

The Difficulties in Settling the West.

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For long years the problem of what was to be done with the strip of land lying between the Mississippi river and the Rocky mountains was a very important one. To the average mind of fifty years ago it stretched away in the imagination a ~~desert~~ land, the feeding ground of the American bison and the home of the aboriginal tribes of the continent. The mere suggestion that some day this waste would be the home of a prosperous people or that on the broad plains would rise great and handsome cities, that from these arid wastes, as it was then pictured, would come a large part of the food stuffs of the world, would have been laughed to scorn and derided as the dream of a fanatic. But time, energy, bravery, and determination alloyed with a large percent of good sense and brains have brought this, yes, and even more than this to pass.

The difficulties which the early settlers had to encounter were very great, and the self sacrifice that was required was

enough to turn back some of the stoutest hearts, for it is hard to leave a land of civilization and go, almost alone, where danger in the shape of disease and the cruel death of the Indians is waiting on every hand.

The first and greatest difficulty to be encountered was public opinion on the matter. As was said before, the idea that it was practicable to settle and make any thing out of the great American desert was scoffed at by nearly all thinking people of the East, and as a consequence very little support or encouragement was given to those who wanted to attempt, at least, the reclaiming of this country. To get money or goods for such a scheme was next to impossible, and what was true of private enterprise was also true of governmental ideas and actions on the same question. A great many bills were brought up in our congress during the early part of the century, the express purpose of which was to explore and determine the exact nature of this western country;

but deeming it a waste of money and time as well as dangerous in the extreme the Government, which is noted for enterprise and the attempting of dangerous schemes where there is a chance of success, refused to take up the work and the veil of silence and superstitions awe which had fallen over the West seemed to have become fixed and the only hope for the unsettled land was to remain as it had always been the home of the buffalo and the indian.

The only men who had dared to enter these solitudes were a few trappers and bold adventurers who were acquainted with indian ways and who had been brought up to undergo hardships and encounter dangers and to regard their own lives of very small consequence. Among this adventures class might have been found men who were fleeing from justice and found here immunity from chase a wilderness and not a city of refuge. And there were others who were trying

to isolate themselves from civilized life and found here the solitude which they desired. The pictures of the country which these persons would paint and try to impress on the eastern people could not be very reassuring as they could only want to make things as dark as possible. The trapper would see that settlement would spoil his hunting ground. The fugitive from justice would see danger in the coming of civilization. The hermit would want his silence still. The positive harm that some of these did will be spoken of farther on.

It was not till the "Lewis and Clark expedition" any definite and official knowledge was obtained and this expedition and the discovery of gold in California were the the impulses which started the western immigration. The discovery of gold aided in a kind of an indirect way as people who were led on by the gold fever had to cross this country and then they had a chance to see with their own eyes.

the possibilities which lay in the future. They were led to think if this country will support thousands of buffaloes why not support great numbers of horses cattle and sheep; if it will raise such an abundance of the best kind of grass why not raise corn and wheat in similar abundance. The climate too was found to be of the best. But one drawback remained it was the American indian, cruel cunning unscrupulous, but he had been conquered in the East why not in the West.

Soon after the gold fever had spent its force and the people of the East had began to quiet down to sober industry, the new picture of the West which had been painted by the gold seekers commenced to impress its self upon their minds and they turned towards this as possibly a new source in which to turn their energies. Money was forthcoming now as it was not taking so great risk and public opinion had been.

materially changed by the learning of a few facts - and so the question of immigration was once more strongly debated.

A great difficulty of getting to these new homes was at once felt. No railroads had been built as far west as this, and the only thing that was left to do was to go in the prairie schooner. This kind of conveyance had been used in the California journeys but now it was a different question. Then, men in the height of their excitement - left every thing behind except a few necessities of life, but now they had to carry their families and household goods as well as farm machinery. This, of course, made it necessary to take only such things as were absolutely required. But the long lines of wagon soon began to find their way. From the populous Eastern States to the broad uncultivated prairies of the west, and the stream of men who had tried so hard through years

was about to be realized.

The story of the struggles and privations of the new settlers is the same as could be told of the first attempt of settling any new country. The small amount of goods they had taken with them were inadequate and inconvenience and want was the result. Scarcity of food is a hardship at any time and especially when every energy should be at its highest. The houses were the crudest affairs. Sometimes they were built of logs or stones and other times from sod with the dirt as a floor.

