Part I of Flagg's The Far West, 1836–1837

Early Western Travels 1748–1846 Volume XXVI

Early Western Travels 1748–1846

A Series of Annotated Reprints of some of the best and rarest contemporary volumes of travel, descriptive of the Aborigines and Social and Economic Conditions in the Middle and Far West, during the Period of Early American Settlement

Edited with Notes, Introductions, Index, etc., by Reuben Gold Thwaites, LL.D.

Editor of “The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents,” “Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition,” “Hennepin's New Discovery,” etc.

Volume XXVI

Part I of Flagg's, The Far West, 1836–1837

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PREFACE TO VOLUMES XXVI–XXVII

These two volumes are devoted to reprints of Edmund Flagg's *The Far West* (New York, 1838), and Father Pierre Jean de Smet's *Letters and Sketches, with a Narrative of a*

Year's Residence among the Indian Tribes of the Rocky Mountains (Philadelphia, 1843). Flagg's two-volume work occupies all of our volume xxvi and the first part of volume xxvii, the remaining portion of the latter being given to De Smet's book.

Edmund Flagg was prominent among early American prose writers, and also ranked high among our minor poets. A descendant of the Thomas Flagg who came to Boston from England, in 1637, Edmund was born November 24, 1815, at Wescasset, Maine. Being graduated with distinction from Bowdoin College in 1835, in the same year he went with his mother and sister Lucy to Louisville, Kentucky. Here, in a private school, he taught the classics to a group of boys, and contributed articles to the Louisville *Journal* , a paper with which he was intermittently connected, either as editorial writer or correspondent, until 1861.

The summer and autumn of 1836 found Flagg travelling in Missouri and Illinois, and writing for the *Journal* the letters which were later revised and enlarged to form *The Far West* , herein reprinted. Tarrying at St. Louis in the autumn of 1836, our author began the study of law, and the following year was admitted to the bar; but in 1838 he returned to newspaper life, taking charge for a time of the St. Louis *Commercial Bulletin.* During the winter of 1838–39 he assisted George D. Prentice, founder of the 10 Louisville *Journal* , in the work of editing the Louisville *Literary News Letter.* Finding, however, that newspaper work overtaxed his health, Flagg next accepted an invitation to enter the law office of Sergeant S. Prentiss at Vicksburg, Mississippi, where in addition to his legal duties he found time to edit the Vicksburg *Whig.* Having been wounded in a duel with James Hagan of the *Sentinel* in that city, Flagg returned to the less excitable North and undertook editorial duties upon the *Gazette* at Marietta, Ohio (1842–43), and later (1844–45) upon the St. Louis *Evening Gazette.* He also served as official reporter of the Missouri state constitutional convention the following year, and published a volume of its debates; subsequently (until 1849) acting as a court reporter in St. Louis.

The three succeeding years were spent abroad; first as secretary to Edward A. Hannegan, United States minister to Berlin, and later as consul at Venice. In February, 1852, he returned to America, and during the presidential campaign of that year edited a Democratic journal at St. Louis, known as the *Daily Times.* Later, as a reward for political service, he was made superintendent of statistics in the department of state, at Washington—a bureau having special charge of commercial relations. Here he was especially concerned with the compilation of reports on immigration and the cotton and tobacco trade, and published a *Report on Commercial Relations of the United States with all Foreign Nations* (4 vols., Washington, 1858). Through these reports, particularly the last named, Flagg's name became familiar to merchants in both the United States and Europe. From 1857 to 1860 he was Washington correspondent for several Western newspapers, and from 1861 to 1870 served as librarian of copyrights in the department of the interior. Having in 1862 married Kate Adeline, daughter of Sidney S. Gallaher, of Virginia, he moved to 11 Highland View in that state (1870), and died there November 1, 1890.

In addition to his labors in the public service and as a newspaper man, Flagg found time for higher literary work, and won considerable distinction in that field. His first book, *The Far West* , although somewhat stilted in style, possesses considerable literary merit. Encouraged by the success of his initial endeavor, he wrote the following year (1839) the *Duchess of Ferrara* and *Beatrice of Padua* , two novels, each of which passed through at least two editions. The *Howard Queen* (1848) and *Blanche of Artois* (1850) were prize productions. *De Molai* (1888), says the New York *Sun* of the period, is “a powerful, dramatic tale which seems to catch the very spirit of the age of Philip of France. It is rare to find a story in which fact and invention are so evenly and adroitly balanced.” Our author also wrote several dramas, which were staged in Louisville, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and New York; he also composed numerous poems for newspapers and magazines. His masterpiece, however, was a history dedicated to his lifelong friend and colleague, George D. Prentice, entitled *The City of the Sea* (2 vols., New York, 1853). This work was declared

by the *Knickerbocker* to be “a carefully compiled, poetically-written digest of the history of the glorious old Venice— a passionate, thrilling, yet accurate and sympathetic account of the last struggle for independence.” At the time of his death Flagg had in preparation a volume of reminiscences, developed from a diary kept during forty years, but this has never been published.1

1 For a list of Flagg's prose and poetical writings, contributions to periodicals, and editorial works, see “Annual Report of the Librarian of Bowdoin College for the year ending June 1, 1891,” in Bowdoin College *Library Bulletin* (Brunswick, Maine, 1895).

“In hope of renovating the energies of a shattered constitution,” we are told, Flagg started in the early part of 12 June, 1836, on a journey to what was then known as the Far West. Taking a steamboat at Louisville, he went to St. Louis by way of the Ohio and the Mississippi, and after a brief delay ascended the latter to the mouth of the Illinois, and thence on to Peoria. Prevented by low water from proceeding farther, he returned by the same route to St. Louis, whence after three weeks' stay, spent either in the sick chamber or in making short trips about the city and its environs, the traveller crossed the Mississippi and struck out on horseback across the Illinois prairies, visiting Edwardsville, Alton, Carlinsville, Hillsborough, Carlisle, Lebanon, Belleville, and the American Bottoms. In July, after recrossing the Mississippi, he visited in like manner St. Charles, Missouri, by way of Bellefontaine and Florissant; crossed the Mississippi near Portage des Sioux, and passed through the Illinois towns of Grafton, Carrollton, Manchester, Jacksonville, Springfield, across Grand Prairie to Shelbyville, Mount Vernon, Pinkneyville, and Chester, and returned to St. Louis by way of the old French settlements of Kaskaskia, Prairie du Rocher, and Cahokia.

During this journey Flagg wrote for the Louisville *Journal* , as already stated, a series of letters describing the country through which he travelled. Hastily thrown together from the pages of his note book, this correspondence appeared anonymously under the title, “Sketches of a Traveller.” They were, however, soon attributed to Flagg, and two years

later were collected by the author and published in two small volumes by Harper and Brothers (New York, 1838), as *The Far West.* These volumes are in many respects the best description of the Middle West that had appeared up to the time they were written. Roughly following the journals of Michaux, Harris, and Cuming by forty, thirty, and twenty years respectively, Flagg skillfully shows the remarkable growth and development of the Western country. 13 His descriptions of the Ohio, Mississippi, and Illinois rivers are still among the best in print, particularly from the artistic standpoint. His account of the steamboat traffic is valuable for the history of navigation on the Western rivers, and shows vividly the obstacles which still confronted merchants of that time. Chapters xi, xii, and xiii, dealing with St. Louis and its immediate vicinity, are the most detailed in our series, while the descriptions of St. Charles and the Illinois towns through which Flagg passed, are excellent.

The modern reader cannot but wish that Flagg had devoted less space to his youthful philosophizing, but the atmosphere is at least wholesome. Unlike Harris, whose criticism of Western society was keen and acrid, Flagg was a man of broad sympathies, possessing an insight into human nature remarkable for so youthful a writer—for he was but twenty years of age at the time of his travels, and twenty-two when the book was published. Although mildly reproving the old French settlers for their lack of enterprise, he fully appreciates their domestic virtues, and gives a faithful picture of these pleasure-loving, contented, unprogressive people. His description of the once thriving villages of Kaskaskia, Prairie du Rocher, and Cahokia, are valuable historically, as showing the decay settling upon the French civilization after a few years of American occupation. Our author's interview with the Mormon convert, his conversations with early French and American settlers, his accounts of political meetings, his anecdotes illustrating Western curiosity, and particularly his carefully-recounted local traditions, throw much light on the beliefs, manners, and customs of the Western people of his time. *The Far West* is thus not only a graphic and often forceful description of the interesting region through which the author travelled, but a sympathetic synopsis of its local annals, affording much varied 14

information not otherwise obtainable. The present reprint, with annotations that seek to correct its errors, will, we think, prove welcome in our series.

In the *Letters and Sketches* of Father de Smet, we reprint another Western classic, related to the volumes of Flagg by their common terminus of travel at St. Louis.

No more interesting or picturesque episode has occurred in the history of Christian missions in the New World, than the famous visit made in the autumn of 1831 to General William Clark at St. Louis by the Flathead chiefs seeking religious instruction for their people. Vigorously exploited in the denominational papers of the East, this delegation aroused a sentiment that led to the founding of Protestant missions in Oregon and western Idaho, and incidentally to the solution of the Oregon question. But in point of fact, the Flathead deputation was sent to secure a Catholic missionary; and not merely one but four such embassies embarked for St. Louis before the great desideratum, a “black robe” priest, could be secured for ministration to this far-distant tribe. Employed in the Columbian fur-trade were a number of Christian Iroquois from Canada, who had been carefully trained at St. Regis and Caughnawaga in all the observances of the Roman Catholic church. Upon the Pacific waterways and in the fastnesses of the Rockies, these Iroquois taught their fellow Indians the ordinances of the church and the commands of the white man's Great Spirit. John Wyeth (see our volume xxi) testifies to the honesty and humanity of the Flathead tribe: “they do not lie, steal, nor rob any one, unless when driven too near to starvation.” He also testifies that they “appear to keep the Sabbath;” and that their word is “as good as the Bible.” These were the neophytes who craved instruction, and to whom was assigned that remarkable Jesuit missionary, Father Jean Pierre de Smet.

