

The
PALIMPSEST

JULY 1948

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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

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSEST

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material 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 RUTH A. GALLAHER

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Maverick Poem

When King George VI of Great Britain made his usual address to the nations of the British Commonwealth on January 1, 1940, he closed with a quotation which began, "I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown,' and he replied, 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than a light and safer than a known way.' " At once there rose a world-wide chorus of questions as to the name of the author. No one seemed to know, but search revealed that the poem was from a small volume entitled *The Desert*, published some twenty-five years earlier by a commonplace spinster teacher of English, Minnie Louise Haskins.

There have been many single famous poems. Why a person should be able to write one popular poem and no others of equal interest has never been fully explained. For one thing, such writers

seem to have been rather nonentities who engaged in routine work — to provide necessities for themselves and families — they had little time to give to poetry. Possibly only unusual emotion could break down the inhibitions of prosaic, everyday tasks. Perhaps the lack of immediate recognition discouraged the muse already doubtful of its welcome.

Whatever the reason for the one-poem men and women, it appears that their works often lead an uncertain existence, claimed first by one aspirant and then by another. It is not surprising that this happens. Since the author is unknown, his poem is often published in an obscure newspaper, a book printed in a small edition, or in a collection. No copyright is secured and he who reads may copy. Editors guess at the author.

One of the most famous and most controversial of these "maverick" poems is "There Is No Death". When this poem was written, where it was first published by John Luckey McCreery, and how the name of Edward Robert Bulwer Lytton (Owen Meredith) came to be associated with it seem to be lost in the fog of memory and misstatements. There are even inconsistencies concerning McCreery's name and the place of his burial. One account says that *John Luckey McCreery* was buried in Glenwood Cemetery,

Washington, D. C. A Dubuque newspaper says he was buried in the Linwood Cemetery at Dubuque. A report from the Glenwood Cemetery at Washington states that *James L. McCreery*, aged seventy, was buried there in September, 1906.

The old saying, "The less light, the more heat", most certainly applies to the story of this poem, for controversy has raged about it for many years. McCreery, who seems to have been a sincere but indefinite sort of person, gave three different accounts of the origin of "There Is No Death"; Bulwer Lytton gave none at all. Perhaps he never heard that the poem was attributed to him. Possibly he would not have been pleased if he had known.

John Luckey McCreery was born in Monroe County, New York, on December 31, 1835. For a time he worked on a newspaper at Dixon, Illinois, and in April of 1859 he bought *The Delaware County Journal* at Delhi, subject to a mortgage. He ran this paper until the close of 1864, when, apparently, he lost out to the mortgage and moved to Dubuque where he secured a position on the *Herald*. When the question of his authorship of "There Is No Death" was raised, the rival newspaper, the Dubuque *Times*, ridiculed his claim and asserted that Bulwer Lytton was the author.

In reply, McCreery printed his first account of the origin of the poem in the *Herald* of February 2, 1869. He wrote the verses in the fall of 1859, he said, and published them in his own paper. An anonymous someone, who signed himself E. Bulmer, copied the poem and sent it to the "Independence Temperance Offering" at Chicago. This E. Bulmer, whose first name McCreery says was Eugene, is the unidentified villain of this story. Then, according to McCreery, *The Farmers' Advocate*, "a Wisconsin agricultural paper", reprinted "There Is No Death", and the editor concluding that "Bulmer" was a misprint for "Bulwer", changed it accordingly. E. Bulwer, of course, suggested Edward Bulwer Lytton (Owen Meredith) and the stage was set for the long-drawn-out controversy. As a final argument, McCreery offered to pay \$100 to any person who could prove that "There Is No Death" had ever appeared in any published work of Bulwer Lytton or any other writer. There were no claimants. On the other hand, no evidence of the publication of the poem by McCreery in any of these papers has been found. A paper known as *The Farmers' Advocate* was published in Chicago from 1859 to 1863 but the only copy of this paper located does not contain the poem.

When Jacob Rich took over the Dubuque

Times about 1870, McCreery became a member of the editorial staff and remained with that paper some five years. It is said that M. C. Woodruff, who took full charge of the *Times* in 1875, objected to McCreery's temperance editorials.

The poem, meanwhile, went its way, often under the aegis of the sophisticated English poet. When Harper and Brothers printed "There Is No Death" in one of its school readers in 1870, Lord Lytton was given as the author. McCreery protested and was aided by at least one fellow Iowan, J. D. Edmundson, and by John Kennedy, a former resident of Delaware County. Their testimony seems to have convinced the Harper editors for the reader issued five years later credited the poem to McCreery.

A new era in the controversy began about 1880. At that time McCreery, probably at the suggestion of William B. Allison, was appointed to a clerical position in the Department of the Interior at Washington, D. C., and in 1883 he issued his first and only volume of poems — *Songs of Toil and Triumph*. The first poem in the book was "There Is No Death" and in the "Introduction" McCreery gives a second version of its origin.

According to this account he wrote the poem in the fall of 1862 and sent it to *Arthur's Home Magazine* in which it was published in July, 1863.