These structures in many cases were not as comfortable as the wigwams of the savage. The furnishing was of the most meagre description and quantity. A dry goods box to sit on, the dirt floor and a blanket for a bed. Those who settled along creeks and could make log houses had the chance of making a comfortable living place. Though small it could be made warm, but in all the furnishing was about the

same.

To subdue the soil of the prairie land was no easy thing. And as soil will not raise a crop of any consequence where there was timber it had to be cleared up first before the land could be used. All this took time, and during this time all the settlers had to depend on was the food supply brought with him and what could be obtained by hunting and fishing. Many a time their food ran out entirely and hunger stared them in the face. Their connection with the East was imperfect so they could obtain no food or clothing from that source and they were left to fight the battle of existence alone. If such a thing could be possible they were worse off than the settlers of New England, for when they came over enough provisions could be brought over to last through quite a period of time. In a voyage in a prairie schooner this was impossible. Another thing that the settlers had to contend with was the inclem-

inhabiting this region. There were remnants of the ⁴⁵"Five Nations" which so terrorized the Eastern States in early times. True they were not as strong in numbers but they still had a good deal of the energy and cruelty of former times. In addition to these were the Sioux, which contained several minor tribes, and the Arapaho and several smaller tribes. Most of these lived in the mountains but they made constant incursions on the plains to hunt game and kill settlers. They left the mark of their ravages where ever they went and many were the men who fell beneath their tomahawk and arrows. The Indians at first were not disposed to be unfriendly but they commenced to look with suspicion on the invasion of their hunting grounds. and the few trappers and outlaws who all ready inhabited that region tried in every way to increase the hatred of the savages. Constant fighting weakened the savages while the settlers were as constantly

reinforced by new settlers till finally the slow moving powers of government took up the struggle and when the United States troops came nothing was left for the Indians but to move out. When the Indians went the greatest barrier to settlement went for it takes a hardy man much more a hardy woman to face the dangers of an Indian massacre or captivity and when we take into consideration the fact that they were exposing their children too, it seems strange to us that any body could have ever thought of attempting the dangerous experiment. But they did and a monument of glory in the shape of the best states of the union stands as a reward.

Another of the the great difficulties was that of keeping order. When the first settlers came they found the lawless men who had fled from justice in the East. There through years of abandonment had become none, except in number than the Indians. These outlaws not only carried on their own lawless deeds

but they helped to excite the Indians to frequent outbreaks. The trouble was not as bad as that experienced in the early days of California but it was bad enough and for good many years was quite an important factor that had to be taken into calculation. What some of these men could do when they had the chance and dared to act was shown in the burning and racking of Lawrence and other atrocities of the same time.

Above all her difficulties the West has risen triumphant. The prejudice of the East was overcome by facts and the hope of gain. The Government was stirred to action by recognizing the prospect of worth and future greatness. The journey in the covered wagons was accomplished though the way was marked by hardships, privation, want, and death. The Indian and lawless man was conquered by steadfast courage and determination. The East has stimulated the feeling for the crowded

masses to find room and a home on
 the broad western prairies. The cry
 of "Go west young man and grow
 up with the country" has echoed
 far and wide. And they have
 come from the farm, from the work
 shop, and from the office. They
 have brought the best brains and
 the sturdiest characters of the world
 with them. They have built pop-
 ular cities where once was waving
 grass and herds of buffalo. The
 factory has sprung up. The farm
 produces its food. Our statesmen
 have made reputations. Our lawyers,
 our judges are among the best.
 The stars which we have added to
 the constellation are among the bright-
 est and purest. We welcome the
 traveller still. To our States he
 comes; but not in the slow moving
 wagon but in the rapid car. For
 the bands of steel have bound us
 to the East and they have bound
 us firmly. We are necessities to
 each other. We are the same

Government. Death to us would be
death to the East. We feed her. She
gives us clothing. We are sister
now and they admire us. The object
of her scorn has become the object of
her best hope, for the future that
awaits us is grand beyond com-
prehension. We have surmounted our
difficulties. The reward has come,
and to the early settlers who risked
their lives and gave up their homes
let us give our praise.

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