

The **P**ALIMPSEST

APRIL 1931

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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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Birds That Have Vanished

The "hoo—hoo—hoo—hoo" of the prairie chickens early on a spring morning was sweet music. It was a melodious sound that, once heard, would never be forgotten. This so-called "booming" was very deceptive; "when close it appears far away, and when a mile away may seem very near." It was a soft note "like the alto horn in the orchestra" which filled the still air of the mornings and evenings with harmony.

These birds, the true prairie chickens, were formerly abundant in the open country of the Mississippi Valley. They were common in Iowa thirty years ago, but now they have almost disappeared. Although they were resident birds, they migrated north and south, ranging as far east as Ohio, and from southeast Saskatchewan and southern Manitoba to eastern Colorado, northern Texas, Arkansas, and western Kentucky. In the winter they assembled in great flocks, but in the spring at mating time broke up again.

In the early days of the settlement of Iowa, the prairie "swarmed with prairie chickens". They were the most numerous of all the game birds. But from the beginning they were hunted and trapped so mercilessly that they have been practically exterminated. It was not uncommon seventy years ago to see a farmer come to town with a sled box nearly filled with undressed prairie chickens. They sold as low as two dollars a dozen at that time.

The disappearance of the prairie chickens is due to two reasons: first, the breaking up of their nesting places by cultivation; second, indiscriminate hunting with high powered repeating shotguns. These birds should have been counted among the Iowa farmer's best friends, as their chief diet in this State consisted of grasshoppers and other insects that destroyed the crops. To be sure they also fed upon grain but only while the ripe oats, wheat, or corn was in the field. Probably they consumed as many weed seeds as grain. Had the prairie chickens been protected as they should have been, they would be plentiful even now, and of material benefit to the farmer.

The prairie chicken, however, is not the only species that has diminished in numbers with the increased population of the State. When Thomas H. Macbride, writing *In Cabins and Sod-Houses*, spoke of parrots in the trees of southeastern Iowa, many readers supposed it was merely a figure of speech. But he was

actually stating a fact. The Carolina paroquets were once numerous in the Mississippi Valley. They ranged widely, reaching as far north as the southern border of the Great Lakes, west as far as eastern Colorado, and south to the Gulf of Mexico. Lieutenant Pike saw them in the Rockies in mid-winter of 1806.

The last record of these paroquets, once so plentiful, was reported from Florida near Lake Okeechobee, where in April, 1904, thirteen birds were seen. In Iowa the last recorded appearance was reported by Elliott Coues in his *Birds of the Northwest*, in the year 1874. Their beautiful plumage of green body-feathers, yellow heads, and red faces made them much sought after by plumage hunters and professional bird catchers, and their huddling together after being fired upon made them easy prey for so-called sportsmen. Their favorite food in winter was the cocklebur, and the destruction of those noxious weed seeds was a boon to the farmer. To-day their extermination is practically complete. Museums of natural history consider themselves lucky if they possess mounted specimens.

It is no wonder that bird lovers look with alarm at the rapid decrease of other species. In 1907, R. M. Anderson, in his *Birds of Iowa*, wrote, "It is highly probable that at the present time the whooping crane or white crane can be accounted no more than a rare migrant in Iowa. This magnificent and striking bird, perhaps the most imposing species native to Iowa, was

formerly a well-known and fairly common summer resident in the State, breeding in the large marshes which were at that time characteristic of northern Iowa".

This, the tallest of all North American birds, has been so relentlessly hunted that it is now considered unusually rare, perhaps the rarest of all our birds. In flight their long necks and stilt-like legs were stretched out in a line with the body, and the slanting sun rays glinted sharply on their white feathers. During late autumn, their slowly beating wings, moving them strongly southward, their circling spiral-like to a great height, croaking as they traveled like hounds on a cold trail, heralded the close approach of winter, and their reappearance in the spring was an assurance that cold weather was gone. The gradual extermination of the whooping crane has been one of the prime factors in the movement toward more stringent game laws.

Although the more serious sportsman realizes that protective game laws were enacted none too soon, few hunters know that one of the splendid bay ducks, in a class with the redhead and canvasback ducks, has been extinct nearly sixty years. This is the Labrador duck. The last bird of this species, so far as known, was taken at Grand Menan in 1871. Only forty-three specimens are recorded as existing in mounted collections.

