

DENNIS LONERGAN A STURDY PIONEER NEBRASKA FARMER

Son of Tipperary Finds a Douglas County Farm a Most Inviting Haven and There Builds a Home that Has Endured Half a Century of Rush and Bustle and Grows Brighter Every Day.

FROM the sunny hills of Tipperary, Ireland, two peasants, man and wife, with their family, departed in the spring of 1841. They had spent many years there in the toll and under the oppression that has been the heritage of the warm-hearted, sturdy sons of turbulent "Erin go Bragh." Those storms of human passion which had drenched with blood and swept with flame the fertile fields of the Emerald Isle had not left them entirely unscathed. But they had maintained the reputation of their race; they had worked and saved and, like millions of their fellow countrymen they pushed bravely out toward the western land of promise to plant their sons and daughters in a soil where they might grow and flourish.

It was a family which conformed liberally to the Rooseveltian doctrines, for there were thirteen children, the youngest 5 years old. Today father and mother and all the children save one are dead. This one is Dennis Lonergan, a pioneer of Omaha and Douglas county and today an active man, living on his farm, five miles northwest of Florence. When his parents left Ireland he was 7 years old, having been born June 9, 1834, in Cashel, county Tipperary. It took courage to cross the ocean in those days. There were no steamships; the vessels were made of wood; there was danger of fire, and the time of the passage was entirely uncertain, being largely dependent on the winds and weather. The good ship "Scotland," on which the big family took passage, was tossed about by the waves for eight weeks before it sailed into the harbor of New York, April 5, 1841, a day rendered memorable by the fact that the city was draped in mourning for the death of former President William Henry Harrison.

The family went immediately to Utica, N. Y., where they remained two years. They went from there by ship over the lakes to Milwaukee, then a small but thriving city. Thence they pushed twenty miles west through the almost primeval forest and over roads which Mr. Lonergan says are the worst he ever saw. A piece of land was selected and the family set to work to clear it, building a log house with the first trees felled. It was an immense undertaking in those days to raise enough money to buy 160 acres of land at \$1.25 an acre, but the sturdy Irish father and his sons determined to do it. Labor of the best kind was worth only 50 cents a day. Their only capital was their strength and their axes. The trees were dragged into piles and burned up as fast as they became dry enough and thus by springtime a small area was cleared, though the stumps and stones still remained to be contended with. Mr. Lonergan remembers plowing with crude castiron plows with wooden beam and reaping grain with the sickle.

Early Days of Hard Work

In this strenuous frontier battle with nature he grew to manhood. When he was 18 years of age he left the paternal roof and secured work in the lumber camps of northern Wisconsin, where he remained four years, working for wages and frugally husbanding every penny. For in his heart was an ambition to seize hold of the opportunities presenting themselves in this new and thriving country and to make something of himself. This ambition was further increased and augmented when in 1854 he married Miss Margaret Duffy. Horace Greeley's well known advice to young men, "Go west," had reached him and he resigned his position in the spring of 1856 and, first paying a visit to his parents, left, with his wife, for Omaha.

"I had made the acquaintance of a bricklayer who came aboard the boat at St. Joseph," says Mr. Lonergan. "He and I left the boat and came uptown together when we reached Omaha, and I remember asking him where the city was. There were only a few straggling shanties in sight and the reports back in Wisconsin said the 'city had 1,500 people.' The old capitol building on the high school hill was just being erected, and I decided the city must be back of that hill. When evening came, though, and I saw them gather into the City hotel, on Harney street, where I was fortunate enough to get lodging for myself and wife, I knew the people were there, though no large buildings were to be seen. I remember writing back home and telling the folks they were sleeping about three deep on the floor at the City hotel."

The young man, being a lumberman, first tried to get work at his own trade, but there was little to do in that line. Eventually he secured work in the firm of Davis & Salisbury. Later he worked for a time in a sawmill. There was great rivalry at that time between Florence and Omaha. Many believed Florence was to be the city of the future. The moving spirits there were giving a building lot to anyone who would erect a house, and young Lonergan accepted the proposition and cast his lot with Florence.

