

# Congressman Mercer's Splendid Record

WASHINGTON, May 3.—(Special.)—The renomination of David Henry Mercer to congress from the Second Nebraska district indicates that the republicans of that district believe in the proposition that one good term deserves another.

Ever since he has been in congress Mr. Mercer has been a factor in the lower house, and his success is largely attributable to ability, affability, and adaptability. He has an exceedingly engaging manner about him and has the fine faculty of discriminating in his friendships. Unlike a number of men I know, Mr. Mercer is perfectly content to do his work in committees, where, after all, real legislation is accomplished, rather than upon the floor of the house, although in the latter place he compares favorably with the best. He came to Washington seven years ago as the first representative of the Second district as it was re-districted by the legislature in 1891—William Jennings Bryan having previously represented a portion of this district which was included in the First.

### Career as a Legislator.

Mercer began his career as a legislator very early. The late Charles F. Crisp, the democratic speaker of the Fifty-third congress, appointed Mr. Mercer to the committee on public buildings and grounds, and when the lower house of congress was re-organized by the republicans and Thomas Brackett Reed became speaker in the Fifty-fourth congress, Mr. Reed, having a strong liking for the representative from the Second Nebraska district, moved him to within three places of the head of the majority side of the committee, Hon. Seth L. Milliken being made chairman. In the Fifty-fifth congress, by the death of Mr. Milliken and the refusal of Mr. Elijah A. Morse of Massachusetts to become a candidate for re-election, Mr. Mercer became the chairman of the committee, which position he has since filled.

David H. Mercer was born in Benton county, Iowa, in 1857, and the following year his parents moved to Adams county, Illinois. His father, who was a captain in the civil war and marched with Sherman to the sea, removed to Nebraska and settled at Brownville immediately after the close of the rebellion. Mr. Mercer's father was a blacksmith, and here young Dave began to study seriously the whys and wherefores of things. He had an early desire to be as good a blacksmith as his father, but the senior Mercer had other ambitions for his son, and so David was started to the public schools preparatory to taking a course at the University of Nebraska. At 16 he taught a district school in a Bohemian settlement in Saline county, and at the end of the term Mercer could talk a little Bohemian while his pupils could speak fair English. During the term of the district school Mercer gave his pupils two weeks' vacation and went into the harvest field himself, earning \$3 per day binding wheat.

### Nebraska University Graduate.

He entered the Nebraska State university with the freshman class of 1877 and graduated in the class of 1880. During his university career David H. Mercer was elected to every office within the gift of the students and as he had shown a particular fondness for athletic sports he was elected captain of the base ball and foot ball teams and captain of Company A of the University cadets. While in the university he was made the editor of the Hesperian Student, the contest for this place becoming so bitter that the faculty became involved in the fight, which attracted a very great deal of attention all over the state.

After leaving the university Mr. Mercer began the study of law in Brownville, where he was admitted to the bar, and while a resident of Brownville he was elected city clerk and police judge. The republicans of that city desired to make him their candidate for mayor, but he declined the honor, believing that the law was much more to his liking than politics.

In 1881 he entered the law department of the Michigan university, graduating therefrom in 1882, returning to Brownville to enter upon the practice of his profession.

Politics has always played no small part in Mercer's life. At 17, when in the University of Nebraska, he showed a keen insight into the workings of politics, and even then gave promise of his future career.

### Locates in Omaha.

While serving as secretary of the republican state central committee in 1884 Mr. Mercer was located in Omaha during most of that campaign, and he became so infatuated with the city that he decided to cast his fortunes with it, which he did soon after the election. Within ninety days after moving to Omaha he was elected a delegate to the republican city convention and came within one vote of being nominated for police judge, although he had previously announced that he did not desire the office.

His first campaign for congress, in 1892, was one of the liveliest campaigns ever experienced in Nebraska. This was the year of the democratic landslide, when Cleveland was elected. Mercer, with a determination to beat his competitor, Judge George W. Doane, resolved to see every voter in the district and it is believed that he succeeded. If any escaped, it is not generally known. There are many funny stories still remembered in connection with that campaign.

