

The
PALIMPSEST
OCTOBER 1927
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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

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

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

Superintendent

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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Baseball Beginnings

Considering the present popularity of baseball, it is difficult to realize that the sport has developed almost entirely since the Civil War. Before that time there were sporadic attempts to arouse interest in baseball but it was not until the soldiers, who learned the game while in army camps, returned to their homes that the sport became a national pastime.

During the year 1866, clubs were organized in towns and cities throughout the country and records exist of a few ball teams in Iowa in that year. By 1867 the baseball fever had spread and new teams were formed which contended for supremacy with neighboring clubs.

Typical of the baseball clubs organized sixty years ago was the one in Cedar Rapids, then a thriving town of about three thousand inhabitants. This club was formed by a group of young men who met

for the purpose at the office of the Farmers' Insurance Company on the evening of May 2, 1867. A constitution was adopted which, with a few modifications to fit the local situation, followed a model constitution that had been drafted in the previous December by the National Association of Base Ball Players at their meeting in New York. This association, it should be mentioned, had been formed in 1858, and after the Civil War was evidently engaged in promoting the organization of baseball clubs throughout the country.

The Cedar Rapids players decided to style their organization the "Cedar Rapids Base Ball Club". They elected officers including a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and three directors. The president elected at the first meeting was E. S. Hill, secretary of the Farmers' Insurance Company, at that time one of the large insurance companies of the State.

A few days later, the weekly *Cedar Valley Times*, edited by Dr. F. McClelland, announced that the "organization is now perfected and in full operation. The time of meeting for practice is Tuesday and Saturday of each week, at 4 P. M. This is an admirable opportunity for 'developing the muscle', and all our young men of sedentary habits should embrace it."

It was not until June 21st that the Cedar Rapids Base Ball Club played its first "matched game", the opponent on that occasion being the Oatka Base

Ball Club of Vinton. In calling attention to this game which was to be played on the grounds of the Cedar Rapids Club on Eagle Street (now Second Avenue), the *Times* said, "Those who want to enjoy a season of fun and scenes of dexterity, will not fail to be present on this occasion."

The game was played as scheduled but, probably due to the inexperience of both teams, the score was comparatively low. Cedar Rapids made only thirty-seven "tallies" while Vinton could score but fourteen. In those days the total score of a game not uncommonly exceeded a hundred runs. On October 17, 1867, for example, Mount Pleasant beat Burlington one hundred and fifteen to forty-two!

Two scorers, one representing each club, kept the record of the game. The box score showed the lineup and the record of each team as follows:

Oatka Club of Vinton

	<i>Outs</i>	<i>Runs</i>
Pickerill, catcher	5	0
Ross, pitcher	2	2
Weed, short-stop	5	0
McLucas, first base	2	2
Shields, second base	3	1
Steadman, third base	3	2
Sterling, left field	1	4
Griffeth, center field	2	3
North, right field	4	0
	27	14

Cedar Rapids Club

	<i>Outs</i>	<i>Runs</i>
C. Morehead, catcher	2	7
Hancock, pitcher	3	4
Stewart, short-stop	2	5
Hill, first base	4	3
Thompson, second base	3	3
Greene, third base	2	4
Ayers, left field	2	4
H. C. Morehead, center field	3	5
Howlett, right field	6	2
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	27	37

After reading the "jazzed" accounts of present-day sport writers, the comment on this game which appeared in the *Cedar Valley Times*, June 27, 1867, seems naïve. "The Cedar Rapids boys," said the writer, "acquitted themselves nobly, playing with an earnestness and vim and meeting with a success truly encouraging and decidedly flattering to them, as players, considering the shortness of the time since the organization of the club and the little practice they have had. The Vinton boys played well, but fate was against them from the start, and the first three or four innings demonstrated the result. Taken as a whole, this was a very pleasant affair, all parties conducting themselves in a most gentlemanly manner; a true spirit of fairness and courtesy characterizing the entire proceedings." In those days friendly sportsmanship seems to have

been regarded as highly as skill in playing. The spirit of professionalism had not yet developed.

