THE MAKING OF A PIONEER

The settlement of Iowaland was colorful, abounding in human experiences that ranged from the serious to the comic; and the passing years have but deepened the interest in the acts and lives of those early pioneers who blazed new trails, established new homes, and organized new social and political systems in what is now the State of Iowa. That they were men and women of character, industry, originality, and vision, their achievements will attest. Lieutenant Albert M. Lea, in his *Notes on the Wisconsin Territory; Particularly with Reference to the Iowa District* published in 1836, made the following observation in regard to them: "The character of this population is such as is rarely to be found in our newly acquired territories. With very few exceptions, there is not a more orderly, industrious, active, pains-taking population west of the Alleghenies, than is this of the Iowa District. . . . For intelligence, I boldly assert that they are not surpassed, as a body, by any equal number of citizens of any country in the world."

Much has been written about pioneer life, but in the main it pertains to the office-holders; they made the headlines and were looked upon as the leaders that directed the general trend of policy and progress. Most of them were deserving and all honor to their memory! But a well balanced orchestra is not composed of all first violins, neither is a well organized society made up of leaders. It is the purpose of the writer to set forth something of the part taken in pioneer days by two of the less spectacular type, who quietly filled their niche and therein, with others of their kind, gave ballast and poise to the Ship of State.

The characters selected for this narration are my pa-

ternal grandparents, Alexander Cruikshank and Keziah Perkins, his wife. It is not because these two "old settlers" were distinguished for outstanding service beyond their neighbors, but rather that they were typical of those rugged volunteers that came to Iowa to make homes and therein led the way for a new and progressive civilization in a wild, but free, land.

The story of this couple shows how a heterogeneous section of humanity, the elements of which came from the different sections of the United States and Europe, was united to form, as it were, a new people, and how, through business and social intercourse, intermarriage, and a common interest, the various elements were amalgamated into local community units, noted for their originality, independence, and self-dependence — the characteristic Middle West American.

The founder of the Cruikshank (original spelling Cruickshank) family in Lee County, Iowa, was Alexander Cruikshank, my grandfather, born in Kristiansands, Kingdom of Norway, on February 2, 1805. Alexander Cruikshank knew little of his ancestry beyond the family of which he was a member, except that it was an old established lineage, following the usual vocations of the Scottish people of that period. A few were prominent in the professions; others followed pastoral pursuits, such as breeding improved stock; some were soldiers and others were sailors.

Alexander's father, James Cruikshank, was a native of Old Deer, Aberdeen Shire, Scotland. His first wife was Jane Wilson, presumably a native of Norway, but of Scottish-Norwegian parentage. His second wife was Susan Wilson, Jane's sister. Only two children, a daughter by the first wife and a son, Alexander, by the second, constituted the James Cruikshank branch of the family.

James Cruikshank was a mill-wright by trade, which ac-

counts for his being in Norway in that vocation. A Scotch Presbyterian, he seems to have been a man of good morals and religious habits, as evidenced by his church letter, the original of which is in the possession of the writer, and a copy of which follows:

These testify that the Bearer, James Cruikshank, an unmarried man, has resided in the Parish of Old Deer for the space of six years prior to the time he left this place and went to Christiansands, the 26th day of March, 1787, and has always behaved himself soberly, decently and honestly, free of church censure and scandal, or any bad vice known to us, so that he may be admitted to any Christian congregation where Providence may order his lot.

Given at Old Deer, the tenth of March, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety years.

Basial A. Dawson, Minister
John Thompson, Elder
Jo Naughten, Elder

James Cruikshank died during the infancy of the son and when Alexander was twelve years of age the mother remarried. Alexander then left the seaport of Kristiansands and shipped on a sailing vessel as a cabin boy. One year later, since his father had been a member of the Masonic Order, he was taken in charge by that society and returned to the old Caledonian home community at Old Deer, where he attended school for two years.

After acquiring an elementary education, Alexander Cruikshank returned to his first love, the fascinating, roving life of a sailor and for fifteen years his home was on the ocean. There he engaged in various capacities from cabin boy to the command of a vessel, principally on the waters of the Atlantic and Arctic oceans, and the Baltic, Mediterranean, and Caribbean seas.

