

DANIEL HOTCHKISS WHEELER AN EARLY DAY NEBRASKAN

Michigan Schoolmaster Who Came West in an Early Day and Found Another Outlet for His Talent Prospers with the Growth of the Country He Helped to Develop and Bring to Fruitful Use.

DANIEL HOTCHKISS WHEELER has lived fifty years of the real strenuous life in Nebraska. His activities have been great and varied. He has acquitted himself with honor in politics, in business, in society. He knew Abraham Lincoln. In boyhood he was a friend of William R. Shafter, who was destined to become a major general in the United States army.

He was born on his father's farm in St. Joseph county, Michigan, November 26, 1834. He received his early education in the log school house near his birthplace, where the children all sat on benches made of the slabs sawed from the sides of logs and provided with legs made of rough sticks of wood. When he was 18 years old he entered the academy in the neighboring town of Schoolcraft. A teacher was needed at the log school house that winter and he left the academy and became teacher of the school where he had been a pupil the preceding term. Thirty-one of his thirty-seven pupils there were either sisters and brothers or cousins, the community consisting almost entirely of members of the Brown and Burson families.

He attended the Schoolcraft academy two years following his experience as school teacher and then he went over into another county and taught school. In the neighboring district the school was in charge of William R. Shafter.

"Shafter didn't show any special leaning toward the army then," says Mr. Wheeler. "He was sort of a blustering fellow, always going around with a chip on his shoulder waiting for anyone to knock it off. And yet he was a quite likeable young man. We had many a spelling match between his school and mine. Sometimes I would take my pupils over to his school on a Friday and sometimes he would bring his over to mine. I knew him all through his life."

Low Pay for School Teachers

He entered the employ of his uncle, a distiller at Three Rivers, Mich., at the age of 20 years, as bookkeeper and remained there about a year. Then his attention was directed westward, and in company with his brother-in-law he emigrated to western Iowa. The trip from Burlington to Council Bluffs took six days and nights by stage. It was a trip he has never forgotten, through a glorious land full of waving wild flowers, basking in the spring sunlight. The vast acres seemed to be lying waiting for the advance of the army of men who should till the fertile soil and make it yield the great wealth which was stored up in it. He had intended to teach school, but on finding that the salary was only \$30, and board would cost about \$27 a month, he decided that wealth was not to be gained in disseminating knowledge. So he entered the employ of Nuckolls & Co., who had stores in Glenwood, Ia., and in Plattsmouth, Neb. He traveled between these two points, making collections, buying furs from the Indians and performing the other services of a pioneer merchant.

A girl had been left behind him in Michigan and as soon as he had a permanent location in the territory he hurried back over the arduous miles to Kalamazoo, and on February 26, 1857, he married Charlotte A. Lewis, a cousin of the late Dr. Dio Lewis of New York and of former Judge of the New York Supreme Court Lorin L. Lewis. It was on this trip that he first visited Omaha. It was on New Year's day, 1857. He stayed in the Douglas house on the southwest corner of Thirteenth and Harney streets, where he shared a bed in the crowded quarters with three other travelers.

Reaching Plattsmouth with his bride, he determined to go into business for himself with money he had saved. He erected a two-story frame building and put in a stock of hardware. He took a leading part in affairs at once, holding the position of county superintendent of schools in 1858 and making the first educational report in that county. He was elected county clerk of Cass county in 1859 and at that time began the insurance and real estate business, which he has continued ever since.

Acquaintance with Lincoln

His acquaintance with Abraham Lincoln was intimate. He met him first in Council Bluffs in 1859. The man who was to occupy such a lofty position in American history was not very well known at that time. He had begun his political career, but his welcome to the west was not strikingly enthusiastic. Most of the pioneers were of the opposite political persuasion and to them Lincoln was an abolitionist and a radicalist.

"I met Lincoln at the home of Dexter L. Bloomer in Council Bluffs," says Mr. Wheeler. "Mrs. Bloomer, by the way, was the originator of the costumes for women, which bear her name to this day. I liked Lincoln. He had an easy, careless, sociable way about him and told funny stories that put us all at ease. He delivered only one speech in Council Bluffs. The next time I met him was in his own private office at Washington. The great and terrible calamity that was approaching cast no shadow before it. Even while we sat there the assassin was getting ready to take the life of that wonderful man who had brought the country through the greatest crisis in its history. We were there on the afternoon of April 13, and on the following evening Lincoln was shot.

