

Comment by the Editor

THE MEANING OF IOWA

Why should Iowa mean anything to us? It is not the greatest State in the Union in size, in numbers, or in wealth. It has no large city — no mecca for the pilgrimages of mankind. Its shores are not washed by the sea as are those of California and Florida. Its hills do not rise into the blue like the mountains of Colorado. It does not look out toward the island empire of either Great Britain or Japan. Its people can not talk across the fence to the Canadians or feel the stir of excitement along the prickly border of Mexico.

But it is the heart of America. Its shores are the two greatest rivers of the continent. Its rolling hills and fertile plains smile in the sun — well content with the task of making manna for millions. It has woods and winding streams and blue lakes, and towns with shady streets and green lawns and alert and friendly people.

And it has traditions. We are young in the land, but the land is old. Its story runs back of the days when glaciers slipped down across it; back to the times when the sea covered the Mississippi Basin. Into the long story come the red men, and after many generations the whites. The songs of French boatmen echo upon its streams; Spanish fur traders trail its western shore. Julien Dubuque and Manuel Lisa move through the misty past. Builders of

homes arrive and out of the border land a State comes into the Union. Congressmen, soldiers, and farmers, lawyers, business men, and wide-visioned women play their parts; and so our heritage has grown.

And yet, probably it is the associations of a more immediate past, the memory of more intimate and homely things that makes up for us the thought of Iowa. It is where we live — perhaps where we have always lived. Its people are our people, and Iowa is our State. We frame its laws and try to obey them. It is we who build its institutions and make its history and look forward to the enjoyment of its future. The familiar scenes of the land between the rivers have woven themselves into our lives. And so Iowa means a thousand things to us — the rush of water in the gutters in the spring time, and the smell of burning leaves in the fall; the tang of early frost and the sight of oaks still clinging to their rusty foliage on the hill tops; the sound of birds in the early summer morning, and the stillness graven on the marble of a winter night. It means black mud in the bottom road and red sumac along the fence; small towns and large corn fields; *Wallace's Farmer* and Ding's cartoons; the clack of the mower and the memory of boys going off to war.

Iowa has its faults; but so, perhaps, have our parents, our wives, and our children — to say nothing of ourselves. And after all, we can not explain the charm of the things we love. Let us then not so

much boast of Iowa as be happy in it. Let us look with seeing eyes upon its beauties, and with friendly eyes upon its people — our neighbors. Let us know its story and make sure that we ourselves play in it a worthy part; for what we make it mean to us, that will it mean to those who come hereafter.

J. C. P.