

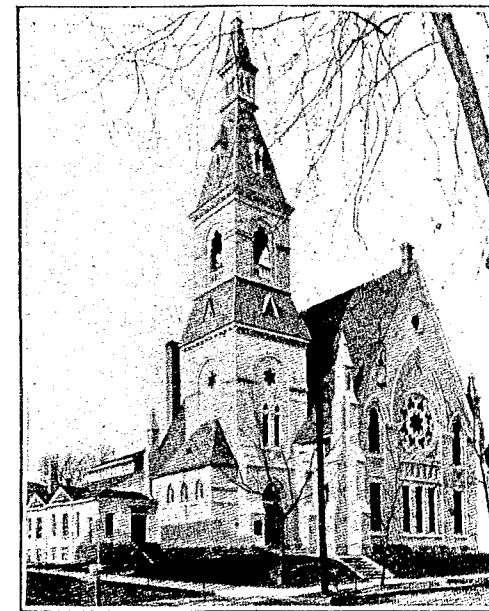
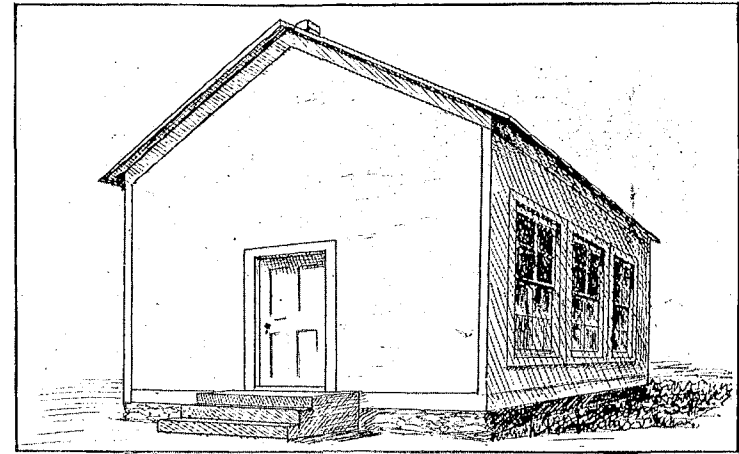
## CHAPTER XI

### RESULTS

HOW genial and wide-spread, in the spring and summer time, are the influences of sun and showers! In autumn we gather in the harvests, and reckon up their sum. But in the multitude of bushels of corn or wheat, more or less, have we a measure of what the sun and showers have done? What facts and figures are of use here?

Like sun and showers are gospel influences in a state, as they flow along the channels of individual, domestic and social life. The effects produced are quite as much unseen as seen. They are such as no words can compass. Human language cannot set them forth. To attempt, therefore, to point out, in the form of definite and tangible results, what home missions have done in Iowa may prejudice rather than promote our object. It were safer, perhaps, to content ourselves with the general impression given from the view we have taken of the workers and their field.

Nevertheless, we will venture, as to a few points, upon a closer view; yet so as by the facts and figures to be reminded constantly quite as much of the things



Beginnings — Present edifice  
EDWARDS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, DAVENPORT

not told as of those that are. We will begin with a novel scene, — novel indeed for Iowa, and rare even for any state.

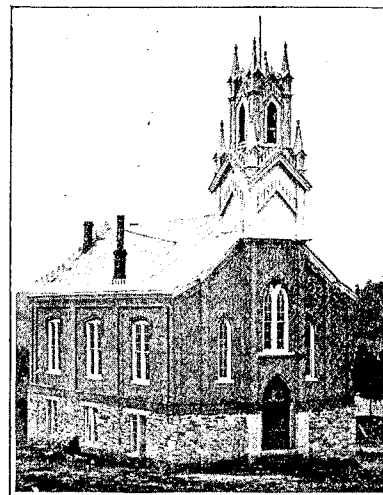
On the 18th of November, 1868, in Muscatine, one of the busy cities on the banks of the Mississippi, there was a great gathering at the house of a pastor, Alden B. Robbins, one of the Band. Within that modest dwelling, children had grown up around him; about him now were his flock, — parishioners, friends and neighbors, — the largest social gathering the city had ever seen. By his side stood one, not the first to share his joys and sorrows as wife and companion, but for many years his helpmeet indeed, the fruitage of whose exemplary life of prayerful, earnest toil was in the scene around her. With him, too, were gathered a few — here a brother, and there a sister — of those who, twenty-five years ago, were with him at the beginning of things. The silver wedding they called it, and fitly, of pastor and people.