In 1824, Alexander Cruikshank enlisted and served for nine months in the Mexican Navy, during that country's struggle with Spain for its independence. He was

wounded in a naval engagement off the coast of Panama, for which service he was entitled to a Mexican "headright" — 1280 acres of land in the Republic. Since the value of the land was only about ten cents per acre and the services of young Alexander were mainly as a "soldier of fortune", no effort was ever made to locate land under this grant.

"A life on the ocean wave, a home on the rolling deep" has ever had its alluring charms and has been most colorfully set forth in both prose and poetry. Who has not gloried in the feats of Columbus and other intrepid explorers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, or marveled at the daring of the freebooters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Who has not been thrilled with pride at the brave deeds of the "old salts" and "sea dogs" of Revolutionary fame, or even felt the glow of enthusiasm for the "Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum" of Long John Silver and the buccaneers as portrayed by Robert Louis Stevenson.

Such had been the background and environment of Alexander Cruikshank up to the age of twenty-nine. It was, seemingly, not a very good preparation for the duties of a homemaker or for a landsman's life on the very fringe of civilization, but strange as it may seem, at the beginning of the year 1832, Alexander decided to abandon the sea, at least temporarily. In January, 1832, he forsook his ship in New York, a city at that time with a population of about 70,000, and with a companion named John Thompson, set out to try his fortune in the thinly settled interior of America. The two men went by steamboat up the Hudson River to Albany, New York, thence by Erie Canal and a horse-drawn railroad to Buffalo. Here reports of Indian raids (the Black Hawk War) in the Mississippi Valley region — their intended destination — gave them a foretaste of what they might encounter, but they went on. From

Buffalo they traveled by steamer on Lake Erie to the town of Erie, and thence by stage to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

At the tavern where they stopped in the latter city, they met returning emigrants from the Middle West, who gave discouraging accounts of hostile Indians,[1] cold winters, wet springs, hot summers, mosquitoes, and wild beasts that killed the young stock of the settlers. The would-be landlubbers felt that they might be making a mistake in abandoning the enchanting life on the sea for the uncertainties of a settler in a wild and sparsely settled country. The call to return to the roaming life on the waters of the world was beginning to be heard. "Once a sailor, always a sailor" seemed to be proving true. The two finally decided to give up the land venture. They planned to travel by steamboat down the Ohio and Mississippi to New Orleans, where they would have no trouble in contacting outgoing vessels.

They started down the Ohio on board a river steamer, but at Marietta, a deplorable and fatal accident occurred to Mr. Cruikshank's comrade. In passing the large revolving fly-wheel which passed through a pit in the floor of the vessel, and regulated the power of the engine generated by the steam, Thompson stumbled, and fell into the pit, where he was crushed to death before the engine could be stopped. Mr. Cruikshank attended to his comrade's burial in Marietta, and sent his personal effects to his relatives in New York.

Call it fate, destiny, or what you will, in the lives of men there are certain incidents or circumstances, seemingly beyond their control, that change or re-shape their future careers and so direct them into new paths, unknown and unconsidered in their previous thinking. In the tragic death of his comrade, Alexander Cruikshank was again

[1] This was the Black Hawk War.

faced with making a decision as to what course to pursue. The question was soon answered. While stopping at Marietta, he became acquainted with a Mr. Bissell who was on his way to his home at Beardstown, Illinois, where he was a large landowner. Bissell gave a glowing account of the country and its future possibilities and invited Alexander Cruikshank to accompany him. The invitation was accepted and together they continued to Beardstown, via the Ohio, Mississippi, and Illinois rivers.

