PART III.
HALF-TONE SECTION
PAGES 1 TO 4.

THE OMAHA SUNDAY BEE

Largest Circulation
THE OMAHA BEE
Best in the West

VOL. XXXVII—NO. 35. OMAHA, SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 16, 1908. SINGLE COPY FIVE CENTS.

MICHAEL F. DEMPSEY WHO HAS LONG SERVED OMAHANS

Twenty-two Years of Continuous Service on the Local Police Force Finds Him Active and Vigorous and at His Post of Duty Every Day in the Year and Full of Vigilant Life

OVER twenty-two years of continuous active service on the police department of the city of Omaha, during which time he has, in his thoroughly capable manner, performed the duties devolving upon him in every capacity, from patrolman to acting captain, is the proud record of genial Sergeant Michael F. Dempsey, the oldest man on the force from the point of continuous service, and who at present holds the position of pawn shop detective with twenty-five pawn shop, twenty-six second-hand stores and numerous junk houses to round up every day in search of missing and stolen articles which are reported to the police.

Mr. Dempsey was born nearly fifty years ago at Pittstown, Pa., and, as his name indicates, is of Irish descent. After leaving school Dempsey spent several years in the coal mines of Pennsylvania building up a physique which stood him in good stead in buffeting the rigorous weather and arresting law-breakers years after, while patroling a beat and keeping peace among the citizens of the Gate City of the west. Coming to Omaha in 1879, Dempsey was not enamored with the prospects of the town at that time and decided to try his hand at farming in Iowa. Continuous reports reaching him of the rapid growth of the active, hustling city he had left, Dempsey returned a few years later and worked in various capacities until his appointment on the police force, October 21, 1885, by Mayor James E. Boyd. Before the inauguration of the present metropolitan police system for Omaha there was no chief of police and all policemen were appointed by the mayor. At the time of Dempsey's appointment the twenty-two men who were on the department were under charge of Marshal Tom Cummings, who is well remembered by many of the residents of the city.

Troublous Times for "Coppers"

In those good old, rare old, halcyon days of cedar block pavement, horse cars and muddy walks Omaha was a wide-open town, with the principal business district of the city being bounded by Douglas street on the north and Thirteenth street on the west, while Tenth street was one of the main business streets. The patrol beats were considerably longer then than they are under the present system, and policemen then had not the convenience of calling for the patrol wagon from the patrol box, because there were no patrol wagons and no boxes, and the officer was obliged to walk his prisoner in to the city jail, which at that time was located in the old city hall building, which stood on the northwest corner of Sixteenth and Farnam streets, the site now occupied by the United States National bank building. It was an easy task for a "copper" to place a person under arrest, but it was exceedingly difficult to land one or more belligerent prisoners behind the bars of the city jail, sometimes one or two miles away, and retain the dignity of the "coppers" of the present day, who have only to walk their prisoners to a nearby patrol box or telephone and call the patrol wagon.

The metropolitan police system was established July 28, 1887, with Webber S. Seavey as chief of police. Dempsey was at this time appointed patrolman under the new system. In recognition of his services he was appointed on the detective force the following year, and for thirteen years he made an enviable record in the detection and arrest of several notorious criminals of national reputation, many of whom are still serving sentences. April 1, 1901, he was promoted to partol sergeant, performing faithfully the duties of that office until his appointment to his present position, in October, 1906.

Veterans of the Force

Three men on the police department now, Captain Mostyn, Sergeants Sigwart and Whalen, were on the department previous to Dempsey's appointment, but they, from business or other reasons, left the service for various periods, leaving Dempsey the oldest member for continuous service. Indicative of his popularity and efficiency, he has given the utmost satisfaction to the heads of the department from the regime of Marshal Cummings, through the terms of Seavey, White, Sigwart, Gallagher and Donahue, the various chiefs under whom he has served. Attesting to his efficiency, it may be remarked that during the month of January just passed every article reported stolen during the month, either by burglars or petty thieves, was recovered and returned to the owner. Although he always has a cordial greeting for friends, Sergeant Dempsey is of a very modest disposition, and almost any evening can be found at his cozy little home, 1608 North Thirty-fourth street, with his wife and their two neices, whom they have raised since early childhood.

