

The **P**ALIMPSEST

MARCH 1940

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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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Yankees in Memphis

Following Van Dorn's devastating raid on Grant's supply base at Holly Springs on December 20, 1862, the Union army was compelled to relinquish the occupation of northern Mississippi and retreat to the vicinity of Memphis. While a new campaign against Vicksburg was being organized, the soldiers enjoyed a few days of relaxation — according to the diary of a private in the Sixteenth Iowa Infantry. —
THE EDITOR.

Our first experience at Memphis was not delightful. On our second day there a heavy rain set in and lasted until midnight. Then the weather turned suddenly cold, and by morning a foot of snow fell. Our threadbare tents failed to keep out the chill breezes, and any allusion to the Sunny South awoke sardonic blasphemy.

We would no doubt have suffered severely but for the happy fact that our division, the Sixth in the Army of the Tennessee, was paid off in the afternoon, and a general stampede for the city ensued. All discipline was gone. Even sentries left

their beats, shoved their muskets under tents, and went off in the universal hegira. This may seem an extravagant statement, but I heard of many such cases, and knew of some in my own regiment. The officers cared nothing for it, and were as anxious to get to town as we were. A thousand cavalry led by a man like Earl Van Dorn, could have easily captured the camps of our whole division — arms, artillery, and all.

Every man of us had in his pocket what to him was an ample fortune. Having been over so large a part of the Confederacy, fought battles, waded rivers, starved, thirsted, roasted, suffered, and frozen, we were now moved by a unanimous desire to sleep in a feather bed once or twice, have something nice to eat, and otherwise participate in the blessings of civilized life. Some of the older ones among us also thought they would like to have something to drink.

We soon reached the business center of the city, and a saturnalia began. The streets were alive with boys in blue — by thousands — and, ere long, Southern whisky bore luxuriant fruit. All ways of getting rid of money were utilized impartially. Gambling, drinking, feasting, reveling with Free Companions — speedily put Uncle Sam's greenbacks in circulation. Though the Memphians did not love us, they loved our money. It

bore the hated brand of the "Lincoln despotism", but plenty of people were glad to get it. Saloons, occasionally, were thrown out on the sidewalk, with many breakages, and the pantaloons and coats that danced on hooks in front of clothing stores often flew heavenward or formed impromptu carpeting for the passing crowds to walk on. If a soldier was arrested for riotousness, he was immediately rescued by other soldiers.

Many funny things occurred. One unsophisticated veteran bought a pair of boots, but had walked only a short distance in them when they got wet and came to pieces. They had been merely pasted or cemented together. Filled with ire, he went back to the dealer, demanding justice or blood.

"Mine frent", the merchant explained, handing back the money, "you should not have valked in dose poots. Dose are cafalry poots, and are yust made to ride in."

A small party of us took rooms at a nice hotel, had hot baths, arrayed ourselves in "boiled shirts", paper collars and neckties, and sallied forth to see the sights. The officers of our division, we observed, had imitated the example of the men, and were also bent on a sportive time. A fine brass band in Jackson Square discoursed free music. Toward evening the fun became fast and furious,

and the military officials of the city filed a complaint with General John McArthur, our commander. He gave little attention to their grievances, however, replying that we had seen rough times in the interior, and he thought, as long as we paid for what we got, a little frolic wouldn't hurt us.

I attended a theatre in the evening. The audience was composed almost entirely of officers and soldiers, seated promiscuously together. I saw a grizzly old colonel contentedly taking in the play, seated in the midst of jolly young soldiers. A pretty woman came out to the footlights and sang the "Star Spangled Banner", which, of course, awoke tumultuous applause. In the progress of the play, a ludicrous circumstance occurred. While the heroine was weeping before an incorrigible villain, and imploring him to grant some earnest request, a cavalryman with his brains fuddled with whisky took the whole scene to be real. Leaping on the stage he drew his six-shooter, cocked it, and would have made short work with the villain but for the latter's quick exit. The audience roared and applauded. With a defiant air the trooper replaced his weapon, and was about to draw the weeping heroine to his protective embrace when half a dozen of his comrades collared him and with great difficulty persuaded him that

the battle was over and that his presence on the stage was no longer necessary.

A Confederate officer was in the audience that evening. He described the incident as follows: "The play was 'Robert Macaire', and there was a fresh, hearty young Yankee in the pit who was under the influence of liquor. He took the whole thing for solemn fact, and in the scene where the Captain seizes a young girl to take her away forcibly, and the pretty actress shrieks, the Yankee sprang up to the footlight, whipped out his revolver and shouted at the top of his voice: 'Drop her, old fellow! Drop the gal, or I'll blow Hell out of you in a second!' Old Ben de Bar took in the situation instantly, and did 'drop the gal', whereupon the Yankee said kindly: 'Don't you cry, miss. He shan't hurt you! Whenever a gal's in trouble, just let her holler for the Second Cavalry!' The Yankee brought down the house."