After a short stay at the Bissell home, Alexander Cruikshank made his first advent into the Iowa country in May, 1832, crossing the Mississippi River at Keokuk (then designated as "Rat Row Landing"), at the foot of the Des Moines Rapids. The settlement consisted of not over a half-dozen cabins and shacks. The former sailor did odd jobs during the remainder of 1832 for Mr. Bissell and others in Hancock, Adams, Schuyler, and Cass counties, Illinois. In 1833 he burned a kiln of brick at Montebello,[2] then the county seat of Hancock County, Illinois, located across the river from Keokuk and just a little above the present town of Hamilton. Some of these brick can be found in certain old buildings in that vicinity and in the town of Nauvoo. At Montebello the young adventurer had a severe attack of cholera, a most terrible disease from which many died. Grandfather often said that he owed his recovery to Dr. Isaac Galland's[3] timely and personal attention.

The stranded sailor made friends and rapidly adjusted his ways to his new environment. He sensed the drama that was to be enacted on the broad prairies and streams of the great Mississippi Valley. With the acumen of the

[2] The site of Montebello, Illinois, is now located only by a marker.

[3] Dr. Isaac Galland was a pioneer physician of Lee County, Iowa, and was one of the prominent men connected with the Half-Breed Tract.

forward-looking pioneer, he visualized something of the new civilization that was to come and was motivated anew by the moving and compelling power of the opportunities offered.

But the interest of Alexander Cruikshank was not limited to material things. In the home of Mr. Bissell he met Miss Keziah Perkins, a native of Lawrence County, Kentucky, who was serving as a maid in the home and as a nurse to the invalid wife of Mr. Bissell, the Bissell and Perkins families having been neighbors in Kentucky and having moved to Illinois at about the same time. The acquaintance of the two young people ripened into a mutual attraction and on January 25, 1834, the roaming, homeless sailor and the untutored frontier maiden were united in marriage. The wedding took place in the home of the bride's parents and was performed by the Rev. William Crane.

An old book, *Augusta's Story,* which deals with the early history of Augusta and Pulaski, both in Hancock County, Illinois, and Huntsville in Schuyler County adjacent to Hancock County, gives the following information concerning Keziah Perkins' family. "Steven Perkins [father of Keziah] of Kentucky, but then living in Indiana, came in 1832 with his family and took up a pre-emption right on the S. W. ¼ of Section 6. He built a double log cabin and smoke house, and improved and fenced 25 acres of land". The book further recorded that in the fall of 1834, "Steven Perkins sold out to Rev. William Crane and moved to Iowa."

After his marriage, Alexander Cruikshank was definitely imbued with new objectives and a changed plan of life. The *History of Lee County, Iowa,* published by the Western Historical Company of Chicago in 1879, has the following account of the coming of Alexander Cruikshank:

> In the beginning of 1834, Mr. Cruickshank took unto himself a

wife in the person of Miss Keziah Perkins, of Hancock County, Ill. A short time after his marriage, he started for the Black Hawk country to locate a home for himself and wife. When he reached the Mississippi River opposite Puck-a-she-tuck, he hired a canoe, and being an old sailor he made a sail out of his blanket, and started up the river for Fort Madison. The river was rough and several times he expected himself and canoe would part company, but he weathered the gale and landed safely at Fort Madison. At that time, there was no sign of a settlement west of the few cabins at Fort Madison, but having come to locate a home for himself and the wife he had recently taken, he started back into the interior toward Skunk River. After prospecting a little, he selected a claim in what is now Pleasant Ridge Township, about two miles from that stream, and about the same distance to the southeast from the present village of Lowell. He prepared a shanty, and when the spring opened, he broke up about eleven acres of the virgin soil, which he planted to corn and raised a very good crop of sod-corn. . . .

During the summer he assisted in building the barracks at Fort Des Moines (Montrose). He burned a kiln of lime that season, 596 bushels of which he sold to the United States at 12½ cents per bushel. His limekiln was of the most primitive kind — a layer of logs and then a layer of stone. When the kiln was large enough the heap was fired from the bottom. The site of this first limekiln in Lee County was just below the "Old Orchard". He also built several of the stone chimneys to the barracks. When the troops came in from the plains in November, 1834, the barracks were ready for occupancy.[4]

For a time, his only close neighbor, John Box, loaned Mr. Cruikshank a yoke of oxen, but with the money received from the government he was able to buy oxen of his own.