This publication is one of the few authenticated facts in the controversy. This version is also supported by Joseph B. Swinburne, who lived in the McCreery home at the time the poem was written. According to his recollection, McCreery was superintendent of schools at the time. McCreery was elected to that office in October, 1861, serving two years. The later items in the story are much the same as in his 1869 account.

The appearance of his copyrighted volume seems to have strengthened McCreery's claim to the authorship of "There Is No Death". An edition of Peale's *Popular Educator and Cyclopaedia of Reference*, published in 1885, included it among the selection of poems and credited it to J. L. McCreery and in June, 1889, *Lippincott's Magazine*, in a series of questions on literary matters, made the statement that McCreery was the author of "There Is No Death".

But the controversy flared up again in 1892. T. S. Parvin printed the poem in the *Iowa Masonic Annual Souvenir* under McCreery's name and was caustically criticized by the editor of the *American Tyler* of Detroit who characterized McCreery's claim as a "Bad Piece of Plagiarism". In unbrotherly irritation the Michigan editor declared: "we are astonished that he should seek to foist upon intelligent people as 'Iowa's Great-

est Poem', the well-known work of Lord Edward Bulwer Lytton, written thirty years ago."

After some correspondence and an unclaimed offer by McCreery of \$1000 to anyone who could prove that Lord Lytton ever published the poem under his name, John H. Brownell, the editor of the *American Tyler*, in April, 1893, wrote "The Amende Honorable", in which he apologized for his attack on Parvin and spoke of McCreery as "the man who has been 'Charlie Ross'd' out of the sweetest child of sacred song ever born in America." In spite of this apology, however, Brownell's *Gems from the Quarry and Sparks from the Gavel*, published in 1893, gives ten stanzas of "There Is No Death" and credits them to Bulwer Lytton. Sidney Smith, editor of the short-lived *Iowa Masonry*, defended Parvin and McCreery's claim and in December, 1892, wrote, "It ["There Is No Death"] does not appear in any of Lytton's works . . . and his son writes to an enquirer that he never saw it among any of his father's writings".

This incident seems to have produced McCreery's third version of the story of his famous poem which appeared in *The Annals of Iowa* for October, 1893. It is longer and much more detailed than either of the earlier stories. McCreery told how he drove slowly across the country in

Delaware County one Saturday afternoon. The roads were muddy and the journey was not finished until after dark. He was worried about his future and his mind moved over the course of his life. His father had been a Methodist minister and the son had been reared to be a preacher, but he says he had "become skeptical regarding many points of dogma regarded as essential by orthodox churches." Unable to preach, he had turned to newspaper work but the establishment was heavily mortgaged and he realized he was not an efficient businessman. He had no money with which to buy a farm and was not physically fit for manual labor. As the stars came out his troubled mind was soothed by the majesty and tranquillity of the heavens. The first four lines of "There Is No Death" came into his mind. The next morning he wrote several more stanzas, and later sent the poem to *Arthur's Home Magazine* which had previously printed three or four of his poetical efforts.

McCreery relates that after the poem had been published he reprinted it in *The Delaware County Journal* and sent a clipping to a friend, John H. Moore, a foreman on a newspaper at Dixon, Illinois, who reprinted the verses. There Eugene Bulmer, or whoever was represented by that name as a *nom de plume*, saw it and sent it to the *Farmers' Advocate* at Chicago as part of an article

on "Immortality". Since Bulmer wrote the article the readers apparently assumed that he wrote the poem also. Comes then the keen-minded editor of a Wisconsin paper who knew of Edward Bulwer Lytton. Correcting typographical errors being a part of any editor's job, he changed E. Bulmer to E. Bulwer and the popularity of the English poet did the rest. McCreery added:

"Meanwhile the poem has encircled the world. I have received papers containing it printed in nearly every state of the Union; in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Canada; and even one from Australia. It has gone into dozens of school books, and been incorporated in scores of miscellaneous collections of poetry. It has been quoted, in full or in part, five times that I know of in Congress; on the last day of January, 1880, I had the pleasure of sitting in the strangers' gallery of the House of Representatives, in Washington, D. C., and hearing the Hon. Mr. Coffroth, member of Congress from Pennsylvania, in his oration on the death of the Hon. Rush Clark, member of Congress from Iowa, quote a portion of it (credited to Lord Lytton, as usual), which thus became embalmed in the Congressional Record."

Once in print, any error tends to perpetuate itself. As late as July 27, 1928, the *Des Moines Tribune-Capital* printed seven stanzas of "There

Is No Death" and gave E. Bulwer Lytton as the author. McCreery, however, seems now to be assured of recognition as the author of "There Is No Death", but there are still gaps in the story. Who, for example, was E. Bulmer?

The poem which made John Luckey McCreery famous was not, however, otherwise an asset to him. He says that in 1868 he was recommended as a secretary or stenographer on President U. S. Grant's staff. His sponsor read the poem to the general, who apparently did not care for it — at least he decided he wanted business ability and not poetry in his office.