Presenting stage heroics to such an audience was an easy path to dramatic eminence. Most of my companions were versed in the drama as little as myself. And yet we had borne parts in dramas on which the gaze of the world had been centered. This Memphis theatre was the first I had ever been in. Soft, voluptuous music, the glare of the footlights, stage illusions, and other scenic effects opened to me a new and bewildering field of splen-

dor. On the following evening, at the same theatre, I saw General Grant, Mrs. Grant, General Rawlins, one or two other generals, and some staff officers in one of the boxes.

The news that our stay in Tennessee was to be only temporary and that steamers would bear us southward soon excited the hopes and raised the spirits of all. The weather became genial and we gradually wandered back to camp, leaving a large amount of money in the tills of Memphis. Several soldiers had been shot at, under cover of darkness.

On the morning of January 18, 1863, the drums of our division beat to arms, and the order to strike tents was given. Cheer after cheer pealed through our spacious camps, and in half an hour the various brigades were marching into the city, with colors unfurled and all bands playing. Still another division was in motion also, and after a display of unusual pomp, which drew crowds of people to the sidewalks, we stacked arms along the levee while baggage of every kind was being transferred to a fleet of steamers. A multitude of sentinels were posted to keep the men from drifting back into the city to get "just one more drink".

It was night before we embarked. Twelve large steamers were loaded with twenty-four regiments and many batteries. The accommodations were somewhat insufficient, and we stowed our-

selves away in all sorts of places regardless of company or any other distinctions. I slept that night on the hurricane deck. At about twelve o'clock a heavy rain storm arose, drenching me and a party of companions to the skin. A work of several hours in the morning was necessary to dry our clothing and effects.

Not liking our perch on the roof, we picked up our knapsacks and walked into the cabin of the boat. A remonstrance was made, which met with a counter remonstrance, and we denounced the selfishness of assigning a large cabin for officers to play poker in while their soldiers were quartered on a rain-swept roof above. Other men poured in behind us, and with democratic equality officers and soldiers occupied the cabin together, for the boat was very crowded. We remained at the wharf all day on the 19th, but guards at every possible point of egress kept us on board.

The sutlers of the army found all previous calculations deranged by recent military movements, and thousands of dollars' worth of expensive goods were stacked and piled along the levee, much consisting of wines and liquors for the officers. We entertained no very amiable feelings for sutlers. They charged us four prices for everything we bought, and had an almost complete monopoly of our trade. Their goods on the wharf

were strongly guarded, but the sentinels were like so many blind men. I saw two fellows pick up a barrel of butter from almost under a sentry's nose, and carry it past other guards and on board our transport. It was placed on the hurricane deck, the head of the barrel was knocked in, and there was "free butter for all" as long as it lasted.

Weighty suggestions began to fall on willing ears, and that evening, as soon as darkness came, a grand raid was made on the sutler goods. The transport guards allowed jayhawkers to pass both ways with impunity. The sentinels on the levee saw nothing whatever, and in two hours every command was abundantly supplied with all imaginable luxuries. Liquor was so plentiful on our steamer that a general "jamboree" ensued. An effort was afterward made to have the value of these goods deducted from the pay of our division, but the scheme failed.

At noon on the 20th our grand fleet swung from its moorings. In skies of blue the sun shone with friendly brilliancy. Banners waved on winds as soft as those of summer. Steamer after steamer turned its prow to the South. The wildest cheers filled the air, drowning the clamor of our martial music. "Ho! for Vicksburg!" was the cry, and we believed we could take the impregnable city.

CLINT PARKHURST

Pioneer Gangsters

Through the figures of the stately minuet and the graceful steps of the Virginia reel danced the ladies and gentlemen of Bellevue, as was then the custom, on the night of January 8, 1840, in honor of the anniversary of General Jackson's victory at New Orleans. Suddenly there was a commotion at the door of the new hotel where the Jackson Day Ball was in progress, the fiddlers stopped playing, and a frightened, dishevelled girl ran into the room.

The disreputable James Thompson and some of his gang, she said, had pillaged the house of her relative, James C. Mitchell, and subjected her to indignities from which she had finally escaped. Mitchell borrowed a pistol and went out to find the man who had often threatened him and finally in drunken spite had perpetrated this offense. They met on the street. Both men raised their pistols and took deadly aim. A shot resounded through the still night and Thompson fell with a bullet in his heart.

