

PIONEER LIFE IN THE MIDDLE WEST AS PRESENTED IN
THE WRITINGS OF HANLIN GARLAND

by

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to show Hamlin Garland's picture of life in the Middle West, during the period of homesteading; namely, between the years 1865 and 1890.

In this work the Middle West includes Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, the northern part of Missouri, the Dakotas, Illinois, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Oklahoma, the northern part of Texas, Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming. Of these states, Mr. Garland places most emphasis on the Dakotas, and Wisconsin, because they were the states in which he and his people lived.

In 1848 and 1849 the discovery of gold in California brought about an immeasurable change in the East. Thousands of New England farmers sold their land for half its worth and went to join the tide of western settlement. Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the Dakotas were all parts of a widening republic. However, reports began to get back to the East in regard to the scarcity of gold and the suffering that was taking place in California. Many, who had decided to cross the plains and mountains, stopped and settled in the Middle West.

As the Garlands, in company with other emigrants prepared to leave their homes, city people asked, "Why go west? Here is life, wealth, opportunity for happiness and fame." But Hamlin Garland's grandfather was of the

pioneering stock which would not allow him to give up his plans. He and his family came West.

The spirit of the pioneers as they came west is clearly shown in the marching songs of the Carnegies and the Garlands. As the Carnegies marched westward they sang,

"To the West, to the West, to the land of the free
Where the mighty Missouri rolls down to the sea;
Where a man is a man even though he must toil
And the poorest may gather the fruits of the soil."¹

The spirit and high hopes which Mr. Garland had in the new land are well shown in this fine old marching song which he sang as he marched, as well as at family gatherings for years afterwards,

"Cheer up, brothers, as we go --
O'er the mountains, westward ho --

Chorus

Then o'er the hills in legions, boys,
Fair freedom's star
Points to the sunset region, boys, 2
Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

These sturdy people had high hopes in regard to the West and expected to find life a great deal easier than it proved to be. Instead of coming to a place where money was easy to make, they came to a section where they were confronted with drouth, grasshopper invasions, chinch bugs,

1. Hazard, L. L., The Frontier in American Literature, p. 213
2. A Son of the Middle Border, p. 63.

crop failures, privation, drudgery, want, land speculators, and loan sharks.

After the Garlands came west, peace and quiet reigned supreme for several years; however, in the late fifties fierce passions flamed throughout the nation. Finally, in 1860 the break came and the nation was at war over the slave question. In this long and terrible conflict, Richard Garland, Hamlin's father, took part.

Following the Civil War, there was a distinct change in economic and social life in America. A new age, termed the 'Gilded Age' became evident, and was applied to the quarter century between 1865 and 1890. "The epoch is so called because it was a time when everything in our social and business life was colored by gold, when money was (the?) sole criterion by which everything was judged, and when our whole nation was engaged in a mad, vulgar scramble for the possession of dollars....."¹

"While the American Industrial system and the status of the laborer were undergoing great changes from 1865 to 1890, agriculture was experiencing a revolution no less momentous....."²

"From the earliest days of settlement one of the domi-

1. Blankenship, Russell, American Literature, p. 391

2. Ibid, p. 400.

nant influences in American development, material, intellectual, and spiritual, was the presence on the western frontier of a vast amount of open land. The existence of that land determined the character of much of our politics, our economics, our thought, and our conception of the problems of human existence. Without the great reservoir of western land as one of the chief impelling forces in American life, much that is most significant in our history would never have occurred.

"Before the Civil War, government land had been sold in varying amounts to speculators as well as to bona fide settlers, but none of it was given away as a home to the man who was willing to live on it. In 1862 the system was changed. Land was still sold, but any one could get a title to a homestead of 160 acres by living on it for a specified number of years. Under this impetus there was an unprecedented rush for public land, and within thirty years from the passage of the Homestead Act, the government officially announced the disappearance of the frontier and the virtual disappearance of our open land."¹

The time had passed when any one who was dissatisfied with his lot could pack up his goods and go to a new home in the West, where he would at least be his own master;

1. Blankenship, Russell, American Literature, p. 401.

when the farmer who had impoverished his land by careless methods of farming could get new soil of greater richness out on the frontier; when the city laborers and the oppressed European peasants could dream of finding free, new, and comfortable homes on the open lands of western America. But the disastrous thing was that millions of acres of the public land had not gone into the possession of actual settlers and home makers, but had become the property of land speculators and the railroad companies. This land speculation was considered by every American social thinker during the Gilded Age as one of the major crimes. Because the farmers could not obtain cheap land in the West, they were forced to pay an excessive price or a very high rent for land in the older portions of the country that had been settled for some years. Laborers also objected to land speculation for the same reasons; they realized that so long as the price of land was kept high they would have a small chance of becoming landowners. Due to this land situation, Henry George set forth his theory in which he stated the fears of the American farmers and workers. Hamlin Garland also expresses the same sentiment in such books as A Son of the Middle Border, A Daughter of the Middle Border, Main-Travelled Roads. In his A History of American Literature Since 1870, Professor Fred L. Pattee says, "His (Garland's) little book of essays, Crumbling

Idols, breezy and irreverent, with its cry for a new Americanism in our literature, new truth, new realism, was the voice of the new generation....."

Mr. Garland knows his background, the Middle West, with completeness. He was born in a Wisconsin "coulee" on a ragged, half broken farm, and before he was eleven he had migrated westward three different times, with his parents, first to Iowa and later to the Dakotas. Hamlin Garland's knowledge of farm conditions comes from actual contact with its back-breaking toil and privations. Life on a pioneer farm as he understood it, was an unrelieved round of hard work; it was especially severe for women, and for many of them it meant tragedy.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Hamlin Garland was born September 16, 1860, in West Salem, Wisconsin, in the heart of the Middle West, of which he writes. His people were Yankees from Oxford County, Maine, and his father, Richard Garland, was for three years a clerk in Amos Lawrence's warehouse in Boston.

While Hamlin Garland was still a youngster, his family migrated to Iowa, and when he was sixteen, he became a pupil at Cedar Valley Seminary, Osage, Iowa. In 1881 he was graduated from the Seminary and tramped through the Eastern States.

Two years later, after a short period of teaching school in Illinois, he took up a claim in McPherson County, North Dakota, but the next year he mortgaged his claim for two hundred dollars and went to Boston to qualify himself for teaching. He became a pupil and a little later an instructor in the Boston School of Oratory.

Joseph Edgar Chamberlin, of the Boston Transcript, has created for us a picture of him at this period:

"He lived in bleak little attic rooms, breakfasted on eight cents, dined on fifteen, and supped on ten; wore his prairie-born coat to a shine and his cuffs to a frizzle, and was shrunken thin by low fare; but his head was up and his manner, though grave, was confident;..... he would not

equivocate or compromise or deny anything that he really believed in. He would not write anything that his heart was not in. When he was earning eight dollars a week, and sent a part of that to support his father and mother, whose crops on their claim in Dakota had for two years running been entirely eaten up by grasshoppers and chinch bugs, he refused to write anything for a newspaper that he was not willing to sign with his name, or to write romantic love stories for a magazine. 'We have had enough of those lies,' he said, in his sharp, high voice -- and went off and dined on a dime."

From 1885 to 1889 he taught private classes in English and American Literature and lectured in and about Boston. Here he made the acquaintance of Oliver Wendell Holmes, William Dean Howells, Edwin Booth, and other leaders in art and literature.

In 1887 he visited Dakota, Iowa, and Wisconsin. This trip marks an epoch in his life, for it led to his Mississippi Valley stories. Writing was now very definitely his "work." Main-Travelled Roads (1891), short stories; A Spoil of Office (1893), his first novel; Crumbling Idols (1894), a volume of essays; Rose of Dutcher's Cooly (1895); and his Ulysses S. Grant (1898), all were published within a period of eight years.

In 1898 he went into the Yukon Valley overland. This

trip consumed six months and formed the basis of a volume called The Trail of the Gold Seekers.

The following year he married Zulime Taft, the daughter of Don Carlos Taft and the sister of Lorado Taft, the sculptor.

From 1900 to 1916 The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop, The Light of the Star, Hesper, Money Magic, The Shadow World, The Eagle's Heart, Cavanaugh, Forest Ranger, Other Main Travelled Roads, The Long Trail, Victor Olney's Discipline, and The Forester's Daughter, were published.

It was, however, with A Son of the Middle Border, published in 1917, after he had brought his family to New York and established a home there, that Hamlin Garland came to be recognized.

In 1918 he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and in 1921, A Daughter of the Middle Border, which carries on the tale of the Garlands, and the McClintocks was published and awarded the Pulitzer Prize for the best biography of that year.

Trail Makers of the Middle Border followed in 1926, and Back Trailers from the Middle Border, his final chronicle of his family, was published in the fall of 1928. Mr. Garland applied the name of Back Trailers to himself and his family when they sold their Wisconsin home and returned to the East to live.

Roadside Meetings, 1930, Companions on the Trail, 1931, and My Friendly Contemporaries, 1932, reminiscences and Literary Chronicles are Mr. Garland's latest books.

On June 21, 1926, The University of Wisconsin conferred upon Mr. Garland the degree of Doctor of Letters. In presenting him as a candidate for the degree Dr. Paxson said: "Hamlin Garland is the novelist of our northwest farmer country. For thirty-five years his easy pen has worked at the life of our people. A Son of the Middle Border himself, his art has portrayed the character of humans and has recorded the history of the generation that saw the American people transmuted into a nation..... His writings are works of art, but they are also documents that may become the source of history; for the contemporary portraiture of a people by itself has a value in interpretation that goes beyond the literary values of the stories."

FARM LIFE IN THE MIDDLE WEST

Hamlin Garland was born September 16, 1860, and his infancy and early childhood coincided with the most critical period in American history, the twenty-five years following the Civil War.

His knowledge of this period virtually begins in the third year of the Civil War, when his father came home and announced that he had enlisted. He was characteristically a soldier as well as a pioneer. His word was always law in his household, and they who were of it had to follow him. As a vigorous young man he entered the war, but the severity of his service is indicated in the following lines taken from A Son of the Middle Border: "Upon looking up the road we saw a soldier with a musket on his back, wearily plodding his way up the low hill just north of our gate. My mother hesitated to call to him for he was so thin, so hollow-eyed, and so changed."¹

A Son of the Middle Border centers around the author's personality and narrates the story of his early pioneer life. It gathers up and graphically expresses the life of that whole wide and long section which was the "Middle Border" sixty-five years ago, namely, the western half of

1. A Son of the Middle Border, pp 2-3.

the Mississippi Valley. "His book is as much the story of that border as of this particular one of its sons. With his own family as the chief actors in the drama of the frontier experiences and himself prominent among them, he has painted a picture that is typically true not only of the communities in Wisconsin, Iowa, Dakota in which they successively lived, but of all the whole broad belt of country. Singularly interesting and characteristically American as the story of one life, Mr. Garland's book is of vastly more consequence as the epic tale of a section and a period. For he has caught and presented in true colors, not only the material facts of the story, but the spirit of the place, the time and the people, and has set it forth personified in his men and women, permeating the whole life, and glowing vividly through all the narrative."¹

Hamlin Garland gives us a picture of these earlier years that is harsh and cruel, although pleasant occasions were interspersed with the unpleasant duties, as we see from the descriptions of family and social life on the frontier in the early 60's and 70's. We learn that in those days people did not "call" on their neighbors, they went "visitin'." The women took their knitting or patching and stayed all the afternoon and sometimes all night.

