

and school yards. Indeed, the Amana village from June to October is one huge garden all aglow with quaint old-fashioned flowers. There are great rows of four-o'clocks and lady-slippers, borders of candy-tuft and six-weeks-stock; gorgeous masses of zinnias, marigolds, and geraniums; great pansy beds and rose gardens — all laid out with precision and cared for with such devotion and such genuine pleasure that the visitor too rejoices.

The picturesqueness of the Amana estate is enhanced by a mill-race — a canal seven miles long which furnishes the water power for the mills and factories. This mill-race is now old enough to be fringed with pickerel weed and dwarf willows bent by the weight of wild grape-vines. Here and there the race is spanned by quaint wooden bridges. Half-way between two of the villages the mill-race expands into a lake which covers about two hundred acres and is now almost filled with the American lotus or yellow nelumbo. In July when the lotus lifts hundreds of great buff blossoms above the water, the Sunday quiet of the peace loving Inspirationist and his family is sadly disturbed by the endless procession of automobile visitors and their attendant noise and dust.

THE REAL AMANA

“To be a church always” is the essential aim of the Community of True Inspiration; and it is in the personal service and the practical devotion of six

generations to a spiritual ideal that we find the real explanation of the Amana of to-day. The dreams of men live on triumphantly through the ages when the visible structure of their civilization has crumbled away. The old feudal castle of Ronneburg is an empty echoing shell, but the spirit of "the old defenders of the faith" who there strove for religious liberty in the early years of the eighteenth century still lives in the little valley of the Iowa River which has been the dwelling place of their descendants for more than three score years.

Sincerely and most devoutly do these people believe that from the beginning of the "New Spiritual Economy" they have received in all spiritual matters, and in those temporal affairs which concerned their spiritual welfare, divine guidance through specially endowed individuals. They believe that the beautiful Amana of to-day is simply the expression of the Lord's will as revealed directly to them from time to time through their prophets. They believe they were commanded by "a decisive word of the Lord" to dwell together in the Fatherland; to come to America where they might "live in peace and religious liberty"; to adopt communism in the "new home in the wilderness"; to leave Ebenezer and move to Iowa; and there to buy land and establish factories in order that the brotherhood might be maintained in "the faith which has love and the bond of peace for its essence."

Since the death of Barbara Heinemann, who re-

ceived her gift of inspiration at about the same time as Christian Metz and who outlived him by sixteen years, there have been no "Instruments" and no new revelations; but "still living witnesses" and "well founded Brethren" carry on the work as of old, and much inspired literature remains for the assurance and guidance of the congregations of to-day. Of testimonies alone there are forty-two printed volumes, besides many collections of poetry and songs.

The stranger in the Amana villages would have some difficulty in finding the church buildings, unless perhaps his attention were challenged by their inordinate length; for the Amana church is no "steeple house", but simply a series of rooms made necessary by the fact that in the larger villages the men and women of certain spiritual orders meet separately on Sunday morning, when four services are conducted simultaneously. The general meetings on Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon are held in a large assembly room of the church.

The interior of the Amana meeting-house is marked by its plainness. The whitewashed walls, the bare floors, and the long unpainted benches worn smooth with much use and frequent scrubbings, all bespeak the character of the service which is simple, sincere, and deeply impressive. There is no pulpit, but instead a plain table where the presiding Elder sits. On either side of him, facing the congregation, is seated a row of Elders who possess the necessary

“measure of enlightenment and discrimination” to “fulfill the calling of the shepherd of souls.”

In the general meeting the men sit on one side of the church and the women on the other, both groups according to age and spiritual rank — the youngsters on the front benches under the watchful eye of the Elders, the older members behind. Each member of the congregation from little Wilhelm and Johanna to the presiding Elder comes armed with a Bible and a copy of the ponderous Psalter-Spiel in a pasteboard case.

The religious services of the Community of True Inspiration are numerous but extremely simple. There is no attempt at rhetorical effect or eloquence on the part of the Elders, the hymns are chanted without instrumental accompaniment and oftentimes the prayer is “unhindered by words”. The service is dignified and breathes throughout a reverent and devout spirit, and ever there remains the sincere effort of the forefathers to eliminate all that is formal and bound to the letter. At the close of the service the congregation quietly files out of the church. If it chances to be a general meeting the women all leave the church by one exit and the men by another. This no doubt is calculated to prevent “silly conversation and trifling conduct”. There are no greetings, no good-byes, no visiting on the steps of the church — nothing in fact that would tend to lessen the solemnity of the occasion.

The religious service which is held upon the death

of a member is conducted in the church. The body, however, remains in the home. The service is the regular church service with the lesson drawn from the life and death of the departed Brother or Sister. After the service the entire congregation, including the children, are permitted to go to the home to view the remains. Then the plain casket is placed in a light open wagon and the little procession proceeds on foot down the flower-bordered street to the cemetery. At the side of the wagon or behind it are the pall-bearers, the family of the deceased, and the relatives, who are followed by the Elders, the school children accompanied by their teacher, and the members of the Community. There is no service at the grave save a hymn and a silent prayer offered by the entire congregation with bowed heads as the body is lowered into the earth.

There is no outward mourning for the dead. Indeed, the faith of the Community teaches that death is but "the blessed release of the spirit" from the pain and suffering, the sorrow and trouble which is the lot of man during his "pilgrimage on earth". The unencumbered spirit passes beyond into "a blissful eternity" where other souls will join it as they in turn are "freed of their burdens".

BROTHERS ALL

Amana's simple doctrine of "Brothers all as God's children" is maintained even in death. In the cemetery there are no family lots, no monuments.