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## Comment

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## Comment by the Editor

### THE ESSAY CONTEST

Without pride of family and respect for local institutions there can be little sincere patriotism. Daily associations, personal experiences, and familiar objects are the treasures in life most esteemed. People love the nation only as the sum of family, church, school, town, and State. It is for hearth and home that men go to war.

In recognition of the services of the founders of this Commonwealth, the importance of every community, and the value of patriotic zeal, the Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs with the coöperation of the State Historical Society is conducting an essay contest in local history. Every high school student in the State has been invited to write a true story drawn from the history of Iowa. Liberal prizes are offered to those who produce the nine best essays. The topics, while affording a wide range of subject-matter, are such that the materials are readily available to everyone: The Story of My Grandmother, The Story of My Grandfather, An Old Settler's Story, A Story in the History of My Community, and What Iowa Means to Me.

In this number of *THE PALIMPSEST* there is a grandmother's story, a grandfather's story, and a

story as told by an old settler, while the account of Old O'Brien is a narrative of events in the history of a community clearly suggested by Herbert Quick's novel, *The Hawkeye*. Attention is called to these stories, not as models to be imitated, but rather as examples of the variety of incident and character in pioneer life at the disposal of the essayist.

#### WHAT IOWA MEANS

Out of this contest it is hoped there will come an abiding interest in local affairs, pride in the achievements of our fathers and mothers, understanding of past conditions from which the present has evolved, and an appreciation of the true worth of the Commonwealth. This enterprise may contribute to the attainment of State consciousness. But there can be no clear common awareness until people have a definite realization of what Iowa means to those who live here.

In the minds of some, Iowa is a geographical area with a certain shape; while others visualize the physical features of prairie and timber, farms and towns, rivers and hills and valleys. People of political temperament think of the State as a Republican stronghold. Probably the most popular concept is that of a place where prosperity reigns, where crops never fail, where hogs and hens vie with each other in the production of wealth, and where everyone rides in an automobile.

What has Iowa meant through the ages to the people who have made their abode along the streams and on the prairies of that friendly region embraced in the two great arms of the Father of Waters? What did it mean to the ancient Mound Builder as he built his places of worship? What did it mean to the roving Indian as he pursued the bison or watched his squaw planting the corn in the spring-time? What did it mean to the hardy settler as he unyoked his oxen from the old covered wagon and staked out a claim? What has it meant to the children and grandchildren of the pioneers?

To me, Iowa means what it has to the millions who have lived here — home.

J. E. B.