

5-1-1922

Comment

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Recommended Citation

Parish, John C. "Comment." *The Palimpsest* 3 (1922), 165-168.

Available at: <http://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest/vol3/iss5/5>

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Comment by the Editor

HISTORY FANS

Many friends have helped us with encouragement and information, with suggestions as to the existence of material, and with material itself. That this support is not entirely local is shown by the fact that two of our history fans — Mr. John P. Irish and Mr. August P. Richter — are now residents of California. Nearer home is Mr. A. N. Harbert of Iowa City. For a generation he has been collecting books and pamphlets upon the history, the literature, and the general interests of the State of Iowa. In particular he has searched far and wide for Iowa railroad material and probably has the largest private collection of such items in existence. He is planning a history of the railroads of the State and has secured data on hundreds of railroads, dead and alive, which have appeared on paper if not always on the prairies of Iowa.

With the materials in his collection he has always been generous. The report of the pleading of Abraham Lincoln in the Rock Island Bridge Case, printed in this number, was loaned to the Society by him, and much of the material upon which the article on the First Mississippi Bridge was based was obtained through his kindness. A number of pamphlets dealing with the bridge cases were tempo-

rarily in the hands of Mr. Harbert, having been loaned by Mr. Henry W. Farnam of New Haven, a son of the president of the bridge company who supervised the construction of the bridge.

Another collector of pamphlets — though long since dead — has given us assistance. James W. Grimes, Governor of Iowa from 1854 to 1858 and United States Senator from 1859 to 1869, gathered and preserved fugitive pamphlets on education, naval affairs, the Civil War, and railroads. Many are out of print and quite unobtainable. In this collection, now in the custody of the State Historical Society of Iowa, are a number of items which, dovetailing into the Farnam collection, enable one to work out a rather consecutive story of the old bridge and its struggle for existence in the United States courts.

THE DESPISED PAMPHLET

A word for the unappreciated pamphlet, the shirt sleeve publication that can not appear to advantage in society on the bookshelf, the bane of the librarian who curses it for its miscellaneity and its slovenly appearance and finally in despair stows it away with its own and other kinds in a pamphlet box grave. It deserves a champion for it tells a story that is too short for a book and too long for a newspaper. Who can doubt the influence of the pamphleteers of the French Revolution, the American Revolution, or the World War? Who can tell rightly the story of re-

ligion without a consideration of the despised tract, of politics without the campaign literature, of business without the advertising circulars and the annual reports.

Many events too slender for a book, and many separate phases of important movements, find expression only in unbound pages, and often the gaps and disproportions of history are due to their disappearance. There is no decline of birth rate in pamphlet literature but the high mortality is a matter to be viewed with some anxiety.

J. C. P.