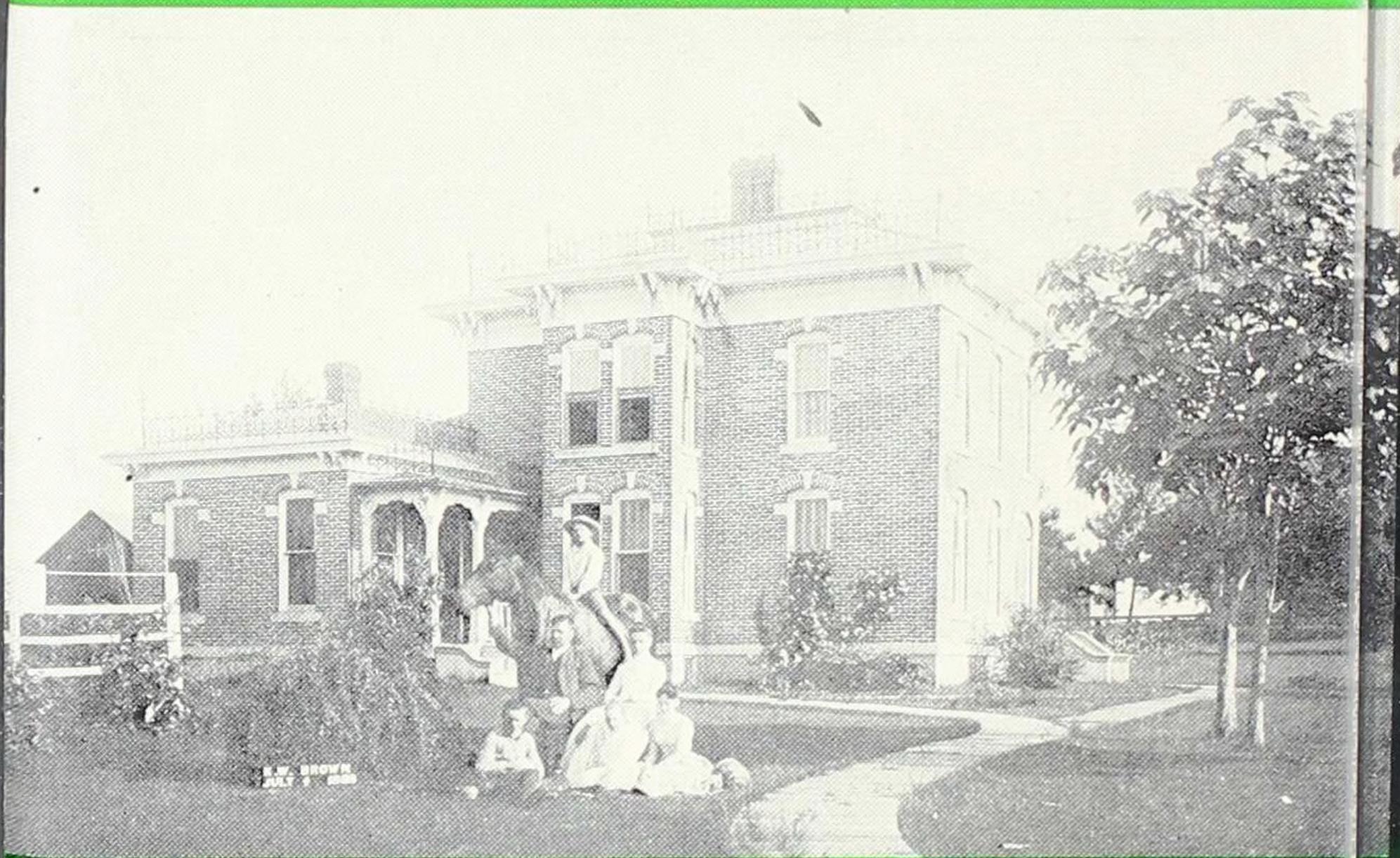


The **PALIMPSEST**



Kenwade—the palatial home built in Ames for Brown in 1879.

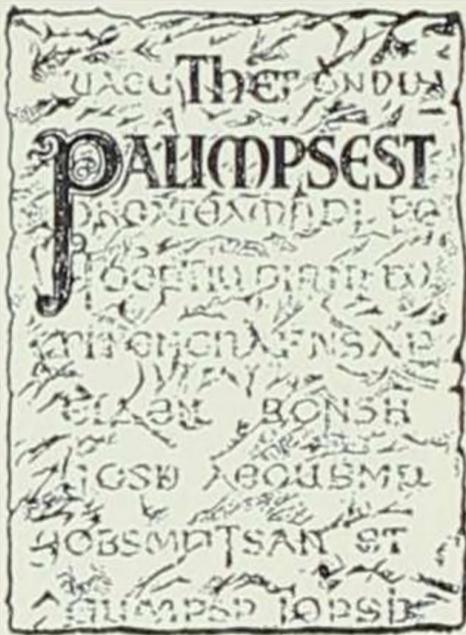
Memories of a Commercial Traveler

Published Monthly by

The State Historical Society of Iowa

Iowa City, Iowa

MAY 1971



The Meaning of Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material 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 record 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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WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Illustrations

Pictures used were furnished by Farwell Brown of Ames or came from the Society's picture collection.

Authors

A brief biographical note on Kendrick W. Brown by Superintendent William J. Petersen was prepared with material furnished by Farwell Brown, a descendant of K. W. Brown.

THE PALIMPSEST is published monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa in Iowa City, William J. Petersen, Editor. It is printed in Iowa City and distributed free to Society members, depositories, and exchanges. This is the May, 1971, issue and is Number 5 of Volume 52. Second class postage paid at Iowa City, Iowa.

PRICE—Included in Membership. Regular issues, 50¢; Special—\$1.00

MEMBERSHIP — By application. Annual Dues \$5.00

ADDRESS — The State Historical Society, 402 Iowa Avenue
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

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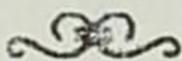
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VOL. LII

ISSUED IN MAY 1971

No. 5

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Knight of the Grip

[The following autobiographical reminiscences of a traveling salesman were written by Capt. Kendrick W. Brown and appeared in the *Ames Evening Times* over a period of many months in 1915. The Editor.]

My first vision of "Ames Station," as it was called in its early history, was July 12th, 1866, when I bought one of its best business lots for one hundred dollars; that is, I paid twenty-five dollars and was trusted for seventy-five dollars. I built an immense (?) building, twelve by sixteen feet, and went into the grocery business with my cousin, S. B. Farwell, now of Osborne, Kansas.

Selling Books

When I had been thrown upon my own resources to obtain a livelihood for myself and little family, with no trade or profession, I chose the grocery retail trade as the most simple, most easily learned, and most likely to furnish the desired bread, butter, and clothes. My location was the geographical center of Iowa and, as it was the best state in the Union, I deemed it best to get as

far into it and away from its borders as possible. After eighteen months diligent work of mind and body, the community had my few hundred dollars and I had the experience. Eighteen months more of harder work—keeping books, teaching school, and selling patent rights—the fifteen hundred dollars I owed was paid, one hundred cents on the dollar. I was free.

Now out of debt, not a dollar, family on my hands, no trade or profession—I was “looking around.” One day the express company brought me a package of paperbound books—fifty copies—“History of the Great Fires in Chicago and the West.” (It was immediately after the great October fire of 1871 in Chicago.) The books were about the size and style of *Harper's Monthly* and the price, 50 Cents, was printed on the back of each cover. They were sent by the J. W. Goodspeed Publishing Co., of Chicago, without consulting me. I was somewhat acquainted with Mr. Goodspeed, the head of the house. He wrote me a letter of explanation urging me to go to work at once and sell them and he would bill them to me at 30 cents each, prepaid express. I wrote him immediately that I was sorry he had sent them; that I could not sell them; that I would try and dispose of a few copies and return the rest.

I went out on the streets of our little town and by much effort disposed of half a dozen copies or so in the afternoon. On looking over a copy in the

evening I saw this notice on the inside back cover: "The profits from the sale of these books is to be devoted to relief of sufferers of the late Chicago fire." This was a pointer. I had our printer strike off a lot of slips, "Sold for the benefit of the Chicago sufferers," and pasted a slip across the top of each copy. It took amazingly. With a bundle on my arm I went through the town and had little difficulty in disposing of fifteen copies before noon, and over twenty copies more in the afternoon. I telegraphed for a hundred more. The publisher got my dispatch and filled the order before he received my discouraging letter of the day before.

One thing that helped my sales that day was my willingness to trust men for the 50 cents for a few days; I knew everyone and collected all my money in due time. I received the one hundred copies and bill. They cost me 25 cents a copy. In the meantime I had closed out the balance of my first 50 copies and was ready for the second lot. I pasted a slip over the headlines on the cover of the hundred copies, "Sold for the relief of Chicago sufferers." I went to Nevada and in one day sold twenty-five copies, returning home for Sunday.

Monday morning bright and early I drove up to Ontario, sold half a dozen copies and at noon went to Boone. Taking an armful of books, I went up the street. Every man I saw who looked like a reading man, I would step up to him, point to the printed slip and say, "Give me fifty cents." Some

would do it at once, without a word. The outlook was so bright I sent the publishers \$25 to pay my second bill, telegraphed the fact, and ordered five hundred more copies. I knew that in a few days there would be others in the business and that what was done must be done at once. Very little "talk" was indulged in. If men were disposed to argue the case I would cut them off with "Look here, sir! I've no time or disposition to argue this matter. This book is worth half a dollar. If you don't buy it for one reason, buy it for another. Give me fifty cents." Every copy of the hundred was sold in Boone and old Boonsboro. The five hundred copies were received. I attacked the job with all the faith inspired by my success. At Moingona, Ogden, Grand Junction, and Jefferson I sold over a hundred copies in two days. In three days more I made Scranton, Glidden, Vail, and Denison, where I spent Sunday. In these places and some small new towns just started, I sold two hundred and fifty copies, making four hundred and fifty copies in the six days.

Before the next week ended men from all over the country were selling the same history by different publishing houses. Every town had a book agent in it working for the "Great fires in Chicago and the West." I had sold all of mine but about a dozen copies in the towns west of Denison, in Iowa, and went home with about a hundred and twenty-five dollars for my two weeks' work.

Two White Elephants

As I was sitting in my diminutive excuse for an office one day in the summer of 1872, Mr. J. H. Alexander, then a traveling salesman for Ives, Murphy & Gore, New York, came in and said:

"B, I want you to take my place on the road; I've got to quit."

"Oh, Alex," said I, "I can't sell hats. I might possibly sell books or groceries, but I never could sell hats. I don't know the first thing about the business."

"Well, you can learn. Read this." And he showed me a dispatch which read, "Get us a good man to take your place." I said, "This calls for a good man; they want a man of experience and a man that can sell their goods."

"Yes, that's so, but they can't always get him; the man they want, somebody else has. They must make a salesman out of a new man. You are as liable to succeed as anyone. I think you will. I shall quit anyhow. My business here requires my attention. If you will take my place and try, they will do well by you if you succeed."

"Suppose I don't succeed; what will they pay me?"

"They will pay you \$75 per month and your expenses and a commission of 5 per cent on all sales exceeding six thousand dollars in a season."

"When is 'the season?'"

"It begins August first and continues three

months and you ought to sell eight or ten thousand dollars and maybe more in that time."

"What do they sell?"

"Hats and caps, gloves and mittens. Furs, blankets and robes in the fall, and in the spring they carry parasols and umbrellas and straw goods in addition."

I finally consented to take the matter under advisement and, after talking the matter over with my wife, decided to make the attempt and so told Mr. A. He wrote to the house giving them my name and such other information as was necessary. They at once sent me two large trunks full of samples, a contract for three months, a long letter of instruction, and a one hundred and fifty dollar check.

This was the first word I had received from them. The tone of the letter was full of hope. The check surprised me with confidence. But, oh, the trunks full of samples, so strange, so new, and so foreign to me, were, verily, two white elephants. Mr. Alexander was sick abed and could not "show me through" and "post me." Were it not for the letter and check I would have been discouraged in the beginning as the time for work was now at hand. I closed my little business (I was dealing in butter and eggs) and, going to Chicago, purchased a fairly good suit of clothes and a plug hat, notice—a plug hat. I don't want that item overlooked, for I am confident that two things

were largely conducive to any success I may have had on the road, viz., my *hat* and the *card* of my employers. The fact that I traveled for a New York house in those days cut quite a figure. The inspiration of a silk hat was certainly the only thing about my environment to induce men to buy goods. You must understand that at this distance—20 years—I can talk and write dispassionately and with an unprejudiced mind on this theme, and also that whatever existed then as a controlling reason for certain consequences may not be the case in A. D. 1892.

My two trunks were two white elephants. I did not want them—nobody wanted them. I had no confidence in my ability to sell from them. I knew no more about hats than an infant, had never sold a hat or a glove in my life, so you will not wonder that I was appalled at my chosen vocation and responsibility.