Flowery Days for Florence

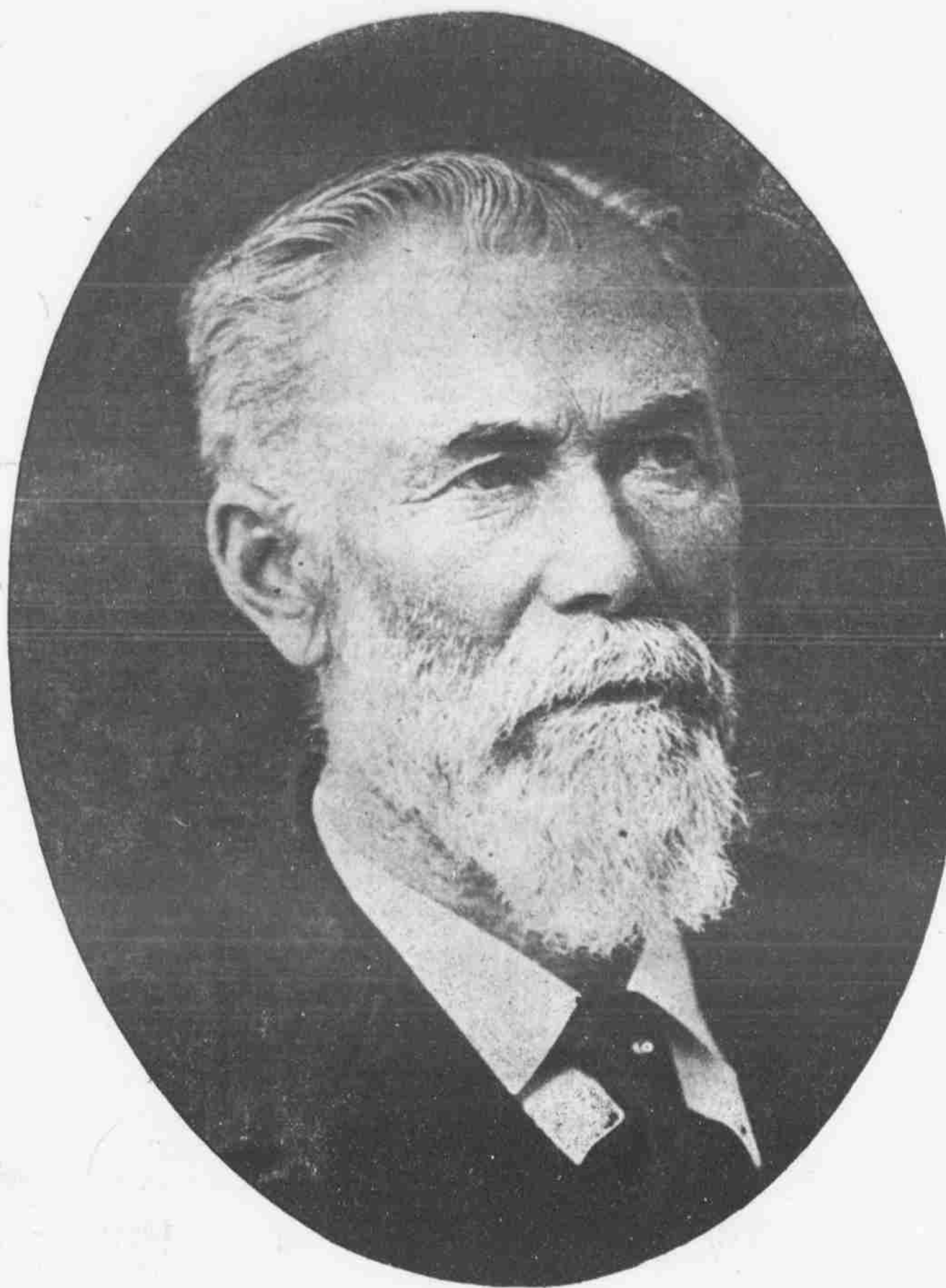
Those were flowery days for the present Omaha suburb. The great boom had passed somewhat. Lots had sold for \$1,500, which even today are not worth one-fifth that sum. Houses had been built and abandoned. It was the day of the greatest Mormon activity. Florence was the gateway from the east into the west for the hordes of faithful followers of Brigham Young. They arrived daily from the east during the summer months and there they rested and prepared for the long, perilous journey across the plains and mountains to Utah. Mr. Lonergan was a witness of all this activity and he took much part in the movement in the way of dealing with those in authority over the faithful. He sold hundreds of cattle to the Mormon leaders and had an intimate acquaintance with some of the elders.

Among these was George Q. Cannon, for a time chief Mormon agent at Florence, and an influential man in the church. Another was Mrs. Painter, wife of a wealthy manufacturer of wagons in Illinois. The Painter wagons were used by the Mormons to a large extent. Painter was not a Mormon. His wife left him with the purpose of making the trip to Utah. She got as far as Florence, but there her courage gave out and she returned eventually to her husband. He also knew Joseph Young, a nephew of Brigham Young, and was slightly acquainted with a son of the great head of the church. He was well acquainted with "Dave" Kimball, a son of Heber C. Kimball, one of the twelve Mormon apostles. Young Kimball was on his way to Europe on a mission and, Mr. Lonergan says, was a "harum-scarum sort of fellow," always up to some "devilment." Of the Mormon emigrants, Mr. Lonergan has nothing but good to relate.

