

Iowa and the Expert

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ANNALS OF IOWA.

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

DEATH OF MR. ALDRICH.

In the death of Mr. Aldrich, *The Annals* suffers irreparable loss. He founded the third series, and placed upon it his best efforts, as an experienced journalist. He selected topics and writers to treat them, with great skill and, through his own efforts and those of his assistants trained by him, made of the pages of *The Annals* such a repository of Iowa historical matter as even he, at the beginning, scarcely hoped for. He never ceased his efforts to induce men, who were factors in eventful periods of Iowa history, to record their views of such events. When he closed his desk, for the last time, there were within it manuscripts from the pens of valued contributors. There were unfulfilled pledges of many others, to furnish articles he very much desired. There were some editorials from his own pen, and much material undeveloped or in outline. Volume eight is but half finished and it will be the purpose of the writer, who has been appointed Acting Curator, during the pleasure of the Board of Trustees of the Historical Department, to continue the form of the journal identically with that preceding the death of Mr. Aldrich, and make use of such material as he, in life, provided or approved. If any deviation shall be made it will be in the eighth number (January, 1909), closing the volume; this should include all messages, communications, press notices, addresses and programs incident to Mr. Aldrich's death. EDGAR R. HARLAN.

IOWA AND THE EXPERT.

In these days we are told that the test of success both in business and in government is the employment of scientifically trained or practically skilled men whose achievements have been duly attested. Science and expert ability, however, are

not common growths. They can not be secured by means of popular elections governed as these are usually by bitter and often sordid partisan strife, for the expert who is an expert will not demean himself to obtain public favor by petition, prayer, or pressure. The expert can be secured only by selection by the responsible head of the State or of the department wherein trained service is desired. In such selection the heads of the administration should not be hampered by local interests, commercial, partisan or personal. Other things being equal it is wiser, of course, for a city or state to choose an expert native to its heath and familiar with its folk rather than one born and reared in regions remote where life and traditions are unlike. But the supreme test of a rational and efficient public administration is met whenever a people go outside their local area and secure men of special fitness for scientific or technical work.

At various times in her history Iowa has met this test with a fair degree of success: and what is satisfactory to note the practice was begun early in the State's career. In 1847 the State entered upon an elaborate policy of internal improvements centering chiefly in the improvement of the navigation of the Des Moines River. The Board of Public Works having the matter in charge went to Ohio and secured the services of Samuel R. Curtis, a West Pointer who had in 1837-1839 achieved fame as Chief Engineer of the Muskingum River Improvement. In 1855 the people demanded a general reorganization of the public schools and legislation with a view thereto was enacted and a Commission provided therefor. Governor James W. Grimes was empowered to name it. He went to Ohio and secured the services of the nation's educator, *par excellence*, Horace Mann, and thence to New York where he enlisted Amos Dean. On or about the same time Professor James Hall of Albany, New York, was induced to come to Iowa and establish our State Geological Survey. It was at this time that the State University attained an existence *de facto* and Dr. Dean was installed as its first executive head. For the most part the University has had men at its head whom the Board of Regents have called from other States, *e. g.* Presidents Pickard, Schaeffer and MacLean.

President A. S. Welch, the first President of the College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts at Ames, had attained fame in Florida prior to coming to Iowa. In general the authorities of our educational institutions whenever local talent has been inadequate have without hesitation gone outside the State for specialists to carry on particular scientific and technical work. The members of the Constitutional Convention that convened in Iowa City in 1857, desiring to have their proceedings accurately and fully reported engaged the services of a man who had then achieved distinction as a stenographer, Mr. W. Blair Lord. He had reported the debates and proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of New Jersey in 1844 and in 1856 had been the stenographer for the noted Congressional committee that investigated the troubles in Kansas, of which John Sherman was a member.

In the administration of the several charitable and correctional institutions now under the Board of Control we may find to a greater or less degree the fulfillment of this rule of business efficiency in two respects. The authorities either have gone abroad for trained men to take charge of this or that institution; or, they have pursued the policy of transferring efficient subordinate officers from one institution to another as vacancies occurred. This practice is, of course, but little else than another phase of the method of seeking experts from abroad when not to be found here.