John L. McCreery died on September 7, 1906. He was survived by his wife, Loretta Knapp McCreery, and two of their three daughters. His tombstone in Glenwood Cemetery, Washington, D. C., bears his name, the dates of his birth and death, and the first four lines of the poem which had given him so many heartaches and thousands of bereaved mourners so much solace and comfort:

There is no death! The stars go down
To rise upon some other shore,
And bright in heaven's jeweled crown
They shine for evermore.

In his *Famous Single Poems*, published in 1923 by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Burton E. Stevenson says: "No doubt other tombstones

scattered up and down the land bear these same lines, for they were once unbelievably popular".

In 1926 the Delhi Woman's Club placed a bronze tablet on the site of the home where McCreery wrote his one famous poem. It bears his name, the dates of his life, 1835-1906, and the final stanza of "There Is No Death".

And ever near us though unseen,
The dear immortal spirits tread;
For all the boundless universe
Is life — there are no dead!

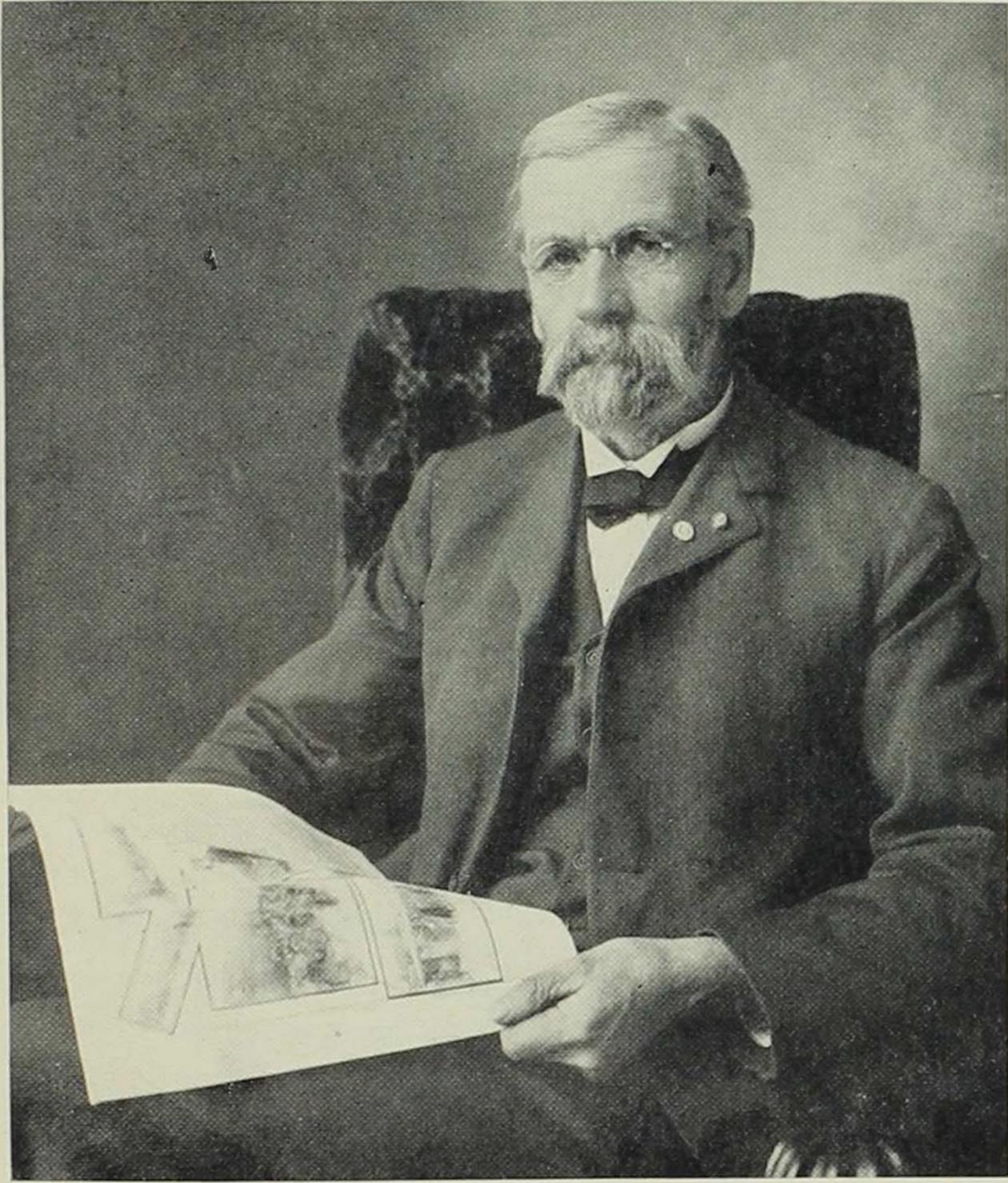
It is a curious anomaly that John Luckey McCreery, insecure and inefficient in material affairs, should have had this vision of the permanence of life. Perhaps his own insecurity made him cling unconsciously to the faith in an eternity of existence. His indefinite recollections of the origin of the poem are not necessarily indications that his claim was questionable. He was an unassuming man and neither his actions nor his poems were matters of great importance. He himself said: "at the time I was not expecting to go down to posterity very far". Yet, like all humble persons, he desperately wanted what was his. The struggle for recognition was bitter, but through it John Luckey McCreery achieved the recognition denied to him in other fields.

