

CHAPTER XVI

A RARE CHAPTER, AND SHORT

IF, in conventions, speeches, reports and histories we are wont to speak and write as though only men were actors in the world, then is the present chapter rightly named; for we wish here expressly to acknowledge the influence and aid of the wives and sisters. As woman's work in the war forms one of the rarest chapters in the history of our late national struggle, so if in this chapter the influence alluded to in our Christian work in Iowa could be but truthfully and fully unfolded, it would indeed be the rarest chapter of all.

But fully to present the intense labor, the keen sympathy and efficient helpfulness of a home missionary's wife is not attempted. They can at most only be suggested. This began to be impressed on one of our earliest missionaries years ago, before, by happy experience, he knew what such help was, by a scene well worth describing. We will let him give it in his own words:—

"I was a young man, and it was the first year of my ministry. Traveling abroad one day, from my field of labor, I thought I would make the acquaintance

of a brother minister of whom I had heard, but whom I had never seen. I went to his house. It was made of logs, with a shingle roof, with one room below, and the usual loft. As I remember, it was about sixteen feet square, with a passage through it by a door on each side. On one side of the room was a stove, on the other a bed, with the usual display of kettles, dishes, hats, clothing, etc., found in such houses. The brother was not at home. His wife,⁸⁰ I was told, was above, and sick. I was invited to go up and see her. I did so, ascending by a ladder in one corner.

"There, sitting on her bed, having, with evident exertion, arranged her person for the reception of a stranger, was the missionary's wife, frail in form, pale and sickly in countenance. Her constitution was evidently fragile, and to her bodily suffering was no stranger. I shall never forget how she looked, nor with what womanly courtesy she received me. Her eye beamed hopefully; and her smile, though languid, was cheerful. Not a murmur did she utter, and scarcely an apology even for anything. An air of peace and contentment characterized her. I noticed that the whole roof was a little askew, as though it had been lifted up, and turned around, and let down again, with articles of clothing caught in the cracks.

"That," said she, 'was done by a hurricane we had a few days ago. The wind blew terribly for a while I was here all alone, and thought once the house was going; but somehow I felt safe.'

⁸⁰ First wife of O. Emerson at De Witt, Clinton Co.

"Her husband, she said, had gone to the river to get a load of lumber. She was sorry he had to work so hard. He was lame, and not strong; but ministers in a new country had to do many things to which they were strangers elsewhere. 'The worst of it all is,' she said, 'I can't help him, I am sick so much. I feel so sorry when I think sometimes that I must be only a burden, and of no use to him.'

"Then she went on to speak, with her whole soul in it, of the missionary work in which he was engaged. I tarried for the night, and, in the morning, went on my way with a new insight into the realities of the mission work. Especially did I there begin to see how woman in patience could endure self-sacrifice, self-denial and toil, and how keenly, in every fiber of her being, she could sympathize in all her husband's plans and labors for Christ. In after years it was often my privilege to be in that family. Her health afterwards was better; and then I saw how a wife, in the fortitude of a trusting spirit, could cheer, encourage and help her husband in his work. In other cases I have often seen it, and as often asked, 'What could our brethren do without their wives?'"

The first draft made on the energies of home missionary wives is made through their keen sympathy with all that pertains to their husbands' work; the next is in connection with their family cares. It has often been remarked, and somewhat truthfully, that the hardships of a new country fall more heavily on

women than men. A Western farmer, as a general thing, can carry on his outdoor operations at the very outset quite as easily on his new Western farm as he could on the old and harder lands of the East. But, between the old Eastern homes and all the little home conveniences of a long-settled country, and the new log-cabin and the nameless discomforts of a new country, the difference is wide. Here it is that bricks are to be made without straw, and that the exigencies of a new country are especially hard upon women. The experience of home missionaries' wives is, in this respect, the same as that of others.

As was natural, among the all sorts of Yankee questions alluded to in the first part of this book, as having been asked by the "Band" prior to their coming West, were inquiries as to whether a missionary should be married or unmarried, and whether wives could be maintained and made comfortable. There came back but this one answer: "Wives are the cheapest thing in all Iowa. Bring wives! Bring Yankee wives, that are not afraid of a checked apron, and who can pail the cow, and churn the butter."³⁷

It would not be safe to say that every one here has been able literally to fill this bill; but it is safe to say that the rude and rough experiences of Western life have been, and are now being nobly borne by the wives of missionaries. For a newly married couple, just from the East, to begin housekeeping in two

³⁷ From Aşa Turner,

rooms, with only a little stove, and some boxes for chairs and tables, is not much. There is a touch of romance in it, with hopes of better days. To see a missionary pastor's young wife, fresh from the delicacies of an Eastern city home,³⁸ at Association time, when ministers and delegates, and wives and children, come pouring in beyond the preparations of the village to accommodate them, call for a farm-wagon, take the reins herself, and scour the country for straw, till straw beds are provided, and placed in bedroom, entry and parlor even; to see the wives of the brethren turn in for days to help her, and then all go to meeting together—this, too, is well enough. There is a dash and novelty in it, that makes an occasion long and pleasantly to be remembered.

But let years roll on, children be born, and cares increase; let the days come when there is moving from house to house, and perhaps from place to place, till the little furniture, new at first, begins to be old; from year to year let the limit of the little salary be most plainly marked, and the increasing study be how to keep within it; let the necessity come for all sorts of contrivances, such as making washstands and toilet-tables out of boxes, turning worn garments, making over old ones for a new look, refashioning those of the older children for the younger—and missionary wives find that no small part of the missionary work and the missionary sacri-

³⁸ First wife of J. J. Hill at Gagnavillo,

ifice is theirs. Nobly have they borne it, till the bloom of youth has faded from many a cheek, yet cheerfully till some, overburdened, have fallen by the way.