Mormons Ordinary People

"They were an ordinary people," he says. "They were liberal in their dealings and some of them had a great deal of money; they were of many nationalities. A considerable number of them had come direct from their native countries. They came from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland. There were a great many from England, Scotland and Wales and a few, a very few from Ireland. There were also a number from South Africa and those seemed to me to be more like the people of western America than any of the others. I remember one man named Talbot from South Africa. He had a very expensive outfit, worth probably in those days and in that country \$100,000. He talked just like we did and we had considerable sport over our apparent likenesses. They were not all rich by any means. There were many poor who were brought out at the expense of the church, but were under a contract to pay this back when they arrived in Utah."

The authorities in Florence gave the Mormons a tract of land consisting of seven acres north of the present waterworks. There the Mormons built their warehouse and maintained their stock yards. They had agents all through Iowa and Illinois and Missouri buying up cattle to supply this station. This stock in Florence was drawn upon to fit out the trains for the west. The order had gone forth from the head of the church to "kill no calf." It was strictly obeyed. In the later days they began driving cattle from Utah, mak-



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ing one round trip to Florence in a season. It was a surprising fact that cattle driven from Utah were in better condition than those brought up close to Florence. They had been toughened and accustomed to travel.

The steam ferry across the Missouri river at Florence was kept busy during the migrating season from May to September. Sometimes 600 emigrants would arrive in a single day and the arrivals of cattle and wagons were proportionately large. The people camped in tents and made good use of some of the houses built during the boom and abandoned later. They were fitted out and sent on to the west as rapidly as possible by the agent and his assistants in Florence.

But before the days of wagons and ox teams was the day of push-carts. The world's history may be searched in vain for an instance of a braver migratory movement of human beings than that of the Mormons who started from Florence in the early push-cart days. More than 1,000 miles of unexplored country lay before them infested with savages, overrun with wild beasts. There were hundreds of miles of sand, hundreds of miles of muddy clay, towering

mountains, cliffs, crags, canyons, precipices. Through all this these wonderful people went almost unarmed and pushing their two-

"I used to see them start out every day," says Mr. Lonergan. "They always had some sort of service before a train would start. There were usually from thirty to forty carts in a train and three persons to a cart, two pulling on a rope in the front and one pushing and guiding with the handle behind. The burden of each cart when it left Florence was 300 pounds. I can see them now going up the hill zig-zagging to make it pull easier. They would tug and push and pull with the greatest enthusiasm, sometimes singing songs. When they reached the summit they went along the divide for several miles toward the northwest and there were lost to view in the immense wilderness into which they ventured. I never saw them with any arms to speak of, certainly not enough to withstand an attack from the Indians. Yet very few were molested on the way. I believe they had emissaries among the Indians who established friendly feeling toward them."

Polygamy was not practiced among the Mormons in Florence, at least not openly. There was one fellow, a Mormon named Joseph

E. Johnson, who lived in Crescent City, Ia., a few miles from Florence, and who was reputed to be a polygamist. His home was referred to as "the harem." There was also one exception to the rule in Florence in the person of Henry Keeler who had two wives and was afterward confined in the insane asylum at Lincoln. (Mr. Lonergan notes that these two facts are not to be regarded as cause and effect.) Keeler became so violent he had to be chained to the floor. He was confined in this manner when the asylum burned and was the only inmate who perished in that conflagration.

Two Dead-Game Toughs

Wild and wicked were some of the men in Douglas county in the early days. But they possessed a recklessness and bravado that made one almost admire them for the "artistic" and picturesque manner in which they carried through their wickedness. With two of these desperadoes Mr. Lonergan was well acquainted and, though they came to a most dishonorable end, they met it with a "nerve" that was wonderful. The two men were Harvey Brayton and Jack Daly. Brayton's father was a Mormon who had come to Florence in 1846 and gone on to Utah. Daly was a laborer. They stole two horses from P. Connor, who lived southeast of the present town of Calhoun. They crossed the river, but Connor pursued and captured them after a desperate fight in Shelby county. They were brought to Omaha, taken back to Calhoun and finally returned to Omaha to await trial.

