



FREDERICK C. MACARTNEY

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IT is an old axiom that the way to a man's good nature is through his stomach, and, so being, F. C. Macartney, or Fred., as he is familiarly called, must have the true friendship and good fellow-ship of myriads of people, for, during the past forty-two years, as a caterer to the public, he has proved himself the prince of hotel-keepers, and, not only that, he and his family have been largely and intimately connected with the business and social life of the city.

He came here from Canada in 1863, a young man in the adolescent stage, hunting a job. With him was a brother, George, who was employed by "Billy" Quick as United States Express messenger for several years, and died in 1865.

Fred. took the first job he could find. I. N. Webster was running the Savery House, which James C. Savery had, at progressive stages, with many postponements, partially completed. It was a plain structure, unlike the present one. There were no balconies, no cornices, no outside ornamental "flubdubs." The offices were all on the second floor. The ground floor was as the bricklayers left it. Fred. hired himself out as clerk of the hotel, at twelve dollars a month and his board. In those days, hotel clerks didn't wear diamond-studded shirt fronts; there were no day and night clerks, no porter, no bell-boys, no elevators. His daily stunt was to keep books, sweep, dust, wait on guests, from six o'clock in the morning until supper was over. At night, he could lie on the lounge in the office until all passengers had arrived by stage from Brooklyn and Nevada, then the terminals of the Rock Island and Northwestern roads, and then he could go to bed. When the roads were bad, when Skunk River got on a rampage, and passengers had to walk most of the way, and carry a rail to pry the coach out of the mire, he didn't go to bed at all. It was a sort of continuous performance. In October, 1864, George C. Savery, a brother of J. C., took the house and retained Fred. as Chief Clerk, a place he held,

becoming practically the manager—George being too angular for a hotel man—until 1875, when J. C. purchased George's interest and installed Fred. as Manager. The house was refurnished throughout, the structure having been completed.

In 1879, the house was sold under foreclosure of a mortgage. The entire furniture was removed and shipped to Yankton, thence by steamboat to Fort Benton, thence by wagon to Helena, Mont., where it was sold at auction, Fred. going also as custodian of the property. There he remained, with J. C. Savery, who was engaged in several mining projects, as book-keeper and supply purchaser for the miners' stores until September, 1882, when he returned to Des Moines and engaged in the brick and tile business. But brickmaking was not his forte, and in 1886, he assumed the management of Hotel Colfax, a mammoth summer and health resort built and fitted up by the Rock Island Railroad Company, near Colfax. He remained there until 1888, when he went to California, and kept a hotel in Vera Cruz until March, 1891.

In 1879, the old Savery House having been purchased by J. N. Dewey and S. R. Ingham, was again remodeled, the name changed to "Kirkwood," in honor of the old War Governor, and re-opened under the management of C. D. Bogue and John Wyman, who remodeled it, moved the office and rotunda to the ground floor, and held it until 1891, when Fred. purchased Bogue's interest and became the sole manager, and has so continued to the present time, having as assistants his sons, Frederick C., Jr., and George.

In the early days, the house was the home of many business men—the first City Directory contains the names of fifty-one—year after year, surrounded by all the comforts of the best homes in the town. I recall a few of them: J. C. Savery and wife; Doctor F. Woodruff, druggist, and wife; J. B. Stewart, banker; E. J. Ingersoll, founder of the Hawkeye Insurance Company, and wife; S. R. Ingham, capitalist, and wife; George W. Clark, lawyer, and wife; Rev. J. M. Chamberlin; "Billy" Quick, United States Express Agent; Rev. F. Brooks; Major Thomas Cavanagh (ten years); A. Y. Rawson, merchant, wife and daughter; J. H. Windsor and wife; Colonel J. M. Elwood, lawyer; John A. Kasson; N. B. Baker, Adjutant-General, and family; J. M. Dixon, City Editor of the

Register, Tac. Hussey and wife (twenty-five years), and William Foster.

When Foster arrived, Fred. asked him what his occupation was.

"Architect," replied Foster.

"Well," said Fred., "you had better go back East, for you will starve to death in this town," and for several years, Foster thought Fred. told the truth.

The house was also the favorite stopping-place of the venerable Judge Miller, Clerk Corkhill, and other officers of the Federal Court, Judge Dillon (fifteen years), and Judge Baldwin, of the State Supreme Court. The latter was a person of large proportions, weighing over five hundred pounds, of which he was, as was Cromwell of the big wart on his nose, exceedingly sensitive, and it was a source of much discomfort. He came to the house once when there was a big convention and the house full. When the dinner hour came, Fred., knowing that all the chairs in the dining-room had arms, removed one at the end of a table and substituted a heavy one without arms, and when the Judge was ready, escorted him to the seat, but just as he was taking it, some friends at another table invited him to sit with them; and Fred., very quietly and courteously, exchanged the chairs, and the Judge sat down. On returning to the office, he gave Fred. a regular lambasting for thus inviting attention to his ponderosity.

Of the Governors who made the house their homes during the terms were Kirkwood, Stone, Merrill, Carpenter, Sherman, Gear, and their families. Of the newspaper editors, there were Beardsley, of the *Burlington Hawk-Eye*; Ham, *Dubuque Herald*; Sam. Clark, *Keokuk Gate City*; Ed. Russell, *Davenport Gazette*; Judge Thomas. W. Clagett, *Keokuk Constitution*, and the venerable quill-driver and party regulator, Rathbun, of the *Marion Register*—all of whom have gone to their eternal home except the latter.