Reminiscences of his experiences during his long service on the department would, if put in printed form, fill a volume of several hundred pages containing interesting tales of long vigils in cold and rainy weather, waiting for the appearance of burglars who were expected to ransack a residence or to blow a safe, and again some chapter of the book might tell of experiences with law-breakers who had been captured in other states and whom Dempsey had gone after, to return them to Nebraska to stand trial for their crimes; or many pages might be written of the humorous episodes in connection with the cases upon which he has been detailed. Sergeant Dempsey is very reticent in speaking of his own exploits, but as an illustration his ingenuity in handling cases which require quick thinking, the following story is told of him and Captain Dunn, who was paired with Dempsey several years ago, about the time Kelly's army of variegated self-styled legislators passed through Omaha and camped on the other side of the river:

Hundreds of the idle curious mingled with the cohorts of the ingenious Kelly and altogether about 1,500 gathered in the evening about 9 o'clock at the west end of the Douglas street bridge. Owing to the orders of local authorities that the army could not camp in the city limits, the antagonism of that multitude of erstwhile "bohemians" was aroused, and when the west end of the bridge was reached it was evident that trouble was brewing, and if once started the small force of police who were detailed to see that the "army" crossed the river could do but little to stop it. Detectives Dunn and Dempsey were detailed at the east end of the bridge and, seeing that trouble might break out at any minute, they sneaked down the alley between Douglas and Dodge streets, east of Ninth, and emptied their revolvers at the twinkling stars, and then sauntered into the rear end of a nearby saloon and stood by the stove. To the muttering multitude, congregated less than a block away, the reverberating echos of those dozen shots seemed to come from all directions and the crowd dispersed as if by magic, some going one way and some another in an effort to locate where the fusilade had taken place, and one policeman ran down the alley and, jumping off into a yard some feet below the level of the alley, lit in a garbage barrel, much to his discomfiture. Suffice it to say, that the ruse of Dunn and Dempsey was successful and the rear guard of the "army" was marched across the river without further trouble.

MICHAEL F. DEMPSEY.

Incidents of the Service

At another time, while Cox was chief of detectives, it was rumored that a full-fledged gambling house was being conducted in an upstairs apartment on North Sixteenth street, which was supposed to be occupied by a man and his family. Taking Savage and Dempsey with him, Cox hied himself to the supposed den, where he expected to make a great haul. Sneaking upstairs, the trio waited outside a few minutes, and then hearing someone inside pouring a bucket of hard coal into a stove, Cox exclaimed, "A roulette wheel, by all that's holy," and, backing away a few feet, the chief of detectives dove at the door, breaking it off the hinges and landing himself on all fours in the middle of the room and frightening the inmates, two women, into hysterics. Cox demanded to know where the roulette wheel was located, but it took the united efforts of Dempsey and Savage to convince him of his error. Later it was learned that the husband of the woman had been in the habit of conducting a "quiet game" in a downtown hotel.

Following the tragic death of Patrol Conductor Dan Tiedman June 9, 1897, who was shot by one of three burglars who had rifled a saloon in the early hours of the morning at Thirtieth and Spaulding streets, Dempsey and Savage were the recipients of many jests, owing to the following occurrence, of which they were the principals under orders of then Chief of Detectives Hemming. Tiedman had been killed by a load of buckshot fired from a shotgun. Suspect after suspect was arrested in connection with the case, and finally the detectives arrested men they believed were the parties who had killed Tiedman and also seriously wounded Officer Glover. The shotgun with which the shooting had been done could not be found, and as the burglars had used a horse and buggy to make their escape and the suspects under arrest had in their possession such a horse and buggy, a brilliant thought came to Hemming. Calling Detective Henry Dunn into his private office, Hemming explained that if the horse were hitched up and allowed to take his own course he would go to the place where the burglars had hidden the shotgun, if they had buried it anywhere. Seeing the fruitlessness of such a quest, Dunn explained that neither he or Donahue knew anything relative to the harnessing of a horse, but volunteered the information that Dempsey and Savage were two real broncho busters. The chief of detectives then detailed the latter couple on the case, much to their chagrin, but under orders they went out and hitched up the horse and let him have loose rein. The animal immediately picked out a course to the nearest creek and started to drink and refused to move, even after having filled himself with water. He failed to lead the detectives to the hidden gun and it was afterward intimated that the horse was blind.

Laughs at the Passing Jokes

Mr. Dempsey still laughs heartily at the parts he played in many a humorous episode in which he was often the butt of a joke, and which at the time seemed serious enough. Despite his fifty years, he is apparently in the prime of life and good for many more years of efficient service on the department, where he has spent the best years of his life, helping in his useful way to build up the standard of the Omaha police department from a small squad of twenty-two men to its present excellent condition.

Daily Performance During a Session of the House of Representatives

WASHINGTON, Feb. 1.—To be a gallery god in the house of representatives is to have a free seat at a unique performance. In that particular wing of the national capitol they make more laws and do it with fewer symptoms of law-making than anywhere else in the world.

The performance is scheduled to begin at noon, but most spectators like to be on hand before that time. Early birds straggle in soon after 11, take up claims in the front row and settle down to contemplation of the serried ranks of seats below them.

