

MANOAH B. REESE PIONEER JURIST AND LEADER AT BAR

Life of a Man Who Has Had Much to Do With Forming the Society of the Great Commonwealth of Which He Has Long Been An Honored and Useful Citizen.

LIKE a giant oak beaten and buffeted by the snows and storms of many years, yet which stands strong and sound, rising to majestic height among its fellows, is the republican candidate for supreme judge, Hon. M. B. Reese. He stands among the last of a very few strong pioneers in the fight of the people against the domination of railroads in Nebraska politics. In times past he has carried the people's banner to victory, and he has fallen beneath the tremendous weight of the power of the corporations. Considerable sentiment attaches to the candidacy of Judge Reese at this time, for it is just seventeen years since he went down before the powerful onslaughts of the combined railroad influences in a republican state convention. At that time he had served six years, or a full term, and his defeat was his reward for faithfulness to a trust. That the railroads at this time would oppose his renomination goes without saying, when The Bee said of him:

In Judge Reese the republican party presents to the people of Nebraska a candidate who has often been tried and never found wanting; a man who laid down the judicial ermine he had worn for six years as spotless as when he first donned it. Coming unsought, and, in fact, in spite of repeated declinations, the nomination of Judge Reese by unanimous vote of a representative and harmonious convention is an honor rarely conferred. It is an expression of confidence and esteem that comes to but few men in a lifetime.

Practically the entire life of Judge Reese in Nebraska has been spent under the limelight, though, personally, he prefers to work at his profession rather than hold office. He was a member of the constitutional convention in 1875; district attorney of the Fourth judicial district for three terms; supreme judge, and dean of the law department of the State university. All positions of the greatest importance. How well he has done his duty and how faithful he has been to the trust reposed in him, is answered by the endorsement given him by his party at the late primary election. Judge Reese was slow to ask for this endorsement, and only allowed the use of his name after many newspapers and many people had called upon him to again assume leadership. Before he announced his candidacy in answer to this demand, he was for the renomination of Judge Sedgwick, for whom he always had the most profound respect and admiration. His nomination this year was not unlike his nomination ten years ago. At the convention held at that time in Omaha, there were many candidates, but all united in a call for Judge Reese. He repeatedly declined to accept, but finally responded to the call. He accepted over the long distance telephone, and in the files of expense account in the office of the secretary of state it is shown that he spent 32 cents to get the nomination, and on the margin of his report it is written out that this sum was spent after the convention had acted.

Illinois Farm His Start.

Judge Reese was born in Macoupin county, Illinois, in 1839, a farmer boy, and doubtless would still be a farmer with a ranch 100 miles square for a workshop somewhere in western Nebraska, had he not injured an arm about the time he was ready to branch out, and this turned his attention to another profession, for in those days a farmer didn't get to use a riding plow or cut cornstalks by proxy as they do now. While he was living on the farm Judge Reese completed the course prescribed by the country schools, and then worked his way through a seminary near his home. Between his farm work and his schooling he found time to court and win for a wife Miss Carrie Burrows. All this happened by the time he was 23 years old, and so proficient was he in his law studies that about the same time he was admitted to practice and removed to Osceola, Ia., Illinois having become entirely too eastern for him. He lived in Iowa from 1865 to 1871, when he heard the call of the prairies and removed to Plattsmouth, where he again hung out his shingle. The health of Mrs. Reese was not good in the river town, so the judge, with his belongings, removed to Wahoo. He resided in Saunders county only two years, when the people realized his worth and he was elected a member of the constitutional convention of 1875. In this convention he attracted the attention of the state, and no sooner did he reach home and get settled down again than he was called upon to make the race for district attorney of the Fourth district. He was elected to this office in 1876, and was re-elected twice, but before his third term was completed he resigned and moved to Lincoln, where a larger field was open to him for the practice of law. That was in 1882.

People Call for Him.

While Judge Reese has been in office a good many years, the records show the people have wanted him oftener than he has called upon the people to take him. He had no sooner become settled in Lincoln than he was called upon by the republican party to make the race for supreme judge. He was elected, and served until 1889. Then, following custom, he entered the contest for a renomination. That republican convention, which has been recorded as the best railroad-controlled convention ever held in the state, defeated him. As he again took up his private business Judge Reese was called upon by the Board of Regents of the State university to become a member of the faculty of the law school. This was followed shortly by his elevation to the position of dean, which he held with distinction for ten years.