It was easy now to speak of incidents and dates, to call up facts and figures, to set the present membership of the church of two hundred, and the total membership from the beginning of three hundred and fifty-five, over against the little band of twenty-six who first composed it; and to set in array the figures showing the twenty-four thousand dollars contributed to benevolent purposes during the last twenty years. It was easy to contrast the present house of worship with the first one built, — the little brick

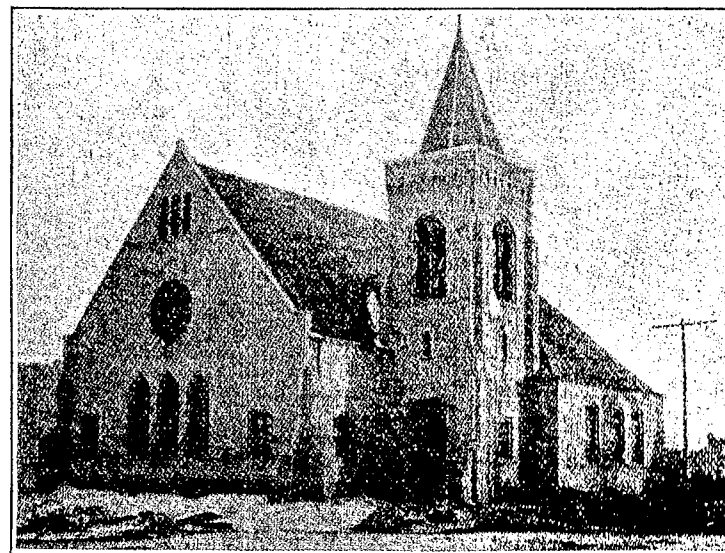
building at the top of the hill, among the stumps, in the erection of which, after pockets were empty, the brethren brought their bodies to the work, with hod in hand, carrying brick and mortar.

It was easy to go back of this to the old court-house, where the meetings first were held, and then to fill up this space of twenty-five years with pleasing incidents of revival scenes recalled, and manifold changes wrought. Easy indeed was all this, and rich and rare was the Book of Chronicles opened that night by the pastor among his people.

But all that was said, all that was thought or conceived of, by any or all, — what was it in comparison with the true history of the twenty-five years there under review? To give that history, one must trace the workings of prayers and prayer-meetings, — even those little church prayer-meetings of the olden times there, held in the afternoon, because Deacon Lucas, one of the three brethren who were to sustain them, lived five miles out in the country. He must tell the story of the sermons from week to week prayed over, studied and preached; of the good seed sown, in what hearts it took root, and how it grew. He must tell how children grew up, were trained and moulded by church and Sabbath-school; what souls were born into the kingdom of Christ in the progress of the years. He must relate the history of those souls in their Christian development in this world, and tell how some who have gone over the river were fash-



1858-1895

1895  
FIRST CHURCH, DECORAH

ioned and ripened for heaven. He must portray the days of anxiety and solicitude on the part of both pastor and people in days of weakness, when that church was among the little home missionary churches of Iowa. He must show what was the part of each and all the home mission workers, who, by their prayers, labors, gifts and sympathies, sustained it, till, by the blessing of God, its liberty and Christ-loving principles were triumphant, and it became a tower of strength among sister churches in the state.

But, if such things as these are to be fully and truthfully told, who is to be the chronicler? And yet nothing short of this, and more than this, would be a complete history. Over and above the few facts and figures which we can put down in connection with the history of any one church, as the results of home missions in Iowa, there are in the divine Mind and as eternity will reveal them, other results just as definite and tangible, greater, and more in number. To that silver-wedding scene of pastor and people, with all its hallowed associations and precious memories, we point as one of our results. And as with this church, so with others scattered over the state. Not that each church is as strong as this; a few are as strong or stronger; many are weaker. Not that every pastor can look back upon his quarter-century labors in the same field; but wherever churches have been planted, and gospel ordinances maintained, a like process, as to its general features, has been going on,

We have now reached a point where figures begin to be significant. When the pastor of whose silver wedding we have spoken began to labor with his little home missionary church twenty-five years ago, and looked around for his immediate allies and coworkers, there were in the territory, of his denomination, seven ministers and sixteen churches, with an aggregate membership of four hundred and twenty-two. Among them all there was the one house of worship,<sup>18</sup> built and used expressly as such: now (1870), there are one hundred and eighty-one ministers and one hundred and eighty-nine churches, with a membership of about ten thousand.