Working for Fun

The first town I made was Morrison, Illinois. My territory was Iowa, but I had some friends in Morrison and decided to try and sell them some goods. This was an unwise thing to do. They *knew* I was a new man; they knew I could not tell a cheap article from one that was not cheap. Worrying through a sweaty August day in that town was a tedious task, I tell you. It was Monday and three or four merchants succeeded in

spreading an inextricable lot of confusion all over the room in a conglomeration of hats, caps, blankets, gloves, furs, mittens, etc. It was such a mess as to make it seem impossible to restore the samples to their original order. But I did, by working far into the night. While I succeeded in returning them to the two trunks—I sold no goods. The next day, Tuesday, I went to Fulton, opened up, and found one or two hopeful men, and by waiting until after noon, induced them to look over my line. Of course, I did not sell them anything; I think now most any man could have, but I could not then. I remember these stops since I had to unpack and pack up again—an arduous task for me—and it was late at night before I got to the depot and was ticketed and checked to Clinton, Iowa. It took me all day Wednesday and part of Thursday to get through Clinton and Lyons—one man came pretty near buying a few gloves, but to my disgust decided not to—"It was a little too early,"—so I sold nothing.

Thursday noon I went to Camanche and at night to DeWitt. At neither place could I induce a man to look at my goods, and at 9 a.m., Friday, went to Clarence, doubled back to Lowden, and in the evening ran to Mechanicsville. At only one place did I open up. At each town I carried a few of my most attractive samples to the store of some good-natured man and let him look them over. *I did not talk much.* This, to men who know

me, may seem quite improbable; but you must remember two things: first, I had nothing to talk about, and second, this was twenty years ago.

To my chagrin one man in Mechanicsville asked me to show him "a good Saxony hat." The idea of me picking out a "Saxony hat!" I pulled the hats out and he looked them over, finally hitting upon a pretty good wool hat, and the matter was passed over. I had learned a little from him. I picked up a little information in that way from old merchants, many of whom knew just how green I was. Many of them never dreamed that they were telling me something I knew nothing about. Saturday I made Stanwood, Mt. Vernon, and Lisbon, and at dark went into Cedar Rapids and was assigned a room in Brown's old hotel—then the best in the city—for an over Sunday rest *and no sales*.

Now to review the work of the week—my first week as a commercial salesman: 105 miles travel by R. R.; six days hard work; thirteen towns; expenses, \$35; sales, *not a cent*; not an order.

I found a competitor at Cedar Rapids to whom I opened my heart and he kindly gave me quite a number of valuable points, explaining the different grades of hats and aiding me much in selecting desirable patterns and prices. He was selling goods; he supposed I was, but I was not—I was only traveling for a New York hat house. *I sold nothing.*

I plainly saw defeat in my future and wrote the house as follows: "Dear Sirs:—I herewith hand you the result of my first week's work. If at the end of the first month I have nothing more encouraging to report I will release you from your contract and hold the samples subject to your order." This was all well enough for me and for the house, but the terrible thing which I dreaded most was the going home and facing the public with "failure" printed all over my face.

Our town had furnished a half-dozen men, young, middle-aged, and old, who aspired to be traveling men. They had gone out on a trip and in a short time came back to "wait for trade to open up." Everybody knew it would never "open up" for them; they had "fizzled" and lacked the nerve to say so. They never went out again and it had gradually dawned upon us that they had failed to make a success of their line and dreaded to own up to it. Now here I was in the same boat.

I keenly felt the humiliation of my situation. That Sunday was a long day for me. I attended church, but I fear my thoughts wandered a long way from the text and its exposition. I knew it was a crucial time and that success or failure was a matter of lifelong interest to me and mine.

Selling Goods

I matured this plan in my mind—use every means in my power to sell goods regardless of

expense, work to the extent of my physical endurance to that end. If, however, at the end of a month it developed that I could not sell goods, to go home and make a clean breast of it; say to my friends and acquaintances, "If you want a job, here it is. I can sell books and pack eggs, but I can't sell hats. If you think you can, here is your chance; take hold and try it." Having settled on this policy and plan I felt better and started in the morning for Shellsburg with encouragement.

The first man I called on was Wm. Shrader, who kindly consented to look through my samples and, to my utter astonishment, gave me an order for \$234 dollars' worth of hats and caps. To say I was pleased was a small way of expressing my pleasure. I was delighted. Going across the street from him I struck a man to whom I sold a bill of gloves and mittens to the amount of \$275. The hotel was a tough place and by the time I was through with my second man, my goods were scattered in two rooms, but I did not care. *I was selling goods.* When I packed up that night I was as happy a salesman as one ever meets. Next morning, in company with a salesman from D. Torrence & Co., 36 Warren Street, New York, boots and shoes, I drove over to Center Point and sold "old man Hubbard" \$250 worth and a similar bill to C. H. Kurtz, in all about \$500, making a thousand dollars in two days! I made up my mind I was on the road to wealth, that a great fortune

was ahead of me, and was intoxicated with success. Unlike Mrs. Partington, I temporarily forgot that "we are all poor critters."

Climbing up to Marysville with the same boot and shoe man, we were compelled to wait there all Wednesday p. m. and sold the only merchant about \$200 worth at the end of the day. We remained there overnight—and a tough night it was—hot, still, sultry, and sweltering. The next morning was so oppressingly warm that we got an early start and went to Vinton, where I sold J. W. Butler & Co. and Spears & Eddy two fine bills (over \$500, both together) but had to wait a good deal for them. W. S. Cole was then keeping the best hotel there, and I commenced an acquaintance with him as a hotel man that has run through all the years of my experience as a commercial man. He went to Ackley, Ft. Dodge, Cedar Rapids, Colfax, and is now at Grinnell—an estimable landlord and Christian gentleman.

I continued to have fair success—some days no sales; seldom going into a town without selling a bill; if I did, it was the exception. At the end of the season I had sold \$13,500 worth and was credited with sales to that amount. Visiting the house in November, at the close of the season, I was warmly and cordially welcomed, even though I had sent in some \$3,000 in orders which the house refused to fill. Still I was pleased with the result and had saved over \$600 in the three fall

months' trade. The house engaged me at a regular salary and a commission in excess of stipulated sales, for the next year.

It is not my intention in any of these articles to follow any special line of work or any special line of experience on the road. I hope to give, in the main, sketches of general interest to the reader that came under my personal observation. I am not attempting a continuous narration or making any attempt at literary display. If my friends enjoy reading as much as I do writing, I will be satisfied and amply repaid for my effort.

Let nothing I say be construed as a boast. Far from it. After a moderate degree of success, the writer has long since ceased to be ambitious to excel in large and prosperous sales. Many others take and are entitled to the place.

Fifty years of revolving seasons, "twenty on the road," four in the army, where five wounds undermined a vigorous health and impaired constitutional strength, have fitted me more for the quiet of home and lighter office duties than the arduous life of a "rustler."

Years ago I sold many goods—now I sell few. In one year of three months' fall and three months' spring sales I was credited with \$62,500 in approved orders. My heaviest season was the fall trade in one of the seventies, over \$35,000 in eleven weeks.

My best week was in that year in which I

lacked a few dollars of \$5,000; my best day in twenty years, \$1,500; the largest bill I ever sold, \$1,350. We don't sell such bills now as we did 20, or 15, or even 10 years ago.

A Few Words as a Class

Fifty years ago there were almost no regular "traveling men" in the country. In 1860, a few traveled in the eastern states, carrying no samples, simply calling on country merchants and inviting them to "call on the house" when in New York. They were keeping up acquaintances or keeping in touch with men who were customers or who they hoped would become customers.

In 1872 I seldom met a competitor. After a few weeks' experience I became accustomed somewhat to the detail of my work and was at home in the sample room. All I had to do to sell goods to a man was to get to him. You can imagine, under those circumstances, I "got to" a good many merchants during the months of August, September, and October—the busy fall and winter season for manufacturers and jobbers in eastern cities.

How many are there? Of course, no one knows or can find out the exact number of traveling men there are in the country. The combined estimates of several secretaries of fraternal travelers organizations are as follows: The grand total in the United States is placed at 500,000 with one-tenth of the entire number, 50,000, coming from

Chicago. Twenty-five thousand represent Chicago houses and 25,000, who live in Chicago and its suburbs, represent houses in other cities—New York, Boston, Philadelphia, mostly in the East.

Minneapolis and St. Paul are sending out 5,000 and other cities in proportion—Des Moines claims to have five hundred and Ames, about twenty-five.

“Are they making money?” As a rule 85 per cent of all commercial men who have been on the road as salesmen for several years ought to have an adequate competency. They get a salary and their expenses are paid by their employers. They ought to save most of their salary. Even though they do not spend their competency, at least 85 per cent get in the habit of spending money freely. They are generous and seldom “kick” if overcharged. Their expenditures are usually limited to the amount of their income, not their necessities. Men can live on very little if they are compelled to or desire to. Their expenses are not a matter of careful and well-considered judgment; they are the result of habit, environment, and impulse. Only about one man in ten on the road saves money. It does not help any to say “only one in ten employees of a railroad or express company is saving money” because the same argument applies. Let me illustrate:

I sat at a table with seven others in the St. James hotel in Iowa City; all of the eight men were traveling men. The subject under discussion was

the theme upon which I am writing. I did not introduce it. The party who did was the only one at the table whom I knew personally. Each of the eight, except the writer, told his financial condition, how long he had been on the road, how much he earned, and how much he had saved in a year. I sat at the end of the table. The young man at my left, about thirty years old and a good looker, said, "Well, boys, I've only been on the road five years. I get about the average salary for my line of goods (about \$1,500 a year) and you may search me, I've supported my wife and baby but I've not saved a dollar." The man at my right, also a very fine looker, had a good face and a good head and looked as if he could manage a railroad corporation. He was an excellent clothing salesman. His report was this: "I've been on the road fifteen years. I never got less than \$2,000 a year and have received five thousand. I give my wife half of my salary at the beginning of every month and at the end of the month, neither of us has a dollar and it's been so for ten years. We pay thirty-five dollars a month rent and my wife pays all house expenses. I pay the rent and all outside expenses." The reader knows that when this man and his "only woman in the world" were married, two fools had met. Someday when calamity comes to them, as it comes to all of us, they will be "in the soup" and we, you and I, will be circulating a subscription paper for them. I want to put it on

record that if I was one of two fools like that (he was getting \$4,000 a year at the time) and my wife was another, my daily prayer would be that some fellow would steal her.

With forty-two years' experience "on the road" as a "commercial traveler," I never failed to save a little money—not less than five hundred dollars in any year of the forty-two and sometimes more. Few men get enormous salaries; most get twelve, fifteen, or eighteen hundred dollars a year. Much depends upon the line of goods sold, but more on the ability of the salesman to sell it. The average salary is not as high as the figures given. Of course, if I traveled all the months in the year I would earn and save more money. My earnings and my investments have always been economically handled and never speculated with. I have had some losses, three times over a thousand dollars, and once by over five thousand dollars. It took several years to "make good" these losses.

The average traveling man's check is perfectly good on his own employees, but he is unable, by failing to protect his own interests by prudence, care, and economy to give a check for twenty-five dollars on his personal account. He is a good fellow, a good worker, a good salesman and, if he has a family, a good husband and a good father, but not a successful safeguard of his personal financial interests.

Overworked

Thirty-five years ago and thirty years ago there were a few towns in which I always sold large bills. Such towns were few and far between. I never had the remarkable faculty of holding a large trade with heavy buyers. I could sell the best merchants in any city a bill or a few bills but if an item or two was not entirely up to what they thought was O. K., I was not gifted with an ability to "fix it up." I preferred to go after another man and my territory was almost without limit.

For years I never went to Oskaloosa without selling about two thousand dollars in the town. A few towns in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin were the same. I can name a few men, heavy buyers to whom I sold great bills for years and always sold them. They were old merchants, doing a large business with much credit and who bought from a few houses. H. C. Lamb, Denison, and M. C. Murdough, Tama City, bought of me for many years, two bills a year, fall and spring, and never less than \$1,200 to \$1,800 each. The trade of such men was worth approximately three thousand dollars a year.

N. T. Manly & Son of Parkersburg, Iowa, (the son is now in the banking business in Sioux City) were on the same list. A change came to this business which was fatal to my interests and came near being fatal (?) to me physically.

On a regular trip, I called on them on Saturday

and was told that "they were unusually busy" and, as there were several cases of scarlet fever in town, I better come again on Monday. I had my little daughter with me and feared to stay where there was scarlet fever. So we came home and remained over Sunday.

Monday forenoon I was back in Parkersburg ready for work. I had three elements to deal with—the father, the son, and a new element introduced into their business since my last visit six months ago. This "new element" was the "head clerk," a big muscular man who was supposed to do much of the buying. I had what would ordinarily be considered "a sure thing" for an order all fixed up before dinner with the senior member of the firm. He and the son were with me from 2 to 6 p.m. but did not buy, though they selected some goods. From 7:30 p.m. to 9:30, the son and the "manager," as they called the "head clerk," were with me. The son was losing his interest in the store. At 9:30 I had not sold a dollar. At 10 p.m. I succeeded in getting father and son into the sample room and by twelve o'clock had sold them \$1,500 in hats, caps, furs, lap robes, horse blankets, gloves and mittens.