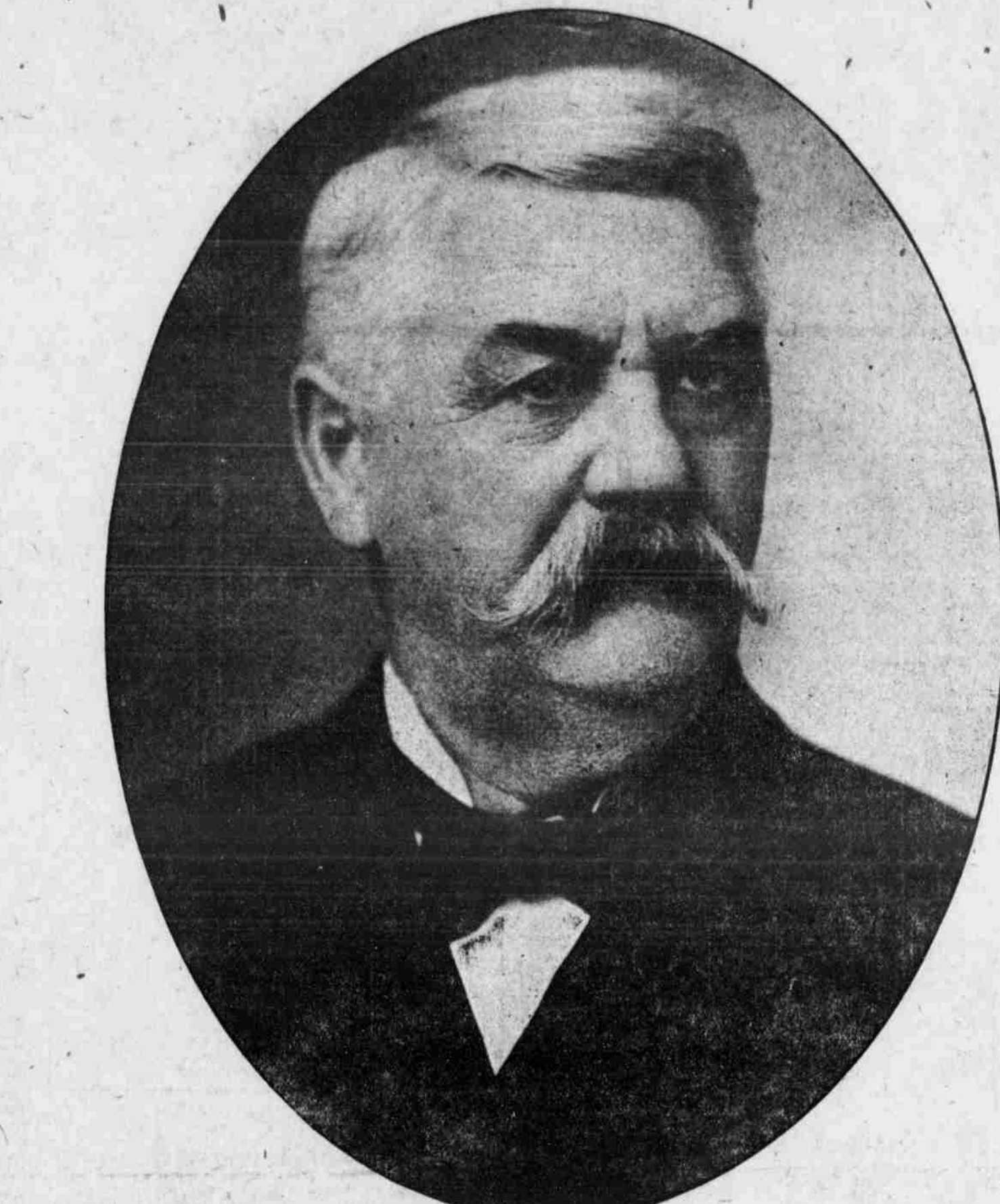
How well he succeeded as the head of the law school is best told by the action of his students, 500 of whom he graduated, during the late campaign. Nearly every one of them, some in the farthest corners of the globe, wrote him letters of encouragement and good wishes, while those in the state, or several of them, who through circumstances did not openly support him, did not work against him. During the school days he won the love and admiration of his students, and he has retained their sincere friendship. Incidentally, Judge Reese keeps in close touch with a great majority of these former students, and it is his boast that practically all of them are doing well and have become respected and honorable citizens.