These churches are well supplied, for a new country, with houses of worship, some of which are among the finest structures in the state. They are located mainly in the principal centers of population and trade,—places, in this respect, like those in which Paul first preached the gospel. They embrace, to say the least, their proportionate share of the commanding forces of society. These churches, as a general thing, are alive and vigorous.

The amount of money raised by them during the year ending June, 1869, for home purposes and benevolent objects abroad, was \$136,405; and was equal to an average of sixteen dollars to every resident church member. Of these churches all but four were planted by, and have been nurtured

<sup>18</sup> At Dubuque.

through, the agency of the American Home Missionary Society.

But let us not dwell too long among mere statistics. Keeping in mind the one hundred and eighty-nine churches now scattered over the state, as the fruits of, and the fruit-bearing vines planted by, the Home Missionary Society, let us indicate a few facts illustrative of their significance and value.

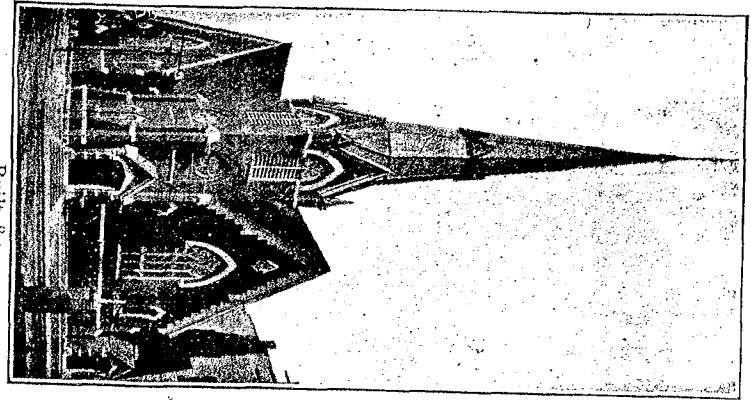
The local church is the laboring point in the kingdom of God. Where the local church is vigorous and active, it includes every form of wise Christian labor. Were the world to be converted by public gatherings in associations and conventions, by public councils and resolves, the work were easily done. But little is accomplished by these, useful as they are in their place, save as those who share in them go back to the home churches, where by prayer and by work the seed of the kingdom is to be sown among the people. Here, where the gospel is preached and its ordinances are maintained, where the light shines and the gospel leaven is at work in households, Sabbath-schools, congregations and society at large, are the working centers of Christianity.

Here, too, are the laborers for Christ who are to go forth into other fields, bearing precious seed with them. From these Iowa churches such laborers have gone forth to the East and the West and the South and to the isles of the sea. Some of our missionaries abroad to-day were raised up in the bosom of these

churches, and others are preparing to follow. For the promotion of Christ's kingdom in the land, we have various organizations, — Bible societies, tract societies, Sabbath-school societies, and the like. But who does not know that the moment a home missionary enters a field, he is almost compelled by the force of circumstances to be a Bible agent, a tract agent, a Sabbath-school agent, and the agent and actor in every form of effort by which Christian work is to be done?

We hear often and much as to its being the province of certain agencies to go in advance of the churches; but we never yet heard of a great battle won by skirmishers. All due honor to anybody and any agency that can do good in any measure and anywhere; but let us not forget to recognize the wisdom of the divine plans in accordance with which everything effective in the kingdom of God must spring from and be nourished by "the church of the living God, which is the pillar and ground of the truth." So shall we honor that Society, which, in the planting of churches, in a sense absorbs and carries in itself all Christian agencies.

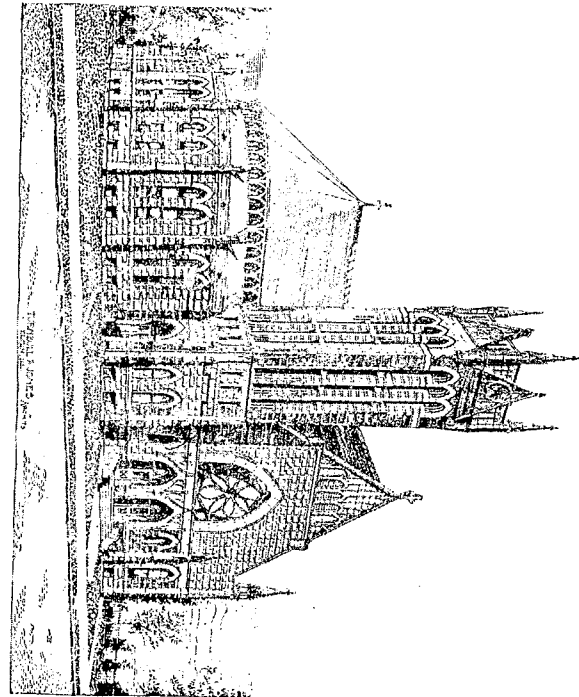
In estimating the influence of these churches in Iowa, we must not forget the revivals of religion included in their history. When God in various ways so wonderfully prepared this nation for the fearful struggle through which it has recently passed, by abundant harvests and general financial success, he



