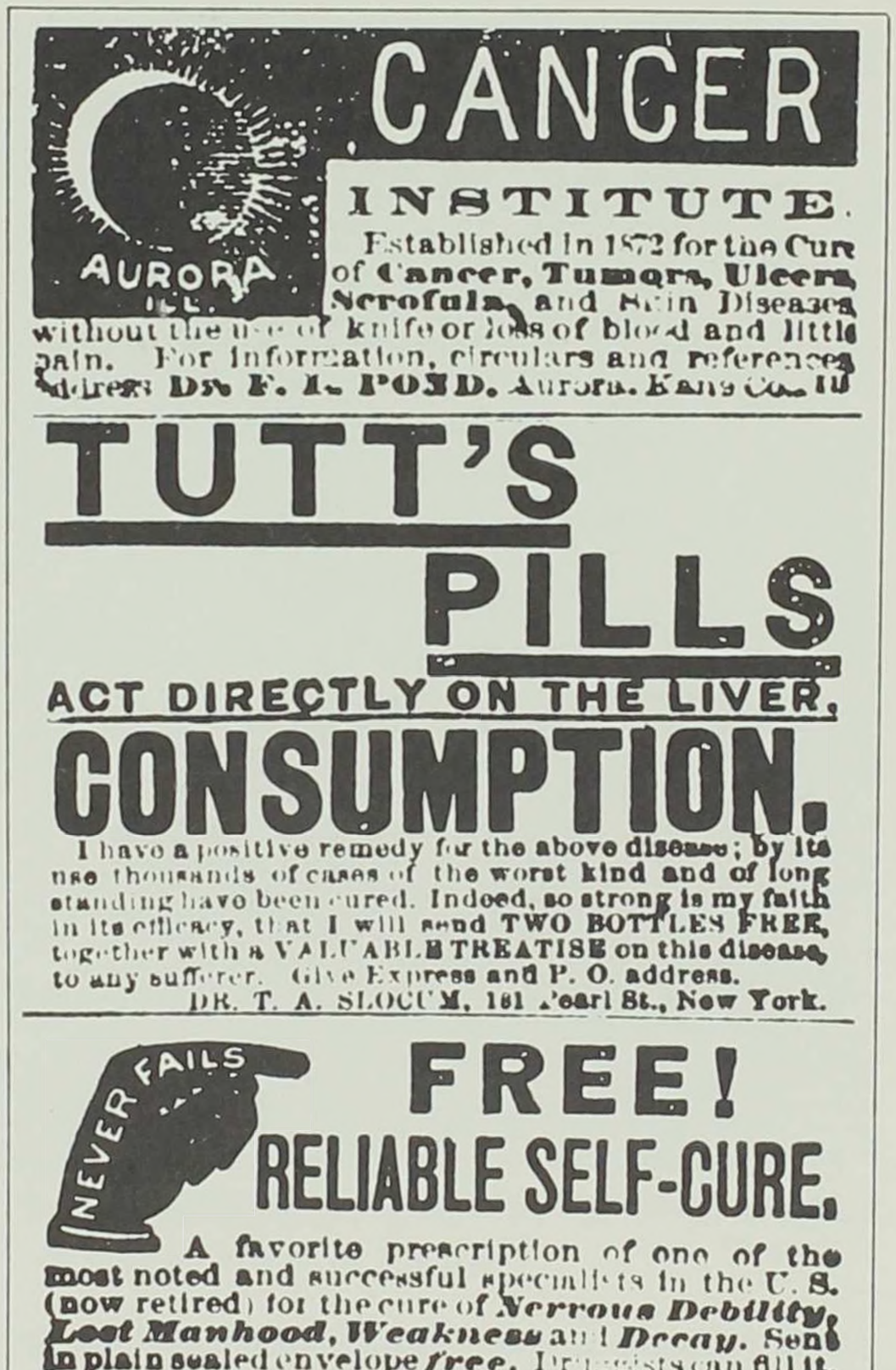
The question of salary became a serious one right away, since I paid my brother $3.00 a week for board, and that took all my wages with nothing for laundry, clothing, or extras of any kind. After three weeks of work I suggested to the boss that I hoped I would soon be worth a little more to him. He took the matter sternly, it seemed to me, and replied that he would pay me more when I was worth it. Mr. Beardsley was about forty-five years old and had been a widower for a long time, but he married about the time I entered his employ. The week after he was married he gave me $4. A short time later he wanted me to change to board at the Bryant house because the landlord was a good

customer. Mr. Beardsley then paid my board and gave me $16 a month.