1. Kelly, Florence Finch, *The Bookman*, 46 (November 1917), 327.

"No one owned a carriage, so each family, when going to visit, journeyed in a heavy farm wagon with the father and mother riding high on the wooden spring seat while the children jounced up and down on the hay in the bottom of the box or clung desperately to the side-boards to keep from being jolted out."¹

Families were large; one of which we have special note is the McClintock family of seven sons and six daughters. One of the daughters became the mother of Hamlin Garland.

At large gatherings the children ate in the kitchen; their food was as good as the grown people had, and besides they could eat all that they wanted without their mothers to bother them. After a day spent in talking and discussing matters pertaining to the home and farm, the family that came to visit was again loaded into the farm wagon and started for home in order to do the evening chores.

"Buoyant, vital, confident, the sons of the border bent to the work of breaking sod and building fence quite in the spirit of sportsmen.

"They were always racing in those days, rejoicing in their abounding vigor. With them, reaping was a game, husking corn a test of endurance and skill, threshing a 'bee'.² Barn-raisings, harvestings, and rail-splittings,

1. A Son of the Middle Border, p. 14.

2. Ibid, p. 21.

as described by Hamlin Garland's father filled his son's mind with vivid pictures of manly deeds. Music, singing, and dancing made the evenings cheerful.

Mr. Garland's father, whom he calls "The Soldier," was a born pioneer with the restless urge which seeks for new horizons and uninhabited territory. He moved with his family six times, and on each of these trips, it was necessary that he sing in order to keep up the spirit of his wife and children who shared his wanderings, but not his enthusiasm, and whose dislike for moving increased each time a new farm was sought. In his A Son of the Middle Border the lives take on a dramatic quality from the struggle between the spirit of the father's eager desire for new lands and the home-loving instincts of the mother and son, longing to go back to the settled way and to their relatives and friends. These stanzas were Mr. Garland's favorites, and show his high spirits, his love for the new land, his enthusiasm, and his assurance of being able to become a victor through toil:

"Cheer up, brothers, as we go
O'er the mountains, westward ho,
Where herds of deer and buffalo
Furnish the fare.

Refrain

Then o'er the hills in legions, boys,
Fair freedom's star
Points to the sunset regions, boys,
Ha, ha, ha, ha!

When we've wood and prairie land,
 Won by our toil,
 We'll reign like kings in fairy land,¹
 Lords of the soil!"

It was during the Garlands' first year on the prairie, that Mr. Garland put Hamlin to work running the plow, because he could not afford to hire help.

To Hamlin, working with a team seemed a fine commission, for he was only a lad of ten, and he drove the horses into the field the first morning with a manly pride.

He alludes to the task: "I took my initial 'round' at a 'land' which stretched from one side of the quarter section to the other, in confident mood. I was grown up!

"But alas! my sense of elation did not last long. To guide a team for a few minutes as an experiment was one thing -- to plow all day like a hired hand was another. It was not a chore; it was a job. It meant trudging eight or nine miles in the forenoon and as many more in the afternoon, with less than an hour off at noon.....

"Day after day, through the month of October and deep into November, I followed that team, turning over two acres of stubble each day."²

There is a certain pathos in the sight of that small boy tugging and kicking at the stubborn turf when it gather-

1. A Son of the Middle Border, pp 45-46

2. Ibid, p. 86, ff.

ed on the plow. After a day of leisure, he found it hard to go back to the farm to the greasy overalls, the milk-beapattered boots, the fly-bedeveloped cows, the steaming sweaty horses, the curry comb, and a will bucket.

It is at the task of plowing that we first sense Hamlin Garland's antagonism toward the drudgery of farm life. He developed a somewhat bitter and rebellious attitude toward having to go to work in the fields on exceedingly cold November mornings.

He arose by candle-light, in the mornings, not because he was eager to make a record, but for the very good reason that his commander father believed in early rising. As he looks back on his youth he cannot recall that the "sluggards" who rose an hour or two later were any poorer than they. He is inclined to think that it was all a convention of the border, a custom which might very well have been broken by all the pioneers.

Farm life was rather gloomy and depressing especially during the spring season when high winds caused much of the Garlands' well harrowed land to blow away in clouds of dust. "All the forenoon the blizzard of loam raged, filling the house with dust, almost smothering the cattle in the stable. Work was impossible, even for the men. The growing grain, its roots exposed to the air, withered and dried. Many of

the smaller plants were carried bodily away."¹ It seemed to Hamlin Garland that nature was, at such times an enemy. More than seventy acres of their land had to be resown due to one such dust storm.

Most authors in writing of pioneer American West leave out many such experiences as the one just described; they omit the mud, the dust, the grim; they forget the army worm, the flies, the heat, as well as the smells and drudgery of the barns. Milking the cows is spoken of in the traditional fashion as a lovely pastoral recreation. When as a matter of fact it is a tedious job. The Garlands all hated milking, "We saw no poetry in it. We hated it in the summer when the mosquitoes bit and the cows slashed us with their tails, and we hated it still more in the winter time when they stood in crowded malodorous stalls."²

These lines carry with them and echo Hamlin Garland's resentment to a greater degree than was noticeable when he was only ten years of age; though he is now but twelve, his resentment toward the drudgery of farm life has increased greatly.

Hamlin Garland was born in Wisconsin and he expresses his love for the beautiful surrounding country. He counts himself fortunate in the fact that his boyhood was spent in

1. A Son of the Middle Border, p. 128
 2. Ibid., pp 128-129.

the midst of a charming landscape and during a certain heroic era of western settlement. The men and women of that far time loom large in his thinking, for they possessed not only the spirit of adventurers but the courage of warriors. Aside from the natural distortion of a boy's imagination, he is quite sure that the pioneers of 1860 still retain something broad and fine in their action, something a boy might honorably imitate.

The early chapters of A Son of the Middle Border show the "Middle Border" in the late sixties, settled into a vigorous civilization, which had not appreciably drained the New England from which it had sprung, not yet itself become attenuated. In this western Wisconsin where Mr. Garland was born, the wine of the Puritans was still sweet and ruddy. The life was rough, but left a margin. In comparison with the rough and rocky hill lands of New England, the Wisconsin prairies were inviting.

In contrast with the long, hard work of the daytime, the evenings were often cheerful; for the Garland family gathered around the melodion, on which his sister Hattie was able to play a few simple tunes, and sang. Occasionally, neighbors and relatives came in to sing, and in that his mother often took part. During the second winter on the prairie a singing school was started, which brought the young folks together once a week. Besides singing in the

home and attending the singing school, the Garland children entertained themselves by reading, when it was possible to obtain books, or anything of an interesting nature. Hamlin Garland indicates their desire to read, in the following lines: "Infrequently we took long walks to visit our friends or to borrow something to read. I was always on the trail of a book. My sister Harriet joined me in my search for stories and nothing in the neighborhood homes escaped us."¹

Mr. Garland gives a vivid picture of a society of much personality and charm. Little official culture had come with them perhaps, but among the uncles, sunts, and neighbors there was music and gaiety and a certain sturdy raciness of legend and homely philosophy. Would this life have all been conserved, if the Mississippi that bounded the "Middle Border" had been an impossible iron wall, or if the men had only doubted their ability to grapple with the endless plains that lured them from their wooded hills? One gets hints in these pages of the kind of mature and intensive democracy that Whitman prophesied out of the vigorous America he looked upon. But the war made men restless, and this American life was so much diverted from its course that Whitman reads quaintly today, as a visionary who made his

1. A Son of the Middle Border, pp 119-120.

democratic dreams out of his desires. But, Mr. Garland brings back a conviction that this America of Whitman's visions was really there, or at least there in the raw for the building of his democracy of great personalities.

The "farther on" gnawed at the lives of the Garlands and the other men of the "Middle Border," and the pioneer songs bedeviled them. They ripped their civilization up by the roots, and scattered it over the boundless plains. This vigorous communal life was scattered into a thousand isolated homesteads and wan hamlet outposts. Through Minnesota, Iowa, and to Dakota, the Garlands made their way, harried by drought, and blizzards and insect pests in the impossible single-handed fight.

Although Mr. Garland shows an abiding love for his native state, to which he brought back his pioneer parents after their long struggle on Iowa and Dakota farms, of which he does not spare us one sordid detail, he exaggerates the bareness and ugliness of a wild prairie claim, being subdued into a "broken" farm. In spite of the adventurous desires of his "soldier" father, the titanic side of the conflict with nature does not escape him and he felt his return to New England as an escape and a deliverance from the unpleasant prairie life.

He perceived that their song of Emigration had been, in effect, the hymn of fugitives. He perceived little that was

poetic, little that was idyllic, and nothing that was humorous in the man who with hands like claws was scratching a scanty living from the soil of a rented farm while his wife walked her ceaseless round from tub to churn and from churn to tub. On the contrary, the life of such a family appealed to him as an almost unrelievedly tragic futility. For him the grime, the mud, the sweat, and the dust still exist and they still form a large part of the life on the farm.

In great part, his history is the tragedy of labor, which even when not ruled from above, but self-given in the hope of its own betterment, is still the victim of some force outside itself. The country life is shown as it was, the toil of it, early and late, in heat and cold; the filth of it among the cattle and horses; the helpless squalor and insult of it in the unwashed bodies of the men reeking with the sweat of the harvest fields, and served in their steam and stench at tables where the hopeless women wearily put their meat and drink before them, these facts have perhaps never been confessed before.

In spite of the fact that Mr. Garland pictured the unpleasant and bare facts of life in A Son of the Middle Border, there are also some charming passages, vignettes of amazing delicacy, "The grasshoppers move in clouds with snap and buzz, and out of the luxurious stagnant marshes comes the ever-thickening chorus of the toads, while above them

the killees and the snipe shuttle to and fro in sounding flight. The blackbirds on the cat-tail sway and swing, uttering through lifted throats their liquid gurgle, mad with delight of the sun and the season -- and over all, and laving all, moves the slow wind, heavy with the breath of the far-off blooms of other lands, a wind which covers the sunset plain with a golden entrancing haze. At such times it seemed to me that we had reached the 'sunset region' of our song, and that we were indeed 'lords of the soil.'¹

But, at once, here as elsewhere, follows the confession that it was a false seeming, that those halcyon moments could not atone for the slavery and limitation of farm life. Again and again the chronicler records his hatred for those simple processes of farm routine which the real farmer accepts with contentment if not with enthusiasm. He was resentful and ashamed to be cleaning out barns and "sitting under cows" as a boy; he is resentful and ashamed now in recalling that boyhood. He was proud and happy, presently, to have exchanged this atmosphere for that of the literary area-ways of Boston; he is proud and happy as he recalls the exchange. His zeal for rescuing his family from the wilderness and planting them in a community, like his zeal, which for some time assumed a political aspect, for rescuing the

1. A Son of the Middle Border, p. 138.

western farmer by organization, was animated always by this personal disgust, and by some sort of quaint feeling that, in a golden age of fair dealings, cows might be persuaded not to litter up barns, and calves might refrain from filling their nostrils instead of their throats, with the proffered milk of the farmer's boy.

