

The
PALIMPSEST
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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

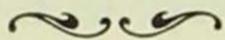
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Life in the Iowa District

Newspaper editors described the Iowa District in 1837 as a land of promise — a region flowing with milk and honey. Poets would not have hesitated to call it a land of dreams. The historian would readily agree that the Iowa District was rich in opportunity: it was also a land of stern reality. Hard, unremitting toil was necessary to clear the timber, break the tough prairie sod, and raise log cabins. Although the climate was described as “salubrious”, whole families and communities often shook with ague, and cholera was not unknown.

But the people of the Iowa District were inclined to count their assets and discount any liabilities. In 1837 the capital of Wisconsin Territory was removed from Belmont to Burlington on the west bank of the Mississippi. Land surveys were being made, courts convened, elections held, schools opened, churches founded, newspapers printed, and post offices established. Dreamers

were talking of railroads: less visionary men were content to urge the establishment of wagon roads, ferries, and bridges. Everybody wanted more frequent and expeditious delivery of the mail.

The Mississippi River was the main artery by which the pioneers kept in touch with the eastern world whence they came. Covered wagons brought immigrants across country to the new West, but that was a one-way traffic. Stagecoaches jolted back and forth over the ruddy roads between the Mississippi and ports on the Great Lakes. Ferries were crowded with ambitious families crossing the Mississippi to the land of promise. For the most expeditious means of transportation, for trade and commerce, as well as for news, the pioneers depended mainly upon steamboats. One enthusiastic writer, who had attended the Indian conference at Fort Snelling, declared that it cost only ten dollars to come by steamboat from Pittsburgh to Dubuque. The hardships of the trip were "all imaginary" and the danger from Indian attack utterly without foundation.

The steamboat was the chief means of transportation and communication for the Iowa District in 1837. River towns, such as Keokuk, Fort Madison, Burlington, Bloomington (Muscatine), Davenport, Dubuque, and a dozen smaller places, served as entrepôts for the smaller inland settle-

ments. During the year a total of twenty-nine different steamboats (the *Palmyra*, *Dubuque*, *Pavilion*, *Adventure*, *Emerald*, *Smelter*, *Ariel*, *Lady Marshall*, *Cavalier*, *Wyoming*, *Envoy*, *Irene*, *Missouri Fulton*, *Burlington*, *North Star*, *Rolla*, *Wisconsin*, *Gipsey*, *Olive Branch*, *Science*, *Heroine*, *Galenian*, *Alpha*, *Huntress*, *Caledonia*, *Bee*, *Rover*, *Chariton*, and *Cygnnet*) churned as far north as the mineral region. Only nineteen had come up in 1836.

A number of these boats steamed on up to Fort Snelling where the Falls of Saint Anthony was already being hailed as a summer "Watering Place" by eastern newspapers. So popular had the Falls become that the Secretary of War had been asked for permission to erect a "spacious hotel" there so "the man of business and the invalid will be invigorated by the healthful breeze and delightful climate."

In the fall of 1837 the steamboat *Science*, Captain S. B. Clark commanding, ascended the Iowa River during a low stage of water as far as Wapello. This was the first craft to turn a wheel on that stream. Those aboard claimed that the Iowa River was navigable to the "town of Catteese" at the mouth of the Cedar River. The country above Wapello was "fast settling by an industrious farming population" and it was believed that the Iowa

River could be "rendered easy of navigation" by light-draft boats at all seasons of the year.

The *Science* also won the distinction of navigating the Des Moines River as far as Keosauqua during the autumn of 1837. Her arrival with a cargo of flour, meal, pork, and groceries fairly electrified the inhabitants of that western outpost of the Iowa District. But the *Science* was not the first to go up the Des Moines: in May the steamboat *Hero* ascended a distance of about thirty miles. Her enterprising skipper, Captain Kenady, hoped to open communication between Saint Louis and the towns on the Des Moines River and "entertained no doubts but that with a little cleaning out" the stream could be "rendered navigable much higher than he had ascended."

The worst steamboat explosion along the eastern border of Iowa occurred in August, 1837, when the steamboat *Dubuque* collapsed a flue of her larboard boiler. More than a score of her crew and passengers were killed. The accident occurred eight miles below Bloomington (Muscatine) while the *Dubuque* was bound upstream from Saint Louis to Galena.