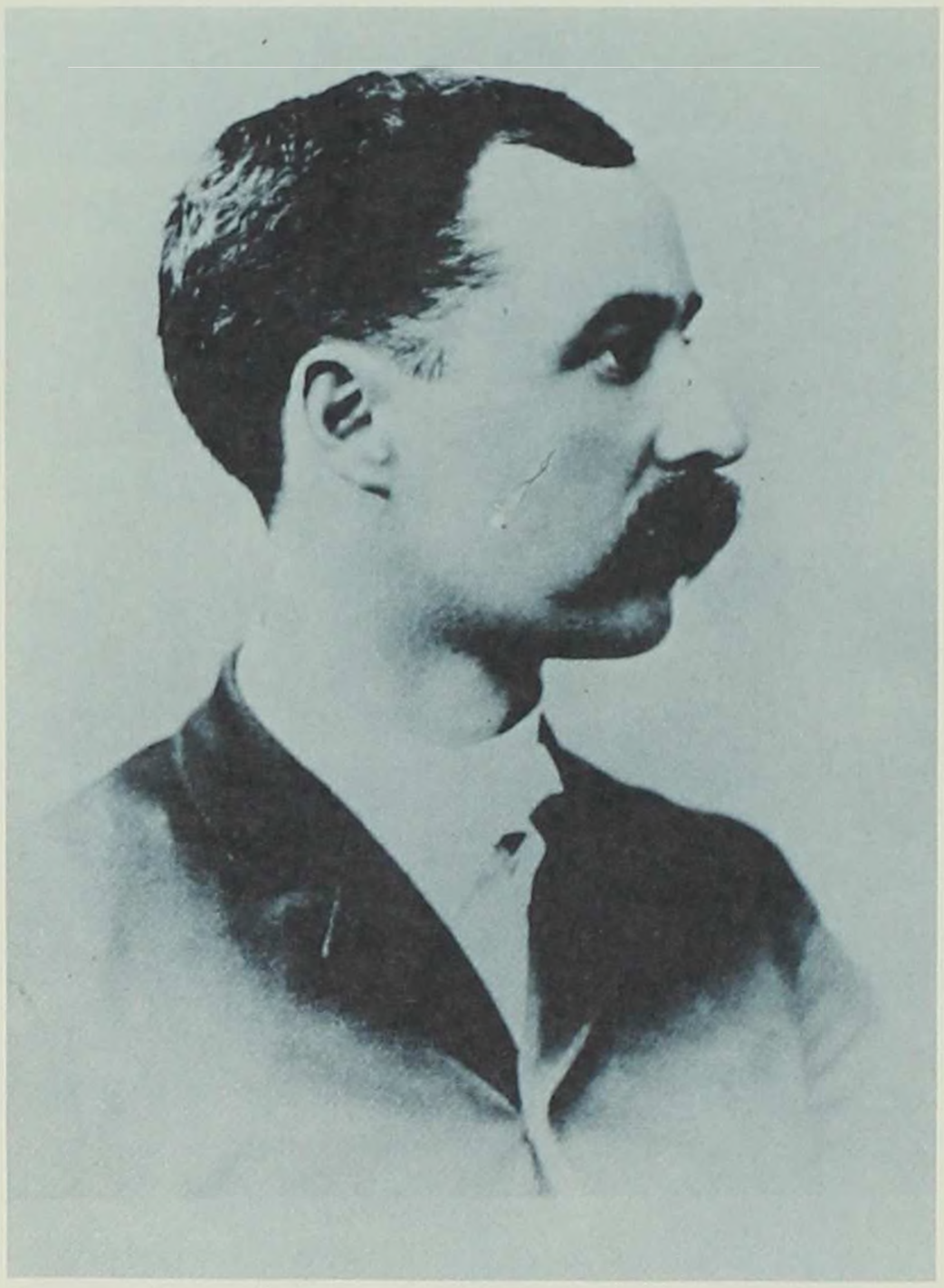
At first the nights were very lonely at the drug store, surrounded with what I considered poisons and not knowing when I should be called out of bed. Even the ribaldry next door was company in that I knew I was not alone if anything happened.

One night I was called up and handed a prescription to fill. The orders were not to fill any. I looked at this prescription thoughtfully. I thought of the humiliation if I confessed my ignorance, and I thought of the urgent need, for the party told me he had been the whole length of the street and had been unable to arouse a single drug clerk. It was a simple prescription, plainly written, but it took me a long time to fill it and hand it over. I went to bed but not to sleep. Several times I got up and looked at the piece of paper and the medicines I had used in making it up. I told the boss when he came down in the morning and explained why I had disobeyed him. He looked at the prescription and looked at the things I had put in it and the quantities as I had interpreted the signs. He said it was all right this time, but he sighed as he said it.

The second day working I was in the store alone, and an old lady came in from the country. She looked at me and inquired for Mr. Beardsley. I told her he was home for dinner. She wanted to know when he would return. I was unable to say but suggested I might be able to supply what she wanted. She said, "You look pretty young." She was restless and got up from her chair often. I asked her to tell me what she wanted and I would tell her whether or not I could supply it. Finally she said she wanted "camfire," but I was pretty young and she would wait. I swelled with importance and took a bottle from the shelf labeled Aqua Camphorae. I showed it to her. She smelled it, looked at it, smelled it again, hesitated and said, "It looks like camfire, smells like camfire,



Some of the cures and medications advertised in the Council Bluffs Weekly Nonpareil *around the time of Mr. Stuart's apprenticeship (SHSI)*



James Daniel Stuart, 1881 (courtesy Robert B. Stuart)

are you sure it is camfire?" I assured her and she finally heaved a sigh and departed with her purchase.

Mr. Beardsley returned, and I laughingly told him the experience. He said, "What did you give her?" I showed him, and he replied, "You go and find her and get it back." It was humiliating, for I had given her camphor water, when I should have given her spirits of camphor which contained two ounces of gum to a pint of alcohol. How could I face her and explain? I'm afraid I strained the truth. I walked up the street looking in each store I passed and found her in a toy store owned by an old English couple, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Soar. I had a bottle of what she wanted to exchange for her first purchase. I approached her and explained, "Madam, Mr. Beardsley returned and when I said who you were he told me you were in the habit of buying the stronger kind of camphor, and he has sent me with it to exchange." She said, "I thought you were pretty young."