In view of the frequency with which umpires of this day are showered with pop bottles and threatened with mob action, it is interesting to read that E. A. Allen, captain of the "Grove City" Base Ball Club at Marion, who umpired the game, received "the thanks expressed in three rousing cheers of both clubs for the able, efficient and impartial manner in which he discharged the duties of umpire on the occasion."

The result of the next game was not so pleasing to the Cedar Rapids team for, on June 28, 1867, the "Grove City" Club of Marion defeated them by a score of fifty-two to twenty-six. But, said the *Times*, "The most perfect harmony and good feeling existed during the game, and the Cedar Rapids boys take their defeat philosophically. The only reason we hear given for the great difference is, that the Marion boys did the best playing."

No further games were recorded until July 24th, when the Cedar Rapids Club journeyed to Vinton for a "return matched game of base ball" with the Oatka Club. On this occasion the Vinton team gained revenge for its earlier defeat for when the last "out" had been made, the box score showed that the Oatkas had thirty-eight runs while Cedar Rapids had only twenty-nine.

While the Cedar Rapids boys were "vanquished" they were not "discomfited". As a mark of their

sportsmanship they adopted a resolution, on their return to Cedar Rapids, thanking the members of the Oatka Club for their "liberal hospitality" and declaring that "to them belongs the honor of a double victory, won by superior skill on the field and by an exhibition of those qualities which constitute perfect gentlemen." Copies of the resolution were sent to the Oatka Club, the *Vinton Eagle*, and the *Cedar Valley Times*.

As it was difficult to secure outside competitors, the members of the Cedar Rapids Club provided diversion for themselves and amusement for the whole population of the town by two games between the married men and the single men of the club. The first game, played on August 16th, resulted in an overwhelming defeat for the married men. The final score was sixty-two to twenty-eight. The single men made thirty-four runs in the last inning. In an account of the game, headed "Alas Poor Benedicts", the *Times* humorously remarked, "We can account for this great difference only upon the theory that the game lasting until late, the benedicts were depressed in spirit in anticipation of the greetings they would receive from their worthy spouses for keeping supper waiting *so long*."

But a few days later the benedicts turned the tables on their rivals and achieved a sixty-one to thirty-one victory. This fact the *Times* recorded under the heading "Alas Poor Bachelors", and, in a facetious vein, offered the explanation that, "In-

spired either by the chagrin of their late defeat or urged on to victory by the taunts and jeers of the more energetic and aspiring partners of their bed and board, the benedicts hastened to remove the blemish which darkened their fair fame and disturbed the quiet of their households.”

During the remainder of the 1867 season, only two other games were played by the Cedar Rapids Club, both with an organization styled the “Valley City Club”. The first game, on September 2nd, was a victory for the Cedar Rapids Club by a score of fifty-one to forty-one, while the second game, played four days later, had a similar result, the Valley City Club going down to defeat forty-four to thirty-two.

Though a State baseball tournament at Belle Plaine was announced for September 10-13, 1867, the Cedar Rapids Club did not attend. Nor did the club participate in the State baseball tournament at Burlington, on October 15-17, 1867, where the Mount Pleasant Hawk-Eyes won the championship by overwhelming scores.

Not only is the Cedar Rapids Base Ball Club of interest because it was the first organization of its kind in the city, but it is worthy of consideration because of its personnel. Many of the players were members of the best families in Cedar Rapids and most of them were active in the business life of the city.

E. S. Hill, the first baseman and the president of the club, has been mentioned as holding the position

of Secretary of the Farmers' Insurance Company. E. M. Greene, who played third base or did the catching, was a son of Judge George Greene, the noted railroad builder, and half brother of C. G. Greene, at present one of the most respected citizens of Cedar Rapids. Mr. Greene was engaged in the real estate business but later moved to St. Louis to serve as Secretary of the St. Louis, Hannibal and Keokuk Rail Road, with which his father and other Cedar Rapids men were prominently connected.

L. M. Ayers, who played left field, was a member of the firm which published the *Cedar Valley Times* and for some time afterward the *Cedar Rapids Times* during the period these papers were edited by Dr. F. McClelland. For many years he was chief of the Cedar Rapids Fire Department and, more than any one else, deserves the credit for organizing fire fighting in the city.

G. M. Howlett, who played right field and second base on the team, was shortly afterwards appointed postmaster of Cedar Rapids. H. C. Morehead, center fielder, was a dealer in tinware, hardware, and stoves. His kinsman, C. Morehead, the catcher, was a tinner by trade.