For three years personal safety and security of property had been gradually diminishing in the vicinity of Bellevue. Horses and cattle were

stolen, counterfeit money circulated freely, a French fur trader was assaulted and robbed, and a settler was shot by a man suspected of stealing a yoke of oxen. Neighbors could not be trusted. Though men were caught with stolen property, they always escaped punishment. A murderer was acquitted on a plea of insanity. In spite of everything Sheriff William A. Warren could do, lawlessness spread in Jackson County and the surrounding territory. The boldness of the pioneer gangsters increased, particularly among the associates of the mannerly W. W. Brown who kept a tavern in Bellevue. In 1839 settlers in Jackson, Jones, Cedar, and Linn counties met at Linn Grove and formed a Citizens' Protective Association. But the depredations continued.

The shooting of Thompson, one of the most infamous of Brown's boarders, brought affairs to a crisis. Mitchell was arrested and, for lack of a jail, was guarded in his own home. A plot to blow up the house with a keg of gunpowder was frustrated in the nick of time. Other crimes were traced to Brown and his men. Sheriff Warren sought the help of other law enforcing officials and was advised by Judge Thomas S. Wilson to arrest the desperadoes on a charge of conspiracy to prevent them from testifying for each other. Brown agreed to surrender but the other men de-

fied arrest. Thereupon a posse of citizens from the surrounding country gathered in Bellevue to support the administration of justice.

At ten o'clock on the morning of April 1, 1840, Sheriff Warren went alone to Brown's hotel and read the warrant of arrest to Brown and twenty of his gang assembled there. They refused to surrender. Apparently force was the only language the desperadoes understood. After four hours of parley the posse, under the leadership of Sheriff Warren and Thomas Cox, rushed the house that sheltered the outlaws. Brown was shot and the battle began. Four members of the posse were killed and two bandits fell. Several on both sides were wounded. At last the citizens set fire to the hotel, which drove the besieged men out. Seven escaped but thirteen of the worst offenders were captured.

Many of the outraged citizens favored hanging the outlaws at once, but cooler counsel prevailed. The next morning a mass meeting was held to decide what the verdict should be. To hold the prisoners until the next term of court was hopeless. Death seemed to be the only penalty that would prevent rescue by their confederates and end the reign of lawlessness. A spokesman for the outlaws begged for mercy.

The district attorney from Dubuque urged the

people to impose no greater punishment than the law prescribed. At last they decided to dispose of the prisoners according to the will of a majority by secret ballot—white beans for hanging, red beans for whipping and banishment. When the vote was counted, the box contained three more red beans than white ones. And so a wholesale lynching was averted and the lucky culprits, smarting from the lashes on their backs, were glad to forego vengeance and promise never to return to Jackson County.

Excitement subsided at Bellevue, but news of the fight and trial by referendum alarmed law-abiding citizens in more peaceful communities. Political opponents of Warren and Cox deplored mob rule. Mrs. Brown aroused considerable sympathy in Dubuque, where her husband had a good reputation. On April 4th the public prosecutor at Dubuque reported the "disgraceful tragedy" at Bellevue to Governor Lucas.

"Dear Sir,

"I am under the painful necessity of informing you that Jackson County in this Territory is in a state of complete disorganization. The Sheriff Judge of Probate and the *celebrated Col Cox* on the first day of this month headed a mob at Bellevue and attacked a peaceable citizen of that place with a view of driving him out of town. The re-

sult was that a most disgraceful fight took place, and as a report says from six to nine lives lost and several wounded. It is currently reported at this place and very generally believed that Warren the Sheriff went about the county procuring the names of persons pledging themselves to support the mob several days previous to the day of the assembling of the most infamous mob that ever was assembled in this or any other country. The mob with their infamous leaders have since the killing been engaged in holding a *citizens* court as they call it and have tried and punished several individuals. It is also understood at this place that this triumvirate composed of Cox Warren and Moss are about to divide the property of Brown who happened to be the special object of their vengeance & who had considerable property Mitchell the man who committed the murder last winter and who has been held in *mock* confinement by this infamous Sheriff is now let loose rejoicing with the good and pious mob citizens at this freedom from all the restraints of regulated society, law and good order. A court as you must be aware of under the existing laws of this Territory is appointed to be held on the 13th instant at Bellview. Since I have set down to write this letter I learn from two gentlemen who have just returned from the seat of war that the mob boast that they had

all of the Grand Jury for the next court to act with them except Brown and that he was killed. It will be impossible if not impossible utterly useless to hold a court in a community composed of such brutish beasts, when blood and murder is the order of the day. In such a state of things you must be aware that those base and foul felons cannot be punished in their own county. I have therefore deemed it a duty of mine to acquaint you with the facts and if you have any powers vested in you as the Governor of this Territory to aid and assist the laws I hope you will exercise them in bringing to justice base and foul murderers and to wipe off the disgraceful stigma that has evidently been thrown upon the people of this Territory by this most disgraceful tradgedy.