But we have alluded only to the less important phases of their work. When a little church, with a young pastor and his wife, is started in a new village hitherto destitute of the means of grace, it is interesting to see what a change is soon wrought, and how a new and better order of things is in many respects speedily established. Children are gathered from Sabbath roamings to Sabbath-schools; young people, and sometimes older ones, too, let go their balls and dancing-parties for sewing-circles and church sociables; Christmas trees, children's gatherings of various kinds are introduced, prayer-meetings, too—the ladies' prayer-meeting and the church prayer-meeting.

Some among the flock are sick, or are in poverty and sorrow, and must be ministered unto; and some are to be buried with a Christian burial. Here opens a field for the wife. We may say, indeed, that she is under no obligation in these matters more than any others; that, when husbands agree to be ministers, wives do not; and that they ought not to be compelled to the double toil of parochial and domestic duties. All true; yet who would keep them from it? Who would be willing to spare this part of mission work? How great a part it is!

But we ought not here to speak of missionaries' wives alone. In all our churches there are two or

three women to one man. These churches at the outset, in the days of their feebleness, were composed, in many cases, of one or two brethren only, surrounded by a band of noble sisters. Where, then, was their strength? What wonder if there were some praying and talking then, and voting, too, other than that done by the brethren? If, in the days of our Saviour, woman ministered to him, and he honored her ministry, if Paul acknowledged his indebtedness to those women who helped him in the gospel, is it not well for us to remember how prominent has been woman's influence and work in the planting and rearing of the Iowa churches?

"Who is that?" was asked of a lady who had just admitted a stranger to her door. "It is the man I have long been praying for," was the reply. "He says he is a missionary sent by the Home Missionary Society." To this day that Christian woman is laboring with that then newly-arrived minister, in the firm belief that he was sent of God. So has it been with many another. Ministers have not only been obtained and supported, but churches have often been gathered, and meeting-houses built, more through the prayers and energies of the sisters than through those of the brethren. As the world goes, when battles are won, generals are praised, and private soldiers forgotten. But, in the kingdom of Christ, let it not be so. Let not the source of the rarest and best influence employed in the Master's service be unacknowledged.³⁹

³⁹ The experience of later years best confirms the truth of this chapter.

CHAPTER XVII

FRAGMENTS

MORE completely, if possible, to reveal to the reader the inner view of home missionary life, we present in this chapter a few incidents from the personal reminiscences and experiences of the brethren. Broken sketches, indeed, they will be, and diverse, — some joyous and some sad, some serious and some humorous, but all true to the life, because real. For some of these the writer is indebted to the brethren who have kindly furnished them; others he has culled from old numbers of *The Religious News-Letter* — the files of which are an honor to, as they are a record of, the Iowa churches, for the time in which it was published. Many a regret has there been that it ever ceased to be. From the pen of J. C. Holbrook there are, first, a few

REVIVAL REMINISCENCES

"Where'er we seek Him he is found,
And every place is holy ground."

"I was once invited to assist a home missionary in a series of religious meetings, under peculiar circumstances. Although it was a considerable village,⁴⁰ yet

⁴⁰ New Diggins, Wis.

there was neither meeting-house, schoolhouse, hall, nor other room large enough to accommodate a congregation such as might be expected to gather, with the exception of a spacious ninepin alley. To the astonishment of everybody, and especially of the minister, the owner of that building, which joined the liquor-saloon, offered without solicitation the use of it for a protracted meeting, as long as it might be needed; and that, too, without any pay, although it was bringing him in an income of ten dollars a day.

"This offer was gladly accepted; and immediate arrangements were made for its occupancy. On my arrival at the place, I was conducted to this novel house of worship, which I found fitted up with seats made of rough boards arranged across the alley nearly the whole length of it. At one end a billiard-table was placed in position for a desk; while in one corner, behind the speaker's stand, were piled up the pins and balls. It was well lighted and warmed, and, on the whole, constituted quite an inviting audience-room; and when, as soon came to be the case, it was filled with attentive listeners, and pervaded by a spirit of true devotion, the original design of it was entirely forgotten. Here meetings were held every evening for preaching and for prayer and conference and inquiry during the day, for more than two weeks; and the Spirit of God condescended to be present, and render them profitable and delightful seasons,—seasons which will be remembered in eternity by

some, as probably among the most precious ever enjoyed on earth.

"Frequently we could hear the conversation and the noise of the toddy-stick in the saloon adjoining, separated from us only by a thin board partition; but so deeply interesting were our services, that these incongruous sounds did not disturb us, or divert attention from eternal things. Seldom have I enjoyed such services more, or seen more marked effects from them.

"During the progress of these meetings, there were many hopeful conversions—the exact number I do not remember; and it is an interesting and suggestive fact that among the converts was the son of the proprietor of the building in which we met. At the close of the series of meetings, a church was formed; and the record in the church book states that it was 'organized on — day of —, in Mr. —'s ninepin alley.' Subsequently, a house of worship was erected for this congregation. The minister, now deceased, and 'whose sun went down while it was yet day,' was afterwards called to a more important field, and was succeeded for a time by one who is now one of our ablest and most popular preachers.

"On another occasion I was called to aid a ministerial brother in a protracted meeting in a considerable farming settlement, where there was no church organization and no house of worship. The school-house being too small, it was decided to hold the services in a large barn, the weather being favorable.

