

Rev. Samuel Clarke

Sam M. Clark

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use of that rich country as a supply depot, as well as a provisioned route through which to make raids and forays. In this way the retrograde movement was leisurely conducted through Newmarket, Mt. Jackson and Woodstock, stopping a few days near Strasburg and finally, on October 10th, making an entrenched camp on the east bank of Cedar Creek just at its confluence with the Shenandoah river, where the next great act in the drama was played.

REV. SAMUEL CLARKE.

THE PIONEER METHODIST CLERGYMAN OF SOUTHEASTERN IOWA.

BY HON. SAM. M. CLARK.

About the time of its date, the following communication appeared in the Burlington *Hawkeye*:

DES MOINES, March 8, 1894.—*Editor Hawkeye*: The Historical Department is engaged in an effort to secure as far as possible oil portraits of the men and women who bore distinguished parts in the early history of our state. Among these, it is especially desired to obtain portraits of the early representative clergyman or missionary of each of the great religious bodies. We now have fine portraits of the Rt. Rev. Henry W. Lee, First Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Iowa, and the first Catholic Bishop of Dubuque. Several others are promised at no distant date. After much inquiry, I have no doubt that the foremost Methodist Episcopal clergyman of early Iowa was the Rev. Samuel Clarke, whose arduous labors are well remembered by our surviving pioneers. My purpose in writing this communication is to call the attention of the Methodist Episcopal Conference, which is to meet in your city the present year, to this subject, in the hope that some action may be taken in the matter of securing Mr. Clarke's portrait.

Very respectfully yours,

CHARLES ALDRICH,
Curator of Historical Collections.

Samuel Clarke (that is the way he always spelled his name, and his father before him) was born near Winchester, Virginia, October 9, 1799. His father, George Henry Clarke, was born

in County Cork, Ireland, 1755, and was brought up to the trade of a weaver. He came to America just before the breaking out of the war for Independence, and was a private soldier in that war. He was at the siege of Yorktown. At the end of the war and his retirement from service, he married Jane Mercer, and became a farmer near Winchester. Her people had been long in the colony. One of her brothers was a staff officer with General Anthony Wayne in his Indian campaign, and another brother built the first block house at Cincinnati. George Henry Clarke was raised a Quaker, but after Francis Asbury began to organize the Methodist Episcopal church in America, he became a Methodist, and was accounted a wise helper, and counsellor in the new church by Asbury and Bishop William McKendree, the latter of whom often visited him.

Samuel Clarke did not have many school advantages. There was no such thing as education of the masses in Virginia at the close of the last century, and he was not born to the wealth of the large land holders there, who employed tutors for their children, who prepared them for the university. We presume Mr. Clarke got the most of his education after he became a Methodist preacher, which he did in his twentieth year. Wesley and Asbury as the founders of the Methodist church recognized the deficiencies in scholarship of a ministry taken from the masses of the people and prepared a very wise and thoughtful course of reading and intellectual training for the young ministers.

• Mr. Clarke's first two years that he was under a preacher in charge, as Methodist usage goes, were with Beverley Waugh, afterwards a bishop of the church, and with the German bent for thoroughness and scholarship. So it was a good association for young Clarke. The earliest book that we have of his, is an old battered copy of Ainsworth's Latin dictionary which belonged to that period of his studies. But he never became a scholar in the university sense. He was always a good reader, and tore the heart out of a book with an intuitive genius for reading and extracting the matter of

books beyond any man we ever knew. He was what Emerson admired, a man who knew the greatness of Shakespeare. He read him all his life and probably was more familiar with his plays and quoted them oftener than any book, except the Bible.

The Baltimore Conference at the time of Mr. Clarke's ministry, embraced Maryland, Virginia and a part of Pennsylvania. Mr. Clarke's appointments while he was in that Conference, were at Rockbridge, Hagerstown, Leesburg, Gettysburg, Frederick, Staunton, Fairfax. These years and work brought him to the year 1832. He then went to Ohio, bought a farm in Green County, near Xenia, where he settled his family and became a minister of the Ohio Conference. After nine years there he bought 640 acres of land in Van Buren county, Iowa, and moved with his family there. In the preliminary trip that he made to spy out the land to see whether he would like it, he preached at Keokuk in the summer of 1840 to an audience gathered in a grove where now runs one of the principal streets of the city. Iowa and the Iowa Conference were his final field of labor. In the early part of February, 1858, he walked from his farm into Keosauqua and preached to a full house, speaking with all his old time strength and force. He went on to Birmingham and preached twice there. He then went out to Libertyville in the edge of Van Buren and Jefferson county, and preached in a country church. He drove with a friend a few miles to his home, took an inflammation of the throat and died of the croup or diptheria on the 16th of February, 1858.

