

"The Aldrich Collection. "

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forms a very valuable addition to the collection of portraits of Justices of the Iowa Supreme Court. It was provided through the generosity of friends of Judge Kinne, and was painted by Prof. Charles A. Cumming of Des Moines.

An interesting and valuable oil portrait of the late Col. H. H. Merritt has been received. It represents him at about the age of thirty years. The family who present it attribute it to George P. A. Healy. Judge George Greene, late of Cedar Rapids, a brother-in-law of Col. Merritt, sat for his portrait at the same time. Judge Greene's portrait, signed by Healy, has been copied by Adeline A. Wiegand, and is among our collections.

The acquisition and installation of the portrait of Gen. James B. Weaver, in February, was attended with unusual interest. Gen. Weaver from his arrival at maturity until the present time, in the seventy-fifth year of his age, has been an active worker in the front ranks of reform. He had been invited some years ago to provide his portrait for the collections, but had not complied, when Mrs. Caroline Young Smith, of Des Moines, daughter of an old friend and comrade, aroused the friends of Gen. Weaver to the purpose of immediately securing and presenting the portrait. Hundreds of friends and comrades of Gen. Weaver responded to the suggestion, and the commission was given to Mr. Charles Atherton Cumming, of Des Moines, whose finished work was turned over to the committee February first. After arranging a public ceremony of installation, the Historical Department of Iowa accepted an invitation from the House of Representatives, then in session, to hold the exercises in its Hall. Governor Carroll presided, and addresses were delivered by Rev. Father Nugent of Des Moines, Hon. J. F. Lacey of Oskaloosa, Judge Horace E. Deemer of Red Oak and Mr. William Jennings Bryan.

“THE ALDRICH COLLECTION.”

Iowa possesses few collections of materials which surpass in educational value “The Aldrich Collection.” The leading article of the present number of *The Annals* is a partial account by the founder of the Historical Department, of his ex-

periences in building this collection. He was wont at times to doubt the appreciation of the public for the manuscripts, the letters and the memorabilia of the American and foreign men of note, and in justification of his own enthusiasm in the matter, was apt to cite the fact that the great patrons of art and science frequently indulge their taste for autographs; and especially that Mr. Adrian H. Joline, the lawyer and capitalist, not only collected, but wrote a book on the subject, and that Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan, the financier, includes the collection of autographs among the enterprises he prosecutes. Mr. Aldrich had become known to the foremost collectors before he presented his collection to the State. When he founded the Historical Department, he began the collecting of autograph materials of Iowa citizens, and it is due to him that there is assembled in easily accessible condition, the portrait and one or more personal missives or manuscripts of nearly every man that has served the State as a prominent official or pioneer. It seems appropriate in this connection, to publish an allusion to Mr. Aldrich which occurs in the writings of the English author, William Michael Rossetti,¹ through whose esteem for Mr. Aldrich an Iowa public came to possess one of the strongest collections of materials of the donor's distinguished brother and sister, Dante Gabriel and Christina G. Rossetti, to be found outside of England.

In 1884 I received a letter from an American, the Honourable Charles Aldrich, living in the State of Iowa, asking me for some autographs, those of Dante and Christina Rossetti being principally in demand. I sent him these, and at various subsequent intervals, numerous other autographs, I dare say more than a couple of hundred, for during many years past I have made it a practice to set apart letters, etc., coming into my hands from interesting persons, and to give them away as autographs to applicants, casual though these may be. Of course, I do not treat thus such letters as are valued by myself, nor such as contain confidential matter. I don't know how many such papers I may by this time have presented in all—perhaps at least fifteen to eighteen hundred, besides several hundred (not all of them unimportant) made over to my daughter Helen. Mr. Aldrich, as I learned, had collected, and still went on collecting, autographs at

¹"Some Reminiscences of William Michael Rossetti." New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906 (Vol. 11., p. 508).

a great rate, including many historical and other documents of marked importance. I presume this was at first a private hobby of his own, but it had developed into a public-spirited plan for the benefit of the Iowa State Library. Here are lodged all Mr. Aldrich's copious gleanings, including a "Rossetti section" by no means inconsiderable: and I have seen divers newspaper paragraphs and articles (besides letters from Aldrich to the same effect) showing that this section is—what I should hardly have anticipated—an object of substantial interest to the visitors from various parts of Iowa and elsewhere. Mr. Aldrich, who was engaged in farming when first I knew of him, is now the curator of the "Historical Department of Iowa," in the State capital, Des Moines. I saw him in two instances when he visited England, and I keep up to this day a correspondence with him; and it is no more than justice to say that I never met a man to whom the duties of citizenship seem to come more natural—he appears constantly to merge his personal interests in those of his Institution, his State, and ultimately the American Union. At an advanced age he continues to work hard, and always with a public end in view. On one of his visits to Europe he was accompanied by Mrs. Aldrich, a well informed and well-bred but perfectly unpretentious specimen of the American housewife. My wife conceived a high regard for her, and it was a sorrow to both of us to hear of her decease some few years afterwards.

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