

WHEN HOWE AND MAJORS STROVE

Salathiel, better known as "The Wandering Jew," or some other character akin to him, wandered into the corridors of the state house one day last week and from thence into the house chamber and over to the senate chamber. After viewing the landscape o'er he retired to a quiet corner and shed many tears.

"Why these weeps?" queried a representative of Will Maupin's Weekly.

"I weep for the days that were and are not; for the scenes that have vanished and return not again," replied the weeping wanderer. "I have gazed upon the legislature when it moveth itself aright; when it giveth utterance to various things and mixed, and yet there is lacking something that I expected to see on this, my two hundredth centennial trip around the world; something that I saw when I was here a hundred years ago, more or less."

"And what was that, I pray thee?" queried the newspaperman, adopting the courtly language of the weeper.

"I miss the pulchritudinous gentleman from Nemaha, and his cerulean-shirted compatriot."

Then the newspaper man added his tears to the tears of the wanderer, and the engineer of the stone building gave the alarm, fearing that the water pipes had sprung a leak.

After weeping until his tear ducts went on strike the representative of Will Maupin's Weekly sat himself down and ground out a few reminiscences of the old days when the two gentlemen from Nemaha were wont to walk across the stage, pose in the political spotlight and blaze the pathway to erstwhile political reforms.

The feud between Church Howe and Tom Majors is historic, but its origin is almost lost in antiquity. Those who knew it have forgotten it during the fifteen years of comparative peace; the younger generation, intent on today's problems, never heard of it except in vague rumor. To revive memories in the minds of the graybeards, and impart information to the younger generation is undertaken the task of telling the story. It is official.

The Majors' farm is located in Peru precinct of Nemaha county, towards the county's northeastern corner. Fifteen miles away, in Bedford precinct, is the old Howe homestead. This is the geography of it.

In 1859 Tom Majors came to Nebraska from Jefferson, Ia., and located on the farm he still occupies. He entered the civil war as a first lieutenant in the First Nebraska, and came home at the war's close with the rank of major and the honors of a brevet lieutenant colonel. Hence the title—really earned, therefore different from most titles.

From 1866 to 1869 Church Howe, who also served with honor during the war as a member of the famous Massachusetts regiment mobbed in Baltimore, was United States marshal for the territory of Wyoming. In 1870 Howe came to Nebraska and located in Bedford precinct, Nemaha county. And that was the *entre act*.

The grange movement was in its glory when Howe arrived in Nebraska, and that wily and astute young gentleman seized his opportunity. He organized the first grange in Nemaha county, and became its first master. Tom Majors was also a member—a private in the ranks. The two, however, did not meet until 1871. In that year Wilson E. Majors, brother of Tom, was the republican candidate for county clerk, and of course Tom was doing everything he could to promote his brother's candidacy. Cap-

tain Pollock, postmaster at Peru, asked Tom if he had met Howe, and when Tom said he had not, Pollock exclaimed: "Well, by gracious, you ought to meet him; he's a regular political wonder."

Pollock immediately took steps to bring the two together, and succeeded. And in the little postoffice at Peru, in the fall of 1871, Church Howe and Tom Majors met for the first time. Before a word was said Howe gazed sharply at Majors, and Majors returned the gaze with interest.

"Mr. Howe, Colonel Majors; Colonel Majors, Mr. Howe," said Captain Pollock.

The two men shook hands then and there—and not again for many years.

"What do you think of Majors?" asked Pollock of Howe a few days later.

"A very agreeable gentleman," responded Howe. "But I'll keep my political eye on him."

"What do you think of Howe?" asked Pollock of Majors afterwards.

"He'll bear watchin', all right," responded Majors.

Several days after the meeting Majors called on Howe and requested him to assist in the work of electing his brother county clerk. Howe agreed and went to work, delivering several speeches in the county. He declared himself to be an ardent republican and it seemed that the newcomer was destined to rise high in the councils of his party in Nemaha county.

