CHAPTER X.

REMINISCENCES.

In speaking of some of the early days, Mr. Albee says: "Some incidents which occurred 50 years ago, may be of interest to the present generation. In 1856, or a little earlier the Manitowoc & Mississippi Railroad was started, it running from Manitowoc to Menasha, a distance of about 40 miles. Considerable grading was done, some of which has since been utilized by the St. Paul road, they using several miles of the old grade from Menasha east, and probably in other places. The grading was in progress in the Summer of 1857, but the approaching stringency in financial circles being felt severely by those who were promoting the road, some of those in Manitowoc who were interested in the enterprise endeavored to boost the road along by means of a mass meeting, a parade, with band of music, public speaking, etc., to which the people of Two Rivers were invited. The invitation was accepted by some of the more jovial element, and the late Robert Suettlinger who conducted a hardware store, at the corner of Main and Washington Streets, for many years, was chosen as chief engineer, to manage Two River’s part in the parade. One of Aldrich, Smith & Co.’s teams was procured, a long reach put into the wagon, a long platform built upon the wagon, a cabin built upon the platform near its rear end to represent the engineer’s cab, and the tender, a piece of an old smoke stack, mounted upon the platform, and extending horizontally forward for the engineer’s ‘Cab,’ the bell being, I think, a large cow bell, with rope for ringing it, running to the cab. Fred Arndt, then an employee of the Aldrich, Smith Co. (who later enlisted, went through the War of 1862 to 1865, and soon after
the war bought a farm 4 miles west of Neenah, which he farmed for many years in connection with his trade of butcher, buying and selling cattle, etc., but two or three years ago gave it to his sons to run and moved into the city), was appointed 'fireman' for the 'locomotive.' The 'tender' was provided with an abundant supply of fuel, which consisted of material that would produce an abundance of dense black smoke, when ordered to do so by the engineer, and ring the bell.

You can well imagine the amusement the outfit made for the spectators and participants. After doing their part in the parade and quaffing a few glasses of lager, the party started on their return trip, late in the evening. The road was not the best, the load was heavy, and it was necessary to occasionally stop the horses for a rest. Arriving at a sandy stretch between 'Kuehn's Farm' and the village of Two Rivers the team was halted and the fireman ordered to fire up so as to go into the village under a good head of steam, which he proceeded to do. After waiting until his patience was exhausted, he looked out of the cab, to learn the reason of the long delay, when to his surprise and chagrin he discovered that the horses had been unhitched from the wagon and the men and horses were far ahead on their way to the village. He walked home that night, and always accused Mr. Suettinger as the perpetrator of the prank."

When the financial crash of 1857 came, money was a thing of the past. Wages of men dropped, common laborers commanding but 75c. per day, and "orders on the store" were the principal currency. $10.00 in bankable funds being more than many families had in a year. Provisions, such as wheat, rye flour, corn meal, and potatoes were low in price, but labor was not plenty. One incident I recall proves this. An Irishman living in Mishicott secured employment at the pail factory in the Winter of 1858 at 75 cents per day. When Saturday night arrived he took for a part of his pay a sack, 98 lbs., of
flour, which he carried to Mishicott, nearly, or quite 8 miles on
his shoulders. After the commencement of the war, for
convenience in dealing with their employees, many manufac-
turers issued what was called “script” which was somewhat
like bank bills and was issued in dollars and fractions thereof.
These representations of value soon received the name of “shin
plasters,” and were payable in merchandise only, but were
kept in circulation by some business houses up to as late as
1875 or a little later. Laws have since been passed, making
their issuance illegal. After the commencement of the war
and the call for 300,000 more men, the younger element became
interested and began talking about enlisting. Some of the
Democrats were opposed to the war, but not all of them, a
few enlisting, but a majority of those enlisting were believers
in the principles of the Republican party. Public opinion was
such that no active opposition was made by the Democrats in
Two Rivers, and several who were prominent in the Demo-
cratic ranks took active and prominent parts in securing
enlistments. The beginning of enlisting in Two Rivers as I
remember it, was started by the chair and pail factory em-
ployees, one afternoon, by organizing a company with fife and
drum to march up to the tannery, going up on the east side,
and returning on the west side of the Mishicott River. A
raid was made before starting on a pile of broom handles in
the pail factory for “guns.” The writer was one that carried
a “gun” in that march. Upon the return of the company that
night, or soon after, the following persons agreed to enlist,
although no papers were then signed to that effect.