

Comment by the Editor

LOOKING BACKWARD

Old days, old ways — how quickly we let them slip. Almost pathetically sometimes the older members of the community try to hold them in our remembrance. But we turn from them with little patience and fasten our eyes and attention upon the infinitesimal present, as a speculator scans the quotations on the tape of a stock ticker, engrossed in the ups and downs of the market and indifferent to the fluctuations of the week before.

We detach ourselves from the past and live only in the present. Events lead us by the nose. Conditions of life change and with lightning like facility we adjust ourselves to the new and forget the old. The age of furnaces and motor cars and tiny yards has so captured us that the base-burner and the old gray mare and the wide-doored barn and ample yard and orchard are fast dimming memories. The sight of a patient horse hitched to an old fashioned buggy and standing with drooping head at the curb of a modern street stirs us only as something alien, even though we may have spent many hours as a boy currying just such a horse and greasing the axles of a similar buggy.

The men who drove those once fashionable equipages, who banked the foundations of their houses and perhaps stuffed the window cracks with cotton

to keep out the cold, and emptied hods of rattling coal into the tops of base-burners, are being gathered to their still more ancient fathers. And with them are going those faithful souls who sewed the rag rugs and kept the whatnot dusted, who took the pain of chillblains out of our feet with tubs of cold water and the ache out of our childish hearts with motherly comfort, who patched our trousers worn through with sliding down the shed roof, made batches of doughnuts and cookies of a Saturday morning, and sent us down to the monthly church supper laden with huge warm pots of baked beans and scalloped potatoes.

If the memories of our childhood bind us so little to the past, how quickly will fade from the memory of man the sharpness of detail of the times that are gone. Only from the lips of older men and historians come words that remind us of that which once was; and we are prone to humor and forget the one and find little interest in the other. Sometimes novelists draw us a more or less clear picture of other days, but usually they are kept too busy explaining somewhat bewilderedly, but with no less positiveness and detail, just what our perplexed modern life is driving at.

AN HISTORIC SPORT

It is likely that the rather incidental sources of information will be the most illuminating in our study of past conditions — the hurried newspapers,

the personal letters and infrequent diaries, the treasured souvenirs of events, social, religious, and political, the portraits and random photographs of individuals and gatherings, of river fronts and bridges and steamboats, of streets and public squares and old buildings.

Hunting with a camera for historic landmarks is recommended as an outdoor sport. There are no game laws that hinder. In fact the only way to preserve the game is to shoot it. Nor is it prohibited to shoot the young in this kind of sport. The street scenes that seem to us fresh with youth to-day will be historic to-morrow. If every town in the Middle West had a municipal album preserved at the city hall or public library in which were placed views of the infant village at six months and of the growing and changing town at frequent subsequent periods, what an interesting and valuable record we should have.

It is probable that there is not extant in any one place a complete set of views of the buildings which served Iowa, State and Territory, as capitol. Famous inns and taverns and forts have vanished, churches and academies have crumbled and gone, unvisualized except in the minds of those who will soon leave us.

There is game in every county and an open season throughout the year. Let us take down the trusty camera and make the most of the sport.

J. C. P.