At that time most half a dozen of those seats are occupied. One by one a corporal's guard of members strolls in. The place is quiet.

The pages in their two corners are gossiping in the subdued tones of which later they seem to have a monopoly. The few members read the morning paper or work on documents, blandly unconscious that a young man a few seats off is making rapid sketches of them for use in caricature.

Half past 11 comes. So do more congressmen. So do other folks who have a pass which admits them to the floor when the house is not in session. Reporters are getting expressions of opinion from chairmen of committees. Even up in the gallery one hears the chairman's, "Now, my boys!" And one knows that the "boys" are pressing him too hard.

Odd figures in hats of the long ago and overcoats of the never was, at least in New York, wander down the aisles like so many lost causes. They are constituents from back home. Their representatives have sent them passes to the floor, good for one day. The passes are not good after 11:45 and the representatives are careful not to arrive before that hour.

At precisely 11:45 one of the clerks formally announces the time and requests all persons not having the privilege of the floor to leave. Of course, they don't leave immediately. But at five minutes to 12 any loiterers are hustled out by house officials, who go up the aisles saying, "Time's up! Time's up!"

A few women may be seen on the floor almost any morning before the house is cleared. They are relatives or friends of the representatives.

By the time the clock is ready to join hands at 12 there is a fair sprinkling of members. Congressmen are a demonstrative lot. Probably they form the habit while they are campaigning. Anyhow, they are given to shaking hands with one another, to shaking two hands, to putting an arm around a colleague's shoulders, to poking him in the ribs, to tapping him on the knee.

At precisely 12 o'clock Uncle Joe comes in at the right of the speaker's desk, goes up the steps, lays his cigar down at his left with the lighted end carefully adjusted so as not to scorch the white marble. He doesn't always bring one into the house with him. Even when he does bring one in he never smokes it within the sacred precincts.

Some of the members are not so particular, but those who smoke at all do it in as unobtrusive a way as they can manage, puffs few, far between and almost smokeless. There is some sort of a rule against smoking on the floor during a session, but it's a case of "If we don't care, whose business is it, anyway?"

As soon as Uncle Joe is at his post—and he is as punctual as the clock itself—the blind chaplain, Rev. Mr. Couden, prays. He does it as slowly as if he felt his way through speech as well as through the material world.

Everybody in the house, from the speaker to the smallest red-headed boy in the pages' corner, Jew or Gentile, orthodox or atheist, stands during the prayer. The general attitude is respectful, but a sharp glance shows that many heads are not bowed and that some of the members are frankly scanning the galleries.

"Amen!"

The instant the word is pronounced hubbub sets in. The speaker's high voice is heard somewhere in the medley of sound and the clerk begins to read the journal.

No one pays the slightest attention. Why should anyone? Everybody knows it all, anyway. The time is devoted to a grand powwow of visiting, consulting, story-telling, planning and dickering. Late comers arrive. Pages fly around. Its hoorah, boys, everywhere.

By this time the important members are pretty sure to be in their seats, or in somebody else's seat. For it is by no means safe to try to spot them by the places they occupy half the time. If you see a man unlock a desk and get out his papers you can be sure he belongs in that seat. Otherwise there's no telling.

Colonel Pete Hepburn is as little given to straying from his ain swivel chair as any man in the house. There he sits and rocks and rocks, back and forth, back and forth, watching, listening, studying.

Representative Cole of Ohio ought to be able to make a good bit if he could rent out his seat. It is next to Hepburn's and somebody is always dropping into it for a heart to heart talk with Colonel Pete.

You can go to any session of the house and be reasonably certain of seeing the men whose names are known throughout the country. They are not the ones whose places are vacant day after day. The big white head of Payne is mighty sure to be a landmark at the seat he occupies, right in front of Dalzell, who can also be counted on to be there for almost every session.

Mr. Payne perambulates around more or less, his hands in his trousers pockets, though how he finds those pockets is a problem not to be appreciated by anyone who has not seen the figure of the republican leader. Finding those pockets must be a sort of peninsular campaign, with the pockets on the other side of the peninsula.

Across the aisle from Payne sits General Keifer of Ohio, who was himself speaker of the house once. His chief claim to notice at present is the fact that he wears a two-tined coat in the daytime. It is not a strictly dress coat, for it is buttoned, what there is of it, snugly across the general's ample front. But it is so unlike anything else in the house array of garments that Keifer's comings and goings, which are numerous, are always followed with rapt attention by the galleries.

Mr. Mann of Illinois sits near the Payne group; that is, he occasionally sits. He has an opinion about most things that come before the house, and if he isn't already provided with one he can ask some questions and fix himself out with material on which to form an opinion. This gets him on his feet often enough to keep his knees from going stiff.