William B. Stewart, the first team short-stop, was employed by a business firm on Commercial Street (now First Street) which was then the center of the business district. He was the city recorder while W. B. Leach was serving as mayor. In 1870, Mr. Stewart entered the railway mail service and moved

from the city. His son, Charles B. Stewart, is now engaged in business in Cedar Rapids.

Other members of the first team were A. G. Hancock, pitcher, and W. A. Thompson, second baseman. Another member of the club, not on the first team, whose name is known, was Samuel Neidig, a wholesale and retail grocer whose place of business was on South Commercial Street. He is now living in Des Moines. Charles Weare and Ely E. Weare were, at the time, employed as clerks. They were the sons of John Weare, the banker, who with Judge Greene had started the first bank in Cedar Rapids in 1851. A few years after the organization of the baseball club, Charles Weare became the postmaster of Cedar Rapids. The two Weares were brothers of Mrs. W. W. Walker, one of the much revered residents of Cedar Rapids at the present time.

L. L. Cone, the treasurer of the club, was a member of an old Marion family and is still remembered as an excellent bookkeeper. During the seventies he was employed by the Union Savings Bank of which Judge Greene was the president. Others listed were William Weeks, a carpenter; Lyman Gleason, an employee of the Farmers' Insurance Company; A. J. Mallahan, foreman of the job-printing department of the *Times* office; G. A. Gault; J. K. Wagoner; R. H. Whitenack; Harry Ward; George Carroll, vice-president of the club; and John Van Meter, the secretary.

These twenty men were the pioneers of Cedar

Rapids baseball. They made the sport popular in their own locality, just as similar clubs were popularizing baseball in towns and cities all over the United States. From such beginnings sixty years ago our most distinctive national pastime has developed.

ERIK MCKINLEY ERIKSSON

The Biography of a Newspaper

One of my college chums was George C. Harrington, the son of a farmer near Joliet. When he left Union College, he joined a brother, a steamboat man, who lived at Davenport, Iowa. The latter was possessed of considerable means which he offered to share with his brother. George looked the ground over, and, being more or less literary in his tastes, concluded that the best investment would be an evening newspaper.

This was in the spring of 1856, and soon after young Harrington reached Davenport I received a letter from him in which he offered me a half interest in his enterprise, without cost to myself; he to furnish the plant, and sufficient capital to sustain the publication until it grew strong enough to walk alone.

I felt, of course, highly complimented by this liberal proposition; and after some further letters from Harrington, in which he painted, in richest colors, the beauty and wonderful prospects of the city and its surroundings, and more especially the certainty of immediate success and ultimate fortune in the newspaper venture, I threw up my position

[This intimate account of the melancholy career of the Davenport *Daily Evening News* is adapted for THE PALIMPSEST from Franc B. Wilkie's *Personal Reminiscences of Thirty-five Years of Journalism*.
— THE EDITOR]

on the Schenectady *Evening Star* and went to Davenport.

Davenport was then a handsome and promising town. The first railway bridge across the Mississippi had just been completed, connecting the Chicago and Rock Island Railway with Davenport. It may be said at this point that this splendid connection was an object of intense opposition — both its building and its existence long after it was completed. The river interests, which included the majority of the population of the city, saw only ruin in the bridge. It would make the town a way-station; it would annihilate the two ferry-boats which transported freight and passengers across the river, and pauperize the teamsters and all the other industries involved in the transportation business.

The opposition was furious. Threats of blowing up the bridge were common, and when some reckless pilots, in taking their vessels through the draw, would now and then wreck one against a pier, the disaffection against the structure assumed almost the dimensions of a riot. Time passed. There was a ferry-boat or two thrown out of service, but, in the end, Davenport throve under the alleged misfortune and became rich and prosperous.

Davenport was, at that time, a characteristic “river town”. The majority of the business interests were involved in the receipt and shipment of goods by the Mississippi River. Long lines of steamers lay along the “levees,” as the landings were termed.

