

The Development of the West.

In the genesis of nations there is no chapter parallel with the growth and development of the west. Over two centuries had intervened since the first germ of civilization imbedded itself on our eastern coast, and during this long period the tide of immigration had only reached the Mississippi river. Halted for a short period in the pursuance of its course, with the introduction of more speedy modes of travel and communication, the westward march was again taken up with renewed vigor, and the mighty wave as it swept on increased in force as the mists which had once enveloped the west cleared away and exposed to the home-seeker the true nature of her soils.

Less than fifty years has brought about a change which reduces to comparative insignificance the

"wonderful romances and realities
of the State Builders of the past."

The broad prairies are as densely
populated as were those of Mexico
and Central America when occu-
pied by that class of people, who
are only known to us through
legends, and the massive ruins
that still remain to speak of a
race wonderfully skilled in the
art of masonry. The rapid settlement
was due to the delirium of specula-
tion, but the movements of her peo-
ple were for the founding and
development of prosperous commu-
nities.

On every hand providence had
prepared the way to wealth and
prosperity. The farmer found his
lands waiting for the plow; no
forests to fell; no stumps to clear;
no rocks to remove. In every pur-
suit and profession the steady
improvement and constant growth
was made manifest, and as each
new field of labor and occupation

added a new impulse to the tide of immigration the railroad extended into a vast net-work over the entire country and afforded a ready conveyance for the products of industry.

We can look about us and observe the fruits of less than fifty years of untiring increasing labor. The once "Barren waste", has been converted into one of the best agricultural districts of the world. Inconveniences suggested alterations, and improvements grew out of necessity; thus the dugout and sod-house have been displaced by comfortable farm-dwellings; the straw shed common among the early settlers has given away to roomy structures for the shelter of both stock and grain, and in a thousand forms wealth has been created by the united energy of a community quickened by a zeal to obtain subsistence.

Early in its history the people exploded the idea that the lands of the west were unfit for agricultural purposes. They sowed the seed and witnessed its germination and growth. As the years passed by, and the plow piercing the soil exposed its fertile elements to the air and sunshine, the clouds were enticed to yield their life giving moisture; broad fields of corn and golden cereals displaced the stunted sapsy grass that once struggled for existence, and prosperous towns sprang up where utter silence had once reigned.

The period of suspense and fluctuating hopes has passed, and now fully and firmly convinced that beneath the sun lies no more fertile field for the farmer than the prairies of the west we can but note with great interest the effects of her products on the markets of the world and the

improvement and development of her great agricultural interests.

Farming is very far from being the simple concern we are apt to think it. On the contrary there is no pursuit in life that not only admits but requires for its full development more of the resources of science and art. There is, we must admit, need for as much skill and discipline, as much scientific, physical, and mechanical knowledge involved in the successful conduct of the various operations in farming, as is required in any of the arts, trades, or professions. Theory as well as practice enters as a factor in developing the best modes of cultivation; showing the advantages gained from the rotation of crops; the adaptation of plants to soil, and the forming of laws for governing production and growth in general. This great work has already been taken up by most

of our western states. Colleges have been and are now being established for the practical and scientific education of the farmers sons and daughters. Cooperating with these are the experiment stations coming in actual contact with and inducing many of our farmers to observe and carry on experiments in connection with their farms. All this is tending toward a higher education and firmer foundation, where the farmer may not only observe but reason and understand.

Through experiment it was found that the lands of the arid regions could profitably be made fertile by irrigation. And the effects of this improvement upon nature's course is indeed wonderful. Here lies a desert, a barren plain, whose characteristics show the primitive nature of all the land in this region; out of its parched soil grows nothing, except

The sagebush and Cactus. By its side and made fertile by irrigation are waving fields of alfalfa, grain, and other crops, which speak plainly that irrigation has proved itself to be the great "magic wand of the west." It matters not if the sun rises and sets for months in a cloudless sky the work of the farmer goes on unmolested, the production just as great, and the market for his products vastly increased in demand and price.

The products of our western lands are now watched with an eagle eye by the speculators of the world. As soon as our crops are planted every acre of every product sown is obtained, all through germination and growth careful observations are being made, and when they are finally matured and harvested the production is carefully estimated and the ruling price the world over is based on these calculations. It seems rather sweeping to state that

so small a portion of the earth's crust should enter so largely into the regulation of prices, but when we consider that in a single year, 1884, five states out of this broad area, (Kansas, Nebraska, Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa), grew 170,000,000 bushels of wheat, which was two thirds the entire amount necessary to feed the total population of the United States, we must admit that such enormous productions in a great degree fix the markets of the world.

As the lands of the west have furnished new fields for the home-seeker, the eastern farmer has experienced and been compelled to contend with difficulties of various natures. His lands have rapidly declined in value until now they command no higher prices in the markets than our western lands. Year after year they have been cropped with no attention, whatever, given to rotation until many of the

most essential elements needed in the growth of plants have been exhausted, and he finds that artificial fertilizers must be applied to restore the elements needed for production. He has followed out the old theory that "the lands never wear out", and now he finds himself placed in a position where he must endeavor to compete in production with the lands not yet exhausted of their supply of productive material. While the farmer of the west fattens his cattle for market on nature's supply of good material, the eastern farmer must grow the food for consumption, and when his products are finally ready for market he must accept for them the prices fixed by the production of the west.

However rich or productive the soil, like the rocks that are continually wearing away by the forces of nature, it must sooner or later

if not replenished, lose its essential elements, and while the farmer of the west now prides himself on the yields of his lands, let him profit by the mistakes of others, and look forward to the immediate replenishment of the elements exhausted by plant growth.

The industry and enterprise of our farming population lies at the foundation of our present prosperity. It is the agriculturist that makes the manufacturer, and to destroy one of these industries is but to extinguish the prosperity of the other. Let this most important of all branches of national industries cease but for a short period and it would interfere with all improvements now in progress, resulting in the final collapse of every department of business. The merchant, the manufacturer, the teacher, and the professional man survive, only because they have that unlimited store house

from which they derive their subsistence which makes their existence possible.

Could we live in accordance with the Bellamy system for a few short moments, and have unveiled to us these United States as they will be one hundred years hence, we should behold an empire such as the world never before saw; we should see the farmer the most respected and independent of all classes of people, and the richest and most productive part and the seat of empire as well will have followed the tiller of the soil to the regions west of the Mississippi river.

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