RUTH A. GALLAHER

A Man and His Garden

" 'Tis the story of a life. Real gardens, like children grow and develop with the years. The story begins away back in the careless past" — as Eugene Secor spoke, the members of the Iowa State Horticultural Society listened attentively. Their 76-year-old beloved friend was telling them the story of his life as if he were painting the picture of a lovely garden.

To fill in the details of Eugene Secor's life story, we must go back to the middle of the nineteenth century to a small farm in southeastern New York. There in Peekskill Hollow, New York, eleven children were born to Alson and Sarah C. (Knapp) Secor. Eugene Secor, one of the eleven, was born on May 13, 1841, on the home farm. The blond child spent only a few terms going to school in the little log schoolhouse of Putnam County, for strong helpers were needed at home. Eugene's father loved to work with plants — budding, grafting, and experimenting. New fruits were constantly tried on the hillside farm where Eugene was "born and grew, and barefooted drove home the cows." As a little girl plays with dolls, so Eugene started experimenting with



EUGENE SECOR

plants. How thrilled he was when his first graft on a seedling apple tree survived and flourished.

In this environment he matured — “tall and slim and green”. But there came a time when the tow-headed boy was no longer tow-headed. “Years, and generations of dark haired ancestors from sunny France had changed his flaxen locks to a light brown. . . . He no longer drove home the cows from the hillside pasture. No longer did he sleep in the attic with nothing between himself and the stars but shingles. . . . No more was he to fish in the beautiful creek . . . go bobbing for eels . . . no more partridges would he lure into traps under the red-berried dog woods on the hillside. . . . He followed Horace Greeley’s advice: ‘Go West, young man.’ ”

When he reached the age of 21 (1862) Eugene followed his elder brother, David Secor, to Winnebago County, Iowa, where David was county treasurer and recorder and served also as the Forest City postmaster. Young Eugene worked for a time, learned the mason’s trade during two summers and taught two winter terms of school, and then enrolled at Cornell College at Mt. Vernon, Iowa. When David Secor enlisted in the regiment formed from the Second and Third Iowa Infantry in September, 1864, Eugene was called home to take charge of his brother’s office and the

postoffice as a deputy. He remained there until the end of the war.

By 1865, Eugene had decided it was time to "settle down" in this still "new" country, and on September 17, 1866, he married Millie M. Spencer, a pretty, frail, 19-year-old girl, whom he had courted at Forest City and in Cedar Falls where she was attending school. Millie Secor was musical and intelligent. Although she was never physically strong, she was a capable mistress of Eugene Secor's home. For her he built "The Shelter", a beautiful spacious home at Forest City, fronted by a miniature park and surrounded by the oak trees that he loved. Eugene Secor was progressive and through the years he equipped their home with the latest conveniences of the day. He was one of the first householders to put in a furnace, running water, electric lights, and a telephone, and to have a typewriter.

It was in this home that the ten children of Eugene and Millie Secor were born and there the parents saw six of them die. The lovely, quiet home proved a true shelter for his invalid wife in the last years before her death on April 29, 1912, when she was 64. Only four of the ten children were living when Millie Secor died. Three sons — Willard (died May 27, 1915), Alson, one-time editor of the farm magazine, *Successful*

Farming (now — 1948 — living in Hollywood, California), and Manly, a resident of Waterloo, Iowa — and one daughter, Nina, who remained at home with her father and after his death stayed at The Shelter until shortly before her death in 1942.

Over the years, Eugene Secor donated much of his time and energy to the public. In 1869 he began six years as clerk of the courts, and he was county auditor beginning in 1876 for four consecutive years. He was a member of the Forest City Board of Education for 15 years. In 1878 he was appointed one of the commissioners to supervise the incorporation of Forest City and at the election in 1879, he was elected mayor and held that position until April, 1882. In 1884 he was again elected, serving for two terms. For two years, 1885–1887, he was Winnebago County coroner and he served as councilman for five out of the eight years between 1883–1891. In 1892 this “true democrat but always a staunch Republican” was a delegate to the Republican National Convention. In 1907 President Theodore Roosevelt appointed him postmaster of Forest City and the job was his for the next five and a half years.

In November, 1901, when he was sixty years old, Eugene Secor was elected Representative from Winnebago County in the Twenty-ninth

General Assembly and served two years, but he was not a candidate for re-election. During his tenure Mr. Secor was named chairman of the Horticultural Committee and served on seven other standing committees including Agriculture, Schools and Text-books, Police Regulations, and the Agricultural College.

Not all his activities were political. In 1887 he helped organize the Winnebago County Agricultural Society and was its first president. He also rose to leadership in his church, and in 1892 was a delegate to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, to which denomination he belonged.

In spite of his limited education, Eugene Secor surrounded himself with good books and intelligent people. He appreciated the advantages of higher education and gave precious time to his duties as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Iowa Agricultural College from 1888 to 1894. He also served on the Board of Trustees of Cornell College for twenty years and he was proud of an honorary M.A. degree from that school.

