



RACHEL E. PATTERSON.

Formerly of Linn county, a minister in Friends Society.

THE QUAKERS IN IOWA.

BY D. C. MOTT,
Editor Audubon (Iowa) Republican.

There lives in Iowa the remnant of a people perhaps the most peculiar, retiring, unique, and, in some ways, interesting, of any sect or society known to our country and time. We mean that branch of the Quaker church sometimes called the Old-fashioned Quakers, or at other times the Wilbur Friends. The history of this people has been but little known to the public because it has been a part of their religion to keep aloof from the world. Their peculiarities have been observed, but have been but little understood. They are a people largely controlled by religious motives in their every act of life. Their religious forms, their manner of marriage, their social customs, their church government, and even their dress and language are all matters of conscience and deep religious conviction and mark them as a people unlike the world in which they live. Many of their customs most interestingly represent the survival of the old English language, dress, and church government of over two hundred years ago.

No paid ministry, a rejection of baptism and the "outward ordinances," and their great reliance on the "inward light" or guiding spirit, are the society's most distinguishing doctrinal points. "Freely ye have received, freely give," is their authority for not paying the ministry. A desire to break away from "the tyranny of the clergy" of England was perhaps one great reason for their adoption of this principle. They hold that baptism is spiritual, and that acceptable worship can only be given in spirit, hence their many silent meetings. These are the foundation stones upon which has been built that peculiar superstructure called Quakerism.

Students of history will remember that the Quaker church, or the Society of Friends as they call themselves, was formed in England in 1648 by George Fox. It sprang up in opposi-

tion to forms, and from a desire for spirituality in religion. The first hundred years' history of the society shows it to have encountered strong opposition, fierce persecution, and, in a few cases, actual martyrdom. The Quakers came to America with the colonists, primarily seeking religious freedom, and they have done their share in helping to mould opinion in America and to shape our country's destiny, even though this influence has been exerted in an unobtrusive and undemonstrative way.

The leading communities of Quakers in the original thirteen states were in Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, New York, Maryland and North Carolina. From these centers occasionally went devout men and women who did their full share in developing homes in the primeval forests of Ohio and Indiana, and when the prairies of Iowa and afterwards of Kansas were luring settlers westward, the Quakers occasionally appeared among the pioneers. They always settled in communities, however. They at once proceeded to "set up" their "meetings," but they associated little with the "outer world." They were good, honest, industrious, law-abiding and moral citizens.

Thus it came that in the early settlement of the territory of Iowa a few Quakers were among the vanguard. The first Quaker settlement made in the new territory was in Henry county, now Salem, in 1835. The pioneer Iowa Quaker is said to have been Isaac Pigeon. He was soon followed by Henry W. Joy, Gideon, Thomas and Stephen Frasier, Stephen, John and Nathan Hocket and William Hammer, most of whom brought their families. In 1837 they established a meeting, and in 1839 they built a meeting house which was of hewn logs and was 22 x 44 feet. For these facts as to the settlement at Salem and some other data we are indebted to Lawrie Tatum, of Springdale, a prominent member of Progressive Friends. During President Grant's administration Mr. Tatum was an Indian agent to the Kiowa and Comanche agency in Indian Territory and was prominent in

advocacy of the peace policy in dealing with the Indians.

The next Friends' settlement appears to have been at Pleasant Plain, Jefferson county, about 1840. In 1843 they formed a settlement at Oskaloosa, Jesse Arnold being the first one to locate there. In 1851 a settlement of Friends was made in Linn county, near Springville, and a little later one at Springdale, Cedar county.

It was about this time that the society was again rent by separation. Away back in 1827 the parent body in the Eastern States was divided by what is known as the Hicksite separation. Elias Hicks openly denied Christ's divinity, depreciated the value of the Scriptures and placed a greater dependence upon "the inward light." A large number accepted his doctrines and separated from the main body and still maintain their separate organization. They are numerous at Baltimore, Maryland. The poet Whittier belonged to this branch of the society. There are but few Hicksite Friends in Iowa. At least one meeting exists, however, at West Liberty.