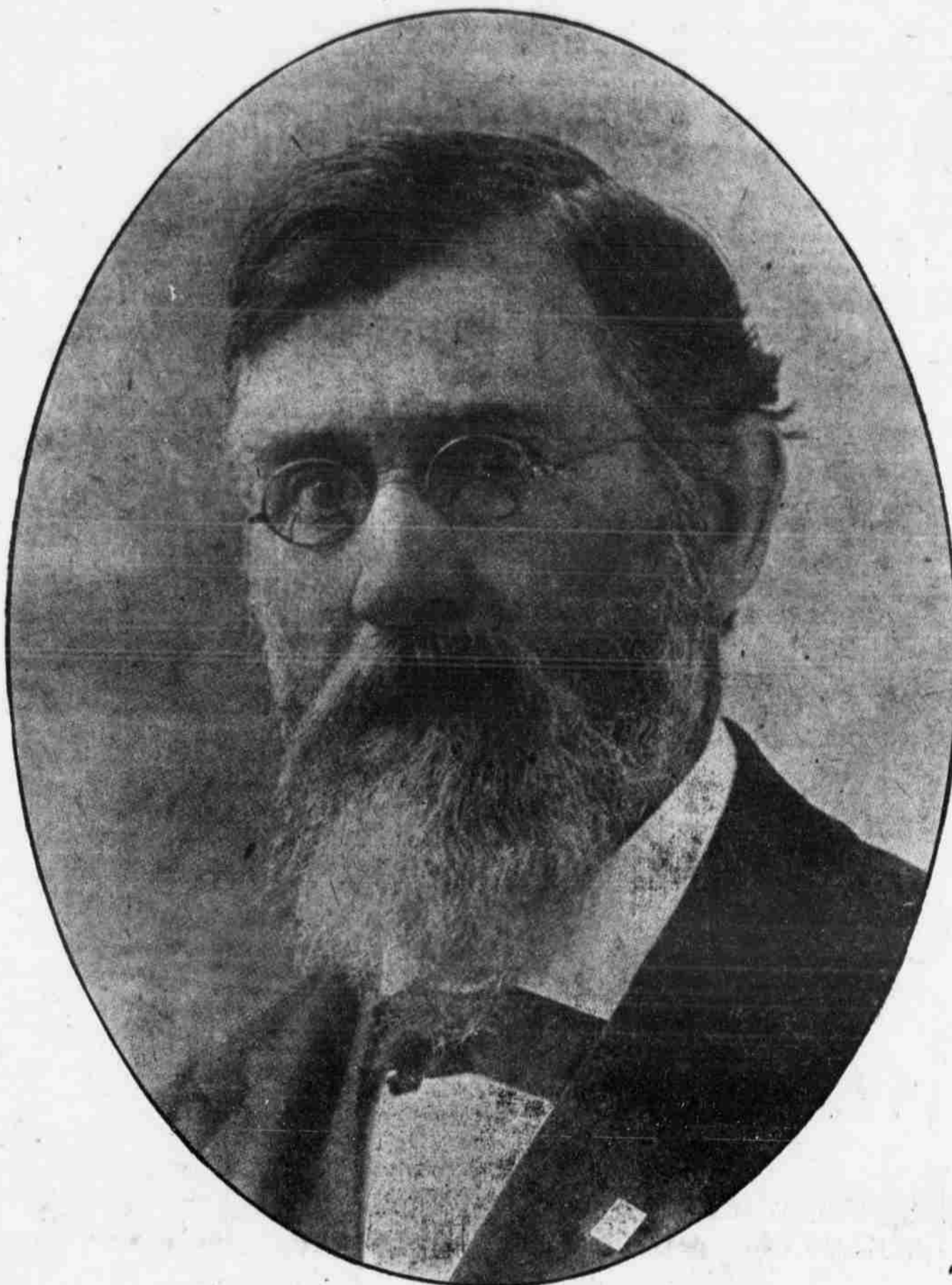
"He was very approachable, only one man standing at the door of his office between him and the public. I remember how he sat up straight in his leather-covered revolving chair. His movements were very deliberate and his speech had a drawl. He called everybody by his first name. William Pitt Kellogg was one of our party and was seeking the appointment as collector at the port of New Orleans. I remember Lincoln said to him: 'Well, Pitt, if I appoint you to New Orleans I think I'll appoint old Bill to your place in Nebraska.' He referred to another Kellogg, whose name was William and whom he proposed to appoint to the position in the Nebraska judiciary, which would be left vacant by the appointment of Pitt Kellogg to the New Orleans position.

"He bade us a cheery good-bye. I went to New York and the next evening, when I was at the Astor house, the news came of the assassination. There were men on the streets of New York who ventured to say in that awful hour that it 'served the 'abolitionist' right.' And when such an expression was heard the man was promptly knocked down and kicked into the gutter. I attended the mass meeting the next day where Ben Butler and James A. Garfield spoke. That was the occasion when Garfield spoke that often-quoted sentence: 'The president is dead, but the government at Washington still lives.'"