Perhaps it was because of his interest in public affairs and his constant seclusion to study and write that he seemed aloof, not only to his friends but to his children. To those who did not know him well, he appeared to be an austere man. His

speech and manner were gruff when he was displeased, but he was broadminded and tolerant at a time when tolerance was unpopular. All races and creeds were received with sincere hospitality at the Secor home. Because of his sober appearance many did not understand this tall, handsomely bearded man, and often lost his quiet humor. "He could burn one up with sarcasm, but his poetry and writing are so full of romance, and tenderness, that we know he was at heart a very loving and generous man."

Eugene Secor loved books and he spent many hours reading Shakespeare, Longfellow, and the classics to his wife and children. He was also a poet and author in his own right. He wrote for newspapers and several of his works have been published. One of these was *Verse for Little Folks and Others*, published by his son, Alson, "for the purpose of putting some of my father's nature verse into a form in which they may be better preserved". Another collection of verse, *Echoes from the Shelter*, was "dedicated to the memory of her who named and adorned the home". Each year at Christmas-time a small paper-bound collection of verse was sent to his friends instead of the customary card. One year, five years before his death, he called his greeting "The Calendar". It contained a poem for each

month of the year in addition to "Good Morning" and "A Day".

In addition to these many non-paying tasks, he was part owner of a real estate business and director of a private bank organized by himself and others in 1882 under the name of Secor, Law, and Plummer, later incorporated as the First National Bank of Forest City.

In his "spare" moments Mr. Secor raised colonies of choice bees. He had begun this work about the time of his marriage. His apiary was never large but in 1892 he had 75 colonies of bees. He wrote much for bee publications on subjects ranging from the breeding of bees to "extracted honey and bee pasture from alsike clover", but it was for his songs and poems, many of which were sung at the beekeepers' conventions, that he became well known and long remembered by beekeepers all over the country. He was, however, recognized as a bee authority and in 1892-1893 he was the sole expert judge of the apiary department at the World's Columbian Exposition held at Chicago. For many years he served as a judge for the bee and honey exhibit at the Iowa State Fair. His own bees were outstanding and were known all over Iowa.

Eugene Secor's chief delight was the out-of-doors. He loved to think of the possibilities hidden

in a seed. The Shelter became a show place in the Middle West for its flowers, shrubs, and fruits, and every tree and shrub, except for a few native oaks and lindens, was planted by Mr. Secor himself. Each tree bore a zinc label giving its name, the date of planting, and the name of the donor.

One of Mr. Secor's outstanding contributions, covering half a century, was the trial and testing of new varieties of plants that he might determine their value and adaptability for north central Iowa. His findings, often at considerable expense to himself, were given freely to the public. He experimented with ornamental trees and shrubs as well as flowers and fruit trees.

In an article written in 1914 for *The Guide to Nature*, he said, "Man was created to be happy. He was endowed above all other creatures with a large capacity for enjoyment. Knowledge increases that capacity. Ignorance is not bliss and 'tis not folly to be wise. . . . Anyone who has reached middle life and has failed to become interested in the out-door world has missed something which no amount of mere book-learning, or even material prosperity alone can supply."

