

INTRODUCTORY.

The readers of this volume will find on every page excellent reasons for its publication. John James Ingalls was such a man as does not grow in every soil. He was Kansas incarnate. Whatever he said, whatever he wrote, whatever he did, Kansas was his theme, his motive, and his inspiration. He was of the Puritan breed, and the traditions of his New England ancestry were with him from his youth up; but when he first set foot on the western bank of the Missouri and beheld the land of his dreams, he became a devotee, a lover, a worshiper of Kansas. His highly-wrought imagination idealized the wooded slopes, the deep ravines, the tangled vines, and stretching to the illimitable west, the prairies solemn in their vastness and mysterious as the sea. As one reads the history of those early days, how clearly the truth comes to him that the *actual* is not half the picture. In the deadly conflict between freedom and slavery, men forgot the corn and wheat, and saw only the beauty that should come after the Right had won. The making of a State is a grim work, and those brave State-makers could not stop to listen to the carols of birds; but some of them kept the music in their hearts. John J. Ingalls was a born poet. Brilliant as was his career in the Senate, it yet is certain that literature was his true field.

When Kansas finished her fight with the aliens, her war against those who insulted her with shackles, she moved for-

ward, joyous in her freedom. After the war, people came to settle there by thousands. And such a people have never before or since built up an American commonwealth. It has been fashionable among giddy and unthinking people to make jokes about Kansas,—jokes ranging in merit from zero to the bottomless depths below zero—but meanwhile Kansas has not paused in its march to the front. It cannot be denied that she has had her freaks and her follies, but let us remember it is the stupid, and not the wise, who never err. The heart of Kansas has always been right. An educated, enlightened people, worshipping the lights of duty, conscience, and truth, may briefly go astray, but in the long run they will always be found "true to the kindred points of heaven and home."

I speak of these things only to vindicate her from the shallow and inconsiderate criticisms of those who do not know her history or appreciate her true position in the Union. She needs no defense. The twelfth census is just out, and it tells the story of Kansas in the eloquent figures which place her in the vanguard of the States.

The western bank of the Missouri at Atchison is lined with bluffs whose rugged sides stand out boldly toward the river and the opposite shore. On summer nights it needs no poet's eye to see that it is beautiful. The yellow, sluggish river changes to molten silver when the rising moon plays upon it with the witchery that makes pictures for poets. Once I sat upon the bluff that overlooks the river, when Senator Ingalls said: "This is my Euphrates and my Ganges, and I love to think that these turbid waters have rolled, as long as they, down to the all-embracing sea."

He was a lover of home; and no one who was permitted to share its sanctities can forget how sweet a place it was. His

wife and his children were the lights of his life,—and he was theirs. He did not give his heart to every new-fledged stranger, but to those who were his friends, "and their adoption tried," he was open and unreserved. Looking back upon a friendship of thirty years, I can say but this: "I knew him well; I loved him well."

What brought him fame? The answer undoubtedly is: his own genius. But there were certain collateral influences, and mayhap the dominant voice of "Opportunity" had something to do with it. *The Kansas Magazine*, that brilliant venture—the child of promise, and of early death—first gave him to me, but he had long been known to Kansas people as their most brilliant citizen.

I was new. Arriving in December, 1871, I first found a boarding-house, and then, studied Kansas. *The Kansas Magazine* began its brief career in January, 1872. Henry King was its editor. I have never known a finer literary judgment than his. He had in him the making of a Lowell, or a Matthew Arnold, but the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* swallowed him up, and now he is editor-in-chief, with many honors and great emoluments.

I lived in a town untrammelled by railroads, but it was a Kansas town, and therefore bright, cultivated, and filled with educated people. *The Kansas Magazine* was a forlorn wager by certain enthusiasts, that Kansas could maintain a high-class literary monthly. They lost; but losing, they won. John J. Ingalls, the most brilliant of its contributors, became United States senator because he wrote "Catfish Aristocracy" and "Blue Grass."

His career was a stormy one; but above the stress of events there was always a consoling influence in wife, children, friends,

and the blessed ministration of letters. I came upon him once in the midst of a terrible senatorial struggle, of which he was the central figure, and found him reading Charles Lamb's "Essays of Elia." He was self-poised always, and I never saw him thrown from the even balance which he habitually maintained.