The Labrador duck was almost as large and fully as

striking in appearance as the canvasback. The center of the crown was black; the rest of the head, throat, and upper neck were white. The wings were fuscous and white, and white predominated on the front and sides of the upper breast, in sharp contrast to the black belly and lower breast. Thus colored, they surely thrilled the early game hunters of the Atlantic seaboard, as they swooped, circled, and alighted in the bays and swamps from Nova Scotia to New Jersey.

Perhaps the saddest case of bird extermination is that of the passenger pigeon. "Upper parts rich bluish slate-color, back and sides of neck with metallic reflections; underparts deep, rich vinaceous", so reads a partial description of this "wild pigeon", as it was commonly called, which, less than seventy-five years ago, migrated over the eastern half of the United States in flocks of countless thousands. Alexander Wilson, writing about 1808, estimated that a flock of wild pigeons observed by him near Frankfort, Kentucky, contained at least two billion and a quarter individuals. Two recorded flights, one in 1858, over Washington, D. C., the other in 1873, on the Red River of the North, were described as being so large as to darken the sun. Iowa lay within the range of the wild pigeon, and many of the older residents of the State remember them as they alighted in the timber and orchards in search of food.

This beautiful bird, once so plentiful, has now been

unquestionably extinct since 1898. Thus within the space of twenty-five years, the most harmless and loveliest of birds, whose enormous flights were the wonder of the early settler, passed from an uncounted number into oblivion.

Protective bird laws came too late, however, to save a bird that means so much in the practical, historical, and aesthetical life of American people. Who can say what charm Thanksgiving day would hold for children if turkey were excluded from the picture? The day of Thanksgiving and turkey are always associated because the Pilgrims served the wild turkey at the first Thanksgiving.

To those who pioneered from the eastern coast to the timber-fringed streams of the broad Mississippi Valley, the wild turkey meant meat of high quality rather easily secured, though some cunning was necessary. The broad wings, large enough to carry the bird on sustained flights, were valued by the housewife as adjuncts to her sometimes meager equipment of utensils. Many a hearth in the pioneer homes was kept clean with a wild turkey wing. Distributed over a range that covered the entire eastern half of the United States, this noblest of American birds has rapidly decreased in number until now it can be found with difficulty, and then only in parts which are unfit for the habitation of man. In Iowa the wild turkey was a resident in Mills, Fremont, Des Moines, Lee, and

Van Buren counties, and even other districts reported them as abundant; yet from 1889, they began to be considered rare, and none has been observed for over thirty years.

Many other birds are surely passing out of existence. Where flocks were once seen, now only an occasional bird is observed. The quail or bob-white, the ruffed grouse, the canvasback and redhead ducks, the barn owl and swallow-tailed kites, the upland plover, the eskimo curlew, and many other birds that were commonly seen by the past generation have gradually diminished in numbers until at the present time the appearance of any of these birds on their old ranging grounds creates unusual interest.

WALTER W. AITKEN

A Country Fit for Princes

The Iowa that Caleb Atwater saw from the deck of a Mississippi River steamboat in the summer of 1829 was as wild as it was picturesque. At every bend of the river the wooded hills gave prospect of future mansions and estates of country squires. A portion of his "Remarks Made on a Tour to Prairie du Chien" is here adapted for The Palimpsest. — The Editor.

Above the Missouri, on the western side of the Mississippi, the streams putting into the "great water," were quite small ones, and only valuable for mill streams, until we arrived at Fort Edwards, on the eastern shore, and opposite the Des Moines River. This river is a large one, compared with any we have passed above the Missouri. It may not be longer than the Illinois River, but I should think it carries in its current more water, though perhaps it is not more than three hundred miles in length.

Fort Edwards is three miles below the foot of the rapids, on the east side of the river, and the buildings being painted white, located on a high bluff that juts out into the river, it looks beautiful from Keokuck village. The rapids are twelve miles long, and in a

common stage of the water, present no impediment to steamboat navigation; but low as the river was when we arrived there, it was impossible for any loaded steamboat to ascend them. The river is from half a mile to a mile in width here, without any island in the river, in the distance of twelve miles, an uncommon feature in the Upper Mississippi, which is full of islands and sandbars, in a low stage of water.

