

university student who comes from one of the oldest towns in the state told me with much grief that he is the only person from his place who is a member of the Nebraska Historical Society, and the only collector of relics. But the old town on the river has had its stories told, and well told, by eye-witnesses and pioneers. One man can make a town famous to the heathen outside. Did not the city of Lincoln make its debut as a known power one summer not long ago when a certain respected citizen made some most remarkable excursions out into the world? There is absolutely no politics in that statement, just honest fact. To the limited few Lincoln is famous because of—well, her strict integrity, cedar-block paving, which refuses to be forgotten, and her Hagenow's band. But the great unwashed think of it as merely Bryan's town. It is a town without a history. About all the traditions which it might claim as a halo of glory clustered about the old salt basin. So careless we were of tradition, however, that we rejoiced when Joe Burns took his big scoop-shovel and made what we called a lake there where red men and white scraped salt in the hard days gone by.

But Nebraska City has committed unforgivable sins, too. It has mocked at ancient relics, scorned the laws of the prophets, and broken to fragments the sacred hieroglyphics of the past. For the old town on the river has a clear, exact, india-rubber, mathematical street nomenclature which, I am sure, would be the envy of all those inspired Moseses who from time to time have tried to lead Lincoln out of the wilderness of errors and alphabets. Lincoln has nothing to keep that is worth keeping in the way of street names, but here it was different, and I wonder at the impulse of modern improvement thus invading the old place. Indian names once used were cast aside and now all you have to do is to count "streets" by numbers west from the river, "avenues" by numbers north from "central avenue," and "corsoes" by numbers south. No Otoe, Pawnee, etc., for the children to learn to spell. The quaint old names of a race that will some day be naught but a name itself in history seemed to give the proper atmosphere to this old town by the river. The change must have been made, I should judge, about the time a post office was built, with a box capacity which seemed to expect a tremendous increase in the size of the town. The new system is good, but it is not romantic and,—well, we western people think we have no time for romance, but our children's children will pay the penalty.

A park seems almost a superfluity for a small city whose pleasant homes are set in the midst of many trees. But the old town has a beautiful one, the gift of J. Sterling Morton. It is on the western edge of the town, away from the river. A few of the trees have been set out, but they are principally of natural growth. The park contains nothing, but trees, a small hall in the grove, and white-washed "old settlers' cabin"—the apologies to the spelling-book must be made by another than myself. I am told that the old town still feels poor and sore over its five week's small-pox scare last winter, so they have no money to use in fixing up the park. But it is a lovely place in these autumn days, without any modern improvements.

The old town also has a library. The thoroughly substantial and artistic little building is another gift from Mr. Morton. It is only moderately well supplied with books, however, and like all western libraries lacks funds to live and grow on.

Speaking of libraries makes a Lincolnite think of just one thing at this time. It seems not very far back in the unforgotten past when the women of

Lincoln gave socials and suppers to obtain money with which to start a public library. Since that time our library has grown slowly, laboriously eking out a limited income by humble appeals to the dispensers of taxes. Women librarians had worked their lives out on that old pile of books, and had gained as their only reward the affection of all patrons who had any conception of what their labor meant. And well known citizens had served without pay for years on the board of directors, giving time, energy and devotion to the service of the city. The books have been housed in almost any place, for no citizen of Lincoln has ever actually had money enough—our wealthiest citizens have often been very poor when it came to real money—to build a library home for Lincoln. We plodded along as best we could, and appreciated what the conscript fathers afforded us. And so when the time came the funeral pyre was heaped high not only with paper and paste and ink but with well spent energy and devotion. And all the precious old books are the least part of what is gone. We should think of that. In those days, too, the Methodist church was a low, white frame building with "frosted" windows. The brethren and sisters worshiped with the spirit and understanding. I can remember Sister Peckham, and Sister Hyde, and Brother Hardy. But the younger generation always seemed too well dressed and consequently "uppish" for me—or so my childish notion was, I suppose there was an organ, run by foot-power, with possibly a "coupler" and a "tremolo" stop in working order, no beautiful affair of long pipes and hidden boxes of wood, and great strong voices to praise God with. Long pews, in old fashion, so that the congregation might kneel with the minister and no cushions for their knees. And the Easter bonnet was not a fixed institution in those days. Perhaps that helped build St. Paul. But anyway whole lives and souls full of devotion went up in the flames last Saturday morning.

I have but one suggestion to make, being thus afar. If I had been in Lincoln I could have told a dozen ways for checking that fire—the morning afterwards. My thought is this—why, oh why, conscript fathers, do you lay down fine new, unpaid-for paving over long, narrow ditches that contain six-inch water mains?

Every accident, holocaust, or unsuccessful thing in this world is caused by some one who has failed to do his duty just truly. There is always some negligence, some carelessness, some ignorance or weakness where strength is required back of the things that go wrong. I wondered as I looked at the old burnt and shattered boiler at the terrible wreck near Paul, ten miles south of here, who it was, how far back he was who was responsible for the weakened bridge, the loss of four lives in a cremating fire so that a few bones and the watchers were about all that was left to tell the tale, the twenty-six hundred burned cars and twisted trucks and iron. Someone, somewhere, failed to carry his letter to Garcia. It may have been the president or managers of the road, it may have been a member of the bridge gang. The attempt to fix the responsibility is an amusement for logicians. It doesn't matter so much. What is needed is absolute faithfulness to the one duty you call your own whether it be large or small. The penalty for one little duty neglected sometimes reaches around the world and tribute is exacted from crowned heads and beggar maids alike.

To change the subject—don't you think that Lincoln business houses could afford to hire night watchmen more generally than they do?

Nebraska City, Sept., 20th.

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