Yours in haste

J V BERRY"

Two days later John King, the postmaster at Dubuque, described the "Bellevue War" and advised the Governor to put the leaders of the posse out of office.

"To His Excellency Robert Lucas

"Sir I regret to state to you, that a more disgraceful affair, has never been recorded in the annals of history, than that which I am about to relate. It occurred on the 1st ultimo at Bellview Jackson Co.

I. T. about seven miles below Galena A *mob* collected calling themselves the people — headed by — *Warren, the sheriff of the above named county, and Col. Cox (so called) member of the Legislature, Gen. McDonald, and James K. Moss.* The mob proceeded to the house of Mr. Brown (inn keeper) and informed him, through, Warren, that he must leave the Ter. immediately — Brown replied, that if he (Warren) had any *legal* demand against him, he was willing to go with him and be tried—but that a mob could not take him—However they were not satisfied with this, and made a rush to capture him — and in trying to effect their object, six persons were killed, and three wounded, one having since died!!! What the character of Mr. Brown was, I am unable to say — He was certainly hospitable, and obliging to strangers, and affectionate to his family, he was also industrious, which is certainly *one* good quality — His wife was of a reputable family and understood the duties of a hostess, well. Brown fell like a *brave man*, defending *his wife and child* from insults, and his property from the ravages of a reckless and lawless mob. Mrs. Brown was conducted to this place by a gentleman, at whose house she has, and will receive the most kind treatment.

“On Saturday evening last, the citizens of this place assembled at the Presbyterian Church, (tho’

large it could not contain near all) to express their deep abhorance of the *murderous* conduct of the mob at Bellview, by strong resolutions, which will be published in the papers of this Ter.

“The people at the meeting expressed their unanimous wish, that you would promptly *remove from office Warren & McDonald*.

“Our Legislators, will be instructed at the extra session, to expel from their body Col. Cox. And we will endeavor to have J. K. Moss removed forthwith, from the office of P. M. I have just learnt, that the latter gentleman (or rather the man) holds the office of Judge of Probate, if so he should be removed from that office also. I have just had a conversation with Mr. Petriken, who feels indignant at the outrage — and thinks those villains if possible should be arrested — and that there are two ways of having it done, first, that by removing Warren, and having a new sheriff appointed, they could then be arrested Secondly that your Excellency can command Gen. Lewis, to raise the militia, and arrest them, — others think Chief Justice Masson is authorized to act in this matter — but all agree, that your long experience in public business, gives you the advantage of us all, in knowing how to dispose of those persons, who have committed the most wilful and premeditated murders, and have brought a stigma and a

disgrace upon our young and beautiful Ter. that years cannot efface.

Your Obdt. Servt.

JOHN KING P. M."

Governor Lucas, however, calmly directed the prosecutor to do his duty. The court records show no evidence that Berry took any action. Nor were the leaders of the posse removed from their civil offices. To the perturbed prosecutor wrote the the Governor on April 7th:

"I received your letter on the 4th Int by Captain Smith of the Steam Boat Brazil — I regret extremely to hear of the transactions in Jackson County detailed in your letter. — It reflects a disgrace upon our Territory; and I trust, that the persons, who may be found guilty of so great a violation of the laws of the Territory may ultimately receive the punishment the law prescribes, — but this is a subject, that is entirely under the control of the Judicial Branch of the Gov[ern]-m[e]nt. The law gives to the Judiciary, the power to inforce obedience to its mandates, by fines and penalties — The Executive Branch has no such power, The Executive may issue his Proclamation, but he has no power to inforce it, he has neither funds, men, arms or am[m]unition under his control. The law vests the Civil Ministerial

office, with the power of the County and the Judiciary is vested with power to impose fines and penalties for disobedience to their command — However desirous I may be, to check such outrageous proceedings — yet I see no way in which an Executive interference could be of any benefit. The duty is devolved upon you, as District prosecutor, to bring the subject before the proper Judicial tribunal for investigation which I trust will be promptly and efficiently done — The account of the disgraceful affair, as published in the *Iowa Territorial Gazette of the 4th Inst* differs materially from the one given in your letter. How far these accounts may be correct, I do not pretend to decide but one thing is certain (*That is*) that a most disgraceful, outrage has been committed upon the laws of the County by some body, and it becomes your duty as the legitimate prosecuti[n]g officer to have the subject impartially and legitimately investigated — and to cause the guilty persons, whoever they may be, to be prosecuted and brought to Justice — This should be done without prejudice or favour to any one, but with a single eye to the maintenance of the Supremacy of the laws.