15

Born in Belgium in 1801, young De Smet was educated in a religious school at Malines. When twenty years of age he responded to an appeal to cross the Atlantic and carry the gospel to the red men of the Western continent. Arrived in Philadelphia (1821), the young Belgian was astonished to see a well-built town, travelled roads, cultivated farms, and

other appurtenances of civilization; he had expected only a wilderness and savages. Two years were spent in the Jesuit novitiate in Maryland, before the zealous youth saw any traces of frontier life. Then the youthful novice was removed to Florissant, Missouri, not far from St. Louis, where the making of a log-cabin and the breaking of fresh soil furnished a mild foretaste of his future career. Still more years elapsed before the cherished project of missionary labor could be realized. In 1829 St. Louis University was founded, and herein the young priest, who had been ordained in 1827, was employed upon the instructional force. Later years (1833–37) were spent in Europe, while recruiting his health and securing supplies for the infant university. It was not until 1838 that the first missionary enterprise was undertaken by Father de Smet, when a chapel for the Potawatomi was built on the site of the modem Council Bluffs. There, in 1839, the fourth Flathead deputation rested after the long journey from their Rocky Mountain home; and at the earnest solicitation of the young missioner, he was in the spring of 1840, detailed by his superior to ascertain and report upon the prospects of a mission to the mountain Indians.

Of the two tribesmen who had come down to St. Louis, Pierre the Left-handed (Gaucher) was sent back to his people with news of the success of the embassy, while his colleague Ignace was detained to serve as guide to the adventurous Jesuit who in April, 1840, set forth for the Flathead country with the annual fur-trade caravan. The 16 route traversed was the well-known Oregon Trail as far as the Green River rendezvous; there the father was rejoiced to meet a deputation of ten Flatheads, sent to escort him to their habitat, and at Prairie de la Messe was celebrated for them the first mass in the Western mountains. The trail led them on through Jackson's and Pierre's Holes; and in the latter valley the waiting tribesmen to the number of sixteen hundred had collected, and received the “black robe” as a messenger from Heaven. Chants and prayers were heard on every side; “in a fortnight,” reports the delighted missionary, “all knew their prayers.” After two months spent among his “dear Flatheads,” wandering with them across the divide, and encamping for some time at the Three Forks of the Missouri—where nearly forty years before Lewis and Clark first encountered the Western Indians—De Smet took leave of his

neophytes. Protected by a strong guard through the hostile Blackfeet country, he arrived at last at the fur-trade post of Fort Union at the junction of the Missouri and the Yellowstone. Descending thence to St. Louis he arrived there on the last day of December, 1840.

The remainder of the winter was occupied in preparations for a new journey, and in securing men and supplies for the equipment of the far-away mission begun under such favorable auspices. Once more the father departed from Westport—this time in May, 1841. The little company consisted, besides himself, of two other priests and three lay brothers, all of the latter being skilled mechanics. Among the members of the caravan were a number of California pioneers, one of whom has thus related his impressions of the young missionary: “He was genial, of fine presence, and one of the saintliest men I have ever known, and I cannot wonder that the Indians were made to believe him divinely protected. He was a man of great kindness and 17 great affability under all circumstances; nothing seemed to disturb his temper.”2

2 John Bidwell, “First Emigrant Train to California,” in *Century Magazine*, new series, xix, pp. 113, 114.

Father de Smet's letters describe in detail the scenery and incidents of the route from the eastern border of Kansas to Fort Hall, in Idaho, where the British factor received the travellers with abounding hospitality. Here some of the Flatheads were in waiting to convey the missionaries to the tribe, the chiefs of which met them in Beaver Head Valley, Montana, and testified their welcome with dignified simplicity. Passing over to the waters of the Columbia, they founded the mission of St. Mary upon the first Sunday in October, in the beautiful Bitter Root valley at the site of the later Fort Owen. Thence Father de Smet made a rapid journey in search of provisions to Fort Colville, on the upper Columbia, but was again at his mission stockade before the close of the year. In April a longer journey was projected, as far as Fort Vancouver, on the lower Columbia, where Dr. McLoughlin, the British factor, received the good priest with that cordial greeting for which he was already famous. During this journey the father narrowly escaped drowning in the turbulent

rapids of the Columbia, where five of his boatmen perished. Returned to St. Mary's, the prospects for a harvest of souls both among the Flatheads and the neighboring tribes appeared so promising that the missionary determined to seek re-enforcement and further aid in Europe. Thereupon he left his companions in charge of the “new Paraguay” of his hopes, and once more undertook the long and adventurous journey to the settlements, this time by way of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers, arriving at St. Louis the last of October, 1842. At this point the journeys detailed in the volume here reprinted come to an end. The later career of Father de Smet and his subsequent 18 journeyings will be detailed in the preface to volumes xxviii and xxix, in the latter of which will appear his *Oregon Missions.*

Father de Smet's writings on missionary subjects ended only with his death, and were increasingly voluminous and detailed. The *Letters and Sketches* were his first published work, with the exception of a portion of a compilation that appeared in 1841, on the Jesuit missions of Missouri. We find therefore, in the present reprint, the vitality and enthusiasm of the young traveller relating new scenes, and the abounding joy of the successful missionary uplifting a barbaric race. The book was written with the avowed purpose of creating interest in his newly-organized work, and securing contributions therefor. The freshness of description, the wholesome simplicity of the narrative, the frank presentation of wilderness life, charm the reader, and make this book a classic of early Western exploration. Cast in the form of letters, wherein there is more or less repetition of statement, it is nevertheless evident that these have been subjected to a certain editorial revision, and that literary quality has been considered. Aside from the interest evoked by the personality of the writer, and the events of his narrative, the work throws much light upon wilderness travel, the topography and scenery of the Rocky Mountain region, and above all upon the habits and customs, modes of thought, social standards, and religious conceptions of the important tribes of the interior.

After the present series of reprints had been planned for, and announced in a detailed prospectus, there was issued from the press of Francis P. Harper of New York the

important volumes edited by Major H. M. Chittenden and Alfred Talbot Richardson, entitled *Life, Letters, and Travels of Father Pierre Jean de Smet, S. J., 1801–73.* This publication contains much new material, derived from manuscript 19 sources, which has been interwoven in chronological order with the missionary's several books; and to it all have been added an adequate biography and bibliography of De Smet. This scholarly work has been of great service to us in preparing for accurate reprint the original editions of the only two of Father de Smet's publications that fall within the chronological field of our series.

In the preparation for the press of Flagg's *The Far West* , the Editor has had the assistance of Clarence Cory Crawford, A. M.; in editing Father de Smet's *Letters and Sketches* , his assistant has been Louise Phelps Kellogg, Ph.D.

R. G. T.

Madison, Wis. , April, 1906.

PART I OF FLAGG'S THE FAR WEST, 1836–1837

Reprint of Volume I, and chapters xxiii–xxxii of Volume II, of original edition: New York, 1838

THE FAR WEST: OR, A TOUR BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS.

EMBRACING OUTLINES OF WESTERN LIFE AND SCENERY; SKETCHES OF THE PRAIRIES, RIVERS, ANCIENT MOUNDS, EARLY SETTLEMENTS OF THE FRENCH, ETC., ETC.

“If thou be a severe, sour-complexioned man, then I here disallow thee to be a competent judge.”— Izaak Walton.

“I pity the man who can travel from Dan to Beershebs, and cry, ‘Tis all barren.’”— Sterne.

“Chacun a son stile; le mien, comme vous, n'est pas laconique.”— Me. De Sevigne.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

NEW-YORK: PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS NO. 82 CLIFFS-STREET.

1838

Clarkes River

To One — AT WHOSE SOLICITATION THESE VOLUMES WERE COMMENCED, AND WITH WHOSE ENCOURAGEMENT THEY HAVE BEEN COMPLETED— TO MY SISTER LUCY ARE THEY AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

TO THE READER

“He that writes Or makes a feast, more certainly invites His judges than his friends; there's not a guest But will find something wanting or ill dress'd.”

In laying before the majesty of the public a couple of volumes like the present, it has become customary for the author to disclaim in his preface all original design of *perpetrating a book* , as if there were even more than the admitted *quantum* of sinfulness in the act. Whether or not such disavowals now-a-day receive all the credence they merit, is not for the writer to say; and whether, were the prefatory asseveration, as in the present case, diametrically opposed to what it often is, the reception would be different, is even more difficult to predict. The articles imbodied in the following volumes were, a portion of

them, in their original, hasty production, *designed* for the press; yet the author unites in the disavowal of his predecessors of all intention at that time of perpetrating *a book.*

In the early summer of '36, when about starting upon a ramble over the prairies of the “Far West,” in hope of renovating the energies of a shattered constitution, a request was made of the writer, by the distinguished editor of the Louisville Journal, to contribute [vi] to the columns of that periodical whatever, in the course of his pilgrimage, might be deemed of sufficient interest.1 A series of articles soon after

1 George D. Prentice (1802–70), founder of the Louisville *Journal*, was graduated from Brown University in 1823. Two years later he became editor of the Connecticut *Mirror* and in 1828–30 had charge of the *New England Weekly Review.* In the spring of 1830, at the earnest solicitation of several influential Connecticut Whigs, he went West to gather data for a life of Henry Clay. Once in Kentucky he threw all the force of his political genius in support of Clay's policy. On November 24, 1830, he issued the first number of the Louisville *Journal*, which through his able management was soon recognized as the chief Whig organ in the West. Wholly devoted to Clay's cause, its own reputation rose and declined with that of its champion. The *Journal* maintained an existence till 1868, when Henry Watterson consolidated it with the *Courier*, under the title of *Courier-Journal.* Prentice is reputed to have been the originator of the short, pointed paragraph in journalism. His *Life of Henry Clay* (Hartford, 1831) is well known. In 1859 he published a collection of poems under the name *Prenticeana* (New York). It was reprinted in 1870 with a biography of the author by G. W. Griffin (Philadelphia).— Ed.