There is a constant recognition of the beauty of nature, which is hardly less, or only less appealing than its fidelity to human nature. There are little moments where the poet lets his delight in nature overflow in pure joyance, as, for instance, where he tells how "when at the close of a warm day in March we heard, pulsing down through the golden haze of sunset, the mellow boom, boom, boom of the prairie cock"..... "the certain sign of spring. Day by day the call of this gay herald was taken up by others, until at last the whole horizon was ringing with a sunrise symphony of exultant song."¹ The seasons are lived again with a boy's gladness in them, and with a growing man's hope and doubt of them.

Hamlin Garland has set his life down just as he saw it. He may look back on it now a bit less harshly than he saw it in earlier years, knowing that wealth and riches are not to be obtained as easily as the settlers of the "Middle Border"

1. A Son of the Middle Border, p. 99.

had been led to believe. The Middle West to-day is a brighter spot than Garland had reference to, in his earlier books. But it still has its problems. And we must be grateful for the record of that early struggle in all of its realism.

Before Mr. Garland, the literature of this section was mainly of the romantic type and much of it was of the cheapest sort. The characters presented in it were not of the substantial type that paid the price in labor and toil for the development of the prairies.

As Mr. Garland is riding across the plains in 1887, going from Boston to Dakota to visit his parents, musing upon the landscape and the ugly cabin houses of his people, he makes the following statement: "All that day I had studied the land, musing upon its distinctive qualities, and while I acknowledged the natural beauty of it, I revolted from the gracelessness of its human habitations. The lonely box-like farm-houses on the ridges suddenly appeared to me like the dens of wild animals. The lack of color, of charm in the lives of the people anguished me. I wondered why I had never perceived before the futility of woman's life on the farm."¹ He tried to submit himself to the out-grown and always hated conditions for the sake of those

1. A Son of the Middle Border, p. 356.

still bowed under them, for the sake of the old work-worn mother and of that little work-worn sister, who must die before his help can reach them. Mr. Garland asked himself why these stern facts had never been put into our literature as they had been used in the literature of Russia and England.

Garland is probably the first actual farmer in American fiction and he has undertaken to tell the truth about western farm life without lightening the picture in any way. He felt that the lot of the western farmer was hard and difficult in itself, but added to the grinding toil of the farm was the specter of the mortgage that hung over the heads of most of them. His pictures are not cheerful but they are true in detail. To say the least, he is not romantic in his fiction of this section of the country.

As a matter of fact he is directly in contrast with the romantic thoughts expressed by some of the New England writers. Recall for a moment Whittier's "Snowbound" and the romantic picture of the family sitting around the hearth as the storm roars outside. Here is peace and quiet and contentment, and the life of the New England farmer, if we are to take our concept of it from this poem of Whittier's, is all that could be desired. Whittier is looking back upon a life that the hand of time has softened in his memory. Not so does Hamlin Garland look back upon the life that he led

upon the western prairies. Here is his picture of a snow storm:

"One such storm which leaped upon us at the close of a warm and beautiful day in February lasted for two days and three nights, making life on the open prairies impossible even to the strongest man. The thermometer fell to thirty degrees below zero and the snow-laden air moving at the rate of eighty miles an hour pressed upon the walls of our house with giant power. The sky of noon was darkened, so that we moved in a pallid half-light, and the windows thick with frost, shut us in as if with gray shrouds.

"Hour after hour these winds and snows in furious battle, howled and roared and whistled around our frail shelter, slashing at the windows and piping on the chimney till it seemed as if the Lord Sun had been wholly blotted out and that the world would never again be warm. Twice each day my father made a desperate sally toward the stable to feed the imprisoned cows and horses or to replenish our fuel -- for the remainder of the long pallid day he sat beside the fire with gloomy face. Even his indomitable spirit was awed by the fury of the storm."¹

In 1889 Mr. Garland again returned to his old home. He was not favorably impressed by the scenery for another dry year was upon the land and the settlers were dis-

1. A Son of the Middle Border, p. 110.

heartened. Every house where he visited had its individual message of sordid struggle and half-hidden despair. All the gilding of farm life melted away. The hard, bitter realities came back to him; however, he still saw beauty in nature and expressed his admiration for it: "Nature was as beautiful as ever. The soaring sky was filled with shining clouds, the tinkle of the bobolink's fairy bells rose from the meadow, a mystical sheen was on the odorous grass and waving grain, but no splendor of cloud, no grace of sunset, could conceal the poverty of these people; on the contrary, they brought out, with a more intolerable poignancy, the gracelessness of these homes, and the sordid quality of the mechanical routine of these lives."¹ He perceived beautiful youth becoming bowed and bent. His wistful boyhood friends were eating out their hearts in an arid life and cursing the bondage of the farm. He saw lovely girlhood wasting away into thin and hopeless age. Some of the women, who were schoolmates of his had grown old before their time, due to long, endless days of drudgery in the kitchen, and rearing large families. New immigration saved the deserted land, but nothing could save the sturdy old American fabric.

Hamlin Garland's picture of life in the Middle West is not a pleasant one. However, it is one that is true to the

1. A Son of the Middle Border, p. 365.

facts of the early years of the "Middle Border." He was a farmer himself. His books that give the best expression of his feeling of this life are A Son of the Middle Border, A Daughter of the Middle Border, Main-Travelled Roads, and Rose of Dutcher's Cooly. It is in these books that he presents the Garland and McClintock families. They are strong men and courageous women but even at that, the life for them is difficult and hard.

In the foreword to Main-Travelled Roads, Mr. Garland says: "The Main-Travelled Road in the West, as everywhere, is hot and dusty in the summer, and desolate and drear with mud in fall and spring, and in winter the winds sweep the snow across it; but it does sometimes cross a rich meadow where the songs of the larks and bobolinks and blackbirds are tangled. Follow it far enough and it may lead past a bend in the river where the water laughs eternally over its shallows.

"Mainly it is long and wearyful, and has a dull little town at one end and a home of toil at the other. Like the Main-Travelled road of life it is traversed by many classes of people, but the poor and the weary predominate."

In "Among the Corn-Rows" Mr. Garland echoes his opinions in regard to the rising of the modern democrat against the idea of caste and the privilege of living on the labor of others, the nameless longing on the part of

humanity of expanding personality.¹ He pictures a man who has declared rebellion against laws that are survivals of hate and prejudice. And who also exposes the native spring of the emigrant by uttering the feeling that it is better to be an equal among peasants than a servant before nobles.

Mr. Garland prepares us for a drab picture of humanity by first drawing a picture of a corn-field in July. The soil is hot and dry; the wind comes across the lazily murmuring leaves laden with a warm, sickening smell drawn from the rapidly growing, broad-flung banners of corn. The sun, nearly vertical, drops a flood of dazzling light upon the field over which the cool shadows run, only to make the heat seem the more intense. After he has prepared for us the setting and has our mind set in the mood for such a picture, he goes on to give one of the most pathetic scenes that one will perhaps discover throughout his writings. "Julia Peterson, faint with hunger, was toiling back and forth between the corn-rows, holding the handles of the double-shovel corn-plough, while her little brother Otto rode the steaming horse. Her heart was full of bitterness, her face flushed with heat, and her muscles aching with fatigue. The heat grew terrible. The corn came to her shoulders, and not a breath seemed to reach her, while the sun, near-

1. Main-Travelled Roads.

ing the noon mark, lay pitilessly upon her shoulders, protected only by a calico dress. The dust rose under her feet, and as she was wet with perspiration it soiled her till with a woman's instinctive cleanliness, she shuddered. Her head throbbed dangerously. What matter to her that the kingbirds pitched jovially from the maples to catch a wandering bluebottle fly, that the robin was feeding its young, that the bobolink was singing? All these things, if she saw them, only threw her bondage to labor into greater relief."¹ Such labor was characteristic on the frontier.

From Mr. Garland's new convictions and his old resentments sprang his grim group of stories collected under the title Main-Travelled Roads and dedicated, "To my father and mother whose half-century pilgrimage on the Main-Travelled Road of life has brought them only toil and deprivation, this book of stories is dedicated by a son to whom every day brings a deepening sense of his parents' silent heroism...."

The stories in Main-Travelled Roads are all variations of the same theme; the ugliness, the monotony, the bestiality, the hopelessness of life on the farm, as an analysis of "Among the Corn-Rows" definitely shows.

The entire series of Main-Travelled Roads was the result of a summer vacation visit to Mr. Garland's old home

1. Main-Travelled Roads.

in Iowa, to his father's farm in Dakota, and last of all, to his birth-place in Wisconsin. This happened in 1887. He was living at the time in Boston, and had not seen the West for several years, and his return to the scenes of his boyhood started him upon a series of stories delineative of farm and village life as he knew it and had lived it. In regard to the material presented in the collection, Mr. Garland says, "'It remains to say that, though conditions have changed somewhat since that time, yet for the hired man and the renter farm-life in the West is still a stern round of drudgery. My pages present it -- not as the summer boarder or the young lady novelist sees it -- but as the working farmer endures it.'"¹

After the years at Boston the life of Mr. Garland's native region had taken on for him a totally new aspect. He saw it now as Howard saw it in "Up the Cooly," the grinding toil of it, the brutality and hopelessness and horror of it, and it filled him with fierce anger. He wrote with full heart and with an earnestness that was terrible, and he had the courage of his convictions. In a "Branch Road," presents a woman who is unhappily married and in the routine and steady work of farm life, becomes discontented. When she reaches the place where she feels that she can no longer

1. Pattee, Fred Lewis, *American Literature Since 1870*, p. 375.

go on, her girlhood sweetheart, Will Hannan, comes to her aid. He takes her and her baby from the miserable surroundings, and there is no apology. The same theme appears again in The Moccasin Ranch, a story of the Dakota prairies. There is the grimness and harshness and unsparing fidelity to fact, however unpleasant, that one finds in the Russian realists, but there is another element added to it; the fervor and faith of the reformer.

In "Up the Cooly" we come into contact with considerable grim realism and unpleasantness.¹ Howard is visiting his home after a long absence: "It was humble enough -- a small white story-and-a-half structure, with a wing set in the midst of a few locust trees; a small drab-colored barn with a sagging ridgepole; a barn yard full of mud, in which a few cows were standing, fighting the flies and waiting to be milked. An old man was pumping water at the well; the pigs were squealing from a pen near by; a child was crying.

"Instantly the beautiful, peaceful valley was forgotten. A sickening chill struck into Howard's soul as he looked at it all.

"As he waited, he could hear a woman's fretful voice, and the impatient jerk of kitchen things, indicative of

1. Main-Travelled Roads.

ill-temper or worry. The longer he stood absorbing this farm-scene, with all its sordidness, dullness, triviality, and its endless drudgeries, the lower his heart sank. All the joy of the home-coming was gone, when the figure arose from the cow and approached the gate, and put the pail of milk down on the platform by the pump..... Grant said after a pause, "Well, I'm glad to see you, but I can't shake hands. That damned cow has laid down in the mud."

The brothers quarreled because Grant resented the fact that Howard had been very successful in play production in the East. "As they gazed in silence at each other, Howard divined something of the hard, bitter, feeling that came into Grant's heart, as he stood there, ragged, ankle-deep in muck, his sleeves rolled up, a shapeless old straw hat on his head."

Grant became resentful toward farming, toward Howard and toward life in general while Howard was visiting them, "I wish I was in somethin' that paid better than farmin'. Anything under God's heavens is better'n farmin', 'every body is poor that earns a living. We fellers on the farm have to earn a livin' for ourselves and you fellers that don't work.'"