The location of the dwelling on the Pleasant Ridge Township claim is not recorded, but it was a sort of dugout in a hillside and its owner was once introduced at an old settlers' meeting as the "cave man". The approximate loca-

[4] *The History of Lee County, Iowa* (Western Historical Company, 1879), pp. 379, 380.

tion of the claim was designated as "Crookshank's Point" by Albert M. Lea on his map of Wisconsin Territory in his *Notes on Wisconsin Territory* published in 1836.

Alexander Cruikshank was not satisfied with this claim, however, and a friendly Indian directed him to a spring of water located about six miles to the southwest. Preferring the new location, he sold his first claim in the fall of 1834, and moved to the new location, which was known as Clay Grove.

In moving to his second claim the former sailor was guided by a clump of trees which he called "Pilot Grove". Later the village of Pilot Grove was erected on the site of the grove.[5] During the winter he lived alone in his cabin and for six weeks did not see a white face. A party of Indians camped nearby on the present site of Lowell, but they were friendly and showed no inclination to harm their white neighbor.

In the spring of 1835, his wife and her family came from Illinois and joined him in his wilderness home. That season Mr. Cruikshank raised about twenty acres of sod corn, but he was not yet satisfied with his location and in the fall of 1835 he sold his Clay Grove claim to a man named Davis and located a third claim in Franklin Township, Lee County, taking parts of sections two and three. The claim originally contained 300 acres but was later reduced by sales to 227 acres. On this claim Mr. Cruikshank built a substantial log cabin, typical of those pioneer days, and this served as the family home until 1850 when a rather pretentious brick house, one and a half stories high, was erected. The brick used were burned on the farm by the owner. The writer has in his possession one of the brick molds used to shape the unburnt clay. Each mold held six bricks.

[5] See O. A. Garretson's "Pilot Grove" in *The Palimpsest,* Vol. III, pp. 390–399.

Alexander and Keziah Cruikshank had eight children. The eldest of these, James Cruikshank, was born in the log cabin on the Clay Grove claim and was the first white child born in Marion Township. When James Cruikshank died on May 27, 1920, at the age of eighty-five, he was considered Iowa's oldest native citizen. He and his parents were buried in the Clay Grove cemetery on the site of the cabin where James was born. Six children were born in the log cabin on the permanent claim and the youngest was born in the new brick house built in 1850. Andreas' *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Lee County, Iowa* (1874) contains an excellent picture of this brick house.

This story is, however, only half told in the person of Alexander Cruikshank. There was also Keziah Perkins who became his wife. Coming from a long lineage of frontiersmen, she had been schooled in the hardships and meager advantages of those early settlers of the American continent. The two were markedly dissimilar. Alexander Cruikshank possessed those attributes of mind, heart, and bearing that a progressive civilization had pronounced cultural, refined, and gracious, all of which led to social conduct stamped with the amenities of those well born. Such qualities must have been innate, for his environments had been largely of the opposite nature. Keziah Perkins was endowed with equal native abilities, but hers were along different lines. By inborn gifts and by training she was utilitarian, highly practical, and bluntly direct. She was not a servile conformist but a true individualist and she did not pay much attention to many of the established conventionalities of society. Unlearned in books, she had, through experience, gained a vast store of information, all of which was practical and necessary for those who wished to establish a home amidst the wilds of the frontier. In this she was the leader and taught her sailor husband much that he needed to know.

Although there was this marked difference in the personal characteristics of these pioneers, their opposite gifts seemed to be supplementary, and together Alexander Cruikshank with his quiet dignity, refined instincts, and self-control, and his less cultured, more matter-of-fact wife built their home and reared their large family most successfully and happily among the trials, reverses, successes, and pleasures of a new country. They had their differences and I have heard grandmother fret and scold at some of her husband's idealistic and ethical notions, which seemed to her impractical and absurd. He listened to her with patience and respect; but never did I witness a "scene" that could be called embarrassing to an outsider. There was always mutual confidence and coöperation, as together they strove to do their respective parts in creating a new and better social order within the confines of the Black Hawk Purchase.

Since the ancestry of Keziah Perkins carries back to the American Revolution, and since the State of Iowa has erected a memorial monument at the grave of her grandfather, it seems fitting that a brief sketch of this Revolutionary soldier be included in the narrative. Out of such heritage came many of the residents of Iowa.