30 made their appearance in that paper under the title, “ *Sketches of a Traveller.* ” They were, as their name purports, mere sketches from a traveller's *portfeuille* , hastily thrown upon paper whenever time, place, or opportunity rendered convenient; in the steamboat saloon, the inn bar-room, the logcabin of the wilderness, or upon the venerable mound of the Western prairie. With such favour were these hasty productions received, and so extensively were they circulated, that the writer, on returning from his pilgrimage to “the shrine of health,” was induced, by the solicitations of partial friends, to enter at his leisure

upon the preparation for the press of a mass of MSS. of a similar character, written at the time, which had never been published; a thorough revision and enlargement of that which had appeared, united with *this* , it was thought, would furnish a passable volume or two upon the “Far West.” Two years of residence in the West have since passed away; and the arrangement for the press of the fugitive sheets of a wanderer's sketch-book would not yet, perhaps, have been deemed of sufficient importance to warrant the necessary labour, had he not been dialy reminded that his productions, whatever their merit, were already public property so far as could be the case, and at the mercy of every one who thought proper to assume paternity. “Forbearance ceased to be longer a virtue,” and the result is now before the [vii] reader. But, while alluding to that aid which his labours may have rendered to others, 31 the author would not fail fully to acknowledge his own indebtedness to those distinguished writers upon the West who have preceded him. To Peck, Hall, Flint, Wetmore, and to others, his acknowledgments are due and are respectfully tendered.2

In extenuation of the circumstance that some portions

2 John M. Peck, a Baptist minister, went as a missionary to St. Louis in 1817. After nine years of preaching in Missouri and Illinois, he founded (1826) the Rocky Spring Seminary for training teachers and ministers. It is said that he travelled more than six thousand miles collecting money for endowing this school. In 1828 Peck began publishing the *Western Pioneer*, the first official organ of the Baptist church in the West, and served as the corresponding secretary and financial agent of the American Baptist Publication Society from 1843 to 1845. He died at Rocky Springs, Illinois, in 1858. Peck made important contributions to the publications of the early historical societies in the Northwest. His chief independent works are: *A Guide for Emigrants* (Boston, 1831), republished as *A New Guide for Emigrants* (Boston, 1836); *Gazetteer of Illinois* (Jacksonville, 1834 and 1837); *Father Clark or the Pioneer Preacher* (New York, 1855); and “Life of Daniel Boone,” in Jared Sparks, *American Biography.*

Judge James Hall was born in Philadelphia (1793), and died near Cincinnati in 1868. He was a member of the Washington Guards during the War of 1812–15, was promoted to the 2nd United States artillery, and accompanied Decatur on his expedition to Algiers (1815). Resigning in 1818, he practiced law at Shawneetown, Illinois (1820–27), and filled the office of public prosecutor and judge of the circuit court. He moved to Vandalia (1827) and began editing the *Illinois Intelligencer* and the *Illinois Monthly Magazine.* From 1836 to 1853 he was president of the commercial bank at Cincinnati, and acted as state treasurer. He published: *Letters from the West* (London, 1828); *Legends of the West* (1832); *Memoirs of the Public Services of General William Henry Harrison* (Philadelphia, 1836); *Sketches of History, Life and Manners of the West* (Philadelphia, 1835); *Statistics of the West at the Close of 1836* (Cincinnati, 1836); *Notes on the Western States* (Philadelphia, 1838); *History and Biography of the Indians of North America* (3 volumes, 1838–44); *The West, its Soil, Surface, etc.* (Cincinnati, 1848); *The West, its Commerce and Navigation* (Cincinnati, 1848); besides a few historical novels. For a contemporary estimate of the value of Hall's writings see *American Monthly Magazine* (New York, x835), v, pp. 9–15.

For Timothy Flint, see Pattie's *Narrative*, in our volume xviii, p. 25, note I.

Major Alphonso Wetmore (1793–1849) was of much less importance as a writer on Western history than those above mentioned. He entered the 23rd infantry in 1812, and subsequently was transferred to the 6th. He served as paymaster for his regiment from 1815 to 1821, and was promoted to a captaincy (1819). In 1816 he moved with his family to Franklinton, Missouri, and later practiced law in St. Louis. His chief contribution to Western travel is a *Gazetteer of Missouri* (St. Louis, 1837).— Ed.

32 of these volumes have already appeared, though in a crude state, before the public, the author has but to suggest that many works, with which the present will not presume to compare, have made their debut on the unimposing pages of a periodical. Not to dwell upon the writings of Addison and Johnson, and other classics of British literature, several of Bulwer's most polished productions, the elaborate Essays of Elia, Wirt's British Spy,

Hazlitt's Philosophical Reviews, Coleridge's Friend, most of the novels of Captain Marryatt and Theodore Hook, and many of the most elegant works of the day, have been prepared for the pages of a magazine.

And now, with no slight misgiving, does the author commit his firstborn bantling to the tender mercies of an impartial public. Criticism he does not deprecate, still less does he brave it; and farther than either is he from soliciting undue favour. Yet to the *reader* , as he grasps him by the hand in parting, would he commit his book, with the quaint injunction of a distinguished but eccentric old English writer upon an occasion somewhat similar:

“I exhort all people, gentle and simple, men, [viii] women, and children, to buy, to read, to extol these labours of mine. Let them not fear to defend every article; for I will bear them harmless. I have arguments good store, and can easily confute, either logically, theologically, or metaphysically, all those who oppose me.”

E. F.

New-York, Oct., 1838.

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XXVIII

XXIX

THE FAR WEST [PART I] I

“I do remember me, that, in my youth, When I was wandering—”

Manfred.

It was a bright morning in the early days of “leafy June.” Many a month had seen me a wanderer from distant New-England; and now I found myself “once more upon the waters,” embarked for a pilgrimage over the broad prairie-plains of the sunset West. A drizzly, miserable rain had for some days been hovering, with proverbial pertinacity, over the devoted “City of the Falls,” and still, at intervals, came lazily pattering down from the

sunlighted clouds, reminding one of a hoiden girl smiling through a shower of April tear-drops, while the quay continued to exhibit all that wild uproar and tumult, “confusion worse confounded,” which characterizes the steamboat commerce of the Western Valley. The landing at the time was thronged with steamers, and yet the incessant “boom, boom, boom,” of the high-pressure engines, the shrill hiss of scalding steam, and the fitful port-song of the negro firemen rising ever and anon upon the breeze, gave notice of a constant [14] augmentation to the number. Some, too, were getting under way, and their lower *guards* were thronged by emigrants with their household and agricultural utensils. Drays were rattling hither and thither over the rough pavement; Irish porters were cracking their whips and roaring forth alternate staves of blasphemy and song; clerks hurrying to and fro, with fluttering note-books, in all the fancied dignity of “brief authority;” 44 hackney-coaches dashing down to the water's edge, apparently with no motive to the nervous man but noise; while at intervals, as if to fill up the pauses of the Babel, some incontinent steamer would hurl forth from the valves of her overcharged boilers one of those deafening, terrible blasts, echoing and re-echoing along the river-banks, and streets, and among the lofty buildings, till the very welkin rang again.

To one who has never visited the public wharves of the great cities of the West, it is no trivial task to convey an adequate idea of the spectacle they present. The commerce of the Eastern seaports and that of the Western Valley are utterly dissimilar; not more in the staples of intercourse than in the mode in which it is conducted; and, were one desirous of exhibiting to a friend from the Atlantic shore a picture of the prominent features which characterize commercial proceedings upon the Western waters, or, indeed, of Western character in its general outline, at a *coup d'œil* , he could do no better than to place him in the wild uproar of the steamboat quay. Amid the “crowd, the hum, [15] the shock” of such a scene stands out Western peculiarity in all its stem proportion.

Steamers on the great waters of the West are well known to indulge no violently conscientious scruples upon the subject of punctuality, and a solitary exception at our behest, or in our humble behalf, was, to be sure, not an event to be counted on. “There's

dignity in being waited for;" hour after hour, therefore, still found us and left us amid the untold scenes and sounds of the public landing. It is true, and to the unending honour of all concerned be it recorded, very true it is our doughty steamer ever and anon would puff and blow like a porpoise or a narwhal; and then would she swelter from every pore and quiver in every limb with the ponderous labouring of her huge enginery, and the steam would shrilly whistle and shriek like a spirit in its 45 confinement, till at length she united her whirlwind voice to the general roar around; and all this indicated, indubitably, an intention to be off and away; but a knowing one was he who could determine the *when.*

Among the causes of our wearisome detention was one of a nature too melancholy, too painfully interesting lightly to be alluded to. Endeavouring to while away the tedium of delay, I was pacing leisurely back and forth upon the *guard* , surveying the lovely scenery of the opposite shore, and the neat little houses of the village sprinkled upon the plain beyond, when a wild, piercing shriek struck upon my ear. I was hurrying immediately forward to the spot whence it seemed to proceed, [16] when I was intercepted by some of our boat's crew bearing a mangled body. It was that of our second engineer, a fine, laughing young fellow, who had been terribly injured by becoming entangled with the flywheel of the machinery while in motion. He was laid upon the passage floor. I stood at his head; and never, I think, shall I forget those convulsed and agonized features. His countenance was ghastly and livid; beaded globules of cold sweat started out incessantly upon his pale brow; and, in the paroxysms of pain, his dark eye would flash, his nostril dilate, and his lips quiver so as to expose the teeth gnashing in a fearful manner; while a muttered execration, dying away from exhaustion, caused us all to shudder. And then that wild despairing roll of the eyeball in its socket as the miserable man would glance hurriedly around upon the countenances of the bystanders, imploring them, in utter helplessness, to lend him relief. Ah! it is a fearful thing to look upon these strivings of humanity in the iron grasp of a power it may in vain resist! From the quantity of blood thrown off, the oppressive fulness of the chest, and the difficult respiration, some serious pulmonary injury had evidently been sustained; while a splintered clavicle and 46 limbs shockingly shattered

racked the poor sufferer with anguish inexpressible. It was evident he believed himself seriously injured, for at times he would fling out his arms, beseeching those around him to “hold him back,” as if even then he perceived the icy grasp of the death angel creeping over his frame.

[17] Perhaps I have devoted more words to the detail of this melancholy incident than would otherwise have been the case, on account of the interest which some circumstances in the sufferer's history, subsequently received from the captain of our steamer, inspired.

“Frank, poor fellow,” said the captain, “was a native of Ohio, the son of a lone woman, a widow. He was all her hope, and to his exertions she was indebted for a humble support.”

Here, then, were circumstances to touch the sympathies of any heart possessed of but a tithe of the nobleness of our nature; and I could not but reflect, as they were recounted, how like the breath of desolation the first intelligence of her son's fearful end must sweep over the spirit of this lonely widow; for, like the wretched Constance, she can “never, never behold him more.”3

3 The reference is to Shakespeare's *King John*, III, iv.— Ed.

“Her life, her joy, her food, her all the world! Her widow-comfort, and her sorrow's cure!”

