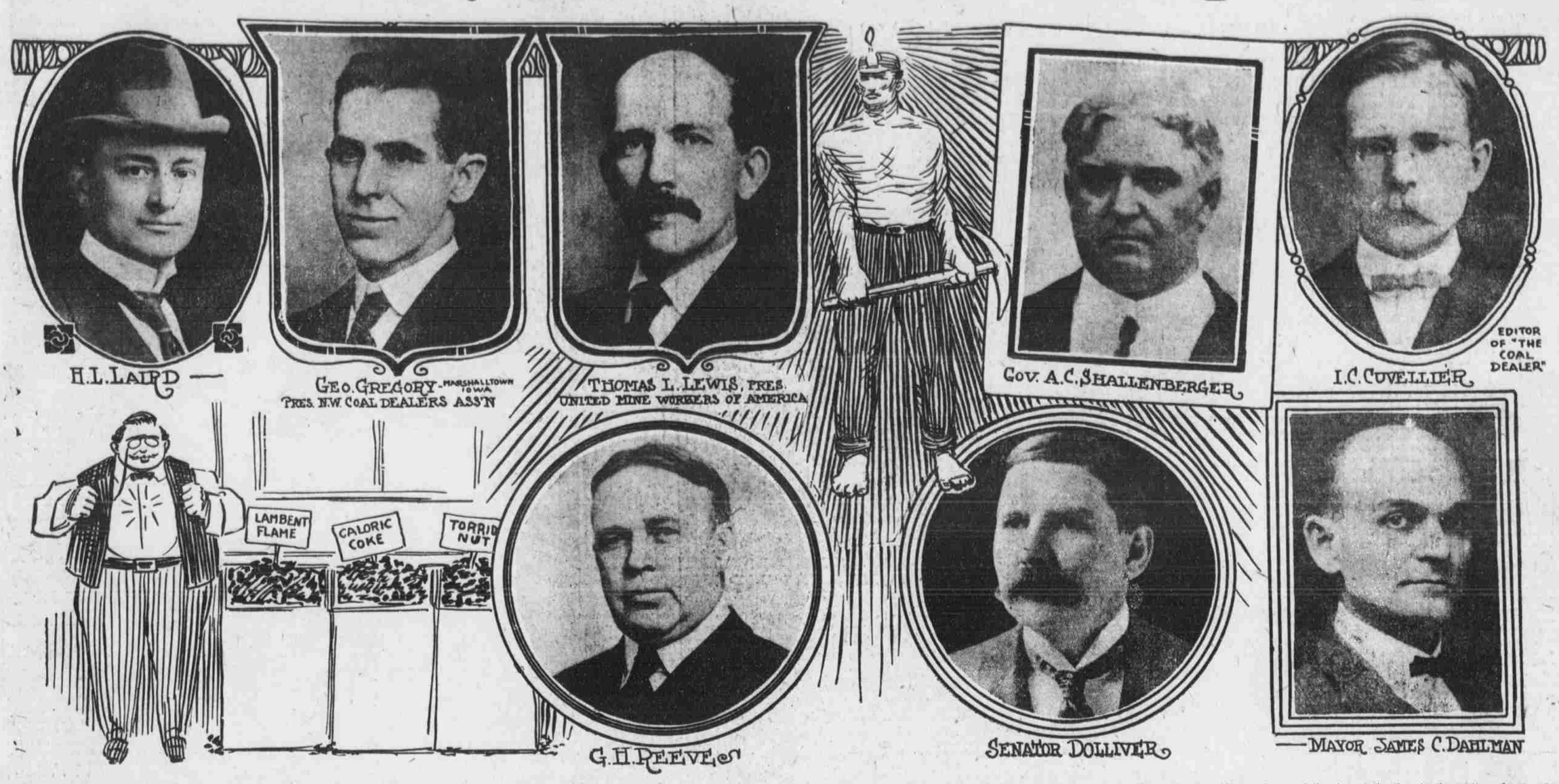
Coal Men from Many States Meet in Omaha to Indulge in Shop Talk



OMAHA'S welcome arch, spanning Farnam street between the city hall and the Douglas county court house, bears the symbols, N. L. C. D. A.

The coal man will be around tomorrow for a three days' convention. Hence the Gate City, with its warm western hospitality, swings wide its portals to the black diamond merchant and his colleagues in the Northwestern Retail Coal Dealers' association.