A short time after this a young lady came in and inquired for Lilly White Powder. Now the billboards were covered with huge posters announcing a new baking powder named "Lilly White" for sale by all grocers. I explained to her that the grocery stores handled baking powder. We both flushed when she said she wanted a powder for the face.

Sometime later I filled a prescription at the noon hour. It was for a retired hod carrier whose stomach was spoiled from so much whiskey. One of the ingredients was Ipecac, and the intention of the Rx was to ask for one dram. The last stroke of that sign looked like a lower case "j" with the hook at the bottom turned in the opposite direction. In this case I interpreted this sign to mean five drams and so dispensed it. When Mr. Beardsley returned and I told him the quantity he told me to go to the patient's house and have the bottle returned. I reasoned with him that it would do no more harm after he had taken it than to come up again, it might be too late when I got to the house, and the advertisement of error and possible damages would discredit the store. He was quite uneasy about it but let it go. No harm came from it, and the patient lived for many years afterward.

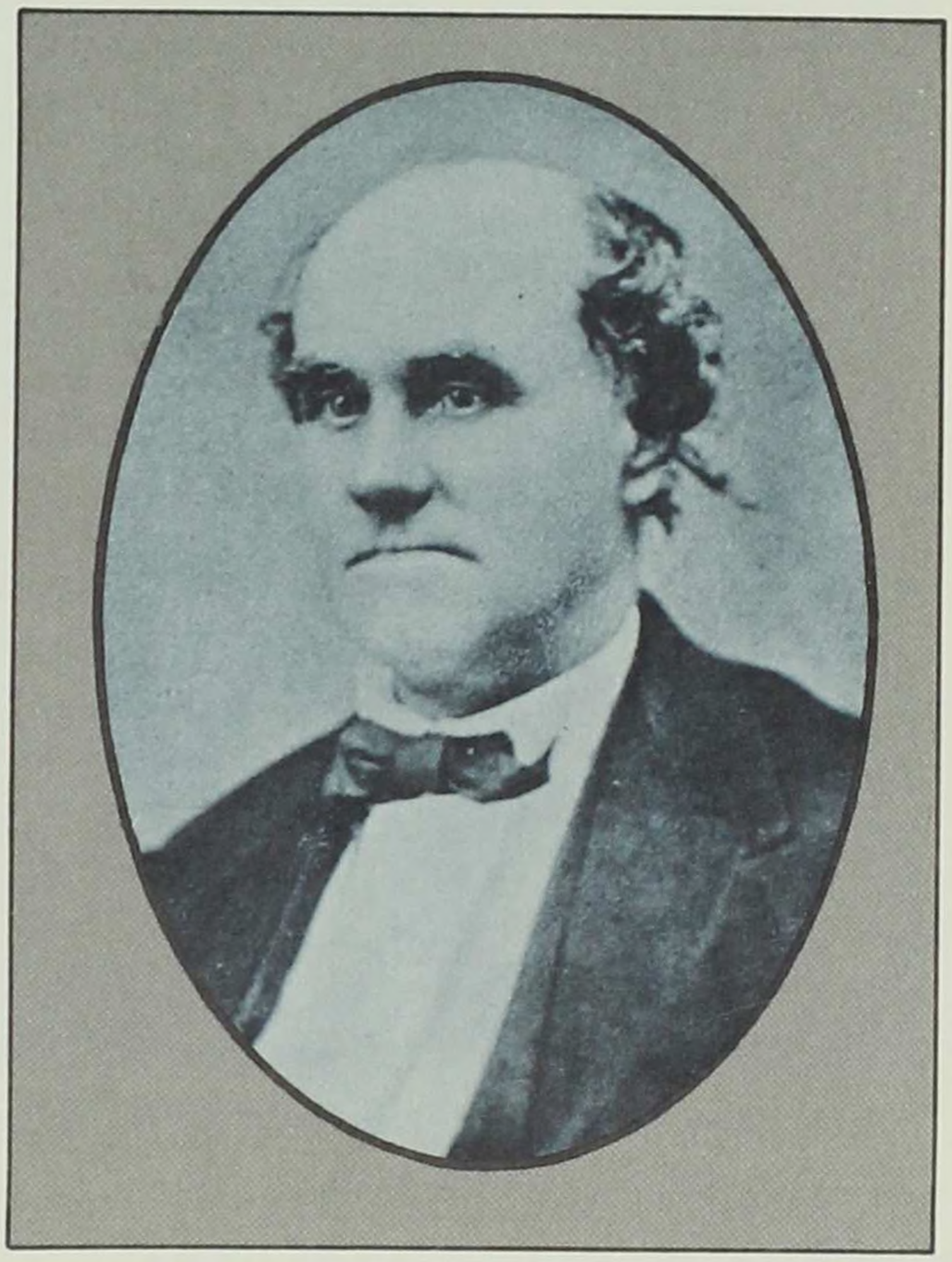
I rejoice in the thought that these are the only mistakes I ever knew I made, and also I am very glad I have caught many serious errors by physicians that would have done harm had they not been aborted. I was at a disadvantage in my apprenticeship since my employer was neither educated as a druggist nor as a scholar. He engaged in the business as I did without book learning or schooling in the profession. I remember one humiliating mistake he made that illustrates this handicap. We received a prescription that included an ingredient written "Aquae Bullientes." I asked what it meant, he

puzzled over it and looked for it in the dispensatory and finally concluded that it was a private formula intrusted to the preferred druggist, so that he would get the business. Mr. Beardsley sent me with a four-ounce bottle to the druggist indicated. That man smiled and asked if I had been sent, or did my employer know that I was after it. I told him I had been sent. "Well," he said, "when you get back to the store, light your burner, set a pan of water on it, and when it boils you have what is called for in the prescription." I felt pretty cheap, and so did my employer.

