

UNDER A GILDED DOME.

BY FLORA BULLOCK.

Des Moines people have been amusing themselves and trying to tide over the hot season by pursuing the Rev. Rollin Lynde Hartt's facetious pen pictures of "The Iowans," in the August Atlantic. They read the thing in installments, survive, and go on their common-place way rejoicing that the writers of "copy" are not with them always. It is easily surmised that the writer of this jaunty characterization got all of his material in Des Moines. He probably came through the state in the night, stayed around in the city a day or two, quizzed the natives, climbed to the gilded dome of the great capitol, glanced at the backs of the volumes in the library, took out his pencil, got into his cleverest mood, and proceeded to describe the Iowans. I appreciate his temptation, and am likely to succumb to a similar one as I sit on the high portico and look out over the vigorous capital of a worthy state. But neighborly feeling engenders sympathy for the latest victims of Mr. Hartt's humor. I wonder, if the writer can key himself up to such heights of fervor in describing what he considers the humdrum existence of the tribe of Iowans, what wells of eloquence will be left for him to draw from when he "does up" the Nebraskans. This, according to his own intimations, would require much greater warmth and spirit.

I am lead to doubt if this writer ever saw an Iowa farm or any other in any closer way than from a car window. It might be well for Boston magazine mongers to hire a western rancher to edit these impeachable descriptions. Snap shot writers might then be saved the unhappiness of shedding tears of pathos over the imagined doings of things that are never done on Iowa farms nor anywhere else in the world.

Thin bluish-white lines of smoke that hide low smoke-stacks around among the hills explain in large part why the Iowa capital is twenty-five years ahead of our city on Salt creek, and is likely to always distance us in industrial lines. The hills are full of coal, parts of the town are built above mine tunnels, and—if you credit the stories told by natives—miners are blasting down below you even now. So Des Moines is a city of smoke-stacks; the coal is no sooner dug from the hills than it is converted into soot and smoke and the roar that denotes the city. The men who sit in easy leather-back chairs under the gilded dome on the hill, and the solons who sojourn here to make laws betimes are not permitted to forget that they are servants of a thriving people. For the insistent noise of the conflict rises and fills the pillared portico and broad halls with its clamor.

The capital and some of its perquisites came trekking from Iowa City before people had thought much about it. Now the golden dome looks down on a city chanting the ceaseless song of industry. A city with the population, the dirt, the noise that belongs to a congested center of trade and manufacture—but for the rest not, to my thinking, which I realize is worth very little, not at all a capital city. It is a Chicago, not a Springfield; a Milwaukee, not a Madison; an Omaha, not a Lincoln. That is my impression, in spite of the fact that I sit on the great pillars of the west front portico, and breathe the capitol air and atmosphere. It may be different in winter when the wheels of government are uncovered for a season and we hear the sound thereof. But the biennial legislative spree is not a permanent element of the atmosphere of a place (let us be thankful!) Certain other things that according to our ideals are essential parts of the life of a capital

city seem to me, on a snap-shot view, to be lacking in old Des Moines. They boast of having "twelve colleges and universities, leading medical schools, a dental college, a college of osteopathy, several sanitariums, three great hospitals, summer schools of method, and a three-weeks Chatauqua annually, . . . schools of music and able musicians, artists and schools of art," and so on. That may be something to boast of in a way. But the fact that there are twelve colleges of greater or less insignificance, instead of one university, is the very thing that seems to take from Des Moines a certain atmosphere that Nebraskans know so well in their capital city, leaving the commercialism of down town full sway. I may be wrong, but both from direct evidence and from subtle indications that come to me, I should call Des Moines, in spite of all its colleges, hardly a center of education. It has the material, but it lacks the leader.

The policy of "scattering," as they call it, which places the colleges of the state in various districts, divides the revenues, says "many small instead of one big," is perhaps an advantage to the people. But it does not develop an atmosphere, any more than a thousand smoke-stacks in as many different towns would create a Pittsburg. Iowa City, of course—but don't talk about Iowa City in Des Moines.

It is all right for Mr. W. E. Curtis of the Chicago Record and other reporters on the hunt for a "story" to make fun of the silver dome of our capitol. It amuses people to find a philosophy behind manifestations of originality, even if they have to invent one, as Mr. Curtis did. The imagination that can conceive a time when Nebraska was able to put gold leaf on the dome of a very unpretentious capitol is a lively imagination. But I think that even if the dome had once been golden, a change to silver would have showed good taste. Iowa's capital sits up on the hill like a stately gray dame with bleached hair. Just because it is a traditional custom to gild domes is no reason why Iowa—or at least Nebraska—should follow after. I see in my mind's eye how a coating of silver gray with trimmings of gold, such as appear in the four small domes of the corners, would have added the touch of an artist, and saved the stately gray edifice from its somewhat gawky splendor.

It makes a treader of gravel streets very weary as he looks up from the bottom of capitol hill to the steady rise and the banks of broad steps that he must traverse. The molded grassy slope is strictly forbidden and the sojourner must climb the white stone stairs, pausing to gaze at the few attempts at statuary in his path. A bronze pioneer at the foot of stairs looks ever westward over the city, and further up a fountain with bronze decorations gives another opportunity to rest. "Then your feet go click on polished marble," the Reverend R. L. Hartt says. It happens to be just tiling, however, but if you want to exercise a poetic imagination you can call it marble. There is a spacious granite and marble stair-way, and pillars of granite, with panels that perhaps are granite, perhaps only paint. It shocked me greatly and made me doubt the genuineness of justice in Iowa when I crept timidly up to the chief justice's chair in the room of the supreme court and learned that the fine green mottled panels behind the chairs were only paint after-all. There is a marble and granite effect everywhere, but some times the effect was gained in strange ways. I was curious to examine some castile soap granite—I mean it looked like castile soap. It was simply pieced rock. Some one said they hired Italians at fifteen dollars a day to do that work. In

the library the lower pillars are of granite bona fide, but above is paint. But few of the innocent Iowans who wander in every day and come in swarms during this gala fair week ever suspect that all that is mottled is not granite.

