

Historical and Memorial Value of Incoming Correspondence

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ANNALS OF IOWA

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

HISTORICAL AND MEMORIAL VALUE OF INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE

Of the evidence men leave at death of the consequence of their lives, nothing equals the accumulations of written materials which have passed under their hands in their intercourse with other men. These data accumulate in the experience of all persons. Few preserve and methodically arrange their "papers." Many are careful to destroy or at least discard all writing that reveals individual or mutual interest as soon as matters with which they are associated are matured.

In the ANNALS from time to time we have published the policies of the Historical, Memorial and Art Department of Iowa with respect to private "papers" and public archives. The number and bulk, as well as organization and administration, of these collections, comprise a division of our work which we feel distinguishes the institution. We design both to honor our noted persons and to serve the serious historian. This becomes perpetual, tangible and comprehensive delineation of a notable life, excelling, as we believe, in extent and in effect what may be done with imperishable materials and consummate art.

When our state and the nation awoke to the loss of James W. Good on November 18, 1929, for instance, there was a burst of encomium from the press that glorified his name. The part of the public which had no avenue of expression felt that he was of immeasurable worth and impossible to replace. Yet as time recedes news sources become scarce. Men with recollections race to the grave. That bold and solid figure of James W. Good in the Iowa skyline of eminent men with Allison, the two Wilsons and Cummins, will recede into haze from sheer distance and be obscured by figures that are rising now.

In the purpose of arresting this dimming process, our institution has sought to collect, arrange and preserve Mr. Good's papers. We have been advised that Mr. Good's writings have

not been preserved. It is not yet known whether he discarded all materials he received. If he destroyed his own, yet saved the compositions of his correspondents, they may be assembled and organized into an invaluable portion of the record of the career of Mr. Good.

At first it may seem that the touch of Mr. Good is gone when his outgoing autographed materials are lost. But, in his long, active and consistent career, he must have been most certainly and frequently addressed by important men and interests upon important matters. These incoming missives inevitably carried their contributions of intelligence into his equipment for discharging duty. They must have been inevitably responded to by oral or written word. If then an important question of or suggestion to Mr. Good exists in writing, his response, though literally lacking, is easy of inference. At least, the writer of the query and his text fixed the position and importance of Mr. Good in that one instance. Multiplied by the number and varied by the character of mere incoming missives, the correspondence, even fragmentary, sets out the public figure of Mr. Good among his fellow men. What though the substance of Mr. Good be missing, incoming materials pressed against his life compose his mold. They form a matrix from which may be perfectly cast the form and symmetry of his noble figure.

GOOD WORDS FOR C. C. CARPENTER

It always gives us pleasure to note the success of a true and worthy man. C. C. Carpenter, being such a one and one of our true and tried friends, we take solid pleasure in announcing that an appointment of commissary of subsistence with rank of captain has been conferred upon him by the United States Senate, and that he has left us for St. Louis to report himself ready for duty. This we learn is one of the most responsible positions in the army and one requiring great prudence and honesty. For every requirement "Cy" has an overplus of capacity. We have every confidence in his making a most capital officer. Success to him. After his return we propose sending him to Congress.—*Fort Dodge Republican*, republished in *Daily State Register*, Des Moines, Iowa, May 3, 1862. (In the Newspaper Division of the Historical, Memorial and Art Department of Iowa.)

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