While indulging in these sad reflections a gay burst of music arrested my attention; and, looking up, I perceived the packet-boat “Lady Marshall” dropping from her mooring at the quay, her decks swarming with passengers, and under high press of steam, holding her bold course against the current, while the merry dashing of the wheels, mingling with the wild clang of martial music, imparted an air almost of romance to the scene. How strangely did this contrast with that misery from which my eye had just turned!

There are few objects more truly grand—I had [18] almost said sublime—than a powerful steamer struggling triumphantly with the rapids of the Western waters. The scene has in it a something of that power which we feel upon us in viewing a ship under full sail; and, in some respects, there is more of the sublime in the humbler triumph of man over the elements than in that more vast. Sublimity is a result, not merely of massive, extended, unmeasured greatness, but oftener, and far more impressively, does the sentiment arise from a *combination* of vast and powerful objects. The mighty stream rolling its volumed floods through half a continent, and hurrying onward to mingle its full tide with the “Father of Waters,” is truly sublime; its resistless power is sublime; the memory of its by-gone scenes, and the venerable moss-grown forests on its banks, are sublime; and, lastly, the noble fabric of man's workmanship struggling and groaning in convulsed, triumphant effort to overcome the resistance offered, completes a picture which demands not the heaving ocean-waste and the “ *oak* leviathan” to embellish.

It was not until the afternoon was far advanced that we found ourselves fairly embarked. A rapid freshet had within a few hours swollen the tranquil Ohio far beyond its ordinary volume; and velocity, and its turbid waters were rolling onward between the green banks, bearing on their bosom all the varied spoils of their mountain-home, and of the rich region through which they had been flowing. The finest site from which to view the city we found to be the channel of the Falls upon the Indiana side of the stream, called the *Indian* [19] chute, to distinguish it from two others, called the *Middle* chute and the *Kentucky* chute. The prospect from this point is noble, though the uniformity of the structures, the fewness of the spires, the unimposing character of the public edifices, and the depression of the site upon 48 which the city stands, give to it a monotonous, perhaps a lifeless aspect to the stranger.

It was in the year 1778 that a settlement was first commenced upon the spot on which the fair city of Louisville now stands.4 In the early spring of that year, General George Rodgers Clarke, under authority of the State of Virginia, descended the Ohio with several

hundred men, with the design of reducing the military posts of Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Fort Vincent, then held by British troops. Disembarking upon Corn Island at the Falls of the Ohio, opposite the present city, land sufficient for the support of six families, which were left, was cleared and planted with *corn.* From this circumstance the island received a name which it yet retains. General Clarke proceeded upon his expedition, and, in the autumn returning successful, the emigrants were removed to the main land, and a settlement was commenced where Louisville now stands. During the few succeeding years, other families from Virginia settled upon the spot, and in the spring of 1780 seven stations were formed upon Beargrass Creek,5 which here empties into the Mississippi, and Louisville commenced its march to its present importance.

4 For a brief sketch of the history of Louisville, see Croghan's *Journals*, in our volume i, p. 136, note 106.— Ed.

5 The seven stations formed on Beargrass Creek in the fall of 1779 and spring of 1780 were: Falls of the Ohio, Linnis, Sullivan's Old, Hoagland's, Floyd's, Spring, and Middle stations. Beargrass Creek, a small stream less than ten miles in length, flows in a northwestern trend and uniting with two smaller creeks, South and Muddy forks, enters the Ohio (not the Mississippi) immediately above the Falls of the Ohio (Louisville).— Ed.

The view of the city from the Falls, as I have remarked, is not at all imposing; the view of the [20] Falls from the city, on the contrary, is one of beauty and romance. They are occasioned by a parapet of limestone extending quite across the stream, which is here about one mile in width; and when the water is low the whole chain sparkles with bubbling foam-bells. When the stream is full the descent 49 is hardly perceptible but for the increased rapidity of the current, which varies from ten to fourteen miles an hour.6 Owing to the height of the freshet, this was the case at the time when we descended them, and there was a wild air of romance about the dark rushing waters: and the green woodlands upon either shore, overshadowed as they were by the shifting light and shade of the flitting clouds, cast

6 It is only at high stages of the river that boats even of a smaller class can pass over the Falls. At other times they go through the “Louisville and Portland Canal.” In 1804 the Legislature of Kentucky incorporated a company to cut a canal around the falls. Nothing effectual, however, beyond surveys, was done until 1825, when on the 12th of January of that year the Louisville and Portland Canal Company was incorporated by an act of the legislature, with a capital of $600,000, in shares of $100 each, with perpetual succession. 3665 of the shares of the company are in the hands of individuals, about seventy in number, residing in the following states: New-Hampshire, Massachusetts, New-York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, Kentucky, and Missouri, and 2335 shares belong to the government of the United States.

In December, 1825, contracts were entered into to complete the work of this canal within two years, for about $375,000, and under these contracts the work was commenced in March, 1826. Many unforeseen difficulties retarded the work until the close of the year 1828. At this time the contractors failed; new contracts were made at advanced prices, and the canal was finally opened for navigation December 5th, 1830. When completed it cost about $750,000. Owing to the advanced season at which it was opened, the deposites of alluvial earth at the lower extremity of the canal, or debouchure, could not be removed; and also from the action of the floods during the succeeding severe winter on the stones that had been temporarily deposited on the sides of the canal, causing them to be precipitated into the canal, it was not used to the extent that it otherwise would have been. During the year 1831, 406 steamboats, 46 keelboats, and 357 flatboats, measuring 76,323 tons, passed through the locks, which are about one fourth the number that would have passed if all the obstructions had been removed.

The Louisville and Portland Canal is about two miles in length; is intended for steamboats of the largest class, and to overcome a fall of 24 feet, occasioned by an irregular ledge of limerock, through which the entire bed of the canal is excavated, a part of it, to the depth of 12 feet, is overlaid with earth. There is one guard and three lift locks combined, all of which

have their foundation on the rock. One bridge of stone 240 feet long, with an elevation of 68 feet to top of the parapet wall, and three arches, the centre one of which is semi-elliptical, with a transverse diameter of 66, and a semi-conjugate diameter of 22 feet. The two side arches are segments of 40 feet span. The guard lock is 190 feet long in the clear, with semicircular heads of 26 feet in diameter, 50 feet wide, and 42 feet high, and contains 21,775 perches of mason-work. The solid contents of this lock are equal to 15 common locks, such as are built on the Ohio and New-York canals. The lift locks are of the same width with the guard lock, 20 feet high, and 183 feet long in the clear, and contain 12,300 perches of mason-work. The entire length of the walls, from the head of the guard lock to the end of the outlet lock, is 921 feet. In addition to the amount of mason-work above, there are three culverts to drain off the water from the adjacent lands, the mason-work of which, when added to the locks and bridge, give the whole amount of mason-work 41,989 perches, equal to about 30 common canal locks. The cross section of the canal is 200 feet at top of banks, 50 feet at bottom, and 42 feet high, having a capacity equal to that of 25 common canals; and if we keep in view the unequal quantity of mason-work compared to the length of the canal, the great difficulties of excavating earth and rock from so great a depth and width, together with the contingencies attending its construction from the fluctuations of the Ohio River, it may not be considered as extravagant in drawing the comparison between the work in this and in that of 70 or 75 miles of common canalling.

In the upper sections of the canal, the alluvial earth to the average depth of twenty feet being removed, trunks of trees were found more or less decayed, and so imbedded as to indicate a powerful current towards the present shore, some of which were cedar, which is not now found in this region. Several *fireplaces* of a rude construction, with partially burnt wood, were discovered near the rock, as well as the bones of a variety of small animals and several human skeletons; rude implements formed of bone and stone were frequently seen, as also several well-wrought specimens of hematite of iron, in the shape of plummets or sinkers, displaying a knowledge in the arts far in advance of the present race of Indians.

The first stratum of rock was a light, friable slate, in close contact with the limestone, and difficult to disengage from it; this slate did not, however, extend over the whole surface of the rock, and was of various thicknesses, from three inches to four feet.

The stratum next to the slate was a close, compact limestone, in which petrified seashells and an infinite variety of coralline formations were imbedded, and frequent cavities of crystalline incrustations were seen, many of which still contained petroleum of a highly fetid smell, which gives the name to this description of limestone. This description of rock is on an average of five feet, covering a substratum of a species of cias limestone of a bluish colour, imbedding nodules of hornstone and organic remains. The fracture of this stone has in all instances been found to be irregularly conchoidal, and on exposure to the atmosphere and subjection to fire, it crumbles to pieces. When burnt and ground, and mixed with a due proportion of silicious sand, it has been found to make a most superior kind of hydraulic cement or water-lime. The discovery of this valuable limestone has enabled the canal company to construct their masonry more solidly than any other known in the United States.

A manufactory of this hydraulic cement or water-lime is now established on the bank of the canal, on a scale capable of supplying the United States with this much-valued material for all works in contact with water or exposed to moisture; the nature of this cement being to harden in the water; the grout used on the locks of the canal is already *harder* than the *stone* used in their construction.

After passing through the stratum which was commonly called the water-lime, about ten feet in thickness, the workmen came to a more compact mass of primitive gray limestone, which, however, was not penetrated to any great depth. In many parts of the excavation masses of a bluish white flint and hornstone were found enclosed in or incrusting the fetid limestone. And from the large quantities of arrow-heads and other rude formations of this flint stone, it is evident that it was made much use of by the Indians in forming their weapons for war and hunting; in one place a magazine of arrow-heads was discovered,

containing many hundreds of these rude implements, carefully packed together and buried below the surface of the ground.

The existence of iron ore in considerable quantities was exhibited in the progress of the excavation of the canal, by numerous highly-charged chalybeate springs that gushed out, and continued to flow during the time that the rock was exposed, chiefly in the upper strata of limestone.— *Louisville Directory for* 1835— Flagg.