Keokuck is in latitude about forty degrees twenty north, and belongs to the half breeds, whose capital it is, on the western side of the Mississippi. The northern line of the State of Missouri, in running from its northwest corner eastwardly, is a straight line, until it strikes the Des Moines River; thence following that river to its mouth. A triangle containing one hundred and thirty-six thousand acres of land, north of and adjoining the lower end of the Des Moines River, by treaty, has been given to the half breeds, and is owned by about forty-two persons. Congress have passed an act to divide it into shares for them, and at their own request they are to belong to the State of Missouri. From the mouth of the Des Moines, along the Mississippi, following the sinuosities of the river, their front on the river may be thirty miles. It is a very fine tract of land, generally well timbered, except on the bottoms of the Des Moines, which is valuable prairie land.

The village is a small one, containing twenty families

perhaps. The American Fur Company have a store here, and there is a tavern. Many Indians were fishing, and their lights on the rapids in a dark night, were darting about, appearing and disappearing like so many fire flies. The constant roaring of the waters on the rapids, the occasional Indian yell, the lights of their fires on the shore, and the boisterous mirth of the people at the *doggery*, attracted my attention occasionally while we were lying here. Fish were caught here in abundance.

On the eastern side of the river the lands are all occupied by white people, from Fort Edwards upwards, for many miles above the rapids. Farms are opening, and log houses appear almost every half mile on that shore. On the west side only a few places are opened by half breeds.

The beach on the western shore is narrow, and the hills of moderate elevation come quite down to the high water mark. Large blocks of coarse sandstone have been floated down on the ice at different times, from the St. Peters River, and lodged on the beach. The rocks in place are limestone, though great numbers of geodes of quartz cover the beach.

After making every arrangement for conveying the public property over these rapids, and seeing every thing done here that could be done by the commissioners, I started on foot to walk over the rough hills skirting the western shore. Our provisions, though started

nearly one month before from St. Louis, were scattered along these rapids, and I found a considerable part of them as I ascended the river's edge, lying on the beach and exposed to the hot sun.

After a tiresome walk of several miles, I reached Philip Blondeau's farm. Him I found sick, lying under a shade, out of doors. He was a sub-agent formerly, and his family are owners to a considerable extent of this fine tract of land. His wife is an Indian woman, and his daughters are well educated, well read, and accomplished young ladies.

His farm is a fine fertile one, and his dwelling house is on the bank of the river, within a few rods of the water's edge. His corn on the side hill covered a great space, and looked finely. Here I ate as good a dinner as any one ever did, of venison just killed, and of fish just caught as I arrived there.

Highly gratified with the treatment I received from this interesting family, I moved forward again on foot, and reached an island in the river just above the head of the rapids, and opposite an Indian town, where I found a steamboat lying, and went on board it.

This vessel was occupied by its owner, who had his wife and children with him. The boat was as poor an one as ever was navigated; it had been up the river and was detained here by the rapids. During the night it rained hard, and in addition to getting as wet in my berth as water could make me, a drunken set of fellows,

who, in addition to boisterous mirth, gambling, and blasphemous oaths, finally added quarreling to the turbulent scene.

Knowing that one man, by his example, had produced the whole wicked and disgraceful conduct that so much annoyed us, on the arrival of Colonel Pierre Menard next day, I arranged everything to stop any thing of the kind in future. On learning our determination, the author of all this disturbance, just about dark, inquired of me as to the intended opposition, and I frankly told him that no more such conduct would be permitted either now or hereafter, while I was with him. He told me I might leave the expedition and go home; but I informed him that I would neither go home, nor would I permit him to act as he had done constantly for some time past. Ascertaining my determination, and that every other person on board united with me, he was compelled to acquiesce, and behave himself better in future. He never ventured again so to conduct himself in my presence, though the effects of similar conduct afterwards were but too visible on many occasions.

In company with John W. Johnson, formerly an Indian trader, under the old factory system, I visited Quasquawma's village of Fox Indians. This town was exactly opposite our island, on the west bank of the river, and consists of perhaps forty or fifty persons. Landing from our canoe, we went to Quasquawma's

wigwam, and found him and several of his wives and children at home. These Indians had joined the United States during the last war. The wigwam we visited was a fair sample of all that we saw afterwards in the Indian country, and was covered with white elm bark, fastened on the outside of upright posts fixed in the ground, by ropes made of barks, passed through the covering and tied on the inside around the posts.