With sincere respect
I am your obt st
ROBERT LUCAS''

Meanwhile, rapacious men, taking advantage of frontier conditions, preyed upon defenceless settlers in other parts of the Territory. Scarcely had peace been restored in Jackson County, when a band of thieves raided the homes of several pioneers in Linn County. Attracted by the rumor that John Goudy had a hoard of \$9000, Henry E. Switzer, a member of the "Cedar River Buccaneers", sought to borrow some money. Goudy refused to lend, however, and the only information the gangster obtained was a view of the premises.

On the night of April 14, 1840, five desperadoes broke into the Goudy cabin. One of the robbers covered Goudy, another covered his son-in-law, Thomas McElheny, "and a third stopped the clock". They demanded money. When told there was no hoard of gold they angrily ransacked the house. In the confusion, Switzer was recognized. The thieves found only a few dollars but finally left the Goudy family "to reflect in sadness upon the ways of the wicked and the ungodly."

Frustrated in their acquisition of riches, the bandits sought other sources of plunder. Suspecting that the money might be concealed elsewhere, they searched the cabin of Goudy's son, Thomas, but with disappointing success. Thence they proceeded to the home of William F. Gilbert. There,

however, they encountered resistance by Gilbert and three guests. In the fight another bandit was recognized.

The three robberies aroused the entire neighborhood. Thomas Goudy raised a posse and started in pursuit. At Illinois City one of the thieves was captured. Switzer was arrested at his cabin. Four other outlaws, thought to belong to the same gang, were tried by "Judge Lynch" and horsewhipped. A fifth was later shot by a vigilant member of the Linn County vigilantes.

For a while, however, the outlaws continued to terrorize the country. In some instances the activities of the vigilantes were about as highhanded as the raids of the border ruffians. In May, 1840, a settler in Linn County appealed to Governor Lucas to restore peace.

"Honoured Sir. The case which I now lay before you is such, That the character and welfare of our Country are at Issue — This is a weighty matter and deserves an abler advocate than myself. But such materials as we have we must use — The duty I owe to my god and Country require me to use all my power to preserve her dignity —

"As an humble citizen of Lynn County (Iowa) I lay before you the distressed situation of the people of that vicinity, we are constantly allarmed by riotous bodies of armed men, without lawful au-

thority, without disciplin and I may add without principle, parading through our country and threatning violence to all who do not countenance their unlawful conduct, and threatning to remove many honest citizens who have toiled hard for an honest living, and have expended large amounts of money in improvements and for provisions during a long and hard winter —

“After enduring so many hardships it is hard for us to retreat, and leave our hard earnings behind without the expectation of ever receiving any benefit therefrom, and to leave so beautiful and fertile a Country without violating her laws to a lawless gang seems a hard case, we sometimes think of arming and defending ourselves, but we cannot be constant on our Guard and pursue our labour, and to arm against our citizens when we are under a civilized goverment and within reach of Justice is another hard case —

“To you the executive of Our Territory I appeal for the enforcement of her laws and cause the violators to be apprehended and brought to Justice. It is not unfrequent for a man to be taken up and without the formation of a trial to be tied to a tree and whiped almost to death without any evidence of Guilt —

“I will here state a case which I saw, Saturday evening the 23rd of may last I was called on by a

neighbor (Michael Greene to assist him in repairing a plow and on Sabbath morning 24th before I left his house a large posse of armed men came headed by two young ruffians who were Styled Captains of the banditt and summoned him instantly to surrender or they would blow him through, after some hesitation he surrendered and in a few hours they had his Goods and family placed on waggons and marched him off together with his large stock. During the time of packing he was often threatened if he resented they would blow him through after his goods were loaded and the posse had paraded, to pass some resolutions he was privileged to speak a few moments, during his speech he requested of all or any present to State for what violation of the law or what cause was his removal made and none present brought forward any but quit he must and should remove for the posse said so — and having no officer of the peace nearer than 20 miles the riotous band had to be allowed in their wanton crime —

“I will now state the manner those cruel crimes are conducted, two or more fix upon a desired victim, then forthwith notify a sufficient number of their cruel band to accomplish their desire, then meet around a whiskey barrel and gorge themselves with its madning contents, they are then prepared to sweep the country with the besom of

destruction — Since on my way to you I have been creditably informed that the skeleton of a human being has been found on the prairie but a small distance from where he was linched

“Such is the manner in which many young men of promising appearance are ruining themselves and country.

