The Difficulties in Settling the West.

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

The difficulties which the early settlers had to encounter were very great, and the self-sacrifice that was required was
enough to turn back some of the startled hearts, for it is hard to leave a land of civilization and go almost alone, where danger in the shape of disease and the cruel death of the midway is waiting on every hand.

The first and greatest difficulty to be encountered was public opinion on the matter. As was said before, the idea that it was practicable to settle and make anything out of the great American desert was scoffed at by nearly all thinking people of the East, and as a consequence very little support or encouragement was given to those who wanted to attempt, at least, the reclaiming of this country. To get money or goods for such a scheme was next to impossible. And what was true of private enterprise was also true of governmental ideas and actions on the same question.

A great many bills were brought up in our Congress during the early part of the century, the express purpose of which was to explore and determine the exact nature of this western country;
but claiming it a waste of money and time as well as dangerous in the extreme. The Government, which is noted for enterprise and the attempting of dangerous schemes when there is a chance of success, refused to take up the work and the veil of silence and superstitions was which had fallen over the west seemed to have become fixed and the only hope for the unsettled land was to remain as it had always been the home of the buffalo and the Indian.

The only men who had dared to enter these arbitrations were a few trappers and bold adventurers who were acquainted with Indian ways and who had been brought up to undergo hardships and encounter dangers and to regard their own lives of very small consequence. Among this adventure class might have been found men who were fleeing from justice and found here immunity from chase in a wilderness and not a city of refuge. And there were others who were trying
To isolate themselves from civilized life and found here the solitude which they desired. The pictures of the country which these persons would paint and try to impress on the eastern people could not be very reasoning as they could only want to make things as dark as possible. The traffic would see that settlement would spoil his hunting ground. The fugitive from justice would see danger in the coming of civilization. The hermit would want his solitude still. The fugitive harm the sense of these said will be spoken of farther on.

It was not till the Lewis and Clark expedition any definite and official knowledge was obtained and this expedition and the discovery of gold in California were the impulse which started the western immigration. The discovery of gold aided in a kind of an indirect way as people who were led on by the gold fever had to cross this country and then they had a chance to see with their own eyes
the possibilities which lay in the future. They were led to think if this country will support thousands of buffalo, why not support great numbers of horses, cattle and sheep, if it will rear such an abundance of the best kind of grass why not raise corn and wheat in similar abundance. The climate too was found to be of the best. But one drawback remained: it was the American Indian, cruel, cunning, unscrupulous, but he had been conquered in the East why not in the West?

Soon after the gold fever had spent its base and the people of the East had begun to quiet down to sober industry, the new picture of the West which had been painted by the gold seekers commenced to impress itself upon their minds and they turned towards this as possibly a new source in which to turn their energies. Money was forthcoming now as if it was not taking as great risk and public opinion had been...
materially changed by the learning of a few facts and so the question of immigration was once more strongly debated.

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

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

These structures in many cases were not as comfortable as the wigwam of the savages. The furnishing was of the most meager description and quantity. A dry goods box to sit on. The dirt floor and a blanket for a bed. Those who settled along creeks and could make log houses had the chance of making a comfortable living place. Though small it could be made warm, but in all the furnishing was about the
The cultivation of the soil of the prairie land was no easy thing. And an sod will not raise a crop of any consequence. Where there was timber it had to be cleared up first before the land could be used. All this took time, and during this time all the settlers had to depend on was the food supply brought with him and what could be obtained by hunting and fishing. Many a time their food ran out entirely and hunger stared them in the face. Their connection with the East was imperfect so they could obtain no food or clothing from that source and they were left to fight the battle of existence alone. If such a thing could be possible they were worse off than the settlers of New England. For when they came over enough provision could be brought over to last through quite a period of time. In a voyage in a prairie schooner this was impossible. Another thing that the settlers had to contend with was the Indians.
inhabiting this region. There were remnants of the "Five Nations" which so terrorized the Eastern States in early times. True they were not as strong in numbers but they still had a good deal of the energy and cruelty of former times. In addition to these were the Sioux, which contained several minor tribes, and the Arapahoe and several smaller tribes. Most of these lived in the mountains but they made constant incursions on the plains to hunt game and kill settlers. They left the mark of their savages wherever they went and many were the men who fell beneath their tomahawk and arrows. The Indians at first were not disposed to be unfriendly but they commenced to look with suspicion on the invasion of this hunting grounds and the fur-trappers and outlaws who all readily inhabited that region tried in every way to incense the hatred of the savages. Constant fighting weakened the savages while the settlers were as constantly
reinforced by new settlers till finally the slow moving forces of government took up the struggle and when the United States troops came nothing was left for the Indians but to move out. When the Indians went the greatest barrier to settlement went for it takes a hardy man much more a hardy woman to face the dangers of an Indian massacre or captivity and when we take into consideration the fact that they were exposing their children too it seems strange to us that any body could have even thought of attempting the dangerous experiment. But they did and a monument of glory in the shape of the best States of the union stands as a reward.

Another of the the great difficulties was that of keeping order. When the first settlers came they found the lawless men who had fled from justice in the East. These though years of abandonment had become none, except in number than the Indians. These outlaws not only carried on their own lawless deeds
but they helped to excite the Indians to frequent outbreaks. The trouble was not as bad as that experienced in the early days of California, but it was bad enough and for good many years was quite an important factor that had to be taken into calculation. Whatever some of these men could do when they had the chance and dared to act was shown in the burning and sacking of Lawrence and other atrocities of the same time.

Above all her difficulties the West has risen triumphant. The prejudice of the East was overcome by facts and the hope of gain. The Government was stirred to action by recognizing the prospect of worth and future greatness. The journey in the covered wagons was accomplished though the way was marked by hardships, privation, want, and death. The Indian and lawless man was vanquished by steadfast courage and determination. The East has stimulated the feeling for the crowded
masses to find room and a home on the broad western prairies. The cry of "Go west young man and grow up with the country" has echoed far and wide. And they have come from the farm, from the workshop, and from the office. They have brought the best brains and the sturdiest characters of the world with them. They have built splendid cities where once was waving grass and herds of buffalo. The factory has sprung up. The farm produces its goods. Our statesmen have made reputations. Our lawyers, our judges are among the best. The stars which we have added to the constellation are among the brightest and purest. We welcome the traveller still. To our states he comes; but not in the slow-moving wagon but in the rapid car. In the bands of steel have bound us to the East and they have bound us firmly. We are necessities to each other. We are the same.
Government. Death to us would be death to the East. We fed her. She gives us nothing. We are a sister now and they delinve us. The object of her scorn has become the object of her best hope, for the future that awaits us is grand beyond comprehension. We have overcome our difficulties. The reward has come, and to the early settlers who risked their lives and gave up their homes let us give our praise.
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