

ANNALS OF IOWA
APRIL, 1871.

MEMORIAL OF REV. G. D. A. HEBARD

GEORGE DIAH ALONZO HEBARD, the sixth son and eighth child of Diah and Sarah Avrill Hebard, was born at Brookfield, Orange county, Vermont, September 6th, 1831. The Hebards had all been tillers of the soil as far back as the sixth generation from the subject of this memoir, and his great-great-great grandfather, John Hebard, with two brothers, came from England soon after the Pilgrim Fathers. From these have sprung a multitude of descendants, who are scattered the continent over, spelling their patronymic, for the most part, Hibbard. The names of the immediate line with which we have to do in this sketch, were John Hebard (the great-great-great grandfather, mentioned above), Nathaniel, his son, Zebulon, his grandson, and Zebulon again, his greatgrandson, and the grandfather of the subject of this sketch, who settled with his family, at an early day, in the township of Randolph, Orange county, Vermont, on a large farm of several hundred acres. By industry and economy, he was enabled to leave his posterity, at his death, a large patrimony and whatever benefit could be derived from his reputation of having been one of the wealthiest men in Randolph. His family consisted of a daughter and three sons—Samuel, Enoch, and Diah, the latter becoming the father of the person whose name heads this sketch. He married Sarah Avrill, whom he left a widow, dying in his forty-ninth year, August 26th, 1831,—ten days before the birth of the person in whom we are now directly interested.

In addition to the name George, he who is the theme of these notes, had added unto him the Christian name of his father, Diah, and that of a lately deceased brother, Alonzo, and when thoughtless critics may have questioned the taste of this trinomial array of initials, so often coupled with announcements of Sabbath discourses, how soon objection would have vanished had they learned that two of them were added to memorialize a parent and brother, whose names might have been forgotten unlinked with the sanctity of his.

On the death of his sister, Laura, which occurred a few months before George's birth, she requested that her then youngest brother, Samuel Avrill, might be devoted to the ministry. Her desire was complied with in a manner which, if departed spirits take cognizance of earthly transactions, must afford her the highest gratification (as can be attested by those who know the Rev. Samuel A. Hebard, of Adrian, Michigan), but which must have been greatly enhanced in witnessing the enthusiastic Christian devotion of him that we write of, driving the work of the Lord with, as it were, super-human energy.

The family residence in Brookfield was in full view of the beautiful Green mountains, whose glorious scenery must have acted as a powerful provocation of the spirit of freedom and adoration for the works of the Creator, which lay latent in the breast of young George.

His father was a good English scholar, of methodical habits, a member of the Baptist church, with a leaning for the Congregational, which he often attended, and he was distinguished in the community in which he lived for his charities and benevolence. The sacred duties of a father were but indifferently discharged toward George by a step-father, whose disposition was less amiable, and whose morals were less conspicuous than those of his deceased parent. Nevertheless, the pious precepts of a devoted and Christian mother, after the wayward exuberances of youth had subsided, triumphed in his heart, and high thoughts of duty to God and man began to develop themselves at about the age of seventeen, when, relinquishing

the leadership of the mischevious boys of the village, he betook himself, with earnest aptitude, to retrieve himself by attending, at Randolph Center, Vermont, the school then under the principalship of Rev. George Nutting, since become distinguished in the religious world as a missionary to China. After two or three terms spent at this school, he passed the years of 1848-9 in the academies at Bakersfield and Thetford, in the northern part of Vermont, where he made great proficiency in his studies. From this time forward his career was upward and onward. After due preparation at the academies named, he entered, in 1850, Amherst College, Massachusetts, which he left, with commendable honors, in 1853, to finish his collegiate course at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, where he graduated in 1854, and where his memory will long be green.

During his pupilage at Amherst College he experienced that change of moral sense and feeling, signifying conversion, and now, his classical education being complete, he determined to enter upon a preparation for the ministry, and for this purpose entered, in September, 1854, Union Theological Seminary, an institution of religious learning in New York City under the joint auspices of the Congregational and New School Presbyterian churches, whose degree was granted him in May, 1857.

During the vacation of the Theological Seminary in 1856, he was married, May 13th, in Woodstock, New Brunswick, to Miss Margaret E. Marven, a sister of the late John C. Marven, so admired for gallantry and chivalry as lieutenant of the First and subsequently as captain and major of the Eleventh Iowa volunteers.

