

HISTORY OF
Goodhue County
MINNESOTA

ILLUSTRATED

EDITOR IN CHIEF

FRANKLYN CURTISS-WEDGE

ASSISTED BY

W. M. Sweney, M. D.; Jens K. Grondahl; C. A. Rasmussen; Julius
Boraas, M. L.; F. W. Kalfahs; Edward W. Schmidt, M. A.;
Mrs. Julia B. Nelson; E. Norelius, D. D.; George C.
Wellner, M. D.; John C. Applegate; Ralph W.
Holmes; Dwight C. Pierce; Henry Hal-
vorson; Rev. James H. Gaughan;
Henry R. Cobb; Edgar F.
Davis and many others

CHICAGO
H. C. COOPER, JR., & CO.

1909

the present time Arthur T. Gibson operates the plant of S. N. Gibson & Son, on Bush street, and Russell & McGiverin (Raymond R. and Harry S.) have a plant on Third street. There is a printing plant at the Minnesota State Training School, and at the Red Wing Seminary is the press of the Hauge Printing and Publishing Company, from which is issued several denominational papers and religious books. At one time Peter Sjöblom published several boys' magazines here, and in former days Leonard Hodgman and George F. Enz had amateur print shops.

Jens K. Grondahl, who gives his vocation as "newspaperman," was born at Eidsvold, near Christiania, Norway, December 3, 1869, son of Lars and Inger Margrethe (Julrud) Grondahl, natives of that country. The father, Lars Grondahl, was a farmer of limited means but with advanced ideas as to the education and training of his children, a man of warm heart and generous disposition. He died in 1895 at the age of 72. His wife, mother of Jens K., is still living. The subject of this sketch began his schooling in his native town and continued it in Red Wing, to which city he came as a boy of 11 years. After attending the local public schools for two years he entered the Red Wing Seminary and graduated in 1887 with high honors. During this period he engaged in various boyish business enterprises, which resulted in valuable experience if not always in big profits. Later he attended the University of Minnesota for some time. Shortly before graduating from the seminary he won an oratorical prize of fifteen dollars. With this he opened a small confectionery store and in this connection printed cards, sold rubber stamps, carried papers and acted as correspondent for several Twin City dailies. When the Red Wing Daily "Independent" was started in 1891 he was engaged to conduct that paper, and while occupying this position received considerable newspaper training, doing, at times, everything from peddling the papers to turning the press and writing local articles and profound editorials on the nation's destiny. During the summer of 1897 Mr. Grondahl had an experience which, in moments of confidence, he occasionally relates to his intimate friends. Having a little spare time on his hands and having made a success of writing humorous squibs and pathetic verse for the magazines and newspapers, he decided to attempt humorous lecturing, at a season of the year when the most experienced lyceum stars would fail to secure a hearing. An experience in Hastings, where, instead of beginning his lecture "Ladies and gentlemen," he was compelled to address his audience of one as "Dear sir," and at another place, where a thunder storm vied with his voice in holding the attention of the auditors, convinced the youthful lecturer that summer was not the proper season in which to make a fortune in the lyceum field. The cam-



JENS K. GRONDAHL

paign of 1892 found Mr. Grondahl an active worker in the Republican ranks. Two years later he became a candidate for the legislature to represent Goodhue county in the lower house. A bitter fight against the "boy" candidate ended in his election by a large majority, he being one of the youngest men ever given a seat in the Minnesota legislature. He was successively reelected for two terms, serving six years in all, and declining a fourth nomination, grateful for his political experience, but feeling that he had made all the sacrifices of time and energy in public office which a young man starting out in life could well afford. The real importance of his work in the legislature can best be judged by the future. In 1895 his refusal to accept passes from the railroad companies while a member of the legislature, and his subsequent position on this and kindred matters, was the beginning of the anti-pass legislation, state and national, which has since been enacted. It is needless to say that so radical a departure from prevailing ideas would naturally bring a storm of opposition and ridicule, and many were the wiseacres at home and abroad who shook their heads and questioned the young man's tact in calling attention to and questioning the so-called courtesies which corporations so freely extended and which public officials so freely accepted. There was a diversity of opinion among the press of the country, but many of the newspapers of the East, as well as the West, particularly the New York "Sun," heartily concurred in the young legislator's action. This stand, however, did not cost him the loss of the good will of fellow members nor did it impair his influence or usefulness as a legislator, as some had predicted. On the contrary, it made him many staunch friends, with whom he afterwards coöperated in securing progressive legislation. Mr. Grondahl has had the satisfaction of seeing men, who scoffed at his attitude then, sit in legislative bodies since and by their votes enact laws against receiving favors from the railroad corporations, as demanded by the people and a result of the agitation which had its origin with him in 1895. He was the leader in the campaign for a better system of caring for the chronic insane in this state and, while his efforts did not result in the adoption of a modified and improved copy of the Wisconsin cottage plan, which he advocated, it called attention to the need of better methods than those in vogue and resulted in some beneficial changes. While he was not the author of the law establishing the "piece price system" at the state prison, to replace the antiquated and cruel contract system, and one big step in the direction of still better laws, he nevertheless bore the brunt of that successful fight and received the appreciation of free labor, with which prison made goods came into competition. He had charge of training school legislation and

was instrumental in securing other laws beneficial to the state and county. In 1906, at his first re-nomination as a candidate from the Red Wing district, he received the honor by acclamation, there being no opposing candidate. He also received the election without opposition. In 1897 he was a formidable candidate for the speakership of the House. During his years of political activity Mr. Grondahl did considerable campaigning throughout the state under the auspices of the Republican state central committee. Being able to present the issues of the campaigns in either English or Norwegian, his services as a speaker were naturally in demand. Since 1892 Mr. Grondahl has been connected with the Red Wing Daily "Republican," and from January, 1895, to November, 1898, was editor of the "Nordstjernen," a Norwegian weekly issued by the same company. In the spring of 1896 he was elected secretary of the Minnesota Republican Editorial Association, and in 1898 was secretary of the Minnesota Taft Club. He took an active part in the Republican state conventions for several years. In August, 1896, he was chosen as one of the delegates to represent Minnesota in the national convention of Republican clubs at Milwaukee. He is at present editor and manager of the "Republican," published by the Red Wing Printing Company. He is the president of the Red Wing Commercial Club and a member of the Red Wing Manufacturers' Association. He is interested in a business way in two or three enterprises to which he does not give personal attention. It might be mentioned in passing that Mr. Grondahl is the author of a number of sketches and verses, both humorous and pathetic, written either for pleasure or as a part of his newspaper work. The Spanish-American war song, "Fighting for Cuba," had a national circulation at that time and is preserved in papers and books of that period.

Henry Ridgway Cobb, managing editor of the Red Wing Daily "Republican," was born in Portland, Maine, and received a classical and literary education in the public schools of his native place, in Tabor College, Iowa, and in the Minnesota State University. His early bent was toward a literary life, and as a young man he entered newspaper work as a matter of personal preference. He has been connected with several newspapers of Iowa and Nebraska, and in 1882 came to Minnesota and established the Hubbard County "Enterprise," the first weekly newspaper north of the Northern Pacific railroad, between Duluth and the Red River valley. This paper had an important influence on the upbuilding of Hubbard county. Since 1904 Mr. Cobb has occupied his present position on the "Republican," and has taken an important part in the advocacy of many public reforms. Always an ardent Republican, Mr. Cobb has seen public service as county