Two years ago, at the annual reunion of the old settlers of Van Buren county, that veteran Iowan, George G. Wright, ex-chief justice and ex-United States senator, made one of his reminiscient talks to his old friends and neighbors of Van Buren county. He said substantially: "I wonder how many people here recall the sermon preached by Rev. Samuel Clarke on a Sunday of 1842 at the camp-meeting in Purdom's grove, on the river just above Keosauqua. The circumstances were these: Mr. McBride, at that time a leading associate of Abner Kneeland in his attempt to found an infidel and free-thinking

commonwealth in the Des Moines valley, was present. As Mr. Clarke went to the pulpit, or the plank platform which did duty for a pulpit, Mr. McBride was seen to approach and speak to him for a moment. Mr. Clark advanced to the front of the stand and said: 'Brethren, I had intended to preach to you on another subject (naming it,) but Mr. McBride has just handed me this written request: "Mr. Clarke, will you please preach to this people from the text, 'The unknown God whom ye ignorantly worship?' 'I will preach to you from that text.'" Judge Wright continued, "I have heard at the bar and on the stump and on the platform about all the great speakers of the United States who have lived in my time. I have never heard nor did any one that heard it, ever hear the equal in power and greatness and massiveness of argumentation, of the sermon Mr. Clarke then preached."

Samuel Clarke was quick on the trigger in this way. We have heard from many sources about a sermon preached by him at Xenia, O., in 1840, which was much talked about. A strong Whig in politics, he was chaplain at the great Harrison demonstration at Dayton, O., when William Henry Harrison attended the great meeting there in that phenomenal campaign. Later in the fall, there was a Methodist meeting at Xenia which was attended by many ministers. Judge Alexander was congressman of the district, an intense Democrat, a man of burly physique, a political boss, dominating and of great force. He had taken a seat in the very front pew, there being a great audience present. Mr. Clarke read the opening hymn, read the scripture lesson, read the second hymn. Judge Alexander sat there either thinking that this might be preliminary and that another minister was to preach, or else purposing to make his demonstration the more effective when he made it. Just as Mr. Clarke was opening the bible to announce his text, Judge Alexander arose and with his heavy gold-headed cane making a ringing protest by a sounding rap on the floor every step he made, marched down the aisle and out of the church. He would not hear the Whig preacher but he had to hear his text. Before Alexander got to the door, Mr. Clarke said: "My text:

is: "The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous is as bold as a lion." He went on and preached a sermon growing out of the heart of the occasion which the Whigs of Ohio made a tradition of, and it would have been difficult to convince some of them that that was not the greatest sermon ever preached in Ohio. Of course Mr. Clarke had no thought of preaching from that text when he entered the pulpit. It is only a full and ready man, masterful in resources, that can master circumstances in this quick way. Judge J. M. Casey, judge of Lee district, said in his address to the old settlers of Lee county in their meeting at Fort Madison last year, that Samuel Clarke was one of his two favorite preachers, and that he was the most forcible speaker he ever heard.

In the early days of his ministry there were incidents in his preaching when the close of his preaching would find every one in the congregation either standing excitedly upon their feet or bowing upon the floor in prayer and sobs. But he never was a shouting preacher; he was always quiet and masterful, speaking with a power that had a commanding effect upon his hearers. Calm and strong as his speech was, he always put in it enough of the Demosthenic element of action to move the enthusiasm and sensibilities of his hearers. And we don't care what any of the critics of oratory say. From Demosthenes until the end of the world, there will never be any supreme orator that doesn't fulfill the three rules of Demosthenes, that the first requirement of an orator is action, and the second is action and the third is action.