There has been an evolution in the drug business since that time. Then we made our tinctures from barks and roots and our syrups, pills and ointments from the raw materials. We powdered our drugs and dispensed everything sold in wrapping paper.

I am glad Mr. Beardsley depended on me and gave me responsibilities. He would not let me lean on him and insisted that I should go to the books to study it out. In a general way, also, he insisted on his own methods being followed. I was not allowed to sit down during the day. If no customer were in the store I was to stand at the door and greet the incoming customer at the door or at the curb if in a vehicle. I was to be in bed every night at nine o'clock. I was allowed Sunday afternoon from two to six o'clock and Thursday night from seven to nine. I had an hour for each meal. I was to arise in time to have the store cleaned and the sidewalk swept, the fires attended to, and the empty dispensing bottles filled before sunup.

It is not my purpose to enter into the details of the experiences that every drug clerk has, although very many were unusual. At one time I undertook to keep a copy of every funny order or peculiar experience. It became too bulky since the ordinary layman knew so little about drugs. It became commonplace, for example, to fill phonetically spelled orders, "gum mare back" for gum arabic, or "Auntie Guentim" for unquentum, or the request, "enough Ipecac to



James Stuart, father of the Council Bluffs druggist (courtesy Robert B. Stuart)

throw up a small child." The semi-professional character of the drug business attracted confidence from patrons. The skeletons were paraded and advice sought. In reviewing some of these experiences I am thankful I have intervened to prevent crime and death, or useless expense. In that respect I have performed some service to my fellow man. Perhaps there is more ignorance and superstition with regard to drugs than any other line. Miraculous virtue is given to inert drugs and testimonials of lives saved that exist in hallucinations of the mind only. And yet if a word of doubt is expressed to the customer, you have offended him.

An acquaintance, Edward Knabe, quarreled with his wife and aroused me in the middle of the night, coming into the store in shirt and pants only. Excitedly he said he was being tortured with toothache and wanted morphine.

To refuse him would only send him away to another store. I asked the quantity, and he threw down a quarter. As he left he shook the contents of the paper down his throat and said "goodby." It was quinine that I gave him; if it had been morphine the quantity was great enough to kill a score. His passion cooled by morning, but he passed the store on the opposite side of the street.

Grocer Clark aroused me at midnight, yelling through the door, "Never mind dressing." He held out a quart bottle saying it was given him for taking snuff for catarrh and he had taken a large dose. I gave him a stiff dose of Ipecac and opened the door to let him out. He got rid of it at the curb. I gently teased him the next morning, and he pledged me to secrecy.

Rebellious expectant mothers were quite frequent solicitors for advice and abortive medicines. I am glad I yielded to none of them. One mother afterward thanked me for a son she said was saved by my advice.

When positions are scarce and money lacking, clerks cling to their jobs. When a new opening is ready at every turn because helpers are scarce, they are often careless of their conduct and indifferent to their employer's interests. If one is not interested in his work and thinks only of money, he watches the clock and never makes a success.

Seldom do the sons of the rich make a name for themselves. Poverty is often a blessing in disguise. My father built strong hopes on me. I knew he did.

My employer was an honorable man. He bought the best quality drugs and never substituted or omitted any ingredient because it was expensive. He always paid a liberal wage for the times and was entitled to service. He enjoyed a good trade, and I was just as much interested in the receipts as if they were my own. I formulated a number of good things that sold well and made him extra profit, all of which he took to himself without any appreciation. Many times I felt that my work was burdensome because of lack of appreciation, or monotony of sameness and long hours, or sometimes business policies I did not approve of. Being the best paid drug clerk in town, however, I seemed to be indispensable to him. I bought the goods, did the banking and correspondence, and kept the books. Not to disappoint my father, and also because of the good things about my employer that offset the things I disliked, I stayed on.

Incidents that annoyed me: if I was engaged in filling a bottle for my customer and spilled some in the operation, Mr. Beardsley would call me down before the customer. If a customer came in and I stepped up to wait on them, if he knew them pretty well or thought he could do better in making a sale, he would step up and quote a lower price than I was instructed to sell for, discrediting me before the customer. I bore with this, at times with inward rebellion and sometimes verbally, and then he flew all to pieces.

We kept a want book. Every time we made a sale or had a call for something we were out of or thought we needed, we made the notation in this book. That was my job also. Traveling men got all the orders. One traveling man in particular never failed to get a liberal order every time he called through many years.

One evening this man was being given the order while we all sat before the stove in early evening. Mr. Beardsley thought one item on the want book was in stock, and he asked me about it. I told him I had used the last of it. He was not convinced. I repeated that I had made a diligent search for it when I entered it on the book, but he ordered me in a rough way to look again and so I did gingerly. Then he looked himself without success and placed the order. I went to supper and while I was gone, I learned afterward, they discussed me. The traveler persuaded Mr. Beardsley that a clerk in his town was the very man he wanted. The young man wanted to come west because of weak

An enlargement of a traveler's "carte-de-visite," ca. 1866-1870 (SHSI)

lungs, he said. Three weeks later at the noon hour on the first of October I had returned from making a successful first of the month collection among our customers, when a young fellow came in with grip in hand and mackintosh over his arm. He stepped up and inquired for Mr. Beardsley and introduced himself as Mr. Barker. He was invited to take a seat by the stove, and turning to me Mr. Beardsley said, "Stuart, that's my new man. You have been so impudent that I couldn't stand it any longer," referring to the earlier incident with the traveling man and the order.