There, day after day, we preached, the people occupying the barn floor, and, when that became too strait, resorting to the haymows and bays adjoining. Here, too, we enjoyed the presence of God, and a delightful work of grace was witnessed.

"At another time, while exploring the country with a brother minister, we came to a place of considerable importance at that day, in its own immediate vicinity, but occupied in the main by a most godless community. Still, there was a little leaven there. A small band of Christians, the remnant of a church that had once been organized there, were praying, and for weeks had been pleading for a revival of religion in the place. As soon as it was known by them that two ministers were in town, they at once took it as God's token for good, and immediately besought us, with an earnestness that would take no denial, to tarry, and begin without delay a protracted meeting.

"Not daring to refuse, we consented. Here, too, the only place of gathering to be found was a vacant storeroom in the center of the village. Here, in a dimly lighted room, with drinking and gambling saloons on all sides of us, like Paul and Barnabas, we preached the gospel for two weeks; during which the Spirit of the Lord came down and filled the place with the glory of his presence. More than thirty persons were converted, and a church was afterwards organized, a meeting-house built, and the morals of the place improved, as the result, we will not say of the

preaching, but of the earnest prayers of those few pleading Christians. From such cases we are constrained to say, Let bands of believers everywhere, even without ministers, be encouraged to pray, and trust the Lord for help; let ministers and churches not wait for new houses of worship or more favorable circumstances, but go to work in faith and hope with such facilities as they have, and the Lord shall bless them."

Often, in new settlements, it is interesting to note the changes wrought by the introduction of the gospel; and sometimes among the hardy but rough backwoodsmen there are marked conversions, showing the power of God to change the lion to the lamb. Illustrative of this, J. W. Windsor, of Durango, gives us a sketch under the title of

THE PET BEAR

"In the year 1845 I was preaching in the destitute neighborhoods of the lead-mining region west of Dubuque. On my first introduction to the settlement I found no religious services at all and no observance of the Sabbath. That day was usually spent as a holiday, in carousing and sporting. During the first year of my labor there, I did not know even a single family where the worship of God was observed. Many of the miners had dropped their proper names and

were known only by titles or names which indicated some distinguishing trait of their character, and which had been given them by their companions. In passing through a considerable tract of timber to reach the schoolhouse where I preached, I frequently met parties of hunters on a Sabbath morning, and could not fail to hear the oaths which mingled in their common conversation.

"After a while, in coming upon them suddenly, I could hear the suppressed 'Hush, hush!' and swearing would cease while I was within hearing. This was the first hopeful indication of an awakened conscience; and it seemed to me to be the dawn of a better state of things. Then, when they saw me coming, they would 'break and scatter.' Their dogs, however, told upon their masters; and I could not restrain a smile as my eye would detect a man here, and another there, trying to place a tree between me and himself, acting the squirrel to perfection. Here, too, I thought, is hope.

"It was not long after this when a passing shadow in the schoolhouse window or doorway, during preaching, would arrest the eye, and lead to the detection of listeners without. Then, a little bolder, and conscience a little more active, they would lean their rifles against a tree, and themselves stand out in full view, hearing what the preacher had to say, or would seat themselves on the doorstep; and finally they would venture into the house, leaving their guns out-

side, but still wearing powder-horn and shot-belt across their shoulders, and would sit quiet and attentive listeners.

"In the winter of 1847 we held a series of religious meetings. The Rev. J. C. Holbrook came out, and preached ten or twelve days. It was a memorable time in the history of that community. The word preached was attended with divine power; and many of the hardest characters bowed to the mild reign of the Saviour, and became new creatures in Christ Jesus.

"Among this number was 'The Pet Bear.' His proper name was Thomas B——. He was one of the early pioneers, a real backwoodsman, possessing a powerful frame; was just in the pride of life, a hard drinker, and one of the most profane men I ever knew, and a perfect slave to a passionate temper, that not unfrequently raged like a tornado. With him it was a word and a blow, often the last first.

"On several occasions I had attempted to converse with him on the subject of religion, but was answered by a volley of oaths; and I had learned to fear coming in contact with him. During the meetings, I turned out of my way one evening and stopped at his cabin door. He was there. I said to him, 'Mr. B., we are having some good meetings at the schoolhouse, and most of your companions attend. I wish you would come: we shall be glad to see you.' Without giving him an opportunity to reply, I bade him good-evening, and

walked on. To our astonishment, he entered the house with his wife. A solemn and searching sermon was preached, in which the guilt of the sinner was faithfully exposed, and the love of the Saviour clearly set forth. He listened attentively, and was evidently affected. Nothing was said to him; we shook hands, and he left for home.

"Early the next morning, one of the neighbors came to me and said, 'Mr. Windsor, I wish you would go and see "The Pet Bear!"' 'Why do you wish it?' I asked. He replied, 'There is something the matter with him. He came home from meeting last night like a fury. He sat down in a chair before the fire, and he has been there all night. I do not know what it is, but he is weeping like a child. As I was passing, his wife came out and whispered to me to ask you to come and see him.'

"With silent prayer that God would teach me how to meet him, and what to say, I hastened to his cabin, and there found him sitting with his head bowed on his hands, between his knees, and the tears trickling down between his fingers and falling on the hearthstone. I drew my chair up to him, and asked him kindly to tell me the cause of his distress. After a pause, he looked up in my face; and, with a look and emphasis I shall never forget, he said, 'O Mr. Windsor! I am the most wicked and the most wretched sinner in the world, and I do n't know what to do; can you tell me?'