### His Record as a Baby Kisser.

The World-Herald, which was pushing Judge Doane's candidacy with might and

main, in an editorial warned the democratic candidate to not underestimate the strength of Mercer, as he, Mercer, would kiss every baby in the district. One day a lady met Mercer on the street and said:

"You have not yet kissed my baby, Mr. Mercer, and unless you do my husband will not vote for you."

To this sally he replied:  
"I am indeed very sorry, madam. I thought I had kissed your baby. The mistake, I assure you, has been entirely unintentional. I will be over tomorrow to kiss the baby, but please bear in mind that I am not confining my kisses to babies alone."

Mercer got the vote of the lady's husband as well as the votes of several male members of the lady's family as a result of this new method of campaigning.

But the best story that has ever been told on Mercer, and which I believe has never been printed, is the following: One day, in his campaign, he entered Specht's iron works at the noon hour, just as the men were leaving for dinner. The young and aspiring candidate for congressional honors immediately engaged the men in conversation, but one of the workmen attempted to leave the building while Mercer was haranguing the crowd. Mercer touched the man on the shoulder in order to attract his attention, which caused a burst of laughter from the workmen, one of the employees of the iron works remarking that they had Mercer this time, as his friend was deaf and dumb and could not understand Mr. Mercer's plea for congressional recognition.

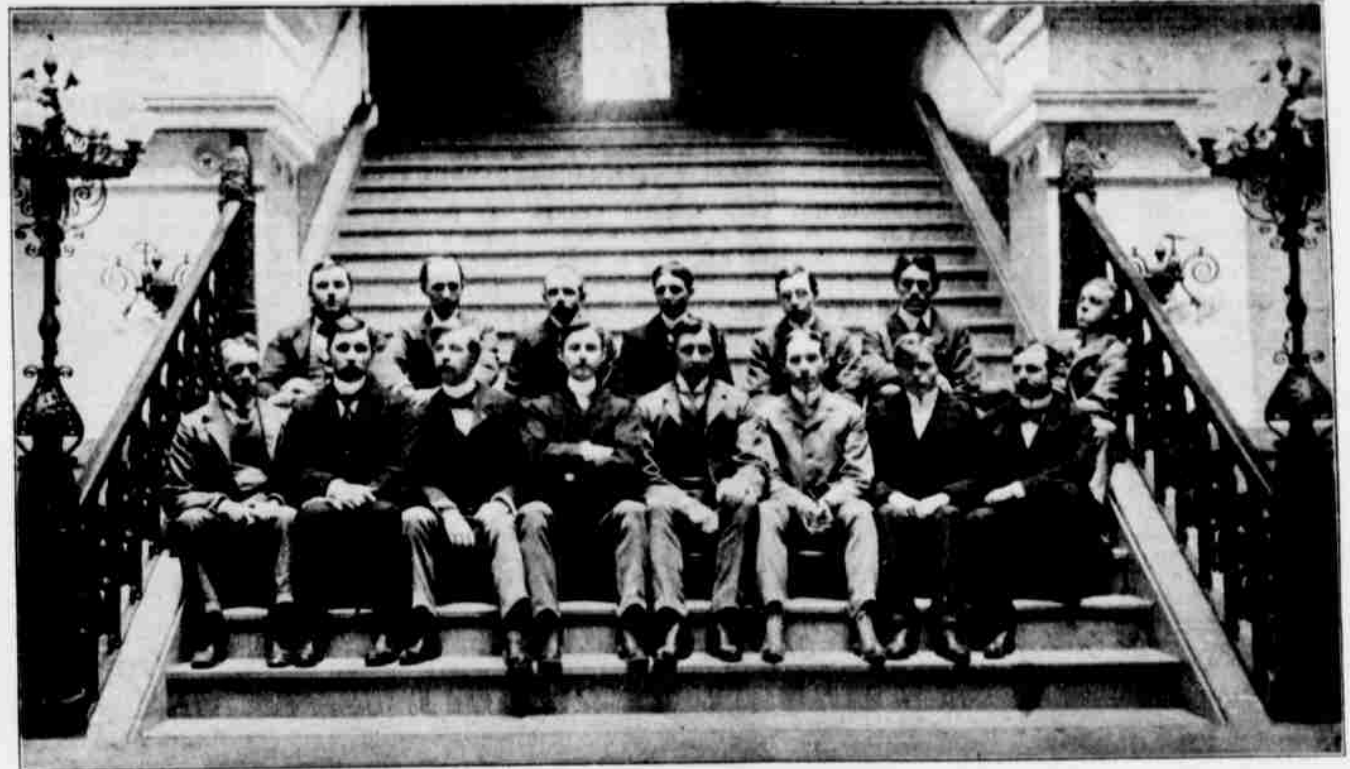
### Talks Politics with His Fingers.