The day after his graduation from the Theological Seminary he went directly to his chosen place of labor, Clayville, Oneida county, New York, supplying the pulpit of a Presbyterian church there nine months, and demonstrating his unavailableness for an Indiana field by exhibiting quite exceptional views regarding the sanctity and permanence of the nuptial relation in refusing, despite the proffer of a large fee, to solemnize the marriage rite to divorced parties— views which he conscientiously held and practiced to the last.

Early in the spring of 1858 he started west, with a commission in his pocket from the American Home Missionary Society, to "preach the gospel in the destitute parts of Iowa," with instructions to report himself to Rev. Jesse Guernsey, at Davenport, where he found the Presbytery of Iowa City in session. A request had been received by the Presbytery that very day to send a minister to Clinton, but they knew not where to find an unemployed one till Mr. Hebard appeared, a few hours later, with his credentials. The next day he was in Clinton, and the following, which was Sunday, discoursed to the people there so satisfactorily as to receive a call the next day to the Presbyterian church, which then had a membership of thirteen, but which he left, three years and a half afterwards, numbering upwards of sixty.

Resigning his pastorage of this church in the autumn of 1861, he accepted the charge of the New School Presbyterian church of Iowa City, which he retained till the summer of 1866, when he and his congregation, many of whom, like himself; were originally Congregationalists, relinquished their governmental associations with the Presbyterians, and by uniting with a small Congregational church then existing in Iowa City, resumed their relations with the Congregationalists. A few of the members of his congregation, however, maintained their allegiance to the Presbyterians, and out of the changes incident to the formation of a new, and the termination of an old, congregation, grew a controversy which it would be unprofitable to allude to further than to say that Mr. Hebard's position was finally triumphantly sustained.

The church in which Mr. Hebard's congregation had worshipped belonging to the Presbyterians, he at once set about the construction of a new one with his customary energy,

which secured to Iowa City a new era in church architecture, by the erection of one of the most beautiful buildings of the kind in the west—the Congregational church, facing the University and the west from the corner of Jefferson and Clinton streets. When remonstrated with by his wife for his excessive mental and physical labors in this behalf, which were undermining his health, he would reply, "*That church shall be built if it costs me my life.*"

He saw the exterior of this building finished, the money for its completion nearly provided for, its membership more than one hundred, and then, feeling the necessity for rest and change, accepted an earnest invitation to the pastorate of the Congregational church at Oskaloosa. In his nearly two years service there, his labors, as in other fields, were abundantly blest, for he saw his congregation doubled and become one of the strongest of its denomination in the state.

But many of his former flock at Iowa City followed him with a jealous eye, determined to have him back as soon as opportunity offered, and almost the last letter he answered was in reply to one asking him whether he would accept a call back to Iowa City, which gave him intense satisfaction, and to which he alluded the day he died. Exactly in one month from the day he received that letter, he went to those he loved so well in Iowa City, at his own request, to be interred among them.

In search of renewed strength, he had spent two months of the summer of 1870 in California and among the Rocky Mountains, and while so engaged received a call to the Congregational church at Denver, Colorado, but feeling physically unequal to the task, declined it. So much improvement had the Pacific breezes and the Rocky Mountain air wrought in his physical frame that his near friends, for the first time in four years, felt relieved of anxiety on account of his health.

His last appearance in public was at a Union Thanksgiving service at Oskaloosa, the 24th of last November. The next day he rode into the country to confer with a lady ninety years old concerning her proposed union with his congregation, and the following day was attacked with inflammation of the lungs, of which he died December 14th, at the age of thirty-nine years and three months, leaving a widow and four children, who sincerely lament him.

The striking features of Mr. Hebard's character were energy, perseverance, enthusiasm, and independence. He cherished a broad catholic spirit of charity toward all denominations, which made him a member of not one, but all, Christian churches. His father a Baptist, his mother a Methodist, his conversion in a Congregational college, his marriage to an Episcopalian, and his preaching for seven years in Presbyterian churches, gave him a love for the common Christian brotherhood not bounded by denominational lines, although the Congregational was the especial church of his choice.

Early in its history, Mr. Hebard became a member of the State Historical Society of Iowa, in whose work and advancement he took a lively interest, serving during the society year of 1868-9 as a member of the Board of Curators, which affords a grateful excuse, if any be needed, for publishing this brief and imperfect record of his life in the ANNALS OF IOWA.