Connor, R. S. Bryant and some others decided to see that the men were punished without any delay. They went in a wagon to Omaha and in some way secured the keys from Sheriff "Cam" Reeves. The men were placed on the wagon shackled. The two asked what was going to be done with them and when they were told they were about to "stretch hemp" they said they would prefer that to lying in that "measly jail in Omaha." It is said there was many a joke told and many a lie "swapped" on the weird trip to Florence. Mr. Lonergan saw the men when they were brought in to the village. The wagon stopped at a saloon and Brayton asked Connor if he didn't mean to treat.

"It'll be the last drink we're likely to get," he said, laughing. And Connor treated. A man went to the store and bought forty feet of rope and when the storekeeper asked what he was going to use it for, calmly replied: "Oh, just goin' to hang a couple o' fellers." The wagon drove off into the night and the next morning the bodies were found hanging from a limb near the old Vandercook house, two miles north of Florence.

Claim Club Operations

The Claim club also furnished some excitement. The land in Douglas county was thrown on the market in 1857 and the club immediately claimed it all. If a man tried to pre-empt a tract he was called a claim jumper and dealt with summarily. One man, Steve Neal, was thus branded and the Claim club "tried" him and sentenced him to be flogged. He was beaten into unconsciousness and then thrown into the river to see whether he was shamming. He was taken out before he drowned and upon regaining consciousness still refused to sign the papers. He never did sign them and retained possession of his land. Most of the men preferred to forego the land rather than secure it at such a price.

Mr. Lonergan has continued to live in Douglas county since the early days. He believes there is no place in the world to surpass it. He has a beautiful farm of eighty acres, where his daughter, Emma R. Lonergan, lives with him. He is still actively engaged in farming, for his 73 years sit lightly upon him. He is straight and strong. He took the temperance pledge from the famous Father Mathey while still a boy.

On adjoining farms, one on each side of him, live his two sons, Charles and William, and their children gladden the house of the pioneer. The two sons are general farmers and make a specialty of breeding fine hogs. Mr. Lonergan has two other children, Mrs. Mary L. McCarthy and Miss Margaret Lonergan, the latter a teacher in the Omaha public schools. Mrs. Lonergan died in 1873 and Mr. Lonergan has not remarried.

He has been a member of the Catholic church all his life. He has never sought political office, though there were times when he might have had it. He has never missed an election. He considers the franchise a sacred responsibility.

Living at ease in his latter days upon the broad and fertile acres of the home he has carved out of the wilderness, Dennis Lonergan is a fair example of what Nebraska, so long maligned as part of the "great American desert," does for her sons. The men who had faith in her and in her possibilities, scratched the wilderness and found a paradise. Their labors were richly rewarded. Dennis Lonergan in Ireland might have spent a laborious life in earning a precarious living. In Nebraska he has three farms to show for his efforts and has established a home for his children and his children's children.

Weidensall on Work of the Y. M. C. A. in Holland

IMMEDIATELY after leaving Belgium I entered Holland and visited two of its noted cities, The Hague and Amsterdam, which are very peculiar, remarkable and important cities. The Hague, though smaller than some of the Netherlands cities, is none the less in its character and quality for that. In some respects it intensifies its real excellences. The Hague is very beautifully located naturally, which has been improved very much by skill and labor. It has fine and extensive parks, boulevards and very charming suburban places. It has large and attractive public and private buildings. Its residence quarters are very homelike and clean and seem like very desirable places to live. There are two quite large Protestant cathedrals or churches. The chief attraction of The Hague is its wonderful seaside resort, Scheveningen, with its delightful beach and surf, its splendid pier that extends far out into the sea. The many institutions, hotels, restaurants, stores and places of amusement, make it one of the most desirable resorts for wholesome pleasure and recreation that can be found anywhere. Then it is so close to the city that no time is lost in going to and from it, which also makes it easily accessible to the common people. The Hague, doubtless because of its central location and because of its many other excellences, has been chosen by the nations of the world as a most desirable place for the Peace Tribunal, or the court for the settlement of national questions in a manner that will avoid resort to war. If this should succeed, as it certainly ought to do, no place in the world would be more notable than The Hague. The exact place in The Hague chosen for the Peace palace is a very desirable one, with very peaceful and charming surroundings.