The tendency in the society toward the unitarianism of Hicks had its opposite in the more evangelical doctrines of Joseph John Gurney, an English Quaker. Gurney's writings, published in 1835, led the discussion which resulted in divisions in most of the yearly meetings in this country in the early fifties. This controversy found its way to Iowa, coming through the Ohio Yearly Meeting. Thus it happens that there are two distinct branches of Quakers in Iowa, the one known as the Gurneyites, or Progressive Friends, and the other as the Wilburites, or sometimes called the orthodox, or old fashioned Friends.

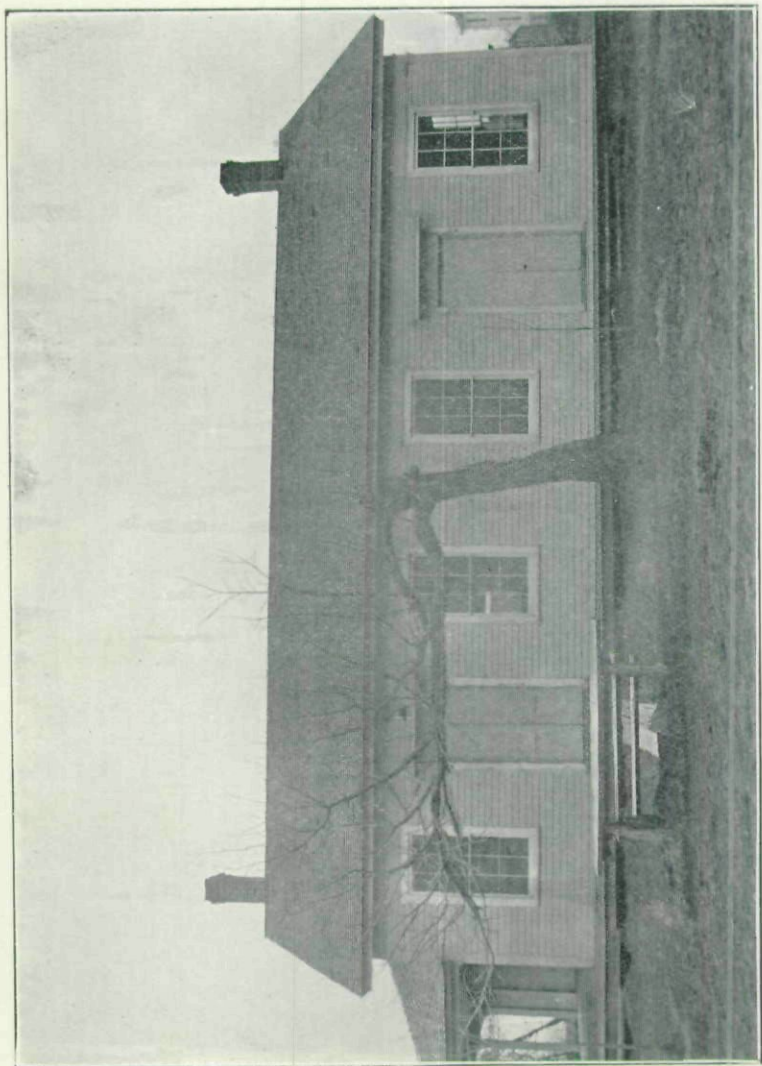
The Progressive Friends constitute very much the larger and more influential body in Iowa. Their yearly meeting was established at Oskaloosa in 1863. Its subordinate meetings are scattered in many places in Iowa and a few in Minnesota and other states. They recently established a yearly meeting in Oregon and another in California. The membership

of Iowa Yearly Meeting is about 12,000. This branch of the church is progressive, vigorous and growing. Its members abound in the missionary spirit, both home and foreign. They lead in reforms and works of charity. They join their efforts with other evangelical churches to redeem the world to Christ. They have admitted regular pastors, have organs and singing in their churches, have largely dropped the distinguishing plain language and plain dress of earlier days, but retain many of the doctrinal characteristics of the church such as peace, opposition to oaths, and the leadings of the spirit. They also retain practically the old church government.

The spirit of change which the Gurneyites have developed and their activity in uniting with other churches in revival work caused, a few years ago, a small separation from them, so that now there is a small body with a yearly meeting at West Branch known as the Conservative Friends, and occupying a position in doctrines and practice about midway between the progressive Gurneys and the staid Wilburs.