Mrs. Judge Townsend, of Albia, the chief of the young women scholars of Van Buren county in her girlhood, in a letter to us the other day, spoke pathetically of her regret at never again being able to hear such speaking as that of "The Old Man Eloquent," as she called Samuel Clarke. For a long time most men and women that you would have met in southern Iowa, or in central Ohio, or in the Baltimore Conference, would have had some incident or utterance to tell you characteristic of Mr. Clarke, and illustrative of his power. When some years ago we met Bishop Randolph S. Foster, the great

bishop of the Methodist church, at the home of his sister, Mrs. Dr. Burkett, of Keokuk, he said to us: "I heard your father make at Cincinnati, forty-four years ago, a prayer which I remember now, and it is the only prayer I ever heard that I could remember forty-four years." One of the greatest preachers of the Universalist church in the west once said to us that he heard Samuel Clarke make at Oskaloosa, the most impressive prayer he ever heard. Mr. Clarke was chaplain of the famous constitutional convention of Virginia in 1829-30, of which ex-President James Monroe was presiding officer and ex-President James Madison and Charles Fenton Mercer were members. Doctor Blackman, the great professor of surgery in the medical college of Ohio at Cincinnati, who was as a boy a looker-on at the convention, said, in talking about it in 1858, that the most distinctive impression he brought away from it was that in eloquence, bearing and power, Samuel Clarke was the greatest man there. Most people who knew him at all would remember him by some trenchant saying that went straight to its mark with the force of a minnie ball. Colonel J. P. Sanford, soldier and Universalist minister, traveler, lecturer and the like, who became quite widely known in this and other states, told us that when he was a young fellow in his "smartest" state, when bright-minded and callow young men deny everything because they are certain they know more than mankind ever did before them, he thrust his opinion upon Mr. Clarke, who swept him off his feet by a dozen words, which Colonel Sanford always remembered as the most formidable statement he had ever listened to.

Uncle Dan Miller, the veteran lawyer and legislator, likes to tell of an incident that happened at a camp-meeting in Lee county during the time Joseph Smith and the Mormons were at Nauvoo. Mr. Clarke was preaching to a great audience on Sunday and made a statement about the Mormons. A well appearing and well-dressed man arose in the congregation and denied what Mr. Clarke had said. "What's that?" said Mr. Clarke, in the quick, imperious way in which he always met a challenge, "what's that?" The gentleman an-

swered, "I am an elder in the Mormon church and I deny the accuracy of what you have just said about my people." "You are a Mormon elder, are you?" said Mr. Clarke. "Yes, sir." "Then all I want is a rope and gallows for you," was the quick retort with which the preacher knocked the elder helplessly into his seat.

Earnest and zealous as Methodism was through all the period of Mr. Clarke's ministry, and it was a time when the churches were much given to polemics and disputation one with the other, formidable as Mr. Clarke was in debate and ready as he was to engage in it, he was a tolerant man and always more insistent upon character than doctrines. There was probably a bent in this direction given to him by the Quaker vein in his ancestry. He was always a favorite preacher with many other denominations and often filled their pulpits, in the way we are used to now, but which was an unusual thing then. And it was a favorite saying of his that he liked sinners and that he liked to preach to sinners; that he sometimes didn't know which was the better—the sinners or the church folks. We recall his saying one day to a devout class leader who thought there was a great difference between people in the church and people outside of the church, and who didn't have a bit of doubt that he was going to Heaven and the other fellow was not: "Brother V., if you and I are so fortunate as to get to Heaven, we will probably be surprised at two things: first, not to find many people there we thought we would, and secondly, to find a great many people there we didn't expect would be there." Once he said to a favorite niece, good but frivolous, who was rollicking about the house, "Mary, I have no doubt whatever that you will go to Heaven if you die at any time within a week after a camp-meeting."

His insistence upon character was shown at his death. He died many miles from home in midwinter, and none of his children were present. As the end approached, their mother asked him if he had any word to send to the children. He said: "Only this, that nothing but religion gives true dignity to character." And that is the only word that we ever knew him

to say directly to any one of his children in all their lives or his, to get them to be religious. In fact there was not a bit of cant or professional religion in his make-up. The day before he died, he walked to the window of the country house where he was and looked out upon the bleak winter outside and said—“Well, to-morrow I shall go home or I shall go to Heaven.” Rev. Mr. Robinson and other ministers and Methodists who were present, had evidently been wanting him to say something on the line of what they thought would be bearing a testimony for religion in the hour of death. They probably had a desire that a ministry of thirty-eight years should be more demonstrative, confessional and professional than he was manifesting, for he was bearing himself in a very matter of fact way. So taking that calm utterance as a cue, Mr. Robinson asked a somewhat ministerial question as to what was his thought and testimony in dying, and as to the other life. Mr. Clarke merely said in a calm and tranquil way, “I am willing to trust the Judge of all the earth to do right,” and that was all he said. It was his straight-forward manliness and sincerity that secured him the life-long friendship and attachment of strong and forcible men of all parties and beliefs, and no beliefs. The late Judge Thomas W. Claggett, of Keokuk, was devotedly attached to him. Whenever a Methodist Conference met in his city, Judge Claggett always put in a claim for Father Clarke to be his guest. He would say in his emphatic way, “Father Clarke is the only blankety blank preacher that I ever knew that wasn’t a blankety blank blank hypocrite.” He has often said to us, “Your father was the only religious preacher I ever knew.” And however much Judge Claggett might swear from sheer force of habit, and without meaning anything bad about it, for he was a wonderfully good man with all his profanity, he never swore when Mr. Clarke was in hearing.