However, Howard softened Grant's heart to a certain extent, when he offered him money with which to repurchase the old home, which they had lost. But Grant felt that he

had failed; it was too late for Howard to help him.

Such a theme is rather a pessimistic one; however, one can clearly see why Grant felt that his life had been of little value with no accomplishments. He had worked hard on the farm day after day, and year after year. And what was his reward? The loss of his home and land.

Such a story as "Under the Lion's Paw," does not leave one, like Ibsen and Hardy, in despair and darkness; it arouses rather to anger and the desire to take action harsh and immediate.¹ There is no dodging of facts. It shows us also that in the Middle West, money meant power and power meant injustice. Upton Sinclair has vividly and realistically portrayed at least one of these problems in his book, The Jungle, which depicts conditions in the stock yards district of Chicago. A typical illustration of this sort of thing is found in Mr. Garland's story, "Under the Lion's Paw." Here in brief is the story of the average middle western farmer after the free land has been exhausted. Tim Waskins, who leaves his old home in the hope of bettering his condition, is assisted by kindly neighbors who take him and his family into their own home until he can get a start, who lend him implements, cows, and seed corn, who introduce him to the leading magnate of the neighborhood

1. Main-Travelled Roads.

with whom he makes an arrangement for leasing a farm. In the gratitude and hopefulness of the moment, Mr. Haskins is not as cautious and canny as he should be. He inquires the price of the farm from Butler, the owner and landlord. It is twenty-five hundred dollars. He is, of course, in no position to buy, but makes an agreement for a three-year lease with the privilege of renewal or purchase at the end of the period. During these three years "they rose early and toiled without intermission till the darkness fell on the plain, then tumbled into bed, every bone and muscle aching with fatigue, to rise with the sun next morning to the same round of the same ferocity of labor. Even the boy was a pathetic figure. "To see him in his coarse clothing, his huge boots, and his ragged cap, as he staggered with a pail of water from the well, or trudged in the cold and cheerless dawn out into the frosty field behind his team, gave the city-bred visitor a sharp pang of sympathetic pain. Yet Mr. Haskins loved his boy, and would have saved him from this if he could, but he could not."

They repaired the house and planted a garden. They added fences and outbuildings. They transformed the neglected, run-down farm into a pleasant and profitable homestead. At the end of the three years with joy and pride that his terrible ordeal is over, he offers to buy the farm from his landlord -- who calmly informs him that the land

is now worth five thousand five hundred dollars, and that he can buy at that price or get out.

"The tragedy in this story is, of course, accentuated by Haskins' almost incredible blindness to the probability of Butler's making such a demand; this blindness makes possible the sudden reversal from high expectations to desperate rage and sullen despair as he realizes that he is caught 'Under the Lion's Paw.' But Haskins' lack of foresight is not the cause of his misfortune. He would have been powerless to help himself in any event; without capital, he had to take land at Butler's terms or go without. It is not Haskins' simplicity but the disappearance of the frontier that makes possible Butler's demand for the unearned increment."¹

The Haskins family had good crops and received fairly decent prices for them, but they had to fight the greed of a landlord whose main interest was the unearned increment that he could acquire from the land that another man had sacrificed all that he and his family had to improve. The whole story is a question of social justice. Was it just that this man who had acquired that land for a nominal sum should profit so largely from the other man's toil and sacrifice? This is only one of the problems that confronted

1. Hazard, L. L., *The Frontier in American Literature*, p. 266.

the settlers of the Middle West in those days.

A variation of this problem is that of the settler who buys his land with promise of paying for it in a certain number of years. Of course, he counts upon fairly good crops and decent prices for his products. If a crop fails he is faced with the necessity of meeting his interest payment without the money to do so. This he cannot do and sooner or later he must lose all that he put into the land in the beginning and he is once more a renter on another's land. Another variation of the same story is the good crop years with no prices for the produce of the soil and once more the farmer who is attempting to acquire a home for himself and his family is the victim of circumstances over which he has no control.

Who profits from all of this? Obviously the land speculator who holds the mortgage on the land. This man does not want the land but only the interest from the money the settler owes for it. He probably does not even live in the Middle West and is interested in it only in the opportunity it offers for a profitable investment for his money.

To Hamlin Garland this is futility. He can see no beauty here that is worth such a sacrifice. To him the farmer of the "Middle Border" as he chooses to call it, should have some recompense for his labor. At the very least, it should be reasonably possible for him to obtain

a piece of land that he can call his own. But during the eighties and the nineties of the last century this seemed hardly possible.

Hamlin Garland knew at first-hand the hardships of such a life. He knew what it was to labor long hours in summer heat and winter cold. He saw debts pile up until the farmer knew not the way out. He saw land lost after years of grinding toil and privation. He saw the pioneer women become old before their time on account of this toil and worry. It was only natural that knowing conditions as they were, that he should revolt against the romantic fiction of the earlier period. Adventuring into new territory may be romantic, but Garland knew what this adventuring in the Middle West meant. During his youth he moved steadily westward with his parents, from Wisconsin to Iowa and then on to Dakota. He disliked this type of life and a part of his prejudice against it is personal. He wanted beauty and little of it was to be found here on these undeveloped prairies. He wanted leisure and learning, neither of which is to be found in a new and undeveloped country. As a young man he took the back-trail to Boston to find the leisure and the learning and the beauty that he could not have in the West and for which he longed.

After contact with the realists of Boston, Garland turned to his prairie country for the material of his books.

He knew his back-ground thoroughly and gave the unvarnished truth about the lives of the farmers of the Middle West. This is not satire; it is truth. He does not tell of the few who succeeded, but of the many who toiled and sweat and endured, but who reaped no profit at least in so far as material wealth is concerned.

"An even more bitter picture of a frontierless America is given in his play "Under the Wheel" (written during the financial depression of 1889-1890 when the Dakota drouth was at its worst). The opening scene is laid in a tenement. The city workers, hard pressed by constantly soaring prices and rents, voice their nostalgia for the soil:

"'Phwat is the world comin' to whin the half av us nivr see the blissid sun rise 'r set; an' nivr a blade of grass n'r a shavin' o' mud f'r the childer t' roll on, savin' the gutter, an' a cop on the corner waitin t' brask y'r head 'r a placard sayin' kape off the grass. Faith an' if this is free Amuriky what'll be the Amuriky that'll be comin' wid the fall o' wages and the rise o' rint?'"

"Goaded by notice of another increase in rent, lured by the gaudy 'literature' of real estate promoters, the Edwards family decides to go west:

"'Where there ain't no landlords and no rents, where there ain't no rich n'r no poor. Where people don't live in holes like this. Where they raise such ears of corn as

that and have farms like that (displaying poster) with cows and pigs and clover and brooks near by full of trout.'

"Later in the play, Reeves, Alice Edwards' Boston suitor, unsatisfied with the vague accounts given in her letters, follows the Edwards family west to see for himself the conditions under which they are living. He finds them packed in a miserable shanty on a burning prairie; driven to long hours of backbreaking toil to wring from the land a bare living plus the interest due the speculators from whom they have bought. To Alice's appeal that the Judge either take back the land or remit the interest due on the mortgage, the Judge replies, 'We don't want the land. We've got more land now than we know what to do with. All we want is the interest on the mortgages.' to which Alice replied bitterly: 'I see! It pays better to let us think we own the land than it would to pay us wages. We work cheaper.'

"Reeves visits the land sharks' office and sees their devices for cheating their victims. He visits the Edwards' shanty where old Edwards tells him: 'We've tried our last chance and we've failed. This is the upshot of our dream. The great free West! Free t' starve in. Just as a desert is free. I've strained every muscle all my life and this is the result of it. If the blight 'r the drouth didn't take the crop, taxes, the railroads and the landlords did. Every

year puts us deeper in a hole.' Stirred by the tragic irony of their hopeful weatering, Reeves cries: 'If this is free land what in the devil would you call high priced land! The settler pays for his 'free land' all that makes life worth living; these families have purchased their bare and miserable acres with blood and sweat and tears. Free land! Bah! For a century there has been no free land in America.'¹

In "Lucretia Burns" we get another picture of the poor on the western prairies and the crowded conditions when Mr. Garland says: "The poor of the western prairies lie almost as unhealthily close together as do the poor of the city tenements. In the small hut of the peasant there is as little chance to escape close and tainting contact as in the coops and dens of the North End of proud Boston. In the midst of oceans of land, floods of sunshine and gulfs of verdure, the farmer lives in two or three small rooms. Poverty's eternal cordon is ever round the poor."

In those days people came west thinking they would have ample room in which to live and a great deal of land; they anticipated pleasant conditions, but to their disappointment, conditions were quite as bad as they were in the crowded tenement sections.

1. Hazard, L. L., *The Frontier in American Literature*, pp 266-267.

"Hamlin Garland paints with an unfaltering hand a life in which ennui sits enthroned. It is not the poverty of the western farmers that oppresses us. Real biting poverty, which withers lesser evils with its deadly breath, is not known to these people at all. They have roofs, fire, food, and clothing..... It is the dreadful weariness of living. It is the burden of a dull existence, clogged at every pore, and the hopeless melancholy of which they have sufficient intelligence to understand. Theirs is the ennui of emptiness, and the implied reproach on every page is that a portion, and only a portion, of mankind is doomed to walk along these shaded paths; while happier mortals who abide in New York, or perhaps in Paris, spend their days in a pleasant tumult of intellectual and artistic excitation."¹

In A Daughter of the Middle Border a sequel to A Son of the Middle Border, Mr. Garland has continued the autobiographical reminiscences of the Garland family after their return from North Dakota to the "final Garland homestead" in West Salem, Wisconsin. A legacy enabled his father to give up his farm in North Dakota. He says, "It released him from the tyranny of the skies. All his life he had been menaced by the weather. Clouds, snows, winds, had been his unrelenting antagonists. Hardly an hour of his past had

1. Pattee, Fred Lewis, *A History of American Literature Since 1870*, p. 431.

been free from a fear of disaster. The glare of the sun, the direction of the wind, the assembling of clouds at sunset -- all the minute signs of change, of storm, of destruction had been his incessant minute study. For over fifty years he had been enslaved to the seasons. He agonized no more about the fall of frost, the slash of hail, the threat of tempest."¹

Hamlin Garland's father soon became quite tired of his small plot of land in West Salem after having spent years working his large farms. He says to his son, "'I'm no truck farmer. I turn this onion patch over to you, Hamlin. It's no place for me. In two days I'll be broad-casting wheat on a thousand-acre farm. That's my size.'"²

Mrs. Garland, however, liked the new home -- it seemed more like home than any other place, but she missed the prairie and her Ordway friends.

After Hamlin Garland's marriage to Zulime Taft, he immediately took her to the old homestead to present his mother with her much wished for daughter. At half-past six on the morning following their arrival at the Homestead, Mr. Garland opened the stairway door and shouted, just as he had been want to do in the days when Hamlin was a boy on the farm -- "Hamlin! Time to get up." With a wry grin

1. A Daughter of the Middle Border, pp 169-170

2. Ibid, p. 13.

Hamlin called to Zulime and explained that in their family, breakfast was a full and regular meal at which every member of the household was expected promptly at seven.