The mineral region was utterly dependent on steamboats for supplies. "Our paper, of today, appears in a reduced form", lamented the *Belmont Gazette* on December 28, 1836. "This is rendered

absolutely necessary, in consequence of a disappointment, in receiving a sufficient supply of paper, to last us during the winter."

That the government at Washington was becoming aware of the importance of the upper Mississippi as a highway of commerce is attested by the arrival of a young army officer to survey the Lower and Upper Rapids. As a result of these surveys, Lieutenant Robert E. Lee, recommended the improvement of the natural channel instead of constructing an artificial channel, and estimated the total cost of the two projects at \$344,280.

Another index of progress in the Iowa District was the establishment of stage lines and regular mail delivery. Private enterprise and congressional aid combined to provide these conveniences. According to the Dubuque newspaper there were twenty-four post offices in the Iowa country. Twelve were in Dubuque County: at Dubuque, Peru, Weyman's, Higginsport, Pleasant Valley, Davenport, Belleview, Durango, Salisbury, Parkhurst, Wabesapinecon, and Carl Port. In the seven counties that had been carved out of old Des Moines County, post offices were located at Rockingham, Iowa (Montpelier), Clark's Ferry, and Bloomington in Muscatine County; at Burlington and Gibson's Ferry (Augusta) in Des Moines County; at Montrose, Fort Madison, and Keokuk

in Lee County; at Richland in Henry County; and at Wapello and Black Hawk in Louisa County. Fifty-eight post offices had been established in Wisconsin Territory east of the Mississippi.

The tardy delivery of mail and the effort to secure new post roads and more frequent mail service was a source of frequent comment. The *Burlington Gazette* believed the inadequacy of mail facilities was mainly due to the fact that there were less than one hundred miles of stage line in operation west of the Mississippi. Belleview petitioned for two new roads to alleviate the "unsufferable inconveniences" which that town had to endure. Dubuque complained in December that "high water and bad roads" had detained eastern mail and that the mineral community had received "but little news of what was going on in the world."

The first municipal governments were established in 1837. On March 28th a meeting was held in the Methodist Church at Dubuque to organize a government and a resolution was adopted for the election of five trustees on April 1st. This was in accordance with a provision of the law passed by the legislature of the Territory of Wisconsin on December 6, 1836. Burlington also held an election in the spring of 1837. James W. Grimes and Charles Mason were appointed solicitors by the board of trustees.

Judge David Irvin traveled about the Iowa District in the spring of 1837 holding district court in the principal towns. The first session was held at Burlington in February. On March 27th Judge Irvin opened court at Fort Madison, but adjourned for lack of a grand jury. At the next session there in August, fifty-six indictments for gambling were presented. According to the law, district court was held in Farmington, Mount Pleasant, Wapello, and Bloomington in April. The temporary seal at the latter place was "a diamond-shaped piece of paper, fastened to the records by means of a wafer, and impressed with the reverse of a United States dime." By the time court was held at Dubuque on May 1st, the judge was sealing the documents with the impression of a quarter. Due to the illness of Judge Irvin, most of the business at Dubuque was left until the next term of court in the fall.

Sawmills and grist mills were running steadily in many communities. Captain John Sullivan of Zanesville, Ohio, erected a "steam saw and flouring mill" during the summer of 1837 at Rockingham. John Spencer and John Work also started a sawmill on Spencer Creek near Valley City. A noteworthy mechanical improvement was "Getty's Patent Metallic Mill" owned by D. C. Eldridge at Davenport. This so-called "flouring mill" was

described as "not much larger than a coffee mill", but it "did wonders in the way of cracking wheat and corn." Although the flour might not bear present-day inspection, the hot biscuits made from it were better than "corn dodgers".

The first sawmill in Muscatine County is said to have been built by Weare Long in 1837. Benjamin Nye operated the first grist mill at the mouth of Pine Creek, and Eli Reynolds and John Lawson built the first steam sawmill at Geneva on Lime Creek in the same year. William Smith sold his share of a dam and sawmill on the Skunk River at Augusta to his partner, Levi Moffet, for \$5000, and erected a grist mill of his own.