“Such conduct I hope has not its parallel in the annals of time, and should it be allowed to continue armed posses will rise one against the other and murders of the Grossest nature be committed, and I fear before this hour the dreaded blow has been struck —

“Such are the beginings of our troubles — My pen and Language fails me to describe the distressed feelings of our citizens and such doings should they continue would cast a stain upon Iowa which I fear will not be easily erased out.

I am sir Respectfully

Yours

PERRY OLIPHANT”

Two of the thieves who had robbed Gilbert and the Goudys fell into the hands of the law instead of the vigilantes. Switzer was brought before Judge Joseph Williams at Tipton, on a change of venue from Linn County, at the October, 1841, term of the Territorial District Court. The presence of a muscular, two-hundred-and-forty-pound

ruffian failed to overawe witnesses who identified Switzer and connected him with the crime. In desperation the robber resorted to strategy. When the jury went out to deliberate, he asked the deputy sheriff to signal with his handkerchief if the verdict should be guilty. The officer refused.

For two days and nights the jury debated — eleven for conviction and one for acquittal according to rumor. The fact that the jurymen had gone home during the trial and one of them had stayed with friends of Switzer might explain the deadlock. Finally they decided to report that they could not agree upon a verdict. As the twelve “good men and true” returned to the courtroom, a handkerchief, inadvertently or purposely, dangled from the pocket of one of them. When the prisoner noticed the white sign he saw red. Suddenly he broke away from his captors, ran out of the building, leaped on a horse, and rode away. The law never caught up with him.

This was not the end of pioneer racketeers in the Cedar Valley. In July, 1842, the leaders of a gang of sixty counterfeiters and horse thieves were arrested in Linn County. The law-abiding citizens tried hard to rid the country of the “bogus party”, but it was hard to convict the gangsters in court. For several years the most effective method of maintaining peace and protecting property was

through the activities of vigilance committees. Their purpose and organization is well stated in the constitution of the Benton County association.

"This Society shall be called the Iowa Protection Company.

"ARTICLE 1. The object of this Society shall be to protect the property of the members of this company, and particularly their horses, from the depredations of robbers and thieves, and also to trace out the perpetrators of thefts, rescue and restore property stolen, and assist in a due and faithful administration of law and justice.

"ART. 2. The officers of this Society shall consist of a President, Secretary and Treasurer, to be chosen *viva voce* at any stated meeting, and to hold their offices during good behavior.

"ART. 3. It shall be the duty of the President to preside at all regular meetings of the Society, and, in his absence, the Society may chose a President *pro tem.*; and it shall be the duty of the Secretary to record all the proceedings of the Society, and preserve the same; and it shall be the duty of each member to pay to the Treasurer such sums of money from time to time as the Society shall dictate. He shall keep a correct book in which he shall enter the amount received and expended, and the purpose for which it was expended.

"ART. 4. The Society shall appoint such com-

mittees as may be necessary to carry out the objects of the Society.

“ART. 5. Each and every member shall sign the constitution and hold themselves subject to its provisions, and on revealing its proceedings in any respect, shall be excluded from its benefits.

“ART. 6. This Society shall be convened at any time by notice from the President.

“ART. 7. No person shall be entitled to vote unless a member of the Society.

“ART. 8. This constitution may be altered or amended at any regular meeting, by a two-thirds vote of the members present.

“ART. 9. No person shall be admitted a member of this Society who is under suspicion of horse stealing or any other theft, or for harboring thieves or robbers.

“ART. 10. The regular meeting of this Society shall be the Saturday before the full of the moon, at such place as may be designated.”

Gradually peace and security were established on the frontier. Through the energetic defense of their homes and summary punishment of thieves, counterfeiters, and claim jumpers, the honest pioneers shaped the character of the frontier. As settlement increased, the “due process of law” was substituted for spontaneous justice.

JOHN ELY BRIGGS

The First Four Years

In the spring of 1888, a young couple began life together on a hundred-acre rented farm in Madison County. This farm, on which John and Agnes McNamara started their arduous career, was "improved" by an unpainted four-room house, with neither porches nor shade, surrounded by a wire fence, with no gate. Persons were obliged to crawl under the wire to go in or out. The house was located in the field, off the main road. There was a well with a windlass to draw up water, at such times as there was any to draw; and a small shed, built of native lumber and roofed with poles and slough grass, that served as a stable and granary. There were no other outbuildings for any convenience whatever.

