

KLU KLUX KLAN

THE PUBLIC PULSE

Editor of the Tribune:

Hastings on the Mississippi, Dakota County, Minnesota had perhaps its greatest thrill on Saturday night, August 22nd, 1925. It was on the occasion of the official visit of the Knights of the Klu Klux Klan. The coming event had been noised so thoroly by the opposition, that the city was filled with people from the surrounding country waiting to welcome the visitors.

Assembling at the River Cemetery, the knights donned their robes; and marched two abreast along Highway No. 53 to River Street, then south to Third Street, then east to Ramsey Street, and north to Second Street and then west to the place of assembly.

Two knights both on foot and on horse also, led the parade, accompanied by a policeman. There were nearly three hundred knights and about 100 Klanswomen in line, also an auto filled with Junior Klan boys and girls.

The marchers were robed but not masked and had arms folded. Contrary to many threats of everything short of massacre voiced by those who are not in favor of the Klan principles no demonstration of harm, except one klansman kicked by a high official of the city, a brick thrown through an automobile following the parade and a few scattered sneers and idiotic laughs was directed towards the knights and ladies of the Klu Klux Klan as they marched with steady tread the whole length of the streets selected.

For the after the parade meeting an assembly ground, across the Vermillion River and south of the King Midas Flour mill was leased. To this large cross was transported. erected also a high pole with the star spangled banner flying from its top. Here came the knights and ladies in more than 100 autos.

It had been reported during the evening that Mayor H.A. Sieben, who is described by admirers as "He's Young. But he is 'Boss' of Hastings! and "More than that "he's a reg'lar feller," had decided to prohibit the burning of the usual fiery cross. Sure enough the Hastings Fire department arrived early on the scene and remained throughout the hours "waiting" for a fire to occur, under the direction of Mayor Sieben, personally. It is believed that was the first time in the history of the state of Minnesota that a fire company responded to a false alarm and waited for a fire which never occurred while a city of 5000 people's homes and business houses was left unprotected for hours, and all the time the firemen abetted the hoodlums in annoying American citizens in the enjoyment of their rights of Free Assembly, Free Thought and Free Speech. Even his honor (?) the mayor whose policy is said to be "A square deal for every resident of Hastings" with a special policeman as guard, trespassed on the private property to break up the assembly or else cause a breach of the peace. But he recieved a salutary lesson in official ethics, when both he and the policeman, to whom he held tightly were ordered off by the Klan Klavaliars, and refusing to go because "I am the Mayor" were pushed bodily and not to gently clear to the highway. These Klavaliars are the specially organized and drilled keepers of order at Klan gatherings and fearlessly carry out orders given by their officer. The mayor found out that there were some folks who did not own him as "boss", and his oft repeated "I am the Mayor", failed to win him any sympathy or honor from the "Americans on Guard."

It was decided by Keagle Wetzel not to violate, the city ordinance against setting fires within the city limits, even the burning of a fiery cross is not specifically mentioned in the ordinance, yet it might have given the Fire company an opportunity to needlessly assault the women and children with streams of water and also damage the automobiles parked nearby. After the guards had been set with instructions to admit only prospective members, the program began. "America" was

sung and a prayer was offered by Rev. William E. Thompson, who also gave an address of welcome. He thanked the knights and ladies for their interest in the moral welfare of Hastings, which caused them to come from many miles distance. For the benefit of prospective members and there were many present by courtesy, he outlined the principles and plans of the movement. He especially defended the K.K.K. from slurs cast at them as inciters of mob violence and riots and called attention to the demonstration of interference by the officials of Hastings as an example of all the disturbance that have been chronicled by the subsidized press and which is worse have been swallowed as pure gospel by so many misguided people. He declared that the regularly appointed officers of the law and officials of the city would find in the K.K.K. the best friends of law and order on whom they might call for any assistance needed. He pleaded for a drastic enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. Hearty applause punctured his talk at the end of almost every paragraph. The meeting was closed by the Lord's Prayer.

The presence of a few drinks with the Fire company mob and Mayor outside the fence of robbed knights caused a near riot and several blows were exchanged by bystanders. Even the mayor recieved a severe blow from one who is supposed to own him "boss" and salute him "Mayor!" but he blamed it on a law abiding citizen of the city, who he caused to be arrested by his special policeman. In the confusion that followed, he was struck on the head and arm and rendered unconscious. Bert Wilson thus became the first martyr to be injured at a Klan meeting in Hastings and is therefore honored by all his friends of every creed. Such treatment does not tally very well with the mayor's policy of a "A square deal for every resident of Hastings." Three other men were arrested but when their friends went to bail them out, they were told that they had been set at liberty and apologies were made for the disturbance caused. An attempt was also made to wrest the cross from an automobile as it was leaving the grounds but the prompt closing in of many Klansmen around it foiled the hoodlums.

The cross was later erected outside the city limits where it was fired and watched by the assembled knight's unmolested.

Great indignation was expressed all day Sunday by the better class of citizens without regard to demominational lines at the unwarranted interference with the Klan program. Many lament the unenviable advertisement of intolerance given the city of Hastings which will be voiced far and wide by the visitors and their friends. It is time that even some "sour moss-back officials with which some less favored communities are occasionally afflicted should be elected to uphold the honor and labor for the welfare of this city "surrounded by fertile and productive farms" and having "cool and inviting residential districts, wide and well-laid business thoroughfare, splendid highway, rail and river connections with the Twin Cities and other important business centers." It is said that there will be a large increase in membership of the local unit of the Knights of the Klu Klux Klan because of the affair.

-A COUNTY KLANSMAN.