Once there was a man, so the joke book says, who professed to be a diamond merchant because he sold peanuts and popcorn at the ball park. But the coal dealer has come forth with the self-appropriated, and perhaps plagiarized, title of the black diamond merchant because he claims to have the best ground to substantiate his claim. The coal man points to the fact that the veins and seams of the old earth from which he mines his crystalline lignites produce more valuable, more useful and more necessary minerals than all the other jewel and treasure stores of the earth's interior.

Now come the black diamond merchants of seven states to talk over the business situation, to listen to authorities on labor conditions, to plan legislation that will work to the best interests of the trade and of the public and to further promote that spirit of co-operation and mutual benefit among themselves that works to all that is good in the relations of man to man. The coal men will come to Omaha from all sections of Nebraska; they will come from the coal fields of Iowa, Kansas and Missouri and from the neighboring states of Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota.

The convention will be in session three days—Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. During those days the coal dealers will keep in touch with Omaha, with the convention itself and with the members through the medium of a daily paper, published by the coal dealers themselves. "The Convention Special" will be extra editions of the Coal Dealer, the official monthly organ of the Northwestern Retail Coal Dealers' association, and will be issued each morning that the convention is in session, under the personal direction of its editor, I. C. Cuvellier of Minneapolis.

Thus the diamond merchants have introduced an innovation into the convention history of Omaha. The special edition will come out each morning just as the morning papers are issued. The work will be night work—linotype operators, proofreaders, pressmen, the editor himself, will work nights, just the same as the staffs of the great morning papers in the big cities. Each morning the hundreds of delegates to the convention will receive copies of the convention special, giving complete proceedings of the day and the night before, speeches, discussions, reports of officers and committees, business proceedings, minutes, with society notes in full giving little personal notes about those present. Then the special will devote columns of space to Omaha, telling of its attractions, its amusement features, and the plans of entertainment for the visitors.

Mr. Cuvellier and his staff are already in Omaha and have made complete plans for printing the special daily newspaper. The idea is an original one with the editor and marks the coal dealers' convention as a star event in Omaha.

During the three days' convention the following program will be carried out:

MONDAY.

First session, 2:30 p. m. sharp.
Address of Welcome—Mayor James C. Dahlman of Omaha.
Response—H. T. Folsom, Lincoln, Neb.
Address—George Gregory, president Northwestern Retail Coal Dealers' association.
Report—H. L. Laird, secretary-treasurer.
Appointment of committees.
Address, "Credits"—E. Q. Stone, Minneapolis.
Address, "Trade Building"—Louis B. Dorr.
New business.

During the evening the coal dealers will be guests of Omaha dealers and Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben, the big Nebraska Boosters' organization. The initiation witnessed by five presidents, foreign ministers and the big men of the world will be held at the Ak-Sar-Ben den. It will be followed by a "Dutch."

TUESDAY.

Second session, 10:30 a. m. sharp.
Music—Masonic quartet.
Consideration of these subjects:
(a) Code of Ethics by Committee of Wholesalers and Retailers.
(b) Shrinkage.
(c) Refusals.
(d) Grading.
(e) Responsibility of Retailers.
(f) Responsibility of Wholesalers.
Address, "Storage of Coal"—Charles Goodnow.
Other questions which may arise.
Third session, 2 p. m. sharp.
Music—Masonic quartet.
Address, "Present Business Methods"—Governor A. C. Shallenberger.
Address, "The Art of Making a Sale"—Ben R. Vardaman, Merchants Trade Journal, Des Moines.
Deferred business.
Evening Session—Hotel Rome Assembly Room.
Gathering of the Clan "Ko-Koals" initiation.
Vaudeville lunch.

WEDNESDAY.

Fourth session, 10 a. m. sharp.
Music—Masonic quartet.
Report of committees.
Amendment of articles of association.
Address, "The Mining Industry as a Factor in the Progress of the United States"—Hon. T. L. Lewis, president United Mine Workers of America.
Address, "The Trend of the Times"—Senator J. P. Dolliver of Iowa.
Election of officers.
Unfinished business.
Adjournment sine die.

The coal merchants are coming to Omaha for business, but they are going to have a good time while they are here. The Omaha Commercial club, the local coal dealers and the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben are looking after the entertainment features.

The first number on the fun program will be held at the Ak-Sar-Ben den Monday night, when the visiting delegates will be the guests of the knights. Coal dealers who are initiated will carry away the same kind of a smile that President Taft has worn ever since he saw the performance at the den last fall. Following the Ak-Sar-Ben entertainment a real "Dutch" lunch will be served.