There had been no intimation or notice of any kind, simply the roughshod summary dismissal. Mr. Barker stepped forward and asked permission to go and clean up before he began work. I felt it was brutal and undeserved. I sat by the stove fingering the wage he paid me and realized that after my obligation for a suit of clothes was met I was out of a job and had only $1.50. It was past Mr. Beardsley's dinner hour, and he was nervously waiting for the new clerk to return. I told him to go to dinner and I would stay until he returned. He thanked me and went. I got my belongings together, and when relieved by the new clerk I got courage enough to tell my father. He said little. I imagined that although disappointed, he thought I was not altogether at fault. I stayed then with Dad at the tailor shop.

Mr. Beardsley regretted the haste in engaging my successor and persuaded his brother-in-law to solicit my services in a general merchandising store. I told him, however, that I had started out in drugs and wanted to continue.

The night watch was asked to keep a lookout on the new man. He reported the first morning that Barker had spent the previous night at a resort across the way. The next night it was a billiard hall until one AM, and the night after that several young fellows were in the store drinking with him until very late. Then a friend of mine told me he had been asked if he thought I would come back. I avoided Mr. Beardsley. I

heard all kinds of compliments about myself, and I wanted to go back, but I wanted to be asked and with a chance to have my say. After nearly two weeks Mr. Beardsley saw me on the opposite side of the street and called me over. He had swallowed his pride by force of reason and necessity and asked if I didn't think we could come to some agreement. I told him some of the things where I thought I had been mistreated. He referred to the traveling man as evidence that I had been impudent. He finally admitted he had been hasty and suggested the experience might be good for both of us. If I would come back he would advance my salary to $5. We agreed. This was Saturday and he wanted me to begin Sunday morning.

I went to the store Sunday at nine AM as Barker was leaving for the post office to get the mail. Mr. Beardsley turned on him and said, "Give the keys to Stuart; he will get the mail. I have no further use for you." Brutal again, but he had reason as the man had not been true to him. Nevertheless, tears came to Barker's eyes as he surrendered the keys and departed. He got instant employment in a downtown store, was discharged, engaged his service to a plumbing establishment in Omaha, got drunk one night and broke into a Council Bluffs grocery, stealing a shot sack filled with minor coins. He was arrested and would have died in jail had he not been pardoned out to die a few weeks later.

Not usually resentful for a long period, I still felt the traveling man had mistreated me. If he had overtaken me in some dishonest act or disloyalty it was his duty to inform my employer, but when he meddled to curry favor or further his own ends he had gone beyond his rights. He got no more orders. When he called there was simply nothing on the order book, then after he had gone I put a page of wants on the book from a memorandum in my pocket. He couldn't understand it and felt something was wrong. Years later when I was a proprietor he called on me to solicit business, but I never bought from him. Finally, after I learned his son had committed suicide and his wife had died, and knowing he was crippled with rheumatism I relented and sat him down on a chair by the stove and told him the whole story. He wiped his eyes, said he was wrong, did not understand why he had done it, realized that clerks had much to do with the orders and always cultivated their favor. He remembered the whole circumstance including the mistake he had made in recommending an unfit man. I gave him an order and ever after when he called I "remembered him." It was the only similar experience in my career.

As I look back to that experience I am of the opinion that it was profitable both to me and Mr. Beardsley. He treated me with more consideration, and I tried to look at matters from his viewpoint. He not only had raised my wages, but I profited by my experience of being out of work and money. I had never squandered any money, but I did not realize that it was necessary for me to make a start in life for myself by saving for that start. I resolved that I owed the bank all my wages except $10 a month, and that was an obligation I had to meet. When I had saved $250 I loaned it to my brother's father-in-law, David Gamet, at ten percent. He used it for a year. I found that the habit of thrift was beneficial, and it made me feel independent. When an opportunity occurred later to buy a store I had saved $630, and without this money I should not have had any chance.

Being short in stature and heavy set I had strong limbs and back, and some of the work I was called on to do developed my strength. I could unload a barrel of oil from a truck without skids. We bought coal oil in barrels and pumped it by hand into a measure, through a funnel into a vessel. I have sold as many as ten barrels in one day.

One time I took a barrel of alcohol down the cellar stairs with no assistance or skid. There

was a landing halfway down, but I often think of the criticism I got for doing it nonetheless. Normally the draymen unloaded heavy goods in the rear of the store, where we took them to the cellar through an outside door using skids to slide barrels directly to the cellar. On this occasion, however, he unloaded the alcohol on the front walk when I was occupied with a customer. The only way to dispose of it then was to take it down from the inside, or have it loaded again to take around the block to the rear of the store. The boss was at dinner, and I rolled the barrel into the store, turned it behind the counter, opened the cellar door, stepped down two steps and tipped the barrel toward me, and step by step I eased it down. It weighed perhaps four hundred fifty pounds, and if it had started to slide it would have killed or crushed me severely. I was young and foolish and took the chance, and I got the barrel down safely. When Mr. Beardsley returned and I told him what I had done he said, "That barrel of alcohol cost me over a hundred dollars, and if it had got away from you and fallen into the cellar it would have been a total loss. Never do such a trick again." Not a thought of what would have happened to me!