Built 1877

PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, DES MOINES

Corner stone laid, 1901



also scattered over the land numerous and powerful revivals of religion, through which, in part at least, a moral sentiment was created, adequate to cope with the powers of oppression, and to endure in the struggle. In our accounts of revivals, we say: so many were converted, so many have joined the church; as though this were the whole of it; but here, as elsewhere, figures fail to tell the story. Follow those truly converted through their life-work; see in the elevation and development of Christian character, in the changes wrought in many homes, in society, in trades, professions, and the various callings of life, the influence of genuine revivals of religion; and then you may begin to estimate them. So we shall see how the Congregational churches of Iowa, and those of all denominations, have been blessed, and made a blessing to the state, by the outpourings of God's reviving spirit.

We should do injustice, in speaking of the results of home missions in Iowa, did we fail to mention that to these home mission churches is the country largely indebted for the stand taken and the services rendered by this new and rising state in the hour of our common national peril. What these were, we need not tell. They are known and read of all men. It might have been otherwise.

Once, when, in the territorial legislature, the question of the admission or rejection of slavery was discussed, liberty barely triumphed. The portions of

the state earliest and most thickly settled received a population largely imbued with Southern feeling and Southern sentiment. Any open opposition to human bondage was decidedly unpopular. Our little churches found themselves amid uncongenial elements. They were stigmatized as abolition churches. Their ministers were some of them threatened with violence; but they stood faithful, espousing from the first, and ever pleading, the cause of human rights.

A change was wrought, and Iowa is honored, the country over, as true to the cause of freedom. To what extent this fact is due to the churches that gathered to their bosoms the descendants of the Pilgrims, who had made new homes on her soil, and lifted aloft the standard of a liberty-giving gospel, may never be definitely known, for here, again, facts and figures fail us. But we know, that when men were called for and armies were to be raised, one out of every four of their ministers sent a son, nearly every fourth of their adult male members enlisted, and, from their congregations, two thousand went forth to the conflict. Of those who went from their communion tables, one third never returned. In the councils of the nation, too, was their influence felt. Of this we are assured, when, during the war, there stood among us one<sup>19</sup> holding one of the highest positions of trust in the gift of the state, whose voice in both state and national councils had always been

<sup>19</sup> Senator Grimes.

true and potent for liberty, who frankly affirmed, that, in respect to his political principles, he owed more to the body of men before him than to any other, and, at the same time, declared his political godfather to be him who was honored with the title of "Father" among us.

We shall not be charged with undue presumption if we say a word here of the modifying influence exerted upon other denominations. As Congregationalists, we are neither bigoted nor vain enough to feel that all excellence or wisdom is with us. We set up no claim to perfection. Our Western lives have taught us better. As we now see it, each denomination of true believers has its own peculiar excellence, around which it grows, and from which it has whatever is peculiar to its life. The several evangelical denominations, working side by side in this open field, inevitably affect each other. They give to and borrow from each other. No one of them in the future is to be just what it would have been by itself. That future will not, cannot be just what any one of them alone would have made it. It is to be better than this, and each denomination is to be the better for the others.

The modifying influence which the denominations mutually exert is too marked to escape the notice of any. Let it go on. We believe they are doing each other good. In this direction should the friends of missions look for a portion, at least, of the results of

this labor; for there is no danger that the influence of the polity and principles of the Congregational churches will be too strong amid the forming influences of the West. There is need of them, and let the need be supplied.

If anything more is needed in this chapter of results to inspire the feeling that this work of home missions pays, we have only to remember that those churches are young and vigorous, and in a growing field. In a few years, other churches than that already referred to, other pastors, will be having their silver weddings; year by year, additional ones will be coming up to the point of self-support, and pass on in their growth. New ones, betimes, will be planted. In God's husbandry, how soon is it perpetual sunshine and shower, seed-time and harvest, commingled!