"It was not yet fully dawn and the thought of rising in a cold room at that time of night was appalling to a city woman, but with heroic resolution Zulime dressed, and followed me down the narrow stairway to the lamplit dining room where a steaming throng of dishes, containing oatmeal, potatoes, flap-jacks and sausage (supplemented by cookies, doughnuts and two kinds of jam) invited us to start the day with indigestion."¹

The dim yellow light of the kerosene lamp, the familiar smell of the buckwheat cakes and his father's clarion voice brought back to Hamlin Garland very vividly and with a curious pang of mingled pleasure and regret, the corn-husking days when he habitually ate by candlelight in order to reach the field by daybreak.

Hamlin Garland and his wife were invited by Major Stouch, the Indian Agent in charge of the Cheyenne Agency at Darlington, Oklahoma to accompany him and his wife on a survey of the new reservation. The Garlands accepted the invitation and on their way to Oklahoma, they visited Professor Taft in Renover, Kansas. Hamlin Garland recorded the

1. A Daughter of the Middle Border, p. 153.

following note about the little village: "All day the wind blew, the persistent, mournful, crying wind of the plain. The saddest, the most appealing sound in my world. It came with a familiar soft rush, a crowding presence, uttering a sighing roar -- a vague sound out of which voices of lonely children and forgotten women broke. To the solitary farmer's wife such a wind brings tears or madness. I am tense with desire to escape. This bare little town on the ridge is appalling to me. Think of living here with the litany of this wind forever in one's ears.

"In this sun-smit cottage Zulime had left her mother to find a place in the outside world just as I had left my mother in Dakota."¹

Twenty-four hours later they were on the wide, sunny prairie, across which the settlers were moving in white-topped prairie schooners, just as they had done in Iowa thirty years before. Plowmen were breaking the sod, and the women were washing and cooking in the open air, quite as his people had done in 1871. Only the small stations on the rail-way broke the spell of the past with a modern word.

The men whom they saw on the train and on the crowded platforms at the villages were made up of cow-boys, Indians in white men's clothing, black and brown negroes, and tall,

1. A Daughter of the Middle Border, p. 175.

blond Tennessee mountaineers; they were an unkempt horde which chewed and spit tobacco.

After their trip into Oklahoma, Hamlin Garland and his wife returned to the homestead in West Salem. One day they took Mr. Garland's parents to visit mother Garland's brother and wife, Mr. and Mrs. Frank McClintock. While there, they were served a very good, old fashioned country dinner. "How good that dinner was! Hot biscuit, chicken, shortcake, coffee, and the most delicious butter and cream. At the moment it did seem a most satisfactory way to live. We forgot that the dishes had to be washed three times each day, and that the mud and rain and wind and snow often shut the homestead in for weeks at a stretch. Seeing the valley at its loveliest, under the glamor of a summer afternoon, we found it perfect."¹

As Hamlin Garland walked the shaded street of West Salem, perceiving the veterans of the hoe and plow, digging feebly in the earth of their small gardens, or sitting adream on the narrow porches of their tiny cottages his joy was embittered. Age was everywhere. There in the midst of the flowering trees the men of the "Middle Border" were withering into dust.

"Looked at from a distance there was comfort in the

1. A Daughter of the Middle Border, p. 187.

thought of these pioneers, released from the grind of their farm routine, dozing at ease beneath the maple trees, but clearly studied they became sorrowful. I knew too much about them. Several of them had been my father's companions in those glorious days of fifty-five. Yonder white-haired invalid, sitting in the sun silently watching his bees, had been a famous pilot on the river, and that bushy-haired giant, halting by on a stick, was the wreck of a mighty hunter. The wives of these men equally worn, equally rheumatic and even more querulous, had been the rosy, laughing, dancing companions of Isabel McGlintock in the days when Richard Garland came a-courting. All, all were camping in lonely cottages while their sons and daughters, in distant cities or far-off mountain valleys, adventuring in their turn, were taking up the discipline and the duties of a new border, a new world."¹

Hamlin Garland's father proposed a trip to Osage, Iowa near which they had lived for twelve years. He had never returned to the prairie farm in Mitchell County since leaving it, twenty years before. As he was eager to go and as Hamlin Garland had been asked by his old Seminary associates to give the commencement address, they made the trip.

They discovered that Osage was almost as much of an

1. A Daughter of the Middle Border, p. 278.

asylum for the aged as West Salem. It, too, was filled with worn out farmers. In visiting their old home, they found the house almost hid in the trees which they had planted on the bare prairie thirty years before. The house, infested by the family of a poor renter, was repulsive. The upstairs chamber in which Hamlin had slept for many years presented a filthy clutter of chicken feathers, cast-off furniture and musty clothing.

That night at the Seminary when Hamlin Garland spoke to the alumni, he realized that they were not only serious, but also piteously solemn. No one laughed, no one took a light and airy view of life. Once or twice he tried to jest or venture a humorous remark, but those attempts to lighten the gloom were met with chilling silence. No one whispered, smiled, or turned aside. It was like a prayer meeting in the face of famine.

In Trail-Makers of the Middle Border, which is part biography and part fiction, Mr. Garland tells the story of his father, Richard Garland, from his boyhood days on a stony Maine farm, through his pioneer days in Wisconsin, until he returned from the Civil War.

Richard Garland's parents were attracted to the Middle West by the agricultural riches awaiting only their industry. Many people came from the East and staked their claims upon the "Middle Border," because from the pioneers, stories

went back telling of the wealth to be found there. Thus the Garlands yielded to the lure of lush grasses and rich soil, truly El Dorado beside the meagre sustenance which their rocky hillsides afforded. By canal and the Great Lakes they reached Milwaukee, then pushed on by wagon to the Wisconsin wilderness which promised so much. Their life with its struggles and its rewards, the coming of the Civil War calling the menfolk to the colors, retells in miniature the building of America. No turbulent spirits these, who forsook the dreams of sudden richness in the gold fields for the more even handed plenty of Wisconsin's fertility. They were the quiet souls, the stubborn men and women who built America and made her great.

In Detroit, a small shabby town they saw Indians, trappers, lumbermen, fishermen, fur merchants, and soldiers; pigs and cows grazed on the streets. Mrs. Garland faced the long ride up Lake Huron and down Lake Michigan with a distinct sinking of the heart. Milwaukee was also a flimsy little village -- a collection of frame houses, a few trees, most of the buildings were bare as wooden blocks perched bleakly on the plain. Richard saw in the town the wilderness he had come so far to see. The sidewalks swarmed with adventurers from many lands. English, Irish, Swedish, and German immigrants mingled with home seekers from New York and New England; however, in spite of all the desolation,

Richard read the promise of happiness in the beauty of the sky. The beauties of nature exalted Mrs. Garland as well as her husband, but to him it was perfection of the pastoral, the fulfillment of his dream.

As they traveled southwest, they covered long stretches of road and saw very few houses, from doors of shanties or log cabins, settlers clothed in garments as shaggy as the bark of hickory trees asked Mr. Dudley, who took the Garlands to their new home, for news -- while frowsy children swarmed about the doors. Richard saw girls at work on porches barefooted and bare armed. The lives of the people appeared primitive and bare.

Susan Garland had the smallpox, so the Garlands were not allowed to enter Brownsville, but Mr. McClintock took them to one of his cabins and cared for them until she was well.

That summer, Richard Garland, who was becoming a close friend of the McClintocks, helped them harvest. That fall his adventurous nature took him from the farm to a logging camp farther out on the frontier. He fell in love with Isabel McClintock, and married her. After a winter in the logging camp, they purchased a farm and in 1863 when the mortgage was paid, he entered the Civil War. Upon being released from the ranks as a soldier he returned to his wife and babies on his farm in Green's Cooly; however, in a

short time he became eager to move farther westward; hence, again and again through the pages of the "border books" echoes indomitably the favorite song of the Garlands and McClintocks:

"When we've wood and prairie land
 Won by our toil,
 We'll reign like kings in fairy land,
 Lords of the soil!"

Again and again, therefore, we see the little tribe, under the urgency of its leader, deserting its scarce-won foothold here or there and exposing itself, to fresh hardships, fresh disappointments, fresh prodigies of toil cheated of their reward by human mischance or the cruelty of nature.

Back-Trailers from the Middle Border, which completes the chronicle of Hamlin Garland's pioneer ancestors and his own life to 1928 is so called because Mr. Garland applied back-trailers to himself and his family when they sold their Wisconsin home and went east to live. Throughout the book, we are aware of the fact that Mr. Garland is glad to be out of the West. He had a home in Chicago, but spent a great deal of his time in New York.

The book has a mellow fullness and it treats of the period in which Mr. Garland reaped, in distinguished contacts and public recognition, the reward of his long devotion to high literary aims. The intimacy of this record,

occasionally breaking into naivete is always appealing and sometimes touching.

In recounting his back-trailing with his family to the East, he tells of their life in New York, with its many diverse pleasures; and of their journey to England where the family was entertained by such notables as Kipling, Barrie, Lord Balfour, George B. Shaw and others.

Mr. Garland explains his desire to back-trail by saying, "I am not seeking to excuse my recreancy to the Middle West; I am merely stating it as a phase of literary history, for my case is undoubtedly typical of many other writers who turned their faces eastward."¹

Mr. Garland, perhaps had reached an age where he no longer cared to pioneer even in a literary sense. "Desirous of the acceptances proper to a writer with gray hair and a string of credible books, I wished to go where honor waited. I craved a place as a man of letters. That my powers were deteriorating in the well-worn rut of my life in Woodlawn, I knew too well, and my need of contact with my fellow craftsmen in the East sharpened. At the very time when I should have been most honored, most recompensed, in my work, I found myself living meanly in a mean street and going about like a man of mean concerns, having little influence

1. A Daughter of the Middle Border, p. 371.

on my art or among my fellows."¹

That Chicago was still on the border in a literary sense was sharply emphasized when the National Institute of Arts and Letters decided to hold its annual meeting for 1931 in Chicago. The secretary felt that it was a long way out to Chicago and perhaps only a few members could attend; however, the meeting was held there with Hamlin Garland as chairman of the Committee of Arrangements.

In his border books, Mr. Garland makes us live the farm life of the "Middle Border" as he lived it, he points out not only its squalor and ugliness and misery, but also the wild glory and beauty of it, which we feel as he felt it; and we exult, as if it were our own escape, when he escapes from it with his few carefully hoarded dollars to the hunger and cold of that uttermost East at Boston, where he goes to seek the reparation which he feels is due him from fate.

Mr. Garland now realizes that the land of his childhood with its charm and its strange dominion cannot return save in his reminiscent dream. No money, no railroad train can take him back to it. It was a magical world, born of the vibrant union of youth and firelight, of music and the voice of moaning winds -- a union which can never come again to anyone, till the coulee meadows bloom again unscarred of spade or plow.

1. A Daughter of the Middle Border, p. 371.

THE LOT OF THE PIONEER WOMAN

Mary Isabel McClintock and Dick Garland married in the fifties. When the war broke out in 1861, Dick Garland could not enlist for he had just bought a farm "on time," but at last in 1863 on the very day when he made the last payment on the mortgage, he put his name down on the role and went back to his wife as a soldier.