In those early days the city had no sewers. We had a dirt floor in the basement, and in wet seasons the water came up through the soil. I have seen it stand eighteen inches deep. On each side of the basement there were rows of barrels set two feet above the floor on boxes to protect them from water, and to permit the contents to be drawn from the faucet. Scarcely a day passed but at least one full barrel had to be lifted to these boxes. I had a pair of rubber boots to wear when the water came up, and on more than one occasion when I put my chest against the top of the barrel as it lay on the floor, with both hands under the bottom of it bracing my feet to end it up from the water, I have had my toes slip backward falling on my face in the water.

One night a friend came to visit with me. He suffered with a cold in his head, and the room was warm. I got him a clay pipe which he filled with cubebs, crushed and lit it, inhaling the smoke and discharging it through his nostrils. It sickened him before it was half burned out, and he emptied it into a box filled with sawdust which was used for a cuspidor behind the stove. He left as it was my retiring time. I later awakened to apparent broad daylight and dressed hurriedly, thinking I had overslept. Stepping from my room I was startled by flames leaping as high as the stove. The cubebs had set fire to the sawdust in the cuspidor. Fire had burned the dust and container and had eaten a hole through the floor, and there were flames on the bridging of the floor joist and on top of ten barrels of coal oil directly beneath. I seized the remains of the sawdust box and threw it out the back door, then I grabbed a bucket of rinsing water under the prescription case and poured it down through the floor, rushed downstairs and with a spade dug dirt from the basement floor covering the burning barrels with it. The smoke was thick and choking. Extinguishing the fire took only a few minutes, however, then I opened the doors to let the smoke out. The night watch came along and, viewing the situation, congratulated me that the fire department had not arrived and done water damage.

Within a half hour I was in bed again; it was about one AM. I remained awake, though, and wondered how much I would be held to blame for the fire. Mr. Beardsley came at the usual hour, and he turned pale at the site of the narrow escape. He never said a word to me, either of praise or censure, but to others he remarked that if Barker or his like had been working for him he would have had us burned out. So I knew he was appreciative. The smoke from the fire accomplished more than Mr. Beardsley had been able to, and that was to get the landlord to repaper the store.

One night I opened the drug store for a customer who, before he left, drew a gun and

leveled it on me because I had ordered him out when he had pestered me. He was maudlin drunk and didn't know what he wanted. Afterward he was sent to the penitentiary for life for killing a man.

One day a party came in the store and asked if we would oblige him with dimes for a dollar. I waited on him then turned away. He remarked, "Excuse me, but three of these dimes are 3¢ pieces." The 3¢ coin was minted then and was about the size of a dime and looked much like a dime. With an apology I exchanged them for dimes, Mr. Beardsley commenting, "Have you been taking in 3¢ dimes?" I was not aware of it if I had. Shortly after, he was visiting Huntington who operated a grocery, and he was told he had been taking in 3¢ pieces for dimes. This information led to an investigation, and it was learned that every business house visited had been touched. The culprit was apprehended.

The Beardsley Drug Store soon got the reputation of being the only store in town where night calls were answered promptly. One night I was called up eleven times. I was not averse to being called for necessities, but the larger part of the calls were for unnecessary things. A stable across the street called for every dose a horse needed instead of buying a few doses ahead. I complained to Mr. Beardsley about the unnecessary calls, and he said when calls came that could wait until morning as well as not to charge the customer double price and keep the difference. It seemed to me poor advice, at least I never thought enough of it to follow it.