It was midnight. I was simply "done out." To use a modern expression, I was "all in." No one knows, but an experienced salesman, the psychology of this sort of experience. If he is like me, he may know and not be able to describe it. There

is a psychological moment in every sale when the sale is decided, when it will be made or will not be made. The man who cannot find, recognize and use the psychological moment, cannot sell goods.

In this sale to the Manlys I had three men of different types to bring to the point of buying and I had to get them there at the same time. I got two of them to the point Saturday afternoon, the father and the son. There was a time, Monday, when I had only one; another time I had the manager part of the time although he was indifferent; it was not until the late hour referred to above that I got them all and kept them. While I had been under great mental strain before, I was in an intensely nervous condition from 10:00-12:00 p.m. as I tried to overcome the mental resistance of father and son, not to mention the "physical" of the "manager." It exhausted me of all energy in trying to bring them to a united decision to place their order for fall goods.

I gave them their copy and shook hands as the clock struck one. It took me another hour to pack. I took the train at 2:00 a.m. for Cedar Falls and at 3:00 went to bed in Burrs hotel in Cedar Falls as tired as I ever was or ever wish to be. My head ached, especially in my neck at the base of the brain. I did not get up bright and early the next morning and the distress did not entirely leave that section of my "nerve centers" for many months and not entirely at times for several years.

A Periodical Bankrupt

It is a well-known fact that the great majority of businessmen, men in mercantile life, do not make a success of their business; an overwhelming majority fail sooner or later. More than nine-tenths of the general mercantile merchants of the country sometime during their business career make an assignment, go through bankruptcy, or in some other way effect a compromise with their creditors. Some who do finally recuperate, rebuild their fortunes, and reach a degree of success.

The writer has made a study of both the retail merchant and the commercial man and knows that the ranks of the latter are well-filled with men who have tried and failed in the former life. He knows by dearly bought experience that the man who does not make a success in retail trade is quite apt to try "life on the road" as a pleasant change.

There is, however, a small class of men in retail trade who make a business of effecting a compromise with their creditors at regular intervals. It is the purpose of this article to give you an illustration out of my own personal experience to show the possibility of a man making a "failure" for the purpose of making money by defrauding his creditors.

I had a customer in Burlington, Iowa, who was a heavy buyer and prompt payer for sometime. He bought two bills a year, spring goods and fall goods, hats, caps, furs, gloves and robes, etc.,

from one to two thousand dollars a season. However, about every four or five years he would entirely fail and could pay (so he claimed) only a small per cent of his indebtedness. He settled two or three times with his New York and Chicago creditors for twenty-five per cent of his debts and in each case raised the cash to resume business. I continued to call on him.

It became about time for another "collapse" and he conceived the idea that it would facilitate matters if he could meet his creditors in New York and effect a compromise with them more advantageously by personal interview. He did so and met all his New York creditors in a parlor at the Astor house and laid his financial condition before them. Mr. Murphy, of my employers, was deputized to be the spokesman for the creditors. The talk was long and the discussion was heated and finally Mr. Murphy said to him, "We have settled with you for only a pittance of what you owed us several times. We are not going to do it any more. The law in this state arrests a man for debt under certain circumstances. We have canvassed this case very thoroughly and have decided we must have seventy-five per cent on the dollar of our claims or we shall arrest you and try the case out in the courts and you will of necessity be confined in the Ludlow street jail until the matter is settled and the policeman with a warrant for your arrest is waiting to serve the papers."

Of course it was a great shock but it was inexorable and the poor fellow saw he was "up against it" and he "tumbled" at once to the situation and said, after a moment's reflection, "Gentlemen, my broderinlaw is in the next room. He may have some money—I see him if he got de money I borrow it and pay you de seventy-five cents on de dollar." He did so and the incident was closed on that basis. In sixty days he was doing a hustling and no doubt profitable business in Burlington "at the old stand." He had undoubtedly cleaned up twenty-five per cent of his indebtedness in net profit. My people instructed me to call on him and sell him if I could. Of course we lost more or less money every time he failed but our margin of profit was fairly good and we made money on his trade at all other times. I sold him some fine bills in the next and following seasons for four or five years before the next collapse and failure came due. I have no means of knowing the exact time but it was less than five years (I sold him for over twenty-five years) and in that time he failed four or five times.

This was the last time as far as we were concerned. He got all his plans made, all the cash available in his pocket, as many "special sales" as possible, as many goods packed up and in some safe place (outside the store and presumably in his residence). Then he wrote a letter to each of his creditors (the majority of whom were in New

York and our house was on the list) and told them in language that admitted of no misunderstanding or misinterpretation as follows:

"Gentlemen I vas busted agin. De hard times is on me. It costs me so much to live. I fail bad dis time but I pay you ten cents on the dollar and you go to de devil wid your Ludlow street jail."

He was in Iowa and not in New York. He could not be arrested for debt and finally settled on the basis of 10 cents on the dollar. I never called on him again and this closed our dealing with him.

K. W. BROWN

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{ A Sorrowful Story

Without mentioning his name, I will give you a sad story and let you decide who it is I am writing about. It is an "open secret" and some, who read these lines, will know at once the unfortunate subject of this sketch, what a checkered career he led, and what a world of sympathy he needed.

Up to his thirtieth year, before and while he lived in Ames (a goodly number of years), he was an excellent citizen, a loyal member of the G.A.R., a clean man in his personal life, a courtly mannered businessman, a good-looker, whose clothes always fitted him, and one of the most popular "men of the world" that one ever met.

Along in the seventies he sold out his interests in Ames and went into the clothing business at Huron. From the first there was a fine prospect of making a success of the undertaking. He had a partner, who also was a good businessman of some experience, and for a time their trade was "booming." There was one drawback. There were saloons in Huron and it was the prevailing custom among merchants of the town to take a customer out and buy him a glass of beer when he bought a suit of clothes. Of course, if he asked his customers to drink, naturally he must

drink with them. If his trade was good, it meant much treating. This meant frequent drinking and the shores of time are strewn with the wrecks of noble manhood who found out, when it was too late, that the man who "gets in" with "let's take a drink" will be beaten. The adage proved true in this case. It soon became apparent that the drink habit was becoming fastened upon our friend. It was no rare thing to see him so much under the influence of drink, that his friends all observed it. Finally, his partner was obliged to propose a dissolution of their business relationship. This was amicably accomplished with no letup in the downward course on which our friend was started. He seemed powerless to loosen the grip which so firmly held him chained to his pitiful destiny.

I called on him every year in the course of his residence in Huron. I noticed the downward tendency of his course until the change came in his relations with his partner. I often did business with the firm, both before and after the dissolution. He finally got a position on the road as a salesman and went back to his former vocation. He could have made a fine success of it, as he did before I took his place, but he was doomed to a slavery of habit so hindering and so disastrous that before many years he became unbalanced in his mental calculations. In such a state he attempted to cross the track before an approaching passenger train in Cedar Rapids and falling, lost

his leg and became a cripple for the rest of his life.

Going back to Huron, he entered politics and was elected county clerk in repeated elections. Each time the office was given to him on his promise to be "quiet," which he tried to keep. Failing miserably and without the forbearance of his family, his superiors refused to keep him in office and he left the county courthouse. A great group of friends, comrades, and acquaintances knew he was "entering the last ditch," for he went to the South Dakota soldiers home.

At Ames and Huron he had a delightful home while these places were his residence. His wife was a noble woman of culture and refinement. One son and one daughter blessed their union. But his course in life broke his wife's heart and darkened the childhood years of both son and daughter.

At Hot Springs, in the soldiers home, the poor man was the abject victim and bondsman of his sorrowful habit. I went to see him in his years of retirement, in the care and guardianship of Uncle Sam, and each time he talked freely regarding his life, his family, and his future. On one occasion I went to Hot Springs to give an address and my poor friend was among the G.A.R. comrades who "came in a body" to attend the meeting. There was one element in this man's case that was quite peculiar. Not until the end did his face show the slightest evidence of dissipation. His face was fair and "good to look upon." He was always

well-dressed and on every occasion, when I met him, he had the air, the manner, and the appearance of a gentleman. At Hot Springs he gave himself up to the habit of using other drugs and told me himself "it was more and worse slavery than the drink habit."

He finally reached that stage when life seemed to lose its attractions. His wife died. His children were separated, one in the east, one in the west. He had some old friends; one kept a nice clean, homelike hotel in Illinois. He received a pension of twenty-four dollars. He concluded an arrangement with his old friend to board him, do his washing and mending for fifteen dollars a month for life, till the end came. This left him nine dollars a month for drink and drugs. He went from the "home" at Hot Springs to be with his old-time friend in northern Illinois. A wealthy friend in Chicago (for he won a host of friends among all classes) sent him his own partly worn suits.

On the occasion of my last visit with him, a few months before he died, he looked and talked well. He appeared to have as good prospect for life as myself and, in our "heart to heart" talk in his room, he said to me while unshed tears blurred our eyes, "It's no use, Capt., there will be no change. It will be just like this till the end comes."

K. W. BROWN

A Question of Hotels

Brad and I were driving north one cool day in October, 1873. We had left the C. & N. W. Railway in the morning with Webster City as our objective, expecting to reach there by nightfall. There was a stage line running from Boone to Webster City, crossing the Boone River on the old bridge north of Hook's Point. At the bridge was an old hotel, not much patronized owing to its unsavory record. It was understood that there was a better sample of a hotel at the next stopping place on the north and south trail. The place in question was Homer, a small burg ten miles south and a little west of Webster City.

At Mineral Ridge and Hook's Point we had sold some fine bills of goods and as a consequence were much delayed. Another thing tending to relieve us of time was the inclination to shoot game occasionally. Of this there was an abundance and we often stopped and shot a half dozen prairie chickens or ducks and took them to the next town for the hotel people to prepare for our next meal.

On the afternoon in question we killed some chickens, threw them into the wagon, and continued on to Homer. It was quite dark when we drove into "town" and as we moved to the front

of the building, designated as a "hotel," our hearts sank within us. It was a frame building two stories high, unpainted, no porch, no veranda, the "office" door, opening from the ground level, was in the middle of the edifice with two windows on each side. There were five windows in the second story. There was no sign of life, no light, no sound or indication of a place of abode. I dismounted and, followed by the dog, "Dan," slowly opened and entered the door. Finding myself in a long, empty, dingy, dark hallway, I opened the first door I could find at my left. It was another dark, empty square room. The creators of this architectural design had evidently intended this room as an office. It was bare of any kind of furniture.

Passing on down the hallway we found other empty rooms, two or three on either side of the hall. Into each room the dog would nose his way and, smelling around hastily, would skip out, thus signifying his knowledge that the room was vacant. Finally, after reaching the farthest part of the building, (we must have gone sixty or seventy feet), a door was opened that revealed the welcome sight of a woman preparing supper. Filled with smoke and a greasy smell, the revelation was not an unpleasant one—considering the long day's journey, the tired and hungry travelers, the cold, and the lateness of the hour. The dubious prospect of a night's lodging made any indication of food and rest a most pleasant sight. With sleep-

ing outdoors on the prairie as an alternative, one would take up with almost anything that promised fire, food, and shelter.

"Is this a hotel, madam?"

"Yes; will yer dorg bite?"

"No'm he won't bite. Where's the landlord?"

"Wal, he's 'round here som'ers, I reckon."

"I have a man and team with me and would like to stop overnight if you have the conveniences to entertain us."

"We ain't much on the entertain, but we'll do the best we can with the provisions we've got. Say, mister, is that your dorg?"

"Yes, madam, that is my dog. If you will tell me where I can find the boss of this ranch, I'll hunt him up and arrange for the night."

"My old man, if that's what you mean, is out lookin' for the keow, but he ain't the boss yet by a long shot. I run this shop and if you stop yer, I'm the duck that gets the pay and don't forget that part, young feller."

"Have you a barn attached to the hotel?"

"We've a barn, but it hain't 'tached to nothin', much less'n the tavern. Here's a dip if ye want ter put up your team," and she handed me a dirty excuse for a lantern. Finding my way out, I piloted Brad and the team to a low shed where shelter and "entertainment" for the team were found. I held the light until the team and wagon was disposed of, then we repaired to the hotel.

"Madam, how far is it to Webster City?"

"'Bout twenty miles in daylight, nigh on to thirty in the dark, like 'tis t'night."

"Is this the only place to stop this side of the city?"

"Oh, no, there's lots o'places to stop, mostly out o'doors though."

"Can you cook some chicken for supper?"