A number of new professional cards appeared in Iowa newspapers. T. A. Livermore, for nearly four years "Surgeon Dentist" at Galena, informed readers of the *Iowa News* that "by having teeth which have commenced decaying, plugged with gold or silver, in a proper manner they may almost invariably be preserved during life. Persons who have lost their teeth can have teeth inserted by means of a gold or silver cap or clasp, which will answer the purpose of natural teeth." Ailing pioneers read that Dr. Warsaw's "celebrated remedy" cured ague. If that failed and the patient still lived, Rowland's "Tonic Mixture would be found a sure cure for Fever and Ague."

A number of men destined to become political leaders represented the legal profession in the Iowa District. W. W. Chapman, Stephen Hempstead, Thomas S. Wilson, Peter H. Engle, and William W. Coriell were practicing at Dubuque. Alexander McGregor was located at Davenport. In Burlington David Rorer and James W. Grimes had been practicing a year. Charles Mason arrived in February, 1837, and William H. Starr, Henry W. Starr, M. D. Browning, and James W. Woods were attracted to the new capital. Philip Viele and Alfred Rich hung out their shingles in Fort Madison. At Muscatine S. C. Hastings represented the legal profession.

Schools were springing up all over the Iowa District — log-cabin schools for the most part with short terms and simple studies. A step above the three R's was taken at Dubuque where a Female Seminary was established by Mrs. Louisa King. Aided by her daughter, Mrs. King promised to take "great pains" to "impart useful and general knowledge and to cultivate a taste for learning." Young ladies would be taught "useful and ornamental needle work" and could also receive instruction in "Piano Forte".

Religion was gaining a firmer grip on the pioneers as churches were established in the various river towns and circuit riders carried the Gospel

to the scattered settlements farther west. Dubuque could boast a Methodist, a Catholic, and a Presbyterian church, the latter still soliciting subscriptions in October, 1837, for the completion of the building. Asa Turner in Lee County was laboring for the Congregationalists and Presbyterians. Methodism took root at Muscatine in the fall of 1837 when Norris Hobert preached there.

A fiery circuit rider of the "Baptist persuasion" carried the Gospel west of the Des Moines River in 1837. Before more than one hundred frightened pioneers gathered on the bank of Chequest Creek he preached "two hours of agony" on hell-fire and salvation. Unfortunately, perhaps, most of those present were already saved.

Prompted by Christianity and good will to all mankind, the Catholics of Dubuque formed a society "for the furtherance of divine service, and for charitable and other praiseworthy purposes." The religious belief or place of nativity was not to be an "impediment to the admission of members" and the society gave preference to no member for those reasons.

Crime was not unknown in the Iowa District. A public meeting was called at the Harrison Hotel at Dubuque on August 28, 1837, "to adopt measures for the disposition of a sum of money belonging to a man arrested for passing counter-

feit, and left as a security for his appearance, he having failed to appear, the money is forfeited! A general attendance is requested."

On September 9, 1837, the *Iowa News* observed that William Post and Monroe Gibson, two gamblers who were "driven from Du Buque" in the spring of 1837, had been taken up as vagabonds at Saint Louis and "sold out for six months, to be put to hard work." "This is right", the editor declared, "and we hope hereafter such a course will be pursued by our citizens if there is any provision in the statutes authorizing it."

Thomas Carroll warned the public not to purchase a certain lot from William Burke. He himself had "indisputable title", because he was the first to take it up and improve it. J. Strosser, having decided to leave Dubuque, requested all debtors to pay at once and urged his creditors to "come and get it". He branded all assertions that he was running away as "palpable falsehoods, and the authors of them contemptible, infatuated calumniators."

Celebrations were common and none was observed with greater enthusiasm than the Fourth of July. In Dubuque a ball was given in Henry Pfozter's "old house" on Main Street. Alexander McGregor spoke at the celebration at the Lower Rapids, giving ample testimony that he had

read the address of Stephen Hempstead at Dubuque the previous year.

The Iowa District could boast of three newspapers in 1837. The *Du Buque Visitor*, which had been established on May 11, 1836, changed its name to the *Iowa News* on June 3, 1837. The file of this pioneer journal is the only one that covers the entire year of 1837, and therefore it constitutes the most important single documentary source on Iowa history a hundred years ago.