Amsterdam, the capital of Holland, is a remarkable place in many respects. In the language of another: "Amsterdam is as good as Venice, with a super added humour and grotesqueness which gives the sightseer the most singular seat and pleasure; a run through Peking one could

hardly fancy to be more odd; strange, yet familiar, the rush and crowd and prodigious vitality; the immense swarm of life; these busy waters, crowded with barges; piled ancient gables, spacious markets teeming with people; that ever wonderful Jewish quarter, that dear old world of painting and the past yet alive and throbbing and palpable, actual and yet passing before you swiftly and strangely as a dream." Amsterdam originated at the beginning of the thirteenth century by the building of a dam across the Amstel river, and its life has been full of historical changes and events. "The older part of the city is in the form of a semicircle, the diameter being formed by the Y; canals, or grachten, of various sizes intersect the city in every direction and divide it into ninety islands, which are connected by means of 300 bridges." All the buildings are constructed on foundations of piles. The whole city is lower than sea level and is protected from the sea by extensive and well built dykes and great pumping stations. The cost of the works for the protection of the city is estimated at several thousand florins per day. Amsterdam has a population of 500,000 inhabitants, 89,000 Roman Catholics and 3,500 Portuguese Jews. The city has many great buildings—the Royal Palace, churches, museums, picture galleries, etc., and no end of splendid private buildings. The churches are mostly Dutch Reformed, but some very large Lutheran churches. The Rijks museum has a mammoth building and contains a special hall dedicated to Rembrandt, in which some of his best pictures (originals) are kept. Amsterdam has canals for streets like Venice, and canals and streets running side by side like Stockholm. It includes many of the excellencies of both Venice and Stockholm; while it is not as large a shipping point as Antwerp, it is one of the chief commercial centers of Europe and has a very large trade, chiefly in the products of the Dutch colonies—tobacco, Java coffee, sugar, rice, spices, etc.

Holland is a small country, but important in many respects. It occupies a very strategic out-

post of Europe and maintains peaceful relations with the neighboring nations. It has an extensive colonial system, but conducts it so quietly and unostentatiously that the world at large is scarcely aware of it. It is none the less effective, however, on that account. The Dutch are naturally a sturdy people, honest and reliable. When I was a small boy there was a statement in my little geography, "The Dutch are great smokers." They have more than maintained their early reputation, for I believe, from what I saw and experienced, that they are now greater smokers and more of them.

Soon after leaving Belgium I reached The Hague, Holland, Thursday, November 8, and put up at the tourist hotel near the station, a good place. I immediately called at the rooms of the association, Prinsegracht No. 4, a very central part of the city. I met the general secretary, Mr. F. W. Laarman, a fine man, and soon became acquainted with him. He made an appointment for me by telephone to meet Baron A. S. Mackay, former president of the association. Secretary Laarman accompanied me to the house of Baron Mackay, where I was heartily welcomed. The baron is comparatively a young man yet. I presented him and his wife with some of the letters I had from various nations and told them some facts about my trip around the world. Afterward I spoke of the association work in general, then of The Hague and Holland work. The baron is a strong association man and believes in it. He has an intelligent and practical knowledge of association work. The whole presentation of the work seemed to be much appreciated by the baron and his wife. I enjoyed the entire evening's visit at their home. They are experts in the way of entertainment. It is done so royally and yet so quietly that you are unconscious that you are being entertained. This is an art.

The next day, Friday, November 9, I called at the association rooms. Had a good interview with General Secretary Laarman. I took dinner with Baron Mackay at his club, after which I vis-

ited with him several noted places, chiefly the great seaside resort of The Hague, Scheveningen. He took me all about the resort and far out on the great pier. On our return to his office he pointed out the place where the Peace palace is to be built. All the while I had a splendid opportunity to speak of the association work in The Hague, Holland, and in the world. I had other meetings with the general secretary and a short evening visit of Baron Mackay at my hotel. I was well satisfied with my trip to The Hague and would like to have had more of it that I might have helped them more. The Hague association is in a position to do a larger work than is being done—I feel sure it will do so soon.

Early Saturday morning, November 10, I went to Amsterdam and, by request, reported at the house of Baron W. C. Quarles Van Ufford, a member of the world's committee. Baron Van Ufford is married to a cousin of Mr. R. Sarasin, chairman of the world's committee Young Men's Christian association. I was warmly welcomed; I soon realized that I was in the house of friends. After a very pleasant visit with the baron and his family I went to the Excelsior branch of the Amsterdam association and attended the anniversary meeting of its literary society. There was a full attendance of live young men deeply interested in their special literary society and also in the association. After the business session I attended, by request, and partook of a splendid banquet. Lively toasts were made and responded to. I was asked to address the members of the literary society, which I was delighted to do, speaking well of the literary society and of the association. The whole society manifested their appreciation of my visit and address in a manner I shall not soon forget.

The next day, Sunday, November 11, I attended the English Presbyterian church in the morning; heard a very good sermon. It was a quaint service in a quaint church building. Men