Probably one of the most important items of business to be considered by the coal dealers will come up for discussion Tuesday morning at 10:30 o'clock. It is the matter of a code of ethics to operate between the wholesalers and retailers and has its main instigator in Mr. Cuvellier, the "fighting editor" of the coal dealers. In its May number the Coal Dealer had the following editorial on the question of ethics:

"The journal has been highly complimented by the wholesale trade for its pioneer work in bringing to the attention of the coal trade a need for a code of rules as between the shipper and the receiver. We take a little credit for having instigated the action of the northwestern association in appointing an initial committee composed of representative wholesalers and retailers to report at the annual meeting in Omaha a set of rules to be acted upon at that convention.

"There are certain lines that have been promulgated by the association in dealing with its problems that have proven highly satisfactory to the retailer and to the wholesaler. Circular No. 1 which the association took some three months in working out, was the result of consultation with shippers and retailers. It was the first set of printed rules formulated by which the trade could define the rights of the dealer and the rights of the shipper.

"We think the railroads should be represented on the committee to report at the Omaha meeting. Certainly the railroad is as interested a party in the transportation of coal as either the shipper or the receiver. No doubt a leading railroad man to represent all the roads added to the committee would be able to shed much light on the relations of the carrier to both the shipper and the receiver."

Besides taking definite action on the matter of the code of ethics the convention will consider such questions as shrinkage of coal in transit, refusals, grading of shipments, responsibility of wholesalers and responsibility of wholesalers.

In the business of the convention both sides of the labor situation will be represented and also the legal side. On the side of labor will be heard Thomas L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers of America and the successor of that great labor leader, John Mitchell, who will speak Wednesday morning on "The Mining Industry as a Factor in the Progress of the United States." President Lewis has long been in the public eye because of his valiant services for the miners in the recent litigation with the operators which is still in a virulent stage in several parts of the country. He is the champion of the men who work beneath the surface of the earth, the men who face destruction in the mines while in the performance of their duties and while fighting for the bread of life to sustain themselves and their families. The president's plea is for the toilers in the depths who are seeking better wages, better protection from danger in the diggings and a better standard of living.

On the business side of the coal trade will be heard such men as Ben R. Vardaman of Des Moines, Ia., editor of the Merchants Trade Journal; E. Q. Stone of Minneapolis and Louis B. Dorr of Chicago, advertising manager for pyrolite coal. On the administrative and legal side of affairs will be heard Senator J. P. Dolliver of Iowa and Governor A. C. Shallenberger of Nebraska. Mayor Dahlman of Omaha will welcome the coal dealers to the city.

The general public, perhaps, fails to realize in what way it is benefited by such organizations as the Northwestern Retail Coal Dealers' association. Let a railroad increase its rates on certain points, which, it goes, without saying, must be paid by the ultimate consumer for it means simply an increase in the retail price of coal, and there is bound to be an investigation and, if warranted, a complaint to the Interstate Commerce commission. Just at the present time the rate question is paramount with the shippers of all commodities and the railroads that handle the shipments. Only recently the big western lines announced an increase in the rates on freight to become effective in June. Something happened. The shippers stuck together and by means of a federal injunction prevented the railroads from putting the new tariff into effect. In the end President Taft was called upon to legislate with the result that the new tariff was laid aside, the injunction removed and the old order of things restored pending the passage and operation of the administration railroad bill. It will be determined whether the increase of rates is warranted on the part of the railroads and just what power the Interstate Commerce commission has in the matter of rate adjustments. By means of such organizations as the Northwestern Retail Coal Dealers' association a fight has been waged against discrimination and unfairness. The coal dealers seek only "the square deal" by which they may secure a fair margin of profit.

But the coal dealer sees a penalty for being successful. It is true of all lines of endeavor. An individual that succeeds through years of application in building up a business will have his imitators. Some people cannot originate and are copyists. One penalty of success is that these people will attain more or less success by riding on the crest of the waves left in the wake of a successful career.

The fact is the average business man is so busy that he will not take time to differentiate between the originator and the imitator. But the penalties thus paid for success are only incidental and do not detract in any respect from the attainments of the successful men.

The same is true of associations. Coal associations accomplish much directly and indirectly for every one in the trade for much of which they receive no remuneration. It is true that the more successful an organization the more liable it is to lose the support of certain of its membership. It is the penalty of having reduced troubles to a minimum.