One can note the sympathy that Hamlin Garland had for his mother in the following lines: "I have heard my mother say this was one of the darkest moments of her life and if you think about it you will understand the reason why. My sister was only five years old, I was three and Frank was a babe in the cradle."¹

She begged her husband not to go but he was of the stern stuff which makes patriots and besides, his name was on the roll; therefore, he went away to join Grant's army at Vicksburg. "'What sacrifice! What folly!' said his pacifist neighbors -- 'to leave your wife and children for an idea, a mere sentiment; to put your life in peril for a striped silken rag.'" But in spite of the criticism of the neighbors, Mr. Garland went to war; his plough rusted in the shed and his cattle called for him from their stalls. His

1. A Son of the Middle Border, p. 6.

wife spent many days in agony waiting for his return, and many dark days when the baby was ill and the doctor far away.

The children fell into rather free and easy habits under their mother's government, for she was too jolly, too tender-hearted, to engender fear in them even when she threatened them with a switch or a shingle.

Sometime after the war, Richard Garland sold his farm in Green's Coulee, but Mrs. Garland did not like the idea of moving as she contemplated the loss of home and kindred. She was not by nature an emigrant -- few women were. And leaving Green's Coulee meant leaving most of her brothers and sisters and all of her kindly neighbors; it was not a pleasant thought. Finally in February the Garlands left their home for a cold ride into an unknown world; as a dutiful wife Mrs. Garland worked hard and silently packed away her treasures and clothed her children for the journey.

After traveling several days in snow and over icy paths, they reached the place of their new home which was in the wooded section of Minnesota, near the village of Hesper. Mrs. Garland and the children rather liked the new home, but Mr. Garland was not satisfied and for several weeks he traveled through southern Minnesota and northern Iowa, always in search of the perfect farm. When he returned, he reported that they would move to Mitchell County, Iowa.

If Mrs. Garland resented this third removal, she made no comment, for a mighty spreading and shifting was going on all over the west, and no doubt, she accepted her part in it without especial protest.

Our next picture of the Garlands is in their new home in Mitchell County, Iowa; crops were larger, prices higher, and Mr. Garland continually bought more land and more machinery. Although a constantly improving collection of farm machinery lightened the labor of the men, the drudgery of the housewife's dish-washing and cooking did not correspondingly lessen. It probably increased, for, with the widening of the fields came a doubling of the harvest hands. In spite of the increase in land, laborers, and prices Mrs. Garland continued to do most of the housework herself--cooking, sewing, washing, churning, and nursing the sick from time to time.

Hamlin and his father did not realize the heavy burden and the endless grind of her toil. The children helped, but even with their aid, the round of the mother's duties must have been as relentless as a tread-mill. Even on Sunday she was required to prepare three meals and help the children dress for church. The following taken from A Son of the Middle Border indicates her spirit at this time: "She sang less and less, and the songs we loved were seldom referred to."

In 1887, after living in Boston for six years, Hamlin Garland decided to visit his parents. As he drove home with his father he could see his mother a mile away, standing outside the door of the house waiting to see her son; as he and his father drove into the yard she came hurrying to Hamlin. The changes in her shocked him; she was gray, her voice was tremulous, and she was aging rapidly. He had to leave his parents again, although it seemed a treachery to say good-bye to them. It seemed to him a duty to comfort his aging mother -- but he did not.

In 1889 Hamlin Garland again visited his parents. At the time he was home, his mother suffered from a slight stroke. But, she recovered and told her son, "Don't worry about us. Go back to your work. I am gaining. I'll be all right in a little while." These words taken from A Son of the Middle Border indicate that her brave heart was still unsubdued and her hopes were only for her son.

Every time Hamlin Garland heard his mother shuffle across the floor, and when she shyly sat beside him and took his hand in hers as if to hold him fast, his throat burned with bitter rage and his voice almost failed him. He began to plead with his father to compromise and buy a home on old Meshonoc where their old pioneer comrades, his mother's brothers, and Mr. Garland's sister were living. Mrs. Garland yielded at once. "I'm ready to go back. There's only

one thing to keep me here, and that is Jessie's grave."¹ But the old soldier was still too proud and too much the pioneer to back trail; nevertheless, Hamlin Garland convinced them to go to West Salem to live. His mother was becoming weaker and more feeble and he realized that she did not have long to live. He was correct in his sad realization for not many months later, due to her death, he was called home.

As he went on after her death, he found himself deep in her life on the farm in Iowa. The cheerful heroism of her daily treadmill came back to him with great appeal. Visioning the long years of her drudgery, he recalled her early rising and suffered with her the never-ending round of dishwashing, churning, sewing, and cooking; he realized more fully than ever before that in all of that slavery she was but one of a million martyrs.

In spite of the fact that the farm had been in his father's possession for eight years, he observed that it possessed neither tree nor vine. His mother's head had no protection from the burning rays of the sun, except the shadow which the house would cast on the dry, hard doorway. This observation caused him to ask himself, "'Where are the woods and prairie lands of our song? Is this the fairy land in which we were all to reign like kings?'"¹

1. A Son of the Middle Border, p. 403.

All of his neighbors' wives walked the same round. On such as they, rests the heavier part of the home and city building in the West. The wives of the farm are the unarmed, unrewarded heroines of the border.

After his mother's death, he resumed his writing in a mood of bitter resentment, with full intention of telling the truth about western farm life, irrespective of the land-boomer or the politicians.

Hemlin Garland's grandmother, also spent her life on the frontier; like many other wives, she too was a forced emigrant. She did not want to leave her friends, her church, and her home; but she put aside her weakness, as her husband and sons wished to go west. In her voice was the doubt, the sorrow, the fear through which she had passed. Her life history was interwoven with the religious and literary traditions of New England, and the pain of parting and breaking with familiar scenes and friends was bitter to her.

As the Garlands came west, Hemlin's grandmother knew that each stage of the new journey put Oxford County, Maine farther away from her, and deeper in the past. She knew that she would never see Overlook again. However, she sacrificed her interests for her husband and spent her life in the drudgery of a pioneer homestead with little or no earthly reward.

Out of sympathy for his mother and grandmother, Mr. Garland has pictured many types of pioneer women who, like his mother and grandmother, spent their lives in drudgery and constant work.

Of these women, Julia Peterson is perhaps one of the most pathetic figures in Mr. Garland's writings. He pictures her in his story, "Among the Corn Rows," holding the handles of the double-shovel corn-plow, toiling back and forth between the corn-rows while her little brother Otto rides the steaming horse.¹ The corn-field is a sultry place in July and the girl is faint with heat and hunger. Her heart is full of bitterness, her face flushed with heat, and her muscles aching with fatigue. "The corn came to her shoulders, and not a breath of air seemed to reach her, while the sun, nearing the noon mark, lay pitilessly upon her shoulders, protected only by a calico dress. The dust rose under her feet, and as she was wet with perspiration it sealed her till with a woman's instinctive cleanliness, she shuddered."

"The corn must be ploughed and so she toiled on, the tears dropping from the shadow of the ugly sun-bonnet she wore. Her shoes, coarse and square-toed, chafed her feet; her hands, large and strong, were browned on the backs by

1. Main-Travelled Roads.

the sun. As she rested at the end of the row, she forgot her work and began to dream. This would not last always. Someone would come to release her from such drudgery. This was her constant, tenderest, and most secret dream. He must be a Yankee, not a Norwegian."

As she stood, day-dreaming, a fresh, manly voice called to her. It was Bob Rodemaker, who had lived in the community several years before, and whom she was to marry, although she did not realize it at the time. She asked him to stop for dinner, but it was evident that she really did not want him.

He realized that she was very tired. "'Can't you lay off this afternoon? It ain't right.'"

"'No. He won't listen to that.'"

In a later conversation with Bob she said, "'I c'd stand the churnin' an' the housework, but when it comes t' workin' in the dirt an' hot sun, gettin' all sunburned and chapped up, it's another thing. An' then it seems as if he gets stingier 'n' stingier every year. I ain't had a new dress in -- I'd-know-how-long. He says it's all nonsense an' mother's just about as bad..... I've tried t' go out t' work, but they won't let me. They'd have t' pay a hand twenty dollars a month f'r the work I do, an' they like cheap help; but I'm not goin' t' stand it much longer, I can tell you that.'"

Later that day Bob proposed to Julia but she replied bitterly, "'They'd never let me go. I'm too cheap a hand. I do a man's work an' get no pay at all.'"

However, Bob finally convinced Julia to elope with him that night.

"A Branch Road," the opening sketch in Main-Travelled Roads, deals with a lover who quarreled with his betrothed, and seven years later when he returned he found her a mis-mated and miserable farm-wife. She and her husband were living with his parents.

Will called on Agnes -- "She was worn and wasted incredibly. The blue of her eyes seemed dimmed and faded by weeping. Her trembling hands were worn, discolored, and lumpy at the joints. There were no dimples in her cheeks and the smile had more the suggestion of an invalid -- or even a skeleton."

As the old people were preparing to go to church, Will asked Agnes, "'Do you go to church?' She shook her head. 'No, I don't go anywhere now, I have too much to do; I haven't strength left. And I'm not fit anyway.'"

In his soul he felt that she was a dying woman unless she had rest and tender care.

After her husband and his parents left, Agnes and Will talked over old times and he proposed that she leave with him. "'You are being killed by inches. You can't go any-

where, you can't have anything. Life is just a torture for you.....!"

"There's just one way to get out of this Agnes. Come with me. He don't care for you; his whole idea of women is that they are created for his pleasure and to keep house. Come! There's a chance for life yet."

"Oh, Will, I'm so old and homely now, I ain't fit to go with you now!"

She lost her sense of right and wrong, but she was not moved by passion. She gathered a few garments and her baby, and Will closed the door on her sufferings. The world lay before them. What they did was morally wrong, but Mr. Garland allows the reader to say that for himself.

In "Up the Coolly," Mr. Garland gives a sad picture of Grant's wife and his mother.¹ In the course of the story, Grant's brother Howard, comes from the city to visit at his old home. As he entered the yard and looked at the old dilapidated house, he saw his weary, work worn, old mother sitting on the porch.

"Mother! Dear old mother!"

"In the silence, almost painful, which followed, an angry woman's voice could be heard inside: 'I don't care! I ain't goin' to wear myself out for him. He c'n eat out

1. Main-Travelled Roads.

here with us, or else --!"

"Mrs. McLane began speaking, 'Oh, I've longed to see yeh, Howard. I was afraid you wouldn't come till -- too late.'"

"What do you mean, mother? Ain't you well?!"

"I don't seem to be able to do much now 'cept sit around and knit a little. I tried to pick some berries the other day, and I got so dizzy I had to give it up.'"

"You wusn't work. You needn't work. Why didn't you write to me how you were?" Howard asked, in an agony of remorse."

"Well, we felt as if you probably had all you could do to take care of yourself. Are you married, Howard?" she broke off to ask."

"No, mother; and there ain't any excuse for me -- not a bit.'"

"I'm ashamed when I think of how long it's been since I saw you.'"

"It don't matter now. It's the way things go. Our boys grow up and leave us.'"

"Well, come in to supper', said Grant's ungracious voice from the doorway."

"Howard, this is my wife', said Grant, in a cold, peculiar tone."

Grant's wife had been a remarkably handsome young

woman, but now her appesrance was slovenly and her face wore a scowl, which did not change as she looked at Howard and the old lady.

"Every detail of the kitchen, the heat, the flies bus-sing aloft, the poor furniture, the dress of the people -- all smote him like a lash of a wire whip."

