

WE AND OUR NEIGHBORS

Twenty years of continuous residence in the same community has a tendency to create ennui in the old settler, but it is not without its recompense in affording material for comparisons and conclusions. Many people have lived and died and been forgotten in Lincoln as in other places. Others have lived and died and have not been forgotten and will not be because they were men of unusual force and character. Their phrases, their way of doing business, their precedents judicial and financial have impressed themselves on their contemporaries, who in turn influence the younger men. They will pass it on to the third and fourth generation and it will not be effaced even then. Some times pioneers do not realize the enduring character of the stamp they put on a new place or they might be more careful to make the die worthy of eternity. The faces stamped on Lincoln's coin express, without exception, ability, integrity, courage with a line here and there of crudeness or of undisciplined strength. There were three men, especially whose influence cannot be estimated because it extends in so many directions as well as because those who yielded to it did so quite unconscious of the source of that pervading energy. These three masters of the mint were Judge O. P. Mason, Mr. John R. Clark and Mr. Marquett. They shaped business methods and policy and local institutions their own way. That it was permanent the years that have passed since Mr. Clark's and Judge Mason's death have shown. They live in tradition and in the things they shaped, built, applied and planned.

The idiosyncrasies of small men do not do much harm because nobody thinks it worth while to copy them. Great men are no queerer than nonentities. Little, silly people are laughed at when they do odd things. The ways, good and bad, of influential people are copied. Geniuses are accused of many things they do not deserve. The commonest remark on meeting a great musician, artist, statesman or author is that he is just like anybody else. Which means that he has filed off from his character the rough edges that less important people allow to remain to make other folks uncomfortable. But occasionally a man of note has not the time, or does not see the importance of casting off everything that is likely to impede his progress on the road his bleeding feet will have to tread. Then the little people come and look at him and all they see is an excrescence here and there that has nothing to do with the man's real greatness. Such a man was Judge Mason. He never trimmed his speech or altered his course in order that the little might understand. When he was misunderstood it hurt him, but he showed only glee. Abruptness, defiance of man and of the elements, irreverence and a careless dress are some of the characteristics, among many others of real value, to be found in the Mason school. It is not a sign of superiority to refuse to yield to a benign influence. It is imbecile to imitate not that which has given distinction to a model but that which is an accident and of small importance. It seems to me that the young lawyers who walk the legal path Judge Mason's intellect has illumined for them are more anxious to acquire a defiant expression and attitude than they are to think and know effectively. The next generation will not forgive lack of courtesy in a man who has had the opportunity of an advanced civilization, and especially will they not forgive him if he lack the ability that made the

pioneer acceptable. One of the outward signs by which a member of the Mason school may be recognized is his contempt of an overcoat. A few weeks ago when the thermometer was a good many degrees below zero, one of the youngest and most slender of the disciples started blithely for his office in the Burr Block. He was clad in a thin summer coat which he did not even button. When he got there his lips were bare of any color and his teeth were clenched to keep them from chattering. Large men like Mr. Kelly can face a wintry blast with no overcoat between them and it and still look like fine athletic fellows. It is very unbecoming to the other kind however.

There was a time when Horace Greeley was the young man's idol. They thought his strength must lay in handwriting and they practised illegibility night and day. If any one were able to read their scrawls without practice they were disgusted with themselves. And that very night practised on their signatures till a Chinaman would call it a blot on a fair page. When Mr. Greeley died, a disappointed man, his imitators, blinder than ever, thought that he might not be so great after all and their hand writing improved. Imitation is the sincerest flattery, but woe unto the imitator.

"A Social Highwayman" is a story of an aristocratic thief told from his point of view. Gaboriau and others who tell detective stories begin by conveying a sense of horror that honest people feel for a thief or a murderer and show the process of investigation that finally discovers the criminal. Elizabeth Phipps Train, the author of "A Social Highwayman," introduces Mr. Courtice Jaffrey in the act of performing a magnanimous act by offering a situation to a self-confessed thief. At the end of his year's hard labor in the penitentiary, Hanby, the thief, goes to Courtice Jaffrey and he takes him on as his valet. Then the story is told by the valet who loves his master so much that when discovery impends he is willing to assume the blame himself to save his master. The form of the narrative is that of a perfectly trained, observant manservant making a special plea for his employer. He relates numerous instances of Courtice Jaffrey's fine sense of honor, of his chivalry, of his loyalty to his friends, his respect for women, his perfect taste in dress, furniture, functions, and when his hero has begun to be your hero too, he relates very delicately an incident which proves the beau a thief, a highwayman. Can a thief have all the other virtues except honesty and industry? Only a long study of criminal annals can decide. To be sure, honor and thieving contradict each other but one of the last things a tired and choked dweller in this dusty world learns is that men are inconsistent. The parable of "There was a man in our town and he was wondrous wise. He jumped into a bramble bush and scratched out both his eyes. And when he found his eyes were out, with all his might and main, he jumped into another bush and scratched them in again," is as true in Lincoln as it is in New York city. Thieves applaud the honest and misunderstood hero who clings to spotless purity in spite of apparent self interest. They applaud him to the echo with congratulating tears filling their eyes and when the melo-drama is over they swipe everything within reach as

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