

DECEMBER 21, 1917

OBITUARY

Rev. A. L. Frisbie.

(From the Des Moines Register.)

The Rev. Alvah L. Frisbie, D. D., pastor emeritus of Plymouth Congregational church, and for forty-six years a resident of Des Moines, died early Monday evening at Congregational hospital, aged 87 years.

Funeral services were held on Wednesday in the church which he served as active pastor for twenty-seven years before his retirement from the chief pastoral responsibilities in 1898. Members of the family were all in Des Moines at the time of death.

With the passing of Dr. Frisbie there closes a career which was unique in most of its points of contact with his community, with whose development his name was so closely linked in many ways.

For years he was not only the dean of the evangelical clergy of Des Moines, but also the leading figure of Congregationalism in Iowa and the Middle West. He had probably officiated at more marriages and funerals than any other pastor in the state, and through intimate offices such as these he had won a regard that was as sincere as it was widespread. Throughout his entire active career he was concerned for every obligation of good citizenship and he was esteemed for his sane views in secular as well as in religious matters. Thoroughly human and with the saving grace of humor, he was and still is one of the most widely quoted Iowans.

Every feature of Dr. Frisbie's early life seems to have contributed in a peculiar way to the flowering and fruitage of his long ministry in Des Moines. He was born in Delaware county, New York, on Oct. 22, 1830. His father was a veteran of the War of 1812; his mother of the strong Scotch-Irish strain.

Early in his childhood he accompanied his recently widowed mother to an Onondaga county farm, where his youth was under the masculine tutelage of a paternal uncle, who, along with his ideas of thrift and industry, entertained a New England respect for the ministry. Nevertheless, young Alvah studied his first Latin lesson in preparation for the ministry on his twenty-first birthday. His academic education was acquired with more or less struggle at Oberlin and Amherst, where he graduated with the class of 1857. His theological training was at Yale Divinity

Dr. Frisbie's first pastorate was at Ansonia, Conn. After three years' service there, he joined the army as chaplain of the Twentieth Connecticut Infantry. In 1865 he accepted the pastorate of the old First church in Danbury, Conn., which he served till the autumn of 1871, when he received a call to Plymouth church, in Des Moines, and removed there with his family.

In 1871, a trip to Iowa from the far East was accounted as a journey to another world by the residents of the New England area. The new pastor's journey was eventful. The train upon which he traveled passed through Chicago at the time the great fire was raging. Upon the day of his arrival in Des Moines the cornerstone of the present state capitol was laid.

Urban life in Iowa in 1871 was typical of the development of the then frontier state. The complexities of highly organized industrial life had not yet appeared; natural resources were just being defined; it was a day of small things and great hopes. Plymouth church in those days was a strong nucleus of New Englanders who have played so important a part in the upbuilding of Des Moines.

Into this environment Dr. Frisbie entered with a full experience of the life that represented the average of the community. Quick of perception and sympathy, wisely tolerant and tactful in his point of view, he won his way quickly to the hearts of his own congregation and of the city at large. He used his knowledge of theology not as the basis of doctrinaire disquisitions, but simply, as an instrument toward his own better understanding. He was simple, direct and sincere, all qualities which were the foundations of his great influence with persons of all classes. He loved the out-of-doors and travel and good horseflesh, but whatever of indulgence he permitted himself was upon a basis that was wholly in harmony with his profession. He inspired co-operation. His wit was kindly; many of his aphorisms will live.

With the growth of the city and state, Dr. Frisbie learned and carried forward pioneer work of his church. He became a leader in finding means to provide new communities with facilities for worship. He led many young men into the ministry and taught them how to be useful. He acted for years as general western correspondent for *The Advance*, a Congregational weekly of national

circulation, and kept his denomination well posted upon the spiritual progress of the state. This work was one of the factors in a reputation which was considered more than statewide.

Not long after his arrival in Des Moines he suffered the loss of the first Mrs. Frisbie, mother of his three older children. In 1873, he was married a second time to Miss Martha J. Crosby, of Danbury, Conn., who survives him and whose activities so completely supplemented his own, with which they were closely correlated.

Though he nominally retired from the Plymouth pastorate in 1898, Dr. Frisbie's activities were considerable in the early years of his emeritus relation. At the age of 80, he was unfatigued and full of enthusiasm; two days after his eightieth anniversary, he suffered a slight paralytic stroke, since which time he had been increasingly enfeebled, though his mind was unclouded until the final stages of his malady appeared last week. He died peacefully in a room which bears his name in the new Congregational hospital and which he was the first patient to occupy.

Throughout his life, Dr. Frisbie maintained a keen interest in many lines of work. He was one of the corporate life members of the American Board of Foreign Missions; he was a member of Crocker post, G. A. C., and one of the Iowa Commandery Loyal Legion; for twenty years he was chairman of the state board of home missions; he had been a trustee of Grinnell College for twenty-five years. Withal, he found time for literary work, and his "Sermons in Verse" and "Plymouth Vespers" were treasured by his parishioners, while his "Siege of Calais" found a wider circle through the fact that it was purely secular.

Through all the years of his active service in Des Moines, Dr. Frisbie's home was at 723 Fifth street. For the last few years he and Mrs. Frisbie have resided quietly at 1111 Seventh street, where he was beloved of the neighbor children and much sought by old friends.

In addition to Mrs. Frisbie surviving him, there are five children: Mrs. G. M. Whicher and Mrs. W. H. Ryan, of New York; William A. Frisbie, of Minneapolis; A. L. Frisbie, Jr., of Grinnell, and Mrs. Homer J. Clark, of 850 Polk boulevard, Des Moines.