



THE LATE J. STERLING MORTON.

**Life in Nebraska
in the Early Days**

In a paper read before the state historical society last Tuesday night in memory of the late Hon. J. Sterling Morton, his life-long friend, ex-Governor Robert W. Furnas of Brownville referred incidentally to an episode in his early residence in this state which was known to but few of those who knew him during the latter years of his career. The recital also involves the memory of another once distinguished Nebraska pioneer, Gen. Robert R. Livingston of Plattsmouth, who served for a time as commander of the First Nebraska regiment in the civil war. Few people know that the late lamented secretary of agriculture was ever challenged to fight a duel, and that he declined in a manner characteristic of the man. Dr. Livingston, who was the author of the challenge, was, like Mr. Morton, a strenuous democrat, and a man possessed of a great many of the personal qualifications that were so marked in Mr. Morton. He was a man of striking personality and enjoyed for many years great prominence among the people of Cass county, so that he was known throughout the state.

Governor Furnas has said of Mr. Morton that he was a man who never forgot a friend nor allowed an enemy to forget him. Dr. Livingston was notably a man of the same attributes. He came to Plattsmouth in 1859, at the age of thirty-two years, and was a practicing physician there until he died in the fall of 1888. He was exceedingly high-strung in his temperament and, while normally one of the kindest of men, was just such a man as would easily take and vigorously resent an offense. The quarrel between this unique figure in early Nebraska history and the late Mr. Morton came about through their connection with the press of that day. Dr. Livingston was connected with a newspaper in the metropolis of Cass county in 1866, at which time Mr. Morton was the editor of the Nebraska City News. The challenge was an outgrowth of a too vigorous resort to the use of rhetoric by both of them in a discussion that arose between them. Maddened by one of Morton's relentless exhortations, Dr. Livingston retaliated in a manner not in that day looked upon with such disfavor as it has since acquired in this country.

Governor Furnas seems to have unearthed from among Mr. Morton's private papers some of the correspondence in reference to this episode in the life of the latter. In dealing with it Mr. Furnas avoided any reference that would identify the challenging party with it, giving the story simply from the viewpoint of Mr. Morton's side, and there

were probably few in his audience of old Nebraska who realized to whom the masked reference was directed, although nearly every gray-haired listener had known Dr. Livingston in life. Mr. Furnas dealt with his memories of the incident as follows:

Another incident characteristic of Mr. Morton: In the earlier days of the territory, differences between men were frequently settled with knife or bullet. For some reason, I cannot now call it to mind, a grievance sprang up between him and a then prominent citizen of the territory, since dead. The other party challenged Mr. Morton to fight a duel and demanded pistols as weapons. His reply was:

"Do you mean to challenge me to mortal combat? Is there positively a coffin in your polite invitation, and if so, for whom? An early reply will greatly gratify."

The matter was then, by the challenger, referred to his "second" to whom Mr. Morton replied: "Permit me to remind your principal that as the weather is very warm (July), you impress upon his mind that a recumbent position will be more comfortable, and if he will not assume that, compromise with him upon a sedentary position. I am quite anxious to hear, and do hope you will inform me upon this important question very speedily."

"Convey to your bellicose principal my renewed assurance that he has never, in any way, given me reason to demand satisfaction of him, as I have never held a judgment against him, not even a note of hand. He will probably be pleased to learn of my good health, and also to know that I enjoy life very much, and love it, too, even better than I do him. His proposition to shoot lead bullets at me is not in accordance, either with law, or my own ideas of social amenities, or amusements. To kill or to be killed would be no particular felicity with me, especially in hot weather when corpses spoil so readily. Not for a moment doubting the bravery of your martial principal, which is proverbial, I would like to inquire whether he is the author of the following stanza:

"The deities which I adore
Are social peace and plenty.
I'm better pleased to make one more
Than be the death of twenty."

"The temperature at this place is ardent, to such a degree as to prevent my addressing you at length. 'Kiss your principal for his mother.' Enclosed is a copy of Greeley's almanac, and Fred Douglass' speeches, for his perusal and consolation.

"With high regard for the law, and especially that referred to, I remain alive. (Signed)

"J. STERLING MORTON."