50 over the scene a bewitching fascination. " *Corn Island* ," with its legendary associations, rearing its dense clump of foliage as from the depths of the stream, was not the least beautiful object of the panorama; while the receding city, with its smoky roofs, its bustling quay, and the glitter and animation of an extended line of steamers, was alone necessary 51 to fill up a scene for a limner.7 And our steamer swept onward [21] over the rapids, and threaded their maze of beautiful islands, and passed along the little villages at their foot and the splendid steamers along their shore, till twilight had faded, and the dusky mantle of departed day was flung over forest and stream.

7 A circumstance, too, which adds not a little of interest to the spot, is the old Indian tradition that here was fought the last battle between their race and the former dwellers in Kentucky — *the white mound-builders* — in which the latter were exterminated to a man. True or false, vast quantities of human remains have, at low stages of the Ohio, been found upon the shores of Sandy Island, one mile below, and an extensive graveyard once existed in the vicinity of Shipping-port. — Flagg.

Ohio River.

52

II

"How beautiful is this visible world! How glorious in its action and itself!"

Manfred.

“The woods — oh! solemn are the boundless woods Of the great Western World when day declines, And louder sounds the roll of distant floods.”

Hemans.

Long before the dawn on the morning succeeding our departure we were roused from our rest by the hissing of steam and the rattling of machinery as our boat moved slowly out from beneath the high banks and lofty sycamores of the river-side, where she had in safety been moored for the night, to resume her course. Withdrawing the curtain from the little rectangular window of my stateroom, the dark shadow of the forest was slumbering in calm magnificence upon the waters; and glancing upward my eye, the stars were beaming out in silvery brightness; while all along the eastern horizon, where

“The gray coursers of the morn Beat up the light with their bright silver hoofs And drive it through the sky,”

[22] rested a broad, low zone of clear heaven, proclaiming the coming of a glorious dawn. The hated clang of the bell-boy was soon after heard resounding far and wide in querulous and deafening clamour throughout the cabins, vexing the dull ear of every drowsy man in the terrible language of Macbeth's evil conscience, “sleep no more!” In a very desperation of self-defence I arose. The mists of night had not yet wholly dispersed, and the rack and fog floated quietly upon the placid bosom of the stream, or ascended in, ragged masses from the dense foliage upon its banks. All this melted gently away like “the baseless 53 fabric of a vision,” and “the beauteous eye of day” burst forth in splendour, lighting up a scene of unrivalled loveliness.

Much, very much has been written of “the beautiful Ohio;” the pens of an hundred tourists have sketched its quiet waters and its venerable groves; but there is in its noble scenery an ever salient freshness, which no description, however varied, can exhaust; new

beauties leap forth to the eye of the man of sensibility, and even an humble pen may not fail to array them in the drapery of their own loveliness. There are in this beautiful stream features peculiar to itself, which distinguish it from every other that we have seen or of which we have read; features which render it truly and emphatically *sui generis.* It is not "the blue-rushing of the arrowy Rhone," with castled crags and frowning battlements; it is not the dark-rolling Danube, shadowy with the legend of departed time, upon whose banks armies have met and battled; it is not [23] the lordly Hudson, roaming in beauty through the ever-varying romance of the Catskill Highlands; nor is it the gentle wave of the soft-flowing Connecticut, seeming almost to sleep as it glides through the calm, "happy valley" of New-England: but it is that noble stream, bounding forth, like a young warrior of the wilderness, in all the joyance of early vigour, from the wild twin-torrents of the hills; rolling onward through a section of country the glory of a new world, and over the wooded heights of whose banks has rushed full many a crimson tide of Indian massacre. Ohio,8 " *The River of Blood* ," was its fearfully significant name from the aboriginal native; *La Belle Rivière* was its euphonious distinction from the simple Canadian voyageur, whose light pirogue first glided on its blue bosom. "The Beautiful River!"— it is no misnomer — from its earliest commencement

8 Kentucke is said to have a similar meaning.— Flagg.

54 to the broad *embouchure* into the turbid floods of the Mississippi, it unites every combination of scenic loveliness which even the poet's sublimated fancy could demand.9 Now it sweeps along beneath its lofty bluffs in the conscious grandeur of resistless might; and then its clear, transparent waters glide in undulating ripples over the shelly bottoms and among the pebbly heaps of the white-drifted sandbars, or in the calm magnificence of their eternal wandering,

9 Ohio is thought by some philologists to be a corruption of the Iroquois word, "Ohionhiio," meaning "beautiful river," which the French rendered as La Belle Rivière; see also Cuming's *Tour*, in our volume iv, p. 92, note 49.— Ed.

“To the gentle woods all night Sing they a sleepy tune.”

From either shore streams of singular beauty and euphonious names come pouring in their tribute [24] through the deep foliage of the fertile bottoms; while the swelling, volumed outlines of the banks, piled up with ponderous verdure rolling and heaving in the river-breeze like life, recur in such grandeur and softness, and such ever-varying combinations of beauty, as to destroy every approach to monotonous effect. From the source of the Ohio to its outlet its waters imbosom more than an hundred islands, some of such matchless loveliness that it is worthy of remark that such slight allusion has been made to them in the numerous pencillings of Ohio scenery. In the fresh, early summertime, when the deep green of vegetation is in its luxuriance, they surely constitute the most striking feature of the river. Most of them are densely wooded to the water's edge; and the wild vines and underbrush suspended lightly over the waters are mirrored in their bosom or swept by the current into attitudes most graceful and picturesque. In some of those stretched-out, endless reaches which are constantly recurring, they seem bursting up like beautiful bouquets of 55 sprinkled evergreens from the placid stream; rounded and swelling, as if by the teachings of art, on the blue bosom of the waters. A cluster of these “isles of light” I well remember, which opened upon us the eve of the second day of our passage. Two of the group were exceedingly small, mere points of a deeper shade in the reflecting azure; while the third, lying between the former, stretched itself far away in a narrow, well-defined strip of foliage, like a curving gash in the surface, parallel to the [25] shore; and over the lengthened vista of the waters gliding between, the giant branches bowed themselves, and wove their mingled verdure into an immense Gothic arch, seemingly of interminable extent, but closed at last by a single speck of crimson skylight beyond. Throughout its whole course the Ohio is fringed with wooded bluffs; now towering in sublime majesty hundreds of feet from the bed of the rolling stream, and anon sweeping inland for miles, and rearing up those eminences so singularly beautiful, appropriately termed “Ohio hills,” while their broad alluvial plains in the interval betray, by their enormous vegetation, a fertility exhaustless and unrivalled. Here and there along

the green bluffs is caught a glimpse of the emigrant's low log cabin peeping out to the eye from the dark foliage, sometimes when miles in the distance; while the rich maize-fields of the bottoms, the girdled forest-trees and the lowing kine betray the advance of civilized existence. But if the scenes of the Ohio are beautiful beneath the broad glare of the morning sunlight, what shall sketch their lineaments when the coarser etchings of the picture are mellowed down by the balmy effulgence of the midnight moon of summer! When her floods of light are streaming far and wide along the magnificent forest-tops! When all is still — still! and sky, and earth, and wood, and stream are hushed as a spirit's breathing! When thought is almost audible, and memory is busy with the past! When the distant bluffs, 56 bathed in molten silver, gleam like beacon-lights, and the far-off vistas of the [26] meandering waters are flashing with the sheen of their ripples! When you glide through the endless maze, and the bright islets shift, and vary, and pass away in succession like pictures of the kaleidoscope before your eye! When imagination is awake and flinging forth her airy fictions, bodies things unseen, and clothes reality in loveliness not of earth! When a scene like this is developed, what shall adequately depict it? Not the pen.

Such, such is the beautiful Ohio in the soft days of early summer; and though hackneyed may be the theme of its loveliness, yet, as the dying glories of a Western sunset flung over the landscape the mellow tenderness of its parting smile, “fading, still fading, as the day was declining,” till night's dusky mantle had wrapped the “woods on shore” and the quiet stream from the eye, I could not, even at the hazard of triteness, resist an inclination to fling upon the sheet a few hurried lineaments of Nature's beautiful creations.

There is not a stream upon the continent which, for the same distance, rolls onward so calmly, and smoothly, and peacefully as the Ohio. Danger rarely visits its tranquil bosom, except from the storms of heaven or the reckless folly of man, and hardly a river in the world can vie with it in safety, utility, or beauty. Though subject to rapid and great elevations and depressions, its current is generally uniform, never furious. The forest-trees which skirt its banks are the largest in North America, while the variety is endless; several

sycamores were pointed out to us upon the shores from thirty to fifty feet in circumference. Its alluvial [27] bottoms are broad, deep, and exhaustlessly fertile; its bluffs are often from three to four hundred feet in height; its breadth varies from one mile to three, and its navigation, 57 since the improvements commenced, under the authority of Congress, by the enterprising Shreve, has become safe and easy.10 The classification of obstructions is the following: *snags* , trees anchored by their roots; fragments of trees of various forms and magnitude; *wreck-heaps* , consisting of several of these stumps, and logs, and branches of trees lodged in one place; *rocks* , which have rolled from the cliffs, and varying from ten to one hundred cubic feet in size; and *sunken boats* , principally flat-boats laden with coal. The last remains one of the most serious obstacles to the navigation of the Ohio. Many steamers have been damaged by striking the wrecks of the *Baltimore* , the *Roanoke* , the *William Hulburt* ,11 and other craft, which were themselves snagged; while

10 At the age of twenty-five, Henry M. Shreve (1785–1854) was captain of a freight boat operating on the Ohio. In 1814 he ran the gauntlet of the British batteries at New Orleans, and carried supplies to Fort St. Phillip. The following year, in charge of the “Enterprise” he made the first successful steamboat trip from New Orleans to Louisville. Later he constructed the “Washington,” making many improvements on the Fulton model. Fulton and Livingstone brought suit against him but lost in the action. May 24, 1824, at the instigation of J. C. Calhoun, then secretary of war, Congress appropriated seventy-five thousand dollars (not $105,000, as Flagg says) for the purpose of removing obstructions from the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. As early as 1821, Shreve had invented a device for removing snags and sawyers from river beds. But it was not until after two years' fruitless trials with a scheme devised by John Bruce of Kentucky, that Barbour, at Calhoun's suggestion, appointed Shreve superintendent of improvements on Western rivers (December 10, 1826). This position he held until September 11, 1841, when he was dismissed for political reasons. In the face of discouraging opposition Shreve constructed (1829) with government aid the snagboat “Heleopolis” with which he later wrought a marvellous improvement in navigation on the Ohio and Mississippi. From 1833 to 1838 he was engaged in removing the Red River “raft” for a distance of a hundred and sixty miles,

thus opening that important river for navigation. For a good biography of Shreve, see the *Democratic Review*, xxii (New York, 1848), pp. 159–171, 241–251. A fair estimate of the importance of his work can be gained from the following statistics; from 1822–27 the loss from snags alone, of property on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, including steam and flat-boats and their cargoes, amounted to $1,362,500; the like loss from 1827–32 was reduced to $381,000, although the volume of business had greatly increased.— Ed.

