

## Martin H. Calkins

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power, with all its opportunities for occasional good government, or for the other extreme of robbing the counties, disappeared from our statute books. A few years afterward the number of supervisors was reduced by the law which exists today. At some future time, after the early settlers have all passed away, graphic writers may tell strange stories of how certain counties were "organized" and then mercilessly plundered. The truth in some instances would be stranger than fiction. While now and then a board of supervisors has wrought grievous public wrong in the letting of contracts, they are too thoroughly hedged about by law to be able to match the iniquities of some of those old county "judges."

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### MARTIN H. CALKINS.

BY L. F. ANDREWS.

Hon. Martin Halbert Calkins, M. D. died in his beautiful home at Wyoming, Jones county, September 27, 1909, aged eighty-one years and twelve days. He was noble in every attribute that constitutes true nobility and superior manhood.

He was of sanguine-volatile temperament, hopeful, ardent, warm, sympathetic, confident, energetic, persevering, frank, self-controlled, decisive, courteous and social.

He was large physically; large of heart; gifted with large mental endowment; of scholarly culture; racy, genial humor; of healthy body and mind; never fearing to speak the truth. He did his work diligently and discharged his duty with contentment, cheerfulness and resolution. He possessed a vigorous personality, whose unfailing kindness, broadly-generous impulses, and independence of thought and action made him beloved to a degree seldom realized in human experience, forcibly reminding one of the "gude Samaritan," William MacLure, the physician so graphically pictured by Ian MacLaren in his "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush."



He did his best for the need of every man, woman and child in this wild, struggling district, year in and year out; in the snow and in the heat; in the dark and in the light; without rest and without holiday for nearly five decades.

Dr. Calkins regarded his profession with a sacredness which endeared him to everybody in Jones county. For forty-seven years he ministered to the families over a large circuit in one of the holiest relations of social life, and into their human affairs so wove his cheery ways, sympathetic impulses, tenderness and helpfulness, that he became a fraternal part of the collective whole, bound by ties that time will not sunder. His presence even was often more potent for good at the bedside of the sick and suffering than his potions and powders.

He was also more than a physician. He was a citizen, ever active and anxious for the welfare and progress of the people individually, and of humanity collectively. Imbued with liberal, public-spirited sentiments, though never an office seeker, yet he was a leader and an inspirer of progressive public sentiment. He was frequently chosen to important places of public trust in his town, county and State. He performed his duties with thoroughness and conscientious regard for the interests of the public.

He was also a popular speaker, Fourth of July orator, lecturer before county teachers' institutes and farmers' institutes.

He was born near Mexico, Oswego county, New York, September 15, 1828. Amongst his lineal ancestors were Thomas Cushman, who preached the first sermon printed in America; Mary Allerton, the last survivor of those who came to America in the Mayflower; Hugh Calkins, who came to America from Wales in 1638, and Sir Thomas Kinne, who was knighted in 1618. One of his grandfathers served in the War for American Independence. He was educated in the common schools and was for a time a successful teacher. He held the sixth State certificate issued by the Educational Department of the State of New York.

He read medicine in the office of Drs. Bowen & Dayton in Mexico, N. Y., in the early fifties. Then he attended lectures in the College of Medicine in Geneva, N. Y., and finished in the University of New York City. For three years he practiced medicine in the State of New York, at Constantia and North Bay, before coming West. He was associate practitioner and friend of Dr. N. S. Davis, who afterward founded Rush Medical College in Chicago.

In 1856 he came to Iowa and located at Wyoming, then a mere hamlet, and began the practice of his profession. The same year the town was platted, rapidly increased in population and was soon after incorporated. He was elected its first mayor with no opposition and held the office for two terms. He also served several years as a member of the board of directors of the public schools.

As the years passed his influence, ability, and popularity widened and in August, 1862, he was commissioned by the governor to assist in recruiting volunteers for the army. Under a large, wide-spreading oak tree, standing on an eminence in Wyoming, he administered the oath and enrolled eighty-nine men as members of the State militia, who subsequently formed the majority of Company K, Twenty-fourth Iowa Infantry. The same year and also in 1863, he was commissioned to go to the army in the South and take the vote of Iowa soldiers. After his return from one of those trips as there were no railroads nor convenient stage facilities direct, he rode in a sulky from Wyoming to Des Moines, a journey of several days, to make his report to the governor.

Veterans of the Civil War remembered him with high regard as a member for several years of the U. S. Pension Board.

