

that ideal. To this end the Inspirationists persevered, suffered, and sacrificed for more than two hundred years. And finally, that their ideal of a simple religious life might prevail, they substituted a system of brotherly coöperation for one of individual competition.

It is apparent, however, that that isolation from the "world" for which the Community of True Inspiration has so earnestly striven and which it has so jealously guarded for six generations becomes less and less easy to preserve. The railroad and airplane, the telephone and telegraph, the newspaper and magazine, the endless procession of automobiles, and the great World War have at last brought the Community and the "world" so close together that marked changes are taking place in the customs of the people and in their attitude toward life. Indeed, it is the intelligent adjustment of the life of the Community to the new order that explains the "blessed continuation" of Amana in this day and generation.

WHENCE CAME THESE PEOPLE

To the German Mystics and Pietists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Community of True Inspiration traces its origin — developing into a distinct religious sect about the year 1714. Protesting against the dogmatism of the Lutheran Church and refusing to conform to its ritual, the Inspirationists were persecuted and prosecuted.

They were fined, pilloried, flogged, imprisoned, legislated against, exiled, and stripped of their possessions.

It was a simple faith—a belief in guidance through divine revelation—that held together the early congregations of Inspirationists despite humiliation and torture. “Does not the same God live to-day?”, they said, “and is it not reasonable to believe that He will inspire His followers now as then? There is no reason to believe that God has in any way changed His methods of communication, and as He revealed hidden things through visions, dreams, and by revelations in olden times He will lead His people to-day by the words of His Inspiration if they but listen to His voice.” And so from time to time spiritual leaders arose and “prophesied like the prophets of old”, and all their sayings were faithfully recorded by scribes and published as sacred “testimonies”. It was this simple faith that sustained the Community through years of persecution and trial in the Old World and through years of suffering and sacrifice in the New World.

Although the Community has enjoyed the spiritual leadership of a very considerable number of great personalities—such as Eberhard Ludwig Gruber, Johann Friederich Rock, Michael Kraussert, and Barbara Heinemann—it is to the religious zeal and practical genius of Christian Metz, a young carpenter of Ronneburg, that the Community owes its greatest debt. Even to this day the spell of the

influence of this remarkable leader is felt throughout Amana.

It was Christian Metz who first conceived the idea of leasing estates in common as a refuge for the faithful; and while the original intention had been to live together simply as a congregation or church, Christian Metz foresaw that a system of communism would be the natural outcome of the mode of life which these people had been forced to adopt. And he foresaw that exorbitant rents and unfriendly governments in the Old World would one day make it necessary for the Inspirationists to find a home in the New World "where they and their children could live in peace and liberty".

Never shall I forget the day, some years ago, when from the ruined tower of Ronneburg Castle I looked out over those German estates which had been the Old World home of the Community of True Inspiration. The friendly keeper eagerly called my attention to eleven villages in the distance, and apologized for a gathering rain which obscured "Oh so many more". Then he pointed with pride into a mass of clouds where on a clear day and with a field glass one could see Frankfurt. But through the mists I seemed only to see the beautiful Iowa Amana with its villages and vineyards, its gardens and orchards, its fields and pastures and meadows "where all that believed were together and had all things in common". I seemed only to hear in the

rising wind the hum of Amana's varied industries "where each was given an opportunity to earn his living according to his calling or inclination". My thoughts were of Christian Metz, the carpenter prophet, "who kept these things in his heart and pondered them over". And I thought too of the splendid young men of Amana of my own day, six generations removed from the worshiping congregation on the hill of Ronneburg, still making the ancient sacrifice for a spiritual ideal in this turbulent quarter of the twentieth century when brotherly love and idealism have grown timid in the company of selfishness and materialism.

It was in 1842 that a committee of four led by Christian Metz set out to find a new home in America, and it was their sincere and devout belief that the journey had been "ordained and directed by divine revelation". For three months these conscientious Inspirationists, ever mindful of the responsibilities that rested with them, suffered the winter wind and cold of the region of the Great Lakes while they examined tracts of land, dealt with unscrupulous land companies, and weighed the advantages of various situations. In the end they purchased the Seneca Indian Reservation — a tract of five thousand acres near Buffalo, Erie County, N. Y.