Year as Indian Agent

Like the other applicants who had visited the president that last day of his life, Mr. Wheeler had been successful in his object. He had come away with the appointment as agent for the Pawnee Indians on their reservation west of Columbus. He took up his duties July 1, 1865. He succeeded in maintaining peace among the red men better than any of his predecessors. He used to drive out from Plattsmouth, a distance of 110 miles. Once he made the trip in a spring wagon, with a pair of ponies, in a day. As a rule the trip took longer and was often marked by hardships. One of the first things he did after taking charge of the tribe was to ride 150 miles to the north, accompanied by the four big chiefs of the Pawnees, and complete a treaty of peace with the warlike Sioux, which tribe was accustomed to amuse itself frequently by going on the war-path and murdering its red brethren of other tribes. Having smoked the pipe of peace with them, he returned and took up his duties of apportioning bright red calicos and brilliantly-striped blankets to the noble red men.

"We had a peaceful tribe there," says Mr. Wheeler, "and everything went along swimmingly. It was hard to get the Indians to do any work. About the only ones who would do manual labor for pay were old squaws or those who had lost their husbands. The bucks, of course, never stooped to toil and their squaws would work only for them. Each Indian had from one to four wives and a liberal



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supply of papposes. We started a government school while I was there, and that was one of the hardest jobs I had. The papposes were as wild as rabbits and they didn't want to go to school. You could hardly blame them, for it was something which they could not understand in its ultimate object. We had the worst time getting hold of them the first few weeks. They would run and hide in the bushes and I, assisted by my police Indians, had to chase them out, just as one would chase out rabbits or other wild game. The parents of the children were willing to have the girls go to school, but for the boys who were to become braves they were convinced the school could be of no advantage."

Perhaps President Andrew Johnson knew that Mr. Wheeler had voted against him as Lincoln's running mate at the national convention in 1864, to which Mr. Wheeler was a delegate from Ne-

braska. Probably some person who coveted his job called Johnson's attention to this fact. At any rate he removed Mr. Wheeler from the place, and on October 1, 1866, he returned again to Plattsmouth, where he devoted his attention actively to the real estate and insurance business. But these interests were not sufficient to take up all his time and he began reading law under T. M. Marquett. He made such progress that he was admitted to the bar less than two years later.

He was mayor of Plattsmouth during the most important year of that city's development, 1869, when ground was broken for the Burlington railroad and when the city voted \$50,000 bonds to secure the headquarters of the road. His little law office was the place where the stock subscription of \$7,500,000 to the road was made. Perkins, Toussain and Thielsen, three of the great magnates of the

Burlington, were there. Mr. Wheeler took \$3,000 of the stock himself, this being the only block that was bought by a citizen of Nebraska.

The Sheldon and Pollard families were intimate friends of the Wheelers during the residence of the latter in Plattsmouth. Congressman Ernest Pollard was named after the oldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler, who died in his youth. Miss Lottie Pollard was named after Mrs. Wheeler. Mrs. Wheeler and Mrs. Pollard were once participants in a typical Indian scare. They were alone with their little children in the Pollard farm house, when they saw what they thought was an Indian come riding over the hill, his blanket fluttering out behind him in the wind. They hurried into the house, barricaded the door, and armed with axes, determined to resist to the end. But the supposed Indian turned out to be only a woman from a neighboring farm, who was wrapped up in shawls so that she resembled an Indian at a distance.

Activities of Later Years

Mr. Wheeler was elected secretary of the State Board of Agriculture in 1868 and held that office for sixteen years. He was elected secretary of the state senate in 1873 and occupied that position at the two following sessions and also at one special session.

Mr. Wheeler moved to Omaha in June, 1885. With his son, Daniel H. Wheeler, Jr., he established the firm of Wheeler & Wheeler, insurance and real estate agents, which firm has continued in business until the present time. He continued his strenuous activities after coming to Omaha. The first public position which he held was that of secretary of the Omaha Fair and Speed association, in which capacity he served two years.

He was elected a member of the city council in 1889 and served in that body seven years. For six years he was chairman of the finance committee, and in that capacity had more to do with disbursing the city funds than any other man. He performed his duties so carefully and was so vigilant in detecting and resisting measures to spend money in a manner which he considered useless or lavish that he soon gained the name "Watchdog of the Treasury." Some of the hardest work of his life was done while he was supervisor of the census in the Second congressional district of Nebraska, in 1900. He had 197 people working under him and for eight months devoted himself to the duties of his position eighteen hours a day. He came out of the ordeal with his health somewhat broken and has never regained it fully.