Instead of being frustrated at this unexpected turn of affairs, Mr. Mercer began to talk to the man upon his fingers, and as the mute commenced to smile and followed the smile with a handshake, the men gave three cheers for Mercer at being able to get out of a seemingly unsurmountable difficulty so easily and so gracefully. It appears that Mercer learned to talk on his fingers when a small boy in order to entertain a merchant named McGee, in Brownville, who lost his hearing while at the Philadelphia Centennial.

Mercer is one of the strong men in congress who is steadily climbing the ladder of fame. Round by round he has mounted slowly and with great deliberation, always sure-footed and always careful. There has been no political pneumonia in his career, and there has been no sudden paralysis of his steadily increasing worth amongst those who dominate the house of representatives by force of character and by ability.

### Fine Tribute by Cummings.

Mr. Amos J. Cummings pays him a fine tribute in a recent sketch of some of the able men in congress. Mr. Cummings says: "His record has inured to the benefit of his constituents and awakened the attention of the country. The success of the Omaha exposition was due largely to his efforts. Becoming chairman of the committee on public buildings and grounds on the death of Seth Milliken, he engineered the construction of scores of public buildings scattered throughout the country, not forgetting his own state. All rivalries and jealousies were allayed, and everybody seemed pleased. Mercer is a heavy man, with a round face, and the manner of an unassuming farmer."



CRYSTAL LEAGUE LITERARY SOCIETY OF OMAHA.

Good humor squats on every lineament of his countenance; he carries himself well on the floor and is unusually successful in legislation. He married a handsome and accomplished woman while in Washington, and is a favorite in the house. He champions his bills with characteristic pluck and ability and is a forcible and effective speaker."

### Always Hunt Mercer Up.

This tribute, coming, as it does, from a colleague and one of the ablest representatives from the Empire state of New York, shows the regard in which Mercer is held in Washington. His committee room, that of public buildings and grounds, in the south wing of the capitol, is the favorite meeting place of many congressmen not members of his committee, but who find there a kindly atmosphere and a genial welcome. Nebraska from inside or outside of his district hunt Mercer up when they come to Washington, immediately after the dust of travel is washed away.

Just what reasons can be ascribed to Mercer's remarkably successful career is somewhat problematical. He is not a showy speaker, nor can he be compared to some of the brilliant debaters who have helped make the history of this great nation. But Mercer has a wonderful grasp of conditions. He has fine judgment, coupled with a most engaging manner and an address that unconsciously draws men toward him. His laugh is genuine, his stories fit the point, and his work in congress compares most favorably with the ablest men who have dominated the politics of the country in the past decade.

E. C. S.

### An Eye to Business

A woman found a little fellow crying on the street the other day, and said: "Will you stop crying for this penny?"  
"N-no," sobbed the urchin, "b-but if you'll m-make it t-two I'll stop if it b-busts the p-pipes."

# Omaha Debating Society with Remarkable History

The Crystal League Literary society has been playing a more or less important part in local literary circles for the last eight years. The incipency of the organization was unique and ably demonstrates the ability of the American youth to succeed even under the most unfavorable circumstances. The germ and genius of the organization sprung from the alleys and dark corners of North Omaha. The alpha was a wild, illiterate, naughty band of "night hawks," whose delight was the torment of the goodly community. But as the years rolled on the infantine pleasure lost its charm and dissatisfaction and unrest that drive man on to noble deeds. After one of their usual evening revels they met for counsel. It was midnight, the hour of the deepest hush of night, that these infantine sages met under the shadow of an old maple tree on the corner of Twenty-fourth and Seward streets. From such unblinding source, on the morning of August 14, 1891, the "Crystal League" was launched upon the tempestuous sea of social and literary existence.