I should suppose that this dwelling was forty feet long and twenty wide — that six feet on each of the sides, within doors, was occupied by the place where the family slept. Their beds consisted of a platform raised four feet from the earth, resting on poles, tied at that height to posts standing upright in the ground, opposite each other, and touching the roof. On these poles, so fastened to the posts, were laid barks of trees, and upon these barks were laid blankets and the skins of deer, bears, bisons, &c. These were the beds. Between these beds was an open space, perhaps six or eight feet in width, running the whole length of the wigwam. In this space fires were kindled in cold and wet weather, and here, at such times, the cooking was carried on, and the family warmed themselves, ate their food, &c. There was no chimney, and the smoke either passed through the roof, or out at the doors, at the ends of the wigwam. On all the waters of the upper Mississippi, no better dwelling is to be found among the Indians. Quasquawma was reposing

himself on his bed of state when we went into his palace, and the only person at work was one of his wives, at the door, dressing a deer skin. He appeared to be about sixty-five years of age, perhaps he was even older.

He appeared very friendly to Mr. Johnson, whom he well knew; and we held a long and interesting talk with him. We told him all our business, asked his advice and aid, which he cheerfully promised; and he was of great use to us, from that time forward, until the treaties were concluded. His son-in-law, one of the principal civil chiefs of the Foxes, was not at home then, and we did not see him until we arrived at Rock Island.

Quasquawma showed us where he had cut out on a bark, a representation of a steamboat, with every thing belonging to it. This bark formed a part of his dwelling, and was cut on the inner side. It appears, that he had made three attempts before he succeeded to his wishes. He finally succeeded so perfectly, that the cannon was going off, a dog was represented as sitting down near an officer of our army, with his chapeau de bras on, his epauletts were on his shoulders, and several privates were seen standing on the boat. Nothing could be more natural than this representation, of which he evidently felt quite proud. We praised it greatly, which did not displease him. A few small patches of corn were growing near by, but poorly

fenced and badly tilled, among which the weeds were standing between the hills of corn.

The chief went around his village and showed us whatever we wished to see, until we requested him to take us back to our island in his canoe, ours having returned, which he politely did. Not long afterwards, the chief at the head of all his band, old and young, waited on us, at our steamboat, beside this island. They were dressed in their best manner, and Quasquawma introduced them one and all to Mr. Johnson and myself. One woman gaily painted, the one whom we had seen at work, remained by herself some ten rods off, and would come no nearer to us. On my inquiring the cause of her not approaching us any nearer, after having solemnly assured him and all of them of none but the most kind and friendly treatment from our whole company, I was informed by Quasquawma that her appearance indicated that the woman so painted and dressed, "was for sale." Not understanding him at first, he explained himself so fully by words and by signs, that there was no mistaking his meaning. Any one determined to believe our Indians to be "the lost tribes of Israel," would have found proof positive, in favor of such an idea, in this custom of sitting by the wayside, painted and dressed as this woman was on this occasion. Parallel instances in the old testament times and manners, are not wanting.

The visit was continued for some hours, until we

had made our guests many presents of flour, meat, and goods; when they returned to their village, highly gratified with the treatment they received from us on this island.

We were employed seven days in getting the public property over this rapid, when just before sundown, on the seventh day, we went on board another steamer, the *Red Rover*, and passed up the river a few miles where we lay by for the night. Next morning we raised the steam and moved forward slowly, being often detained by low water, and sand bars, so that we did not arrive at Rock Island until the third day about noon.

About thirty-five miles below Rock Island, the beautiful country on the west side of the river opened to view, and from the first moment we saw it, all eyes were turned towards it. At every turn of the river, as we moved along, new bursts of wonder and admiration were poured out by all the passengers. The ladies were enraptured at the numerous and beautiful situations for dwelling houses, where they wished one day to live in rural bliss. Sometimes the east side of the river offered as beautiful situations as the west, though, as a whole, the west was preferable.