It was years after the culmination of this affair before the belligerents were reconciled. It came about while there was a shooting match in progress at Nebraska City. Mr. Morton chanced to

be at Nebraska City on that day, and upon hearing that Dr. Livingston was among the many ardent sportsmen and marksmen presented, asked Governor Furnas to hunt him up and bring him to Arbor Lodge for dinner. As a friend of both, Governor Furnas accepted the mission. When he approached General Livingston and proposed the visit to the home of Morton, the former was taken very much by surprise. He hesitated to accept, not knowing how such a sign of a relinquishment of the old grudge might be looked upon by Mr. Morton.

"Now, look here, doctor," said Governor Furnas, "I am authorized by Mr. Morton to extend this invitation to you, and I know he would be gratified to have you as his guest."

General Livingston accepted and accompanied Mr. Furnas to Arbor Lodge, where, it is needless to add, he would have been received at least with courtesy had he come unreconciled. At the dinner which followed slight reference was made to the trouble of the long ago. Nothing further was said than was absolutely necessary to establish an amicable footing. The two were ever afterwards friends and fought together the battles of democracy.

General Livingston's newspaper connection began in 1861, when, in the absence of the editor of the old Platte Valley Herald, he was placed in charge of that publication. He was then about thirty-four years old. While he was editing this paper the war of the rebellion broke, and a historian of twenty years ago has recorded the fact that the same day on which the news of the firing on the Star of the West reached Plattsmouth, which, owing to the slow mails of that period, was some time after event occurred, he stopped his press, then working off the weekly issue, to announce the event and insert a call upon the loyal men of Cass county to meet at the old court house and organize a company. That night he organized a full company of infantry, which included also a number of men from the Iowa side of the river, and his own name headed the list of enrolled privates, but he was immediately and unanimously elected captain. This occurred prior to any call for troops, and he maintained that company until the 11th day of June following, when it was mustered in as company A, First Nebraska volunteer infantry. To him, therefore, is due the credit of having raised and organized the first company in the territory for the suppression of the rebellion. In 1862 he was made colonel of the regiment. The regiment participated in many of the most noted battles of the campaign in the south. In 1863 he was made com-

manding officer of the post at St. Louis and subsequently commander of the district of St. Louis. He served with distinction later in Arkansas and received a vote of thanks from the legislature of that state for his services. He returned to Nebraska with his regiment in 1864 and led it as a cavalry regiment in a campaign against the Sioux. In 1865 he was promoted to brevet brigadier general and was mustered out in the same year. He was appointed surveyor general of Nebraska in 1868 and held the office for two years. From 1869 until he died in 1888 he was chief surgeon of the Burlington road in Nebraska, which position is now occupied by his son, Dr. T. P. Livingston of Plattsmouth.

**Railway Service
in America**

In no industry perhaps does the United States enjoy a more remarkable ascendancy over the rest of the world than in its railway service. At the close of the last century North America had no less than 220,880 miles of track in operation, while the total for Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and South America was only a trifle greater—about 270,000 miles. The United States then had a mile of road for every 383 inhabitants, Europe one for every 2,267, and British India one for every 12,400. This country invented the parlor, sleeping and dining cars, the pressed steel freight car, many of the best features of the modern locomotive, the air brake, the automatic coupler, and a host of related devices, and it runs the fastest long distance trains. It is no wonder, then, that the handsome and instructive "Transportation" edition of "The Scientific American" should devote a great deal of space to the railroads of the United States.

One of the most marvellous developments in the whole railroad system is that which has taken place at the head of a train in the last seventy years. The best locomotives to-day are about four times as long as the De Witt Clinton (1831), a foot or two higher, have drivers that are 72 (or even 80) inches in diameter instead of only 54, and carry 200 pounds of steam instead of only 80. But these figures afford no idea of the real gain that has been effected in power. Relative to the other features, the boiler has grown abnormally, while the smokestack has actually diminished in size. In the De Witt Clinton the smokepipe was as big as the boiler. One does not realize what modern science has done

SAXONY'S VENERABLE KING.



King George of Saxony is dying. According to court physicians his end may be expected at any time. Worry and anger over the elopement of Princess Louise and her brother have done much to bring down the old monarch. This is his latest photograph.