The bride had what was considered in those days many nice things to go toward furnishing a home — such as a rag carpet, home-made rugs, a feather bed, pillows, quilts, comforters, bed spreads, sheets, pillow cases, table cloths and napkins, towels, dishes, hand-painted pictures, and many articles of fancy work. She had dreams of an ideal home with vines at the windows and flower beds in the dooryard, but was doomed to

bitter disappointment, for the young husband suddenly evinced a dislike for "weeds" as he termed the flowers. And so the hogs roamed the doorway and rooted up the flower beds. The vegetable garden and potato patch were located in the corn field (no hogs admitted), about a quarter of a mile away.

A "hired man" was not employed during the first summer. Fourteen cows were milked, and the calves fed by hand. Skim milk, warmed with half new milk, was given to the calves. The milk had to be carried quite a distance to the house. As there was neither cellar nor cave, the wife set two barrels part way in the ground and banked earth around them to serve in lieu of a milk tank. A few stray boards nailed together served as a lid. The milk was kept in tall tin cans placed in the barrels. The water around the milk cans in the barrels was changed as required, according to the weather. The task of drawing the water, dipping the stale water out, carrying it to the hogs, and refilling the barrels was no picnic on hot days. The cream was sold to a creamery, a man calling for it once or twice a week. The butter was hung in the well.

Household facilities were meager and not the best. The second-hand cook stove was slow in getting hot on top and in the oven, so slow in fact that the bread had to be turned upside down to

finish baking. The heating stove was cracked and therefore not very safe to leave fire in overnight. On cold winter mornings, the bread, meat, and all foods would be frozen almost solid, and it would sometimes be almost noon before the house got warm enough for comfort. At such times breakfast, when things were sufficiently thawed out, was eaten on a small table in the living room by the heating stove. When the well went dry in the winter, snow, if there was any, was put in a barrel in the kitchen to melt. This supplied water for household use. By harvest time the stove wood usually began to get scarce. Inasmuch as the cooking had to be done on the range, corn-cobs were used with a little wood, which meant more work.

The living room adjoining the kitchen was used as a family sleeping room. In hot weather the heat from the cook stove, especially when there was bread baking or extra cooking, made it very uncomfortable. To keep the flies out, mosquito netting was tacked over the windows and over one of the two doorways not used as an entrance. The other door sported a warped screen door, adorned with netting tacked over the badly delapidated screen wire.

In the fall the potatoes were put down in a hole in the ground, with poles laid across and a layer

of slough grass and earth piled on top. At intervals the "potato hole" was opened and a few taken out for use. It was not safe to get very many at a time, as they were apt to freeze in the house. There was little or no milk during the winter months. Butter churned early in the winter was sometimes packed in an unused room upstairs. If the weather was cold, this kept for quite a while, and was better than none.

There was no fruit to use on the table or to can. Soap, yeast, and vinegar were home products. Green coffee was browned and ground at home; pepper was bought in the grain and ground in the coffee mill; dry bread was run through the mill to take out the taste of the pepper. Sugar was bought, fifty cents' worth at a time, for general use — a dollar's worth for harvest and threshing. Starch was used for the best clothes, cuffs, collars, and shirt bosoms. As there was little demand for these things, the starch bill was not very high. For the everyday things and the sunbonnets homemade flour starch was used. A good deal of the sewing was done by hand: this included shirts, underwear, and dresses. Long seams and hems were done on a neighbor's sewing machine.

Churning was done in a dash churn. The wooden dasher, with holes in it to facilitate the churning, and the wooden milk pails, the cedar

"water bucket" with the brass hoops, the steel knives and forks, and the "tin ware" had to be scoured pretty often.

House cleaning meant whitewashing the walls, scouring the unpainted woodwork, washing windows and bed clothes, emptying, washing, and refilling the straw bed ticks, taking up the rag carpet, beating the dust out of it, scrubbing the floor, and putting the carpet down again with fresh straw under it. Sometimes the carpet had to be washed. In that case it was ripped apart and washed on the wash-board, a strip at a time, and wrung or squeezed dry by hand. There was no such luxury as a wringer.

In rainy weather, with no grass or walks in the yard, and a soft pine floor in the kitchen, the task of household cleanliness was almost insuperable. Clothes were cleaned by washing on a wash-board. To save setting posts, the clothes-line was strung to trees, not by any chance near the house. In two years, when the well was dry, water had to be hauled from a spring about half a mile away. Very often there was none on hand to wash with, so it fell to the wife, with a candy bucket on one arm and a milk can on the other, to hie to a well in the pasture, *down* hill, *going*, but *up* hill, *coming back*. One summer, when there was only "hauled" water to use, the morning milk was hung down in

the well in a large milk can till evening when it was drawn up and skimmed. The night's milking was then hung down, and so on alternately. The cream, butter, and a jug of drinking water also had their places in the improvised "refrigerator".