The next morning Laura had on a clean calico dress and a gingham apron; she looked strong, fresh, and handsome. Her head was intellectual; her eyes full of power. She seemed anxious to remove the impression of her unpleasant looks and words of the night before. Also, after Grant and Howard had quarreled, she took Howard's part. "'Pity you can't be decent. You treat Howard as if he was a -- a -- I don't know what.'"

"'If you think I'm going to set by an' agree to your bully-raggin' him, you're mistaken. It's a shame! You're mad 'cause he's succeeded and you hain't. He ain't to blame for his brains. If you and I'd had any, we'd a' succeeded too. It ain't our fault, and it ain't his; so what's the use?'"

Sometime later Howard distributed gifts to the family but his heart swelled almost to a feeling of pain as he looked at his mother. There she sat with the presents in her lap. The shining silk dress material came too late for her. It threw into appalling relief her age, her poverty,

her work-weary frame. "My God!" he almost cried aloud, 'how little it would have taken to lighten her life!'"

Several days later, Laura confided in Howard and poured out to him her thoughts and wishes. "I'd like to go to a city once. I never saw a town bigger 'n LaCrosse. I've never seen a play, but I've read of 'em in the magazines. It must be wonderful; they say they have wharves and real ships coming up to the wharf, and people getting off and on.....!"

"I hate farm-life. It's nothing but fret, fret, and work the whole time, never going any place, never seeing anybody but a lot of neighbors just as big fools as you are. I spend my time fighting flies and washing dishes and churning. I'm sick of it all."

The young wife went on with a deeper note: "I've lived in LaCrosse two years, going to school, and I know a little something of what city life is. If I was a man, I bet I wouldn't wear my life out on a farm, as Grant does. I'd get away and I'd do something. I wouldn't care what, but I'd get away."

"I was a fool for ever marrying," she went on, while the baby pushed a chair across the room. "I made a decent living teaching, I was free to come and go, my money was my own. Now I'm tied right down to a churn or a dishpan, I never have a cent of my own. He's growlin' round half the

time, and there's no chance of his ever being different."

Such grim reality is certainly pathetic, and the young wife is, no doubt, greatly disappointed. Time and hard work have hardened her and made her bitter toward farm life.

Another depressing type is that of Lucretia Burna, also the wife of a farmer and the mother of a large family. She makes a sad picture as she comes from the barn yard carrying two heavy buckets of milk; her face is pitifully worn, almost tragic -- long, thin, sallow, hollow-eyed; her mouth droops at the corners and seems to announce a breaking-down at any moment into a despairing wail.

"'Oh, my soul!' she half groaned, half swore, as she lifted her milk buckets and hurried to the well. Arriving there, she cuffed the children right and left with all her remaining strength, saying in justification: 'My soul! Can't you young 'uns give me a minute's peace? Land knows, I'm almost gone up; washin', and milkin' six cows, and tendin' you, and cookin' f'r him, ought 'o be enough f'r one day!'"

Not being able to milk all of the cows, she left three of them for her husband to milk when he came from the field, but upon hearing his statement in regard to the matter, "'I'll be damned if I milk a cow to-night, I don't see why you play out jest the nights I need ye most,'" caused her to realize that the task was up to her if it was to be done.

Late that night after the children and her husband were in bed, she rose and stole forth to the barn yard. "As she set milking the cows she contrasted her lot with that of two or three women whom she knew (not a very high standard), who kept hired help and who had fine houses of four or five rooms. Even the neighbors were better off than she..... Then her mind changed to a dull resentment against "things." Everything seemed against her."¹

In "A Day's Pleasure" is presented the pathetic figure of Mrs. Markham as she spends a day in their little village.² She arose very early and prepared for the trip by lamplight. When they reached the village Mr. Markham let her out at one of the grocery-stores and he drove to the elevators to sell his wheat. She entered the grocery store where she sat until the baby began to get restless and troublesome, then she spent half an hour helping him amuse himself around the nail-kegs.

After a time she rose and went out on the walk where she waited until Sam came back and asked him for some money, explaining that she had to buy underclothes for the children.

After she made her purchases of cotton flannel, mittens, and thread, she remained in the store until noon.

1. Prairie Folks
2. Main-Travelled Roads.

When she became hungry she went out to the wagon for her lunch and took it into the grocery store to eat it -- as she could get a drink of water from the grocer.

She sat in the store until she felt ashamed to stay there any longer. Then she walked to a dry-goods store, but when the clerk asked, "'Anything to-day, Mrs. -----?'" she answered, "'No, I guess not,' and turned away with a foolish face."

She returned to the street and became bitter and resentful as she saw ladies pass, holding their demi-trains in the latest city fashion, or pushing baby carriages in which sat well-dressed babies laughing and playing with toys.

Her next attempt to pass time away was to go into the drug store, but seeing the fountain made her thirsty and she again walked out in the street. She knew her husband was having a good time and had forgotten her, for he was across the street in the blacksmith shop talking and laughing with a group of men.

The grocer thought nothing of her returning to the store for he was accustomed to seeing worn and weary mothers sit for hours in his big wooden chair and nurse their tired and fretful children. Their pathetic wandering up and down the street was not an unusual happening, and it never possessed any meaning to him.

Mr. Garland feels that the farm woman is the victim of circumstances; she desires the better things of life, but they are denied her. This is shown in Mrs. Markham as she is entertained in the home of Mrs. Hall. A friend visiting in the city home of the Halls called their attention to Mrs. Markham when he saw her walking by the house with her baby in her arms. Savage anger and weeping were in her eyes and on her lips, and there was hopeless tragedy in her shambling walk and weak back.

"In the silence he went on to say, 'I saw the poor, dejected creature twice this morning, I couldn't forget her.'"

"That woman came to town to-day to get a change, to have a little play spell, and she is wandering around like a starved and weary cat. I wonder if there is a woman in this town with sympathy enough and courage enough to go out and help that woman? The saloon keepers, the politicians, and the grocers make it pleasant for the man -- so pleasant that he forgets his wife. But the wife is left without a word.'"

Mrs. Hall dropped her work and asked Mrs. Markham in. After some coaxing, Mrs. Markham yielded to the friendly voice and entered Mrs. Hall's dainty and lovely home. She saw everything, the pictures, the curtains, the piano, the wall-paper, the little tea-stand.

"Mrs. Hall did not ask about her affairs. She talked to her about the sturdy little baby and about the things upon which Delia's eyes dwelt....."

"The rattle of the wagon roused them both. Sam was at the gate for her. Delia departed, telling Mrs. Hall, 'Oh, I've had such a good time.'"

The day had been made beautiful for Mrs. Markham.

All of the women whom Mr. Garland pictures are not as pathetic as these just given. Mrs. Haskins in "Under the Lion's Paw" is another type.¹ In search of a new place to settle, the Haskins family had traveled many miles over muddy roads in cold December weather and at nightfall asked for food and lodging at the Council home. They were immediately taken in by the Councils who were very good to them. Mrs. Haskins was a small, timid, and discouraged-looking woman, but still pretty, in a thin and sorrowful way. It was an unmeasured pleasure to sit there in the warm, homely kitchen, the jovial chatter of the housewife driving out and holding at bay the growl of the impotent, cheated wind. Mrs. Haskins' eyes filled with tears which fell down upon the sleeping baby in her arms. The world was not so desolate, cold, and hopeless, after all.

Later in a conversation with Mrs. Council, Mrs. Has-

1. Main-Travelled Roads.

kins gave a bit of information about herself: "'Our folks was Canadians an' small-boned, and then since my last child I hain't got up again fairly. I don't like t' complain. Tim has about all he can bear now -- but they was days this week when I jest wanted to lay right down an' die.'"

Mr. Garland seldom pictured a farm wife who was satisfied with her lot; but Mrs. Council, in "Under the Lion's Paw" is different. As he neared the fragrant and warmly lighted kitchen, with the Haskins family, Mr. Council shouted, "'Mother, here are some wayfarers an' folks who need sumthin' t' eat an' a place t' snooze.'"

Mrs. Council, a large, jolly, rather coarse-looking woman, took the children in her arms quite as she had handled her own babies, who were now grown men and women. "'Come right in, you little rabbits. Most asleep hey? Now here's a drink o' milk f'r each o' ye. I'll have s'm tea in a minute. Take off y'r things and set up t' the fire.'"

"'His' Haskins, set right up to the table an' take a good swig o' tea whilst I make y' s'm toast.....'"

"'Yes, I do my own work,' Mrs. Council was heard to say in the pause which followed. 'I'm gettin' purty heavy t' be on m' laigs all day, but we can't afford t' hire, so I keep raskin' around somehow, like a foundered horse. S'lame -- I tell Council he can't tell how lame I am, f'r I'm jest as lame in ons laig as t' other,' and the good soul

laughed at the joke on herself as she took a handful of flour and dusted the biscuit-board to keep the dough from sticking."

Other characters of the type of Mrs. Council are Mrs. James Sanford in "A "Good Fellow's" Wife" and Mrs. Ripley in "Mrs. Ripley's Trip."¹ These women also lived the hard life required of all pioneer women, but there was something in their characters that kept them from surrendering completely to the deadening influences of pioneer life.

In all of these types of women, Mr. Garland, doubtless has his mother in mind, and pictures the drudgery and hardship of her life by means of other characters.

1. Main-Travelled Roads.

THE TREATMENT OF THE INDIANS

From the time Hamlin Garland was a youngster in Wisconsin, he came in contact with the Indians. Often the Indians walked into the Garland home without knocking. Since they did not knock at the wigwam of a red neighbor, they did not knock at white men's doors. The Garlands soon learned their ways, and did not fear them. Mrs. Garland often gave the Indians bread and meat which they were always happy to get. "Food was always taken without thanks and eaten with much relish while sitting beside our fire."¹

"Once two old fellows, while sitting by the fire watched Frank and me bringing in wood for the kitchen stove, and smiled and muttered between themselves thereat. At last one of them patted my brother on the head and called out admiringly, 'Small peppoose, heap work -- good!' and we were very proud of the old man's praise."²

Due to his contact with the Indians, when a child, Hamlin Garland became interested in them and his interest became greater as he grew older. In 1897 he visited the Sioux Reservation where he conversed with the head men and inquired into their history; he found the stirring tales of

1. A Son of the Middle Border, p. 12

2. Ibid, p. 13.

their youth absorbingly interesting.

In examining the records of the Agency and in talking with Sitting Bull, Mr. Garland learned that Sitting Bull was proud of the fact that he was a red man, and believed in remaining as he was created. "'The great spirit made me red, and red I am satisfied to remain,' he declared. 'All my people ask is to be let alone, to hunt the buffalo, and to live the life of our fathers' -- and in this he had the sympathy of many white men even of his day.'"1

From Wolf Voice, his Indian guide and interpreter on the Cheyenne Reservation, Mr. Garland obtained many curious glimpses into the psychology of the red people. He learned that the spirits of the various offerings were for the spirits of the dead, as Wolf Voice said, "'Spirit no eat tobacco, spirit eat spirit of tobacco.'"2

"This explanation was essentially Oriental in its philosophy. It was the essence of the offering, the invisible part which was taken by the invisible dead."2

Mr. Garland and Wolf Voice stopped at the Half-Way Ranch, and the manner in which the cattlemen treated Wolf Voice angered Mr. Garland. "He was much more admirable than they, and yet they would not allow him to sleep in the

1. A Daughter of the Middle Border, p. 41

2. Ibid., p. 46.

house."¹

In these lines we can also see that Mr. Garland had a very kind regard for the red people and that he felt that the white men were being unfair to them.