11 The “Baltimore” (73 tons) was built at Pittsburg in 1828; the “Roanoke” (100 tons), at Wheeling in 1835. It is reported that from 1831 to 1833, of the sixty-six steamboats which went out of service, twenty-four were snagged, fifteen burned, and five destroyed by collision with other boats. See James Hall, *Notes on the Western States* (Philadelphia, 1838), p. 239.— Ed.

58 keel and flat-boats without number have been lost from the same cause.12 Several thousands of the obstacles mentioned have been removed since improvements were commenced, and accidents from this cause are now less frequent. Some of the snags torn up from the bed of the stream, where they have probably for ages been buried, are said to have exceeded a diameter of six feet at the root, and were upward of an hundred feet in length. The removal of these obstructions on the Ohio presents a difficulty and expense not encountered upon the Mississippi. In the latter stream, the root of the snag, when eradicated, is deposited in some deep [28] pool or bayou along the banks, and immediately imbeds itself in alluvial deposite; but on the Ohio, owing to the nature of its banks in most of its course, there is no opportunity for such a disposal, and their boatmen are forced to blast the logs with gunpowder to prevent them from again forming obstructions. The cutting down and clearing away of all leaning and falling trees from the banks constitutes an essential feature in the scheme of improvement; since the facts are well ascertained that trees seldom plant themselves far from the spot where they fall; and that, when once under the power of the current, they seldom anchor themselves and form snags. The policy of removing the leaning and fallen trees is, therefore, palpable, since, when this is once thoroughly accomplished, no material for subsequent formation can

exist. The construction of stone dams, by which to concentrate into a single channel all the waters of the river, where they are divided by islands, or from other causes are spread over a broad extent, is another operation now in

12 The keel-boat Hindoo, with merchandise to the amount of $50, 000, is a late instance. — Flagg.

59 execution. The dams at “Brown's Island,”13 the shoalest point on the Ohio, have been so eminently successful as fully to establish the efficiency of the plan. Several other works of a similar character are proposed; a full survey of the stream, hydrographical and topographical, is recommended; and, when all improvements are completed, it is believed that the navigation of the “beautiful Ohio” will answer every purpose of commerce and the traveller, from its source to its mouth, at the lowest stages of the water.

13 Brown's Island, two miles and a half long by half a mile at its greatest width, is located six or seven miles above Steubenville, Ohio, following the course of the river.— Ed.

Ohio River.

III

“The sure traveller, Though he alight sometimes, still goeth on.”

Herbert.

“ A race —Now like autumnal leaves before the blast Wide scattered.” Sprague.

Thump, thump, crash! One hour longer, and I was at length completely roused from a troublous slumber by our boat coming to a dead stop. Casting a glance from the window, the bright flashing of moonlight showed the whole surface of the stream covered with drift-wood, and, on inquiry, I learned that the branches of an enormous oak, some sixty feet in

length, had become entangled with one of the paddle-wheels of our steamer, and forbade all advance.

We were soon once more in motion; the morning mists were dispersing, the sun rose up behind the forests, and his bright beams danced lightly over the gliding waters. We passed many pleasant little villages along the banks, and it 60 was delightful to remove from the noise, and heat, and confusion below to the lofty *hurricane deck* , and lounge away hour after hour in gazing upon the varied and beautiful scenes which presented themselves in constant succession to the eye. Now we were gliding quietly on through the long island [30] chutes, where the daylight was dim, and the enormous forest-trees bowed themselves over us, and echoed from their still recesses the roar of our steam-pipe; then we were sweeping rapidly over the broad reaches of the stream, miles in extent; again we were winding through the mazy labyrinth of islets which fleckered the placid surface of the stream, and from time to time we passed the lonely cabin of the emigrant beneath the venerable and aged sycamores. Here and there, as we glided on, we met some relic of those ancient and primitive species of river-craft which once assumed ascendency over the waters of the West, but which are now superseded by steam, and are of too infrequent occurrence not to be objects of peculiar interest. In the early era of the navigation of the Ohio, the species of craft in use were numberless, and many of them of a most whimsical and amusing description. The first was the barge, sometimes of an hundred tons' burden, which required twenty men to force it up against the current a distance of six or seven miles a day; next the keel-boat, of smaller size and lighter structure, yet in use for the purposes of inland commerce; then the Kentucky flat, or broad-horn of the emigrant; the enormous ark, in magnitude and proportion approximating to that of the patriarch; the fairy pirogue of the French voyageur; the birch caique of the Indian, and log skiffs, gondolas, and dug-outs of the pioneer without name or number.14 But

14 The keel-boat was usually from sixty to seventy feet long, and fifteen to eighteen broad at beam, with a keel extending from bow to stern, and had a draft of twenty to thirty inches. When descending the stream, the force of the current, with occasional aid from the pole,

was the usual mode of locomotion. In ascending the stream, however, sails, poles, and almost every known device were used; not infrequently the vessel was towed by from twenty to forty men, with a rope several hundred feet in length attached to the mast. These boats were built in Pittsburg at a cost of two to three thousand dollars each.

The barge was constructed for narrow, shallow water. As a rule it was larger than the keel-boat; but of less draft, and afforded greater accommodations for passengers.

Broad-horn was a term generally applied to the Mississippi and Ohio flat-boat, which made its advent on the Western waters later than the barge or the keel-boat. It was a large, unwieldy structure, with a perfectly flat bottom, perpendicular sides, and usually covered its entire length. It was used only for descending the stream.

“The earliest improvement upon the canoe was the pirogue, an invention of the whites. Like the canoe, this is hewed out of the solid log; the difference is, that the pirogue has greater width and capacity, and is composed of several pieces of timbers — as if the canoe was sawed lengthwise into two equal sections, and a broad flat piece of timber inserted in the middle, so as to give greater breadth of beam to the vessel.” Hall, *Notes on the Western States*, p. 218.— Ed.

61 since the introduction of steam upon the Western waters, most of these unique and primitive contrivances [31] have disappeared; and with them, too, has gone that singular race of men who were their navigators. Most of the younger of the settlers, at this early period of the country, devoted themselves to this profession. Nor is there any wonder that the mode of life pursued by these boatmen should have presented irresistible seductions to the young people along the banks. Fancy one of these huge boats dropping lazily along with the current past their cabins on a balmy morning in June. Picture to your imagination the gorgeous foliage; the soft, delicious temperature of the atmosphere; the deep azure of the sky; the fertile alluvion, with its stupendous forests and rivers; the romantic bluffs sleeping mistily in blue distance; the clear waters rolling calmly adown, with the woodlands outlined in shadow on the surface; the boat floating leisurely onward, its heterogeneous

crew of all ages dancing to the violin upon the deck, flinging out their merry salutations among the settlers, who come down to the water's edge to see the pageant pass, 62 until, at length, it disappears behind a point of wood, and the boatman's bugle strikes up its note, dying in distance over the waters; fancy a scene like this, and the wild bugle-notes echoing and re-echoing along the bluffs and forest shades of the beautiful Ohio, and decide whether it must not have possessed a charm of fascination resistless to the youthful mind in these lonely solitudes. No wonder that the severe toils of agricultural life, in view of such scenes, should have become tasteless and irksome.15 The lives of these [32] boatmen were lawless and dissolute to a proverb. They frequently stopped at the villages along their course, and passed the night in scenes of wild revelry and merriment. Their occupation, more than any other, subjected them to toil, and exposure, and privation; and, more than any other, it indulged them, for days in succession, with leisure, and ease, and indolent gratification. Descending the stream, they floated quietly along without an effort, but in ascending against the powerful current their life was an uninterrupted series of toil. The boat, we are told, was propelled by poles, against which the shoulder was placed and the whole strength applied; their bodies were naked to the waist, for enjoying the river-breeze and for moving with facility; and, after the labour of the day, they swallowed their whiskey and supper, and throwing themselves upon the deck of the boat, with no other canopy than the heavens, slumbered soundly on till the morning. Their slang was peculiar to the race, their humour and power of retort was remarkable, and in their frequent battles with the squatters or with their fellows, their nerve and courage were unflinching.

15 Flint.— Flagg.

It was in the year 1811 that the steam-engine commenced its giant labours in the Valley of the West, and the first vessel propelled by its agency glided along the soft-flowing 63 wave of the beautiful river.16 Many events, we are told, united to render this year a most remarkable era in the annals of Western history.17 The spring-freshet of the rivers buried the whole valley from Pittsburgh to New-Orleans [33] in a flood; and when the waters

subsided unparalleled sickness and mortality ensued. A mysterious spirit of restlessness possessed the denizens of the Northern forests, and in myriads they migrated towards the South and West. The magnificent comet of the year, seeming, indeed, to verify the terrors of superstition, and to “shake from its horrid hair pestilence and war,” all that summer was beheld blazing along the midnight sky, and shedding its lurid twilight over forest and stream; and when the leaves of autumn began to rustle to the ground, the whole vast Valley of the Mississippi rocked and vibrated in earthquake-convulsion! forests bowed their heads; islands disappeared from their sites, and new one's rose; immense lakes and hills were formed; the graveyard gave up its sheeted and ghastly tenants; huge relics of the mastodon and megalonyx, which for ages had slumbered in the bosom of earth, were heaved up to the sunlight; the blue lightning streamed and the thunder muttered along the leaden sky, and, amid all the elemental war, the mighty current of the “Father of Waters” for hours rolled back its heaped-up floods towards its source! All this was the prologue to that mighty drama of *Change* which, from that period to the present, has been sweeping over the Western Valley; it was the fearful welcome-home to that all-powerful agent which has revolutionized the character of

16 For an account of the first steamboat on the Ohio, see Flint's *Letters*, in our volume ix, p. 154, note 76.— Ed.

17 Latrobe.— Flagg.

Comment by Ed. Charles J. Latrobe (1801–75) visited the United States in 1832–33. His *Rambles in North America in 1832–3* (New York, 1835) and *Rambles in Mexico* (New York and London, 1836) have much value in the history of Western travel.