Chickens were raised in the dooryard. Old salt barrels, turned on their sides, were poor excuses for coops, for they did not turn water very well. Crows, groundhogs, and wet weather took their toll. Poultry raising was neither a profitable business, nor a bed of roses.

It was also the wife's task to water the calves and colts shut in the shed at weaning time, water the sows with the little pigs, and milk the cows, as all this would have made the men late getting at their field work. Besides these barnyard chores, three hearty meals were cooked and served. In the middle of the forenoon a lunch was prepared and taken to the men in the field.

When the first baby came, the mother proved her ability as a carpenter by making a cradle with rockers out of a dry-goods box. Later when a high chair was needed an old straight chair, minus the back, with an inverted box nailed to the seat, and another box with one side removed, fastened to the inverted one and padded on the inside, supplied the want.

The mode of conveyance was a lumber wagon.

Even in this clumsy equipage trips were few. The chief trading point, Winterset, to which the wife went about twice a year, was about nine miles distant. These were no pleasure jaunts either in hot or cold weather. The roads in those days were not what they are now. Groceries could be bought at the small town of Patterson three or four miles away.

No newspapers or magazines were taken. With the exception of a Bible, a dictionary, and a few school books, the only reading matter that found its way into this home in the first years was an occasional borrowed book.

Early rising was the order of the day. One summer the family rose at 3:00 A. M., as water had to be hauled, and things made ready for the day's work, inside and out.

The landlord furnished no improvements, and so the tenants, at their own expense, undertook to dig a well. A "water witch" was called to locate the proper place. This he did by carrying a witch-hazel twig which was supposed to turn in his hand when he reached the right location. The well was dug and dynamited down about thirty feet, as I remember, but no water was found. It was filled up to within a few feet of the top and made into a cave with a roof of poles and slough grass. The dirt steps carved out of the clay were like a tobog-

gan slide when it rained, because the door, a poor piece of carpentry without hinges, leaked badly. Imagine the pleasure of sliding down after cream and butter on rainy days. The life of this cave was of short duration, as the walls and steps soon degenerated into something like a burrow, and the dollar paid to the "water witch" was a total loss.

Another memorable experience was keeping the top on the hay stack. On windy days, when the head of the house went to the field or elsewhere, the wife was warned not to "let the top blow off the hay stack". She usually carried rails from the fence and, by propping them along the sides and against the top, managed to keep it from blowing away. The tops were supposed to be weighted down with ropes made of hay and fastened to heavy pieces of wood, but sometimes this was neglected.

The first four years of farm life were the hardest. But the young couple prospered and eventually owned hundreds of acres of land in Madison County. They enjoyed a home with modern conveniences all the more for their early hardships.

AGNES MCNAMARA

Comment by the Editor

CONTRASTS OF WAR

War is a savage contest. It is a game with no rules of fair play, no object but victory, no means of decision except force. Intolerant, relentless, extravagant, the organized destruction that is politely called belligerency capitalizes the elements of barbarity and disregards the traits in human nature that serve as the bases of civilization. Virtue is distorted into evil and sin is glorified.

Always deplorable and inevitably sanguinary, the conduct of war seems to belie the advance of civilization by its increasing ruthlessness and totality. Soldiering used to be an attractive career for adventurous unemployed men who did not want to be sailors. But mercenary armies went out of fashion, like handicrafts in a machine age.

The armies in the Civil War, composed mainly of volunteers, were too large to be hired and too patriotic to be drafted. The hazards of war were concentrated on the battlefields. Women and children were comparatively safe, and important cities were captured without serious damage. But now the noncombatants at home suffer as much as the soldiers, and places of no strategic value are

devastated. It seems that as the means of comfortable living become greater, the more generally do wars prevent the enjoyment of such progress. For every gain of science or morality, the ravaging forces of war exact a more exorbitant sacrifice.

Without minimizing the hardships of the Civil War, most of the campaigns were mere camping excursions in comparison with the invasions of Poland and Finland, while the siege of Vicksburg and the assault upon Petersburg were only prophetic of trench warfare on the western front in Europe. The Yankees were not very welcome in Memphis when that important city was captured, but only a few were shot at by zealous secessionists. Business continued as usual — or more briskly. Theatres and saloons were unhindered by blackouts or military suppression. The narrow escape of a stage villain from a drunken cavalry captain was the nearest approach to atrocity. Profiteering sutlers were more hated than the enemy. Perhaps it is this contrast of past and present warfare that makes the martial memories of the Civil War seem glamorous.

J. E. B.

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