The sheaves are in our arms, and the tender grain at the same time is springing at our feet. Centuries in God's seasons are but days, quarter-centuries but hours. For what we have already seen, let God be thanked. In following chapters we shall meet with still further results, which, with those that have been named, are but the seeds of the future.

## CHAPTER XII

## THE IOWA ASSOCIATION

IT is interesting to see with what boldness and independence a few home missionaries, when they get together, will start and lay out plans in the West. It is all natural enough; for a sense of the surrounding growth and progress soon takes possession of the Western man. In all arrangements the future is anticipated, and room for it carefully made. So it comes that some little church in an ordinary village bears the name of The First Congregational Church. One, indeed, sometimes almost smiles at the comprehensive and imposing titles with which some little organization is at the first burdened. But it should be remembered that the actors have an eye to things as they are to be, not as they are. If they start with large titles and plans, it is because they have confidence that things will soon grow up to them.

Thus it was, that, in Denmark, as early as Nov. 6, 1840, when, as yet, the state had hardly begun to be settled, the General Congregational Association of Iowa was organized, consisting of three churches, three ministers and one licentiate. It may not be amiss to give their names. The churches were those

of Denmark, Fairfield and Danville, with an aggregate membership of one hundred and fifty-four; the ministers were Asa Turner, J. A. Reed, Reuben Gaylord, and Charles Burnham, licentiate. The first two are still members of the Association, witnessing from year to year the fulfilment of their prophecy in the name they gave it; the third, years ago, pitched his pioneer tent on the western bank of the Missouri, to be an actor in like prophecies and fulfilments in a still more western state.

The Association thus formed held its meetings semi-annually, in spring and autumn, till October, 1844. At this time, by its recommendation, minor associations were formed, to hold their meetings semi-annually; and its own meetings began to be held once a year. The minor associations now number twelve. To these belong ordained ministers, and churches represented by delegates. Ministers and churches of the minor bodies are acknowledged members of the General Association; making this, to all intents and purposes, an annual gathering of the churches, for the exercise of no ecclesiastical rule, but, as expressed in the second article of its constitution, "to promote intercourse and harmony among the ministers and churches in its connection, to disseminate information relative to the state of religion, and enable its members to cooperate with one another, and with other ecclesiastical bodies, in advancing the cause of the Redeemer."

The spirit and proceedings of the annual meetings of this body, if faithfully given, would, of course, reveal much of the inner workings and progress of missionary and ministerial life in Iowa. Among the most pleasing recollections of the writer are those of a long series of these yearly gatherings; for, since 1844, it has been his privilege to be present, with a single exception, at all of them. This exception occurred when the shadow of the death-angel was hanging over his dwelling. The printed minutes of the Association for the last twenty years are before him; and from these, and the storehouse of his memory, let a few things be gathered.

There meets us, at the outset, a little testimony touching the soundness in doctrine of these churches and ministers, as found in the articles of faith adopted at the beginning, and ever since retained. In the early days, this soundness was not always conceded to us. Not only were our churches stigmatized in certain quarters as "abolition," but heretical. They were denounced as unsound and irregular: an exchange of pulpits, even such pulpits as were found in school-houses and court-houses, was in some cases refused.

"Congregationalism tends to Unitarianism" was the whisper industriously circulated. When this was nailed to the wall by an appeal to the true history of Congregationalism in New England, the shift was, "Congregationalism at the West is not what it is in the East. It is all right there, but out here it is

loose and irregular." And, to our chagrin, this charge was partly believed, even at the East. When we most needed confidence and sympathy, there was, in some quarters, somewhat of coldness and distrust. Among some of the good Eastern fathers, to whom appertained, as they seemed to think, the steadying of the ark, was the feeling that hardly any good thing could come from the West.

But these things have passed away. Our practice since has confirmed our professions at the first. We have long been recognized, fellowshipped at the East, as sound in the faith. But for the savor of boasting in it, we might have mentioned the present standing of Western Congregationalism, and the present fellowship between the Eastern and the Western, as, in part, at least, among the results of Iowa home missions.

In view of what has now been said, it can easily be seen how correspondence with Eastern bodies by delegates was appreciated. It is appreciated now; but in former days it had a more precious significance. At first we were few in number, coming from fields new and widely separated. We made provision for a seat with us of delegates from foreign bodies, which were then mainly in the East. Isolated as we were, and in our peculiar circumstances, it was joyous to see each others' faces; but for years no living man from the far East found us in our distant home.