64 half a continent; for at that epoch of wonders, and amid them all, the first steamboat was seen descending the great rivers, and the awe-struck Indian [34] on the banks beheld the *Pinelore* flying through the troubled waters.18 The rise and progress of the steam-engine is without a parallel in the history of modern improvement. Fifty years ago, and the

prophetic declaration of Darwin was pardoned only as the enthusiasm of poetry; it is now little more than the detail of reality:

18 The first steamer upon the waters of the Red River was of a peculiar construction: her steam scape-pipe, instead of ascending perpendicularly from the hurricane deck, projected from the bow, and terminated in the form of a serpent's head. As this monster ascended the wilds of the stream, with her furnaces blazing, pouring forth steam with a roar, the wondering Choctaws upon the banks gave her the poetic and appropriate name of *Pinelore*, “the Fire-Canoe.”— Flagg.

“Soon shall thy arm, unconquer'd steam, afar Drag the slow barge or drive the rapid car; Or on wide-waving wings expanded bear The flying chariot through the fields of air; Fair crews triumphant, leaning from above, Shall wave their fluttering kerchiefs as they move, Or warrior bands alarm the gaping crowd, And armies shrink beneath the shadowy cloud.”19

19 This quotation is from *Botanic Gardens*, book i, chapter i, by Erasmus Darwin (1731–1802).— Ed.

The steam-engine, second only to the press in power, has in a few years anticipated results throughout the New World which centuries, in the ordinary course of cause and event, would have failed to produce. The dullest forester, even the cold, phlegmatic native of the wilderness, gazes upon its display of beautiful mechanism, its majestic march upon its element, and its sublimity of power, with astonishment and admiration.

Return we to the incidents of our passage. During the morning of our third day upon the Ohio we [35] passed, among others, the villages of *Rome, Troy* , and Rockport.20

20 For Rome, see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxii, p. 160, note 77.— Ed.

65 The latter is the most considerable place of the three, notwithstanding *imposing* titles. It is situated upon a green romantic spot, the summit of a precipitous pile of rocks some

hundred feet in height, from which sweeps off a level region of country in the rear. Here terminates that series of beautiful bluffs commencing at the confluence of the mountain-streams, and of which so much has been said. A new geological formation commences of a bolder character than any before; and the face of the country gradually assumes those features which are found near the mouth of the river. Passing Green River with its emerald waters,21 its “Diamond Island,” 22 the largest in the Ohio, and said to be *haunted* , and very many thriving villages, among which was Hendersonville,23 for some time the residence of Audubon,24 the ornithologist, we found ourselves near midday at the mouth of the smiling Wabash, its high bluffs crowned with groves of the walnut and pecan, the *carya olivæformis* of Nuttal, and its deep-died surface reflecting the yet deeper tints

21 Green River, rising in central Kentucky, flows west through the coal fields to its junction with the Big Barren; thence it turns north, and empties into the Ohio nine miles above Evansville, Indiana. Beginning with 1808 the state legislature expended large sums of money for improving navigation on Green River. As a consequence small steamboats may ascend it to a distance of more than a hundred and fifty miles. The length of the stream is estimated at three hundred and fifty miles.— Ed.

22 Diamond Island, densely wooded, is located thirty-six miles below the mouth of Green River, and seven miles above Mount Vernon. Its name is perhaps derived from its shape, being five miles long and one and a half wide.— Ed.

23 For note on Hendersonville, see Cuming's *Tour*, in our volume iv, p. 267, note 175.— Ed.

24 John J. Audubon, born in Louisiana (1780), was a son of a wealthy French naval officer; his mother was a Spanish creole. Educated in France, he returned to America (1798) and settled near Philadelphia, devoting his time to the study of birds. In 1808 he went west and until 1824 made fruitless attempts to establish himself in business in Kentucky and Louisiana. He issued in London (1827–38) his noted publication on the *Birds of America*, which was completed in eighty-seven parts. During 1832–39 he published five

volumes entitled *Ornithological Biographies.* Audubon died in 1851. See M. R. Audubon, *Audubon and his Journals* (New York, 1897).— Ed.

66 of its verdure-dad banks, as the far-winding stream gradually opened upon the eye, and then retreated in the distance. The confluence of the streams is at a beautiful angle; and, on observing the scene, the traveller will remark that the forests upon one bank are superior in magnitude to those on the other, though of the same species. The appearance is somewhat singular, and the fact is to be accounted for only from the reason that the soil [36] differs in alluvial character. It has been thought that no stream in the world, for its length and magnitude, drains a more fertile and beautiful country than the Wabash and its tributaries.25 Emigrants are rapidly settling its banks, and a route has been projected for uniting by canal its waters with those of Lake Erie; surveys by authority of the State of Indiana have been made, and incipient measures taken preparatory to carrying the work into execution.26

25 For the historical importance of the Wabash River, see Croghan's Journals, in our volume i, p. 137, note 107.— Ed.

26 The Wabash and Erie Canal, which connects the waters of Lake Erie with the Ohio River by way of the Maumee and Wabash rivers, has played an active rôle in the development of Indiana, her most important cities being located upon its route. The Ohio section was constructed during the years 1837–43, and the Indiana section as far as Lafayette in 1832–40; the canal being later continued to Terre Haute and the Ohio River near Evansville. Although the federal government granted Indiana 1,505,114 acres for constructing the canal, the state was by this work plunged heavily in debt. After the War of Secession the canal lost much of its relative importance for commerce. June 14, 1880, Congress authorized the secretary of war to. order a survey and estimate of cost and practicability of making a ship canal out of the old Wabash and Erie Canal. The survey and estimate were made, but the matter was allowed to drop. See *Senate* Docs., 46 Cong., 3 sess., iii, 55.— Ed.

About one hundred miles from the mouth of the Wabash is situated the village of New-Harmony, far famed for the singular events of which it has been the scene.27 It is said to be situated on a broad and beautiful plateau overlooking the stream, surrounded by a fertile and heavily-timbered

27 For an account of New Harmony and its founder, George Rapp, see Hulme's *Journal*, in our volume x, p. 50, note 22, and p. 54, note 25.— Ed.

67 country, and blessed with an atmosphere of health. It was first settled in 1814 by a religious sect of Germans called Harmonites, resembling the Moravians in their tenets, and under the control of George Rapp, in whose name the land was purchased and held. They were about eight hundred in number, and soon erected a number of substantial edifices, among which was a huge House of Assemblage an hundred feet square. They laid out their grounds with beautiful regularity, and established a botanic garden and an extensive greenhouse. For ten years the Harmonites continued to live and labour in love, in the land of their adoption, when the celebrated Robert Dale Owen,28 of Scotland, came among them, and, at the sum of one hundred and ninety thousand dollars, purchased the establishment entire. His design was of rearing up a community [37] upon a plan styled by him the “Social System.” The peculiar doctrines he inculcated were a perfect equality, moral, social, political, and religious. He held that the promise of never-ending love upon marriage was an absurdity; that children should become no impediment to separation, as they were to be considered members of the community from their second year; that the society should have no professed religion, each individual being indulged in his own faith, and that all temporal possessions should be held in common. On one night of every week the whole community met and danced; and on another they united in a concert of music, while the Sabbath was devoted to philosophical lectures. Many distinguished individuals are said to have written to the society inquiring respecting its principles and prospects, and expressing the wish at a future day to unite with it their destinies.

28 Flagg is evidently referring to Robert Owen, the active promoter of the scheme. A brief history of his activities is given in Hulme's *Journal*, in our volume x, p. 50, note 22.

For Robert Dale Owen see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxiv, p. 133, note 128.— Ed.

68 Mr. Owen was sanguine of success. On the 4th of July, 1826, he promulgated his celebrated declaration of mental independence;29 a document which, for absurdity, has never, perhaps, been paralleled. But all was in vain. Dissension insinuated itself among the members; one after another dropped off from the community, until at length Mr. Owen retired in disgust, and, at a vast sacrifice, disposed of the establishment to a wealthy Scotch gentleman by the name of M'Clure, a former coadjutor.30 Thus was abandoned the far-famed *social system* , which for a time was an object of interest and topic of remark all over the United States and even in Europe. The Duke of Saxe Weimar passed here a [38] week in the spring of 1826, and has given a detailed and amusing description of his visit.

29 “Declaration of Mental Independence” delivered by Robert Owen (not Robert Dale Owen) on July 4, 1826, was printed in the New Harmony *Gazette* for July 12, 1826. An extended quotation is given in George B. Lockwood, The New Harmony Communities (Marion, Indiana, 1902), p. 163.— Ed.

30 For an account of William Maclure, see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxii, p. 163, note 81.

In reference to the Duke of Saxe Weimar, see Wyeth's *Oregon*, in our volume xxi, p. 71, note 47.— Ed.

About ten miles below the mouth of the Wabash is situated the village of Shawneetown, once a favourite dwelling-spot of the turbulent Shawnee Indian, the tribe of Tecumseh.31 Quite a village once stood here; but, for some cause unknown, it was forsaken previous to its settlement by the French, and two small mounds are the only vestige of its existence

which are now to be seen. A trading-post was established by the early Canadian voyageurs; but, on account of the sickliness of the site, was abandoned, and the spot was soon once more a wilderness. In the early part of 1812 a land-office was here located, and two years subsequent a town was

31 On Shawneetown and the Shawnee Indians see our volume i, p. 23, note 13, and p. 138, note 108.— Ed.

69 laid off by authority of Congress, and the lots sold as other public lands. Since then it has been gradually becoming the commercial emporium of southern Illinois.

