

JACOB KING AND HIS HELPMATE OF HALF A CENTURY

Life Story of a Bride and Groom Who Pledged Their Troth in Omaha, the First Couple to be Wedded in the Struggling Village on the Edge of the Western Wilderness, Fifty Years Ago

THE luck that Judge Wakeley 'wished' on the five-dollar gold piece handed him after the marriage ceremony and which he handed back has certainly come to pass, for here we are fifty years afterward, all three of us still living, happy, healthy and surrounded by our children.

This is the firmly expressed conviction of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob King, who were married in Omaha April 24, 1857, at the home of Experience Estabrook, then located at the present junction of Tenth street and Capitol avenue. The groom had been employed by Mr. Estabrook ever since he had arrived in the settlement nine months before the day of the wedding. That wedding was an event in Omaha. The living room of the Estabrook home was decorated suitably and the ceremony was performed by Judge Eleazer Wakeley, who had arrived just four days before to assume his duties as territorial judge. The wedding was his first official act. The day was Sunday; the weather was balmy and springlike. The neighbors and friends gathered in such force as to tax the capacities of the house and some were compelled to remain outside. Judge Wakeley in deep and impressive voice pronounced the ceremony. When it was over there were congratulations and best wishes and a few tears shed by some of the women in accordance with time-honored custom. And then it was that the groom proudly handed the judge the \$5 gold piece. It was a handsome fee, for gold pieces were extremely scarce in Omaha in '57, and this particular one had been saved by the young man for months for this express purpose. The judge took it and, turning at once to the blushing bride, said: "I give this gold to you. I know that you are better than gold. May both of you have a long and happy life." And the groom responded feelingly: "The same to you, judge, and God bless you."

A cheer greeted the couple as they came out from the house. Those without had been busy decorating the buggy which was waiting for them there, the buggy in which they were to take their wedding trip to Woodbine, Ia. And many honest, sturdy men shook the groom's hand and many good, noble, brave women kissed the bride before they reached the buggy. Away they went down toward the ferry, followed by the burrahs of the people and with the old shoes dangling behind the vehicle. They drove upon the ferryboat and were taken across. Some Indians at the landing on the Iowa side grinned at the dress of the two and at the shoes hanging behind. Even the redman comprehended the nature of the occasion. They had their wedding breakfast in Council Bluffs, at that time called Kaneshville, and then drove all day through the unsettled country. Compare a trip like this, says Mr. King, with the modern wedding trip. They were utterly alone. Today the young people, desiring each other's company, are besieged by prying eyes of hundreds from the time they leave the minister—in the streets, in the train, at hotels, everywhere. Mr. and Mrs. King believe theirs was the ideal honeymoon, with none but prairie dogs, gophers and the birds to disturb their peace.

Came From Afar to Meet Here

Kismet! Fate seems to have had a hand in bringing these two people together and uniting them in a marriage that has endured the storms of life for fifty years. Mrs. King, whose maiden name was Christina Christensen, was born in Denmark. Her parents died when she was a child. She came to America at the age of 18 years, landed at New Orleans and proceeded up the river to Western, Mo., where she worked for a time as a dressmaker. She arrived in Omaha July 29, 1856, just thirteen days after her future husband. Mr. King was born in Sangamon county, Illinois, September 3, 1831. His boyhood was spent in various parts of the east, where he worked on farms. When he was 25 years of age his uncle decided to go west and consented to take his nephew with him on condition that he work on his farm for one year. They drove across Illinois and Iowa with an ox team to Magnolia, Ia., where the uncle decided to go into partnership with another man in a general store. This released young King from his contract and he resolved to push on to Omaha, of which he had heard great things.

He arrived here July 7, 1856, and found a town of shanties and tents, but with apparently more people than the number of houses would indicate. He was a young man with nothing but his two hands, good health and a hopeful spirit, but these things were as good as money in those days. He began looking around for work. The first day he called on the governor and had three meals of cheese and crackers. One day he met a man in the barber shop who inquired: "Can you milk?" That was young King's "long suit," and he told the inquirer so. The man was Experience Estabrook and he immediately offered King work. The young man accepted and worked at the Estabrook place, Tenth and Capitol avenue, from that time until after his marriage.

"They treated me like a brother," says Mr. King, reminiscently. "I remember Experience and one instance of the way he trusted me. I hadn't been there but about a month when one day he asked me to go over to Iowa and buy up potatoes and hogs and other provisions. Just as I was leaving he hands me a roll of bills. 'Here's \$50,' he says, and I put them in my pocket without counting them. Well, I found later there was \$60 in the roll. When I got back I gave him my accounting of what I had bought. 'There's too much money here by \$10,' he says. 'No,' I says, 'that's your money. It isn't mine.' I had a hard time making him take it. You read a lot about bad men and gambling in those days. Well, the stories are true, but the good people were so good that they trusted each other a lot more than they do today."