The summer preceding Mr. Ingalls' election to the Senate was warm in more senses than one. The liberal Republican movement, headed by Horace Greeley, was on, taking from us many of the old "war-horses" of the party, leaving big scars in the ranks, which sadly worried our leaders. Fresh from Wisconsin, I became a delegate to the great Lawrence convention of 1872, which nominated Lowe, Phillips, and Cobb for Congress. The story of that convention has long since ceased to be interesting or important. But this much I must tell: Mr. Ingalls was made permanent chairman. I came up from Montgomery County, very youthful and very verdant, having behind me only six months' residence in the State. I had never seen Mr. Ingalls, but had been captivated by his articles in *The Kansas Magazine*. It was, I think, on the evening of the first day that the convention adjourned over until ten or eleven o'clock the following day. After breakfast, I was introduced to Mr. Ingalls, and we sat together in front of the Eldredge House, enjoying the bright summer sun and air. Then—how it came about I know not—we started for a walk down Massachusetts Avenue. Before we came back to the convention, we had talked about many things—but not one word of politics. Books and literature occupied a place in our hearts that morning far above the approaching struggle in the convention.

The following winter he was elected senator, and held his seat for eighteen years.

I shall not discuss his career in the Senate. In the public records it is amply disclosed. He was a great senator, honored by his fellow-members, who made him President *pro tem.*, and looked up to him as the best presiding officer in that body.

Great men, almost without exception, have a fine sense of humor. To prove this, Shakespeare alone suffices. Abraham Lincoln would have broken down under the tremendous strain of the war, had not a merciful Providence enabled him to see the humorous side of daily events. The humor of Senator Ingalls was of a most subtle character. His mind was so alert that he could not wait the slow processes of ordinary humor, but must burst forth spontaneously in sudden and unexpected flashes of repartee and epigram. In debate he was without an equal in the Senate. A Pennsylvania senator once made an attack on Kansas. Instantly Ingalls rose to reply, and not content simply to defend his own State, he dashed straight into the weak points of Pennsylvania. To stand on the defensive was never his way. He said: "Mr. President, Pennsylvania has produced but two great men; Benjamin Franklin, of Massachusetts, and Albert Gallatin, of Switzerland." Nothing was left for the Pennsylvania senator but to beat a hasty retreat.

He was a scholar, and all his tastes were scholarly and refined. His knowledge of words, and his unerring skill in choosing always the right one, were proverbial. In debate I believe he was superior to John Randolph, who, in his day, was the terror of his opponents. He was such a splendid fighter that many people think of him simply as the great master of invective and of pitiless sarcasm; but read "Blue Grass," or his article on Albert Dean Richardson, or his beautiful trib-

ute to Ben Hill, and the kindly elements of his nature become strongly and sweetly visible.

In my study hangs a frame which encloses an autograph copy of the greatest of American sonnets. I am not at all certain that it is not the greatest sonnet in our language. The sonnet is a highly artificial form of versification with its mechanical regularity of fourteen lines, and is therefore the easiest kind of a poem to write. You set the clock, and when it has run down, you have the sonnet, which almost always is a mere piece of automatic verse, signifying nothing. The little prattling poets turn them out in great numbers. But because it is easy, the sonnet is the most difficult of all forms of verse. How many good sonnets have been written in the English language? Only a few, and they only by the great ones. Shakespeare did everything better than anyone else in all the world. But how many of Shakespeare's sonnets do you remember? In almost every one there are flashes of genius that mark them as Shakespeare's legitimate offspring; but many of them are involved and hard to understand. Mr. Ingalls was once visiting me in Topeka, and we arranged to take a ride the next morning up the west bank of the Kaw, into the country of the bluffs and meadows. On the top of a bluff we stopped and looked out on the beautiful landscape touched with the morning light,—such a landscape as is known only in Kansas,—when suddenly he turned to me, waving his hand outward to that scene of surpassing beauty, and began reciting the famous Thirty third Sonnet of Shakespeare:

“Full many a glorious morning have I seen
 Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
 Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
 Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy.”

He knew and loved the sonnet, but he also knew its limitations. That fine critical judgment could never have been led into the folly of giving to the world an ordinary, commonplace sonnet, which is the last infirmity of shallow minds.

After Shakespeare, the great sonnets of our language were written by Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, and Mrs. Browning, with one or two by Landor, Leigh Hunt, and Lowell. But when I try to think of one superior or even equal to “Opportunity,”—I seek in vain.

As I have said, the sonnet hangs in my study, written in his bold, large hand, and as I read it a thousand memories crowd upon me. From the sordid environment of this great commercial city, I waft him a sad farewell, and beg that I too may be counted with those who have loved Kansas and believed in her to the uttermost.

GEORGE R. PECK.

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