George W. Perkins, grandfather of Keziah Perkins, was born in South Carolina, on March 22, 1752, and died in Lee County, Iowa, on November 27, 1840. Little is known of his ancestors or parentage, other than that they came from England to Jamestown. He was a hatter by trade, but more distinguished as a soldier serving under Marion, the "Swamp Fox". He and his wife moved to Iowa in 1837 where they lived with their only daughter, Mrs. Anna Graves. Here they both died and were buried in the cemetery near Primrose, Lee County, Iowa, now called McGreer Cemetery, close to the farm on which they had lived.

Later their remains were moved to Sharon Cemetery, in the same county.

By an act dated March 29, 1906, the State of Iowa appropriated $500 for a monument in honor of George W. Perkins and it was erected in Sharon Cemetery under the supervision of the Torrence Post, G. A. R. of Keokuk, Iowa. The memorial is made of the best quality of Barre granite, quarried in the granite fields of Vermont. It consists of three parts and stands about five and one-half feet high. A flintlock musket and powderhorn are cut in bold relief on the top piece.

The monument was dedicated on May 28, 1907. As part of the dedicatory services J. P. Cruikshank, of Fort Madison, the youngest child of Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Cruikshank, and a great grandson of George and Keziah Perkins, gave the address, which gives an interesting and, so far as known, authentic account of the life of the patriot. Quotations from it illustrate the background of these Iowa settlers.

Born in the Blue Ridge Mountains of South Carolina, over a century and a half ago, the Old Pioneer Soldier followed the occupations of a hunter, trapper, tiller of the soil, and, in later years, dressed skins and fur pelts and manufactured them into caps, gloves, and various articles of wearing apparel. In the year of 1779, he was united in marriage to Keziah Manning, in the state of North Carolina. Only two children, a son and daughter, were born of this union, from which came a long line of descendants, numbering over five hundred, dead and living, scattered all the way from the Alleghenies to far Alaska. He subsequently lived in the states of North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, and finally, in 1837, moved to the vicinity of Primrose, in this county, then a part of the Wisconsin Territory. Here the aged couple resided with a grandson the remainder of their days, which in his case was only a little over three years while his wife survived him nine years. They certainly lived the full measure of life, he dying in his 89th year and she in her 87th. Both were

buried in the cemetery mentioned, near the farm on which they died. Within the last year, what was left of their remains, together with the mouldering clay in which they were embedded, was disinterred and again returned to Mother Earth, in this beautiful necropolis.

The records of the War Department give May, 1776, as the date of his first enlistment, from the state of South Carolina. Since it was a custom in the Revolutionary War, at least in that state, to enlist for short periods, even so short as one month, he is recorded as having enlisted no less than nine times in the regular service from May, 1776, to May, 1780, aggregating about two years in all. These enlistments seem to have been simply for a raid or foray, and the short periods of service are in a manner accounted for when it is known that he served a greater portion of the time under Gen. Francis Marion, who had peculiar, if not erratic, ideas in regard to the manner of conducting a campaign. . . .

Accepting as true the usual claims of descendants of Revolutionary patriots, there were few privates in that war, but this one seems to have been an exception, as he served solely in the ranks. He also served at different times in the militias of the two Carolinas, in which service, according to tradition however, he at one time held a minor office. In 1834, while a resident of Kentucky, he applied for and received a pension, but lived only six years to enjoy it. Strong and rugged in body and mind, but unlearned in letters, he lived the simple life. His maintenance was chiefly from what he slew in the forest and cultivated in the clearings. He wore garments made from deer skins, dressed with his own hands, supplemented with the coarse woolen and cotton fabrics that his good wife carded, spun, and wove. He smoked his pipe in contentment, using only tobacco cultivated and cured by his own labor, drank his whiskey straight, manufactured with his own hands in a crude domestic still that was little more than a copper tea-kettle attached to a coil of the same material. The worst that can be said of him is that he was a man who liked his dram. The fact that he lived so long proves one of two things: The brand that he manufactured and drank was a much better product than that of the present day, or his constitution was so rugged and so fortified by regular habits and the pure mountain air and crystal waters of his native country that the bad effects were completely neutralized. While it is not known that he was a member of any

church, he was far from being an irreverent man. He trusted in God and kept his powder dry. He so lived, independent and oblivious of a higher civilization, never once dreaming that one day a grateful commonwealth would honor his memory with a granite memorial that will possibly endure so long as the government that he aided to establish.