In 1881, the people of Jones county, irrespective of political partisanship, decided to secure his services in a more extended capacity and he was elected without an opposing vote to represent them in the House of Representatives of the Nineteenth General Assembly, which convened January 9th and adjourned March 17th, 1882. So satisfactory was his work that he was re-elected to the Twentieth General Assembly, receiving two hundred of the two hundred and eleven votes in his

home township. It was a long, arduous session, continuing to the second day of April. He was appointed by the Speaker a member of the most important committees, namely, on Medicine and Surgery, Ways and Means, Insurance, and Library. Early in the session a bill, which had in substance been before the Nineteenth General Assembly, was introduced, providing regulation by a system of rigid inspection of the sale and use of kerosene oil used by miners in illuminating coal mines, and of other explosive products of petroleum. Several other States had similar regulations. It was discovered that oils which did not pass their inspection were shipped into Iowa. From the numerous and constantly increasing reports of accidents therefrom, they appeared to be a menace to human life and property. The bill to safeguard the public was prepared in the office of the State Board of Health. It provided for a higher standard and more rigid inspection than that of other States. Immediately after its introduction opposition from the Standard Oil Company appeared. It was alleged that the bill promised interference with interstate traffic, and that the proposed process of inspection was unreasonable.

The House was composed of fifty-one Republicans, forty-five Democrats, and six Greenbackers, or Populists. The Populists vehemently opposed the bill on the ground that it was purely a scheme to create a gang of officers to prey upon the State treasury; the Democrats opposed it on general principles, as did one or two Republicans. Its progress was obstructed by every device that could be invented. Dr. Calkins, as chairman of the Committee on Medicine and Surgery, to which the bill was referred, from the promptings of his great humanitarian heart took great interest in it. He piloted it along as best he could, parrying the assaults against it with great courtesy and good logic. He was fearful that under the most favorable conditions, and with a full house, it would not receive more than one or two majority.

In the meantime, Ex-Governor Larrabee, who was then a senator, took charge of the bill as Senate File 305. He attended the Senate committee meetings, and was active in as-

sisting so to perfect it as to determine the standard of safety and method of inspection, and to best carry out its purpose and intent. With him went his wife, a noble, public-spirited woman, and model home-builder, who manifested keen interest in the proceedings and the final outcome, believing that the housekeeper was vitally interested in the protection of her home against danger.

The bill met with a strenuous opposition headed by the Senator from Dubuque, who was at the head of a branch company of the Standard Oil Company. Mr. Larrabee secured the passage of the bill in the Senate by a vote of thirty-two to eight. It went to the House and was reported for passage by the committee, when Dr. Calkins decided to let the subject rest.

At the last hour of the last day of the session, with every member of the House present, and as usual at such a time, most of the members getting their personal belongings ready for leaving, the Doctor, ignoring the well-known House bill, quietly moved that Senate File 305 be taken up and put on its passage. The clerk reached for it on his desk, but it was missing. He informed the Speaker that the bill had been stolen. The Speaker at once ordered all doors closed and locked until further orders, and explained to the members the reason for so doing. Immediately there was a great commotion throughout the building. Members searched their desks, committee-rooms were ransacked, and after an hour's vigorous quest, the bill was found hidden in a drawer in a distant corner of the building. It was returned to the House, hurriedly read, and passed without a negative vote, not a member being willing to go on record against it.

It has proved one of the best hygienic measures in the statutes. It brings annually into the State treasury from ten to fifteen thousand dollars in excess of expenses, and gives the State of Iowa protection superior to that given any other State. The Standard Oil Company, satisfied that the law is the settled policy of the State, has accepted it.

Dr. Calkins was one of the fifty-two members of the House who voted for the Prohibitory Law. He was also largely in-

strumental in securing the passage of the law establishing a separate, or woman's department at Anamosa penitentiary; also the law authorizing mutual insurance companies to insure against loss or damage by tornadoes, lightning, hailstorms, or cyclones, a measure greatly beneficial to farmers.

Dr. Calkins at the time of his decease owned the farm near Utica, N. Y., acquired and settled by his great-grandfather in 1793, and since held continuously by the family. In the old farmhouse Robert G. Ingersoll, as the child of a local clergyman, was a frequent visitor and Charles G. Finney of Oberlin called it home when he was a protege of Dr. Calkins' grandparents. An uncle of the Doctor read law with Daniel Webster, and books from the library of the great American orator are now valued treasures in the Calkins home.

Dr. Calkins was a man of literary taste, a writer of unusual ability, and for many years wrote upon scientific, historical or literary subjects—not for himself, but for the public good.

He was a member of the Pioneer Law Makers' Association. Being debarred from professional practice by bad health, and unable to attend their reunion in 1907, he sent his daughter with "Recollections of the Nineteenth and Twentieth General Assemblies," graphically written, to be read by her.

He was a plain man, one of the common people, lived a simple life, devoted to his profession and the uplift of mankind. No tribute more expressive of the worth of such a man to the civic or social life in a commonwealth could be phrased than to say: "He lived."

His only religious creed was the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

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