A newspaper appeared at Montrose on June 28, 1837. It was a "large and well executed" sheet with the imposing title: *The Western Adventurer and Herald of the Upper Mississippi*. Published by Dr. Isaac Galland with Thomas Gregg as editor, its "editorial columns" exhibited "much talent and ability". By September the same press was issuing a sixteen page monthly periodical entitled *Western Emigrant and Historian of Times in the West*. This magazine was devoted to the "interests of emigrants" and contained many selections of western incidents. So confident of success were Galland and Gregg that they also proposed to publish the *Chronicles of the North American Savages* containing sketches of their "ancient and modern history, religion, traditions, dialects, medicine, biography."

A month later the *Belmont Gazette* was moved

from Belmont to Burlington and renamed the *Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser*. "The Gazette", wrote the editor of the *Iowa News*, "is a little larger than our sheet, and contains more reading matter than the *New York Courier and Enquirer*, whose only merit is its size; and less accounts of lurid murders, fatal accidents, and other items to fill the mind (already troubled with the *blues* or pressure) with horror, than the *Saturday Evening Post*."

The pages of those old newspapers mirrored the times in great detail. The temperament of the people was reflected as clearly as their doings. Domestic affairs and cultural interests received almost as much attention as politics. For example the *Iowa News* did not hesitate to point out to wives the advantage of gentleness over force in governing a family.

"Avoid contradicting your husband;" advised one essay, "occupy yourself only with household affairs; never take upon yourself to be a censor of your husband's morals; command his attention by being always attentive to him; never exact any thing and you will receive much; appear always flattered by the little he does for you, which will incite him to perform more; all men are vain — never wound this vanity; choose well your female friends — have but few; cherish neatness without

luxury, and pleasure without excess; dress with taste and particularly with modesty; vary the fashion of your dress; especially with reference to colors; such things may appear trifling but they are of more importance than is imagined."

To cater to the feminine needs Mrs. A. W. Bartlett informed the ladies of Dubuque and vicinity that she had procured the "latest and best New York fashions" and was opening a millinery and dressmaking shop over Ezekiel Lockwood's store. Mr. Lockwood advertised clothing for men — frock coats, roundabouts, shirts, pantaloons, and fancy vests — just received from New York.

During the summer of 1837 E. W. H. Winfield, fishing in the Mississippi River at Rockingham caught a catfish that weighed 170 pounds. As soon as it was hauled up in front of the hotel a crowd gathered. The little daughter of the hotel proprietor, H. W. Higgins, peeking between the curious spectators, caught a glimpse of the monster as it lay floundering on the ground. Off she ran exclaiming, "There, now, if I don't go and tell my Pa. They have killed our sow!"

Wild game was abundant and residents spent much time hunting and fishing. Venison could often be purchased in Davenport for two or three cents per pound. Wild turkeys sold all the way from twenty-five to fifty cents, and prairie chick-

ens were so plentiful sportsmen usually gave them away.

Citizens on both banks of the Mississippi River apparently enjoyed the climate which was described as "mild and temperate". When word reached Belmont that citizens in the East were complaining because of the lack of snow for sledding, the editor of the Belmont *Gazette* announced that "for *eighty-five* days we have had good sleighing, and the snow is still in fine order, and that on but two days this winter has the thermometer stood as low as 20 degrees below zero."

Life in the Iowa District in 1837 may seem somewhat drab to a generation accustomed to canned food and electric refrigeration, stream-lined automobiles and paved highways. But there were many compensations: the pioneers did not have to travel five hundred miles to catch a fish or shoot a duck. Living in a wonderland of nature, they thrived on the simple things about them. During their conquest of the soil they did not lose sight of social, political, and spiritual values. The churches, schools, and political institutions they founded are monuments to the vision of the pioneers a century ago.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

The Farmer Supports All

All the world is moving forward
Progress swells on every gale —
Giant schemes are moving forward
Own we no such word as "Fail".

