

MRS. ADA E. NORTH.*

BY JOHNSON BRIGHAM.

The subject of this brief sketch, though seventh in Iowa's official list of State Librarians, was first to stamp the impress of individual service upon the history of the State. Between the first territorial librarian, Theodore S. Parvin, and the seventh State Librarian, the service rendered by the several incumbents was incidental and temporizing—with the one single exception of that performed by Mrs. North's predecessor, John C. Merrill, whom death cut short his usefulness after three resultful years.

Mrs. North's administration was characterized to a remarkable degree by vigor and judgment in organization, discrimination in the use of the limited funds placed at her disposal and a gentle courtesy which gave new dignity to the position she so well filled.

With almost none of the many present helps to librarians, Mrs. North by correspondence and personal visitation made herself thoroughly acquainted with the progress then well begun in library science and, so far as seemed to her wise and practicable, applied her knowledge to the improvement of the State Library as an aid to lawyers, legislators and the public generally.

But Mrs. North was not content with faithful and efficient service in the library. She was quick to grasp the modern idea of library service. To her mind libraries maintained by the people were for the people and not for a privileged few. She gladly availed herself of the opportunity cheerfully accorded her by the Clarkson Brothers to use the columns of *The Iowa State Register* for the dissemination of information as to the uses which might be made of public libraries and the duty of the State toward these invaluable adjuncts to the education of the schools.

*This tribute to Mrs. North appeared in the 29th Biennial Report of the State Librarian, Mr. Johnson Brigham.



MRS. ADA E. NORTH,
State Librarian, 1871-1878; Librarian of the Iowa State University, 1879-
1892; died in Des Moines, January 9, 1899.

It was long her dream to organize an association of librarians in Iowa, but not until she had been transferred to another field of labor was the dream fulfilled. Finding in the late T. S. Parvin, of Cedar Rapids, Curator Charles Aldrich, of the Historical Department of Iowa, and Capt. W. H. Johnston, now of the Iowa Library Commission, the sympathy and support she sought, in 1890 Mrs. North by correspondence and personal effort succeeded in organizing the Iowa Library Society, the lineal predecessor of the present influential Iowa State Library Association. Prior thereto Mrs. North had attended two annual conferences of the American Library Association, one at Milwaukee in 1886, the other at St. Louis in 1889, and the editorial pages of the *Library Journal*, the organ of that Association, attest the impress this brave, true woman had made upon that body. For twenty-one years, from 1871 to 1892, this pioneer librarian of Iowa dreamed, planned and worked for the inauguration of the library movement now grandly sweeping over our State, and it is surely fitting that in this splendid era of fulfillment the name and career of this Prophet of the New Day should be honored by those who are enjoying the fruits of her labors.

The career of Ada E. North may be outlined as follows: Born in Alexander, New York, November 19, 1840; married in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1865, to Maj. George J. North, military secretary, afterwards private secretary to Gov. W. M. Stone; left a widow in 1870; in 1871 appointed State Librarian by Governor Merrill; re-appointed by Governors Carpenter and Kirkwood respectively; relieved by Governor Gear in 1878 (the office then being in politics); after a brief interval appointed city librarian of Des Moines; in 1879 chosen librarian of the State University at Iowa City; in 1892 compelled by failing health to relinquish her post; an invalid and a sufferer most of the time for nearly seven years thereafter; on the 9th of January, 1899, her spirit found release in death.

Her venerable father, Rev. Milo N. Miles, survived her but a brief time. Her son, Mr. Howard M. North, is at present roadmaster for the Southern Pacific Railroad at Los Angeles; her daughter is married and resides in South Dakota. Three brothers survive her, two residing in Des Moines, the other in Nebraska.

INDIAN TROUBLES AGAIN.—The settlers on the border, in the Northwestern counties of the State, are again alarmed on account of the recent appearance and depredations of Indians in that quarter. Many immigrants destined for Dakota Territory and the little Sioux valley have turned back and sought homes in the valley of the Des Moines. The first act of the great Indian expedition fitting out at Sioux City should be to exterminate these infernal savages before ascending the Missouri river in search of Indians beyond the limits of white settlements. A massacre is feared at Peterson and other settlements along the valley of the Little Sioux. We trust however that the present excitement may prove a false alarm and that Northwestern Iowa may be permitted to receive and retain the immigration which, were these apprehensions removed, would flow into her beautiful valleys and spread over her fertile prairies.—*Ft. Dodge Republican, May 4, 1864.*

I CONSIDER the discovery of America as the opening of a grand design in Providence for the emancipation of mankind all over the earth. The Union is our rock of safety, as well as the pledge of our grandeur. A prospect into futurity in America is like contemplating the heavens through the telescope; objects stupendous in magnitude and motion strike us from all quarters, and fill us with amazement.—*John Adams.*

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