

Oh! thus be it ever when freemen shall stand  
 Between their loved home and the war's desolation:  
 Blessed with victory and peace, may the Heaven-rescued land  
 Praise the Power that hath made and preserved it a nation!  
 Thus conquer we must, when our cause it is just;  
 And this be our motto—"In God is our trust!"  
 And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave  
 O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

Numerous letters were received in response to invitations to be present at the laying of the Corner-stone, from which the following have been selected for publication in these pages:

HON. HIRAM PRICE, MEMBER OF CONGRESS, COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS, ETC.

WASHINGTON, D. C., March 8, 1899.

DEAR SIR: Your kind note inviting me to be present at the "Laying of the Corner-stone of the Historical Building" at Des Moines on the 17th inst. received, for which I am much obliged.

The gentleman who is to preside and the gentleman who is to deliver the address, I am glad to count among my old-time friends, and to meet them would "bring the light of other days around me." But the distance between this city and the city of Des Moines seems much longer since I have left the 85th milestone on life's highway behind me. And in this case, I realize the fact, that distance does not lend enchantment to the view. The small village of Des Moines when I first visited it nearly fifty years ago, and Des Moines the capitol city of the State of Iowa today, are very different appearing places. Then Des Moines had no railroad, and many intelligent people living there then were honestly of the opinion that a railroad through Iowa was not a possibility, much less a probability.

I have a very distinct recollection of trying to convince the people, at a meeting held in the old court house in 1853, that there was a feasible project on foot, led by some eastern men, to build a railroad from Davenport to Council Bluffs by way of Des Moines. Some people at that meeting said I was a dreamer, and one man of some standing paid me the left-handed compliment of saying that I was intentionally talking around the truth, and keeping at a good distance from it. Possibly some person or persons may now be living in Des Moines who were present at that meeting and can remember how utopian and chimerical seemed the idea of a railroad through Iowa at that time. But now what changes, time, talent, energy and enterprise have wrought!

The old time flat-boat or scow, of fifty years ago, that was used to carry people across the "raging Des Moines river," has been relegated to the rear in the onward march of modern progress, and iron highways across that historic stream now furnish the means of transit, for the thousands who yearly travel on this route between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

The old uncomfortable stage coach (sometimes called a "jerky") has given place to splendid upholstered and comfortable coaches, and the iron horse that eats fire and breathes smoke has taken the place of the tired equines that formerly dragged our Uncle Samuel's mail-bags across the prairies of Iowa, those unshorn fields that William Cullen Bryant so fitly and poetically called "the gardens of the desert"—those unshorn fields "that stretch in airy undulations far away as if the ocean in its gentlest swell stood still with all its rounded billows fixed and motionless." But the

changes which have taken place in Iowa in the last fifty years, are all in the right direction and are indicative of the good time coming when all wildernesses and all solitary places shall be made glad, and all desert places will blossom as the rose."

Cordially your friend,

HON. CHARLES ALDRICH,  
Des Moines, Iowa.

H. PRICE.

PROF. W J MC GEE, SECRETARY UNITED STATES BUREAU OF ETHNOLOGY.

WASHINGTON, May 2, 1899.

MY DEAR SIR: Your invitation to aid in laying the corner-stone of the State Historical building awakens sentiments normal and proper to a native of Iowa. These sentiments may be expressed through a brief retrospect.

Those who have studied deeply the physical and moral and intellectual forces of national development realize that western Europe was the chief theatre of human activity three centuries ago; they recognize, also, that the vigor and intrepidity characterizing that region and concentrated in the isles of Great Britain and Little Britain grew out of the combination of the blood and the knowledge of the strongest tribes and half-formed nations recorded in the history of the world. The Angles and Celts of the islands, the invading Saxons, the Normans and Gauls of the mainland, the Danes of the Peninsula, the Vikings of the far north, and the early Romans of the far south, were among the peoples whose blood was blent and whose intelligence was commingled to form the parent stock of the American colonists and pioneers. It is little marvel that the offspring of such stock were able to erect a new nation on a new national theory; and it is little marvel that this nation should have outstripped all others in the material and moral progress of the century now closing.

Already the strongest stock of humanity then living, the American pioneers were yet further strengthened by the exercise of pioneering, and their extension over the Atlantic plains, the mountains beyond, and then over the broad interior was a succession of conquests over savage tribes and over hard nature, a like conquest of the most inspiring sort. The character of the land found reflection in the character of the people, who increased in rugged strength of body and mind, and grew broad and generous and free as their own magnificent woodlands and plains. Nor were the people all alike; two human streams flowed westward over the land, mingling slowly as they passed—the Puritan stream of the north and the Cavalier stream of the south; and, as they met and merged, each stimulated and invigorated the other, much as the ancestral tribes of Britain were fortified in blood and knowledge by intermingling. Some strife was engendered by the contact, especially over differences relating to land tenure; one of the northernmost of these land feuds had western Dubuque county for its scene, and my own kinsmen among its actors; yet, despite the antipathies sometimes created, the general effect of the commingling of the human streams was to strengthen character. The two streams, representing between them the strongest character the world had seen, commingled in Iowa more completely than in any other commonwealth; the consequences may be seen on every farmstead, in every town and village, in the unequalled diffusion of education, in a splendid capitol building, in the halls of the nation's councils, and in the concentrated intelligence represented by the idea of a permanent Historical building.

Some Iowans forget the true place of their commonwealth among the states of the Union; they forget that in general diffusion of education their State leads the country; they forget that in homogeneity of culture and in equitable distribution of wealth their State stands alone in the foremost rank; they forget that in the shape of national policy two states—the border State of Maine and the central State of Iowa—have dominated law-making, and that, within three years, the interior State has outstripped its only rival in determining the nation's career. If the commonwealth of Iowa be viewed from the standpoint of Washington or Franklin or Jefferson, so nearly as their ideas can now be judged, it can but be regarded as the ideal State—the commonwealth without class distinctions, the home of free institutions in their perfection, the population leading all others in equably distributed moral and intellectual strength—the real Stronghold of the Republic:

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.