With no guiding star, save only their own untutored ends, the struggle of existence was begun. Tossed hither and thither by angry waves upon an unknown, untried sea, the league gradually drew nearer to a pure literary existence, until the new Titan, full panoplied, grappled with its only rival, the Omaha View Debating society, in a joint debate, a contest resulting in victory for the league by a large number of points. This signal victory gave new life and renewed energy to the members of the league and in quick succession occurred contests with the South Omaha and Council Bluffs High schools, the Omaha Commercial and Bellevue

colleges, all resulting in signal victories for the league, except the contest with Bellevue, this going against the league by a margin of eight points and being the only defeat ever received by the league. The following year, however, the league redeemed itself by gaining a very decisive victory over the same college representatives.

This ended the contest era, which was followed by the custom of giving literary programs solely by the league members, the idea being to instruct and prepare the members for public speaking, and the benefits thus derived have been of untold value. The membership of the league has always been limited to fifteen, and is open only to the male sex, the only requirements being a good moral character and a willing and active interest in literary work. Active members only are allowed, the honorary membership being only for members who have left the state.

During the eight years of its existence but forty-three names have appeared on the rolls of the institution, and at present but one are enrolled. Of the quondam members, sixteen are still in the city, and the balance are scattered to the four corners of the universe. During all the time of its existence not a member has met with accident, but one has been seriously ill, and of all the forty-three members, one only, Walter Staley, has been called to join the hereafter.

The membership has been varied, and now those who have once claimed membership in the organization can be found in every walk of life, from the experimental agriculturist even to the highest profession.

Among those whose names are to be found on the Crystal League rolls are: Arthur Karbach, president of P. J. Karbach & Sons and venerable consul of the Modern Woodmen, B. & M. camp 2722; George W. Platner, treasurer of the Cady Lumber company; Frank E. Bliss, manager of Joseph Bliss Bros. of South Omaha; Howard Bruner, chief tariff clerk of the Union Pacific; Arnold S. Borglum, traveling passenger agent of the Union Pacific at St. Louis; George W. Sherman, grain merchant of Riverton, Ia.; Joseph Redfield of Redfield Bros., and Grant Cleveland of the Farnam Smith company, while Herbert Hopper is in Paris connected with the World's fair, and Harvey Readinger is demonstrating American push in Mexico City.

