

Jefferson Scott Polk

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tion was a success, and though a bitter war was made upon him at the close of his last term, when he was removed by President Roosevelt, it is a well-known fact that so far as his personal integrity was concerned he came out of the contest without blot or stain. He would probably have been removed or have resigned about the same time, in consequence of his advanced years, but he became, from the force of circumstances, embroiled in the contest between the rival typesetting machines, and this ended with his removal from office. At the time of his death Mr. Palmer had a few months previously passed his 80th birthday. He had a wide acquaintance in Iowa and is well remembered by hundreds of people who have survived since the days when he was editor of *The Des Moines Register*. Our public documents for eight years bear his imprint. He also had a wide acquaintance over the country. Personally he was a kind-hearted excellent gentleman, a model of everything commendable in the line of good habits from the days of his apprenticeship in the office of *The Jamestown Journal* to the time he breathed his last, clean, upright, honorable in his dealings with others. Limitations of space will not admit of as exhaustive an article relating to Mr. Palmer as we would be glad to present in *The Annals*. But the statement of a few facts ever so briefly will form the ground from which to estimate the character and life work of the man. When he was a resident of this city, where he married and where his children were born, during one of the cold winters, he was in the habit every morning of bringing down from his home a little pail of milk for some poor children who lived not far from *The Register* office. This fact has been beautifully written out in the editorial columns of his old paper. It is a unique incident, which shows the tender-hearted nature of the man. Some time before he left the office of *The Inter Ocean*, that paper had failed and Mr. Palmer thereby lost every dollar he had in the world. He was considerably in debt. From that day to the time of his death he was determined to pay these debts as far as possible. His efforts in that direction kept him a poor man. He could have taken the benefit of the bankruptcy law and escaped the responsibility for the debts, but that suggestion he would not entertain for a moment. He met the responsibilities as far as he was able. On the day of the funeral the great Government Printing-office at Washington bore American flags at half-mast from daylight until dark, and the hundreds of employes when the time arrived for the funeral, stood for five minutes with bowed and uncovered heads in respect for their former employer, with some of whom he had been associated for more than a decade. These tributes of sympathy and respect were very touching, and they showed the deep impression he had made upon men with whom he had been long and intimately associated.

JEFFERSON SCOTT POLK was born on the 18th day of February, 1831, near Georgetown, Scott county, Kentucky; he died at Des Moines, Iowa, November 3, 1907. He was graduated from Georgetown college and studied law under R. R. Cable, later president of the C., R. I. & P. R. R., at Georgetown, and was admitted to the Kentucky bar in 1855. Mr. Polk removed to Des Moines in 1856, entering the practice of the law at a strong bar at which he early took high rank. After a few years alone, he became associated with the late General M. M. Crocker and Judge P. M. Casady under the style of Casady, Crocker & Polk and afterward with F. M. Hubbell as Polk & Hubbell which firm dissolved in 1887. Although every detail of Mr. Polk's career at the bar

was highly creditable, that of converting its fruits and opportunities into resources and investment outgrew all others and long before his career had closed had over-shadowed all the rest. The firm of Polk & Hubbell was a great, perhaps the leading, factor in Des Moines financial life as early as 1880. It operated chiefly in the fields of real estate and transportation properties. At the dissolution of the firm Mr. Polk acquired the principal part of the firm's transportation properties. Of these that of the Des Moines City Railway Company became the most significant. This he developed from several horse car lines under different managements and of indifferent effectiveness, into a single electrical urban system with universal transfer service, thorough management and popular convenience. To this he designed to attach an interurban system and before he died had carried his plans well toward establishment. He was the first to successfully experiment in collecting mails on street cars. He has been imitated in many American cities. Anywhere in the city any car stops on signal to allow a letter to be placed in the box to be removed in a few minutes at the postoffice. Mr. Polk acquired immense wealth. He expired with a system provided for its administration. In the enterprises he created several hundred men may remain employed at remunerative wages, under just conditions. It is as if he had endowed the firesides of as many families, conditioned solely upon their industry, integrity and sobriety. Attending his funeral, as a guard of honor, were a hundred street car employes in uniform

E. R. H.

LE GRAND BYINGTON was born in New Haven county, Conn., March 24, 1816; he died at Iowa City Nov. 23, 1907. It is stated that he was orphaned of his father when a mere infant and buffeted about in various families during his youth, and almost excluded from the meager educational advantages of that time. He entered a printing-office in 1831, at the age of fifteen years, for the purpose of learning the trade. We find him publishing a newspaper in 1834, during the year he was eighteen years of age, but it is stated that the publication was not profitable and was abandoned at the end of the first year. In 1836 he settled in Elyria, Ohio, where he edited *The Republican*, a democratic paper. At the time he was thus engaged in newspaper work he was also studying law. He removed to Ravenna, Ohio, in 1838, where he edited and published *The Buckeye Democrat* at a stated salary. Owing to a quarrel between the proprietors of the office, the paper was suspended and Mr. Byington lost his salary up to that time, and closed his journalistic work. In 1839 he started for the west, intending to settle in St. Louis, but he met U. S. Senator William Allen—"Bill" Allen; of Ohio—at Chillicothe, where he was induced to stop off and take temporary charge of a newspaper with the beginning of his law practice. His first case was a homicide in which Judge Allen G. Thurman and Thomas Ewing defended the alleged criminal. It is stated that Mr. Byington secured a conviction. During the fall of 1841, he was elected to the 40th General Assembly of Ohio, in which he became prominent as chairman of the judiciary committee and of the committee on incorporations. It is supposed that he was the last survivor of that legislature, one of the influential members of which was Robert G. Schenck, whom Grant appointed Minister to England. Byington was re-elected to the next legislature of Ohio and also became a candidate for Congress. In 1849 he settled in Iowa City, where he resided until his death. At the commencement he was engaged in a very heavy land business which

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