Nature had done all — man nothing — and not a human being was seen upon either shore, nor a human habitation. That such a beautiful country was intended by its Author to be forever in the possession

and occupancy of serpents, wild fowls, wild beasts, and savages, who derive little benefit from it, no reasonable man can for one moment believe, who sees it. The river here may well compare with the Connecticut, at Northampton in Massachusetts; and take away the buildings and fences from the lovely country about the place just named, and you have the country below Rock Island, with this exception — the bottom lands on the Mississippi are wider, they rise more regularly from the river, and the hills are not so high, nor so irregular as those at Northampton. They are as fertile as the bottoms, and as well covered with grasses as those on the Connecticut, without one weed intermixed, until you reach the very summits, when the woods, thick, lofty, green and delightful, begin and extend back, west of the hills, to a considerable distance from the river. Adjoining the river is grass, on the western slope of the hills are thick woods.

The bottoms covered with tall grasses begin on the very brink of the river, above high water mark, and they gradually ascend from one to three miles back, intersected every mile or two, by never failing rivulets, originating in the hills; and the ground between the springs is rounded, as if by art, and fitted for a mansion house and all its attendant buildings. Princes might dwell here, within a mile or two of each other, fronting the Mississippi and along it, and possess handsomer seats than any one of them can boast of in the

old world. We could hardly persuade ourselves, many times, when we first saw any one of these beautiful spots, that all the art that man possessed, and wealth could employ, had not been used to fit the place for some gentleman's country seat; and every moment, as we passed along, we expected to see some princely mansion, erected on the rising ground. Vain illusion! Nature had done all to adorn and beautify the scenery before our eyes.

Setting down a pair of compasses large enough to extend thirty-five miles around the lower end of Rock Island, and taking a sweep around it, you would have within the circle the handsomest and most delightful spot on the whole globe, so far as nature can produce any thing called beautiful. The island is in latitude forty-one degrees thirty minutes, is two miles in length, containing about two thousand acres of land. The extreme lower end is occupied by Fort Armstrong and the village of Rock Island.

After passing through several feet of rich alluvial soil in perforating the earth, you come to limestone rock, which forms the foundation of this island. Passing around this island, which is long and narrow, you every where see the rock on which the fort and village stand. The lower end of the island is high and dry above the river, whereas the upper end is overflowed in high waters, and all the upper end of the island is covered with a forest of excellent timber trees. The

main channel of the river is on the western side of the island and that part of the Mississippi is half a mile in width; whereas, in a low stage of the water, as when we saw it, the eastern branch of the river is not more than twenty rods wide perhaps, though so deep that it is ferried constantly from the island to the main land. When we were there, the ground where the fort stood was twenty feet or more above the surface of the river, ten or more feet of it were limestone rock, from the water upwards.

The officers have adjoining the fort a most beautiful garden, regularly laid out with graveled walks, in which are cultivated beets, carrots, onions, potatoes, corn, and every vegetable growing in this climate. Nothing could exceed this garden, in fruitfulness, and every leaf appeared to shine in luxuriance. The gourd-seed corn was fit to roast, the beets had attained a good size, and so had the potatoes, beans, and carrots.

The village adjoins the fort on the north, and a few families live here, George Davenport, who keeps a store for the American Fur Company, being a principal man among them. The sutler has a store here in addition to the company's store. Mr. Davenport is an Englishman, and formerly lived at Cincinnati, where I became acquainted with him. His son-in-law, and a few others, live on the island. With such persons I was happy to meet in the "Far West," and they were of use to us.

General John McNeil went to the fort as soon as

we landed, and Colonel Menard and myself went to the Indian agent's, Mr. Thomas Forsyth, where we were met by the Winnebago prophet and about two hundred Indians of that nation. Seating ourselves in the porch of the agency house, we were addressed by five orators in succession, who complained bitterly of neglect, as they had been here sometime awaiting our arrival, without having been fed as they expected by us. "They wanted flour, hog meat, and whisky."

We explained to them the cause of our not appearing there sooner. They then complained of the change of place to Prairie du Chien, from this place, where they had come, but would not go to the latter place. We explained the reason why the place was changed; because Nawkaw had requested the change, and he was the principal chief, whose wishes governed the Secretary of War, in this matter. We immediately purchased eleven barrels of flour, and gave them, with a suitable number of barrels of pork; and we gave them also two hundred pipes, and a plenty of tobacco which we procured of Mr. Davenport, our stores not having yet reached us here.