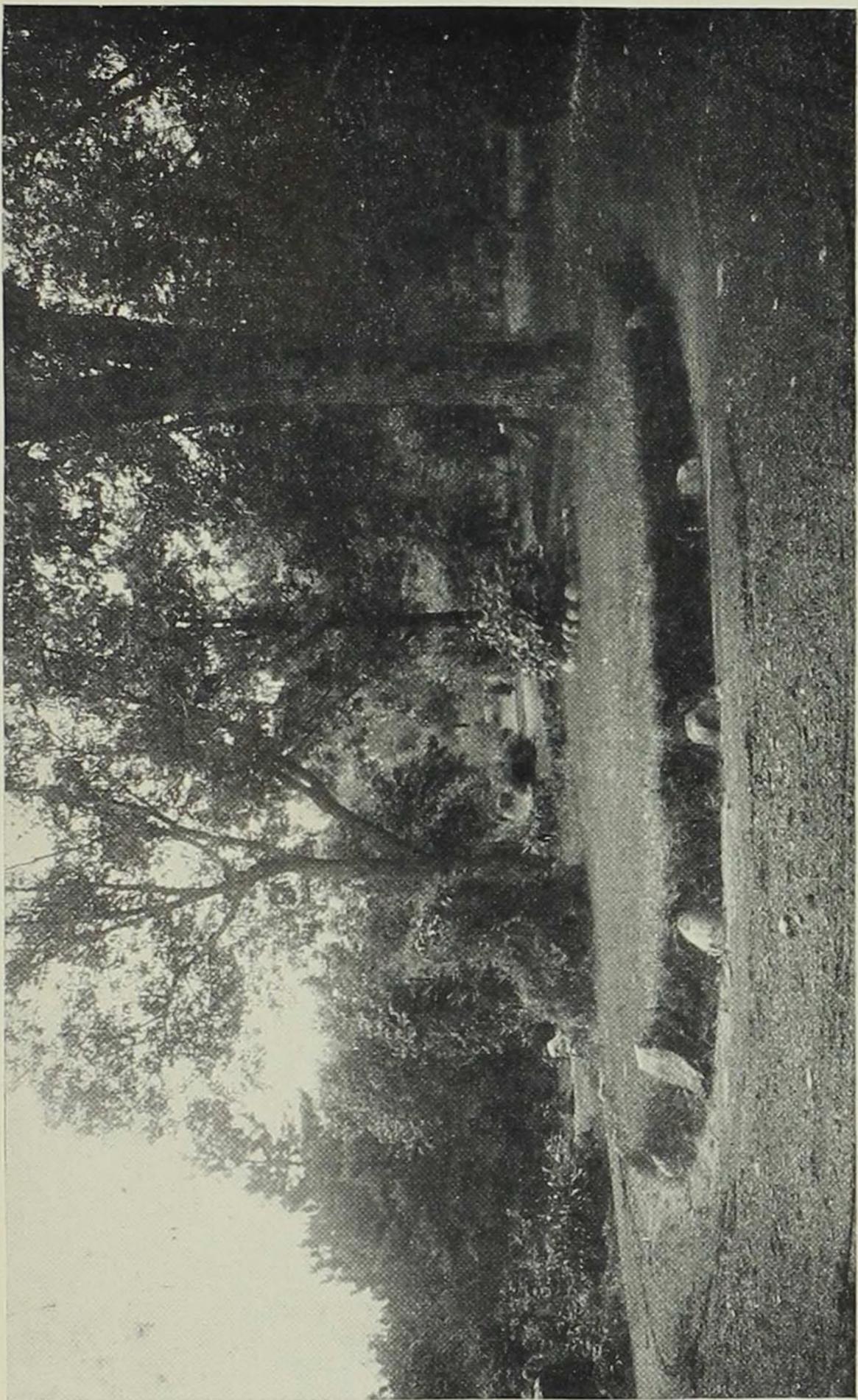
For thirty-five years he was an enthusiastic member of the State Horticultural Society and read innumerable papers at its meetings. In 1901 in a paper read before the members of the North-

western Horticultural Society on "The Coming Winter Apple for Northern Iowa", he reminded his audience of "the importance of growing apples adapted to our needs. Let us plant more seeds and select the best until we get what we want." He predicted "if a hundred men in this district would pursue this course one of them would produce the coming winter apple for our climate."

Eleven years later he strayed from the usual theme of horticultural papers to urge that trees be planted in rural schoolyards, not only for protection in the winter but also to afford an opportunity for the school children to learn the kinds and names of trees. He said, "These could be so grouped as not to interfere with an open playground and yet not in straight rows. . . . I like rather to see them in groups, like a company of informal picnickers."

In 1917 he gave a paper before the Horticultural Society, a reminiscence, in which he likened his life to a garden. He told of his boyhood, his decision to come west, the simple life he had always preferred, and his dreams for the future. Iowa, he said, is "God's garden, planted and cared for before our time for the enjoyment of those who were to occupy this fertile field."

Though he worked with all shrubs, fruits, and flowers, peonies were his favorite — "They laugh



VIEW OF THE SECOR GARDEN

at 30 degrees below zero", he said, and at The Shelter he grew hundreds of seedling peonies. For years he had the reputation of having one of the most complete collections of peonies in northern Iowa and he established what he called "Peony Day", when, in the height of the blooming season, the public was invited to visit The Shelter. One of his favorite peonies, a beautiful white variety, was named after his unmarried daughter, Nina.

Eugene Secor was also interested in breeding Shorthorn cattle and this interest had tragic consequences. On May 14, 1919, when Mr. Secor was in his 78th year, he was gored and killed by an angry bull as he attempted to herd it into the barn.

Keen and active to the last, Mr. Secor mellowed with age and seemed less reserved, more friendly. His last few years were spent quietly at home with his garden, a few colonies of bees, and some cows to care for. Eugene Secor had accomplished his mission. His prayer had been heard and granted. "Creation is not finished. Every seed holds the secret of a new revelation. Oh my soul, may I not be a co-worker with the Almighty in making fairer the face of the Earth?"

MARY CULBERTSON LUDWIG

Friend of the Friendless

In January, 1910, an unusual convention met at Kansas City, Missouri. It was not highly publicized; no fund was raised to secure it; there was no excitement at the meetings. This small convention was made up of men and women who for the preceding ten years had been giving their time and efforts to assist discharged and paroled prisoners. The movement in the Middle West had started at the very beginning of the century, when Reverend and Mrs. E. A. Fredenhagen settled in Topeka, Kansas, and began to apply the principles of Christianity to the problems of men and women released from jails and other penal institutions.

