FOREWORD

In compiling this compendium of history and biography and preparing it for publication its publishers have been engaged in a work of very unusual interest. The story told in these pages is substantially that of a rich and fertile region awakened by the commanding voice of mind from its wasteful sleep of ages to a condition of intensifying and expanding productiveness and the conversion of its vast resources, prior to that time unused, into serviceable forms for the benefit of mankind.

The various stages by which that region has advanced from a wilderness to a highly developed section of country, rich in all the elements of modern civilization—basking in pastoral abundance, resounding with the din of fruitful industry, busy with the mighty volume of a multiform and far-reaching commerce and bright with the luster of high moral, mental, and spiritual life—the home of an enterprising, progressive, and all-daring people, as they founded and have built it, are depicted in detail or clearly indicated in the following chapters. Such a theme is always and everywhere an inspiring one. But happily for the world, though unhappily for the historian, among us it is one fast fading from current experience and comment into the realm of the antiquarian. For in this land of ours civilized man has established his dominion over almost every region, and there is little of our once vast wilderness left to be conquered.

The book contains biographies of many of the progressive residents of Polk County, past and present, and some of men living elsewhere now who were once potent in the activities of this region—those who laid the foundations of its greatness and those who have built and are building on the superstructure—and is enriched with portraits of a number of them. It also gives a comprehensive survey of the numerous lines of productive energy which distinguish the people of the county at the present time and of those in which its residents have been engaged at all periods in the past since the settlement of the region began. And so far as past history and present conditions disclose them, the work indicates the trend of the country's activities and the goal which they aim to reach.

In their arduous labor of preparing this volume the publishers and promoters of it have had most valuable and highly appreciated assistance from many sources. Their special thanks are due and are cordially tendered to Judge William Watts for his services as a reviewer and fountain of information; to Mr. Elias Steenerson for his complete and entertaining contribution descriptive of the early Norwegian settlements in the county; to Mr. W. E. McKenzie for his discriminating history of the press in this section; to Mr. N. P. Stone, Historian of the Old Settlers' Society, for information obtainable from no other person; to Mr. Edmund M. Walsh for thrilling reminiscences of the early days at Crookston; to Mr. James M. Cathart for his equally valuable history of the city of Crookston; to Mr. Charles L. Conger for his graphic account of the rise and fall of Columbia County; to Professor N. A. Thorson for his able and