

## Clearing Off Their Desks

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# ANNALS OF IOWA.

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## EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

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"\* \* \* When he [Mr. Aldrich] closed his desk, for the last time, there were within it manuscripts \* \* \* some editorials and much material undeveloped or in outline. \* \* \* It will be the purpose of the writer, who has been appointed Acting Curator \* \* \* to continue the form of the journal identical with that preceding the death of Mr. Aldrich, and make use of such material \* \* \*. If any deviation shall be made it will be in the number closing the volume [which may] include all \* \* \* communications \* \* \* incident to Mr. Aldrich's death.

EDGAR R. HARLAN."

(*Annals of Iowa, Third Series, Vol. 8, P. 385.*)

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### CLEARING OFF THEIR DESKS.

Nothing in the lives of prudent, methodical men is more admirable than their custom of clearing their desks of each day's accumulated work. Fully as grand is that act of busy, strong and useful men, their effort at finishing work laid out in early life. No one but the designer of a life's work can so perfectly complete it. The Historical Department is indebted for its existence largely to strong and great men of this character. Two who never ceased their labors have recently sent to the Department what they protest shall be their last active efforts—they maintain they have cleared their desks. These are William Salter, D. D., of Burlington, and J. M. Shaffer, M. D., of Keokuk. These names appear in the early correspondence of the Department, and from that time to the present they occur with frequency not exceeded by any others, and ever with wisdom where wise counsels were needed, and with material assistance where that might be provided. Both these grand men remain in the active and accurate use of their faculties and both to-day conduct their correspondence in their own fine, legible hands. Both are over eighty years of age, and both have lately prepared and forwarded items considerably augmenting the collections of the Department, and as usual without cost or expense to the State.

Doctor Salter has lately sent the final portions of the personal archives of eminent Iowa men, his former friends and associates, editing a number of the letters for use in the present *Annals*. Doctor Shaffer lately forwarded a mass of documents, and the last of what he considers appropriate of his natural history collection. These two grand men have been exercising fine discrimination for nearly three-quarters of a century in the selection of the good from the bad, the useful from the trash in book, manuscript and specimen. They have hoarded these for the good of their fellow men in the future. They have tendered their assistance, which has been eagerly accepted, toward increasing the resources of many an Iowa institution for the advancement of learning. Their benefactions have been practically numberless and may be incalculable.

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#### RICH MANUSCRIPT MATERIALS OF GENERAL GRENVILLE M. DODGE.

For aids to the study of inceptive periods of movements among a people, it is to be doubted whether there is a source so valuable as the documentary materials with which active men surround themselves. Current documents and writings furnish testimony on the operation of the popular mind that, in minute historical investigation, can neither be discarded nor ignored. Upon this theory the Historical Department has advanced. By assembling the personal archives of Iowa men it has endeavored to serve two ends. It has gathered a harvest from which every investigator with a good character and a proper purpose may take a share. It has honored those whose archives have been received by putting away from flames and from pernicious hands as well, what evidences remain of their distinguished private lives. For personal records of this sort men seldom provide fire-proof vaults nor permanent custodians. While one's private and personal character is, after all, his dearest creature, he seldom provides against its eventual disappearance. If we

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