Within four months of the purchase of the Reservation the first village of the Community was laid out and peopled. Five others were soon established,

and more than eight hundred members crossed the water to join the group of pioneers at "Eben-ezer" — so named in a song by Christian Metz recorded before the final purchase was made:

Ebenezer you shall call it
Hitherto our Lord has helped us
He was with us on our journey
And from many perils saved us
His path and way are wonderful
And the end makes clear the start.

Each village had its store, its school, and its church; soon there arose the cheerful hum of saw-mills, woolen mills, and flour mills. A temporary constitution providing for "common possession" was adopted, and the Community was formally organized under the name of "Ebenezer Society". For twelve years they toiled in the mills and factories and tilled the newly broken fields when it became apparent that more land than was available so near the growing city of Buffalo would be necessary to accommodate the increasing membership. And once more a committee of four, with Christian Metz as its leader, was "ordained and directed" to go forth to "find a new home in the far West". To Kansas they went, but returned discouraged and disheartened. Then out to the new State of Iowa they journeyed to inspect the large tracts of United States government lands that were still available. Lands in Iowa County were described in such glowing terms that a purchase of nearly eighteen thou-

sand acres was made by them without further delay.

A better location or more valuable tract of land than the new site in Iowa could hardly be imagined. Through it ran the beautiful Iowa River bordered with the wonderful black soil of its wide valley. On one side were the bluffs and the uplands covered with a luxuriant growth of timber — promising an almost limitless supply of fuel and building material. There were a few quarries of sandstone and limestone along the river; while the clay in the hills was unexcelled for the manufacture of brick. On the other side of the river stretched the rolling prairie land. To the Inspirationists, who had been obliged to cut heavy timber and remove stones and boulders from the Ebenezer land before it could be tilled, the long green stretches of virgin prairie “ready for the plow” seemed the most wonderful feature of the splendid new domain on which all the hopes of the future were centered.

But it takes more than a beautiful location and natural resources to make a successful community: it takes moral earnestness and untiring industry. These the Inspirationists brought with them to their new home. Then, too, the Ebenezer experiment had added twelve years of experience in pioneering. Unlike Etienne Cabet’s French tailors and shoemakers of the Icarian Community, the Inspirationists knew how to turn the matted sod of the prairie. Bountiful harvests rewarded their industry and skill.

With a will they set to work to cut the timber and quarry the stone and build anew houses, shops, mills, factories, churches, and schoolhouses. They planted orchards and vineyards, and purchased flocks and herds. They revived the old industries and started new ones. There was some sickness incident to pioneering, but withal they felt that in this new home to which "the Lord had directed them" the fulfillment of all the early prophecies was at hand. Bodily ills are more easily healed than spiritual ones; and so, in spite of the malaria and the ague the Inspirationists flourished and were content in their new home.

There was no rush to the country so gloriously described by the Iowa fore-guards — though no one can doubt the eagerness with which every member looked forward to the upbuilding of the new home. The removal from Ebenezer extended over a period of ten years and was carried through with that prudence, judgment, and common sense which has always characterized these people in the conduct of their business affairs.

While one detail of members prepared the new home in Iowa, the other looked to the profitable selling of the old estate in New York. As they found purchasers for the latter, they sent families to the former. To their business credit it is recorded that they were able to dispose of the whole of the eight thousand acre tract in the State of New York with all the improvements without the loss of a single

dollar, notwithstanding such a sale presented great difficulties — for the six communistic villages and their peculiar arrangement of buildings, with mills, factories, and workshops had peculiarities which detracted from their value for individual uses. Much of the Ebenezer land had been surveyed and laid out in lots; and when disposed of it was sold piece by piece, a task which required much time and patience.

The first village on the Iowa purchase was laid out during the summer of 1855 on a sloping hillside north of the Iowa River, and it was called "Amana" by Christian Metz — the word signifying "remain true" or "believe faithfully" and was suggested, it is said, by the resemblance between the bluff overlooking the site of the new village and "the top of Amana" described in the Song of Solomon. Five more villages were laid out within a radius of six miles from Amana and were named in accordance with their locations, West Amana, South Amana, High Amana, East Amana, and Middle Amana.

Modelled after the country villages of middle Europe, the houses of the "Amana Colonies", as they are commonly called, were clustered together on one long straggling street with several irregular offshoots, with the barns and sheds at one end, the factories and workshops at the other, and on either side the orchards, the vineyards, and the gardens.