Whether all thoughtful Iowans in the year immediately preceding the outbreak of the Civil War fully subscribed to this doctrine of progress, may be doubted, but three men certainly put themselves on record as firm believers in the future of Cedar Falls and of the Red Cedar Valley. They were George D. Perkins, his brother H. A. Perkins (both in their early twenties), and Peter Melendy, a pioneer in promoting the agricultural interests of Iowa.

Late in the winter of 1860, but soon after their arrival from Baraboo, Wisconsin, the Perkins brothers rented ground-floor space in the Overman Block, and on March 16, 1860, issued the first number of the *Cedar Falls Gazette*. If Peter Melendy, fifteen years their senior, had searched the Middle West for these young men, he could scarcely have found two anywhere who accorded so fully with his views. In point of fact the three agreed so identically that it is now difficult to de-

termine in whose mind ideas for community advancement originated.

The *Gazette's* initial number left little doubt that the editors believed the world in their vicinity was moving forward. Had not Cedar Falls, then boasting of sixteen hundred inhabitants, quadrupled its population in seven years? Even the children in the new frame schoolhouse knew that within the year the Dubuque and Sioux City Railroad would make Cedar Falls "the end of the line". The new editors proclaimed, "Cedar Falls is one of those points where nature seems to have planted with lavish hand the germs of future prosperity and greatness. Situated in the valley of the Red Cedar, which has justly been termed the 'Eden of Iowa', it is surrounded by a farm country unsurpassed for the richness and fertility of its soil."

They not only congratulated the readers of the *Gazette* upon the valley's deep, black soil, its water power, and river timber, but also upon the newly appointed "agricultural editor", Peter Melendy, who had promised to edit weekly a two-column section entitled FIELD AND GARDEN. The editors furthermore claimed, "No one else in Iowa is so conversant with the subject of horticulture and agriculture; no one else keeps himself so well posted on such matters at home and abroad; and no one

else is so well qualified to determine what products, modes of cultivation, etc., are best adapted to this region."

The new "agricultural editor" was not altogether undeserving of the praise lavished upon him by the joint proprietors. For three years he had put himself in the van of every progressive movement in the community; he had labored neither as an interested politician nor as a disinterested philanthropist, but had coöperated with other town-builders whose interests he recognized as his own. In this brief time, among other enterprises, he had organized the Iowa Fine Stock Breeder's Association, established the first implement, grain, and produce company in Iowa west of Dubuque, and instituted both the Horticultural and Literary Society and the Cedar Valley Agricultural and Mechanical Association. Through the latter, an early prototype of the Rotary Club, he promoted the first "Agricultural Fairs" held in Black Hawk County.

For believing that no person available could furnish as much "appropriate and practical advice", or present it as "originally" as could Peter Melendy, George and H. A. Perkins had justifiable grounds. More than this, the *Gazette* readers were officially promised that FIELD AND GARDEN would not represent a denatured digest of

eastern farm papers, but were assured that it would supply "the most complete and best edited agricultural department" to be found in any newspaper in the State.

FIELD AND GARDEN, with its heading embossed in ornate and beflowered lettering, was allotted two full columns on the left-hand side of the fourth and last page of the weekly *Gazette* — psychologically a strategic position. Belief in progress dominated the tone of his column. If people could only be persuaded to cultivate their minds and their fields wisely, he was convinced that the community of his adoption might develop into a "new Eden, a demi-paradise"; and, if the values inherent in the development of the mind and the soil could be impressed upon the molders of thought, he saw that a brave new world would be created by the men and women arriving in the gray prairie schooners and building the log and frame homes that were dotting the prairies in increasing numbers.

After the lapse of seventy-five years, the charm of reading FIELD AND GARDEN lies in the cheek-by-jowl association of the ideal and the practical. In his editorial work, Peter Melendy made a distinct effort to mingle a modicum of literary leavening with stock raising and corn planting. He chose to begin each issue with a poem, one that was appropriate either for the season or for rural

life. This he followed with a timely editorial which often began with a characterization of the particular month or season, in which he employed such accurate, if time-worn, epithets as "unruly March", "variable April", and "bleak December". His comments were full of practical and often very homely advice concerning the garden or farm needs of the current season. Naturally the major share of space was consigned to news of especial interest to gardeners and to farmers. Among explanations of experiments in breeding, grafting, and gardening drawn from farm papers or his own experience, the editor interspersed many proverbs worthy of a rural Poor Richard's Almanac, and not infrequently he ended his second column with a reflective personal essay. In this way from Friday to Friday, Peter Melendy endeavored to fulfill his sponsor's promises by furnishing eminently "appropriate, practical, and original" material.