Howe's interest in the grange continued to develop and he was chosen president of the county grange. The constitution of the grange prohibited any discussion of politics in a grange session; and right here is where the characteristics which have made Church Howe famous throughout Nebraska developed for the first time to the citizens of Nemaha county. Presiding at a grange session Howe was in the habit of declaring: "We're adjourned as a grange and we will now hear political suggestions." At this, under the instructions of Captain Pollock's "political marvel and wonder" the county grange would proceed to lay out political plans, and then President Howe would declare: "We will now go into session again as a grange."

This was the straw which broke the camel's back. Majors, as master of his local grange, held that the order should not be directly or indirectly a participant in politics. In the early part of 1872 Howe resigned the chairmanship of the republican precinct committee and at the official meeting of the grange publicly denounced the republican party and declared himself and his all allied to the political destinies of the grange. The result was that in 1872 Howe was nominated by the grange for the legislature. The republicans, under the lead of Tom Majors, nominated William Bailey of Brownville. A bitter fight was made, but Howe had several advantages. He was the grange candidate and personally he was, as he is today, one of the most agreeable of men. Majors laid awake nights to down the new man, but when the ballots were cast and counted Bailey, the candidate of Tom Majors, went down into the dust and Church Howe was elected by a majority of thirty-two votes. Howe continued to gain in popularity, and in 1874 he was re-elected to the legislature by a majority of several hundred. In 1876 Howe was nominated for the state senate on the "people's ticket," Tom Majors then held what was known as "assessor of internal revenues," an office since abolished. Once more under the leadership of Majors, the republicans determined to

wipe up the floor with Pollock's political marvel. To accomplish this Dr. Neal of Peru was chosen for the victim. In the race Church Howe made a remarkable canvass. Speaking of it today an old Nemaha county resident said: "In that canvass Church Howe was a democrat among democrats, and to the republicans in the independent move he was a republican. To democrats he declared his admiration and earnest support for Tilden; to greenbackers he shouted for Peter Cooper, and to the republicans he said Hayes was the only man fit for the presidency.

At all events Howe must have builded better than his enemies knew, for once more Tom Majors dent down, and Church Howe became state senator by thirty-seven majority.

It was during the special session of '76 that Church Howe attracted the greatest public attention. The legislature had made no provision for counting the electoral vote, so a special session was called. Through Hayes had carried Nebraska by 15,000 majority, Senator Howe arose in his seat and protested against the canvass of the vote for presidential electors. This was seized upon by his antagonists in Nemaha county, and at least among republicans it did not raise the senator in point of esteem.

In 1877, weary and worn with the trials and tribulations of the independent movement, Howe issued his famous manifesto, in which he declared that he was "tired of sitting up with a corpse," and henceforward he would be a republican.

At the election following this declaration—fall of 1878—Howe bobbed up before the county republican convention as a candidate for re-election to the state senate. Tom Majors met the ex-grange leader at the threshold of the party spoils room and throttled his ambition. Then, when Howe acknowledged his defeat and gracefully doffed his hat to his foe, Majors made a concession which would have humiliated any other man than Pollock's political marvel. With an exhibition of charming magnanimity Majors—for the once triumphant—gave Howe's nomination for the legislature at the tail end of the Nemaha county legislative ticket. Did Church Howe accept it? Does a duck swim? Of course he accepted it and was re-elected to the legislature, and was as ever the most conspicuous man in the house.

It was in this session—1879—that Church Howe espoused the cause of temperance and introduced in the house a bill to establish statutory prohibition. This bill, through the earnest efforts of Church Howe, won many supporters and was finally defeated by one vote, or rather the absence of one vote. When the vote was taken on the bill Jake Roberts of Butler county, who had been one of the ardent champions of the measure, was missing. Roberts sent word that he was too sick to leave his bed and the prohibitory statute was defeated.

Within an hour after the vote was taken several of the inquisitive champions of the bill set forth on a still hunt. One of them mounted a step ladder and peered through a transom. Great Caesar, what a sight, my countrymen! There in the bloom of health and the pursuit of happiness sat Jake Roberts. Before him, on a well spread table, lay what seemed about three pounds of beef steak, the surplus of which was rapidly vanishing before the hungry onslaught of the gentleman from Butler. Through this incident the missing statesman won the title of "Beefsteak" Roberts. This connection