Following the address by J. P. Cruikshank, the monument was most fittingly unveiled by his daughter, Mollie Cruikshank, a great-great-granddaughter of the patriot. Twenty-two descendants of the old soldier were present to witness the services. The program was varied with addresses by representatives of the different organizations that had been active in the promotion and erection of the monument; but in all probability the one on "Patriotism of 1907" by Major D. R. Hamill of Keokuk was outstanding.

The beautiful Sharon Cemetery is, incidentally, one of the most unique in the State. Consisting of eight acres of land, enclosed with a substantial and beautiful iron fence, anchored into a foundation of granite, with its commanding entrance, all of which cost $45,000, it is attractive and inviting. In addition it is endowed with a 280-acre farm with a permanent caretaker to provide for its every need, all donated at his death, May 24, 1897, by George L. Seeley and executed, as per his request, by his brother, W. B. Seeley. The Seeley brothers were the sons of Eli Seeley, a pioneer in Lee County, Iowa, who by hard work and careful management acquired a fortune in Iowa land. That the Perkins monument will be properly cared for is evident.

To George Perkins, soldier of the Revolution, and his wife, Keziah Manning Perkins, two children were born, a boy and a girl. The boy, Steven, was the father of Mrs. Alexander Cruikshank, and a brief summary of his life will explain her background. He was born in South Carolina and lived in South Carolina, Tennessee, and North

Carolina. In North Carolina he married Katherine Summa of obscure ancestry — from traditional sources English, Welsh, and Pennsylvania Dutch, with a peculiar dialect, which was not Southern. (They pronounced woman, "woo-man".) Katherine became an outstanding member of the Perkins lineage as to natural ability, economy, thrift, stability of character, and longevity.

After the birth of their first child, Steven Perkins moved to Kentucky where they lived several years. Most of their eleven children, including Mrs. Keziah Perkins Cruikshank, were born there. Later Steven Perkins and his family lived in Ohio and Indiana, moved to Illinois in 1832, to Iowa in 1834, and to Missouri in 1837, where Steven Perkins died about 1850. After his death, his widow lived in Arkansas and Texas, returning to Iowa in 1869 to live with her daughter, Mrs. Alexander Cruikshank, until her death in June, 1875, at the ripe old age of 90.

It is evident that Steven Perkins possessed a roving nature, selling out and moving to newer and more sparsely settled locations and it is known that he and his wife lived in eleven different States of the Union. While it cannot be said that he was indolent, his wanderlust led him to dream of better and "greener pastures". His wife was the mainstay of the family, possessing that rare gift of thrift under most adverse conditions. In all she was a most remarkable character. She became the mother of eleven children, seven boys and four girls, all of whom grew to adulthood. Nine of the children married and from these marriages came a long line of descendants scattered today from Texas to Alaska.

As a family the Perkins clan were individualistic, self-centered, and self-sustaining. None of them acquired great wealth, but neither were they "heavers of wood or drawers of water" for other people. A passion for exploration

seems to have been a family trait, hence starting projects and then dropping them was too frequently the rule. As a result they scattered to the several States and Territories of the United States, ever happy when opening up new fields.

George Perkins, Jr., the oldest child of Steven and his wife and the namesake of the Revolutionary soldier, was representative. He came to Iowa in 1835 and made his first claim in Marion Township about one and one-half miles north of the Cruikshank claim, where he is credited with planting the first bearing apple orchard of grafted trees in Iowa (the old orchard at Montrose was of seedling growth). With this orchard he also established a nursery. One mile south of this claim, he laid out the town of Tuscarora, but the plat was never recorded. Later, he made a second claim near Primrose, where he established another orchard and nursery and laid out the town of Primrose. Subsequently, he made another claim near Centerville, Iowa, where he again duplicated his orchard and nursery. Associated with others, he laid out the town of Centerville, Iowa. He closed his leapfrog career in Franklin County, Kansas, always with an orchard and nursery at each stop —a sort of "Johnny Apple Seed" character. He died in his wagon in Kansas while exploring the country.