At length there came one D. Shepley—a godly

man from a conference in Maine. He was acquainted with some of our number in their youth, and, of course, had confidence in them. As he looked in upon us,<sup>20</sup> and was among us in our prayers, our plans and our labors, his heart was moved. He took us to his bosom. He poured forth his prayers for us, and gave his counsels to us. He promised to take us back with him in his heart, and commend us to the confidence of the old home churches. That was Christian salutation and fellowship indeed! In later years there would sometimes be one, sometimes two. Their names stand recorded upon our minutes. Some of them have gone to the greater gathering above; but their faces and their words are still fresh in our memories. Those were the days in which Christian greetings were precious. In these later times, in our printed lists, the names of delegates, secretaries, etc., are not a few, and our body sometimes puts on quite an imposing aspect; but those who come now are not to us exactly what the first and the few in the early days were.

As would be naturally supposed, the meetings of our Association have been characterized by a high degree of Christian love and harmony. Many things have combined to make them so. In earlier years, the majority of our number were old friends and classmates. They had happily coalesced with those on the field before them. Others coming, as happily

<sup>20</sup> The Association at Dubuque, 1850.

became one with them all. So it came to pass that there was a unity of sentiment, purpose and plan, unusual in a Western body; while the early friendships and affections formed, combined with the peculiar circumstances of a new country and new fields, gave to the meetings such zest and earnest Christian fellowships as would hardly be looked for, and would seem almost rude, in an Eastern body. "The best of all," said a daughter of one of the missionaries, when old enough to attend one of these meetings, — "the best of all was to see them shake hands, the first night, after the sermon." If some of the older ministers should be called upon to give some of their happiest reminiscences, they would not forget their journeys of a hundred or two hundred miles to and from the Association, and of the pleasing incidents met with while in attendance. One could tell you that he went on foot nearly two hundred miles, and felt paid for the journey. Others can remember long horseback rides, the fording of streams, and the rude yet genial entertainment at night in the log cabin by the way, whose latch-string was always out. When buggies were introduced, and bridges began to be built, it was an "age of progress."

In the business of these meetings, seldom has there been a jar of angry debate or strife in all these twenty-five years. Differences of opinion have, of course, been expressed, but with Christian courtesy, and, in the decisions that have been reached, care has been

taken that the views of all should, as far as possible, be regarded. If it is good for "brethren to dwell together in unity," in looking back through the long series of these annual meetings, there is little to regret, and much to be recalled with pleasure.

They have been characterized by a spirit of prayer and devotion. For years, the first evening was spent in prayer for the presence of the Master. The need of his presence was peculiarly felt in the early days. Experience soon taught that a meeting of friendly greetings simply, without the presence and spirit of Christ, must be a failure. The practice of an opening sermon soon crowded out this hour of prayer on the first evening; but it found, perhaps, a better place. It was put, and has stood for years, in the middle of the forenoon of each day's session. There it takes the freshness of the morning. It is the hour, if any, that friends in the place can spare to pray with their guests. Though interrupting business, it steadies it for the day. It gives tone to the exercises of the whole meeting. It is the hour of all others in which all wish to be present. With no pride, but with joy, we see that this practice of putting an hour of prayer into the best part of the day has in some cases been copied by other religious bodies. It can be recommended to all.

Among the best features of these annual gatherings has been the attendance of the wives. This was especially true in the early times. And why not? As

the brother got up his horse and buggy to start on his journey of a hundred miles or so, along which he would find other brethren to start with him, why should he go alone? Why not take along his young wife, and their one child? Will not the journey, and the visits by the way, be just as refreshing to her as to him? Is there not a communion of sisters as well as of brethren? The hallowed influences of these annual assemblies, — are they not as needful and useful for the wives as the husbands? At an early day, the general understanding was that the wives, too, should come. They did come, renewing old and forming new friendships, recounting the goodness of God in the past, and gathering new strength, hope, courage and consecration, that made them better helpers in the home mission work.

If in this, too, other bodies have copied our example, we think no harm has come of it. But times have changed. Family cares have increased. Modes of travel have changed, becoming more expeditious, but more costly, too. The field has enlarged. Not every mother and wife can go now, but the attendance of the sisters is still a feature of the Iowa Association, profitable alike to them, their companions and the churches. They have their separate meetings for prayer, while, in the regular hours of devotion, the volume of supplication is increased by the silent uplifting of their hearts, with those of the brethren, to God. By the light of their cheerful faces, homes are

opened to a more cordial hospitality, they helping in many ways to make the meeting of the Association a pleasure and a blessing in any place where it is held. Often, in some house or hall, are social fellowships added to the religious. Acquaintances and friendships are formed, ties of affection are strengthened, and Christ's kingdom as well.