It is said of Judge Reese that he never graduated a law student who was not qualified to practice. He was most vigorous in his examination and his greatest hobby was to make the student reason out propositions rather than memorize them from books. He detested the "faker," and he could always "spot" one. He carried his religion into his classes, and an old student recalled that his favorite expression was this: "Though you speak with the tongue of men and angels and be without faith, you are as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

His Advice to Students.

He impressed upon his students that with all the learning and all the oratory in the world they could not win cases in court without evidence—therefore "use shoe leather," he advised, "dig up evidence." This trait of thoroughness in Judge Reese was shown in his prosecution of Orlando Casier, convicted and hanged for murder in Seward county during the time he was prosecuting attorney. Casier lived in the county and was well and fairly favorably known, while his victim was a stranger, going through the country in a covered wagon seeking a location. The evidence was hard to get and the fight to save the man was a hard one, but with characteristic energy the district attorney gathered his evidence and made his case, and the verdict was guilty. This case marked an epoch in the Fourth judicial district.

For six years Judge Reese has been president of the Nebraska Prison association, and in this position the good he has done is incalculable. This association was organized for the purpose of assisting convicts who having served their time were once more thrown out into the world to make their way. It is one of the rules of the association that none of its members shall, as such, assist in the trial of any person or assist in getting a parole or pardon, but to assist the convict only after his release. Recently Judge Reese was called upon to sign a petition asking for executive clemency for a



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prisoner sentenced to be hanged. He replied: "As a citizen I might want to help this man, but as a court I don't see how I could help but hang him, as long as the law is as it is." And that has been the record of Judge Reese—he has strong personal opinions on all subjects and never fears to express himself, but as a judge he interprets the law regardless of his personal opinion in the matter.

As an officer and a helper in the Nebraska Prison association Judge Reese has been brought in contact with men of influence throughout the country who are interested in the betterment of humanity, and the records of the association show that his advice has been eagerly sought by these men from all parts of the country. He has received scores of letters from ex-convicts who have become good citizens through his efforts to help them. Recently one man wrote him from Massachusetts that he is now receiving a salary of \$1,500 a year and is doing well in every way. Four years ago this man was behind the bars at the state penitentiary.

Judge Reese has been a prominent member of the Methodist church and so long has he been identified with this denomination his friends frequently refer to him as John Wesley. In 1888 he was a member of the general conference of the church held in New York City. He is still active in the church work and never misses a Sunday morning service. Recently he was asked if he could spare an hour on a Sunday. "Well, I think so. Let me see. I go to church in the morning, then to Harry's for dinner, and I stay there during the afternoon, for you know I have two grandchildren that I like to visit Sunday afternoon, and I can't break in on their time. I can spare the hour before church in the morning." Incidentally, Judge Reese says he and the little grandchildren have a great time discussing the questions of the day, even if one or two of them are too young to talk much.

While he was born in a good humor and has never lost his temper since, Judge Reese is not a story teller and neither has he

been the hero of numerous incidents so dear to the heart of the politician. There is a story, however, which the judge has not been asked to verify, about his experience with a client. This client was a rough-and-ready fighter of Saunders county and very frequently he was hauled up before the courts for an infraction of the law. On one occasion he had whipped a neighbor, and wrote to Judge Reese to get him to defend him. An interview was arranged and Judge Reese asked the client who he had for witnesses:

"Well," he replied, "Ben Smith got there when I had the man down, but he saw him strike me. George Jones is another good witness, and so is Bill Good. Bill saw the whole scrap, but I want him on the jury."

In his practice Judge Reese has always looked after his clients well, even if he had to work some times on the absence of law knowledge of the court. When the judge first began the practice of law over in Osceola, Ia., he was employed to defend a man before a justice of the peace. When the case was called, Judge Reese moved to strike from the petition certain surplus statements. After an argument the justice agreed with him, and the surplus matter was stricken out. Then Judge Reese promptly moved that, inasmuch as the surplus matter had been stricken out, there was not enough of the complaint left upon which to base a case. Again the justice held with him and the prisoner was promptly discharged.

Frank at All Times.