Experience With Claim Club

Prior to this time Mr. King had had an experience with that terror of early settlers, the Claim club. He and Henry Porter went down to Sarpy county and took 160 acres each, a short distance west of Bellevue. They were required by law to live on it five days and build a house worth a certain sum. They had built their house and were living there when on the third day about twenty men appeared from Bellevue and notified them that they were "claim jumpers" and would have to come to Bellevue to answer to the charge. The head of the Claim club in Sarpy county at that time talked to the men when they were brought into the settlement. It was a Saturday night and it was decided to allow the two men to go home to appear Monday morning, when the members of the Claim club notified them, they would have a trial. King and Porter secured a lawyer in Omaha and on Monday morning went to Bellevue, each armed with a pistol and a big knife.

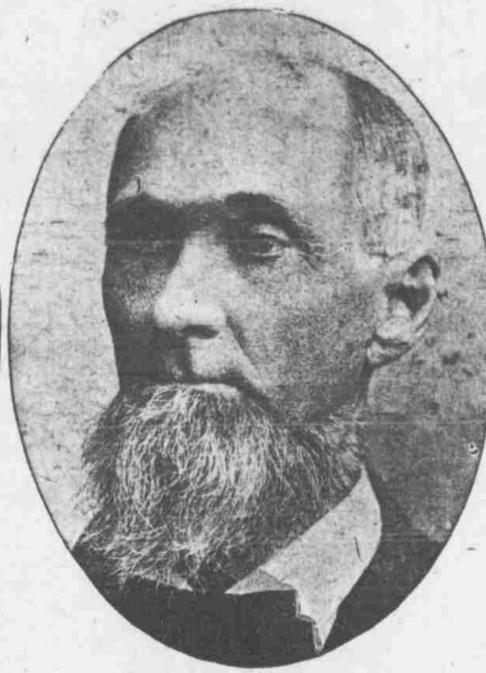
"I've had 2,000 Indians camped around me, but I was never half as frightened as I was in Bellevue among the Claim chubbers," says Mr. King. "I knew it was either a bullet, the Missouri river or clear out for us. 'The court' was held in the dining room of the hotel and it was crowded with as tough a lot of fellows as I ever saw. The court announced that a jury would be selected and the case heard, and that if we could prove we had any right to be there we could stay on the claim. Well, we waited until they had selected a 'jury.' It was made up of twelve of the toughest of the lot. If I'd had twelve deadly enemies in the world I would have expected just as much justice from them as from that outfit. Well, we knew it was no use to wait for the 'trial.' We called for our horses, the court not making any objection to our leaving in the middle of the case. We mounted and, without our lawyer, rode away and back to Omaha."

Mr. King claims to have an especially good view of early happenings in Omaha by reason of the fact that he was always a working man and was not limited by the horizon of any one profession. He shatters several commonly accepted facts of the early days. For example, he declares that A. D. Jones, who has the reputation of being the first postmaster of Omaha, was never really postmaster at all.

"There wasn't any United States mail brought to Omaha in those days," he says. "But every night someone would go over the river



CHRISTINA CHRISTENSEN KING.



JACOB KING.

and would bring the mail along the next morning. But we couldn't tell where to get the mail always when a different man brought it every day. In the morning we would go around asking if anyone knew who brought the mail over. So we arranged that whoever brought it over should give it to A. D. Jones. They did that and we always hunted him up when we wanted to get our letters. He used to carry them around in his hat. Many a time I've got a letter out of that big hat of his. But he never received a salary and was not appointed by Uncle Sam."

Mr. King was employed in the building of the first state capitol on the site now occupied by the high school. This building would have been located in Bellevue, he says, had it not been for the sudden death of Governor Burt. While Cumins was acting chief executive he sent word to Washington that Omaha had been selected as the site for the capitol and congress appropriated \$100,000 for a building. Much of this money, says Mr. King, was dissipated and in the end the city had to issue scrip to finish the capitol.