In matters of art and landscape gardening Iowa has not attempted much in her public administration. Nevertheless when the present capitol was authorized and plans were materializing the Commissioners secured the services of A. H. Piquenard, a distinguished architect of Illinois, with the result that we have a beautiful and stately structure that arouses admiration among all classes, artists and laymen alike. The mural decorations and frescoes were done by Fritz Melzer, a German artist of Berlin. When in 1902 it was decided to decorate the corridors and rotunda in a manner befitting such a building, the Capitol Commissioners exemplified the principle here referred to in striking fashion. Mr. Elmer E. Garnsey of New York, an eminent artist in interior

decoration, was employed to make a general design and superintend the work. Mr. Edwin H. Blashfield was engaged by him to paint the large allegorical picture that now adorns the head of the grand staircase. Mr. Kenyon Cox was secured to paint the beautiful lunettes in the rotunda and Mr. Frederick Dielman was engaged to design the six mosaics in the arcade above Mr. Blashfield's canvas.

This tendency towards the employment of experts in art and science regardless of their domicile we may expect to see increase as the years proceed. Experience here as elsewhere has demonstrated that the intrusion of local prejudices or partisan considerations in the conduct of administration, be it in ordinary commerce and manufacture or in government, makes economy and efficiency impossible. The increasing burdens of government will result in greater demand for the best possible service. Moreover, as the people witness the beneficial results of the employment of experts in their State government they will in due course realize that the same principle is equally applicable in the conduct of the government of our municipalities. It may be years hence but eventually the people of our cities will pursue the practice of seeking experts in finance, sanitation, and police and fire administration, parks, etc., in precisely the same manner followed by railroads in securing superintendents of construction, operation, etc., that is, regardless of their habitat. The sole consideration will be their demonstrated fitness—character, capacity, and achievement. In the public school system of our cities experts in educational administration and in the art and science of pedagogics are now generally employed. School boards that have any reputation to lose seldom employ the superintendents or teachers because they live "in their town." In their great engineering enterprises our city governments have rarely restricted their choice of civil engineers to local talent. The city of Boone years ago gave us a fine illustration of excellent judgment when the council of that city on the recommendation of the late Charles Aldrich, decided to install a modern sewerage system. They employed the greatest sanitary engineer in the United States, if not in the world, Col. George E. Waring, Jr., of New York City. It

is not improbable under a normal growth of intelligent and insistent public opinion that our city councils will be empowered to go abroad for heads of their technical departments wherein experts and specialists are imperatively required if the maximum efficiency is to be attained; and ultimately they will likewise secure the supreme head of the city administration in a manner not unlike that followed by the city councils of Germany.

F. I. H.

THE CONTENTS OF AN OLD BASKET.

The writer passed the night at the Bryson Hotel in Hillsboro, Henry county, Iowa, some two years ago, and from a casual remark of the host, Mr. Gene Bryson, became interested in the family history of his maternal grandfather Pope. When asked whether there were existing any documentary materials touching the Pope family Mr. Bryson said "If there are, they are in the old basket out in the woodshed." "The old basket in the woodshed" in many a homestead of Iowa holds material of interest to all future Iowa and the west.

The old basket in question revealed the fact that Samuel Pope, a man of family, removed from Hillsborough, Ohio, to what was then Washington, now Hillsboro, and as letters therein contained indicated, "near Ceocuck, Iowa." He was a democrat, a tavern keeper, a horseman, a hunter, and a raconteur of tavern tales which, told in the first person, made of his name the peg on which to hang almost every tavern lie in southern Iowa. The basket verified tradition on all these points and though it contained not over a hundred items, embraced the following:

Commission to Samuel Pope as Captain of the Fourth Company, Third Regiment, Second Brigade and Eighth Division, Ohio Militia, dated July 7th, 1819, and signed by the Secretary of State Jn. McLane, and by the Governor, Ethan Allen Brown; it bears the seal of Ohio, and is endorsed with Captain Pope's oath of office. A similar commission as Lieutenant Colonel of the regiment, dated September 8th, 1824,

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