It is easy to find where Judge Reese stands on any question, for he never beats around the bush nor tries to give out a wrong impression. When asked questions he speaks right out in meeting, whether it is to his political advantage to do so or not. During the recent campaign someone started the report that he had ridden on a pass during the year 1905. Political enemies of Judge Reese thought this very reprehensible and the report was spread and gained great circumference. He was finally asked the question: "Did you ride on a pass during the year 1905?" Instantly he replied:

"Yes, I did. I rode, if I remember correctly, from Auburn to Lincoln, and from Lincoln to Ashland and return, though I may have used the pass only on the Auburn trip. Yes, I am president of the Nebraska Prison association, and that association had an arrangement with the railroads whereby it could get reduced rates when it desired transportation for ex-convicts who desired to leave the state. As president of that association I was presented with a pass. I used it when I went out to make a speech in behalf of that association and to collect money for its maintenance. I never used it except on business for the association. And, by the way, I was sent a pass in 1906, but I never used that one. I simply tore it up."

That settled the pass business, and his straightforward answer to the question made many friends for the Lincoln candidate.

After the name of Judge Reese had been mentioned as a probable candidate for the republican nomination, he was asked: "Are you a candidate for supreme judge?"

I am not," he replied, "I have not even considered it seriously. If there is a general sentiment throughout the state for me to announce myself I shall do so, but if there is not, then I shall not be a candidate." After having delivered himself of the above without any preliminaries, the judge continued: "Personally I should like to see Judge Sedgwick renominated. He has made an enviable record on the bench. When Judge Sedgwick was a candidate for district judge I made speeches for him and worked for his election. He is a scholarly, able gentleman."

Why He Is Running.

It was with this feeling that Judge Reese finally permitted the use of his name, and personally he did little or nothing to secure the nomination, placing himself entirely in the hands of his friends. It is his idea that it is beneath the dignity of a candidate for supreme judge to make a campaign, and on other occasions when he has been nominated he has never gone on the stump.

Since the death of Mrs. Reese some years ago, Judge Reese has been dividing his time between his daughter, Mrs. Sanford, his son, Harry Reese, and his own home. The latter is now dismantled with the exception of one room, in which the judge sleeps. "I am merely camping here," he said, "to keep up the insurance." The judge is negotiating for the sale of the place, after which he will live with his married children.

The republican candidate is a magnificent specimen of physical manhood, about six feet tall and broad in proportion. He has snow-white hair and lots of it, and a long white moustache. He is a good specimen of the man who is strong enough to blaze a trail in a new country or lead an old country out of a rut. And he is even-tempered, good-natured, a wit and an orator. He catches an audience with his humor and he holds them while he clinches his arguments. He is a Mason and belongs to no other fraternal society. In 1887 he served as grand master of the Masons, and he has always taken great interest in the lodge. In 1899 he received votes for United States senator, though he was not an active candidate for the position.

Governor Sheldon is a great admirer of the republican nominee, and while taking no active part in the contest for the nomination, expressed himself as being favorable to the Reese candidacy, though saying at the same time he could with equal enthusiasm support Judge Sedgwick. Speaking of Judge Reese, Governor Sheldon said:

"The republicans have nominated a candidate in whom the people have every confidence. Judge Reese has a spotless record, both public and private. He is a student, a scholar and a tireless worker. I have been his admirer for years. He has always stood for the best interests of the people regardless of the consequences to himself. He has been opposed to machine rule in politics and has fought for years that the government and the people might be brought closer and closer together. In the early days back in Wahoo he encountered the hostility of ring rule, and he has always had the enemy of those who prefer machine control in politics rather than have the majority of the people in control. He should receive the entire republican vote and doubtless will receive many of the votes of the opposition parties because he stands for the very best in state government. He is one of Nebraska's best men and will make a splendid record on the bench."

Always Sociable.

Judge Reese is a very sociable man and visitors to his office are invited to make themselves at home and, if they desire, to take charge. Some time ago Henry T. Clarke, jr., candidate for state railway commissioner, who is not a bad mixer himself, called on the judge to get better acquainted. Judge Reese was smoking a cigar with very evident satisfaction. Clarke is also a very ardent smoker, but he didn't come prepared. Finally he spied the judge's pipe:

"Judge," he said, "may I take a pull at your pipe?"

"Yes, sir," replied the judge, heartily, "help yourself. Am sorry I haven't a cigar for you, but I believe the pipe is better for your health, anyhow." Even though Clarke carried off the pipe, Judge Reese told friends afterwards that the good fellowship that resulted from that incident amply repaid him for the loss of the corn cob.