Bricks Like Eggs

Mr. King was employed in hauling brick for this building from the brick yard of Bovey & Armstrong, the contractors, which then stood on the present site of the Union Pacific shops. "Those bricks were just like eggs," he says. "It was scandalous to put such bricks in a building. They would break and crumble while we were pitching them off the wagon and piling them up. The head men were watching out for inspectors from the east, too. I remember there was one of the bosses that could swear a blue streak,

and they had it arranged that when the men from the east come out he should hang around, and if they examined the bricks he should pretend that they were not up to the standard. I remember once when the men came up to where the building was. This fellow came along and looked at the brick and began cussing and swearing and kicking the bricks around. The scheme worked and they were allowed to finish the building with them bricks, though the lower story began to crack before they got the upper stories built on. And it wasn't long before they had to put an iron band around the whole building to keep it from falling apart."

Returning now to the young people on that novel honeymoon trip to Woodbine, Ia. They came back again to Omaha within a week and prepared to carve a place for themselves out of the new country. They stayed at the Estabrook home for a time and by frugal and industrious habits saved enough by the fall of the year of their marriage to build a comfortable home next to the Estabrook homestead. There they lived until the following spring. Then the desire for a farm life returned to them again. With millions of acres lying around they saw no reason why they should not have a share of it in accordance with the law of the United States. They resolved to go to a part of the country where the Claim club would not molest them.

With two horses, a wagon, some farm implements and a few household utensils they pushed bravely into the west, drove three days and finally selected a place in what is now Colfax county. There they built a tiny house and set to work making a home. They were strenuous days for both, and especially for a little woman who had ventured into the wilds with her husband. At one time 2,000

Omaha and Pawnee Indians were camped around them. The pioneers had little worth stealing, and the redmen were not in a mood for killing, so they were unmolested. Five years later, when they had taken up another claim a short distance away, the two pioneers and their children were at the new house half a mile from the first dwelling one day when eight big Indian bucks appeared at the door and begged something to eat.

"I was alone in the house with the children," says Mrs. King, "and I recognized some loaves of bread they were eating. It was mine. I also recognized a blue and red tablecloth one of the warriors had tied around his shoulders and filled with something. It was our tablecloth. I pointed to them, but they shook their heads. Then they ran away immediately. I called Mr. King and we hurried to the house on our other claim. We found they had ransacked the whole place. They had taken all the children's clothes and some of my wedding jewels. I had to buy some Indian calico to get along on until I could get some cloth from Omaha."

Experience With Hostile Indians

In 1864 the Kings moved to another farm seven miles east of Genoa. Shortly after their arrival and within three miles of their home occurred the murder of several men who were cutting government hay. Adam Smith, Pat Murray and several others were in the party. They were working one afternoon when a small band of Indians appeared. A string of horses was tied near where the men were at work. Mrs. Murray was the first to notice a movement among the horses and she called the attention of the men to it. They examined them and found the rope cut again. Then they found an Indian in the weeds. Upon being discovered the Indians made an attack. The men were unprepared, but Mrs. Murray and a boy did good work for the defense. The boy crawled under a haystack, and, watching his opportunity, ran to the fort a few miles away and summoned aid. The woman-pulled arrows out of the body of one of the men and probably saved his life, though she was badly wounded by arrows while so engaged.

The next morning Mr. King went down to the scene of the fight. On the way he was met by two naked Indian bucks. One drew his bow at him, but as the white man did not run he became friendly and told of the fight. Mr. King picked up part of the scalp of Smith, who had been killed. The Indian apparently had cut off more than he wanted and had then cut it in half and left part of it.

Soon after this the two pioneers returned again to the city and Mr. King took charge of ten grading carts for the Union Pacific railroad. He claims to be the oldest employe of the Union Pacific road now living in Omaha. They lived for ten years in Papillion after returning from the farms in the Platte valley, and while there Mr. King was justice of the peace for several years.

Mr. King has been active in Masonry for many years. He has been grand tiler of the grand lodge Ancient Free and Accepted Masons in Nebraska for more than thirty years. He has been grand sentinel of the grand chapter of Royal Arch Masons. He was tiler of Capitol lodge No. 3, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, tiler of the grand council No. 1 and sentinel of the Scottish Rites Masons. During the week Mr. and Mrs. King will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of their wedding in Omaha. Around them in their home at 823 South Twenty-second street will be gathered their children and grandchildren. There are six children, as follows: Luene Albert King, Butte, Mont.; George Franklin King, Papillion, Neb.; Winfield Scott King, South Omaha; Mrs. Caroline A. Reed, Los Angeles, Cal.; Mrs. Alice Maxfield, Sarpy county, and Marcus L. King, Omaha.

These with most of the eighteen grandchildren will be gathered at the celebration this week. And the judge who tied that nuptial knot will be there and possibly one or two other survivors. And they will recall again those pleasant faces in the Estabrook home that Sunday morning fifty years ago; they will recall the kind words and the gold piece, and the cheers of the people as they drove away, and the honeymoon trip and the many events of the fifty years that have rolled between then and now.