In the activities of the leading secret fraternities, Mr. Wheeler has been among the foremost. He is now a thirty-third degree Mason, wearing upon his little finger that three-banded ring of which there is but one in the state. He joined the Masonic lodge in Michigan in 1856. He has been master of Plattsmouth lodge No. 6 and master of Nebraska lodge No. 1, in Omaha. He is the oldest past grand master of the lodge, having held that position in 1863; past high priest of Nebraska chapter No. 3; past grand high priest of Nebraska chapter No. 3; past grand high priest of Nebraska grand chapter; grand master of the grand council, Royal and Select Masters; past commander of Mount Zion commandery No. 5, Knights Templar, and past grand commander of the grand commandery of Nebraska. He is a member of the Knights of Pythias, which order he joined in 1868. He joined the Odd Fellows in 1866 and is past grand master of that order.

Taking Life Easy Now

Mr. Wheeler and the cheerful helpmate whom he brought to Nebraska in the early days still live in Omaha, taking their ease in their comfortable home at 559 South Twenty-sixth avenue. Five sons were born to them, of whom two are living. William Herbert Wheeler resides in Omaha and is associated with his father in the insurance business. Myron E. Wheeler lives in Lincoln, where he has business interests and also acts as court reporter in the district court. The latter served a year in the revenue service in Cuba, shortly after the close of the war with Spain. Later he was private secretary to George D. Mielejohn while he was assistant secretary of war. William H. Wheeler was formerly reporter in the United States court here and also private secretary to David H. Mercer and clerk of the congressional committee on public grounds and buildings.

Though somewhat disabled by partial paralysis, Mr. Wheeler is still active in the pursuit of his varied interests. He is a leader in the councils of the secret fraternities to which he belongs. During his long connection with these organizations he has received many medals and diplomas of honor in recognition of his services. These form a valuable and interesting collection. He has also an extensive library in his home.

Campagna of Rome a Burial Place of Dead Cities

ROME, Sept. 3.—The Roman Campagna is a huge burial place of dead ancient cities, the children of the great mother of nations, Rome.

A vast undulating plain, for the most part a wilderness without a human habitation, here and there covered with meadows and grassy slopes where cattle and sheep pasture or with grain waving in the wind; a pestilential region where swamps and marshes are left to stagnate in the sun and generate miasmas, and yet, rich and varied with every kind of beauty—such is the Campagna. Everywhere cities, towns, temples, villas and the generations of the dead lie buried under one's feet.

Caere, which was alternately the enemy and the ally of Rome, is obliterated save for its necropolis. Veii, Rome's powerful rival, has vanished except for traces of its old walls and of its nine gates, and until recently its very site had been forgotten. Gaius has all but disappeared.

The hills on which stood Fidene are bare and desolate, its walls have disappeared, not one stone remains on one another and tombs are the sole evidences of its existence. Not a trace remains above ground of Antemnae, the city of many towers, whose daughters, ravished by the followers of Romulus, became the mothers of the Roman race. Sutrium and Laurentum and many other cities of the fifty nations which Pliny enumerates as belonging to early Latium have all vanished.

The villas of Pompey, of Julius Caesar, where the nobles of Rome greeted him on his return from Africa, and of Marcus Aurelius, as well as the site of Alstun on the seacoast where they all stood, have also disappeared. Tarquinii, the capital of Etruria, is no more, and nothing is seen above the ground where it stood but low mounds marking its necropolis, sixteen miles in extent and said to contain over 2,000,000 tombs.

Sometimes, as in the case of Ostia, a whole city is laid bare, but very often only a fragment of ruin, rising here and there above the ground, and marking the remains of a theater or a temple, attests the existence of a city. More often still only the undulations of the turf show where the city once stood.

High on the hills the remains of ancient sites are more evident. The arch of a temple, a rock hewn amphitheater and the remains of walls are frequently met with. Further away from Rome,

where classical buildings were scarce, mediaeval palaces and fortified palaces are still standing, once the center of inhabited regions, but now the landmarks of a solitary wilderness, all as desolate and dead as the ashes of a long extinguished fire.

The comparison of the Roman Campagna to a huge burial place is not a simile suggested by its barrenness, wildness and death-like silence. Besides the dead cities the Campagna contains a mighty population of the dead.

The Latins are buried here, perhaps on the same site where before them the ashes of generations of the past without a history or a name were laid to rest. Then followed the Etruscans and other ancient peoples whose tombs have served as documents of their history.