Across the aisle, right on the democratic frontier, John Sharp Williams used to be. It was mighty seldom that Williams was not in his place when the house opened. He watched everything closely, leaning forward on his desk, his hand behind his ear to catch everything said by the speaker. His enemy, De Armond, is a close attendant, too.

No wonder Williams had to make a sounding board of his hand. The chief difference between the noise in the house of representatives and the noise in a sawmill is the fact that the mill makes its noise because it is sawing wood and the house doesn't. One man, even though he talks at the top of his voice, is no match for a couple of hundred, swapping jokes and arguments in a conversational tone all around him.

One source of noise has been done away with of recent years. Formerly the pages in the house sat on the steps of the speaker's platform, as they still do in the senate, and a member summoned one by clapping his hands sharply.

Strangers in the galleries used to be startled, for instance, by an apparent burst of applause as soon as the chaplain's prayer was finished. It was not really a tribute to the reverend gentleman, but a call for pages. As the house grew larger and ever noisier this was done away with, electric push buttons were attached to the desks and the pages were banished to the cloak room, where the annunciator was installed.

This caused a lot of delay, so the pages were brought back to the main hall and placed in two corners where noiseless annunciators are in operation. When a button is pressed at a desk the corresponding number disk on the annunciator turns a reddish brown. The color gradually fades, taking about thirty seconds to die out entirely. So there is an end to hand-clapping except for real applause.

The representatives are fairly generous with this. It is a matter of democratic duty to applaud any member of the minority who gives the slightest excuse for it. That side of the house always seems to be saying: "Though we shout in vain, yet will we shout!" When a vote is taken and there is an indifferent mumble of ayes from the republican side and a violent explosion of noes from the democrats, the gallery novice is surprised to hear Uncle Joe's calm, singsong:

"The ayes seem to have it. The ayes have it."

But when the novice has seen the division of the house upon call after a few of these votes has observed the number of republicans which it took to make that number of ayes and has seen that volume of noes peter out to astonishing thinness he has more confidence in the speaker's ability to size up a vote.

It is an interesting thing, by the way, to see the speaker count a rising vote. He turns his gavel around, gripping it by its white marble head and using the foot-long slender wooden handle as a pointer. With his head forward, his eyes keen, his lips moving, he indicates each man with a peculiar motion of the gavel so decided and so exact that every member must know by watching that handle whether he is counted or not. His manner of using the gavel to maintain order is peculiar to him, too. He is left-handed, so that it is almost invariably with that hand he grasps the handle, at its extremity, and rather loosely.

He stands a great deal when presiding, and as he lifts the gavel above his head it has a good, long drop to the green baize cover of his desk. It falls with a slow bang—bang—bang. And when it does fall it produces an immediate effect.

When the house sits as a committee of the whole, with somebody else in the speaker's chair, it is amusing to watch the struggles of certain temporary chairmen. There is one who begins banging the desk before he is fairly seated, for he, like most of the temporary chairmen, sits down to the work that Uncle Joe stands up to.

He bangs and then he calls for order, and then he bangs some more. Then he scolds and pounds, singly and together. And with all the hullabaloo he makes he can't get as much order as the speaker does with three of those deliberate left-handers.

But it keeps Uncle Joe's good left arm pretty busy. The top of the speaker's great marble desk, at least about four or five feet of the center of it, is covered with a pine board, which, in turn, is covered with green baize. That board is already being pounded to pieces.

If you should run your hand over the worn spots on the baize which show where the gavel comes down you would feel not only the dents in the wood underneath, but that it is actually now in great slivers. Before the end of the session it will be a candidate for the sawdust pile. Hardwood was tried formerly instead of pine, but it hurt the speaker's hand too much and pine has been used ever since.

There is a worn spot on the baize at the right end of the desk where the temporary chairmen do their pounding and the wood there is yielding to their blows. It is less refractory than the house itself.

There is no detail which indicates more vividly the difference between senate and house manners than this very matter of gavel wielding. In the senate that implement has no handle at all. It is a mere head, which the vice president holds in his hand and with which he taps—taps, mind you—on his desk. If the speaker tapped on the house desk the gods might laugh, gallery and other varieties. Nobody else would know anything about it.

There is another interesting detail about the speaker's equipment. His chair runs on a track. Each rail is formed by two parallel pieces of brass slightly separated. The ends of the chair legs fit into these spaces, two running on one track, two on the other. As Uncle Joe is up and down fifty times a day while presiding, this sliding track is very convenient.

Among the things which always amuse the gallery gods is the spectacle of a representative going through all the motions of addressing the house, while the house shows not the slightest consciousness that it is being addressed. The orator himself doesn't seem to mind.

He is in reality not talking to the house

(Continued on Page Four.)