

THE HISTORY OF PEORIA, ILLINOIS

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The history of Peoria, Illinois by C. Ballance

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C. BALLANCE

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P R E F A C E.

EVERY one admits the benefit of history. But of what advantage is history without truth; and yet how common is the expression that the time has not come for writing the history of such a one, or of such a war; implying that during the life of persons implicated in a wrong it will not do to detail that wrong. Then when will it do? If those who live at the time of a transaction dare not write a history of it, how will those who live afterward know of it? How can a man write a history of that which took place before he was born, if no account of it has been handed down to his time.

The practice now is, and public opinion seems to sustain the practice, to send every man who dies directly to the regions of eternal bliss, leaving none but the living as fit subjects of his Satanic Majesty. When a man dies by the halter, he, with a priest at his elbow to keep up his courage and his confidence, rejoices in the certain prospect of going immediately to the arms of Jesus, who stands ready to receive his guilty soul; and every man who dies a natural death, however great a rascal he may have been, is represented as having been a paragon of virtue. All his virtues, if he had any, are paraded in the newspapers, or, if he had none, virtues in abundance are attributed to him; and all his vices are ignored. And should any man object to this course, he would be told we "should never speak evil of the dead."

Had this been the doctrine of the authors of the Scriptures, we would to this day have remained ignorant of the important fact that Mr. Samson was an old libertine, and that Miss Delilah was anything but a modest maiden. Nor would we now be aware of the more important fact that the man who, at one time, was 'a man after God's own heart', was at another time peeping into the garden at a beautiful woman, whose raiment, all told, was less than that of the woman Maj. Powell saw on the Colorado, to wit, a string of beads. Nor of the much more important fact that the old rascal had the husband of that woman killed, 'that he might possess the ewe-lamb' without annoyance. Nor would the still greater fact have come down to this generation that, even in that day, there was one who had dared, with reference to the doer of this great iniquity, to say unto David "Thou art the man."

All history should be true. But little good can be derived from