Up to 1861 the nearest railroad station had been Iowa City, which was twenty miles distant; but in that year the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad

was completed as far as Homestead, a small town south of the Community's territory. All goods from the East would now be unloaded there, and it would also form the shipping point for the neighboring farming population. The Community saw the necessity of owning this railroad station, and so the entire village of Homestead was purchased.

In the system of village life, which has been the great conservator of the Community's purity and simplicity, the Inspirationists have shown their farsightedness. The villages are near enough to one another to facilitate superintendence and to preserve a feeling of unity. At the same time they are far enough apart to maintain a simplicity of living, which would probably be impossible with the same number of people congregated in one place. By this means the Community, while taking advantage of every progressive step in the methods of agriculture and the processes of manufacture, has been able to sustain in its social, political, and religious life an insular position.

By the time the sale of the Ebenezer land had been completed, the Community's territory in Iowa consisted of twenty-six thousand acres — which is approximately the amount owned at the present time. With the exception of some seventeen hundred acres in the adjoining county of Johnson, all of the land lies within the boundaries of Iowa County.

Two steps of great importance were taken by the Community soon after its removal to Iowa. One

was its incorporation under the laws of the State as the "Amana Society"; and the other was the adoption of a new constitution.

Unlike some of its contemporaries, the fundamental law of the Amana Society is neither a "Declaration of Mental Independence" nor the outlines of a scheme of a "World-wide Socialistic Brotherhood". On the contrary, it provides simply and briefly a civil organization for a religious society. It is worthy of comment that, unlike Owen's New Harmony Society which adopted seven constitutions in two years, the Amana Society still lives under the provisions of the instrument which went into effect on the first day of January, 1860, and which has received the signature of every member of the Society since its adoption in December, 1859.

Materially all of the fondest hopes of the little band of Inspirationists in the Old World struggling to pay the rent of their first estate have been realized in the Iowa home. The membership, numbering eight hundred when the Community migrated to New York and twelve hundred when the removal to Iowa took place, has increased to fifteen hundred at the present day. Bountiful harvests have rewarded their untiring industry; the products of their mills and factories have found a market from Maine to California; and in the books of the Auditors of Iowa and Johnson counties, their real and personal property was listed in 1920 at \$2,102,984.

Communitistic societies are like individuals: many

have been able to stand adversity, but only the steadiest minded are able to stand prosperity. The Amana Society belongs to the extremely small class of the latter. In spite of the continued material success of the last half century, the "solidarity" of the Community is still intact. To the force, patience, sagacity, broad-mindedness and withal the faithful service of competent leaders the Community of True Inspiration owes in a large measure its success and continuity. And the difficulties of administration of so human an institution are apparent. Six generations of precept and practice in self-denial and brotherly love have not of course completely annihilated the dissatisfied and troublesome. Nor was there ever a congregation of fifteen hundred souls without its hampering Brothers — those upon whom the responsibility of protecting the highly cherished good name of the organization rests but lightly, those who enjoy its material blessings and benefits but are reluctant to share the burdens and cares and the necessary sacrifice.

Under the terms of the constitution of the Amana Society such presumptuous members can be expelled as from any other church organization. But such an expulsion, however, presents baffling complications since it involves the actual turning out of house and home of the disturbing elements. It is in the successful solution of such problems quite as much as in the business foresight of its administrative officers that one discovers the explanation of

the Community's long life. The predominating spirit is still the spirit of the forefathers. Were it not so the Community could not be held together, for the Amana Society is after all simply a voluntary association depending for its perpetuity upon the general good will and good faith of its members.

TEMPORAL AND SPIRITUAL RULE

Extreme democracy in government and administration has never been the political ideal of the Inspirationists, but rather a strong central authority wisely administered and implicitly obeyed. The entire conduct of the affairs of the Amana Society rests with a Board of Trustees consisting of thirteen members who are elected annually by popular vote out of the whole number of Elders in the Community. Moreover, the members of the Board of Trustees are the spiritual as well as temporal leaders of the Community, and as such are known as the "Great Council of the Brethren". Thus there has been effected in the Community an harmonious blending of temporal rule and spiritual authority, which is regarded as the fulfillment of the will of the Lord as revealed through Inspiration.

The Trustees elect annually on the second Tuesday of the month of December out of their own number a President, a Vice President, and a Secretary. The incumbents are usually reëlected; for rotation in office has never been a part of the Amana theory of government.