In addition to the initial poems, which in themselves ranged from jingles and doggerel to Whittier's "Telling of the Bees" and Spenser's "December Eclogue", the interpreter of rural Iowa scattered verses throughout his editorials and essays. His column overflowed with victorian optimism and with an almost Wordsworthian enthusiasm for nature. Invariably the selections held up for emulation the simple joys centered about the

home and field life of the independent farmer in a pioneering country.

By temperament Peter Melendy responded to the life and stir of such a community. In the breaking of the prairie sod, in the uprearing of log cabins soon to be transformed into prairie homes, he envisaged the symbols of progress. Often he turned to verse to assure his readers that they were building a splendid new commonwealth.

I hear the tread of pioneers
Of nations yet to be:
The first low wash of waves
Where soon will roll a human sea.
The elements of empire here,
Are plastic, yet, and warm,
The Chaos of a mighty world
Is rounding into form:
Each rude and jostling fragment soon,
Its fitting place shall find,
The raw materials of a State —
Its muscles and its mind.

Any community dependent for its existence on climate, the editor felt, should be interested in nature in all its variable forms. Beginning with March, and following calendarwise, he often selected poems which reflected the change of seasons such as "June", "September", and "The Harvest Home". The editor delighted in choosing verses that so elevated the life of the farmer as to

make it one to be greatly valued. He inserted Felicia Heman's "The Parting of Summer", Alice Carey's "On Ploughing", and less well known verses which could readily be understood by the home circle on the farm. Among these appeared "Home's Harmony", "Agricultural Song", "The Farmer's Daughters", and "The Farmer Boy".

Occasionally, however, a note of jocularly supplanted the idealization of rural life when, for instance, in the midst of an essay describing the merits of a good dairy cow, he employed the following couplets which poetized her ideal attributes.

She's long in the face, she's fine in the horn,
She'll quickly get fat, without cake or corn;
She's clear in her jaws and full in her chine,
She's heavy in the flank and wide in the loin;
She's wide in the hips and calm in the eyes,
She's fine in the shoulders and thin in the thighs;
She's light in her neck and small in the tail,
She's wide at her breast and good at the pail.

In a more serious vein, the poem which most truly symbolized the efforts of Peter Melendy to give the farmer a vision of his place in life was the ballad, "The Farmer Supports All". Following his custom, he placed this poem at the head of one of the early issues of *FIELD AND GARDEN*. In the ensuing editorial, taking the meaningful title literally, he argued that agriculture was the basic in-

dustury of the country, and proceeded to detail the misery and hard times which followed periods of drought. He assigned to Myra Myrles the authorship of the ballad whose thought paraphrases Burns's "A man's a man for a' that" into "A farmer's a man for a' that". Its repetitive refrain emphasizes the importance of the farmer's calling.

Does the farmer dig the dirt?

Aye, aye.

Does he wear a coarse shirt?

Aye, aye.

And if his cheek is brown
With the kisses of the sun
Is he less a gentleman?

Nay, nay.

Does the farmer plow and sow?

Aye, aye.

Does he wield the spade and hoe?

Aye, aye.

And if his hand is hard,
And his feet be roughly shod,
Shall we give him less regard?

Nay, nay.

Does the farmer work for all?

Aye, aye.

Labors he for great and small?

Aye, aye.

If from out the farmer's store
Comes the bread for rich and poor
Should ye honor him the more?

Yea, yea.

Give the farmer then his due.

Aye, aye.

Yes, he *serves his Master*, too.

Aye, aye.

And may heaven its blessing shed

Down upon the farmer's head

'Till we cease our cry for bread.

Aye, aye.