The men connected with the river traffic were the aristocracy of the region. The captain was away up in the altitude of rank, but the pilot, when he stood at his wheel, was a greater person than the captain. The clerk of the boat was always spoken of by the newspapers as "Billy Johnson, the gentlemanly and popular clerk of the *Hawkeye*." Even the burly, big-fisted, bull-necked, blaspheming mate rose considerably above the average business man, the lawyer, and the preacher in the estimate of the elements of the population which found occupation in loafing or working on the levee.

Back of the shanties, the capacious warehouses, and the ginmills, the ground rose slowly toward the lofty bluffs, on which were scattered dwellings, a few business blocks, and the steeples of three or four churches. The sloping site of the town was a lovely one, and, to some extent, justified the ardent belief of its residents — especially those who owned and owed for real estate — that it was the future city of the great West.

Harrington, my partner, a slender young blonde, had thoroughly mastered the printing business before he entered Union College, and, as a consequence, he had no difficulty in selecting the material for the new venture. Office and composing as well as press rooms were all secured in a single apartment on the second floor of James Grant's block.

On September 20, 1856, the first number of the *Daily Evening News* was given to the public. It was

a five-column sheet, and, being printed from brand-new type and on some paper selected for a beginning, it was exceedingly handsome, and satisfactory to the publishers and a fairly large share of the community. As a matter of course, the initial number had a plethoric supply of advertisements, so that the first paper was full of promise of substantial circulation and excellent business patronage.

“Isn’t she a beauty?” asked my partner, as he picked one of the first copies from the pile and regarded its clear, distinct impressions with a warmth of admiration such as he would have extended to a masterpiece of Guido.

“Indeed she is!” was the reply of his equally enthusiastic partner. “We have got it! The future is ours, and we’ll wipe the *Democrat* out of existence!”

The Davenport *Democrat* was a morning daily which had been in circulation some months, and concerning which more anon. Suffice it that, without knowing any of the editors, publishers, or anything else concerning the paper in question, we hated it with deadly animosity.

There was also a morning Republican newspaper, the *Gazette*, which, of course, we were compelled to look upon with contempt as the organ of the opposition, the mere and mercenary instrument of fanatics and bigots. But from a personal and business standpoint there was nothing venomous in our attitude toward the *Gazette* as in the case of our Democratic rival.

Time rolled on till the holidays came, and during all this period business was satisfactory. Other newspapers sent us marked copies of their issues in which were flattering notices of the *News*, with "Please X" on the wrapper. These papers were nearly all weeklies, semi-monthlies, or monthlies, and yet they were so cordial and flattering in their allusions that we could not resist their request for an even exchange. Under the staring head-line, "What the Press Thinks of Us," we reproduced all these compliments in leaded minion and felt that we were deserving of all the outrageous flattery, and also thought that the public, perusing these notices with an untrammelled interest, would accept all as Gospel truth.

Up to the last day of the year business was flourishing, and we frequently felicitated each other on the bonanza we had found and the certainties of a grand success in the near future. So promising was this period that our enterprise attracted attention from foreign capital. Hon. George Van Hollern, who became a well-known judge on the bench in New York City, and his brother, John, were in Davenport at the time engaged in the practice of law. They were so impressed with the success of the *News* that they proposed to organize a real-estate and banking house in connection with the newspaper. Capital in New York City became interested; the proposed institution was given a name; cards were printed on which were the names of the Van Hollerns, Harring-

ton, and myself, as constituting the new financial combination.

One may fancy the feelings of two young fellows just out of college as they contemplated this galaxy of glory, all within less than four months! It was overpowering, incomprehensible! We could not repress our joy; we moved on wings; we no longer walked: we soared far up in the blue empyrean!

Almost immediately after the holidays there was a big falling-off in advertisements. The shrinkage was palpable and alarming. At the same time collections became difficult; accounts regarded as gilt-edged, and which we had held back for a possible emergency, were met by requests to "call again!"

The *News*, in a little time, was running at a loss. For a couple of months we had worked off the issue on a hand press, and just before business turned we had taken advantage of the boom to purchase a power press, the money for which had been advanced by an enthusiastic farmer who was anxious to have something to do with a newspaper. We were to pay for the press in installments, one of which was past due, and another near maturity, and our patron was getting inquisitive, paying us frequent visits and seeming to be unusually interested in our welfare.

George and I discussed the situation.