"I endeavored, in a plain, simple way, to show him the love of the Saviour, and his readiness to pardon all who came to him sick of sin, and who desired to break away from it, and give him their love, and obey him. He listened, and, with a strange expression, said, 'What! you make me believe that he came to seek and to save such a lost sinner as I am?'

"'Yes,' I replied: 'he came to save the chief of sinners, who repent and hope in his mercy.'

"'Ah! but,' he urged, 'you do not know what a wicked sinner I have been.'

"'No,' I replied; 'but the Saviour does; and he says to you, "Come unto me: I will in no wise cast you out."'

"I spent nearly the whole day with him. He became calm, and listened like a little child. In a few days he had intelligently given himself to Christ, and felt by joyful experience that the blood of Jesus could cleanse even such a desperate sinner as he was.

"He was no longer 'The Pet Bear,' having by grace put on the nature of the lamb; constraining all around to exclaim, 'What hath God wrought!' He said to me, 'My cabin is small, but it is at your service. Come and preach in it; come and hold a Sabbath-school in it. I do n't know much, and should make out poorly teaching others; but I can talk about what Jesus Christ has done for me. You know,' he said, "'The Pet Bear" has been a faithful servant of the devil a great many years: now it is God's turn.

I hope to become as faithful a servant to him as ever I was to my old master. I want you to tell me what I can do. I never was afraid of a man; and, since God has made me strong to work for him, ought I ever to be ashamed to tell what a wonderful work he has wrought in me?

“‘You see,’ he said, ‘I have been thinking it over, and I know I shall have a hard row to hoe. I know it will be up stream with me all the way. But then I have a sure Pilot if I only listen to him; and when I find the stream too rapid, why, I shall paddle to shore, and tie up to Jesus; and I know, if I tell him all about it, and ask him to help me through, he will do it.’

“During his absence from the house, his wife told me, that, after I left, on the preceding evening, she expected an outburst of temper; but, instead of this, he turned to her and said, ‘Wife, get your things on, and we’ll go to meeting.’ Then began a perfect tornado of oaths against himself, occasionally speaking to himself: ‘Spew it out, Pet; it is the last time! Get rid of it; for I mean to cut a new set of houselogs;’ meaning that he intended to begin a new course of life. He went to the meeting. She was sure, from his manner, that the sermon had touched him. On his way home, she said, his oaths made her tremble; it seemed as though he was possessed of seven devils. As he reached his cabin door, he turned to her, and said, ‘There, wife, it is all out!’ and, with such an

expression as she had never heard from him before, he cried out, ‘O God, help me!’ He took a seat before the fire, and scarcely altered his position during the whole night. The Spirit of God was dealing with him, and he wept the tears of a repenting and returning prodigal. Until I left that field, his was a consistent Christian walk.”

Such scenes as the preceding, though by no means uncommon, are not always connected with home mission work in a new country. Sometimes it is the lot of one to labor on with only gradual changes for the better, as in the day of small things, but laying foundations for the future, while this is the trial of our faith and hope.

The following is the partial experience of Rev. Ebenezer Alden, whose lot it was for a few years to do pioneer work in Cedar County, and then return to an Eastern field. It will be of interest to those acquainted with the localities, and will show, among other things, that the Home Missionary Society is not confined in its labors to places where churches are organized:

“I became a resident of the county in the winter of 1844, and organized the church in the spring following,—May 5. It consisted of three members. It was a rainy day, which prevented some others from being present to unite with us. It was formed in the

barroom of the public house, or, rather, the public room of the house where I boarded. The first summer I preached in the upper room of the jail, used during the week as a carpenter shop. The carpenter was an avowed atheist, but helped me to clear up the room for the meetings.

"Subsequently I occupied the court-house as a place of worship, alternating with the Methodist circuit-rider. There were received into the church while I was there, thirty-two. I baptized nineteen infants, attended twenty-one funerals, and married five couples. The figures do not show much. It was a dark day, a long trial of faith and patience. But the aspect of things was brightening before I left. Among other encouragements, a female prayer-meeting gave promise of better days. I preached in various neighborhoods, usually at two, sometimes at three places on the Sabbath, without appointments during the week. I ranged the country far and near, having preaching stations in every direction.

"Generally, perhaps, the brethren surpassed me in activity; but one winter, 1845-46, I worked hard. I had many long and lonely rides. My meetings were conducted by myself alone, preaching from a plan written out, but retained in my memory. I made no show of notes. My sermons were talks in cabins, in the court-house, in carpenter shops, and out-of-doors. I knew but little of prayer-meetings, led my own singing, and rode on horseback the first two years.

In the latter part of the time, I preached from more fully written notes. One fall I suffered much, and was laid aside by the fever and ague.

"I cannot speak of special outpourings of the Spirit; but God gave me the privilege of laying foundations, with a few tokens of prospective growth. I have some remembrances of those youthful days which are vivid. I had opportunities to see nature in its primeval beauty. For the pen of an Irving, those years would furnish materials of surpassing interest. Those adventures of frontier life, though but incidental to the work of the home missionary, will long remain with me, while other things, perhaps of more importance, will have slipped from the memory."

In looking over this experience, we can only wish that our brother could revisit the scenes of his former labors, to see, in part at least, the fruits of his toil. "One layeth the foundations, and another buildeth thereon."