In 1906 Reverend Taylor Bernard and Reverend Charles Parsons began similar work at St. Louis and St. Joseph, Missouri. In 1909, Reverend James Parsons, a brother of Charles Parsons, opened a service agency for discharged prisoners in Minnesota and in October, 1909, Charles Parsons became superintendent of the work in Iowa. At the convention in 1910 a constitution was adopted and the Society for the Friendless became a formal and national organization, with Mr. Fredenhagen as the first national superintendent. By

1912 twelve States had organizations to assist former prisoners and by 1931 eighteen States were represented.

During the 1930's, due partly to the depression and the scarcity of money and partly to the activity of the Federal government in relief work, the number of State organizations of the Society for the Friendless decreased sharply and by 1948 only two States — Wisconsin and Iowa — were keeping up the work. The Wisconsin society has been reorganized by Mrs. Ruth Baker, a daughter of James Parsons, as The Wisconsin Service Association; the Iowa Society for the Friendless is still functioning under the direction of Reverend Charles Parsons, now in his eighty-second year. For many years he was also secretary of the National Prisoners' Aid Association and he is (in 1948) a member of the board of directors of the American Prison Association.

The Iowa Society for the Friendless is and has always been the lengthened shadow of a man — Charles Parsons. He was born near London, England, on December 28, 1865. The family came to the United States when he was about two years old and Charles was graduated from Wheaton College, Illinois, in 1891, and from the Chicago Theological Seminary in 1894. Dr. Graham Taylor, who had been giving lectures on so-

cial work at the Hartford Theological Seminary, came to Chicago to do similar work at the Seminary there. Charles Parsons was a member of Dr. Taylor's first class and engaged in missionary and social work in Chicago and vicinity during his student years.

After his graduation from the Seminary, Reverend Charles Parsons served Presbyterian pastorates in Webster, South Dakota, Merville, Iowa, and Byron, Illinois. While at Webster he was married to Elizabeth King of Aurora, Illinois, and his wife became a most efficient assistant in all his later work. While he was engaged in pastoral work, he was urged to enter the field of crime prevention and in 1906 he resigned his pastorate and moved to St. Joseph, Missouri, to engage in work with prisoners.

During his three years in this area, he visited nearly every jail in the north third of Missouri, gave addresses in the principal churches in the leading towns and cities in northern Missouri and northeastern Kansas, spoke on causes of crime in the high schools, conducted religious services in most of the larger jails, had personal interviews with the inmates of the smaller jails, assisted many newly released prisoners and their families, and talked with hundreds of business, professional, and charitably disposed men and women for the

purpose of enlisting their coöperation in the work of the Society for the Friendless.

In the spring of 1908, he happened to be in the vicinity of Fort Madison, Iowa, and he decided to visit the prison and get acquainted with Warden J. C. Sanders, who was attracting attention by some of the changes he was making in the management of the institution. Sanders expressed the hope that a branch of the Society for the Friendless might be established in Iowa. The State, he commented, was "an uncultivated and needy field".

A few months later Mr. Parsons visited Des Moines and conferred with W. H. Berry, of the Board of Parole, and others regarding the need for prisoners-aid work in the State. As a result of this conference, Charles Parsons became the Iowa superintendent of the Society for the Friendless and took up the work here in 1909. Among those who gave active coöperation and support in the early years, besides Senator Berry, were Wardens J. C. Sanders and Marquis Barr of Fort Madison and Anamosa, W. L. Huser, superintendent of the Training School for Boys, Hattie R. Garrison, superintendent of the Training School for Girls, and Judge G. S. Robinson of the State Board of Control.

The first president of the Iowa Society for the

Friendless was George Cosson, who still holds that position. Edward O'Dea has been vice president almost from the beginning. J. A. McKinney was treasurer from the time of organization until his death in 1919. John L. Bleakly, auditor of State, from 1909 to 1915, was a member of the board of directors until his death in 1920. Judge F. F. Faville has been a member of the board of directors throughout the existence of the Society.

During the early years the headquarters of the Society were at the home of the superintendent on East 12th St., Des Moines. Many released prisoners were sheltered there until they could earn enough to pay for board and lodgings for themselves. Mrs. Parsons acted as matron and mothered the discouraged men and boys. Mr. Parsons has visited the jails and prisons, found work for released prisoners, and given addresses on crime prevention and prison reform. He has often addressed an average of four or five meetings each week. During the first three years, all expenditures, including salaries, amounted to an average of only \$1,800 a year.

In later years the Society has maintained headquarters downtown in Des Moines. In terms of statistics the work of the Iowa Society may be illustrated by the statement of some of Mr. Parsons' activities for 1933:

Prisoners interviewed or investigated	412
Addresses in schools and churches	346
Towns visited	253
Miles traveled	24,380
Men advised or assisted	582
Jobs provided	181
Garments given	1,450
Pairs of shoes given	93
Meals and beds furnished	940
Families assisted	138
Individuals in families	417

The total budget for 1933 amounted to only \$3,324.51. The expenditures were as follows: office salary and expenses, \$763.51; travel and hotels, \$274.16; material relief, \$1,457.16; and other activities, \$825.57. Experienced observers have frequently commented upon the Society's small budget and the work accomplished. This record has been made possible by the financial sacrifice of the staff — a far greater sacrifice than they should be required to make.