Three of his brothers, John, Steven, Jr., and Eli Perkins, John Fugate, a brother-in-law, and their youngest sister and her husband, a Mr. Soward, crossed the plains in 1850 to California in search of gold. Eli died in California and Soward and his wife established a home there, but after two years of unsuccessful mining efforts, the other members of the party returned home by way of the Isthmus of Panama. Fugate, who had broken his leg while in California, died on the boat and was buried at sea. John and Steven, Jr., crossed the Isthmus on the backs of natives,

then returned to their respective homes in Missouri, closing a typical "wild goose" chase so common to "rainbow chasers".

Steven Perkins and his wife strongly sympathized with the South upon the question of slavery, but their eleven children ranged from ardent supporters of Lincoln to rabid pro-slavery advocates. George, the oldest of their children, had six sons in the Union army, while two of his brothers marched under the Confederate flag, one by compulsion, the other as a volunteer. Betsy, one of the sisters, married a slaveholder and was thoroughly imbued with the righteousness of the system. Keziah (Grandmother Cruikshank) was abusive and insulting in her tirades against the Black Abolitionists. Thus I was born in the midst of that civil strife and my childhood was subjected to the clashing views of those I loved. The irony of it all was that on other subjects reason, affection, and personal sacrifices, rather than distorted prejudice, ruled.

From this brief sketch of Alexander and Keziah Cruikshank we can visualize something of how those independent, individualistic, and unregimented pioneers thought and acted. Crude and unmindful of many social niceties they may have been, but in the main they were frank, kind, honest, and courageous. Their lasting achievements will challenge the best in history.

One is filled with wonderment at the turns of the wheel of chance which brought together the paths of Alexander Cruikshank, a roaming, homeless sailor before the mast, and Keziah Perkins, a child of the frontier. Reared amidst environments most striking in their dissimilarities and with so little in common upon which to build a home and rear a family in the wilds of the New West, the story of their meeting and marriage rivals fiction. Starting with nothing in the way of material goods, they went forward

step by step and accumulated a subsistence from nature's storehouse. While at times the going was hard and food scarce, there is no record of desperate want or suffering. Thrift, respectability, loyal citizenship, and final success crowned their old age. They lived the simple life with the latch string ever out, and while their names are not emblazoned in the halls of fame, they were, in the hearts of neighbors and newcomers, most truly blessed with kindred feelings of regard and fellowship, a hospitality proverbial to this day.

For fifty-four years they lived most happily together. They saw the wild prairies and native forests give way to well cultivated farms and bustling cities. They saw the development of free schools, self-supported churches, an untrammeled printing press, and a high degree of culture and refinement, all of which culminated in opportunities for individual self-advancement never before enjoyed by the common man.

In this brief survey of frontier life, I am constrained to speak of the pioneer women. With limited means produced with their own hands, ingenious planning, and tireless industry, they reared their large families and performed the menial, oft-times monotonous drudgeries of caring for the home. They provided clothing for the family from coarse woolen and cotton fabrics that they carded, spun, and wove. They endured the discomforts of winter and the extremes of summer. They searched the forests and prairies for edible berries and medicinal herbs at the risk of the deadly rattler; they cultivated their gardens, cared for the poultry, and helped with the chores and other outside work as necessity called. To cap all, they were too frequently denied that one essential to health and life, an adequate supply of pure water, for I have heard them relate how they went to the near-by slough or pond, scraped the "green scum"

from the surface of the water, and then filled their vessels.