As showing still further how the Home Missionary Society reaches out beyond the region of organized churches, and as reviewing the early history of Congregationalism in Western Iowa, which was for a long time to Eastern Iowa as a foreign field, and allowing here, because it cannot well be avoided, the full names of persons and places, we give next a paper presented at the Quarter-Centennial of the Iowa Association in 1866, respecting:

THE MISSOURI SLOPE

“Congregationalism made its first appearance on the slope in the organization of the Union Church at Civil Bend in 1849, where, without any recognized minister, about a dozen Christians — Baptists, Congregationalists and Methodists — formed themselves into a church, adopted a creed and covenant, and agreed to recognize each other in church relations, and cooperate in promoting the cause of Christ. A flourishing day school was already in existence in the neighborhood. A Sabbath-school, Bible-class and regular prayer-meetings were established, and attended with a good degree of religious interest, before any minister labored among them.

“The name Civil Bend was derisively given to this settlement along the Missouri River by the roughs who so frequently held high carousal at the various whiskey cabins that fringed the ‘Big Muddy.’ These breathing-holes of the infernal regions were known by such euphonious titles as ‘Devil’s Den,’ ‘Hell’s Kitchen,’ etc.; and, to designate the temperance neighborhood, it was called ‘Civil Bend.’ The residents accepted the name; and by this title it is known to this day, although the post-office is Gaston. On the 1st of July, 1850, the Rev. John Todd,⁴¹ with his family, joined this settlement for the purpose of preaching Christ on the frontiers. A dwelling of

⁴¹ Known as Father Todd, Tabor.

hewn logs had been erected and roofed, out on the prairies, for his accommodation, which, on his arrival, was perforated, and supplied with doors and windows, and floored with cottonwood ‘puncheons.’ The window and door casings were all the sawed material used in constructing the house; and this had to be brought a distance of twenty-five miles. The minister’s study-walls were curtains, and the study table a puncheon resting on two wooden pins driven into the logs.

“A few families of Congregationalists from Illinois, who had started for California, stopped on the banks of the Missouri, opposite the Big Platte, twenty-five miles north of Civil Bend, in the fall of 1849, and formed the first out-station, which resulted in the organization of a small church of ten members, reported as the Church of Florence, subsequently disbanded. Trader’s Point, nine or ten miles above Florence, about the same distance from Council Bluffs, and nearly east of where Belleview in Nebraska now is, was then a flourishing village of Mormons and traders, of about thirty or thirty-five houses, where many crossed the river on their way to the Great Salt Lake Valley. That, also, was made a monthly preaching place. It has long since been all swept away by the Missouri. About eighteen miles above Council Bluffs, near the Boyer, a few Gentiles were found, who wished to hear the gospel, and there was another preaching-point. A good Christian Baptist lady, re-

siding at Stutnan's Mills, on the West Nishnibotna, twenty-five or thirty miles east of Council Bluffs, signified a wish to have Christ preached to her Mormon neighbors; and there another monthly appointment was made.

"Cutler's Camp, on Silver Creek in Mills County, now seven miles from Glenwood, formed another point in the monthly circuit. Linden, too, then county seat of Atchkinson County, Missouri, twenty-five miles south-east of Civil Bend, was then favored with a monthly visit on the Sabbath.

"Thus, within a year from the time of beginning, from Civil Bend to the banks of the Boyer, and round about unto Missouri, was the gospel preached. There were seven appointments in the circuit, but two of them favored with even a log schoolhouse. In the autumn of 1850, the Rev. J. A. Reed, a sort of bishop in the discharge of the duties of his office, accompanied by the Rev. G. B. Hitchcock, made a descent upon the slope at Civil Bend. Right glad were we to find that somebody cared for us, and that we were not hopelessly severed from the Christian world. It then required a full month to exchange letters with our friends in Eastern Iowa. Our nearest post-office was fifteen miles distant. That same autumn, 1850, Brother William Simpson, the first regular itinerant of the M. E. Church on the slope, entered upon the charge of Council Bluffs, and came to Civil Bend, claiming all Methodists as his. He proved a devout,

genial, working Christian. With his cooperation the first revival was enjoyed during the second winter at Civil Bend. A single family of Africo-Americans, who had earned and paid thousands of dollars for their freedom, came into the settlement, and were encouraged to attend school; for which, some who 'had never attended school with niggers,' nor anybody else, for they could neither read nor write, determining that their children should not be so disgraced, accidentally or by design burnt down the log building which constituted our schoolhouse and place of worship. This occurred during watch night of 1850-1851.

"In June, 1851, the waters of the rivers, the waters of the uplands, and the waters above the firmament, combined to drive the people from Civil Bend. The river rose threateningly, the heavens gave forth frequent floods, and the streams from the bluffs swept down in torrents, bearing away bridges, fences and all before them. Five miles of water spread out between us and the highlands. Sloughs were waded to go to meeting, where horses would mire down, and abundance of buffalo-fish were speared with pitchforks amid the tall grass. Mosquitoes enough to dim the sun and moon chimed in to sing the requiem of our hopes in that land of promise.

"That was a trying time to the itinerancy. A surplus of water and scarcity of bridges necessitated a curtailment of the circuit. Florence and Trader's

Point continued to be visited monthly; but fighting mosquitoes by night, and traveling on horseback by day, with regular ague shakes for variety, were not very well adapted to make a Boanerges of our itinerant. But no human lives were lost; and, as already intimated, we had our first revival the following winter.

"In the fall of 1851, Brother G. G. Rice, from Union Theological Seminary, I think, arrived at Council Bluffs, under the patronage of the A. H. M. S., and entered upon the work of preaching the gospel. After the experience of 1851, on the Missouri bottom, several families resolved to take higher ground, believing that it afforded a firmer basis for the object, which, from the first, they had in view, viz., the establishment of an institution of learning, in connection with the promotion of religion. After considerable search, they located at Tabor. Three families moved there, or to that vicinity, in 1852, purchased claims, lived in log cabins; at once began a weekly prayer-meeting, Sunday-school, and regular preaching, which have continued without intermission up to the present time. In October, 1852, a Congregational church was formed, with eight members. This was the first church on the slope which assumed the Congregational name."

