

Drama of Mystery on the High Seas

# The Case of the Captive Cutlery

By Dan Byrne.

DES MOINES (UP) — The United States navy and the governor of Iowa have put the finishing touches on a taut, real-life drama of mystery on the high seas and frustration in the corn country.

Appropriately, Gov. Herschel C. Loveless and the navy play the leading roles in the epic—the governor as hero and the navy as villain.

The drama's title is "The Silver Service" or "The Case of the Captive Cutlery".

The play—it's really more of a comic opera—opens in 1897 when the people of Iowa contribute money to buy a magnificent set of silverware for the battleship USS Iowa.

The silver goes off to war and graces the table of the

Iowa's officers for many years. When a newer, bigger USS Iowa is commissioned, the silver service goes along.

### The pace quickens in Act II.

The navy discards the latest USS Iowa. But it wants to keep the silver set. So it makes a formal request of Iowa.

The navy suggests that if Iowa doesn't want the silver set, the officers of the heavy cruiser USS Des Moines would like to have it aboard.

### Enter Governor Loveless.

The governor takes a straw vote among Iowa historians. He learns they want the silver returned to Iowa and put on display in the State Historical building.

The governor so informs the navy.

Act II ends as Loveless rushes off to witness the demise of the USS Iowa as it is decommissioned at Philadelphia last Feb. 24.

### Act III opens on a puzzled chief executive.

The governor is delivering a soliloquy. He reports to his audience that while attending the defrocking of the USS Iowa, he asked about the silver.

"They never did give me an answer on where it was and always wanted to change the subject," he muses.

A quick change of scenery and Loveless is back in his office at Des Moines. A letter is on his desk. It's from the navy.

Loveless reads it, but he still doesn't know where the silver

set is. The navy doesn't say in so many words, but the governor infers it's aboard the USS Des Moines, now on a 2-year tour of duty in foreign waters.

The navy suggests it might "loan" the silver to Iowa some day.

The governor stiffens slowly as he puts down the letter.

"If they didn't plan to do what I asked, why did they even bother to write me?" he asks, front stage center.

The curtain starts to draw. But then a final note closes the play on a note of hope and defiance.

Loveless, defending the historical subordination of the military to civil authorities, announces he will demand an explanation.

### Final curtain.