Giving orders to Mr. Forsyth, the agent, to follow us in four or five days, with the prophet, and certain chiefs and warriors, whom we named, we went to rest, not very late in the night. As soon as General McNeil made his appearance in the morning, we moved up the rapids, which begin at the lower end of this island,

and extend upwards eighteen miles. We had lightened our frail vessel, so that by traveling on foot ourselves, along the shore, in the sand and over the pebbles, slipping back at every step, we made our way up the river very slowly. Colonel Menard, myself, and every man who could walk, and not needed to navigate the vessel, went on foot — General McNeil and the ladies continuing on board. Sometimes we turned out into the prairie, but the high grass, weeds, marsh, and mud soon compelled us to return to the sandy beach. Sometimes the woods approached quite to the river, on the east side, where we traveled, especially towards the upper end of the rapids.

Before sunset the vessel had passed the rapids, and we encamped for the night. The next day we moved on again, without any unusual accident, encamped again at night, and next day reached Fever River, ascended it seven miles, and landed at Galena, five hundred miles above St. Louis.

Ascending the Mississippi, the country appeared to rise up out of the river at Fort Edwards, and the hills assume a greater elevation still at Du Buque's mine and tomb, not far from Galena. From thence upwards, the bottom lands are narrow, the river turns towards the northwest, and becomes very crooked, bounded by high hills.

The principal town of the Foxes is on the brink of the river near Du Buque's mine, and in sight of his

tomb, which is erected on a high hill, where the cross on his grave can be seen from the river, to a considerable distance from it. Du Buque was an Indian trader, and lived and died here. The Fox town contains twenty wigwams, or upwards, and I presume some two hundred Indians. I saw but a few acres of poorly cultivated corn near the town, and the wigwams looked shabby enough. Morgan is the principal warrior of this village, as Keokuk is of the Rock River town.

Cassville, thirty miles below Prairie du Chien, stands on a narrow bottom, where an opening into the mineral country, in the direction of Mineral Point, presents itself. This easy passage down to the river, has located a town here, of a few houses, consisting of a tavern, a store-house for the lead belonging to the United States; and here a government sub-agent, to collect and receive the government's share of lead, resides, Captain Bell.

Opposite to the mouth of the Wisconsin, stands Pike's hill, lofty and abrupt; and just above this place, on the eastern bank of the river, begins the low prairie ground on which Fort Crawford and the village of Prairie du Chien stand. The town begins to show itself three miles above the Wisconsin, and extends upwards, about nine miles, where it ends. The river is full of islands, and when at its highest altitude in a freshet is three miles in width, from hill to hill. Originally settled by the French, it was once a place of

some importance, as the remains of old cellars and chimneys show. That importance is no more, and probably never will be again. Overflowed by high waters, with but little good land near it, and without water power, I see little inducement to build up a town here. On the north side of the Wisconsin, there is no land on which a town can be located near the Wisconsin, but the south side is preferable for it, where one will, one day, rise up.

CALEB ATWATER

Erik Kjyten

In the shadowy recesses of my early recollections looms a long, lank Vossing with raven locks and flowing beard. I glimpse him now through the haze that many years have cast over my childhood memories. The image may, therefore, appear too lofty, or it may be confused with my conceptions of the Patriarchs and Prophets. Be that as it may, rather than let this benign being and hero of my childhood be unsung in the chronicles of pioneer days, I am determined to piece together as best I can a little story of this man.

His name was Erik Magneson Kjyte. We called him Kjyten. He traveled about in the Norwegian pioneer settlements as an itinerant tinsmith and general handy-man who served settlements in Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota. He was welcome whenever and wherever he came. How would mother's tinware have fared if Kjyten had not come along to mend it? And it was fair enough that he came to have a sort of proprietary right in every coffee pot in the settlements. I remember well that mother placed the coffee pot on the cook stove, quite as if by previous arrangement, when she saw him coming.

Coffee pot? Yes, it was always called that but it did not always contain coffee. Sometimes it was

forced to the humiliation of brewing a kind of home-made postum. But, nevertheless, a leak could not be tolerated. When such did occur our mothers would make the hole a little larger with a darning needle, then take a bit of clean white cloth, twist it to a point in one corner, and pull it in as far as it would go. When the superfluous ends were trimmed off they would say: "There, that's fixed. I hope Kjyten will come pretty soon."