"What, in the name of Heaven, is the matter with everything and everybody? Business is stampeded and is on the run," was his discouraging remark.

I had nothing to do with the practical department of the paper, and only knew that up to date things had gone well. "What's the trouble?" I asked.

"The bottom has apparently dropped out of the *News* and also out of the town. I can't collect anything; the paper bills are overdue; the old man is getting uneasy about the press, and to-day, for the first time, I have had to pay the printers only a little over half their wages."

"That's pretty tough! I don't see but one way out of it."

"What's that?" he asked.

"To 'strike' John for enough to cover the deficit and tide us over till spring business opens."

John was the steamboat man who was backing our enterprise, or, rather, who had supplied us with funds to start in business.

"I was in hopes," said George, "that I would not be obliged to call on him again, for some time at least. You know that the amount he has left in the pot is only two thousand dollars, and this was to be kept for improvements."

The conclusion was, however, that the situation imperatively demanded relief. George reluctantly agreed to interview our patron.

A few hours later he came back, his face white as a shroud and his mouth twitching with pain.

"In God's name, what ails you?" I asked, in alarm at his appearance.

"We are ruined!" was his despondent reply.

This incident demands some retrospection. In the Presidential election of 1856, Frémont and Buchanan were opposed, and the contest, involving all the bitterness and hatred of the Free-soil issues, was carried on with a vindictiveness that was almost deadly in its intensity. Our capitalist was a strong Democrat, but was carried away, confused, lost in the political turmoil, and concluded that Frémont would carry Iowa, as well as the entire election. Inspired by this conviction, he wagered one thousand dollars that Buchanan would lose Iowa and another thousand that he would not be elected. Of course, he lost both the bets, and the money thus wagered was the fund he had laid aside for the support of the *News*. This was the information which my partner brought me after his interview with his brother.

“But he says,” added George, “that he will make it up to us when navigation opens in the spring. That will be three months yet; but when the river is clear he will make money fast—at least a thousand dollars a trip from St. Louis to St. Paul.

“Well, we’ll have to get on some way till that time. But don’t you think it pretty rough on us and the party that a Democrat should invest money on a Democratic defeat, especially when there was not the slightest possibility of a Republican victory, and more especially when the money thus lost was the vital support of a struggling Democratic newspaper?”

We did not disagree on this point. We separated, very despondent, but determined to try and get through some way till the winter ice floated out of the river. The dullness of the winter season was of itself depressing; the loss of the money wagered on Frémont's election added vastly to our embarrassment; and even this was not all that conspired to impede our progress.

Without being at all aware of the imminence of a catastrophe, one was pending which was to almost wreck a nation's prosperity. There were indications of a financial depression; the commercial barometer showed a rapid decline; but few, unless the more sagacious of the weather prophets, foresaw anything like the real extent of the storm. It was the famous, malignant, destructive financial crisis of 1857 that was moving over the country, and which, in time, swept everything before it with the fury and destructiveness of a tornado.

I need not enter into the details of this calamitous event further than to state that Davenport was especially affected by its operations. The only currency in use in the community was what was termed "Florence" money, the issue of a firm of private bankers in Florence, Nebraska, doing business in Davenport. The wildcat banks everywhere had been utterly ruined. The Florence money had been brought in in order to evade the law, and circulated freely at a considerable discount below gold.

The *News* did not at first comprehend the real

calamity that was pending. When we found that the reserve on which we had depended was lost, we turned our attention to efforts to tide over the crisis in our affairs till the opening of navigation, when we confidently anticipated an ample supply of money.

It had always been the case on the river, that, when the ice went out on the Upper Mississippi, there were always boats below, between Cairo and St. Louis, waiting for the clearing of the ice. Among these waiting boats there was a fierce strife prevailing as to which should take the lead in the first trip up the river. Good pilots were in high demand and sure of a small fortune in case they succeeded in holding the wheel of the first boat.

My partner's brother, John, was one of the best pilots on the Upper Mississippi River. He was always among the first to be selected for the initial trips; and it was upon this engagement that our hopes now turned. His vessel was the *Argo* that was to bring us the golden fleece. John departed some time in February for St. Louis, to be on hand in ample time for the sailing of the first boat.