Judge Reese is very direct when answering a question and sometimes knows how to answer without saying anything. When Hon. Peter Mortensen was mentioned as a candidate for governor, the question of his eligibility was raised, Mortensen at that time being state treasurer, and a provision of the constitution saying that a state officer is not eligible to another state office during the time for which he was elected to the one. As Judge Reese helped to make that constitution, he was asked his opinion of Mortensen's eligibility. Reese was a great admirer of Mortensen. He did not answer the question with words, but merely opened a law book at the constitution and then a supreme court report at an opinion bearing directly on the question. It settled Mortensen's eligibility and he withdrew from the race.

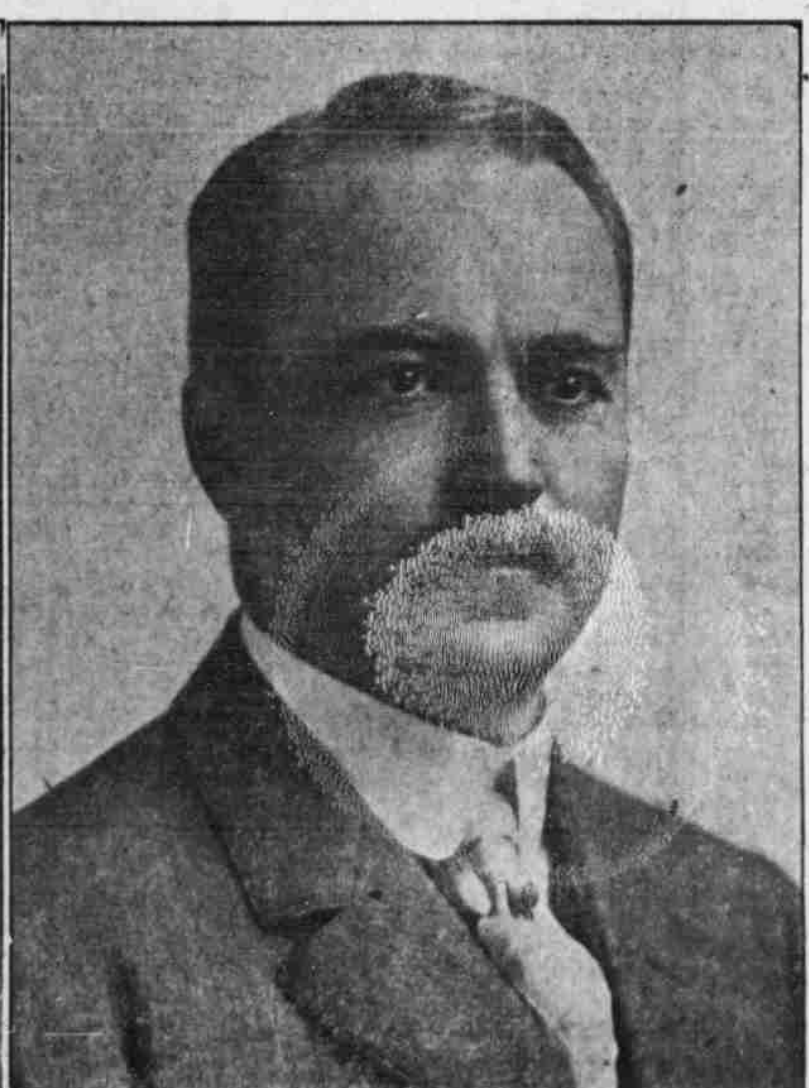
H. H. R.

Ak-Sar-Ben XIII and His Consort



NATHALIE MERRIAM.

Though a member of the younger set, and only out of college, Miss Nathalie Merriam is possessed of a poise and a charm of manner to be envied by much older and more experienced society women. Tall and stately, of the brunette type, Miss Merriam is counted one of Omaha's fairest daughters, and, just entering upon her formal season, her prospects are bright for a brilliant social career. Her selection for the distinction conferred upon her is most popular.



VICTOR B. CALDWELL.

Victor B. Caldwell is one of the best known of Omaha's younger banking men. As vice president of the United States National bank he has made for himself an enviable name as a man of affairs, while as a member of the Board of Governors of Ak-Sar-Ben he has fairly won the honor that has come to him in the order. Mr. Caldwell has been one of the active workers in the order since he has been on the board and has proved efficient and resourceful.