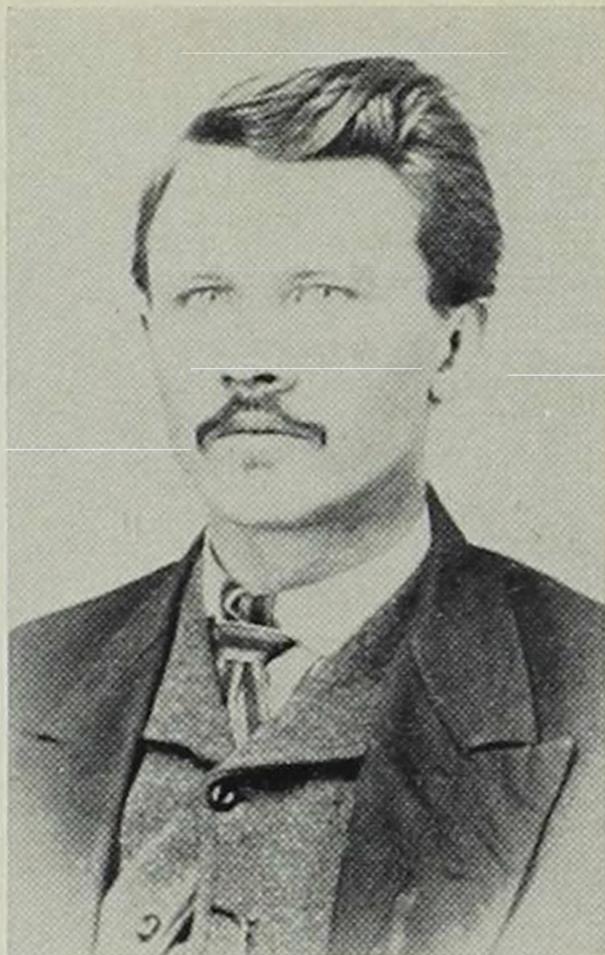
"Kin I cook 'em? Ye just try me and see."

We brought out the birds and sat in grim silence. I tried to read a newspaper by the light of a miserable tallow dip and Brad got a full understanding of the situation while the cook was getting our supper. We had chicken for supper and plenty of it. Brad found a string in the gravy and forever afterwards insisted the fowls were fried in candles and that the string was a part of the wick. I am not so sure of this but I would not dispute him as he had some pretty good evidence on his side. About the time we began to eat, the landlord (the husband of the "boss") came in; having completed his chores, he seated himself by the stove and lighting a big pipe soon filled the room with the strongest of plug tobacco smoke.

"Jim, get a move on ye and fetch a bucket o' water," said the boss. Jim moved and brought the water. His wife liked the dog and took pains to feed him bountifully of the food left from our repast. At bedtime we were shown to a room on the ground floor furnished very scantily, no carpet,



Captain K. W. Brown is pictured with sword, belt and sash given him by his company he personally had enlisted.



K. W. Brown, age 24 years.



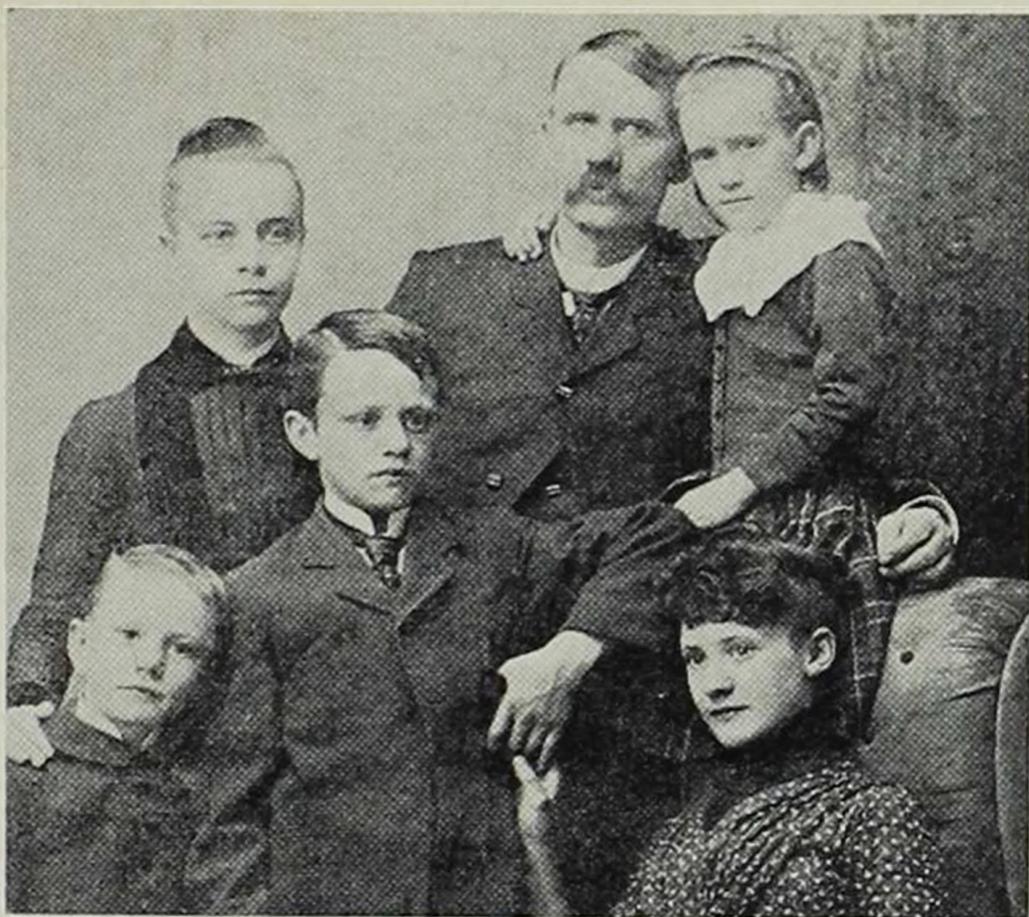
K. W. Brown, the second Mrs. Brown, and a baby out for a ride.



The Brown family shortly before the death of Lydia Gates Brown in 1885.



Lydia Gates and Kendrick W. Brown were married September 7, 1866, and left immediately for Ames, Iowa.



The Brown family with its new mama, Maggie B. Mitchell.
The Captain and Miss Mitchell were married March 2, 1886.



The Captain and his second wife.

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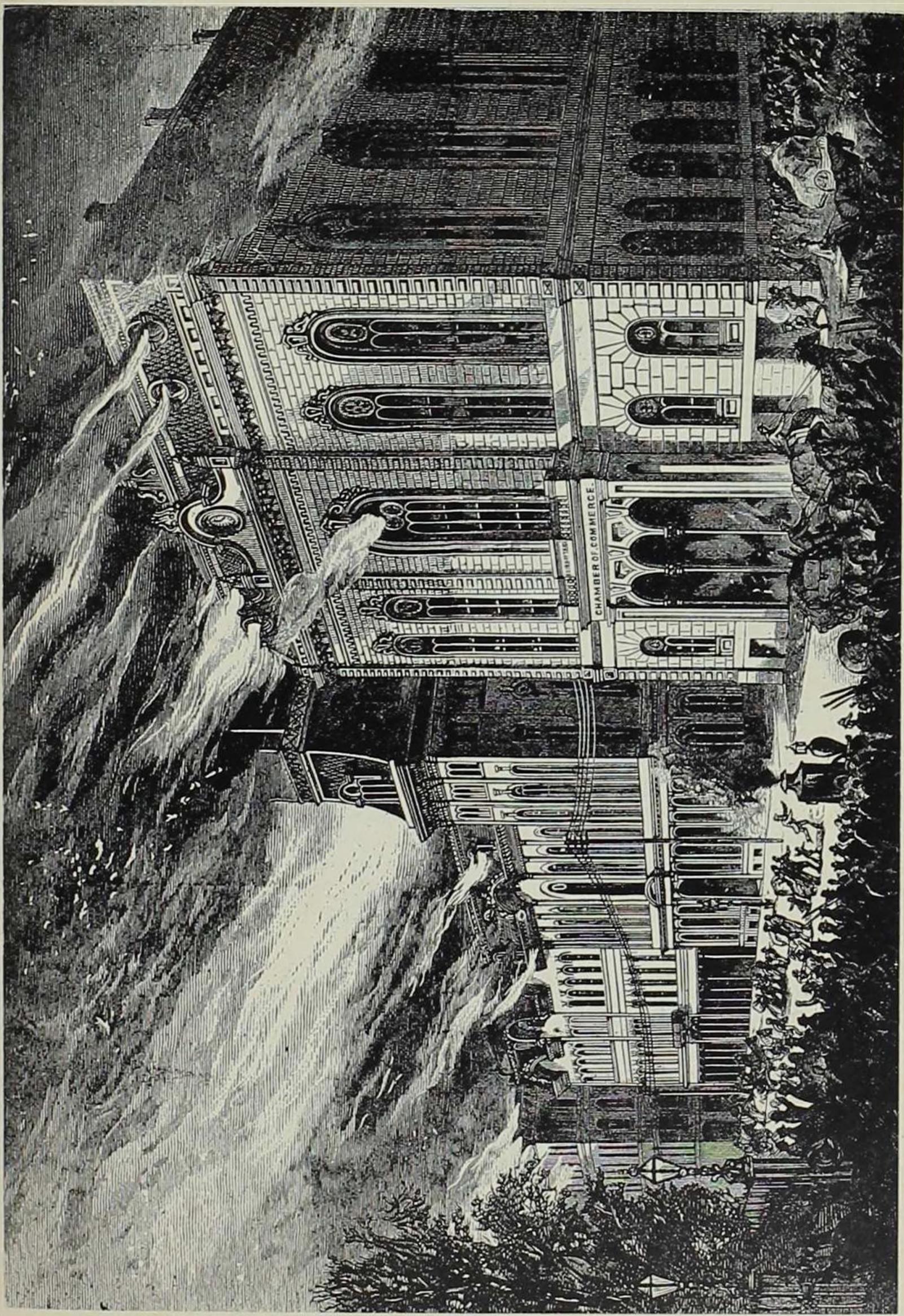
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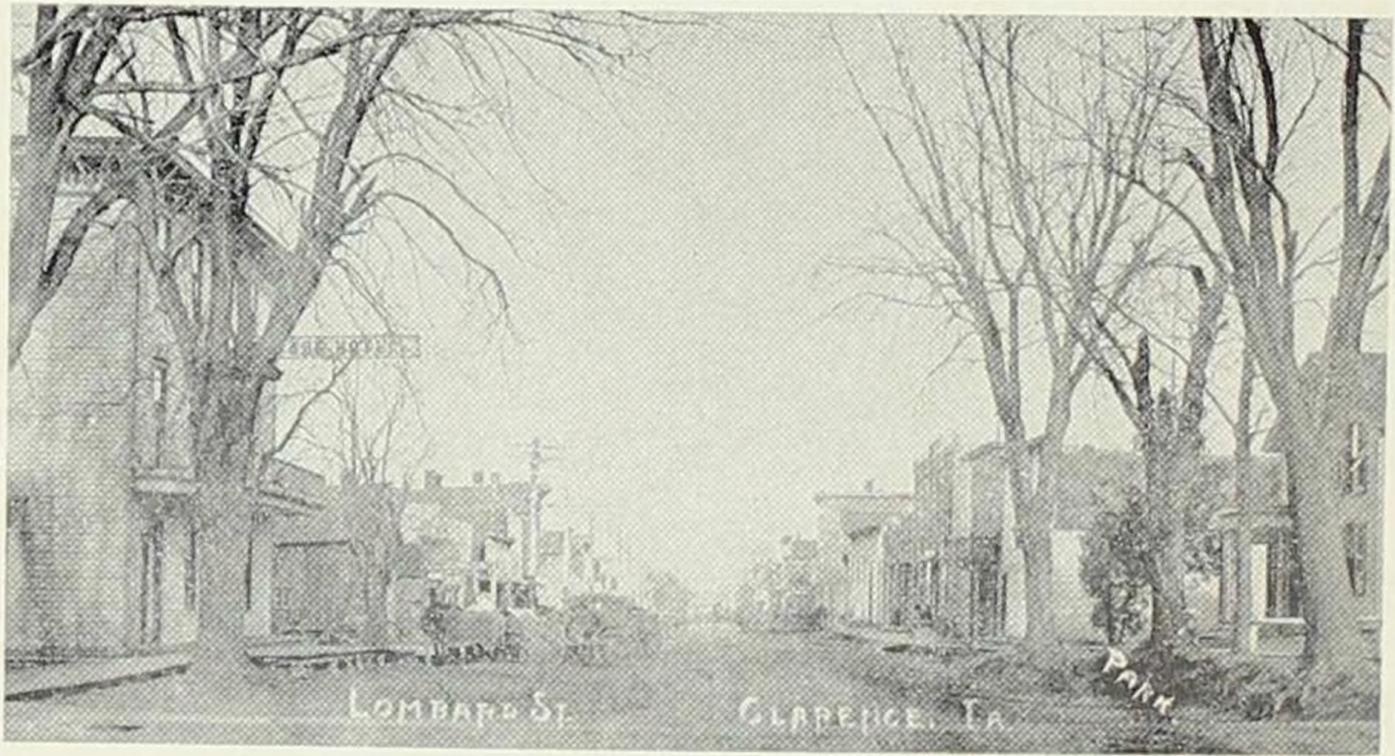


The Chicago Chamber of Commerce building burns during the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.

TYPICAL IOWA MAIN STREET . . .



Main Street looking East, Marshalltown.