Lest any one may think the picture is overdrawn by one who has for years been in and of them, let the testimony of a stranger, whose field of labor is at the East, but who came to us once bearing the greetings of his brethren, be given.<sup>21</sup> He says, "A few years ago, I had the privilege of attending the Annual Meeting of the General Association of Iowa. There are no more self-denying and faithful missionaries of Christ anywhere than were represented there, — the patriarchal 'Father Turner' at the head, apparently the youngest of them all. How those weather-beaten men and women talked and prayed! How they laid hold of each other, and of any casual stranger who might be present, without waiting for formal introduction, when the moderator announced that the time had arrived for the miscellaneous shaking of the hands all around the house! How enthusiastically they united business and enjoyment! How tenderly they sang their parting hymn, standing around the table where together they had partaken of the sacramental emblems of a Saviour's love, breaking forth

<sup>21</sup> E. K. Alden, Secretary A. B. C. F. M.

have a body, we may modestly suggest, highly respectable as to numbers and talent, and characterized, we trust, by a goodly measure of Christian zeal and devotion, whose opinions and recommendations are of weight among its churches, and respected in the land. It is already so large as to suggest the coming necessity of a division. But "not till we are dead," say some of the oldest members; "we don't wish to see it." How long some of us are to labor, and what the necessities of the future are to be, God only knows. To him let there be given praise for the past, and in him let there be trust for the time to come.

## CHAPTER XIII

*THE IOWA ASSOCIATION. WHAT IS IT NOW?*

IT is greatly enlarged, of course. We who are now living do not wonder at it. It is but a part of the wonderful growth which has been going on in all things about us, — a growth far beyond the expectations of those who were at the beginning of things fifty years ago, in small communities that had not felt or even dreamed of the impulse that was to come to a new state from railroads, the telegraph, telephones, and all the appliances of mechanical skill and genius to develop the unknown resources of the land they were possessing.

They doubtless had faith in the future, but how short of the realities must their boldest imaginings have been! As an illustration of this, space is here given for an extract from a letter written by one of those workers in the early days. The letter by its date suggests to us the author. It is our Brother Lane, of course, who, with his good wife, had begun housekeeping with dry-goods boxes for chairs and tables,—and but a little over six months after he entered upon his work has been preaching where, and to whom? No church building, no audience but a mere handful. It

is 1844: the General Association but a year or two old; of minor associations, but two, one for northern, the other for southern Iowa; the Northern just formed, his own church of a dozen or so not yet a member of any. Perhaps, as he sits down to write, it is Monday morning, and he has been thinking of his Sabbath work and the small beginnings around him. Oppressed? Discouraged? Just a little, for a moment, it may be. And yet it is not like him. Possibly a map is before him of Iowa as it then was. If so, his eye rests upon such places as Tipton, Bloomington, and such counties as Jones, Clayton, etc., where the brethren were, and all of them, like himself, in small things. Yes, it is just possible that for his own cheer and courage he sets himself to thinking what in the blessing of God there might be in the future, and so he would pen a few lines for himself and the brother to whom he wrote. At any rate he did write as follows:

Keosauqua, Van Buren Co., July 31, 1844.

We shall be continually sending for new volunteers from Eastern theological seminaries to take possession of the new counties in the New Purchase, and the occasional parishes, which by the blessing of God, we hope to make here in the vicinity about us. Do not think, my dear brother, that I am scheming, that we are going to make parishes here, as easily as a farmer will enclose forty acres of land, and then put ministers into them as readily as the farmer could put tenants upon his enclosed fields. We shall do no such thing. We are hoping, however, that the Great Head of the Church will do this work for us. I believe the time is not far distant, when this work will be done. Sometimes I try and wrap myself up in the future, and by contemplating what *will be*, take courage to labor for the *time being*. Now I am sitting in some well furnished,

spacious church; a large congregation is convened to listen to the reports from various churches; one numbers 200 members, another 150, others 140, 100, 59, 66, 300, 317, etc. Pastors have been settled fifteen, twenty, and thirty years, revival has succeeded revival, and all is indicative of prosperity within the bounds of the association assembled. Delegates from sister associations are there. Brother Salter (locks whitened with age) addresses the audience, representing Zion's prosperity in northern Iowa. Brother Turner ("leaning upon the top of his staff") gives an account of what God has done for his people in Jones County. Brother Hill, from Clayton, although bald-headed, yet retaining nearly all the physical vigor of youth, makes a speech. Brother Alden represents Tipton; Brother Robbins, Bloomington. The ten are there and the voice of each is heard. Then, in view of the past, we will exclaim 'Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all within us bless his holy name.'