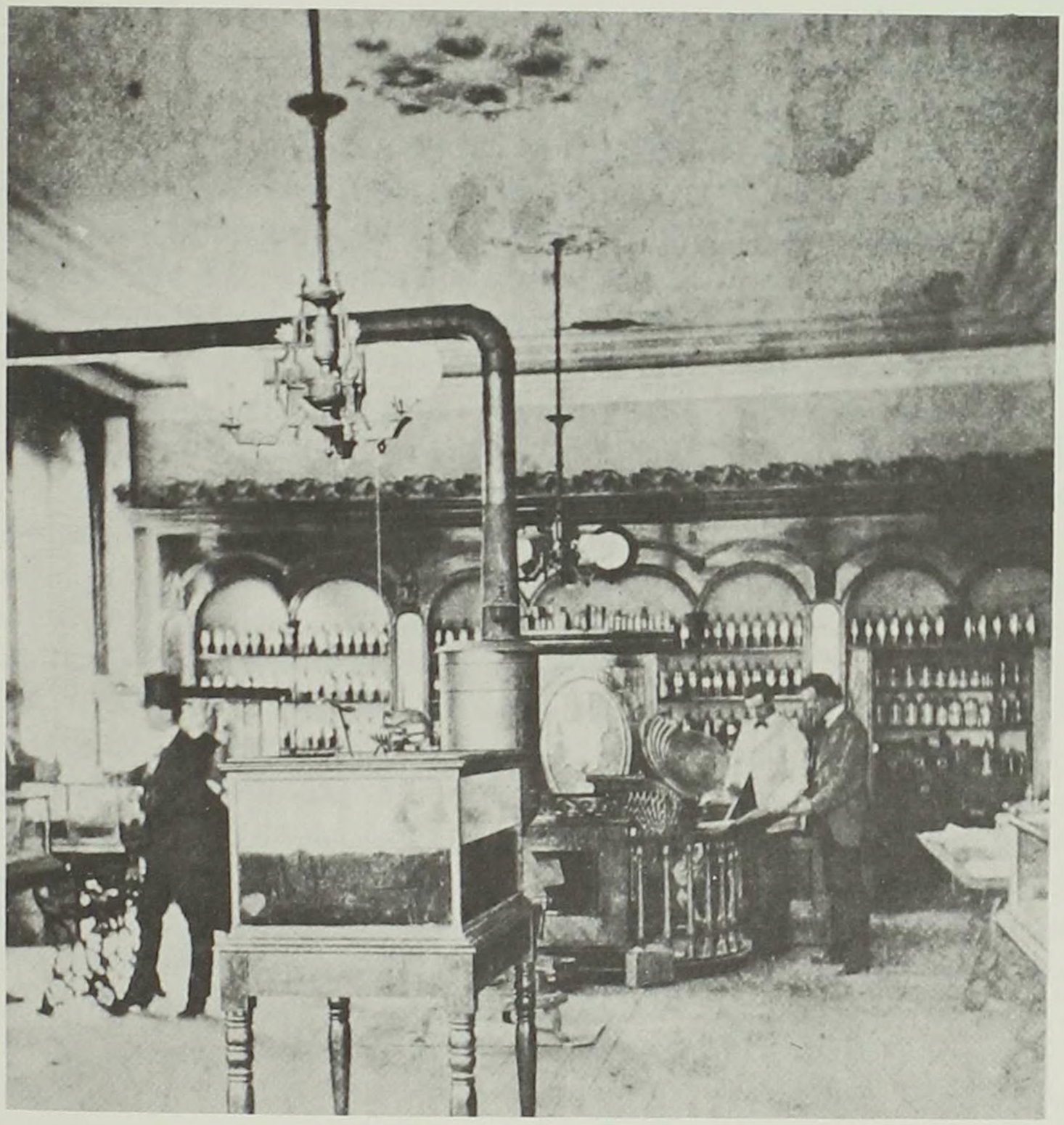
One day I stood by while Mr. Beardsley made up a mixture of neatsfoot oil, turpentine and sulphuric acid for a hoof liniment. There was two gallons of it. The jug was on the wrapping counter whose boards had large cracks between them, and underneath there were two open barrels of birdseed and a lot of folded sheets of wrapping paper. After the acid was added the mixture was corked tight. Gradually the mixture heated, and the cork did not go, so the jug split in two. I had a mess to clean up. After that we made up mixtures in the back yard.

A lady brought a recipe for a dye mixture. Mr. Beardsley took it in hand. It contained indigo and sulphuric acid among other ingredients. They were put into a bottle separately, and with his thumb over the opening he shook the bottle vigorously. When he removed his thumb, the neck of the bottle pointing upward and southward along the row of shelf bottles, the discharge was like a syphon of charged gas. It went over nearly every bottle on the shelf as well as the wall behind and spattered Mr. Beardsley's face and clothes. The situation was certainly laughable, although it meant a serious loss. All the dispensing bottle labels—made of imitation glass and covered with varnish—were ruined, and the back wall needed recoating. Besides, Mr. Beardsley's clothes were ruined and his hands burned.

Another time he was filling a prescription for a powder to be used in a glass tube, the contents to be blown on the patient's throat. The principal ingredients were chlorate of potash and sulphur, a pretty good gunpowder mixture. The potash was in crystals, and instead of powdering each separately he put them both together in a mortar. When the pestle hit the mixture a little too hard the mortar broke in four pieces and the pestle hit the ceiling.

I do not recall any mishaps of this character that befell me, but I remember once, later, while living on Park Avenue, trying to clean a ten-gallon can that had contained gasoline. I washed it with water several times, and it still smelled of gas. I filled it to the cork with water and let it stand an hour, rinsed it again and still it smelled. But thinking it safe and putting it to the test I held a lighted match over the opening. The can struck the ceiling of the porch.

Early on the morning of April 25, 1879, I went over to the tailor shop, where I was still getting my meals from the time I had been dismissed by Mr. Beardsley. Father was partly



A stereoscopic image of an Iowa drug store in 1875, in this case the J.H. Harrison Store in Davenport (SHSI)

on the bed and partly off. His talk was incoherent, but I managed to understand he had fallen as though he had been hit while arising from bed, and he had no use of one side of his body. It was a stroke, which kept encroaching little by little. Some days later, surrounded by his children (myself, William, and our sister Margaret) and a few dear friends, he passed peacefully from this earth. Just before he died, he held out a hand and each of us took it in our own. Then he smiled and left.

He was a worthy father. Amid the surroundings that were unusually bad his example kept me from drifting toward the maelstrom that engulfed so many. His memory is an inspiration.

My father had borrowed $300 from William Strang to build a new shop when the old one burned. He gave his note, payable at an indeterminate time, with interest at ten percent payable quarterly. Rain or shine, cold or hot, father had never failed to call on the day his interest was due, although Strang lived near Crescent City about eight or nine miles away. After my father's death I settled up his affairs, but this note was still unpaid. Attached to it was a full sheet of legal paper endorsed with the $7.50 interest payments made, written closely all over it on both sides. It was an object lesson to me, since he had paid the principal several times over in interest.