In loitering pleasant half hours over Prof. John Campbell Shairp’s “Portraits of Friends,” wherein with delightful freshness and spontaneity, he tells of his friends, Thomas Erskine, Bishop Cotton, Dr. John Brown, Norman Macleod, John Mac-

leod Campbell, John McIntosh and Arthur Hugh Clough, we can see how much men in Scotland and England and the old country have in their lives that men like Samuel Clarke miss out of their lives here in America. This country is too large and there are too great distances between the relation of man to man and mind to mind. In Scotland or England a man like Shairp or Norman Macleod or Campbell, may be at a little country manse where life for the hour seems very local and sporadic: they seem isolated and remote from their fellows and from all comradeship; but then you read a few lines further and you see that another half hour has placed them at Edinburgh, or at Glasgow, or at Cambridge, or at Oxford, in relationship with university men and the richest comradeship of the leaders of life and opinions. The thinkers and leaders are only a few miles or a few half-hours apart from each other at the most and when ever they get lonesome, they can touch elbows with their fellows in the capitals of intellect. Americans have been, now and some years ago far more than now, suffering from isolation and distances, from a privation of separation from their fellows. Boy as we were, we have been conscious in a blind mute way, many an hour, that Samuel Clarke was in his pioneer Iowa home, amid the dull conditions of pioneer life, how he pined and chafed for the sort of contact that the friends in Prof. Shairp's portraits could give themselves at any hour they chose. Mr. Clarke's life would have been far richer in performance than the world would have known if from his boyhood he could have been in or near one of the world's capitals and comraded from the beginning with men of like power and capacity with himself. Another thing isolated him somewhat all the later years of his life, and that was that he was a Virginian. The strong attachments of his early life were with southern men and slave holders. He was the devoted friend of Bishop Soule, who went with the southern division of the Methodist church when the church divided on the slavery issue. He was a devoted patriot, feeling that from his revolutionary father he was one of the guardians of the republic, and though an anti-slavery man, it cast a shadow to the core of his

heart when the Methodist church divided, because he never doubted that that was the precursor of the division of the Union which came with the secession of the southern states in 1860-61, and which only four years of war overthrew. We have been told by those who knew him well throughout all his life, that he was never so bouyant and hopeful, that his oratory was never so great and masterful after the separation of the Methodist church as before it. That separation and the shadow thrust forward of the coming struggle for disunion, put its shadow upon his spirit and depressed his mood. He was never an abolitionist, and the last vote he cast was for Millard Fillmore in 1856. He thus remained with the old Whig party of Henry Clay and Daniel Webster to the last.

In 1824, Samuel Clark was married at Hagerstown, Md., to Elizabeth Reynolds. Her father was Colonel John Reynolds, of that place. He commanded the Third Maryland regiment in the war of 1812, and was at the defense of Baltimore, the most memorable incident of which will ever be that Barton Key, with the thunder of the guns in his ears all the night long, wrote "The Star Spangled Banner,"—"O say, does that star spangled banner yet wave?" How full of adventure the lives of Americans then and earlier had to be! The father of Colonel John Reynolds was Captain John Reynolds of York, Pa. He was an officer in the revolutionary war. At the close of it he bought a tract of 7,000 acres of land in Kentucky, where the city of Lexington now stands, and started there with a colony to establish a post. His fleet of flatboats was attacked by Indians just below Blannerhassett's Island in the Ohio river, and the Indians, following the boats along each shore, keeping up a continual fire, at last captured the company. Captain Reynolds was killed, and fell over in the arms of his wife. She, with her four children, John being then a boy of 10 or 12, were taken prisoners. They were nearly four years with the Indians, ranging from Detroit to the Ohio river in the migrations of the Indian tribes. The mother was separated from a part of her children, but she managed to keep run of all of them. She had several opportunities to get

away to the whites with three of them, but she would not go until she could have all. Finally she plotted and planned with an English trader until she got all of her children together and led them by a night march and in a concealed way into Detroit, where the English who ransomed them had to keep her and her children hidden for several days from the Indians, who searched the place for them. They were content to ransom the mother and three of the children, but they had adopted John into the tribe with Indian ceremonies and destined him for a chief. So they were determined that he should not escape them. When, after four years, the mother and the four children reappeared to her family and friends at York, Pa., it was as a company arisen from the dead. But incidents like these stand at the outset of the family history of all of us whose ancestry have been Americans for a few generations.