This church at Tabor, it should be remarked, is now the largest but one in the state. The institution alluded to is now known as Tabor College. It has,

according to the latest published statement, a president and four other instructors; twenty-one students in the college classes, and one hundred and four in the preparatory department; with property estimated at fifty thousand dollars, and a library of twelve hundred volumes.

In such fields as just described,—indeed, in all new countries liable to excessive rains, with few roads and fewer bridges,—the missionary needs the pleasant faculty of making the best of things, as one prime qualification for his work. Many a one has had an experience similar to that related below, though not always as happily borne.

GOING TO ASSOCIATION⁴²

"Last fall, at the meeting of this Association at S., Brother C. proposed for our spring meeting to convene at C. Brother T. knew nothing of C., except that it was the home of our esteemed Brother A., and that it was situated somewhere 'within the bounds' of F. County. But Brother T. was expected to be there, and he very naturally expected to see his brethren there also. The meeting was to be held on the third Tuesday in M., at eventide; and of this fact all the brethren were warned in due time.

"On the Monday previous to this said Tuesday,

⁴² Note 15.

Brother T. would needs set forth in the ecclesiastical buggy, propelled by the ancient horse, Billy. He first made diligent inquiries, however, as to the location of the said town of C.; but all men wagged their heads, and could do no more. They knew nothing of any such city. The maps were equally silent, and there was no time for correspondence, seeing that the mail from Brother T.'s house to F. County describeth the circle of the greater ram's-horn, and never returneth. Brother T. was in a great quandary, and knew not whether to proceed to the southwest, the west or the northwest. Yet Brother T. was expected to be there. So, after much dubitation, he concluded to follow the wisdom of the prairie-hawk; and, as the game was not in sight, to beat about for it. He started southward and westward, driving towards C., which lieth upon the S., and is a town fair to see. Here he found a certain Gaius, a miller of much substance, whose daughter is a miller also. Here he tarried; and in the evening they all sang hymns, and rejoiced abundantly. In the morning, mine host, and the host of the whole church, would go with Brother T. to question certain men of his town; and, behold, a man was found who had heard of C., and knew where it was, but had never been there. Also he heard that the river must be forded at this place, and that it would be nearer swimming than fording.

"So, a good while before he came to the river, he bade farewell to his host, who bade him good speed.

and said, 'See thou art not drowned in the river!' And, after a while, he came to the river. Now, there was a mighty bridge there, and it was like secession; for it was easy to get upon it, and it carried one fairly for a time; but at the end of it was a grievous jump, and there was nothing but sharp rocks and a quagmire at the bottom. Over this bridge Brother T. carried all the contents of the ecclesiastical buggy. After these were deposited on the other side, he returned and said to the ancient steed, 'Billy, there is nothing for it but for us to take to the stream.'

"So they addressed themselves to enter the river. And, at the very first, the waves flowed into the buggy, which caused Brother T. to raise his feet; and presently the waters reached the seat, which caused the rider thereupon to go up higher; and he sat on the topmost rail of the seat. And the waters prevailed even to the arm of the seat; and Brother T. saw the coat-tails of 'divinity,' that they streamed out behind upon the waters of the river; and he was a spectacle to certain men which stood by; after which the waters abated, and presently they came forth again upon the dry land.

"After this, divers other streams were crossed, and much desolate green prairie; and at evening, when the stars shone, behold, they were at the place C.

"Now, because Brother T. was the only minister that had arrived, he must needs preach to the people; and, when the meeting was done, the two delegates —

Brother B. of P. and Brother A. of M. — essayed to have the Association organized; but, when they looked upon the record, they found there was not a quorum present. So they went to lodge with the people. And the next day, Brother T. told them what was known to him of the condition of the churches.

“Now, at the former meeting, the brethren had appointed Brother T. to read an essay on the annihilation of the wicked; so, in the evening, it was read, albeit the wicked did not come to hear it.

“And after this, the hope of seeing our brethren vanished, and we came together no more. And if those brethren who came not had but known how the people waited for them, and how they climbed the steeple, and how the green sea that surrounds the place was swept often with a spy-glass in expectation of their approach, they would have taken care not to have caused such a disappointment.

“And, besides this, it was a shame to Brother T. that it was confidently asserted many times that the brethren were coming, when, behold, the things that were seen were only a green bush, a stray sheep, some calves, certain horses, and, mayhap, a few mules! These things ought not to be ranked with delinquent ministers at such times.

“So, when all was done, Brother T. wrote it upon the book. that —

“T. Nobody but Brother T. and two delegates can testify to having been at C. on the twentieth day of M., in the year of our Lord 186-.

“II. That, in consequence, nothing was done, except that Brother T. had a good visit.

“III. That the Association is expected to meet next fall at D.

“IV. That Brother T. is expected to be there.’”