The Wilburites, or orthodox branch, for several reasons occupy a unique position in the religious life of the commonwealth, because they more closely represent the interesting Quaker character of a century or two ago, and because they are comparatively unknown to the reading public and to the hurrying life of our time.

The neighborhoods in which the Wilbur Friends are located are West Branch, Cedar county, Springville, Linn county, and Coal Creek, Keokuk county. In 1851 two brothers named Hampton settled near Springville. Joseph Edgerton, Francis Williams, Jesse North, William P. De-weese, and William P. Bedell, with their families, were also among the earliest settlers. In Cedar county among the early settlers were John Thomas and Thomas Leech. It was later, about 1860, that the settlement was formed at Coal Creek and Jeremiah Stanley, Benjamin Bates and Evan Smith, with their families, were among the first comers. The



Friends' Meeting House at Hickory Grove, near West Branch, Cedar County, Iowa.

Friends from all these neighborhoods came from eastern Ohio, Belmont, Monroe, Jefferson, Columbiana, Morgan and Washington counties. They were united to those they left behind by intimate family and church relationships which are kept up to this day. Almost immediately after arriving, meetings were "set up" by authority and under the jurisdiction of the Ohio Yearly Meeting. These Iowa meetings have never yet reached a membership sufficiently large to warrant a separate yearly meeting being established, so they still retain their connection to the Ohio Yearly Meeting and each year send representatives to that assembly which meets at Barnesville, Ohio.

The lack of material increase or decrease of this religious body is a phenomenon. It is true they have occasionally drawn a family from the old homes of Ohio, but with that exception scarcely any members have been added in a third of a century. Many of the children as they have grown to maturity have left the society and adopted the ways of the world, but enough have remained to keep the membership at practically the same, there being in the three neighborhoods 700 or 800 members.

One who is unacquainted with Quakerism will find on attending one of their meetings for worship at either of the three neighborhoods many things strange and unexplainable. A description of the church building or "meeting house," as well as the conduct of the meeting at one of the places, will answer for a description of them at either of the others, for a Quaker meeting is a Quaker meeting the world over. Our artist presents a photograph of the Friends' meeting house as it now appears at what is known as Hickory Grove meeting, two miles east of West Branch. It differs but little, on exterior or interior, from the Friends' meeting house of a century ago. There may be a little wider cornice and a little larger window pane, a shingle roof instead of a clapboard roof, and a better chimney, but the absolute plainness and sameness of the architecture is retained. The building is

comparatively long and narrow. There are two front doors, the right one opening into the "men's part" and the left one into the "women's part" of the building. The interior is separated by a partition which has folding shutters. Our artist also presents us with a photograph of the interior of the meeting house which will be recognized as familiar by any one who has ever attended a Friends' meeting in any country. We believe that this plan of the interior is almost the same that has been used by the society through all its history.

To the left will be noticed the partition which divides the men's part of the room from the women's, the latter being at the far side of the picture. During meetings for worship, to which the public is always admitted, the partition is left open as seen in the picture. During business meetings, which are select to the members of the society, the shutters are closed, the women maintaining a separate, though somewhat dependent, organization and communicating with men's meeting by messengers who occasionally go from one body to the other. During meetings open to the public I have seen more than one unlucky stranger visitor wander into the wrong door and be beckoned by the elder Friends to the other side, followed by the gentle glances of the young women and met by the triumphant but amused looks of the young men. To have allowed him to remain on the women's side, even when accompanied by his wife, would not have been considered "becoming." The main audience part of the room faces forward on entering from the front door. At the far side of the room are the gallery and "facing seats." There are two, three or four rows of the facing seats, owing to the size of the meeting house. They face the audience part of the room and are elevated each one step higher than the one below. They are occupied by ministers, elders and elderly Friends.

The Friend on entering a meeting house, though a stranger to that particular locality, at once feels an assurance that he is at home. Bench and partition, plain wall and



Interior of the Friends Meeting House at Hickory Grove, near West Branch, Cedar County, Iowa.

raised gallery, every nook and corner of the room, as well as the peculiar dress of the people, their handshake and their speech, their sober quietness and reverent actions all remind him of his associations from earliest childhood. He is thus assured that he is among his own peculiar people, that here is his religious home, and here he can worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience.