"Boys," he said as he left, "you needn't worry any more. She (meaning the river) is going to open early, and I'll be back in a jiffy, loaded with cash to the hurricane deck."

"When do you think you will get back?"

"Oh, the first or middle of March, for certain", he declared.

We shook hands all around, and put up a fervent orison for his success and his swift return.

From this period on, George and myself occupied ourselves in making small payments on the more pressing debts, staving off others, and waiting and watching for the breaking up of the river ice. The latter seemed as if it were a permanent fixture: teams continued to cross it as if they anticipated keeping it up all summer. At last there was a break opposite the city and our hopes were aroused, but then the ice gorged on the rapids and we were torn with despair. Thus hopes and fears alternated while we watched the river as Sister Ann looked from the window of the castle in search of relief from death.

Finally the fetters were knocked off, and we began to scan the lower river to discover the smoke of a steamer over the horizon. We listened at all hours of the night for the welcome shriek of a whistle.

“There she is!” ejaculated George one day. “There she comes! Glory to God, we’re all right!”

We rushed down to the levee, which was but a couple of blocks away, and saw far down the river the form of a steamer, with clouds of smoke pouring from her smoke-stacks, and a jet of white steam flying from her whistle. Her deck had a few passengers, and two or three men were in the pilot-house.

“That’s John, sure!”

“It doesn’t look like John. If it’s he, he is shorter than he was, and has raised whiskers.”

It required a visit to the pilot-house to learn the personality of the supposed John. The man proved to be somebody else.

“Did I see Jack in St. Louis? He was there a-waitin’, like fifty others, for a job. There’s six pilots for every boat. They say that river navigation is all gone to hell on account of that bridge,” was his tragic comment.

It was true that the bridge was materially influencing certain commercial phases; but the real interruption was due to the paralysis of the financial crisis. Several boats from below came up the river, and it was not until two or three weeks after navigation was clear that the much-yearned-for pilot made his appearance. He cut all our ardent hopes off at a single blow.

“River business is played,” he said with indignation. “Time was when steamboat owners almost broke their necks trying to get first to St. Louis, to secure their favorite pilot, and to beg him to accept a thousand dollars to take a boat to St. Paul! Now there are more pilots than wheels, and the best of talent has to go begging for a job at half the old figures. It’s all that cussed bridge!”

It was with broken hearts that we received this unexpected information, which promised only remediless disaster. It is true that John hinted that perhaps later on there might be an improvement, but the suggestion was so exceedingly faint that it afforded us no actual encouragement. The steamer

pulled out, went up through the draw, and soon after disappeared around the bend.

We two were prostrated by the intelligence, and for a time concluded that there was no recourse save to close out our business. After a time the elasticity and hopefulness of youth asserted itself, however, and we determined to continue the struggle.

“We’ve got more coming to us than we are owing, Let’s make ’em pay up!” said George.

We tried assiduously to “make ’em pay up,” but they could not in some cases, and would not in others. As a matter of fact, business was prostrated. Very much of the real estate was owned by large proprietors who were eaten up by taxation, who could get no sales for their lands, with the result that many of them were millionaires in the possession of corner lots and acre property and but little better than beggars in means of livelihood.

A death struggle began on the part of the young owners of the *News*. To meet a pressing indebtedness they had to resort to some one of the numerous “banks” engaged in loaning Eastern money and discounting local paper. Two-and-a-half per cent a month was the smallest figure at which accommodation could be obtained, and which, of course, was ruinous to any legitimate business. During the summer of 1857 we struggled in deep water. Often it was up to our chins, and now and then we sank over our heads, only to be rescued strangling and exhausted.

Finally the task became no longer tolerable. It was suggested that the cost of the support of one of the partners would be only half that of two. Accordingly an attempt was made to lighten the craft by throwing over ballast. I was the ballast that was dropped into the raging waters. Harrington assumed the ownership of the paper with all its credits and liabilities, while I was left adrift without a dollar.

I may as well, at this point, trace the career of the *Evening News* to its sepulchre. George Harrington finally became wearied of assisting its weakened steps and turned it over to the charity of John Johns, a son of Bishop Johns, of Baltimore, who was then in the practice of law in Davenport. Johns was immensely pleased to become the owner of a newspaper and beyond doubt contemplated making it one of the leading newspapers in the West.