In September, 1875, at the Reunion of the Army of the Tennessee, when nearly sixty thousand soldiers were in the city, the President, General Grant, General Belknap, Secretary of War, General W. T. Sherman, General Pope, General Myers ("Old Probs"), and several other military dignitaries were guests of the house, and at the close of the event, Fred. gave them a banquet, the spread of

which has never been equalled in the city. Kingsley, the noted caterer of Chicago, was given *carté blanche* to prepare the *menu*.

It was during this reunion that Grant made the memorable speech in Moore's Hall, which raised a tempest throughout the country, and which greatly incensed the Catholics, all of which was caused by an incident common to the experience of all daily newspapers.

The President was to meet the school children of the city. The hall was packed. The speech was along educational lines. A Register reporter and myself were present. So soon as the President concluded, General Belknap secured the manuscript and gave it to us, when a fellow claiming to represent a New York paper asked the privilege of taking it to send it by wire to his paper, to which we courteously assented. He did not make his appearance again until nearly three o'clock in the morning. In the meantime, Belknap and the two of us kept vigil at the hotel office and nursed our wrath. The presses were being held and the editors and compositors in the *Register* office were clamoring for that speech. A copy was made very hurriedly from the manuscript, which was written with lead pencil, with many erasures and interlineations.

The paragraph which caused the excitement as it appeared in the *Register* was as follows:

"Encourage free schools, and resolve that not one dollar of money appropriated to their support, no matter how raised, shall be appropriated to the support of any sectarian school. Resolve that *neither* the state or nation, or both combined, shall support institutions of learning *other than those* sufficient to afford every child growing up in the land the opportunity of a good, common-school education, unmixed with sectarian, pagan or *atheistic* tenets. Leave the matter of religion to the family *altar*, the church, and the private school."

Its appearance at once caused a commotion. It was a declaration of hostility to higher education. Inquiries came here from all quarters as to the correctness of the report, which was apparently confirmed by the fact that Grant remained in the city several days after the speech, and made no correction or comment on it.

It was not long before a copy of a paper containing that speech could not be found in the city; even the newspaper office files were

robbed. A few days ago, I went to the State Historical Building, to get the speech as it appeared in the Register, bound volumes of which are kept there, but some despicable vandal had cut it entirely out of the paper, thus robbing the public of a valuable record.

The following is what Grant did say, as shown by a photographic copy which I possessed:

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Of all the numerous families who made the hotel their home, some ten, fifteen and twenty-five years, and the myriads of guests, there has not been a death in it, but there have been hundreds of births and marriages.

The ground floor was not finished for several years after the opening, business and trade not having gotten that far west. The first office of the Western Union Telegraph Company was in what is now Parlor A, and Frank Johnson, well known to old-timers as successor to his father, who started the first 'bus line, was the messenger boy. The first room finished was the dining-room, and was used for some time by the Christian Church.

The first occupants of the ground floor were the *Register*, on the Fourth Street front, in the room where Matt Kane had his restaurant; next, Christ. Bathman opened a barber shop, and it is there now. On the Walnut Street front, Jule Parmalee had a jewelry store at the corner, and it still is a jewelry store, S. Joseph having occupied it for thirty-five years; next west was H. Monroe, with a clothing store, adjoining which was L. H. Bush, with a drug store, and "Charley" Rogg as clerk. In the west half were Manning & Miller, grocers and grain buyers. The rear part, where the café now is, was used for storing grain, and even now, in tearing up floors for repairs in the rooms above it, the space under the floor is filled with grain chaff.

Politically, Fred. is a Republican, but takes little part in politics, yet his house was the headquarters of political conventions, and some very stirring events occurred there, probably the most exciting of which was the fierce contest, in 1872, between the friends of Allison and Harlan for United States Senator. That was an epoch-maker in Iowa politics, when was settled for forty years a periodical source of contention and strife in the Republican party. I don't think Fred. has forgotten that fight.

In 1896, with faith in his conservatism, public spirit, and business qualifications, the West Siders persuaded him to assent to a nomination for Alderman at Large. He was elected by a nearly unanimous vote, but one term in a bear garden satisfied him.

During the past year, he practically retired from active management, and put his son George, to the manner born, as full of good fellowship as he is large around, into the harness, who, with 'Gene Spring and R. G. Fisher, are again putting the house through another transformation, adding many improvements, and installing in greater degree the homelike features which have so held public favor for fifty years.

Though Fred. will have a paternal interest in the house, he will live on Easy Street, spending the summer months at Sleepy Hollow, Lake Okoboji, fighting mosquitos, and fishing.

No history of this house would be complete that did not give good credit to Mrs. Macartney, who, as housekeeper and homemaker, added so much to its popularity—a woman who not only gave honor to her position, but to social life of the city. She came to her position by natural progression. When Fred. began service in the house, Webster, the proprietor, had several daughters, of the truly helpful kind. One day, Parker Anderson, the cook, a famous colored river steamboat cook, was chatting with one of the daughters, who was making pies for dinner, when she declared she did not like hotel-keeping; wished her father would get out of it; she wouldn't marry the best man living if he was a hotel-keeper. To which Parker retorted: "Miss Lottie, sure, you'll marry a hotel-keeper, talking lak dat." Five years later, Miss Lottie became Mrs. Macartney, and has remained in the house most of the time since, occupying the same rooms which she entered as a bride, in

November, 1868, and vacated with Fred. in April last. Fred. says her pies are just as good to-day as in the days when she "wouldn't marry a hotel man."

Their old family waiter, who waited on them over thirty years, and lifted each child as a baby into his high chair in the dining-room, is still with the house.

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