Lombard Street, Clarence.

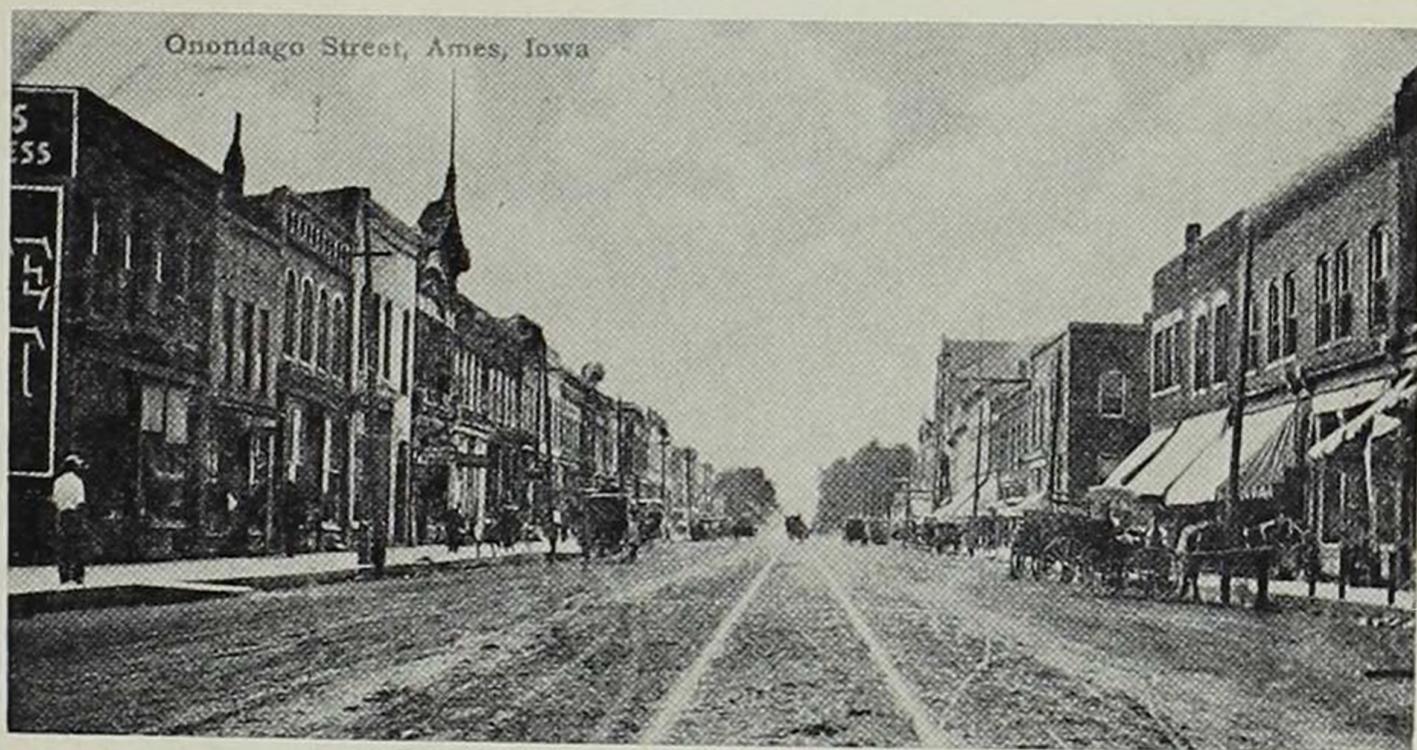


North Side of the Square, Harlan.

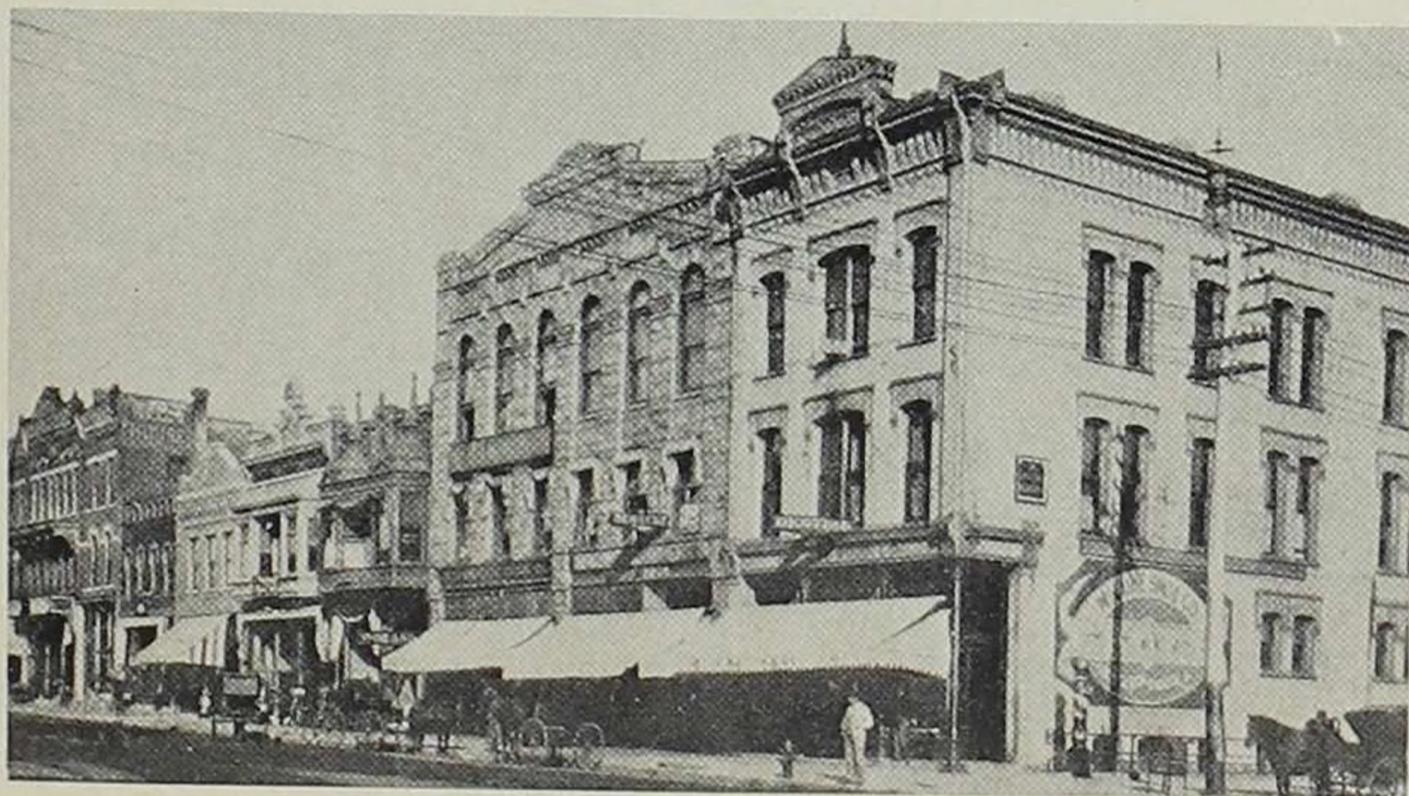
AS SEEN BY KENDRICK BROWN



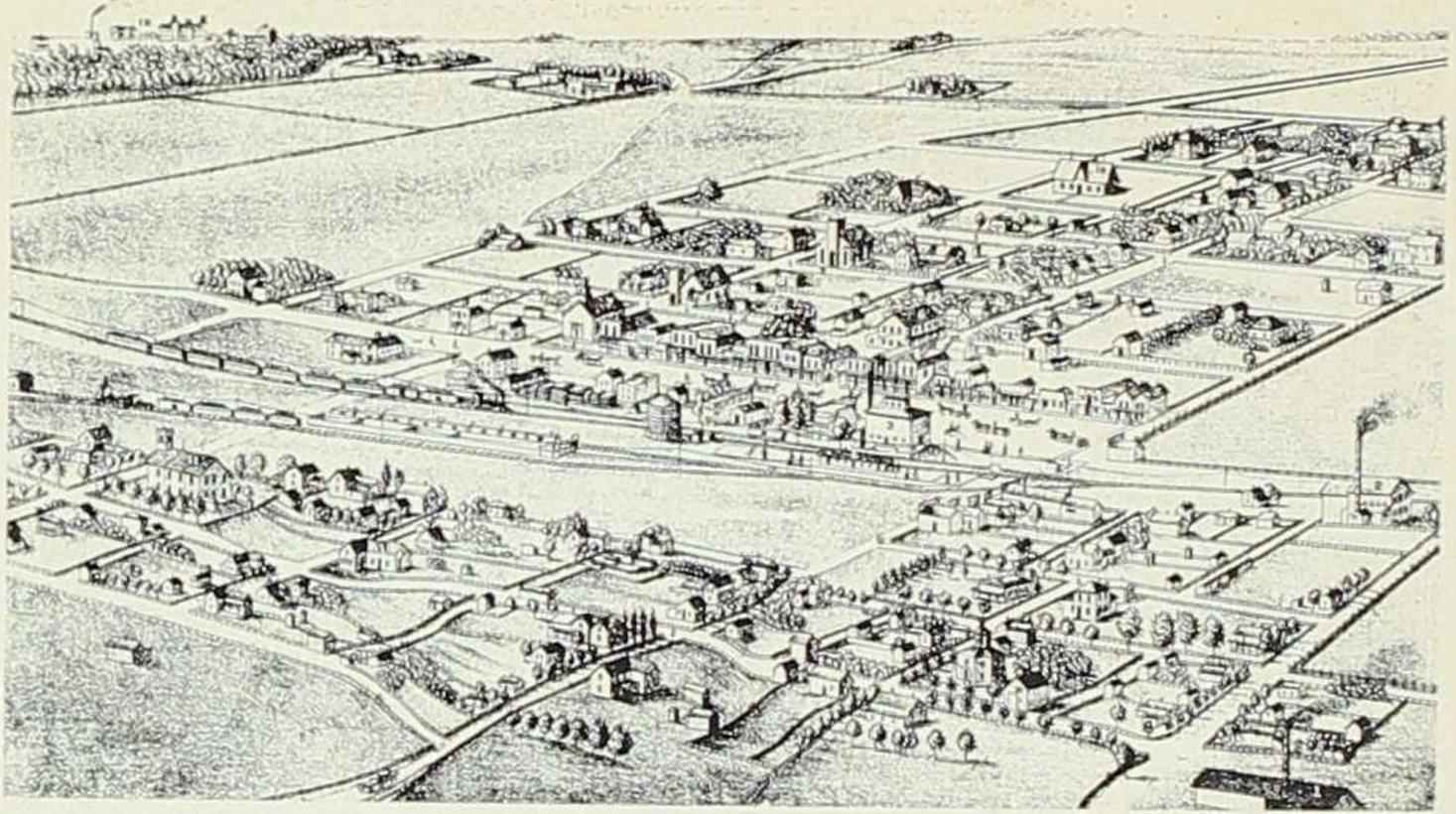
Main Street, Denison.



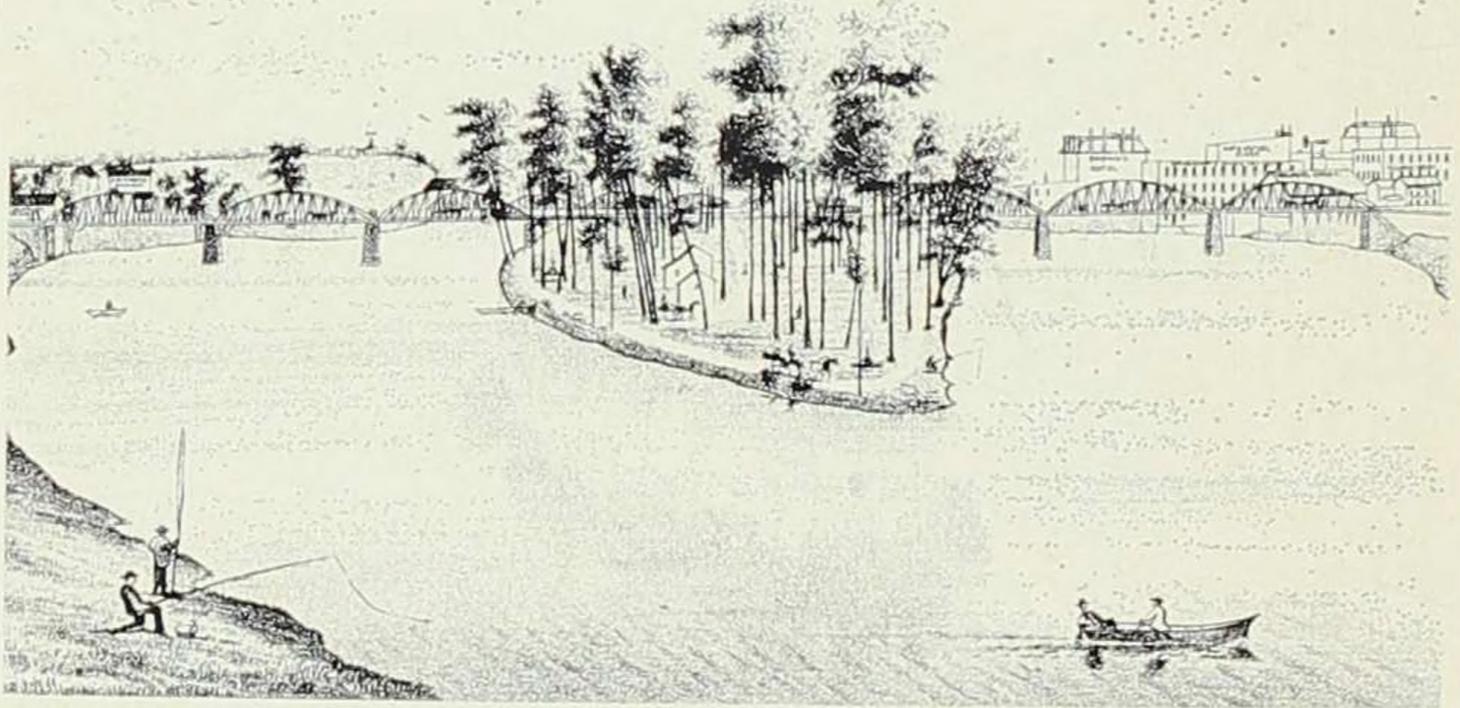
Onondago Street, Ames.