On another trip into Oklahoma, Hamlin Garland made further study of the Indians. In the villages, he saw men and women at their work, and children in their play; all seemed to be very happy and quite indifferent to the white visitors.

After considerable study of the Indians and after talking with several Indian Agents, Mr. Garland concluded that the scalp dance was no more representative of the red man's daily life than the bayonet-charge is representative of the white man's civilization. "Having no patience with the writers who regarded the Indian as a wild beast, I based my interpretation on experiences of men like Major Stouch and Seger, Indian Agents, who, by many years' experience, had proved the red man's fine qualities."²

Mr. Garland was thoroughly in sympathy with the Indians and realized that they were mistreated by the white people who confined them to unpleasant, arid reservations.

His trip into the Cheyenne Indian Territory proved to

1. A Daughter of the Middle Border, p. 46
 2. Ibid, p. 176.

be very important and valuable to Mr. Garland; it enabled him to complete the writing of The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop, and started him on a series of short stories depicting the life of the red man. It also gave him other valuable information and confirmed him in his conviction that the Indian needed an interpreter.

In visiting the Sioux Indians, Mr. Garland learned from Primeau, his guide, about the Ghost Dance, so far as the Sioux were concerned. "There was nothing war-like about it," he insisted. "It was a religious appeal. It was a prayer to the Great Spirit to take pity on the red man and bring back the world of the buffalo. They carried no weapons, in fact they carried nothing which the white man had brought to them. They even took the metal fringes off their shirts. They believed that if they gave up all signs of the whites, the Great Spirit would turn his face upon them again."¹

From Primeau's words we see that the Indians wished to be completely isolated from the white people because they had been driven from their homes and their hunting grounds, by the white settlers.

Slohan, who had been closely associated with Sitting Bull, gave Mr. Garland a great deal of information about

1. A Daughter of the Middle Border, p. 192.

Sitting Bull, which he promised to tell just as Slohan had told him. This Indian was willing to talk about his people, their ways, customs, and manners, but Looking Stag, another of the warriors, who had known Sitting Bull, was indifferent toward Mr. Garland. He regarded the coming of strange white men to his lodge as something of a nuisance. But, when he recalled that he had seen Mr. Garland at a previous time, he treated him with high respect and mutual confidence. Mr. Garland put his questions freely and Looking Stag replied with an air of candor.

Everywhere Mr. Garland went, he studied the soldiers, agents, missionaries, traders, and squaw-men with insatiable interest. He was so absorbingly impressed that he later put his information in his stories. He felt that justice had not been done in much of the literature and writings dealing with them; "We have had plenty of the 'wild redskin' kind of thing, I am going to tell of the red man as the Indian Agents know him, as a man of the polished stone age trying to adapt himself to steam and electricity."¹

As Mr. Garland studied the Indians, he realized that humor, pathos, tragic bitterness, and religious exaltation were all within his reach.

In The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop, Mr. Garland

1. A Daughter of the Middle Border, p. 248.

has taken up the cause of the oppressed Indians with less of sentimentality and a firmer grasp of actual conditions than the author of Ramona. He has made an even more convincing plea for the rights of our national wards, and has voiced an equal indignation at sight of the tricks and abuses that our government has allowed to be put upon them.

One gathers from reading The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop that Mr. Garland is very well informed, and makes a worthy and able plea for justice for the Indian.

In this work, Mr. Garland is camping on his old trail; that is, he is writing fiction with a 'strong moral purpose in view. He is following under Victor Hugo's standard and idea, "Art for progress, the Beautiful useful," rather than the pitiful dilettante cry of an emasculated civilization, "Art for art's sake."

At times he pictures the red man more kindly, more indulgently, than he does the white man. Perhaps the red man stands the scrutiny better.

Mr. Garland's earlier pictures of the Indian are scattered through his Western stories. There is nothing finer in our literature of the Indian than the way in which the Tetongs gave up Cut Finger in The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop. A sheep man was killed by a member of the tribe. The whole tribe was to be punished by the military unless the murderer was made known. Some of the tribe were for

refusing. It was supposed by the authorities that "it was a joint affair." The old chief, knowing what the consequences would be to the tribe if they refused, commanded the killer to declare himself. At the council fire, all were grouped about in a circle.

"A low mutter and jostling caused every glance to center upon one side of the circle, and then, decked in war-paint, gay with beads and feathers and carrying a rifle, Cut Finger stepped silently and haughtily into the circle and stood motionless as a statue, his tall figure erect and rigid as an oak.

"A moaning sound swept over the assembly, and every eye was fixed on the young man. 'Aheei! Aheei!' the women wailed, in astonishment and fear; two or three began a low, sad chant, and death seemed to stretch a black wing over the council. By his weapons, by his war-paint, by his bared head decked with eagle plumes, and by the haughty lift of his face, Cut Finger proclaimed louder than words: 'I am the man who killed the herder.'

"Standing so, he began to sing a stern song:

'I alone killed him -- the white man.
No one helped me; I alone fired the shot.
He will drive his sheep no more on Tetong lands,
This dog of a herder.
He lies there in the short grass.
It was I, Cut Finger, who did it.'

"As this chant died away he turned: 'I go to the hills to fight and die like a man.' And before the old men could stay him, he had vanished among the young horsemen of the outer circle, and a moment later the loud drumming of his pony's hoofs could be heard as he rode away."¹

The Indians believed that their dead would come back to restore their old life and drive out the white man. They chanted weirdly thrillingly, this song:

"The whole world of the dead is returning.
Our nation is coming, is coming.
The eagle has brought us the message,
Bearing the word of the Father.
Over the glad new earth they are coming,
Our dead come driving the elk and the deer.
See them hurrying the herds of the bison!
This the Father has promised,
This the Father has given."²

Hamlin Garland found through his study that the Indian Agents were not honest; he learned that the Indians were often given short rations and bad meat.

One of the missionaries for kindergarten work on the Tetong Reservation gave the following opinion in regard to placing the Indians on secluded reservations: "'Any attempt to make the Tetong conform to the isolated, dreary, lonesome life of the Western farmer will fail. The red man

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1. The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop, pp 310-311
 2. Chamberlin, Joseph Edgar, "Hamlin Garland -- The Hardy of the West," The Boston Transcript.

is a social being -- he is pathetically dependent on his tribe. He has always lived a communal life, with the voices of his fellows always in his ears. He loves to sit at evening and hear the chatter of his neighbors..... He seldom worked or played alone. His worst punishment was to be banished from the camping circle. Now the Dawes theorists think they can take this man, who has no newspaper, no books, no letters, and set him apart from his fellows in a wretched hovel on the bare plain, miles from a neighbor, there to improve his farm and become a citizen. This mechanical theory has failed in every case; nominally, the Sioux, the Piegons, are living this abhorrent life; actually, they are always visiting. The loneliness is unendurable, and so they will not cultivate gardens or keep live-stock, which would force them to keep at home. If they were allowed to settle in groups of four or five they would do better."¹

Mr. Garland agrees with this philosophy; he goes on to tell us at a later time in The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop that the Tetongs, under the supervision of an agent, whom they liked and who was very fair to them, were taught to do many types of work, such as building fences, bridges, and cabins, painting buildings, and piling grain in ware-

1. The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop, p. 57.

houses. Each one was given his rations and all were happy. This agent also persuaded the parents to send their children to school.

The Indians could have been self-supporting, had they been placed on tillable land, but they were placed on land as arid as a desert. It was fair to look upon, but was not fertile. The white people seemed to forget that the Indians were human souls groping for life, light, and happiness. An old Indian chief thus aptly expressed his opinion of the white people:

"When the white man come to buy our lands we are great chiefs -- very tall; when we ask for our money to be paid to us, then we are small, like children."¹

At times the Indians went to their agent pleading for help: "Little Father, we are blind. We cannot see the way. Lead us and we will go....."²

Evidence that the Indians were moved to arid, unproductive lands, that were not even fit for garden products, is indicated in these lines: "We will plant gardens, Little Father, but it is of no use. For two years we tried it, and each year the hot sun dried our little plants. Our corn withered and our potatoes came to nothing. Do not ask

1. The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop, p. 109

2. Ibid., p. 121

us to again plough the hard earth. It is all a weariness to no result."¹

The following quotation, taken from a speech by Red Wolf, indicates the attitude of the more thoughtful Indians: "We lived as the Great Spirit made us. Then the white man came -- and now we are bewildered with his commands. Our eyes are blinded, we know not where to go. We know not whom to believe or trust. I am old, I am going to my grave troubled over the fate of my children. Agents come and go. The good ones go too soon -- the bad ones stay too long, but they all go. There is no one in whose care to leave my children. It is better to die here in the hills than to live the slave of the white man, ragged and spiritless, slinking about like a dog without a friend. We do not want to make war any more -- we ask only to live as our fathers lived, and die here in the hills."

"You have destroyed our game -- and you will not let us go to the mountains to hunt. You must do something besides furnish us ploughs in a land where the rain does not come."²

The Indians realized that they were well surrounded by the settlers who were ever ready to punish them for any deed

1. The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop, p. 136

2. Ibid, pp 184-185.

which was committed whether or not it was certain that the Indians were guilty; this is evident in the words of Grayman, a Tetong chief, "The cattlemen and sheepmen are always quarrelling, but they readily join hands to do the Tetongs harm."¹

Finally, we see the Tetongs on parade, "carrying out the wishes of their chief, illustrating, without knowing it, the wondrous change which had come to them; the old men, still clinging to the past, the young men careless of the future, the children already transformed, and, as they glanced up some were smiling, some were grave and dreaming. They were passing as the plains and the wild spaces were passing; as the buffalo had passed; as every wild thing must pass before the ever-thickening flood of white ploughmen pressing upon the land."²

So the Indian race passed. Under the leadership of good agents, they were quite happy. Even though they did not reach what we call civilization, they did not care, for they had no desire to live like the white men.

1. The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop, p. 305
 2. Ibid, p. 413.

CONCLUSION

Hamlin Garland saw the hopelessness, the unfairness, the unjustness, and the endless toil that the pioneers had to endure. He states his opinions frankly and truly with no apologies.

Beneath his rather antagonistic ideas toward border life, there is a deep sympathy for the pioneers, who left the East hoping to find a life that would offer them many opportunities for advancement. But this sympathy is extended to the pioneer women in a much greater degree than to the men, due to the fact that his father was constantly pushing farther westward and taking his mother farther from her relatives and friends.

Hamlin Garland very early in life removed himself from the "Middle Border" and went east. In his last three books, Roadside Meetings, 1930; Companion on the Trail, 1931, and My Friendly Contemporaries, 1932, which are all literary chronicles and personal reminiscences, Mr. Garland's attitude toward the West has somewhat softened. He is no longer so pessimistic and antagonistic as he was in his "border books."

In a personal letter which I received from Mr. Garland he says in regard to the West: "My attitude toward the West has changed, of course, for with the telephone, good

roads, the radio, the moving picture theatre, the farmer's wife is less of the lonely drudge; nevertheless, the farmer's lot is not, even now, a primrose path."

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