But when the clock stopped and winding did not help, when its friendly tick-tock, tick-tock had ceased, the lonely pioneer cabin was painfully lonesome. How earnestly mother then hoped that Kjyten would come soon. What a thrill it gave her when the children all burst in through the door at once screaming at the top of their voices, "Kjyten kjæme, Kjyten kjæme! Eg saag han foste!" (Kjyten is coming, Kjyten is coming! I saw him first!) After perhaps months of waiting the tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock is again heard. Oh, what sweet music, and what a wonderful man! I stand with awe and admiration before my memory's image of that man to this day.

The clock mended and everybody happy, now is the psychological moment to shear the tousled heads beginning with the youngest. It is easy to capture him now and to get him properly perched for the operation. Kjyten is so adroit and expert and has such ways about him that, I declare, the little fellow never got around

to crying before he was all trimmed up and safely back in mother's arms again. When all her little boys were slicked up like regular gentlemen, and father too, there was an increased gleam of pride in mother's eye and a more cheerful humming while preparing supper for her flock that day.

As a barber our friend was unique in this, that he could and actually did cut and trim his own hair. Whether he served as tinner, clock repairer, or barber, Kjyten always seemed to consider the pay of minor importance.

It goes without saying that pioneer settlements were far away from everywhere. At one time in the history of our settlement, Iowa City was the nearest railroad station. Later the railway reached Marshalltown. Still later a locomotive puffed its way into Nevada. Mail service was, consequently, more or less periodic. News was a scarce article in the pioneer homes.

As a disseminator of news, church and state and from distant settlements, Kjyten was an important factor. Sometimes he carried a Norwegian newspaper that would be read by his hosts wherever he stopped until it was worn out, but, as a rule he delivered the news by word of mouth. He was a fluent talker and would tell interestingly of the political chaos in the South, of Indian disturbances in the Northwest, and of births, deaths, marriages and near marriages, and the general gossip in the older settlements from which his hosts

had emigrated. In our home, news from the Fox River settlement, Illinois, was of first importance.

Time has not dimmed my recollections of the happy moments when, late in the evening, the conversation beginning to lag, father would take down his accordion and, as it seemed to us, finger it aimlessly until Kjyten's beautiful baritone voice lifted us up and carried us on the wings of some folk-song to the charming fjords of Norway, or on some church hymn into the very presence of the God of love. And when mother added her pleasing soprano voice . . . well, I hope again to hear music that shall stir my soul as that did — but not here.

Another memory is also very vivid. On a trip to Nevada father had been assured by a Yankee that a certain patch of grass on the road-side was Kentucky blue grass. Having been told that blue grass was splendid for the lawn and hoping some day to have such a lawn, he came home from that trip quite excited and determined to go back as soon as he could to skin that blue grass sod off and relay it at home. He did as planned. The blue grass patch he thus secured was perhaps about three by six feet in size. Shortly after this was done it so happened that the time was opportune for the annual visit of the family to grandfather Follinglo out on Brushy Creek, about fifty miles west. The neighbor boys were able and willing to do the chores during our absence. Father instructed them

very minutely regarding the chores and admonished them repeatedly, and then again just as we drove off, not to forget to water the blue grass every day.

On the return trip father's anxiety to reach home was transmitted to the horses and increased their gait as the miles decreased. In record time we turned in and entered our yard. And what should father see, first thing, but a dog and a big man lying flat right on the most tender spot of the whole farm. With considerable vehemence he said: "Naa ska du sjaa den honda vaaso aa Kjyten ha leie blugrase mit ihael!" (Now that no 'count dog and Kjyten have choked the life out of my blue grass!) Father's fears soon proved unfounded, however, and Kyjten was again our welcome guest.

It is readily understood that a man who travels constantly and carries his shop with him must have a considerable burden. Kjyten carried his tools, a charcoal stove and a supply of charcoal packed on his back while in his right hand he carried a carpet bag containing his personal effects. As he walked from home to home the charcoal fire was not extinguished and the stove had to be so placed in the pack as to obviate danger from fire. This explains also why a faint cloud of smoke was the first and the last we saw when our friend came and went.