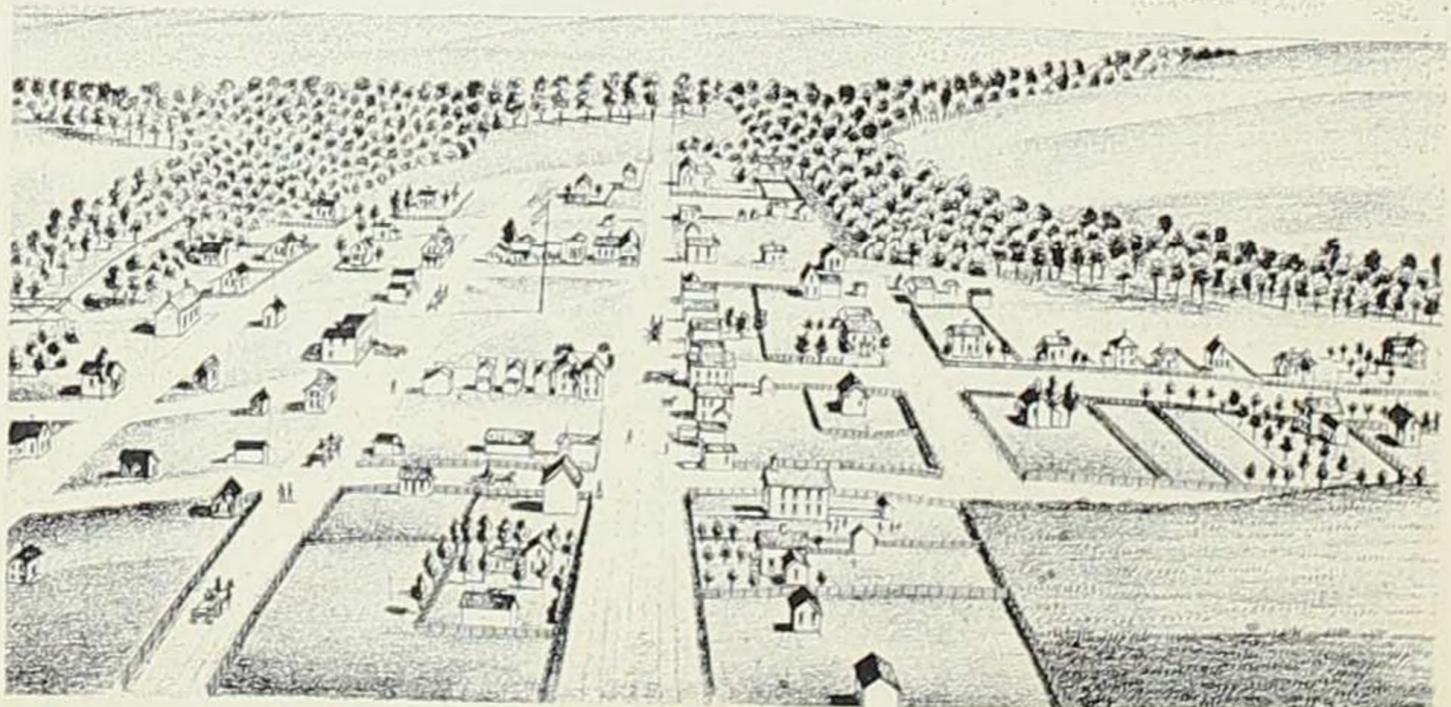
East Side Story Street, Boone.



Ames as pictured in Andreas' 1875 Atlas.



Cedar Rapids. Brown's Hotel is in the background, to the right of May Island.



Exira was still a small village as pictured by Andreas in 1875.

washstand, or chair; the beds were dirty, the sheets were grey with use, and the pillow cases the same. Putting our lap robes on the bed for sheets and letting them extend over the pillows we slept comparatively well. In the morning, prompted by a spirit of mischief (for which I now make no kind of an excuse) I took a lead pencil from my pocket (having blue lead in one end and red lead in the other) and turning up the clothing from the foot of the bed wrote in blue these words: "Slept in these sheets, June 16, 1873," and turning the pencil and writing with the red lead directly underneath: "And again—same sheets—October 16, 1873; four months in use."

For breakfast we had the remains of the chicken supper. They had no butter and the bread was sour and no good. We got away as soon as possible and for many days were regaled by Brad's stories of chicken fried in candles and the "epitaph" on the dirty hotel sheets.

Some Tough Hotel Guests

In the summer of 1873 I became convinced that the most rapid means of travel, and making the most towns for me, was to hire a team and driver by the month. In this way I could keep the team with me and go from one town to another by rail when convenient and drive the team to the next town when not, thus saving an immense amount of time. My driver was a young man, "Brad"

Palmatier, a most kindhearted fellow who was with me for two years (four seasons) and for whom I entertained a warm personal friendship. He was a neighbor and from the first entered into the spirit of the enterprise with a zeal that was only equaled by my own. His team was well-matched and good travelers. His three-spring wagon was suited to the business, and his Parker breech-loading gun and liver-colored bird dog made our equipment complete.

Brad knew how to keep his mouth shut when he was standing by and seeing me sell goods. He neither condemned nor commended. He kept still. We used to have some peculiar experiences in the hotel line in those early days in Iowa. A good hotel was a rarity. The coziness in some hotels, so prevalent in our state today, was sadly wanting in many towns. The native "sodcorn" jayhawker was as apt to keep a "tavern" as anyone; the main issue was the collection of the "fees."

We left Harlan one morning quite early and drove across the country to the new town of Exira. It was about thirty miles. Here we got dinner, sold a bill of goods, and then took another drive of about thirty miles to Coon Rapids. Here we could find no place to stay overnight and were compelled to push on to old Carrolltown, about ten miles further. Here we found ample accommodations (?). The hotel was open (both doors and windows). It was a cold, raw day in October and

visions of a hot fire and comfortable entertainment had encouraged us the last twenty or thirty miles of the tedious journey. The house was boarded up and down and consisted of three rooms: the office, sitting room, parlor, drawing room, and reception room was one; the kitchen, dining room, and cook room was another one, the same size in the rear as the front. A "lean-to," built on the north side of the main room, was where distinguished guests were permitted to retire on special occasions. The family and hired help slept on the floor in the kitchen. On our arrival I began negotiations for the "bridal chamber." Whether it was my well-known (?) good looks or the evidences of wealth we displayed in our "turn out" I am unable to say, but the room at once was placed at our disposal. To say that it was an elegant apartment would not tell the tale. It was superb. There was a high post bedstead of seasoned maple and a cotton bedcord. On the bedstead was a tick of deep and wide dimensions. One dirty and soiled sheet was all the linen the room could boast. The pillows were made of husks and therefore did not need any superfluous covering. The floor was minus a carpet—a good thing because there were so many wide cracks in the floor that a carpet would have sagged into each crack and made it look bad. The wardrobe, dresser, and commode were in the store yet. The chairs were difficult of access as they were needed

in the dining room at mealtime, in the "office" the rest of the time, and there were only six all told. The shortage was made up by using a plank six or eight feet long when there were more guests than the usual "straggler." After supper we had a hard time with the "crowd," consisting of the landlord, his hired boy, Brad, and the writer. We adjourned to the first room referred to and were joined by three cowboys who wanted to stay all night. Permission was granted and they were given the floor of the "front room." They were pretty tough appearing fellows.

We had thrown our lap and buffalo robes on the floor of the "office" and our dog, "Dan," was lying on them. He was a good-natured animal and a good judge of human nature. He was not inclined to bite but insisted upon gentle treatment. He *could* be ferocious. The first thing the ruffians did to manifest a disposition to quarrel was to take a seat by the fire and demand of me, in an insulting manner, that I treat everybody alike by passing around the cigars. (They saw me hand one to Brad.) I looked unconcernedly into the eye of my interrogator as he repeated his question, "Ain't ye goin' ter set 'm up?" I made no reply as I puffed my cigar. I was leaning back in my chair and was very comfortable. He was somewhat nonplussed by my manner as I wished him to be and, turning his eyes toward the dog on the pile of blankets, he seemed to discover an

escape for his malignity. Springing toward the dog he grasped the robes and, with a sudden jerk, pulled them out from under the dog in an instant. The beast struck the floor on his back, bounded like a rubber ball, and was at the throat of the ruffian. He did not make a sound and the action was so sudden and unexpected that man and dog fell backward into Brad's lap. Knowing the habits and disposition of his dog so well, Brad caught him by the neck and, speaking sharply, succeeded in quieting the combatants.

Turning to the discomfited cowboy, Brad said, "Now, my boy, the next time you interfere with this dog, you can fight your own battles." This battle ended with an oath and a muttered threat.

When we retired it was discovered that the door to the room had no fastening. The only way we could keep out intruders was to move the bedstead against the door. This we did and retired. The dog slept in the room with us. He was a good watcher. Along in the middle of the night the growling of the dog awoke us. The "tallow dip" had long since gone out and the dim light of the stars made little headway through the dirt begrimed window pane. The dog became still. The thumb latch, moving up and down, was the only sound we could hear. It was repeated a good many times and the door was pushed with considerable force without effect because the heavy bedstead was planted against it.

Brad's gun was at the head of the bed. My revolver was in my pocket. Brad slept on the front side. My coat hung on the bedpost. Brad carefully picked the pistol from my pocket and aiming it high enough, over the door, to do no harm, fired. There was a shuffling of feet, whether two or more we could not tell, and all was still. The rest of the night we were undisturbed. In the morning the "toughs" were up and off before us. They evidently concluded the combination of men, animals, and battery was too much for them.

The Worst Hotel I Ever Saw

We only stopped for dinner. It was a beautiful day in the early fall of '74. Brad and I, the team, dog, and gun were all subjected to the dinner. I have since been to the town a good many times and never could I find a man or woman that knew for certain who it was that kept the Guthrie Center Hotel that season. There were only three or four business houses in the "burg" and I got through with my work in a hurry. Driving to the hotel we found a long, lank specimen of a man sitting in the doorway whittling.

"Halloo, boss! Is this a hotel?"

He looked up with a sort of tired expression on his face, looked us over carefully and drawled:

"Mister, ye must be a stranger yere; this is the only tavern any w'ere's 'bout these diggin'," and he whittled as if it was for wages.

"Is it about noon?"

"I 'low grub's all ready."

"Can we get some dinner?"

"Ye kin if it ain't all gone 'fore ye set to."

"Do you have feed for our team?"

"Plenty of feed." But he never moved.

"Where is the barn?"

"Just 'round the corner."

I dismounted and, *stepping over the landlord*, entered the house. The door was open and the warm sun shone in and made it look cheerful. The sunlight was the only thing in the room except an old saddle; this lay on the floor and I sat down on it; not a thing on the floor or on the wall. As soon as Brad put up the team he joined me in the office.

"Old man," said Brad, "where are all o' the chairs?"

"Thar all in to dinner jist now. I generally have a bench, but the boys tuk it up to a dance las' night and we're a little short as a consequence."

"Couldn't turn over and let a fellow sit on you, could you?"

The lazy lout turned around and looked at Brad inquiringly a moment but said nothing. There was no place for us to wash. The "proprietor" looked as if he had never washed. We had to feed our team. They were well-cared for and could rest.

"How long have you kept a hotel?"

"Not long."

"Do you expect to make it a business?"

"I 'lowed to when I started in but it kind o' goes agin me."

"I'm surprised to hear you say that. You ought to go to a big town and keep a big house and then people would appreciate you."

He smiled a sickly smile and said nothing but whittled vigorously.

A fat woman, who would weigh about four hundred pounds, came to the door and called out, "You'ns can come to dinner if ye want any."