A coal dealer who now has comparatively no troubles and consequently has allowed the interest to lag in the association would be the first to urge organization were the present efficient association allowed to lapse. There ought to be a way discovered by which such people could be singled out. But it cannot be done. The benefits of association work is on a broad basis that, like the rain, it falls upon the just and the unjust. So that if a coal association succeeds which, in itself may be a menace to its financial support, it must keep on doing the beneficial work for all. The lack of support from some is a penalty of being successful.

The home of the Northwestern coal dealers is in Minneapolis. There are located the executive offices of the association and there is published The Coal Dealer, the official organ of the association. This is an up-to-date, thoroughly twentieth century trade journal of high commercial standing among the wholesale and retail traders. It is issued in monthly installments running about 100 pages to the issue. Every phase of the coal trade is covered within its columns. It is the trade booster for the dealers and is arraigned against discrimination, unfairness and anything that does not work toward the "square deal" to all. The Coal Dealer is the weapon of the retailers in their fight and its editor is known as "the fighting editor."

The June issue devoted several pages with appropriate cuts to Omaha. This was the pre-convention issue calling attention to the convention. In the line of publicity the several articles were highly complimentary to the metropolis of Nebraska as the convention city of the west. Besides containing news of general interest to the trade The Coal Dealer makes a special point to report locality news. Special correspondence is received each month from the larger cities within the zone of the Northwestern Retail Coal Dealers' association, including Omaha, Des Moines, Kansas City, St. Paul, Minneapolis and St. Louis. Correspondents also report from Winnipeg, Canada, and Columbus, O. Everything, in fact, of interest to the wholesaler and retailer, is contained within the columns of the official magazine.

Probably one of its strongest features is its editorial department. Within its columns are touched upon the things political and ethical in the coal business. General market conditions in the northwest, relations between the shippers and receivers and the relations with the railroads are touched upon as well as legislation affecting the trade.

Of the coming three-days' convention The Coal Dealer says in its June issue: "The Omaha convention of the Northwestern Retail Coal Dealers' promises to be a humdinger. We don't want to be asked the meaning of that term. But it means as much or more as when our first citizen, Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, tells the foreigners he is having a 'bully time.'

"Omaha will pull off the biggest and most successful retail coal convention ever held. After the business sessions are over and entertainment enjoyed to the full, those attending will be able to say it was the more instructive and productive in results than any previous convention attended.

"On to Omaha June 20, 21 and 22."

Short Bits of Gossip Concerning Notables from Various Bailiwicks

—President's New Secretary.

THE New York Globe man who writes up "People in the Public Eye" can't understand why Charles Dyer Norton should quit writing insurance at $50,000 a year to become an understrapper at the wrong end of Pennsylvania in Washington, where he gets a little less than enough to pay his auto bills.

Not but what Norton can afford this if he wants to, for he was in the insurance business a good many years—worked his way through Amherst and paid a lot of little bills on the side before he was old enough to vote, and he handled that $50,000 a year real thriftily.

Norton is the man who succeeds Fred Carpenter of Minnesota as the president's private secretary, and his training for this job isn't any better than Carpenter's was. It is true that whereas Carpenter thought it a crime to talk at all, Norton can talk a man into a trance in five minutes, but that is when he is talking insurance. The question is, does he know what to say to a disappointed and irate congressman or to the newspaper men?

Anyhow, he won't stand in awe of either congressmen or cabinet ministers. As for newspaper men, they are all strangers to him.

Norton is in his 40th year. He is the son of a Congregational minister, and is the descendant of a lady who was fried by an admiring constituency on the belief that she was a witch. Charles was born in Oshkosh, Wis., and began to hustle insurance when he was 14 years old. After he returned from college and had been in business awhile, he was made chairman of the Commercial club committee which had a commission to make Chicago look pretty. He held that job for three years. He also wrote magazine stories for a time, and they were pretty good stories, too.

But all the while he had the itching for a commission, so it was not difficult for Secretary MacVeagh to persuade him that he was needed in the Treasury department. He has made good there, and it is predicted that, inasmuch as he has a real affection for President Taft, and can put more emotion into a handshake than any other man in Washington, he may succeed in his new job.

A Presentation at the Vatican.

