

CHAPTER XXI

OUTLOOK AND CONCLUSION

THUS have we cast our thoughts backward. For a moment we have held this fair land in view, as, but a few years ago, its forests, its prairies, its rivers, were vast solitudes of Nature's richness and beauty, which for centuries had waited the magic touch of civilized life. Here, with the thronging thousands, have the lives of those of us that have been in Iowa for the last three, five, ten, twenty, or thirty years, entered in.

By these reminiscences, in the changes wrought, have we been led to think of our individual work and associated labors. We have thought, too, — and perhaps, in passing, have shed the tear of affection as we have thought — of those who entered with us, and have fallen by the way. In the midst of the serious and the sad, there has been much to encourage and rejoice. We have not labored in vain; but the end is not yet. To the most of us that have been here even the longest, life, with somewhat of health and vigor, is still spared; and work yet remains.

We take not our review as in evening's shade, with the armor off, awaiting repose; but as at noontide

heat, with the outlook of demands, opportunities and labors before us of the declining day. And what see we here? A mighty state, which as yet even is but in the dawn of its development. Of her area of fifty-five thousand square miles, there are two-thirds, or twenty-five millions of its rich acres that as yet bear upon them the native prairie sod. Already the fourth state in the Union in the production of some of the cereals, what is it yet to be? It is only here and there that her watercourses, abundant in their privileges, have been made to turn the busy wheels of art; while her extensive fields of minerals and coal have but just begun to be worked. Her system of railroads — with near two thousand miles already in operation, with the converging lines meeting on its western border, there to unite with the great Pacific—is yet to be completed. Then will she lie, as favored of God, on the great highway of the nations, and as central therein. Then by her roads and rivers she will send out from and draw to herself, as she lists, from the North and the South, the East and the West.

It only remains for a growing population to carry out and develop all these resources garnered in her bosom. A guarantee for this we have in the record of the past. In 1836, the population was ten thousand; in 1846, ninety-seven thousand; in 1856, five hundred and nineteen thousand. Now, in 1870, it is estimated at one million and a quarter. How it will stand when he who reviews the next quarter-century shall an-

nounce the figures, a conjecture will not be hazarded. Nor as to the scenes of development and progress which it will be his privilege to unfold, will any prophecy be made. Only this: if by the appliances of education, virtue, piety, religion, the tone and vigor of the people can be kept up and improved; if her schools, colleges, institutions and churches can be made to act well their part—the results in this state for the country, the world and for God will be glorious. Here, then, with all others of the good and the true, is our work and our labor. If, to any, the sun of his day seems to be hanging low, let him do with his might what his hand findeth to do. Surely, in Iowa even, the mission field is but just entered.

But let us extend our view. West of us there is already a region containing four millions of people, where, twenty-five years ago, there were none. Here is opening the West of to-day. Here are almost two-thirds of our national domain, all organized into states or territories, rapidly filling up, but as yet, in the main, almost destitute of the institutions of the gospel. In Washington Territory, with its seventy thousand square miles; Idaho, with its one hundred thousand; Montana, a third larger still; Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, none of them smaller than the others, some larger,—in all these, the number of the laborers of our order can to-day be counted upon one's fingers, while that of all other denominations is small. This is not from want of people, but because the laborers are

few. The tide of population from all parts of the world stays not, and the work grows. Here, truly, our home mission field is almost boundless. Nor is this all. The work is far from being complete in the states east of us, as well as in our own; while all over the South, the cry, no doubt, will yet be heard, "Come and help us also." The spectacle before us is almost appalling; it is really so if we gaze long enough to see in the character of our people, and the genius of our government, the necessity, the absolute necessity, of the gospel of Jesus Christ to fuse us as one, to purify and preserve. Failing to supply this, our nation fails, as becoming effete and worthless without the preserving salt. There are certain notorious facts that may well alarm us. Not only is there alarming destitution in the newer portions of the country, but there is equally alarming indifference in the older. A fourth part of our thirty-seven millions of people are habitual neglecters of public worship. Organized efforts are made in many quarters to break down the sanctity of the Sabbath. Infidelity is rife. The press is in a great measure corrupted and corrupting. Profanity, intemperance, corruption, political and financial, are sadly prevalent. These influences must be withstood, if our country is to be safe. The only efficient counteracting influence is the gospel. The work of giving it must ever be largely a home mission work. Even now, with such an outlook before us, we seem to stand only at the threshold of the home missionary enterprise.

After looking at the past in what now seems to be this little field of Iowa, with this glance around and before us, reflections of various sorts crowd thick upon us. In the utterance of a few will be found our conclusion.

For the Executive Committee and the Secretaries of the Society prosecuting this great home work:

It is yours to stand as upon the watch-tower, surveying the wants of this vast, outspreading field, and to make report of the same to the people. It is yours to direct the money and the men volunteered for their supply, and to report of progress made. You stand as at the very center of the whole. Of the responsibilities of your position, the great trust reposed in you by the churches, we have not a word to say. These you have well considered, and no one can feel them as you can. Nor is it an exhortation to be faithful that we presume to offer, but simply an All hail! in your great and glorious work; to join with you in thanks to God for his blessing upon it in the past, with a hearty Godspeed for you in the future. May enlarged wisdom and grace be given you for the enlarged and growing wants of the field!