After the visit last mentioned, year after year passed without a call from our handy-man. Great changes

were taking place in our settlement. The railroad came up to our very doors. Tanners, barbers, and other artisans opened shops in the villages near us. The pioneer built larger homes and barns. The blue grass had overrun the whole yard, but Kjyten did not come.

At this time a bread-pan that mother had brought with her in the prairie schooner from Illinois was in need of repair. She took it to the tinsmith in Story City who pronounced it no good — past mending. The pan was dear to mother for sentimental reasons and the heartless verdict of the tinner nettled her. "I'll show those fellows", she declared, "who is no good when Kjyten comes. But," she added, "I fear we will never see him again."

In this she was mistaken. We had the pleasure of seeing him once more. On a midsummer day, his black hair showing threads of silver, his back bent under the familiar burden, humming softly, he came and, with pack removed, lay down on the velvety blue grass. The dog wagged his tail and lay down too. This time father had no fears for his blue grass.

We sought to show him our old-time hearty welcome and friendship, but somehow we sensed that it did not meet with the usual response. Our former cheerful friend seemed distant and downcast. His charcoal stove emitted a faint, blue smoke as of old. He asked: "How about your tinware?" It had been mended by the tanners in town. "Is your clock run-

ning all right?" Yes, we have a watchmaker in town. He looked at our heads which told him that there was also a barber in town.

Where formerly he had been needed he was now superfluous. His old friends and customers could get along without him. Wherever he came a certain declaration of independence met him in spite of the hearty welcome he received.

While we conversed with our friend under the shadow of a silver maple tree and some such thoughts as these saddened his heart, mother suddenly remembered her dear old bread-pan. Sure enough, Kjyten could and did mend it. "I told those town fellows", said mother, "that you could fix it." He smiled and for a moment we saw his old self again.

This was his last visit. He walked away slowly under his antedated burden enveloped in a faint cloud of smoke, humming a melody in minor key. Our eyes followed him over the first hill; then we saw only the smoke; and then — nothing. Thus passed the itinerant tinsmith and handy-man from our settlement.

Erik Magneson Kjyte, sometimes called Erik Morgan, died in Dane County, Wisconsin, in 1906. He is buried at Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin.

P. G. TJERNAGEL

Comment by the Editor

CALEB ATWATER, WESTERNER

Neither time nor circumstance could efface the image of President Jackson's first levee from the memory of Caleb Atwater. Out of deference to the western idea of simplicity, several of the ladies were dressed in American calico and "wore no ruffles and no ornaments of any sort". Mr. Atwater, for one, "could not help feeling proud that they were born and wholly educated in the West. The simplicity of their dress, their unaffected manners, their neatness, their ease, grace and dignity carried all before them. The diamonds sparkled in vain at the levee and western unadorned neatness, modesty and beauty bore off the palm with ease." In his estimation, it was "a splendid triumph for the Mississippi Valley."

Ever, as he mapped the course of his career, in private life and public office, Caleb Atwater faced westward. Born in Massachusetts, he went to New York City, after graduating from Williams College in 1804. There he conducted a school for young women while he studied theology. Later, he quit the Presbyterian ministry on account of poor health, studied law, and failed in business. Having migrated to Circleville, Ohio, in 1815, he completed the remaining fifty-two

years of his life as a lawyer, antiquarian, editor, statesman, and historian.

Too much concerned with questions of science and human welfare to bother about making money, he lived and died a poor man. But somehow, through all the vicissitudes of his pioneering, he managed to keep on the social and intellectual frontier. As a part of the first wave of the great migration, he contributed to the foundations of the Commonwealth that served as a model for the other States of the Old Northwest.

The selection of Caleb Atwater as one of the commissioners to negotiate with the Indians at Prairie du Chien for the cession of their mineral lands south of the Wisconsin River was at once the fulfillment and the culmination of his public service. Glad of the opportunity, he straightway set out in May, 1829, down the Ohio River, thence up the Mississippi, and returned overland late in the summer.

This trip confirmed his lifelong confidence in the potential greatness of the West. The time would certainly come, he believed, when this vast region would be "covered with farms and animated by countless millions of domestic animals", when splendid cities would "rear their tall and glittering spires", and when the people of the Great Valley would display talents and virtues of eternal benefit to mankind. Here would be the future seat of civilization.

J. E. B.

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