Meetings for worship are held twice a week, Sunday and Wednesday, or First day and Fourth day, according to the nomenclature of the church. They begin at 10 or 11 o'clock in the forenoon and continue an hour or more. They never have evening meetings and never an afternoon meeting except by special appointment. A church building without lamps or electric lights is a novelty now, but they have no need of lights. We know no reason why night meetings are not held except that it has not been the custom of the society to hold them, and, in all things, custom with them is most religiously followed. The absence of protracted revival meetings that engage the other churches largely obviate the need of night meetings.

On entering a Friends' meeting for the first time the stranger is seated about midway in the audience part of the room. Care is taken not to seat him too far forward, as the further forward toward the gallery he sits the higher seat of honor he occupies. The men enter with their hats on and many keep them on throughout the entire meeting. All take their seats in silence. As the meetings are mostly in the country, they gather irregularly, and sometimes considerable time elapses before all are in. Then perfect quiet settles over all. There is no opening hymn, no announcement, no reading of the scripture, no prayer, no collection, no text, no regular sermon. Every head is bowed and every member is supposed to be communing with the Spirit of the living God. A large congregation waiting in absolute silence for the teaching of the "still small voice that teacheth as never man taught," is surely a sublime spectacle. No one dares

break that solemn stillness until he is sure that he is called by the Divine Spirit to speak to the people. Then he rises, slowly removes his hat, and in a peculiar, half sing-song voice, discourses on the beauty of holy living and exhorts to faithfulness. These sermons are mostly short and unstudied. They are apparently what is presented to the mind of the speaker when under deep religious thought. As the society does not believe in educating its ministry, the sermons seldom display much learning, but they do sometimes show wonderful spirituality. They never elaborate a subject, but they powerfully condense and put the main truths of the Christian religion in a few short sentences which sometimes are both strong and eloquent.

A member anywhere in the house may kneel to pray, whereupon all rise to their feet, the men removing their hats. All remain standing until the sometimes eloquent and usually highly figurative prayer ascends to the throne of grace. When the amen is said all are again seated. It frequently happens that there is no word spoken through the whole service, the meeting being an entirely silent one. But these are not considered at all profitless by Friends, as they contend that acceptable worship may be rendered in this way, and often remark that such meetings are to them most favored seasons of divine blessing. When the time for ending the meeting has come, the man sitting at the "head of the meeting," on the gallery and next to the partition, simply shakes hands with the one next to him, which is the signal for general greeting and handshaking among the members and the meeting is adjourned.

The right of women to appear in the ministry equally with men was always recognized by the Quakers. Their doctrine that all religious speaking should be done under the promptings of the holy spirit seemed to them necessarily to give woman the right to speak. So it happens that in the Friends meetings of which we write there have been even more women ministers than men. Some of them have been

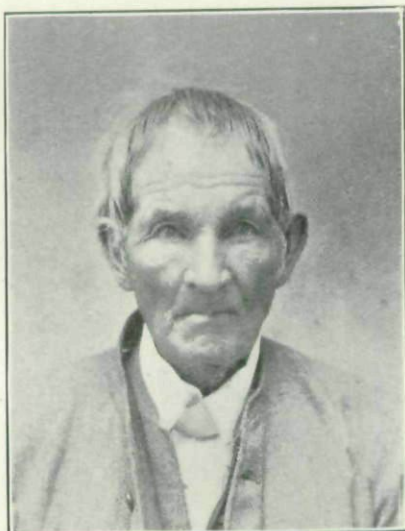
speakers of great power. With this article we give the picture of Rachel E. Patterson, for many years a minister among Friends living in Linn county, but now living in her old age with relatives in Philadelphia. The picture shows a pleasant, pure and spiritual face. It also shows a little of the peculiar dress of the women, the plain shawl over the snow-white kerchief and the cap of spotless white always worn by the elderly sisters. Over this cap is worn the "plain bonnet" which is quite beyond our powers of description. It is made of the finest quality of drab or mouse-colored silk, is lined with white, is made over a stiff frame extending far over the face and would be, with its elaborately pleated crown, a positive impossibility to a modern milliner. Though quite expensive, it is worn by rich and poor alike. It is beautiful principally through its generations of associations with the saintly faces of the mothers and grandmothers of this people. Their dresses are also very plain and do not change with the coming and going of the styles. The same pattern lasts a lifetime.

