

## LAUR LARSEN, D. D.

Dr. Laur Larsen, who wears the insignia of a knight of the Order of St. Olaf, an honor conferred upon him by the king of Norway, and who for forty-one years was president of Luther College of Decorah, is an eminent educator and minister of the Lutheran church whose far-reaching and beneficial influences are immeasurable by any known standard of man. That his life has wrought for good in the field of educational and moral progress is indicated by the hundreds who have sat under his teaching as he has addressed pupils in the classroom or congregations from the pulpit. His work of uplift and benefit continued during the period of his connection with journalism, and who can say where it will end, for association with him means elevation and expansion and all who come in contact with him feel the inspiration that comes from his high moral character and lofty ideals. With all this he is intensely human in his interests and his sympathies, and it has been his spirit of kindness as well as his marked intellectual force that has enabled him to accomplish the great work which he has done.

Dr. Larsen was born at Christiansand, Norway, August 10, 1833, and is therefore eighty years of age. His father was an army officer and his mother the daughter of one of the framers of the Norwegian constitution of 1814. Liberal educational opportunities were accorded him, and following his graduation from the theological department of the University of Christiania in 1855, he worked for two years as a teacher of languages in Christiania. The great field offered for Christian service in America proved to him an irresistible call and in 1857 he came to the new world, spending two years in missionary work in the Norwegian settlements of Rush River, Pierce and in adjacent counties in Wisconsin. Until 1859 the Norwegian Lutherans of this country had procured pastors for their congregations from Norway. As the number of Norwegian immigrants increased from year to year, the necessity of founding an institution for the education of their own ministers became more and more apparent. The ideas of these early Norwegian pioneers were similar to those of the early pilgrims who founded Harvard College. It was Dr. Larsen who was destined to carry this idea to its fulfillment. The first fruition was the founding in 1859 of a Norwegian professorship at the Concordia Seminary, a German theological institution in St. Louis. Dr. Larsen was called as professor to fill this position and moved to St. Louis, where he lectured principally on the Hebrew language. When in 1861 the war necessitated the closing of the seminary the Norwegian population of the middle west decided to establish their own institutions of learning, with the result that Luther College came into existence and Dr. Larsen was called upon to act as its first president. He entered upon his duties at Halfway Creek, Wisconsin, on the 1st of September, 1861. The following year the school was removed to Decorah, and at the commencement exercises of the college in 1911, fifty years after its founding, he was made president emeritus of the institution. During the forty-one years of his incumbency as president even his great capacity for work was put to severe tests. During the years 1876 to 1903 he served as vice president of the Lutheran synod. He assisted the pastors of the Decorah congregation, when called upon to do so, and was often called upon to fill pulpits on occasions of importance to