When I recall that my great grandmother Perkins, under frontier conditions, bore eleven children and brought them all to adulthood, that her eldest daughter, Mrs. Alexander Cruikshank, reared a family of eight, and that her youngest daughter, Talitha, crossed the plains in 1850 when but eighteen years old, in an ox-drawn wagon, over an uncharted trail beset with wild animals and equally wild savages, and that such acts were the common lot of pioneer women, I can but marvel at their collective achievements. The historian seems to have accepted pregnancy and childbirth as a matter of course, but could the full chronicle of the lonely and anxious hours of pioneer motherhood be penned, it would reveal tragedy, pathos, and bitter disappointments as well as unnumbered acts of unselfish love and devotion.

If you desire to secure a close-up, accurate estimate of a man's character, contact his neighbors who meet him in the everyday transactions of life. The writer was twenty-five years old at the time of his grandfather's death, and was deeply touched at the expressions of regard on the part of friends and neighbors and the outpouring of their esteem. It was before the refining services of the professional undertaker and most of the burial rites were the volunteer acts of neighbors and friends. The body of the deceased was prepared by loving, if not skilled hands, placed in the "coffin", and tenderly conveyed to the wagon, freely donated by some neighbor, that headed the procession from the home to the cemetery.

As if but yesterday, I recall the concourse of relatives, friends, and neighbors in a procession over a mile in length that followed my grandfather's body to the unpretentious country graveyard of Clay Grove.

Many were the expressions of esteem and regard that

were spoken or written at that time. From an article by John Sax, a long time friend and a fellow pioneer of Harrison Township, I quote the following:

Alexander Cruikshank died May 18, 1888, at his residence in Franklin Township, Lee County, Iowa. The death of this most noted of the pioneer settlers of Lee County is ample occasion for much more than the ordinary brief notice as above. . . . In his 84th year he died, respected by all who knew him, and reverenced by many as a model citizen and the noblest work of God, an incorruptibly honest man. . . . An immense concourse attended the mortal remains of our old friend to their last resting place in the Clay Grove cemetery, at one time the door yard of the cabin on his second claim in Iowa, there to rest in uncomplaining obedience of his creator's will, "Earth to earth and his spirit to the God that gave it." . . .

At the risk of prolixity, I deem it a duty to add to my former assertions on the character of Mr. Cruikshank that amid all his wild and rough experiences and terrible tests of his powers of endurance, his truly noble and refined nature was thereby brought more prominently forth, bright and pure like gold from friction, inasmuch as his demeanor was that of a gentleman at all times. Also I never heard a word or witnessed an act that, could they have had form and substance and touched his white beard, would have left a stain thereon. His very nature was a kindly gentleness, with an omnipresent sense of propriety like unto womanly modesty; and no one at his fine farm mansion and among its surroundings and fittings, nor from the manners of his family, would know withal but that they ever lived in affluence in the best of society.[6]

In my quiet hours of meditation, I am reminded of a bit of philosophy that my pioneer grandfather often proclaimed, briefly summarized as follows. In this world of strife, it is not so much what a man gets, but rather *how* he obtains it and the *use* that he makes of it that really counts. Change is the law of the material universe,— not

[6] This quotation was apparently taken from a local paper but its original source could not be located. John Sax was listed in an early history of Lee County as a farmer in Harrison Township "who frequently contributes articles for the press."

blind chance as men throw dice to lose or win, but under the control of established physical laws. Biologically, change is the process of growth. But over and above material laws and forces, there is the realm of Truth, Virtue, and the moral laws of human conduct. Their sphere of action may be less tangible than that of the material domain; but its reality is no less certain.

The real success or failure of any generation must be found in the character of its men and women who served its day. The real worth of all political, social, educational, and religious movements will be measured, approved or disapproved, by the same high standards. Even though material progress may unveil the remote and hidden mysteries of nature's secrets, in the sight of Deity there will be no true progress if His moral and ethical laws do not rule in the hearts of men, or if character building is subordinated to the mere acquisition of material things. Such are the lessons taught in the pages of history as they reflect the rise and fall of nations.

Thus did my old Scotch Presbyterian pioneer ancestor speak to me in my teen years. Its abstruse meaning was not fully comprehended, but with the passing years, those early impressions have deepened into a conviction as real and abiding as the laws of gravity.

CHARLES W. CRUIKSHANK