Next came the Romans, Pagan and Christian, the latter filling subterranean cities where in avenues winding for miles and miles the skeletons of martyred and the persecuted lie in tier above tier. The enemies of Rome killed in battle are there, the victims of the Circus; the slaves killed more for amusement than for punishment, the Goths, Vandals and other barbarians and the innumerable victims of every sex, age and condition that fell a prey to their fire and sword.

The dead of the Middle Ages in pillages and sacks, wars and almost daily conflicts between the popes and the nobles, the nobles and the people, are buried with the later, victims of brigands and thieves, and even today with them are being laid the victims of the malaria, which is the scourge of the place—poor tillers of the land or shepherds mostly, who come down from the mountains in the hope of profit and pay for their venture with their lives.

Is it any wonder that the Campagna is so full of sad memories? It is a cemetery of cities and men, and though seemingly dead, it is alive with vestiges of the past; though sad and wild in some parts, yet it is green with grass, golden with grain and gracious with wild flowers in others; it is an ever changing picture, peopled with the shadows of dead generations, deadly yet alive, desolate yet beautiful.

The depopulation and desolation of the Roman Campagna and the plague of malaria date from the time of Gregory the Great, that is, the seventh century. It was then that villas and farm houses were

burned, olive orchards and vineyards uprooted, the supply of water shut off, all sources of life and thrift were drained, and the whole plain from the Apennines to the sea was turned into an unhealthy and dangerous wilderness.

Yet this change was by no means sudden, but very gradual, and many and different causes contributed to bring it about. The decline of Rome and consequently that of the country surrounding it—which Pliny describes as one of beautiful amenity, the work of a rejoicing nature, with vital and parenth salubrity of atmosphere, fertile plains, thick groves and rich varieties of trees—began with the change of the seat of the empire to Constantinople in the year 336. In 410 Alaric and his hordes of Goths swept down from the north and plundered the city for three long days.

It is known that many houses outside the gates were burned and that after the sack burials in the Catacombs were abandoned on account of the insecurity of the suburbs, a proof that these, like the interior of the city itself, suffered greatly at the hands of the barbarians. A result of the barbarian invasions was the burying and careful hiding of bronze statues and other works of art, and it may be assumed that what was left unhid, especially in the villas and temples scattered through the Campagna, was destroyed and burned by the Goths.

Within a short time the second capture and sack of Rome by Genseric and the Vandals followed, about the middle of the fifth century. The Vandals, mixed with Bedouins and Moors, plundered the city during fourteen days and carted the booty to the ships moored in the Tiber.

Later Ricimer, Witiges and Totila followed and palaces, temples, houses, villas, and aqueducts were razed to the ground and left to crumble to ruin and to dust. The traces of the Barbarians along the northern portion of Campagna may be seen almost to this very day.

All through the route over which they poured not a stone is left standing on another and hardly a trace of a building is left. Here the Campagna is desolate and barren almost as if fire had crossed it and burnt its very earth.

water famine, the latter to prevent the enemy from entering the city. This proved disastrous to the country surrounding Rome, and even the most salubrious hills were rendered uninhabitable.

The Goths despoiled and ravaged the whole Campagna, and it is easy to imagine what damage was done. The barbaric eruptions were followed by earthquakes, inundations, famine and pestilence. The popes and anti-popes fighting for supremacy with the German emperors or disputing with each other for their succession, had no time to lend a helping hand.

Later came Robert Guiscard and the Normans and in 1527 the constable of Bourbon, whose ravages were worse than those of Genseric and Totila. Fortresses were made out of tombs and monuments, everything rotted and crumbled away, and as a result of the desolation of fields and gardens and the annihilation of agriculture, malaria stalked in the footsteps of ruin, rendered the Campagna uninhabitable and made it what it now is, a desolate wilderness, a huge cemetery.

But even a cemetery has charms. An Italian sky, abundant if wild vegetation, the memories of the past, variations in color reflecting every aspect of the sky and answering every touch of the seasons and sunshine, all contribute to make the Campagna perhaps the most varied and picturesque region in the world.

It is generally admitted that the only remedy against malaria is cultivation, drainage and population, and it has been said that the scourge of malaria in the Campagna is due to the misgovernment of the popes. The church made feeble efforts to combat the scourge, but as six-tenths of the Campagna land was held in mortmain by the church, and it has been stated that it did not favor agriculture, the old rule was fatal to agriculture and the reclaiming of land.

This statement may be true; still, the improvements effected by the Italian government since 1870 in the Campagna of Rome have hardly altered its condition, and this district is no better drained or cultivated or peopled today than it was under papal rule, while high taxation, practically unknown under the church, handicaps all efforts at improvement.

The land of the Campagna is of a deep rich
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