Allusion has once or twice been made to Abner Kneeland and his followers, who settled upon the Des Moines River, near Farmington, at a place called Salubria. The writer remembers well a visit paid to the old infidel, nearly twenty-five years ago. He was of noble form, venerable in appearance, and treated his visitor courteously. On frankly telling him that I had come to see him simply out of curiosity, “Yes,” he replied, pleasantly; “I suppose I am about as much of a show as an elephant;” and then expressed his readiness to converse on any topic or answer any questions I might choose. In private intercourse, his infidelity and atheism were of the boldest kind, and his public lectures gross. In derision of the marriage institution, he used to say, “Tie the tails of two dogs together, and they will fight. Allow them to go free, and they will be good friends.” He and his followers were quite zealous and successful, at first, in sowing the seeds of their infidelity among the new settlers by pamphlets, periodicals, public lectures, etc. Ridicule of “priests,” making sport, sometimes mock, of sacred things, entered largely into all their efforts. But a view of the positions they assumed, and the manner

in which they tried to defend them, can best be seen in the following account given by one whose first ministry was in the midst of them, — the Rev. Harvey Adams :

THE INFIDEL CELEBRATION

Early one afternoon in the month of August, 1847, a colporteur of the American Tract Society called at our house, and told me there was to be a great celebration in the Kneeland neighborhood; and, as he desired to see what they would say and do, he said he should attend, and wished me to accompany him. As the distance was short, it being only a mile to the place, with staff in hand we were soon there. The gathering was in a charming grove on the east bank of the beautiful Des Moines. The object of the gathering was to celebrate the anniversary of Mr. Kneeland's liberation from prison in Boston, to which place he had been sentenced for blasphemy. There were present, of both sexes and of all ages, about a hundred and fifty; so they claimed; yet probably not more than half of these were very skeptical in their views; the others came simply as spectators. A platform was erected for the speakers, and seats were prepared for the ladies. The men stood round about in a circle. When we arrived, the speaking had commenced. On our joining the company, the snap of the eye, the sly glances, and the jogging of one another,

seemed to say, 'There's a priest among us: he'll have a good time!'

The speeches were spiced with such condiments as these :

"We are not indebted to Christianity for the first practical good. What has it done? Look at Spain! Look at Mexico! In early days, Mexico was a paradise. Her people were among the most virtuous and happy. But ever since Columbus, the Christian missionary, came over and converted them to Christianity, they have been miserably degraded and wretched. We glory in infidelity. We wear it as the cloak for our virtues, just as the Christians wear Christianity as the cloak for their vices."

Cries of, "Yes, yes! that's so!" came from the crowd; and one, who evidently spoke for my special benefit, said, "There was St. Gregory, who was covered with sin six feet deep."

At the close of the speeches, a pressing invitation was given the writer to "take the stand." This was declined, with the remark that I came merely as a spectator; and that, if I spoke, I could not expect to change their views. "He dare not speak without a pulpit before him. 'Twont do where there can be a reply," said an old man.

As advantage would be taken of my silence, the instant resolve was formed to say something if there should be a favorable opportunity. Nor was there need of waiting long. The ladies withdrew to prepare the

dinner, while the men all closed up thick around "the priest"—this being the term by which they always designate a Christian minister.

The two champions of the day were large, gray-headed men, who literally "stooped for age." One of them was an apostate from a Baptist church in Vermont, and the other from a Presbyterian church in Pennsylvania. They placed themselves directly before me, and stood leaning forward on their canes. I was seated. Compared with myself, they were almost giants.

In giving the sequel, for convenience I will call one of them Dr., as he was a physician, the other McB. and "the priest" H. M., for Home Missionary. The doctor was sour in look, crabbed and bitter in speech. McB. was more courteous, but oily and sarcastic. No sooner had they placed themselves thus before me, than they commenced catechizing, thus:—

McB. — "As I take you to be a philosopher and a theologian, I should like to ask a few questions, if you have no objection."

H. M. — "Certainly you can. Perhaps I shall not be able to give you satisfactory answers; but, if you ask civil questions, I am bound to give civil replies, as far as I am able."

McB. (very smoothly). — "Well, just for the purpose of information, will you please to tell us how large the Holy Ghost is?"

The point of this was that they were materialists,

and did not believe in any such thing as spirit; and, therefore, if I, "a philosopher and theologian," could not tell how large the Holy Ghost was, of course I must be the next passenger bound for Salt River.

H. M. — "That is rather a tough question, Mr. McB.; but when you are attacked with something like the bilious colic, and distressed almost to death, and feel as though another gripe or two would take your life, how large is the pain?"

At this there was a general laugh, and the question was dropped as quickly as though it had gone to oblivion.

McB. — "Man does what he does under the influence of circumstances over which he has no control. He is not responsible for his actions, because he cannot help them."

H. M. — "And so you came all the way to this celebration by means of circumstances which you could not control? And all the rest have done the same thing?"

McB. — "Certainly. Show me a thing that is not the fruit of circumstances."

H. M. — "Then the priests do what they do to destroy infidelity and atheism through circumstances they cannot control. But how comes it to pass that you consider them so criminal for what they do? Why do you speak of them as the enemies of the race, as you have done to-day? Why not rather commend their efforts? More especially, why do you cele-

brate the day of Mr. Kneeland's sentence and imprisonment? The Bostonians did what they did under circumstances they could not control." [A good deal of laughing.]

McB. — "But it is the circumstances. Men cannot control the circumstances of one of their actions."

H. M. — "Then if I take my cane, and give you a sound drubbing over the head, I may sing all the way home to-night? And you will charge it all to the circumstances? You will not consider me at fault?"

McB. — "Yes. I'll punish the circumstances: I won't punish you." [A loud laugh.]

H. M. — "That's very generous; but do you act on that principle? Suppose some one against whom you hold a note should come to you and say, 'I know, that, as men use language, I owe you; but I never intend to pay. I would not, if I could as well as not. Circumstances do not compel me to pay, and I shall not do it.' Would you not treat him to a constable?" [Cries of "Good! good!"]