However, Johns soon tired of his pet, and within a short time handed it over to some other credulous victim, who passed it along till it finally was placed in the receiving vault of the *Democrat*, where, for a few years, there appeared the inscription, *The Democrat-News*. But in 1864 the latter half disappeared and was interred in the fathomless, insatiate potter's field of defunct journalism.

FRANC B. WILKIE

Due Process of Marriage

At one of the early elections in Davis County, Samuel Swearingen was chosen for the office of justice of the peace. He at once became one of the first men in his township. In the opinion of his neighbors he was a person of importance, and in his own mind he was destined to cut a conspicuous figure in the public life of the new county. Back in Van Buren County he had been counted a political leader. He had even served one term as Representative of his county in the Legislative Assembly of the Territory. Called upon to settle many disputes that arose within his jurisdiction, he always discharged every duty imposed upon him to the very best of his ability and usually to the entire satisfaction of the parties concerned. It was not long until he had acquired an enviable reputation as a magistrate.

One day Caleb Knowles, desiring to take to himself a wife, called upon the justice to arrange for his services in the performance of the ceremony. As this was the first time he had been called upon to exercise that particular prerogative, Justice Swearingen felt highly honored to be selected in preference to a minister of the gospel. The "business should be done in the best style", he determined,—with dignity as well as "neatness and dispatch".

In order to avoid any mistakes or blunders on his

part, which would hurt the feelings or embarrass any of the wedding party, the justice decided to reduce the ceremony to writing. This he committed to memory, and practiced until he could repeat it with ease and much dignity. He was so well pleased with his efforts that he became fully convinced that his first venture in this branch of his official duties would not only be a complete success but would in all probability eclipse the performance of any other justice in Davis County upon similar occasions. The more he thought about the matter the more thoroughly convinced Justice Swearingen became that the people ought to witness this official act so as to learn first-hand of his ability to marry folks. Suiting action to the idea, the justice proceeded to invite a number of his friends and neighbors to attend the wedding.

The wedding day arrived. With praiseworthy punctuality the justice presented himself at the home of the bride, and with him came the guests whom he had invited. But the bride and groom were not quite ready for the ceremony. And so the party waited. And while they waited, in accordance with well-founded custom and for the sake of good-fellowship, the bottle went around. The justice, somewhat shaken as the time for the ceremony approached, took several drams to brace his nerves. One of the guests noticed that every time the bottle was passed the justice would take a "snort" and then go out around the corner of the cabin. Curious to know why Mr.

Swearingen retired so often, this guest peeped through a crack in the cabin and discovered the justice reading his ceremony. There was nothing like being sure of a thing, especially such an important and public process as marriage rites.

Four or five times the justice went outside, took his written memorandum from the pocket of his buckskin pants, and carefully read the ritual. At last the bride and groom announced that they were ready to "stand up". Justice Swearingen took a final dram to brace up his nerves. But at the moment when he needed nerve and presence of mind, both seemed to forsake him. He became weak at the knees and his memory was missing. Nevertheless he proceeded with the ceremony:

"Do you, Caleb Knowles, in the presence of these witnesses, take this woman whom you hold by the right hand to be your lawful and wedded wife, promising to — to — to —"

Here he was completely stalled. In vain he rummaged his befuddled memory and cudgelled his fleeting wits. Before him stood the blushing bride and embarrassed groom — waiting for him to proceed. "I do" was on the lips of the groom and the eyes of the bride were eloquent with the same sentiment. What was it the man should promise? If only he could take a peep at the notes in his pocket, but he dared not. Had he not boasted of his ability to marry people in fine form — and he could feel the gaze of his friends fixed upon him.

At last, in desperation, "I pronounce you man and wife", he said, "so help you, God!"

Realizing that his part in the ceremony was not as successful as he had anticipated, Justice Swearingen decided to abandon this particular plan of procedure for future engagements of a similar nature. He therefore destroyed his written ceremony and concluded to resort to the "Old Blue Book", as the acts of the first Territorial legislature were termed. The "Old Blue Book" could be depended upon for the fundamentals of judicial procedure. So the justice searched painstakingly through the whole volume, but he found nothing which approached nearer his ideas of a marriage ceremony than the oath to be administered to a witness at a trial. That, he thought, could be easily converted into a marriage vow by a few slight changes to suit the occasion. Indeed, he decided that the whole ceremony could be expedited in this manner.