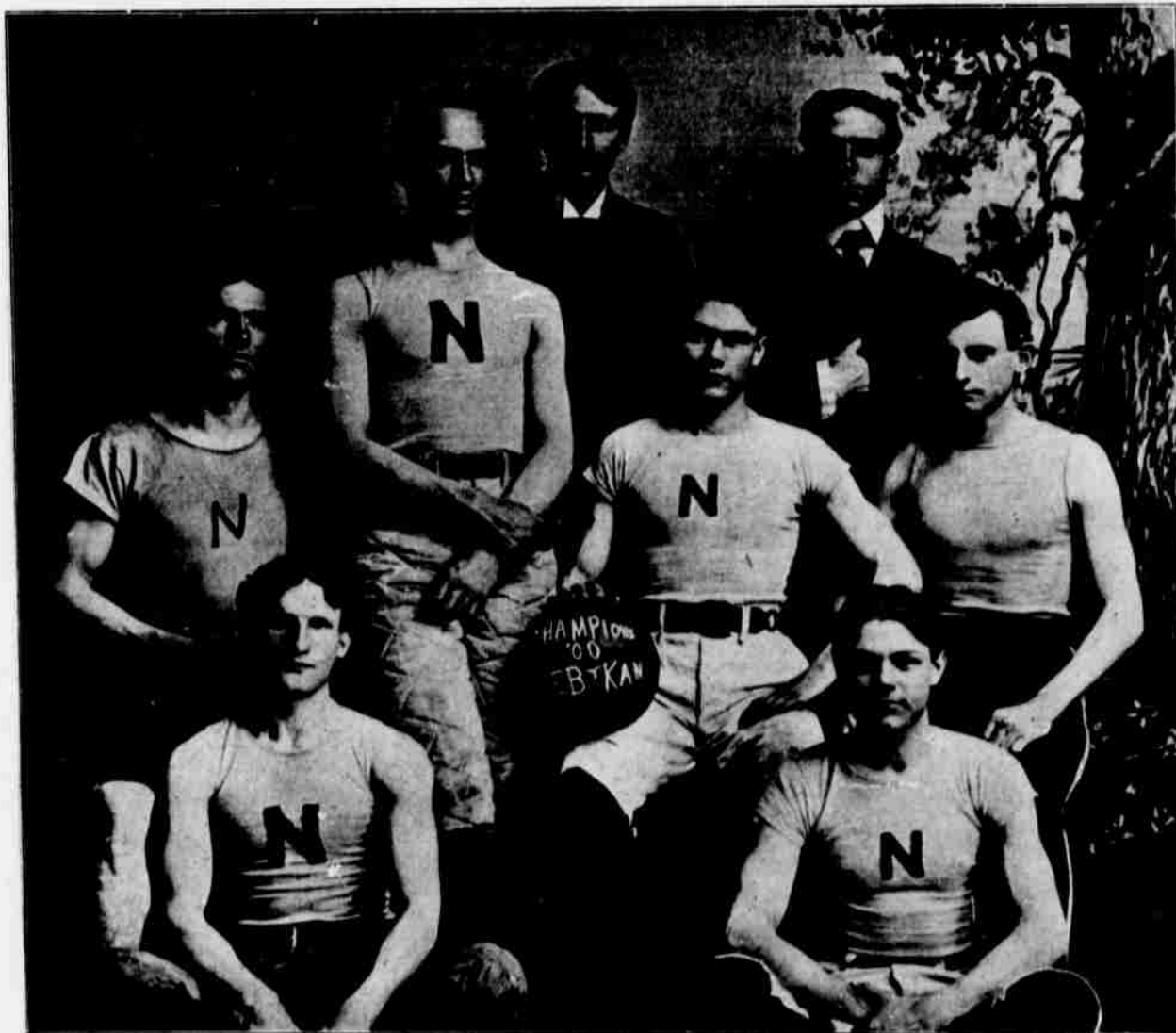
In the medical world the league is represented by Dr. A. Sherman Pinto, surgeon and captain in the United States army, located at Havana, Cuba; Dr. Karl Connell, who so recently passed such a creditable examination in New York City, and Dr. Ray J. Beatty of Omaha and Dr. Jacob Gish of Chicago.

In the field of legal technicality may be found the names of Harry B. Tedrow of Denver and Herbert L. Standeven of Ann Arbor, while among the rising members of the Omaha bar are Charles Battsle, Edward M. Garnett, Charles L. Fritscher, E. C. Hodder and H. A. Whipple.

The league meets every Saturday evening in the hall of the public library, and at every meeting has a full literary program, given by the members. The present officials are Lawrence T. Hoffman, president; Harry H. Cleaver, vice president and treasurer; Frank E. Bliss, secretary; Edward M. Garnett, editor of the "Crystal League Siftings," and Charles L. Fritscher, custodian of records.

### Philadelphia Relishes

Philadelphia Press: When it is stated that 120,000 gallons of olives, 600,000 gallons of ketchup, 35,400 gallons of Worcestershire sauce, 150,000 bushels of pickles, 292,000 gallons of mustard and 1,600 gallons of capers are sent out every year by a large delicatessen wholesale firm in this city it may readily be seen that jaded palates hereabouts have plenty of spice and relish to thrive on.



R. L. Waterman, T. J. HEWITT, Manager, DR. W. W. HASTINGS, Physical Director,  
S. V. Cortelyou, Joel Stebbins, W. E. Anderson, Elmer Berry,  
NEBRASKA UNIVERSITY BASKET BALL TEAM—CHAMPIONS OF KANSAS AND NEBRASKA FOR 1900.