We went through a terribly dirty room where our fat woman and her duplicate were washing. The foul odor of the room permeated the whole house and filled the dining room with sickening steam and the atmosphere of soapsuds. The duplicate came in to serve our dinner. Sour, stale bread; strong and furry butter; cold beef steak, warmed over; cold sliced potatoes, one-half warm and one-half cold, and the tallow in which they were fried not one-half melted; bitter, black coffee; blue milk; etc. I could not eat. Turning to the duplicate, I said:

"My dear, can I have a glass of milk?"

"I reckon ye kin," and she rolled off into the other room, soon returning with a glass of milk, her forefinger sticking into the milk up to the first joint. She set it down by my plate and snapped the milk from her finger with the ease of long practice and the greatest familiarity. I picked it

up and set it down as far from me as I could and groaned, "Oh, Brad, this is terrible."

She looked at me in sympathy and said:

"What ails ye?"

"I am sick."

"That's too bad. Can I do anything for ye?"

"Yes, get me a boiled egg."

She got it. I ate it. It was all I ate. The dishes were so dirty I could not eat from them, even if the food had been passable. Dirt was thick around the handles of the creamer. It looked like the dirt found under the fingernails of a farm boy in the potato field. I took some butter from the plate to use with my egg and picked three hairs from the small portion on my plate. This was too much. I turned to the duplicate again:

"My dear, is the lady in?"

"The which?"

"The landlady, your mother."

"I reckon."

"Can I see her?"

"I reckon," and she rolled off into the other room after her mother. This dining room girl is worthy of a word of description. She will serve as a model for hotel girls for all time to come. Allow me to give her dimensions. As near as I can remember she was about four and one-half feet high by three and one-half feet wide; her sleeves were rolled to her elbows; and she was barefooted. Her feet were the color of the ground but her

hands were clean to her wrists. The latter phenomenon was doubtless attributable to the fact that she had just left the wash tub. She soon returned with her mother who said:

"Which of us you'ns fellows want?"

"Madam, do you have any baldheaded butter?"

"I don't know what you'ns mean."

"You know what a baldheaded man is, don't you?"

"It's a man that has no har on the top o' his head."

"Well, that is the kind of butter we want."

"That's the best we'uns have got anyhow," and she was good natured at that. They seemed to have no conception of the situation. Both landlady and duplicate paddled out of the room.

When we were ready to leave and I asked for my bill, the landlord said, "A dollar." I told him to charge all he wanted for my man and the team, but nothing for me as I had nothing.

"Oh, well, it's a dollar just the same," was his indifferent reply. The above is as correct as memory serves me in describing the worst hotel I ever saw.

K. W. BROWN

Almost a Gruesome Tale

This is not a sketch of my army life nor a story of my experience as a commercial traveler, but simply an incident that occurred in the summer of 1865, soon after my return from the army.

I was not well and was on a trip to the Lake Superior copper regions where it was recommended I spend a month or two. I had done this and was in Winona, Minnesota, where I had formed a temporary partnership with a gentleman of some means. We planned to purchase and ship a quantity of butter and eggs west to some point on the Missouri River. As I knew something of the business, and he had the money, we were to offset his money with my experience and divide the profit.

We purchased our stock and went with the shipment west on the railroad to Rochester and Mankato, where it stopped and stage coaches and freight wagons (schooners) took over.

Imagine my surprise, a few miles out from Winona, when an army comrade and erstwhile "Professional Gambler," Geo. W. Brown, walked into the car. I had enlisted him in New York in 1864 and he had served with me till the war ended. He greeted me with all his old-time

courtesy and friendliness. As I made room for him in my seat, he remarked: "I've got something to tell you in a few minutes." Mr. Jones, my partner, and I had seats facing each other and there was plenty of room. I introduced them and Brown proceeded to tell both of us what he proposed, at first, to tell us. He took from his outside coat pocket a small buckskin bag tied with a string of the same material, and remarked: "That bag contains two thousand dollars in greenbacks I won from a man, who is in this car, while coming up river yesterday by steamboat from Dubuque. He is following me, hoping to get it back. He swears he will or kill me." This was rather exciting. He pointed out the man so we both would recognize him if we saw him again.

Most of the passengers were bound for Rochester, Mankato, and nearby towns but eight or ten, including the four characters of this incident, took stages at Mankato for western points. We rode from about twelve o'clock, when we arrived at the end of the railroad, until we came to a place called the "Half Way House," probably fifty miles west of Mankato. It was a primitive looking "tavern" but had a late supper all ready. The beds and rooms were in keeping with the looks of the house outside. There was no plaster in the building and partitions were made of flooring. Mr. Brown and myself slept together. Our room was on the north side, upstairs. Under our

window was a flat "lean-to," from which it would be very convenient to crawl into our room. The head of our bed was toward that window and about two feet from it.

Before we blew out the candle, my bedfellow took his wallet from his pocket and hung it on the bedpost nearest to that window. I protested: "Brown, why do you do that?" He smiled and said, "Who would look there for it? Would you?" When our room was dark we could see the cracks made by the shrunken flooring boards, from which all partitions were made. We were soon asleep. I was very tired. My bedfellow slept on the front side of the bed and was directly in front of the window.

About midnight I was awakened by the sound of a window being raised. Soon wide awake, I discovered a man between us and the window. His head was just coming into the window. He was very still. Brown was also wide awake, lying on his side, a revolver in his hand, pointed at the intruder. The visitor raised his hand, took the money from the bedpost, and was about to withdraw his head and shoulders from the window when a bullet from the revolver of my bedfellow put an end to the proceedings.

In a minute the room was full of men. The landlord was half dressed and had a lighted candle in his hand. No one spoke for a minute. They saw the dead man lying across the window

sill. Mr. Brown reached down and picked up his bag of money and, hanging it on the bedpost, remarked: "Gentlemen, that's my money in that bag. If you want it, any of you, you better come and get it. Landlord please see that that body is removed and at once." It was done from the outside and he turned over and went to sleep again, even after such a terrible experience. I did not sleep any more. We decided that the landlord was a confidant of the man who was shot and told him where to find the bag of money in the dark.

The next morning the man was buried. There was no funeral, no arrest, no complaint. We left at noon for the Missouri River. My comrade went east and I never saw or heard of him again.

"Held Up" For \$35

Following the experience recounted in my last article, Mr. Jones and myself continued west until we got to the Missouri River. At two or three "supply stations" on the river we sold our entire shipment of butter and eggs at a good profit and returned, the way we came, to Winona where we settled our business. Jones remained, as that was his home; I bought a steamer ticket for Fulton, Illinois, and boarded a boat waiting at the dock to start, in a few minutes, for St. Louis and intervening points on the river.

I was very weary and when shown to my state-room, I locked my door and hanging up my coat,

I crawled into the upper berth, from preference, and was soon fast asleep. I always sleep in the upper berth on a steamboat because of the ventilation. There was a narrow transom over the door through which a little light filtered. I must have slept several hours. The vibrations of the vessel caused by the machinery kept me fast asleep. I was awakened by two things, the stopping of the side wheels and their splashing, and the pressure against my head of a revolver accompanied by a voice that said, "Say you," to which I replied, "Well, who are you and what do you want?" "I want your money and I want it quick." "How did you get in here? I locked the door when I came in here." "Never mind about that. I was in bed here when you came in but you 'shell out' and do it quick or you will not live a minute."

I had forty dollars in my vest-pocket and forty-five in my pants pocket, in greenbacks, and had both garments on, as I had just thrown myself upon the bed. I was lying on my breast and as I raised up a little to put my hand into my vest-pocket, he said: "Hold on, don't move a hand or you are a dead man." I could see him a little and said, "You don't know much. You tell me to give you money or you will kill me; when I try to get it, you say you will kill me if I move. My money is in my vest-pocket. I am laying on it. Shall I get it or will you help yourself?" He said, "Get it and give it to me and no fooling." I thought he smiled

a little. I took the wad of paper money from my vest-pocket and handed it to him, turning over on my back as I did so, saying: "There is my pile, you've got the drop on me—if you are not the meanest man on earth you will give me back five dollars to get home with. Please point that gun the other way. I've got no gun; if I had I would have used it on you before this time."

That man laid my money on the bunk before me, counted it out and spoke: "Yes, here is forty dollars, thirty-five dollars will do me till I strike another victim," and he handed me a five-dollar greenback, remarking as he did so: "We are wooding up at a landing and I go ashore here. If you follow me or raise a row, I'll kill you sure." I replied, "I shall take no chances, go on and go quick, your room is better than your company," and slipping the bolt in the door he left with these words: "There is a linen coat you can have; it's a little small for me." I locked the door and never saw or heard of my "robber" again.

On the lower berth, neatly rolled, was a new, well-made "up-to-date" linen coat. It was just my size and fit. I kept it, reached my destination in safety, came directly to Ames for my first visit July 12th, 1866. I wore that coat as a "duster" several years and took pleasure in telling my friends "I paid thirty-five dollars for that coat."

K. W. BROWN

It Happened on the Territory

One morning, desiring to get an early start and drive into the country some miles before the heat became so intense, we ("Double Sole Kip" and I) engaged a livery for the purpose. The team looked a little fiery and we asked the owner if it was safe. "Just as safe as kittens," was his reply, but I was afraid of the team from the start. We had a light, three-spring wagon loaded with four trunks, two of mine and two of my boot and shoe companion, whom I had dubbed by reason of his initials, Double Sole Kip. He is still living, gray as a rat, or I might say white, and too weak and feeble to sell goods on the road. The team was a well-matched span of brown mares that evidently had run away every chance they had for 15 or 20 years—that was about their age—they looked like it and acted like experienced runaways. We drove out east of town about five miles without incident. It was a delightfully pleasant August morning. D. S. K. was showing me a fine, solid gold watch fob, a miniature horse, an elegant piece of workmanship—a present from a dear friend. He was telling me how he prized it, when we began to descend a short grade. Just as the incline became sufficient to make it necessary for the horses to

hold back a little, the bolt dropped out of the left brace of the tongue and that side of the wagon ran right onto the horses. As I sat on the left side I was interested in this change of program. I did not care anything in particular about horses, but my partner was a horseman and preferred to drive and manage the team. At this juncture in the proceedings I was specially anxious that he should manage them, as the two hind legs of the right mare began to play a double game of fist-a-cuff on the dashboard with a lightning and splintering attachment. I thought I should get a better view of the play from a little distance and hence I stepped out of the vehicle and leaned against the fence. D. S. K. always insisted that I fell out and struck the fence. This was a lie—although I did get out pretty quick and sudden like and came into contact with the fence with an affectionate movement. It was quite surprising, when one considers the early start I had in the affray, to see the picture presented to my view from a fence corner. It was almost impossible to tell who was driving, the hind feet of the team or the trunks. The lines were flying in the air, four horseshoes were trying to grasp them, four great sample trunks were rolling in as many directions. In less time than I could collect my self together and think in good shape, the wagon was turned bottom side up in the middle of the road. The team was gamboling along the highway at a two-minute

gait and poor D. S. K. was trying to extricate himself from a barbed wire fence that had him tied up. No one was hurt, not even the barbed wire fence. We gathered up the trunks, arranged them in a row, righted the wagon, and walked into town two miles away. At the dinner table my partner missed his little gold horse; unavailing efforts were made to find it, but the next year, when we reached the same territory again, the loser was glad to give a little country girl a dollar who had found and returned it to him. It cost us only a couple of dollars to fix up our wreck and we were thankful it was no worse.

We Learn Our Lesson

It became quite a custom with Brad and me in our peregrinations to put a lot of stones in the front of the wagon at the side of our tool box. About the size of a goose egg, or smaller, the stones were convenient to throw at dogs who took a notion to jump our dog, "Dan." Dan was a good dog—orderly, neat, and knew more than some men. He knew enough to mind his own business; he traveled by the hour and by the day between the horses' forelegs, never varying a foot from his accustomed place. Men and animals alike were no temptation to him to leave his two friends, the horses. He was a most "manly" dog. Our seat was covered and an unloaded gun (a breech-loading Parker) always leaned on the seat between

us. A box of shells was handy. Often we were tempted to shoot some of the dogs that attacked us—bulldogs, yaller dogs, and other members of the canine family were attracted toward us. Our Dan was an object of much interest. It finally became necessary to take to the "stoning process" method of treatment as a means of saving ammunition as well as the lives of the attacking parties. Brad did the driving and I threw the stones.

To facilitate the business I sat on the right side in order to give my arm better play. I thus had a full swing at the victim of our intended (mis) treatment. While it is true that we did not stone a dog unless he came at our dog, still we might have avoided some collisions. If it had not been for the spirit of mischief, a good many less dogs would have gone off the "battlefield" with sore heads. Some of the cases, however, were very aggravating. Dan was often put upon and soundly abused but for our timely interference. In ordinary cases when a small dog, of no harmful size, came out barking and snapping at Dan we paid no attention; but when a big dog of twice Dan's size would "bounce" him, then we took a hand. Driving through a town in northwestern Iowa, we passed an old cow shed. A bulldog of massive dimensions crouched beside a strawpile. He was watching Dan's approach and was ready to spring. His head was between his forepaws and his teeth were perceptible two or three rods away. His ap-

parent owners were loading manure on the other side of the barn. They could see us coming but before the dog was ready to spring, the barn was between us and the two men. I took a large stone in my hand and held it so as to be ready to throw as soon as the bulldog started to spring.