The subjects treated elsewhere were manifold. The man with a garden on a single lot, as well as the farmer endeavoring to bring one hundred and sixty acres under cultivation and already casting covetous glances at the section across the road, could find innumerable practical hints. He could either learn how and when to prepare a hot bed; select seed potatoes; graft grapes; feed poultry; or choose currant bushes suitable to the climate of Iowa. No form of farm news was neglected. Of these the digests, from papers devoted to bees, poultry, stock raising, and to agriculture, often rewritten to suit the needs of Iowans, were given due attention. When, however, the editor excerpted data from other publications, he scrupulously gave credit to such papers as the *Illinois Farmer*, the *Farmer's Home*, the *Country Gentleman* (Albany), the *Boston Cultivator*, the *Maine Farmer*, the *Hartford Homestead*, and the *Ohio Farmer*. Of these he quoted most frequently the *Ohio Farmer*.

Somewhat in the fashion of the common-sensible Benjamin Franklin, he assumed the rôle of a rural philosopher. As he read and thought he took pleasure in recording proverbial sayings which he made applicable to Iowa farmers.

Agriculture aided by science will make a little nation a great one.

Bank the house well with snow and the woodpile will last longer.

The great secret of farming is never to allow anything to grow that is not sown.

Weeds that grow unmolested around fences, stumps, and stones, scatter their seeds over the farm, and produce a crop of trouble.

To raise good potatoes — plant them.

Feed the earth and it will feed you; feed the fruit trees and they will yield fair fruit.

From the same bud, the bee sucks honey; the spider poison.

He who encourages young men in the pursuit of agriculture is doing a good work for the morals of society a hundred years hence.

Even though the farm items fulfilled expectation in respect to their advertised appropriateness and practicality, the sparkles of the promised originality appeared to best advantage in Peter Melendy's editorials and essays, where he displayed his personal tastes and background of reading.

In the more complete issues of *FIELD AND GARDEN* he sought to achieve unity of theme. He

would head his department with a poem, such as "May"; then, often in extremely romantic vein, he would proceed editorially to make his reader aware of all the connotations wrapped up in the idea of May. In one particular case he followed the two-stanza poem with these words:

"Is it a wonder that May is extolled? The sick praise it because its breath is soft. The lovers eulogize it because everything is so gladsome about them and in unison with themselves. The farmer utters his daily heart-felt panegyric for southern breezes, genial suns, and fructifying rains; for springing corn, and grass, and grain." Then, quoting from Milton, he inserted,

Hail, bounteous May, that dost inspire
Mirth and youth and warm desire:
Woods and Prairies are of thy dressing
Hill and Dale dost boast thy blessing.

Following this exuberant outburst, he proceeded in straightforward English to explain exactly what May demanded of a farmer: eternal vigilance in "hoeing a crop the moment it needed it", planting onion sets, especial care in protecting the south side of trees which had recently been transplanted from the shade of the river timber, and the mulching of tree roots. In his eyes, general untidiness and weeds represented intolerable agricultural sins. He therefore suggested that "in the merry

month of May", rural readers should whitewash their fences and outbuildings; plow their acres deeply, and proceed ruthlessly to eradicate from their land its farm demons — "the dog-fennel, the jimson weeds, the ragweed, the crab grass". In the name of orderliness they were further adjured to "clean the chips out of the door yard, build a pen for the dozen runty pigs, and to tie the rough-haired shaggy-eared calf back of the house."

In these editorials, often more idealistic than the rigor of pioneer life seems to warrant, Peter Melendy set forth his hopes for a genuine culture based on an enlightened yeomanry of independent farmers, who would conserve the soil with intelligence, who would want to possess well-kept homes and gardens, and who would have leisure and contentment to enjoy them.

"His house is his castle;" wrote Melendy of the independent farmer, "his acres are his dominions; his forests are his parks; his grass plats are his lawn; and his forests are his groves. His cattle, sheep, and poultry are his subjects, and he becomes, at pleasure, either the executioner or the multiplier. In the spring he sows; in the autumn he reaps. He may truly say with an honest pride—

I eat my lamb
My chickens and ham
I shear my own fleece and I wear it."