For the Donors:

If you have wasted money anywhere, it is not in this work. Here, bread cast upon the waters returns again after not many days. Here is a great and growing

want, which, so far as you are concerned, money alone, with prayer, can supply. For your money, then, we appeal in the name of all that is near, dear and precious—in the name of home, country, Christ and souls. Fill up the treasury at New York, that, for the want of money, this great work stay not. In money are the sinews of war. We found it so in the great struggle just passed; and how like water was it poured out! How selfish, how mean, and how sordid he who would hoard it then! But a greater conflict is now raging between the good and the evil, all over the land. It is the old warfare of the two kingdoms; and never, in any country, was the conflict sharper than in ours now. Never before was such a prize to be lost and won. On the one side are the standards of the arch-enemy, and many are flocking thereto; on the other is the banner of the cross. That victory may perch upon it, the great thing needed is, that churches, mission churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, be planted everywhere, out upon the frontiers, up and down the land, as outposts, forts and citadels of the fight. Will you furnish the means?

For the young men:

Men are needed as well as means. You in colleges and seminaries, with the ministry in view, and you in the churches, that have hearts that can feel and tongues to express the things of Jesus, let us speak to you. A few young men there are out in these West-

ern fields, who never saw a seminary or college, who are successfully feeding the Lord's flocks in the wilderness. Would that we had hundreds, yea, thousands, of them! Christian young men in our churches, are you, if God will, just as ready to be ministers as you are to be engineers, merchants or farmers? You that are in colleges and seminaries, are you willing to go anywhere to preach Jesus? "Send me," said one at the home missionary rooms, more than thirty years ago,—“send me to the hardest spot you have.”⁴⁷ They sent him; sent him where it was indeed desolate and drear. But now, if all is not as the garden of the Lord, he can at least look around him and behold the mighty things that God has wrought. Young men, be not afraid to launch out. There are no waters without the steps of Jesus upon them; and his promise, "Lo I am with you alway," reaches unto the ends of the earth.

For our churches, the churches of our beloved Iowa:

The Lord hath blessed you; but how much, under God, do you owe to the Home Missionary Society! Recognize the debt. Look around you, and see others in want. Feel the obligation by every means in your power to attain the point of self-support at the earliest possible period, and then join in with your helpers to be the helpers of others. The time is coming, yea, now is, when the churches of the West, in the matter

⁴⁷ Rev. R. Kent who was sent to Galena, Ill.

of the great benevolent objects of the day, must come up to the help of the Lord as they have never yet done. Let not those of Iowa be in the rear. "Freely ye have received, freely give." Not of your money only; of your prayers and labors also, — the prayers and labors of your individual members, in the wise work of winning souls around you, that each church may indeed be a mission church for the field within its reach. By Sabbath-schools, teachers sent here and there, by neighborhood prayer-meetings, by lay preaching, if you choose to call it so, upon the Sabbath, by every method within the church and around it, work for Jesus. In no other way can our surrounding wants be reached. We cannot call for ministers to do all the work. They are not to be had; and, if they were, it is better to be workers ourselves. We cannot call upon the Home Missionary Society for all the needed help. It would be asking for what it has not to give; and, were all the money and men at its command increased a hundredfold, there are central and promising fields in waiting for them all, in the regions around and beyond. With a limited supply, the great work of the Home Missionary Society must ever be to gather up and establish churches. Let but these be true to their work, let them be mission churches in deed as well as in name, and the system will be more complete. Let the churches of Iowa learn the lesson, and fill up the work remaining to be done. The work can easily be accomplished.

For the ministry of Iowa:

To you who were on the field prior to 1843, we cede the honor of being the pioneers in this blessed work. By you, in many respects, were the foundations laid, the key-note of the true principles of our Christian work and church growth struck. If, after your years of watching, waiting, almost despairing, you recognize it as of God that youthful helpers were sent to you, they also recognize it as of him that you were here, to be in many respects their light and their guide; and, among you, none more than he, who, after his forty years of service in the gospel ministry, has just laid off his pastoral harness. May the Lord long spare him to be to us what hitherto he has been!

Those who have joined us since 1843 will not feel that they are excluded in this quarter-century review; for they, too, have been sharers in the work accomplished. Let each be joyous in view of it, according to the time and faithfulness given to it. May you, dear brethren, as faithful workers for Christ, be true lovers of Iowa, even as those who have been longest here!

Finally, The Band:

God hath been gracious to us. Three only has he taken by death; three have been called to other fields of labor; five yet remain. How much longer we are to labor here, we know not. This we know: it is past the noontide, and soon, very soon, the evening shades will come. When the setting sun hangs low, God grant that we may look back on a day well spent!