This association adjourns on Friday, Oct. 12, 1890. Shall we live to see this? No matter whether we do or not, something similar to that now described will exist in the churches in Iowa, without doubt. If we see it not in this world, God grant that we may look down from heaven and see it!

Written in 1844, the imagined meeting of the Association was placed in 1890. "Shall we see it?" was the question. No, not all were permitted to see it, he himself among the number. But if permitted from heaven to look down, what did he see in 1890? He beheld the General Association holding its semi-centennial at Des Moines, a point at the time of his writing so far west in the Indian country as to be known only as "Raccoon Forks," where there was a fort. "A spacious church?" Yes, large enough to accommodate an assemblage not simply from the old Black Hawk Purchase with the New Purchase just added, but from over the whole state. More pastors, more churches and larger ones than he had dared to dream

of; a time when in sermon and papers were rehearsed fifty years of Congregational work in a new and rising Commonwealth. Could he have been there he with reason doubtless would have said, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" And now it is 1901. To 1890 eleven years have been added. The three churches, little at first, are over three hundred now, with a membership of over 30,000, absentees not reckoned. To the three pastors with one licentiate then, there have been added and now stands a long, long list. They are held as yet in one body, for one annual gathering from year to year. And what is the Association now compared with what it was years ago? In every respect not exactly the same. This in the nature of the case could not be.

With the increase of wealth and material prosperity great changes have come. The cabins with their latch-strings out have gone, giving place to dwellings of comfort, to residences palatial, some of them, where for a stranger to look for hospitality would be intrusion. Telegraphs, telephones and the railroads are here changing almost completely our modes of business and travel. No longer now at Association time, as to an appointed Mecca, do the brethren pursue their journeys on horseback or in buggies, fording streams, toiling over wide prairies with eager expectations of hearty greetings awaiting them. No longer, with here and there an exception, is it possible for brethren to be bound together by the peculiar ties of

pioneer experiences. No, the frontier times are gone. There are other things that have gone. It was once the custom to exchange delegates with corresponding bodies. This no longer obtains. Gone, too, are the good old Sabbaths together. In former times of primitive modes of travel, many could not attend the Association meetings without being from home two preaching days, so, for their accommodation, and what proved to be of benefit to all, the meetings were put towards the end of the week and continued over the Sabbath following. The Sabbath dawn found business transacted and brought a day of quiet rest and worship together. Precious days! But this, too, has changed, so easy is it now by railroad travel to come and go in midweek.

Other slight changes there have been, but on the whole the old, the essential characteristics are the same. The atmosphere of free good-fellowship yet remains; the spirit of Christian courtesy and harmony yet prevails. The ministers of Iowa as a rule love their Iowa work. The churches, as they send up their delegates and other members to the annual assemblies are more and more interested in them. The last gathering was at a point on the banks of the great river. A church not of the largest was represented by nearly twenty of its members, and some were there, both ministers and laymen, whose homes were over two hundred miles away. The old spirit of devotion has by no means died out. The daily prayer-meeting

still stands where, years ago, in the constitution, it was put, in the middle of the forenoon, the best hour of the day, its exercises of all others the best attended. At the close of each meeting, with united hands and hearts, the old hymn is sung, "My days are gliding swiftly by," which for years has been a reminder of those who have passed to the Shining Shore, and an inspiration for better work "while the days are going." Yes, these good Association meetings. There is a power in them when filled with the presence of the Master. The fellowships engender strength for the year to come. On many a field where otherwise there might be a lonely work, the sympathetic chord of fellowship is felt. The writer must here be allowed again out of his own experience to testify to their value. As thirty-one years ago, in 1870, so now in 1901, he can say that beginning in 1844 it has been his privilege, with one exception, to be present at them all; a privilege, indeed, in view of benefits received and pleasing memories recorded. Let God be thanked. To every young minister he would say, Be an Association man. Cultivate acquaintance and cooperation with the brethren. Lead your church along the same lines. Church autonomy within its limits is good, but there is a fellowship of brethren and churches not to be forgotten.

The few illustrations given of church buildings that were, and that now are, will suggest in material things, at least, the progress made.