Iowans who boast of their three million dollar capitol—"every cent honestly spent," they will tell with most justifiable pride—only wish that it had been five millions. Their capitol compares favorably with other state buildings, but it is built on a scheme of elegance that could not be carried throughout. A great sum of money must have been spent on the Corinthian capitals that crown the pillars inside and outside of the building. The carved words behind which the supreme judges sit in state must have cost a pretty penny. The three million is easily seen. But the lacking two million is also guessed at when one sees ugly plaster walls in most conspicuous places, painted granite.

And alas, there are frescoes and statuary, concerning which the Iowans seem to desire absolute silence. The supreme court room fares better than the legislative halls in the way of frescoes, and its walls are decorated with good portraits of worthy and distinguished predecessors. Out in the dome is a circle of statuary—so high up, however, that you need not look at them if you wish to escape. But there are frescoes in the building which—well, they, too, are high up, and require too much neck-craning.

All of which goes to show that there is a kind of unformed westernness about this Iowa yet. Her people are not bereft of the glorious chance of growing old and wise and cultured along with the rest of us, even if the Reverend Mr. Hartt does congratulate them on being separated from populistic Nebraska by a broad river, preventing contamination.

ANGLO JAPANESE SIGNS.

A constant source of amusement to the traveler in Japan, says the Reverend Francis E. Clark in the September Century, are the Anglo-Japanese signs over the shop doors.

In the larger cities many shopkeepers have applied to a sign-painter who has acquired that dangerous thing, a little knowledge of English, without drinking deep at the Pierian spring, for a "shingle" that shall express to the world in Western characters the nature of their business. The assurance of these sign-painters is not matched by their familiarity with English spelling, construction, moods, and tenses; and the result is often amusing in the extreme. For instance, one is amazed to see in Tokio a sign that boldly announces

A TAILOR CUT TO ORDER.

Another one informs us

PHOTOGRAPHER EXECUTED HERE.

A hatter in Kobe announces that he sells

GENERAL SORT STRAW HAT,

and another informs the public that he is a

DEALER NEWANDTILISHSTRAWHAT

WILL MAKE TO ORDER.

Some of the signs really seem to suggest needed English words, like

BUTCHERY AND PROVISIONS.

Why not "butchery?" Another tells us that he deals in

SOFT GOODS.

He does not mean "soft drinks," either, but soft woolen goods. A baker tells us that he keeps a

BAKETRY.

Another sign which I daily passed for nearly a week told the world that within dwelt

THE INVENTOR OF KOBE,

though what he invented, or when, or

why deponent saith not. A merchant in Osaka has hung out his shingle with superfluous articles, as follows:

PATENT THE CHARCOAL PATENT THE
POCKET STOVE.

The conjunctions are almost as difficult for the average sign-painter to master. Consequently he sometimes tells the world of a

HOUSE SHIP AND PAINTER,

or that within there is for sale

SHOTTINGAN POWDER AND.

A glance at the rifles, shot-guns and powder-horns within makes the sign plain. Another tells us that

BYCICLE TO LEND, SEL, AND

are within. It is not strange that single letters should get out of place, as in

RESTAURAND,

MEALS AT ALL HOUSE,

CIGARAND AND CIGARETTED,

and the like. But it does seem as if a wag with a keen sense of humor had been at work when we read, as we do in a prominent street of Osaka:

ER—MAN—WASH.

Put the last syllable first, and you will catch the thought. A wag, too, must have prepared the label for a dealer in borax, who, after extolling the purity and value of his preparation, put in large letters at the bottom:

BEWARD OUR TRADEMARK.

Perhaps the most startling milk sign in Japan is:

COWS MILKED AND RETAILED,

which if I mistake not, is to be found in Kioto. Cloth-dealers also have had not a little difficulty in making known their wares. Here is one of their signs:

SILK HEMP, COTTON AND SEVERAL

HAIRS, SEVERAL KINDS YARN.

REAL ESTATE LOAN AND CORRECTING
AGENCY

appears in Tokio, a place, perhaps, for bad boys and girls.

Public signs and notices are often as amusing as the shop signs. For instance, one that appears on the way up the famous Bluff at Yokohama:

IT IS FORBIDDEN TO THROW THE STONE.

A MAN IS BEING WOUNDED.

Probably in some past year a stone thrown over the bank hit a passer by, but the man is still being wounded. At a temple door we read:

ALL VISITOR ARE NOT ALLOWED TO

ENTER THIS TEMPLE PUTTING

ON THEIR SHOE.

Hence of course we took off our shoe. I copied the following from a poster on the side of a house in a little fishing village on the shore of the Inland Sea:

TO LET GRAUND IN BEACH WHEN IF

YOU LIKE I WILL DID AWAY

FROM STREET AND WILL

TAKEN DIRTY COTTAGE.

On mature deliberation of several savants it was decided that the owner meant to say that if we rented his lot on the beach he would move his house from the street, and also take away the "dirty cottage" that now encumbered his ground.

"VIRTUAMA" TABLETS cure "brain-fag" Great restorative for weak men and women. \$2. Cheaper remedies won't cure. Mailed Kidd Drug Company, Elgin, Ill. Riggs' Pharmacy, Lincoln, Nebr.

He—Well, I suppose I have made a fool of myself.

She—That remark greatly embarrasses me.

He—Indeed! How so?

She—Because it would be equally impolite to agree with you or to contradict you.—Town Topics.