When time and space permitted he sometimes ended his second column with a personal essay on some phase of farm life. Into these he frequently fitted quotations from Spenser, Shakespeare, Cowper, and also from contemporary writers. For themes he chose such apt topics as "A Walk in the Country", "The Life of the Husbandman", or "Agriculture is the Basis of All". In several, he made use of a character sketch to contrast various aspects of the progressive and of the ne'er-do-well farmer's life. The following adaptation of "the characterisme" suggests both the literary background of the editor and his desire to teach the fundamental principles of rural ethics through the ancient plan that Theophrastus, the Greek philosopher-botanist popularized.

THE SHIFTLESS FARMER

"Just take a glimpse at him. He allows noxious weeds to over-run his land — white daisy, snapdragon, burdock, yellow dock, quack grass, Canadian thistle, and many other vile roots too numerous to mention. The time was when many of them might have been exterminated by a little labor. When they first appeared in small numbers, a very little work with a weeding hoe or a dock extractor would have headed them off entirely. But having had full swing for several years, they laugh at the

shiftless man's puny efforts and windy threats. But this is not the worst of the evil. The neighboring farmers are active, enterprising men, and have done their best to keep their land clear of foul roots, but the seeds blow over in clouds from the shiftless man's fields, and they are almost in despair. What can they do?

"He throws the manure out under the eaves of the barn, and lets it lie in sun and air, leaching away half its strength into the neighboring streams. He neglects also to make use of many other useful matters which might go to increase the compost heap — such as bones, ashes, chip dirt, forest leaves, droppings of the hen roost, etc., etc. Yet at the same time he buys manure at the neighboring town and carts it home at considerable expense.

"He keeps poor fences. When he sees a rail broken here, a board off there, or a post, rotten and falling down beyond, he is very sorry and hopes a good time will come for fence-mending; but he can't repair it at once. Bad becomes worse. Hungry cattle leap the tottering fence, and down it all comes. Wheat fields, corn fields, and hay fields are trampled down; the farmer suffers loss, and maybe he and his neighbors are soon having a delightful lawsuit.

"These are only a few broad lines of our por-

trait; the likeness will probably be detected without any further touches of the brush."

His closing essays, often reflective and personal in nature, always illustrated the forward-looking thoughts of Peter Melendy. He hoped to forestall many of the present evils such as soil depletion and farm tenantry. His dream for the place of his adoption included a city of lawns, fine trees, and an educated book-loving urban and rural population who sensed "progress in every gale" and who knew "no such word as 'fail'."

Perhaps when Peter Melendy sent his last FIELD AND GARDEN contribution to George D. Perkins on September 26, 1861, he had no intention of giving up his work as "agricultural editor", but the needs of the State in the approaching war crisis made such heavy inroads on his time that he was forced to abandon his editorship. However true this supposition may be, the quatrain with which he ended his last contribution made a fitting farewell to his rural patrons.

Would you be strong? Go, follow the plow.

Would you be thoughtful? Study the fields and flowers.

Would you be wise? Take on yourself a vow —

To go to school in Nature's sunny bowers.

LUELLA M. WRIGHT

Comment by the Editor

THE RULE OF RIGHT

For more than a year after the Iowa country was opened for settlement, the pioneers had no legal means of settling their disputes. Claim associations and vigilance committees protected property and maintained peace according to rules of their own. Even after Territorial government was established, judicial facilities were inadequate. For the authority of courts the people substituted extralegal autonomy.

Though the early settlers may have been beyond the law, they were not above it. They preferred regular civil processes. From June, 1834, to February, 1837, only "two terms of a county court of inferior jurisdiction" were held in "the whole country west of the Mississippi," declared the delegates who assembled at Burlington on November 6, 1837, to petition Congress to establish the Territory of Iowa. In response to such an urgent demand, the administration of justice was improved. Seldom has any tribunal excelled the legal wisdom of the first Supreme Court of the Territory of Iowa.

Thrifty, practical, and ambitious, the pioneers

were also men of vision. They had the rare capacity to perceive ideals beyond immediate necessity; and they were guided by principle when right and expediency seemed to clash. They believed that every man should have what he deserves, but not at the price of his neighbor's opportunity. Above other virtues they esteemed justice, which is the principal object of civil society.

Suppose that justice had become the distinguishing characteristic of our Commonwealth. What a triumph it would be if Iowans, cultivating the pioneer sense of social honesty, could be known far and wide for their transcendant righteousness!

J. E. B.

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