I had my arm already raised and let fly with all my power. He gave one sharp yell, whirled around where he stood, and ran behind the shed. The owners came running toward us and we met their gaze with an unmistakable look of innocence. They looked at the dog and then at us in blank astonishment. It had given no sign of trouble except that one yell, but all his fight was gone.

"Did you see that dog laying there?"

"Yes, he acted rather strangely, did he not?"

"Your dog did not bite him, did he?"

"No, I guess not. Our dog has not been out from between the horses for some time. Look your dog over and see if anything is the matter."

"Nothing is the matter with him. Nothing can hurt him, only he acts so queer like."

We sympathized, condoled, and drove off, and left them as mystified as possible, while we were much amused by our little adventure.

Sometimes a ferocious, pugnacious sort of an animal would come from a house with the evident intention of utterly destroying our favorite. A well-aimed stone would be planted with a dull thud against his ribs and that was refreshing to us

(if not to the dog). I recall, however, an escape that made a lasting impression on us and nearly put a stop to our amusement in this direction. It made us feel like boys throwing stones at frogs, "it was fun for the boys but death for the frogs." We were going into a southern Iowa town one evening just at dusk. Our team was sauntering along slowly after an unusually hard day's work. We were to stop here all night and knowing that our day's work was at an end, we ceased to hurry. Brad spoke and broke the stillness of the occasion, "Cap., see that dog," and pointed to a moving shadow that was gliding along, among the bushes at the side of the highway. I at once conceived of a big dog watching for an opportunity to bounce our Dan. Getting a rock all ready, I waited for the "overt act." It did not come. The slightest movement toward us and I would have thrown the stone. The gliding shadow kept parallel with us and seemed to be on the lookout for a chance to spring. I was on the alert, ready to defend our dog. The sand was taken out of me by Brad's next words:

"For Heaven's sake, don't throw; it's a baby!"

No one but a parent can conceive of my feelings when I dropped the stone and held my breath, burdened with the thought of "what might have been." It was really a little child running along by the side of the road. I was thankful that I had been taught a lesson to be more careful.

Buying A Blacksmith Shop

Every commercial businessman is legitimate public plunder. It is legitimate to rob him because custom has so decreed. Everybody *does* rob him; everybody expects to rob him; nobody protests and any time the poor pilgrim dares to say a word in his own defense, he is denounced as a kicker. Hotel men who sell a meal (good, bad, or indifferent) to all creation for twenty-five cents will universally say, "Fifty cents, please," to a commercial man. The baggageman who checks the baggage a transient may have, regardless of size, weight, or condition, will "whoop it up" to commercial men at the rate of so much a hundred pounds. The drayman who would blush to the roots of his hair to charge one of his townsmen ten or fifteen cents to do a little job of taking a couple trunks to the depot, would laugh at the soft snap he had struck when a traveling man gets the same work done for fifty cents.

In all our large towns he is victimized from start to finish. For any extra, unusual errand or inconvenience to those about him, the public sizes up his "pile" and charges him accordingly. Driving into one of northwestern Iowa's thriving county seat towns one day, we broke one of the braces to our wagon tongue. It was a simple fracture, nothing more. It was work to take the iron from the gearing, but Brad did that, and hastened to a blacksmith shop where he held together the two

pieces while they were welded. It took about two minutes. The proprietor of the shop was not very busy and the delay to him was nominal and to us, nothing, as I was "making the town" while Brad was attending to the repair business.

"How much is it?" asked Brad.

"I guess how't I'll hef't cherg ye beout four shillin's fur thet ere."

"About what?"

"Beout four bits, I reckon."

"Half a dollar? Why, man, I just want to pay you for the welding of this iron, that's all."

"Well, I know thet."

"How much is it?"

"It's four bits."

"You don't understand me; I want to pay you for welding this iron. I don't want your shop."

"It's four bits anyhow."

"Look here, old man, I don't want the tools or the shop, nor the outfit; I want to pay you about five or ten cents, a good big price for this work you have done." (I was willing to pay a quarter.)

"Is this yer own team?"

"Yes sir."

"I 'lowed 'twas a livery."

"Well, what of it, if it was a livery?"

"Whose trunks b'm in yer rig?"

"They belong to a hat man I am traveling with."

"Just as I 'lowed. I knowed 'twas a runner's rig. It's fifty cents, mister."

"What's fifty cents?"

"Weldin' that there iron. Runners gin'relly kin pay if they haf to," and the wretch collected fifty cents for his job. He had caught the infection and ascertained that the "runner kin pay if he has to." Who can blame him for "when he was with the Romans for doing as the Romans do."

Driving through Grundy County, accompanied by my wife, we stopped at a farmhouse (that looked as if the people knew how to set up a good square meal) to get some supper. Our team was well-cared for and we were well-fed and enjoyed our rural entertainment. Hitching up to go on our way after our bountiful supper, I said to mine host of the farmhouse:

"What shall I pay, my friend, for our supper?"

"I hardly know what to say," and he put both hands in his pocket and looked out over the broad acres of his beautiful and extensive property, for it *was* fine. "Would you think thirty cents too much?"

I was astonished and at once thought the man meant thirty cents for us two and the team. I was uncertain and asked, "How much did you say?"

"Thirty cents, if that ain't too much; that would be ten cents apiece."

I expressed my surprise at the lowness of the price and tried to get him to take more, but he was "set" in his way and would only accept thirty cents. We drove away, wondering how on earth

that man ever accumulated his valuable and attractive farm.

While we were partaking of his bountiful and almost gratuitous hospitality, we noticed several double-barreled shotguns standing in the corners of many different rooms. I inquired if the locality was a good one for hunting. We were told, with a grim smile from our genial host, "that it depended on what was hunted." Come to find out we were in the neighborhood of the celebrated Rainsbarger murderers. The farmer with whom we were staying had felt the power of that gang of thieves in the loss of a horse or two and an attempt to rob his house. His house and barn were continually under lock and key. Guns kept in the house were loaded and ready for use. It was almost a relief to leave the locality.

We did not always find unselfish hospitality in the rural districts. Mrs. B. and I stopped at a farmhouse for dinner once in northern Iowa. The family was just ready to sit down to a bountiful repast. It was noon and the harvest hands were just in from the field. The lady of the house was the "man of the house," and to this day we do not know which of the several "hands" was the husband. Whichever one he was, he had a good boss. She flew around in the house and outdoors like a fly on a hot skillet. She was glad to have us stop. She evidently did lots of business of this kind. It was ten miles from the nearest town in the direc-

tion we were going. We had a farmer's good dinner, well-cooked, well-served, and well-seasoned. It was enjoyed by all. The "lady of the house" went with us to our carriage, hustling around to get us off in good shape.

"What shall I pay you, madam?"

"A dollar and a half," she said smiling a dollar and a half smile.

I paid her the dollar and a half, thankful she did not know that I had more. She did know, however, that I was a commercial traveler and her observation had taught her that I (and all of my class) was legitimate public plunder. Her predilection made it quite the thing to "put it onto us" to the extent of her ability to collect. The difference between the two farmers, the one charging thirty cents and the other a dollar and a half for the same thing, was this: One was informed, the other not, that commercial travelers were legitimate public plunder. One took advantage of the condition, the other did not. One was avaricious and grasping, the other kind and liberal.

K. W. BROWN

A Long Cold Walk

It was in February, 1873, and we were snowed in at Grand Junction, Iowa. The hotel was a block south of the depot and it was filled to the limit with passengers from both the C. & N. W. and the "Des Moines Valley," now the C. R. I. & P., railroad. Nearly a dozen commercial men, of which I was one, were in the number. It was cold and stormy and the wind blew the snow in all the directions of the compass.

The highways were as thoroughly blocked as the railroads and the only thing to do for over forty-eight hours was to wait and try to be as comfortable as possible. Several in the party were anxious to reach Des Moines as soon as possible and I was one of that number. The C. & N. W. would undoubtedly be open first but it had no branch to Des Moines.

At last a train left Fort Dodge for Des Moines carrying mail and express and one passenger car well-filled with men, women, and children. It got along slowly, shoveling its way occasionally until well south of Gowrie, where it ran into an open prairie of some fifteen miles to Grand Junction. The little towns of Paton and Dana were not yet laid out.

About three o'clock, a man, well-bundled up in a fur coat and other means of protection, came down the railroad track on foot. He reported the southbound train was stuck fast in a cut half a mile long, six or seven miles up the track. There was no hope of freeing the train and there was no food for half a dozen ladies and three babies. He asked for volunteers to go up the line and carry some food and coffee.

Here was an opportunity to do some heroic work, a chance to get one's name in the paper! George W. Smith, representing Wellington Bros. & Co., wholesale dry goods, Boston, was the man who volunteered to attempt the "forlorn hope." It was expected that two or three men would undertake the task but no one came to the front and George went alone. We all turned in and got him ready. The landlord put up a large basket of food and coffee, as much as a man would wish to carry so far. I borrowed a fur coat and cap for George and he started off about 3:30 p.m.

His home was in Marshalltown. I got the address of his people there so that I could communicate with them in case of necessity. Several of the boys walked up the track half a mile, carrying the basket, to give him a good start and cheerful beginning. While the track was clear and smooth for long distances, the snowbanks in the cuts were deep and impenetrable.

Ed Steel, a clothing man out of Boston, a born

humorist, and Frank Smith, a furniture man from Grand Rapids, Michigan, went with George over a mile.

George Smith walked seven miles up the track, found the stalled train and delivered the lunch and coffee to the ladies and babies. At once he began the long walk of seven miles on the return trip. At six o'clock we got anxious and, as I had promised when he left, we sent two men, who volunteered for the undertaking, with two lanterns up the track to meet and look after his welfare.

They went about two miles before meeting George and got into the hotel, on their return, at eight o'clock. I want to tell you George had a royal welcome and a pleasant evening of greetings in the dining room and parlor of the hotel as a reward for his disinterested, unselfish, heroic, but wearisome journey of fourteen miles in one of the worst storms of that or any other winter season.

Mr. Smith continued with Wellington Bros. & Co. for years. He finally quit the road and went into the retail dry goods trade at Broken Bow, Nebraska, Marshalltown and Nevada, Iowa, and did a successful business in each place. He died a few years ago in his old home in Marshalltown. The personal friendship existing between us continued for over a third of a century.

K. W. BROWN

Kendrick W. Brown

Captain Kendrick W. Brown was one of those tireless "Knights of the Grip" who played a dynamic role in the growth of his home town and state. There can be little doubt that the successful salesman did much to further the economic growth of Iowa. What is equally important, men like K. W. Brown played a significant role in developing the social, cultural, and religious growth of their home communities. It was given to few men to give so much of themselves for the lasting benefit of others.

Kendrick W. Brown was born in Jefferson County, New York, on July 4, 1842. He responded to Lincoln's first call for volunteers in 1861 and served four years in the army, being wounded several times during his service. He was mustered out as Captain in Company "K" of the 186th New York Volunteer Infantry.

Brown was married in 1866 to Lydia Ann Gates. The young couple came at once to Ames, Iowa, where he became the first grocery merchant. He was shortly enticed to take up salesmanship and in 1872 became a traveling salesman for a New York hat and glove house, in which he continued for forty years.

A charter member of the First Baptist Church in Ames, Captain Brown was widely known throughout Iowa. His three passions were his home, the church, and the furtherance of the cause of temperance in Iowa. It was in the cause of temperance that Captain Brown gained statewide fame, running for Lieutenant Governor of Iowa on the Prohibition ticket in 1906, and for Governor of Iowa on the same ticket in 1908. He garnered 9,118 votes for governor.

His first wife, Lydia, died on February 6, 1885 and he later married Margaret Mitchell. For sixty years K. W. Brown lived in his spacious brick home in Ames. During this period he was identified with every worthwhile enterprise for the upbuilding of the community in which he took great pride.

When Kendrick Brown died on April 30, 1926, he was nearly 84 years old. His wife Margaret, four children, ten grandchildren, and two great grandchildren survived him. His exemplary character won for him a legion of friends and admirers throughout Iowa, scores of whom traveled long distances to attend his funeral.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

TRAVELING MEN'S ...SUNDAY...

Capt. K. W. Brown, a "Knight of the Grip," will address the citizens of Oskaloosa,

Sunday, April 21,

10:30 A. M., at Baptist Church,

Subject: "Personal Christianity from Standpoint of a Traveling Man."

4:00 P. M., at Penn College Chapel,

Subject: "Twenty-five Years in a Grip."

7:30 P. M., at Christian Church,

Subject: "Wanted--A Man."

Capt. Brown stands high in the ranks of heroes and members of his old Army Company declare him the bravest man they ever knew.

His speeches are seldom excelled for unanswerable logic, keen satire and irresistible argument.

EVERYONE SHOULD HEAR HIM.
TRAVELING MEN ESPECIALLY INVITED.