These same general principles apply to the garb worn by the men. The straight collared cutaway coat they all wear is a very close pattern of the coat William Penn. wore in his day. If change comes in the dress of Friends it comes so infinitely little at a time that they scarcely know, realize or believe it, and it is only by looking back several generations that it can be discerned. The broad-brimmed hat and the straight collared coat is simply the garb worn by the common people of England at the time of the rise of the society. At that time all men shaved, and as it is a leading principle with them to avoid following the "vain and changing fashions of the world," the men who are loyal to the church are clean shaven to this day.

The formation of the society in England was, on the part of those joining, a protest against worldliness and was a movement in favor of simplicity and plainness in living, and of spirituality against formality in worship. One direction

their protest took was against the inclination of the times to give titles of distinction to each other by addressing them as Mister, Esquire, Sir and the like, of magnifying their importance by saying "you" when "thee" or "thou" was meant, and of applying names to the days of the week and month of the year which they claimed was sinful because these names were derived from heathen deities. These were the fundamental reasons for the early Quakers retaining the "plain language" which was then really the language of the common people of England. In some parts of England today we find "thee" and "thou" still in use among the simpler folk. The "plain language" has become to Friends a kind of "badge of their race" and helps to distinguish them from the rest of the world, helping to make of them "a peculiar people," and making, with their plain dress, "a hedge round about their people," keeping them from intimate association with the "corrupting influences of the world." Besides these conscientious principles in the matter there is, concerning the retention by them of the "plain language," that powerful incentive of custom. The fact that Father and Mother always used it, and the tenderest memories of their lives are clustering about it, as well as that it has the apparent sanction of the Bible, makes the survival of its use among them secure.

The government of Friends' Church is democratic in principle. In their meetings for business each member is admitted and has a right to speak. Of course their elders and ministers have much prestige and influence in the meetings, but one member has the same right to speak as another. They acknowledge no priest or ruler but the Great Head of the Church. One member acts as clerk, being in reality presiding officer and secretary. In monthly, quarterly and yearly meetings he is provided with an assistant. When a question arises upon which there is a difference of opinion, it is mostly dropped and no action taken until they can move together in unity. As they recognize being led by



THE LATE JONATHAN BUNDY,
Of Cedar County, an elder in Friends Society.

the spirit, if they differ it is evident they should wait for better guidance. No vote is ever taken, but the clerk gathers the sense of the meeting from the expressions made and records the action of the meeting, being largely led by the influence of the elders. The yearly meeting is the highest authority, the quarterly meeting being subordinate to it, and the monthly meeting being still lower.

Nearly all who now belong to the society have birthrights therein. Being born of parents who are members is all the qualification required for membership, although standing and influence are not obtained except by those who show religious lives. Marriage outside the society is sufficient reason for being disowned by the church. Marriage is considered by them a divine institution and only those who believe alike concerning religion should marry. Being a divine institution they will not recognize separation, and divorce among them is unknown. Their marriages are solemnized only after publication has been made in meeting one month beforehand. When the wedding day comes the bride and groom come to the meeting house together, come in together and sit together on the women's side and facing the meeting. Toward the latter part of the meeting they rise, take each other by the hand, and the groom, first speaking, says he takes her to be his wife, promising "to be unto her a loving and faithful husband until death shall separate" them. The bride then repeats practically the same, promising to be unto him a loving and faithful wife. A certificate of marriage is then publicly read by one appointed for that purpose, which declares them duly married. It is a simple, beautiful, solemn ceremony, and is observed without variation throughout the society. No license is required to be obtained, as that would be contrary to the principles of the church. A report afterwards, however, is made to the county clerk, who makes a record of it. Special legislation has legalized this form of marriage in most of the states.