Weidensall's Long Trip Through the British Isles

MY VISITATION of the British Islands was consecutive and consumed the time from the 13th of November to the 6th of December, 1906—twenty-two full days—and included the following cities: London, Birmingham and New Castle-on-Tyne, England; Edinburgh and Glasgow, Scotland, and Belfast and Dublin, Ireland. I paid a second visit to London later, when I spent the time from January 9 to 29, 1907. All this time I was under the effects of the grip or influenza, which had taken hold of me in Paris January 4.

London, England, situated on the Thames river, with a population of 6,000,000 inhabitants, is the largest city in the world, and doubtless the most cosmopolitan city in existence. It is made up of many small towns that have grown together into one great city. Notwithstanding its greatness, it has not the splendid symmetry of Paris, France, and while it has very many beautiful places, it can never be made so beautiful as a whole as the French city. It has a good system of subways for passenger transportation and the best managed omnibus and motor system for city surface passenger travel in the world. All parts of the city have central squares, or places with special names, as Victoria, Charing Cross, Piccadilly, Ludgate, Westminster, etc., as stations to and from which one can go by omnibus, motor, subway or steam car, which makes travel through the great city easily understood. The Thames river is spanned by a number of magnificent stone bridges. There are many fine squares and parks in London, but its boulevards and avenues are not so fine as those of Paris and other continental cities. London has many large and splendid buildings, public and private, and has very desirable residence districts. It has also many efficient public institutions for the good of the people, including the neglected, the wayward and the degenerate. If it would require weeks to study Paris, as I have stated of Paris, it would require months to study London equally well.

The very great majority of the population of London is evangelical in belief. While there is much dissipation in London, the standard of morality is much higher than in Paris, France, or St. Petersburg, Russia. It will be possible to make the merest mention of some of the things referred to above. Bridges across the Thames: The Westminster, Waterloo, Black Friar, London and Tower. Parks: Chapman Commons, Hyde park, Kensington Gardens, St. James park, etc. Public buildings: Buckingham palace, St. James palace, Royal Albert hall, Bank of England, Mansion House, houses of Parliament, British museum, National Picture Gallery, Windsor Castle, London tower, etc. Churches: St. Paul's cathedral, Westminster Abbey, St. Martin's, Metropolitan tabernacle (C. H. Spurgeon's). I might add that

London is full of monuments and statues—the Albert memorial, Lord Nelson's column, Trafalgar square, statue of William Tyndale the martyr; one of Queen Victoria, Gladstone memorial, Marble arch, etc.

Birmingham, England, is a large city twenty-one miles in circuit and has a population of more than 500,000 inhabitants. It is chiefly noted for its great iron and steel business. A city that is foremost in iron and steel industries is bound to be a progressive community and most helpful to the country in which it is located. It may be fittingly called the Pittsburgh of the British Isles. Almost all kinds of manufacturing are now carried on successfully. "The system of small masters (or employers), so rarely found at the present day, still holds its own in the manufacturing of Birmingham." "Wages are higher than in most of the manufacturing towns in the north of England."

Birmingham is most conveniently connected with the great centers of trade by railroads and canals, by which its manufactured articles are distributed in every direction. It has attractive streets, squares and handsome buildings. As samples of streets, Corporation street; of squares, Victoria square, and of buildings, the town-hall, the Council and Art gallery, the General hospital and I can add the splendid Young Men's Christian association building. Birmingham is the home of the great English tariff reformer, Hon. Joseph Chamberlain.

New Castle-on-Tyne, eight miles from the mouth of its river, is a progressive city of 250,000 inhabitants. The tides in the river make the city a port for large sea-going vessels. For a long time New Castle has been noted as the home of coal. At least to take coal to New Castle would have been regarded as a huge joke or an exceedingly foolish thing to do. However, where there is much coal there is much manufacturing. Much manufacturing affords much paying work, which in turn produces much wealth.

New Castle-on-Tyne is a large shipping and shipbuilding center. On the river in the city are many large shipping houses and lower down the river are enormous shipbuilding docks. At one of these docks the large new Cunard steamer Mauritania has recently been launched, said to be the largest passenger vessel in the world. New Castle has many other things of great interest, but I shall mention only several of them: The great pivot bridge across the Tyne, the old castle and Black Gate, exceedingly interesting. Its central square is very attractive, with the handsome grey column and the Young Men's Christian association building.

Edinburgh, Scotland, the capital of Scotland and the former residence of the Scottish kings, has a population of nearly 300,000 inhabitants.