McB. — "All this hair-splitting about would and would not, right and wrong, good and evil, guilt and innocence, is a humbug. These terms all amount to the same thing. There is no such thing as right and wrong."

H. M. — "I knew that would follow from your doctrine, though I did not know that you would so openly avow it. But will you tell us why you employ these terms so freely yourselves? and more especially when

you speak of the priests?" [Cries of "Good!" with laughter.] "And then, too, most certainly, if I give you a real drubbing with my cane, you cannot say that I do any harm or wrong; for there is no such thing. Not one of the priests has ever done any. Now, to try your principle, suppose I take my cane, and make a serious experiment on your head?"

McB. (very emphatically). — "I do n't like — that illustration about the cane." [A roar of laughter.] "The amount of it is, when we speak of doing, or when we speak of right and wrong, or of the mind, soul, spirit, and the like, we use words without meaning. There is no such thing. That which is not material is nothing."

H. M. — "Doctor, you and I have had a little conversation on this point before; but as we did not get through, and it is now up again, I should like" —

Dr. (very sourly). — "None of your gospel pettifogging. I know you have your visions and dreams, and soul and spirit, and Holy Ghost and all that in your Bible; but" — [Cries from the crowd, "Doctor, let him go on; let him go on!"]

H. M. — "You may call it pettifogging, or what you please, doctor: I will try to talk common sense, but am ready to leave it to the company whether I do or not. If I understand you, Mr. McB., you say that that which is not material is nothing."

McB. — "Yes. That's it. Immateriality is an absurdity."

H. M. — "You will admit this general law of nature, that 'like produces like,' I suppose."

McB. — "Oh, yes! No one can dispute that."

H. M. — "So that all thoughts, all the products of the mind, whatever we call them, are really matter."

McB. — "Most certainly."

H. M. — "And have the attributes of matter; that is to say, the mind, the soul, and all thoughts, have length, breadth, thickness, weight, and the like."

McB. — "Certainly. It is absurd to talk of a thing which is not material."

H. M. — "Very well. When we communicate thoughts, we communicate matter, we communicate shape, size and weight. That is understood. Now, then, if you two old men continue to talk to me, and I receive your thoughts without making any reply, you will reduce yourselves to skeletons; and I, though small, bid fair to become a pretty corpulent man." [The woods rang with laughter.]

The call to dinner now came, and my two infidel friends seemed to be very glad of it. But they had become very good-natured. I was invited to partake with them, and was conducted to the head of the table. When seated, and while the waiters were serving, the doctor asked me if I could partake without "grace." The reply was, that, if they did not desire that I should publicly invoke a blessing, I was not limited to that method of doing it. Soon after this, the doctor said to those near him, but for my benefit,

"He eats with publicans and sinners." To this I could not help replying, "Thank you, doctor. Happy to see you recognize the distinction."

Dinner being over, and the furniture removed, the tables were arranged in a row, and seats placed upon and in front of them for the ladies; while the gentlemen were formed into a semicircle, facing the ladies. The toast-master conducted the "priest" to the center of the half-circle, and a little in advance of it, where every one could see him. And now for the toasts and sentiments. One was read, and cheers called for. But the crowd were silent, as if at a funeral. Another, and a third; but with no response. After what had passed, the company did not feel like giving cheers to such sentiments. Volunteers were called for. One man gave out a sentiment, and lifted up his arms, and exclaimed, "Hoo—ra!" but his was the only voice. Among the volunteer sentiments, this was one: "Eighteen hundred and fourteen years ago, Jesus Christ was imprisoned for blasphemy; and — years ago, Abner Kneeland was imprisoned in Boston for the same crime; the latter a philosopher, the former a juggler."

The design of their toasts and sentiments, as well as of all the previous speeches, seemed to be, to deliver themselves of the gall and spleen they had treasured up against priests, priestcraft, and Christianity in general. They probably also intended to confirm such as might be doubtful. But the celebration had

a very different result. The crowd evidently left with the conviction, that, whatever might be said against Christianity, certainly infidelity had not many attractions.

I am not aware that any of that gathering have since been active in propagating it. From that time to this, there has not been another celebration of the kind, that I have heard of. They have not met, as before, to hear infidel lectures on the Sabbath. The one whom I have called McB. renounced his infidelity subsequently; and it is reported that he died with the hope of the Christian. Since that time, also, I have attended many funerals among those families; and, in one case, when three young persons, belonging to three different families, were buried at the same time. They had been drowned. Many have been the acts of courtesy and kindness shown to the writer by individuals who were previously of that belief.

In the retrospect, I am satisfied that all the lectures I ever gave on the evidences of Christianity accomplished little for the purpose, compared with the conversation here detailed. This was not sought or coveted. There was clearly a providence in it all. It was one of a number of occurrences which have been overruled to destroy infidelity in that region. To God be all the honor.

But these sketches have been sufficiently extended. They illustrate a few of the varied phases of mission-

ary life. We might add more, which would bring out scenes in the home circle, sometimes partaking of the sad, in hours of affliction, in remote settlements, away from friends, where husbands have preached the funeral sermons of wives, a father of children; but we forbear. As to that infidel colony, its hopes are blasted. The leaders being bold, but blasphemous, their efforts for political ascendancy in the country, and to set at naught sacred things by mock funerals, and in other ways, soon overreached themselves. The people became disgusted as they saw the tendency and the aim. A strange series of deaths, too, among them, had its effect. Better things came in; and Kneelandism, as an organization, is a thing of the past.