



## JUDGE GASLIN STORIES

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George L. Burr, editor of the Register at Aurora, writes: "You ask concerning Judge Gaslin stories. I have one that came under my personal observation. It is not much, but such as it is you shall have it. I was a boy freighter from Smith county, Kansas, to Hastings, and when on the return trip, I stopped over at Hunnell's ranch between Hastings and Red Cloud for dinner. It was an election day and the candidates were Gaslin and Dilworth. We had a good dinner, albeit considerably late. While we were eating, a half dozen of us at table, the little daughter of the proprietor, Hunnell, a five or six year-old with long curls that were very beautiful, came to her father's arms, and said: 'They are having 'lection over to the schoolhouse, papa.' 'Is that so,' he replied, 'and did you vote?' 'Yes, I voted' said she.' 'Who did you vote for?' inquired the father. 'I voted for Dilworth,' said the little girl. 'I didn't want no old Gaslin in mine.'

"The man eating beside me ducked his head, but said never a word, and after dinner the other freighters told me that it was Judge Gaslin himself and that he was a good judge, but that he was prejudiced against women, he having a wife that had gone wrong, and that he had to watch himself in cases where women were concerned to see that he did no injustice."

Other Gaslin stories:

"At one term of district court the jury released several bad actors that the judge considered hardened criminals. They convicted one young fellow on a first offense. With utmost severity of manner he roared out: 'Stand up and receive your sentence.' The prisoner struggled to his feet expecting to receive the limit and the judge said, 'Prisoner at the bar: For some reason, God only knows what it was, the jury have seen fit to turn loose on this community several bad men, more guilty than you. If they can do this I can turn loose one boy, that I hope will know more than to be ever caught in a scrape like this again. The sentence of this court is that you mount your horse, and be out of town in less than five minutes.'"

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"When I lived in Webster county about 1884 they told the following yarn about Gaslin. The Cook murder trial where the man who committed a horrible and unprovoked murder of an employer was concluded and the prisoner ready for sentence. It should have been murder in the first degree but a mob had hanged and nearly killed him and he was very pluckily rescued by Sheriff Warren at risk of his life and as a result the verdict was for murder in the second degree. The

Judge had been greatly exasperated by several supreme court decisions in other cases and spit out: 'I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give this man five years in the penitentiary if he and his attorney will agree that he take his medicine and serve the sentence; or I will give him ten years in the penitentiary and he can appeal to the supreme court and see what they will do for him.' "

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"Later at Bloomington, he was holding court, and my father, E. M. Burr, was one of the attorneys at the bar. As court got in motion it became manifest that His Honor was very drunk and not in fit condition to act on the bench. As father was bringing forward his case, the judge made a great effort to appear preternaturally attentive, but he as well as the onlookers realized that he could not conquer his indisposition. 'This court sojourned,' thickly enunciated, 'I'm not in condition to try a lawsuit, and I'm not going to do it.' 'To what date, your honor,' said father. 'To the twenty-fifth of Deshember,' said the judge. 'But your honor, that is a legal holiday' was urged. Confusedly he stared at the lawyers and jury. 'Whatsh holiday that comes on the twenty-fifth Deshember?' he inquired aggressively. The great judge who was noted for short-cut justice being too drunk to know when Christmas came.

"Everybody has heard the story where he walked out, measured the breaking and passed judgment on the work, those points being in controversy in a case on trial before him. When court resumed trial of the case, he ruled out further evidence saying the court had seen the land and knew what the facts were."