It is a most noted place, whether considered from an ancient or modern aspect. The old city, with its castle on the highest point, down to Holy Rood palace, Holy Rood abbey and along High street, which contains many old historic buildings of all kinds, public and private, including St. Giles cathedral and John Knox's home, is full of interest. The old castle affords the finest panoramic view of the city and surrounding country. The Holy Rood palace and abbey are intensely interesting in themselves and in their history. John Knox's house occupies a conspicuous place. It has rooms of special interest which were occupied by him and are full of personal relics of the great reformer carefully preserved and kept where he was accustomed to use them. "The most picturesque and striking building in the old town of Edinburgh is the historic Cathedral of St. Giles. No ecclesiastical edifice in the kingdom has passed through so many vicissitudes and still survives its dignity and grandeur." The new city, according to its size, has perhaps more things of interest than any other city in Europe. The general postoffice, the Royal High school, one of the finest specimens of pure Greek architecture; the university, the National Observatory, the charming Princess street gardens, in which are the statue of David Livingstone and the superb monument of Sir Walter Scott. In a single picture some idea may be formed of the wonderful beauty and charm that characterizes much of Edinburgh. "Looking westward, the visitor sees one of the finest sights of the city, and the one which comes first and goes last when the mind reverts to the Edinburgh visit—one of the finest promenades in Europe—it would be difficult to find anything to surpass it in any country. Standing at the postoffice, you see Princess street stretch out a mile in length, guarded on the left by the castle overlooking the gardens, while Scott's monument, in its majestic grace and beauty, with the classic buildings of the Royal institution and the National gallery behind, present a picture with scarcely an equal."

Glasgow is a large and important city, with a population of about 500,000 inhabitants. While it does not possess the exquisite charm and beauty of Edinburgh, it is not without these characteristics in large measure. It is rather to be classed as a commercial and manufacturing city, and in these it excels. In the language of another: "Glasgow, the commercial metropolis of Scotland, is the second city in the United Kingdom and sends several members to the House of Commons to watch the interests of its 500,000 inhabitants. It is picturesquely situated on either bank of the Clyde, about twenty miles from the sea, and is the most important seaport in Scotland. It yields to Liverpool only in shipping, approaches Manchester in the cotton spinning. New Castle in the coal; exceeds the Thames and the Tyne in the iron ship-

building and equals the Merthyr and Wolverhampton with its iron furnaces; while the industry of its inhabitants have converted the shallow Clyde into a broad and deep dock for many of the largest merchant ships—lined with nearly six miles of quay—created at a total cost of about \$8,000,000. In addition to all this, it was the birthplace of the steam engine—James Watt's invention having been perfected here."

Belfast Ireland, is the chief commercial city of Ireland. It is located on the river Lagan, about twelve miles from the Irish sea, and has a population of about 300,000 inhabitants. Its inhabitants are largely of Scotch-Irish and mainly Protestant. It has many churches and is well supplied with higher educational institutions. There are three bridges across its river, the Queen's bridge being the principal one. Belfast is the main depot of the Irish linen trade and the principal center of that trade in the British Isles. There are also large shipbuilding yards. At one of them one of the two largest new ocean liners has recently been launched. It is about the same size of the Mauritania on the Tyne.

Belfast has, it is said, the largest linen manufactory and the largest tobacco manufactory in the world. It has some fine buildings—the new city hall, large, convenient and graceful; the Corn exchange, Ulster hall and museum, White Linen hall, the Albert Memorial monument and the Young Men's Christian association building.

Dublin, the capital of Ireland, is a city of possibly 300,000 inhabitants, chiefly Roman Catholics. "Dublin has been justly classed amongst the most beautiful cities of Europe. Situated on the River Anna-Liffey, which, running east and west, practically divides the city into equal parts. Its public buildings are numerous and of great architectural beauty and its streets and squares are very fine."

Among its finest buildings are: Trinity college, the Bank of Ireland, formerly the Parliament house; Dublin castle, the General Postoffice, the Custom house and the Four Courts. The St. Patrick's cathedral, a Protestant cathedral, in which Dean Swift is buried, is a most interesting edifice, and the Roman Catholic cathedral, in Marlborough street, said to be the counterpart of the St. Mary Majoris in Rome, is of very great beauty. Sackville street is one of the finest streets of the kingdom; on it is the magnificent monument of Daniel O'Connell, the statue of Sir John Grey and the Nelson column. Besides these, there are other fine streets and squares—the Phoenix park, covering an area of 1,750 acres, naturally and beautifully timbered, with splendid drives and walks all through it, is Dublin's most noted park. It was in this park that Cavendish and Burke were

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