It was not long before Justice Swearingen was called upon to unite another couple. When the guests had all arrived and the bridal party was ready, the justice proceeded to try his new ritual.

"Do you, sir, in the presence of Almighty God and these witnesses, solemnly swear that you will take this woman to be your lawful and wedded wife, forsaking all others and cleaving to her so long as you both live, so help you God!"

The swain answered in the affirmative and the justice proceeded to administer a similar oath to the

lady. After this, "in the name of the Territory of Iowa and the United States of America, and by the authority of the Old Blue Book", he pronounced them man and wife.

All went well with the newly married couple. They were very happy. But in less than three months they parted, and the husband applied to the justice to effect a dissolution. Swearingen, having been a member of the Territorial legislature, drew up a petition asking that what he and God had joined together be put asunder by that body. As the justice was a man of much influence, the prayer of the petition was granted and the parties were duly divorced. But the justice would never admit that his nuptial rites were in any way responsible for this unfortunate outcome.

HERMAN H. TRACHSEL

Comment by the Editor

NEWSPAPER MORTALITY

Twenty Iowa newspapers have ceased to exist during the last two years. Some have simply stopped publication and lapsed into the tranquility of job-printing; a few have been consumed by more venturesome or voracious competitors; while others have been consolidated under entirely new management. And the mortality rate is steadily rising. Newspaper mergers characterize the present era in journalism. Since the latest *Official Register* was issued three months ago the list of five hundred and seventy Iowa papers — weeklies, semi-weeklies, tri-weeklies, and dailies — has been further depleted. Nor have the casualties been chiefly confined to struggling country weeklies. Old and influential dailies like the Des Moines *Capital*, the Cedar Rapids *Republican*, and the Dubuque *Times-Journal* have succumbed.

From the earliest times newspaper competition has been very keen in Iowa. Potential subscribers have had no cause to complain of a dearth of aspiring journalists, while merchants have been overwhelmed with opportunity to advertise their wares. Before the Civil War it was a small town indeed that did not boast at least one paper. Sometimes the demand for a local journal outran its economic justifi-

cation. Public spirited citizens of Webster City paid five hundred dollars in cash and guaranteed five hundred subscriptions to secure the establishment of the *Hamilton Freeman* in 1857.

Under such circumstances the most prudential management and the ablest editing were necessary for success. Even so, the prosperity of a paper often depended upon contracts for the public printing. No wonder editors strove valiantly for the privilege of publishing delinquent tax lists and the dreary proceedings of county boards of supervisors. When bitter competition or the removal of a county seat did not prove fatal, financial depression occasionally levied a heavy toll, just as the panic of 1857 ruined the promising *Davenport News*. While Iowa has been a fertile field for journalistic enterprise, the failures have been many and fortunes very few.

Reasons for the present decline in the realm of the fourth estate are not mysterious. Hard times, that ever-recurring blight on better days, is part of the answer. When the farmers quit buying, the merchants stop advertising and the newspapers suffer acutely. But the principal cause is the fact that two papers will perish on the patronage that would support one. Circulation is at once the *sine qua non* of the publisher and the primary test of the advertiser.

THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE PRESS

There was a time when every newspaper in Iowa was partisan. Politics constituted their chief topic

of news and their reason for being. Each assumed to be an "organ" for its favorite party. Editors were men of strong political bias who knew the tenets of their faith and supported their convictions with a zeal that was often more vigorous than dignified.

Violent partisanship belongs to the past. While most of the Iowa newspapers classify themselves as Democratic or Republican, a surprisingly large number — over thirty per cent — claim to be politically independent. Perhaps Republican domination has removed the incentive for decisive partisanship. Certainly Iowa editors are relatively free from the dictation of party leaders. A study of the amount of space devoted to political issues would probably show a marked decline, particularly during the last quarter of a century, which would seem to indicate a shift of popular interest. The newspapers are simply reflecting the tendency of voters to support the candidate instead of the party, particularly in local elections. Personalities are more tangible and interesting than principles.

J. E. B.

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