Mr. Beardsley allowed no loafing in the

store. Nevertheless, a group of his cronies made it their headquarters. One of them was a Mr. A.S. Bonham who owned a fifteen-acre grape orchard on the outskirts of town and a two-story brick business house at the other end of the block where I worked. One day while Mr. Beardsley was at dinner he made it a point to stay to have a talk with me. "Stuart," he said, "I have been taking notice of you, and I want to make you an unusual proposition. You are looking forward to the time when you and Miss Caffall can make a home of your own, and to support that home you will want a business yourself. Now I have that Broadway store building with the upstairs and outside stairway so they can be used for living rooms. I will remodel it to suit you, both upstairs and down, and stock it with an up-to-date stock of drugs, with complete furniture and fixtures of your own selection. I will give you outright a one-half interest in this business, the other half to be owned by my Bill. There will be no rent to pay for the upstairs; I will concede that much to you because of your experience in the drug business, while my son has none. I will charge you no rent for the downstairs until such time as the business is on a paying basis, and then it will be moderate."

I rejected the offer. Bill was a sport and tin-horn gambler who his father wanted me to tame down. He also overindulged in spirits at times. Also, I was close to my employer and would have become an active competitor of his. I was under no special obligation to him, yet I felt it would be unpleasant. Mr. Bonham urged me to consider the proposition well, but I turned him down.

Three doors west of Beardsley's was an old tumbled-down frame drug store operated by E.D. Baker. He was an inoffensive, good-hearted man with whom we exchanged favors in the business. Without exception, however, his was the most untidy and filthy store I ever saw. In his clothing and person it was the same. His son, Eddie, was a rounder, and his wife conducted an assignation house. Mr. Baker was an educated man, a classmate at Princeton College of Chester A. Arthur, and had fallen to his present low estate by the use of dope. He sat in a chair or leaned against his counter and slept most of the time. His trade was made up largely of the demimonde, and of painters who bought their paint and carried it away while he slept. When he got a box of goods he opened it on the floor, and when he had a call for something in the box he rummaged around in the straw packing until he found it. He did not remove anything else until he had another call.

One day while I was in his store on an errand, he said to me, "Stuart, come down at the supper hour; I want to have a talk with you." I went to see him. He opened up much the same as Bonham. Said he had been taking notice of me for a long time, and he wanted Eddie to settle down to succeed him as he was liable to drop out any time. He would tear down the old building and rebuild a modern brick store, stock and furnish it completely, "for Eddie and you." I should have a one-half interest. This offer came right on the heels of the other, and I also declined for the same reasons.

Some suggest that our lives are shaped by little things or incidents. Leaving out the higher thought that Providence overrules, I am inclined to think it largely true. Young people meet by chance and partnerships are formed. Chance employment leads to greater activities. Chance discoveries or chance investments lead to greater opportunities.

It was our custom to take account of stock each year between Christmas and New Year. The year 1878 had been prosperous, and sales had been greater in the drug store than in any previous year. A large amount in sales had been realized from a contract to supply all the plate and window glass in the Merriam Block. The sale was about $1500, although the profit was not overly large as competition was keen. When the footings for the project were in, Mr.

Beardsley said to me, "I feel pretty well satisfied with the year's business, and I will raise your wages from $40 to $50 per month provided business in 1879 keeps up to the 1878 record. I will pay you the $40 as before, each month this year, and when the year closes and the invoice shows the business as good I will hand you a bonus enough to make it $50 a month for the year." I had not asked nor expected a raise as I was young and already was getting more than any drug clerk I knew. Moreover, I was not a druggist by virtue of classical or laboratory knowledge, although I was granted a Certificate of Registration in Iowa, Number 1682, by examination.

During 1879 Mr. Beardsley built two houses as an investment, and it depleted his cash reserve. At invoice time that year we showed sales $1500 less than the year before but profit was $500 greater. "You see the sales were not as great as last year," he said, "and instead of the $50 I will give you $47.50 per month for the year. This irritated me and was the straw that turned my thoughts toward a business of my own. I reasoned that as long as I worked for another I would be subject to whatever happened to him or to his whims, which some day might leave me stranded.

In the spring of 1880 I arranged to leave Mr. Beardsley to go in business for myself. He almost begged and pleaded with me to remain. He was financially well off, he said, but getting too old to break in a new man. He did not want to be tied down by staying at the store as much as it would be necessary to do if I left. He also said I would succeed him in the business. I had given him a month's notice and after two weeks, when he had made no move for my successor, I reminded him the time was getting shorter. He still clung to the hope that he could win me over and offered me $75 per month. I replied that I was alone in the world. I had no parents, no dependents. I had saved $630 and had been offered a store including the building for $1600, in Mondamin [Iowa], $600 down and the balance in six, twelve and eighteen months' time. I had looked forward to being my own manager, and if I lost my savings I was young and could start over. Finally he said, "Well, I don't blame you; I would do the same myself."

Several years later I learned of the sudden death of my old employer. The widow sent for me and offered to sell me the store at a favorable price, on my terms with nothing down. The store enjoyed a large clientele. Moreover, I was acquainted with the trade and could fit in better than others, but the stock was the accumulation of half a century and the furniture was ancient also. I also was tied up where I was at the time and could not see my way clear to take it.

Bonham, Baker, Mr. Beardsley, and Mrs. Beardsley had each offered me an opportunity. I was being paid $47.50 per month when I left, and in his eagerness Mr. Beardsley had offered $75. I knew of no drug clerk in the city getting more than $40. Perhaps it would have been better had I stayed, but my boyish reasoning was that if I was worth the advance he offered, why hadn't he paid it to me before? □