The educational system employed by the society has

helped defend it from disintegration. They have always had a system of select schools supported and conducted by their own members. While these schools have been somewhat deficient educationally, they have afforded good training morally, and have helped keep many of the young people in the church. They also have a few higher institutions of learning called boarding-schools. These have collegiate courses which are good in mathematics and the sciences but slightly deficient in literature, history and elocution, and altogether lacking in music and art. Scattergood Boarding-School is located near West Branch. Barnesville, Ohio, has the leading institution of learning in this branch of the society. Westtown, near Philadelphia, and Haverford, at Philadelphia, are stronger institutions in the East. None of these, unless Haverford, admit students except they belong to Friends.

Quakers are exceptionally clear of most vices that largely prevail. Profane swearing with them brings swift disownment unless public apology is made. So does the use of intoxicating liquors. Lying and deception and dishonest dealings are subjects over which the society watches its members closely. This has helped develop the character of the proverbially honest Quaker. Legal oaths are not allowed to be taken or administered by their members, the affirmation being used instead. In this they literally follow Christ's injunction. Members are prohibited from going to law against each other, all their differences being settled by arbitration inside the church.

One of the strange customs strictly adhered to, and one for which they have suffered much at different times in their history, is their refusal to remove their hats in public meetings, in the presence of ladies or in the court room. Their thought is that the hat so removed is an act of reverence, and they decline to make obeisance to any one but God.

The Quaker is a non-combatant. He believes in turning the other cheek. Rather than strike a fellow man he will

suffer any abuse. He will not even defend himself from violence. In early times this brought them much trouble and hardship, and for these and other peculiar practices a few even suffered martyrdom. This principle of peace is carried into their relation to the government. They will in no way aid or take part in military affairs. The war of the rebellion brought out clearly the full strength of Quaker conviction on this point. Most devoted and enthusiastic abolitionists they yet opposed recourse to arms. Not one of them enlisted, and when the drafts came they protested that they were conscientiously against fighting; that they could not under any circumstances take the life of a fellow man; and, believing it sinful in the highest degree to shed human blood, they could not hire substitutes to do the work for them, or in any way aid or sanction it. Some were taken to the front, uniformed and given arms, but there was not power enough in the armed forces of the government to make them do the work of soldiers. The spirit of martyrdom for the sake of their belief was so strong in them that they were ready to lose their lives rather than stain their hands in blood. William Shaw, lately deceased, a prominent member of the society in Linn county, was drafted from his then home in Columbiana county, Ohio, and with another Friend, Isaac Cadwallader, taken to Columbus to the barracks. They went without resistance but refused to drill or carry arms. They had many tribulations, suffering much for "conscience sake," but by the aid of a committee of Friends who visited President Lincoln and Secretary Stanton, they and a few other Friends in the East who were also drafted, were finally allowed to return home subject to the call of the Secretary of War, but the call to return never came. We doubt if the history of the great struggle presents examples of any other persons being thus released from military duty.

The Quakers have the proud position of being the earliest abolitionists in America.* In temperance work and other

*Greeley's American Conflict, Vol. I, p. 117.

reformatory work they are in the van, except that their natural seclusiveness keeps them from taking part in much public work. They believe in teaching the world by example more than by missionary work. While their seclusiveness has made them poorly understood and little known, it has preserved them in customs, habits and principles from the constantly shifting sands of time. Although the Quaker character has not entered largely into American history, yet many strong men in both state and nation have been of Quaker extraction. Thus, Secretary Stanton was of Quaker parentage, and Secretary Windom also. So was General Nathaniel Greene, and so is ex-Postmaster General Gary. In Iowa the honored Gen. Ed Wright and the late Auditor of State, J. W. Cattell, possessed Quaker characteristics from inheritance and training. So has the Quaker element imperceptibly entered to some extent into the lives of many of our people.

The unbounded faith which Quakers have in their own principles, and the way they regard the principles and practices of other churches, approach intolerance on their part. They believe they are guided to their convictions by the Spirit of Truth, and they really think they have arrived at absolutely correct conclusions, and that any other opinions are wrong. They think that all who differ from them would agree with them if they had sufficient light. If a principle is not worth believing in thoroughly, living by and dying by, it is not much of a principle. To the Quaker every one of their principles is worth dying for if necessary. Behind them they behold the history of their society made glorious to them by the suffering of its founders. It has become endeared to them by every tie of sentiment and conscience, and they regard it as their highest duty to maintain its existence and preserve its purity against the encroachments of time.

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