Nine children were born to Samuel Clarke and Elizabeth Reynolds; one of them died in infancy, and as to the other eight children, the rather remarkable experience has happened that there has been but one death among them in sixty-seven years.

Though combative and of quick and imperious temper, Mr. Clarke had the qualities of a great church executive. He was a young man in charge of a large circuit in Virginia at the time of the separation of the Protestant Methodists or "Radicals," from the M. E. church. The movement was strong with the people in his circuit. He managed the affair so wisely that less than a half dozen finally joined in the separation. Dr. Thomas Bond, the able editor of the *Methodist Advocate*, then the sole organ of the church—a whole family of Advocates have grown up since—said in the paper that Mr. Clarke had shown the most wisdom of any minister he had heard of, and that if all had shown equally good judgment, the attempted separation of the church would have come to nothing. During all his after ministry Mr. Clarke was called upon to adjudicate in cases far and near of trials between ministers and members or between members. We recall an incident in one of the then leading cities of the state; a prominent and active

layman had got into a fierce quarrel with the minister of the church. The case was fiercely contested in the local trial and was carried to the annual Conference. Mr. Clarke presided in that local trial and rendered judgment. After the whole matter was ended, the layman published a large pamphlet account of the proceedings. He said that when the case came before the annual conference, he submitted his case at great length, to which he had devoted weeks and months of preparation, and that Samuel Clarke merely arose and said to the Conference, "This is a plain case. Brother S. went to — as preacher in charge. He found a disturber of Zion there. He did just what he had to do, and just what this Conference will have him to do; he turned him out." And the complainant said that upon that simple statement by Mr. Clarke the Conference sustained him, and wiped out without further attention to the complainant's labored case.

Without much scholastic education himself, Mr. Clarke was an earnest advocate of education of the Methodist ministry and membership. He was one of the founders and first trustees of the Wesleyan University at Mt. Pleasant. He had views of his own of church polity. He always insisted that all children born and baptized in the Methodist church should be entered at once as church members. He knew human nature and went direct to his end without being prisoner of flimsy limitations. We recall that when he was pastor of a church in a southern Iowa town, a leading merchant of the place was of Methodist parents and had a devoted Methodist wife. The merchant himself was a man of good character but not a church member. His infirmity was that he would occasionally get upon a tremendous drunk. One Saturday morning, Mr. Clarke learned that this gentleman had been out with the boys, kicking tin pans up and down the street and raising a jamboree Friday night. Mr. Clarke took down the church book, and entered the name of the merchant as a member of the church. Then he took his hat and cane and walked down to the store, and said to the merchant: "Mr. S. I have just entered your name as a member of the Methodist church at

this place. We are building our church, there is a meeting of the building committee at my house at 3 o'clock, and I want you to come there and take the chairmanship of the committee." And when the time came Mr. S. was there and he never gave the church or community any more trouble.

When Mr. Clarke died the official memoir of him was written by the late Michael Hare, who was a devoted friend of his. But the best of all the memoirs was written by Henry Clay Dean. Dean was devotedly attached to Father Clarke. He was the only preacher of the Iowa Methodist church to whose leadership and power the great orator deferred, and he poured out the warmth of his feelings in an eloquent tribute worthy of Samuel Clarke and worthy of Henry Clay Dean at his best of heart and brain and pen.

THE DES MOINES RIVER LAND GRANT.

BY COLONEL C. H. GATCH.

[SECOND PAPER.]

It should have been previously stated that the Des Moines Navigation & Railroad Company became incorporated as an Iowa corporation under articles filed May 19, 1854, and that the incorporators were Edwin C. Litchfield, Porter Kibbee, Orville Clark, B. R. Whitmore, Henry O'Reilly, A. Hunt, Elisha C. Litchfield, Henry Ten Eyck, John Stryker, Nelson B. Stewart and E. B. Litchfield.

May 15, 1856, Congress granted to the State of Iowa, for the construction of four railroads from the Mississippi to the Missouri river, every alternate section of land designated by odd numbers, for six sections in width on each side of each of the roads, with the usual provision for indemnity selections within designated limits in case any of the granted sections had been previously disposed of. The grant was subject to

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