A slight gesture from the master of ceremonies, writes John Kendrick Bangs in Harper's Weekly, bade us all kneel and the long-awaited figure entered—a sad-faced man arrayed in a simple white robe, expressionless of feature but giving a striking impression of sweetness and intense weariness combined. He walked slowly along the line holding out to each pilgrim as he passed a listless hand, on the fourth finger of which was the ring of St. Peter. At first glance he appeared the embodiment of age and of physical weakness, and it must be confessed that the impression was disappointing; but as he came nearer, and one was able to look more closely into his saddened eyes, one discerned in them not so much of weakness as loveliness of character, strength of soul, touched by a strange pathos that brought with it the conviction that the people of his beloved city of Venice, among whom as Guiseppe Sarto, he had once dwelt, had loved him for reasons that were good. One longed to be able to rise up and give him an affectionate and no less reverential salute than the cold formal greeting to the golden signet prescribed by the etiquette of the ceremony. I pressed his hand with a sincere and earnest feeling of reverence for his office and of respect for the man, and was surprised to find, as a little lump manifested itself in my throat and a suspicious moisture dimmed my eyes for the moment, that I had awakened rather into an intensity of sympathy for the prisoner of the Vatican, than of awed reverence for the successor of the apostle. There was, indeed, no lack of the latter quality, but the former was from the heart, and I am glad to feel that that is truly the American of it. In spite of the splendor of his surroundings and the loftiness of his station, one could not escape the conviction that the office carries with it not only responsibilities which are onerous and exacting, but involves as well such sacrifices of life and liberty as would stagger most men, even those rigorously trained for a life of sacrifice as the church trains its priests. I have sometimes thought it would be pleasant to be the king of England or the emperor of Germany or the president of the United States, but I looked upon Pius X with no feelings of envy in my heart.

After his holiness had passed us by we were bidden to rise and follow in his train, which we did; directly in his train, in fact, for upon the return to the Sala Dell' Concistoro it so happened that our position in the line gave us the position of honor. In a remarkably short time he had passed before the whole group of visitors. Many of these, as I have already intimated, had apparently came merely to satisfy their curiosity to see the head of the Roman church, but others were there for purposes affecting the repose of their own souls, for more than one man and one woman with faces streaming with tears and an anguish of mind ill-concealed, implored indulgence for what I know not, as his holiness passed along; and in every case with a kindly gesture and a glance full of benignity at least, solace was granted. It was altogether most affecting, and, when at the close of the greetings, the holy father raised his hand to bless all present "according to their need and intention," I went down upon my knees, not because the etiquette of the hour required it, but because I wanted to; and when I rose up and went back to the noisy city I felt that the blessing asked had been received, for I was happy and the world seemed the sweeter and brighter for the existence of such a man as Pius X.

Bunyan's Birthplace.

Judith, countess of Huntingdon, the niece of William the Conqueror, who founded the abbey which gave its name to the hamlet of Elstow gathered about its gates; Sir Humphrey Radcliffe, into whose hands the property passed at the dissolution of the monasteries, and the Hillesdon family, who afterwards built their mansion there, would be but names on a rarely-turned page of history, the church, with its separate tower and its peal of ancient bells, the old guest house on the village green, the stump of a cross recalling the fairs that were held there, would be no goal of pilgrimage but for a later name whose rank upon the roll of fame sheds back a light of interest upon all the details of its place and circumstances. Elstow gained its patent of nobility in 1628 through the birth of John Bunyan, and the visitor comes to it in the memory of his early years. He stands in the door of the church tower to recall Bunjan as a ringer of the bells, and walks to the green to see an imaginary game of tip-cat and enters the old Moot hall to revive the memory of Bunyan's "unregenerate" dancing.

Ruskin's Misfit Wife.

Here is a vivacious glimpse of Ruskin's wife from Ada Garland's "Ruskin and His Bride."

"A young gay wife, fond of dress, excitement and social life, was no helpmeet for him. He went with her to court, taking pride in the compliments paid her, but society bored him. She often went out alone. Not a wise thing to do, perhaps, but she was very young, and the home must have been dull—her husband absorbed in architecture and his spare time claimed by the old people. Materially, young Mrs. Ruskin had all she could desire; was always well dressed, had splendid jewels and all the advantages of wealth. But her husband could do without her; Mrs. Ruskin, sr., would not abdicate; the wife's position in the household must have been that of a handsome figurehead."

"'She was conversing with some gentlemen,' one of whom asked:

"'Where is Mr. Ruskin?'

"'Oh, Mr. Ruskin?' she replied. 'He is with his mother—he ought to have married his mother!'"

Smith Premier People at a Banquet

One of the Functions During the Late Omaha Convention of the Commercial College Teachers