After more than thirty years of experience, Mr. Parsons feels that "the most perplexing cases" to deal with are those connected with child support. In many instances the court orders that specified sums of money be paid at certain times by the delinquent parent, usually the father, for the support of dependent children. Often such men are irre-

sponsible and bitter. "This side of the work . . . reveals to what depths of hatefulness some people can descend."

Another problem of the Society for the Friendless is presented by frequent calls from transient men of all ages. In many cases, Mr. Parsons admits, these men prove to be unreliable. Some are boys around twenty years of age who have drifted about for two or three years. Many have been in jail for investigation, though they may not have been convicted of any serious violation of the law. An effort is made to find out the real reason why they are adrift and return them to their relatives if there are any. The most pathetic appeals come from middle-aged transients, most of whom are poorly clad and dirty from sleeping in box cars, barns, deserted buildings or cheap shelters or flop houses which are often infested with vermin. They are often in poor health, homeless wanderers who have drifted about so long that they have no residential rights anywhere and no family ties.

Another problem is presented by men who are released from jail in sub-zero weather clad in lightweight summer clothing without underwear, socks, or overcoats. One case illustrates this need. A Negro was released from a county jail after serving a sentence of eight months. "His clothing", reported Mr. Parsons, "consisted of a partial suit

of underwear in shreds, a ragged shirt with sleeves torn out at the shoulders, a thin summer coat, no trousers, no socks, shoes with soles worn off and a pair of overalls full of holes as large as the palm of a man's hand. The county had given him a ticket for a \$2.00 pair of shoes and left him to freeze in the wintry blast without friends, relatives, shelter or food". The Society provided him with clothing and arranged food and shelter for two days, after which he was able to care for himself.

In one of his reports, Mr. Parsons commented that to a superficial observer the year's work might seem to be "just another year of tussle with human wrecks drifting about upon the sea of life". He added: "The year has brought to our office the poor, the ignorant, the illiterate, the despised, the mentally weak, the very young, the old and decrepit, the unfortunate, the homeless, the slave to evil habits and passions; but it has also brought the strong mentally and physically — those who have been high in financial and social life as well as men of education and training. Recent months have brought to our office for assistance a graduate of Columbia University who had just completed a sentence in the Wisconsin penitentiary; a graduate of the University of Arizona, a parolee from Leavenworth Federal Prison; a graduate of

the University of Nebraska, and a number of others from various educational institutions in other parts of the country."

In his 1938 report Mr. Parsons described the problem of released prisoners. There were 407 convicts on parole from the State's penal institutions. These were given supervision and assistance by the State through the Board of Parole. During the year 566 prisoners were released from the same institutions on expiration of sentences. Each of these discharged prisoners was given a suit of clothes and a small sum of money but no supervision was provided. For the same year some 3,000 prisoners were released from the county jails of Iowa. Neither official supervision nor assistance in adjusting to their new freedom was provided for these prisoners.

The primary purpose of the Society for the Friendless is rehabilitation, not relief, but a hungry, poorly-clad, homeless, penniless man must have food, shelter, and clothing before he can become self-supporting, and hundreds of these men have been fed, housed, and clothed by the Iowa Society for the Friendless. Careful selection must be made to determine which cases are hopeful and which are merely drifters, although relief is given to all applicants or they are directed to other relief agencies for help.

In the course of his regular work, Mr. Parsons has occasion to visit the county jails frequently. "I very much doubt", he says, "if a more senseless, idiotic method could be devised for handling the men and women who are committed to these jails. . . . It is a shame and a disgrace to a civilized community to tolerate such a farce to say nothing about supporting it with the people's money." In his thirtieth annual report he wrote: "The indictment I bring against the county jail is not new. It does not originate with me. This situation has been deplored, condemned and denounced. Nothing has been done about it. . . .

"Almost a generation ago we had a number of men in official positions with sufficient vision to see this problem in its true light and importance. . . . As a result of their vision and influence a tract of land was purchased [at Clive near Des Moines] for the establishment of a custodial farm for the housing and employment of misdemeanants. That was a move in the right direction. This legislation was never completed. The farm was never equipped and operated as a custodial institution for county jail prisoners. . . .

"Other states have caught the vision and established work farms for county jail prisoners. . . . These farms are saving money for the state, and at the same time making better men morally, physi-

cally and spiritually out of the community's wreckage."

In the meantime the none-too-well supported Society for the Friendless, the only private organization in Iowa working with discharged and paroled prisoners, provides help for the released prisoners to the best of its ability and turns a spotlight on the darkness which tends to obscure the jails and prisons. A privately-financed organization may not have money to do the work adequately, but it is free to criticize, to report the result of inspections, and to recommend changes in the laws.

Charles Parsons, now an old man, has been for many years in charge of the work of salvaging broken lives. The Iowa Society for the Friendless has provided the means. He has visited the prisoners, he has given many of them relief, hope, jobs, self-respect, yet, curiously enough, he is not listed in any county history of Polk County nor in *Who's Who in Iowa*. Perhaps his record, as well as his treasures, will be found only in Heaven.

FRED E. HAYNES

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