

## Hummer's Bell

ISSN 0003-4827

Material in the public domain. No restrictions on use.



This work has been identified with a [Creative Commons Public Domain Mark 1.0](#).

---

### Recommended Citation

The Annals of Iowa, 1(7) (Jul. 1864): 332-333

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

## HUMMER'S BELL.

"Funera plango, fulgura frango, Sabbathæ pango.  
Excito lentos, dissipo ventos, paco cruentos."—ANON.

The future historian of Johnson County will, doubtless, devote at least one chapter to that talented but most unscrupulous individual who stole the Rev. Michael Hummer, with whom, in the minds of the oldest inhabitants of Iowa City, his bell is so inseparably connected.

That bell, famed both in caricature and story, as the highly prized jewel of Hummer, so singularly abducted and so secretly and securely concealed, was the subject of some hastily written *versicles*, entitled "Hummer's Bell," that, at the time, attained considerable popularity, not so much perhaps from any intrinsic merit of their own, as from the incident that gave rise to them.

The first copy of the *brochure* was given by me to Stephen Whicher, Esq., who, upon his own volition, had a number privately printed and circulated, in which, greatly to my annoyance, several changes and interpolations appeared, totally at variance with the original; and as it is extremely doubtful whether a correct and perfect *copy* can at this time be found, I have thought it might be sufficiently interesting, as one of the reminiscences of former years, to have "Hummer's Bell," like the fly preserved in amber, embalmed in the pages of the ANNALS OF IOWA.

A part of the first verse was the improvisation of the Hon. John P. Cook, the legal vocalist of the day, who, upon hearing the ludicrous story of the bell's departure, broke out in song, to the infinite merriment of the members of the bar present, and in his sonorous and mellifluous tones, sang the first six lines to the well known popular air of "Moore's Evening Bells." Stephen Whicher, Esq., who made one of the merry company, carefully noted down the fragmentary carol, and meeting me soon afterward, earnestly solicited me to complete the *song*, as he termed it. His request was immediately complied with, and in a few moments the whole versified story of the bell was *tol-d* in an impromptu production, of

which I append a copy, *verbatim et literatim*, from the original MSS. now lying before me, and which has never been out of my possession :

## HUMMER'S BELL.

“ Ah, Hummer's bell! Ah, Hummer's bell!  
 How many a tale of woe 'twould tell,  
 Of Hummer driving up to town  
 To take the brazen jewel down,  
 And when high up in his belfre-e,  
 They moved the ladder, yes, sir-e-e;”  
 Thus while he towered aloft, they say,  
 The bell took wings and flew away.

Ah, Hummer's bell! Ah, Hummer's bell!  
 The bard thy history shall tell;  
 How at the East, by Hummer's sleight,  
 Donation, gift and widow's mite,  
 Made up the sum that purchased *thee*,  
 And placed *him* in the ministry;  
 But funds grew low, while dander riz,  
 Thy clapper stopped, and so did his.

Ah, Hummer's bell! Ah, Hummer's bell!  
 We've heard thy last, thy funeral knell,  
 And what an aching void is left,  
 Of bell and Hummer both bereft.  
*Thou*, deeply sunk in running stream,  
*Him* in a Swedenborgian dream,  
 Both are submerged, both, to our cost,  
 Alike to sense and reason lost.

Ah, Hummer's bell! Ah, Hummer's bell!  
 Hidden unwisely, but too well;  
 Alas, thou'rt gone, thy silver tone  
 No more responds to Hummer's groan;  
 But yet remains one source of hope,  
 For Hummer left a fine bell rope,  
 Which may be used, if such our luck,  
 To noose our friend at Keokuk.

W. H. T.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.—We have been disappointed in getting data from which to prepare a history of the event that gave rise to the foregoing. Any one having a copy of an Iowa City newspaper of the date of September, 1858, will confer a favor by sending it to the Society.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.