The buildings, among which are a very conspicuous bank, courthouse, and a land-office for the southern district of Illinois, are scattered along upon a gently elevated bottom, swelling up from the river to the bluffs in the rear, but sometimes submerged. From this latter cause it has formerly been subject to disease; it is now considered healthy; is the chief commercial port in this section of the state, and is the principal point of debarkation for emigrants for the distant West. Twelve miles in its rear are situated the Gallatin Salines, from which the United States obtains some hundred thousands of bushels of salt annually.32 It is manufactured by [39] the evaporation of salt water. This is said to abound over the whole extent of this region, yielding from one eighth to one twelfth of its weight in pure muriate of soda. In many places it bursts forth in perennial springs; but most frequently is obtained by penetrating with the augur a depth of from three to six hundred feet through the solid limestone substratum, when a copper tube is introduced, and the strongly-impregnated fluid gushes violently to the surface. In the vicinity of these salines huge fragments of earthenware, apparently of vessels used in obtaining salt, and bearing the impress of wickerwork, have been thrown up from a considerable depth below the surface. Appearances of the same character exist near Portsmouth, in the State of Ohio, and other places. Their origin is a mystery! the race which formed them is departed!33

32 For a brief statement on the salines, see James's *Long's Expedition*, in our volume xiv, p. 58, note xi.— Ed.

33 An excellent account of the Mound Builders is given by Lucien Carr in Smithsonian Institution *Report*, 1891 (Washington, 1893), pp. 503–599; see also Cyrus Thomas, "Report on Mound Explorations" in United States Bureau of Ethnology *Report* (1891).—Ed.

Ohio River.

70

IV

"Who can paint Like Nature? Can imagination boast, Amid its gay creations, hues like hers? Or can it mix them with that matchless skill, And lose them in each other, as appears In every bud that blooms?"

Thomson.

"Precipitous, black, jagged rocks, For ever shattered, and the same forever."

Coleridge.

It was near noon of the third day of our passage that we found ourselves in the vicinity of that singular series of massive rock formations, stretching along for miles upon the eastern bank of the stream. The whole vast plain, extending from the Northern Lakes to the mouth of the Ohio, and from the Alleghany slope to the boundless prairies of the far West, is said by geologists to be supported by a bed of horizontal limestone rock, whose deep strata have never been completely pierced, though penetrated many hundred feet by the augur. This limestone is hard, stratified, imbedding innumerable shells of the terebratulae, encrinites, orthocerites, trilobites, productus, and other species. Throughout most of its whole extent it supports a stratum of bituminous coal, various metals, and saline impregnations: its constant decomposition has fertilized the soil, and its absorbent and cavernous nature has prevented swamps from accumulating upon the surface. Such,

in general outline, is this vast limerock substratum [41] of the Western Valley. It generally commences but a few feet below the vegetable deposite; at other places its range is deeper, while at intervals it rises from the surface, and frowns in castellated grandeur over objects beneath. These huge masses of limestone sometimes exhibit the most picturesque and remarkable forms along the banks of the western rivers, 71 and are penetrated in many places by vast caverns. The region we were now approaching was a locality of these singular formations, and for miles before reaching it, as has been remarked, a change in scenery upon the eastern bank is observed. Instead of the rounded wooded summits of the “Ohio hills” sweeping beautifully away in the distance, huge, ponderous rocks, heaped up in ragged masses, “Pelion upon Ossa,” are beheld rearing themselves abruptly from the stream, and expanding their Briarean arms in every direction. Some of these cliffs present a uniform, jointed surface, as if of masonry, resembling ancient edifices, and reminding the traveller of the giant ruins of man's creations in another hemisphere, while others appear just on the point of toppling into the river. Among this range of crags is said to hang an *iron coffin* , suspended, like Mohammed's, between heaven and earth. It contains the remains of a man of singular eccentricity, who, previous to his decease, gave orders that they should be deposited thus; and the gloomy object at the close of the year, when the trees are stripped of their foliage, may be perceived, it is said, high up among the rocks from the deck of the passing [42] steamer. This story probably owes its origin to an event of actual occurrence somewhat similar, at a cliff called by the river-pilots “Hanging Rock.”34 It is situated in the vicinity of “Blennerhasset's Island.”35 The first of these singular cliffs, called “Battery Rock,” stretches along the river-bank for half a mile, presenting a uniform and perpendicular façade upward of eighty feet in height. The appearance is striking, standing, as it does, distinct from anything of a kindred character for miles

34 Hanging Rock is the name given to a high sandstone escarpment on the right bank of the river, three miles below Ironton, Ohio.— Ed.

35 Blennerhasset's Island is two miles below Parkersburg, West Virginia. For its history, see Cuming's *Tour*, in our volume iv, p. 129, note 89.— Ed.

72 above and for some distance below. Passing several fine farms, which sweep down to the water's edge, a second range of cliffs are discovered, similar to those described in altitude and aspect; but near the base, through the dark cypresses skirting the water, is perceived the ragged entrance to a large cavernous fissure, penetrating the bluff, and designated by the name of “Rock-Inn-Cave.”36 It is said to have received this significant appellation from emigrants, who were accustomed to tarry with their families for weeks at the place when detained by stress of weather, stage of the river, or any other circumstance unfavourable to their progress.

36 A brief description of Rock Inn Cave (or Cave-in-Rock) may be found in Cuming's *Tour*, in our volume iv, p. 273, note 180.— Ed.

It was near noon of a beautiful day when the necessary orders for landing were issued to the pilot, and our boat rounded up to the low sand-beach just below this celebrated cavern. As we strolled along the shore beneath “the precipitous, black, jagged rocks” overhanging the winding and broken pathway towards the entrance, we could not but consider its situation wild and rugged enough to please the rifest fancy. The entrance, [43] at first view, is exceedingly imposing; its broad massive forehead beetling over the visiter for some yards before he finds himself within. The mouth of the cavern looks out upon the stream rushing along at the base of the cliff, and is delightfully shaded by a cluster of cypresses, rearing aloft their huge shafts, almost concealed in the luxuriant ivy-leaves clinging to their bark. The entrance is formed into a semi-elliptical arch, springing boldly to the height of forty feet from a heavy bench of rock on either side, and eighty feet in width at the base, throwing over the whole a massive roof of uniform concavity, verging to a point near the centre of the cave. Here may be seen another 73 opening of some size, through which trickles a limpid stream, and forming an entrance to a second chamber, said to be more extensive than that below. The extreme length of this cavern is given by Schoolcraft37

as one hundred and sixty feet, the floor, the roof, and the walls gradually tapering to a point. The rock is a secondary limestone, abounding with testacea and petrifactions, a fine specimen of which I struck from the ledge while the rest of our party were recording their names among the thousand dates and inscriptions with which the walls are defaced.

37 For Schoolcraft, see Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies*, in our volume xx, p. 286, note 178.— Ed.

Like all other curiosities of Nature, this cavern was, by the Indian tribes, deemed the residence of a *Manito* 38 or spirit, evil or propitious, concerning [44] whom many a wild legend yet lives among their simple-hearted posterity. They never pass this dwelling-place of the divinity without discharging their guns (an ordinary mark of respect), or making some other offering propitiatory of his favour. These tributary acknowledgments, however, are never of much value. The view of the stream from the left bench at the cave's mouth is most beautiful. Immediately in front extends a large and densely-wooded island, known by the name of the Cave, while the soft-gliding waters flow between, furnishing a scene of natural beauty worthy an Inman's pencil; and, if I mistake not, an engraving of the spot has been published, a ferocious-looking personage, pistol in hand, crouched at the entrance, eagerly watching an ascending boat. This design originated, doubtless, in the tradition yet extant, that in the latter part of the last century this cavern was the rendezvous of a notorious band

38 It is a remarkable circumstance, that this term is employed to signify the same thing by all the tribes from the Arkansas to the sources of the Mississippi; and, according to Mackenzie, throughout the Arctic Regions.— Flagg.

74 of freebooters which then infested the region, headed by the celebrated Mason,39 plundering the boats ascending from New-Orleans and murdering their crews. From these circumstances this cave has become the scene of a poem of much merit, called the “Outlaw,” and has suggested a spirited tale from a popular writer. Many other spots in the vicinity were notorious, in the early part of the present century, for the murder and robbery

of travellers, whose fate long remained enveloped in mystery. On the summit of a lofty bluff, not far from the “Battery Rock,” was pointed out to us a solitary house, with a single chimney rising from its roof. Its [45] white walls may be viewed for miles before reaching the place on descending the river. It was here that the family of Sturdevant carried on their extensive operations as counterfeiters for many years unsuspected; and on this spot, in 1821, they expiated their crimes with their lives. A few miles below is a place called “Ford's Ferry,”40 where murder, robbery, forgery, and almost every crime in the calendar were for years committed, while not a suspicion of the truth was awakened. Ford not only escaped unsuspected, but was esteemed a most exemplary man. Associated with him were his son and two other individuals, named Simpson and Shouse. They are all now gone to their account. The old man was mysteriously shot by some person who was never discovered, but was supposed to have been Simpson, between whom and himself a misunderstanding had arisen. If it were so, the murderer was met by fitting retribution, for *he* fell in a similar manner. Shouse and the son of Ford atoned upon the gallows their crimes in 1833. Before reaching this spot the traveller passes

39 See Cuming's Tour, in our volume iv, p. 368.— Ed.

40 Ford's Ferry is today a small hamlet in Crittenden County, Kentucky, twenty-five miles below Shawneetown. Flagg is referring probably to the Wilson family. Consult Lewis Collins, *History of Kentucky* (Covington, 1874), i, p. 147.— Ed.

75 a remarkable mass of limestone called “Tower Rock.” It is perpendicular, isolated, and somewhat cylindrical in outline. It is many feet in altitude, and upon its summit tradition avers to exist the ruins of an antique tumulus; an altar, mayhap, of the ancient forest-sons, where

“Garlands, ears of maize, and skins of wolf And shaggy bear, the offerings of the tribe Were made to the Great Spirit.”

In the vicinity of the cliff called “Tower Rock,” and not far from Hurricane Island, is said to exist a [46] remarkable cavern of considerable extent. The cave is entered by an orifice nine feet in width and twelve feet high; a bench of rock is then ascended a few feet, and an aperture of the size of an ordinary door admits the visiter into a spacious hall. In the mouth of the cavern, on the façade of the cliff, at the altitude of twenty-five feet, are engraved figures resembling a variety of animals, as the bear, the buffalo, and even the lion and lioness. All this I saw nothing of, and am, of course, no voucher for its existence; but a writer in the Port Folio, so long since as 1816, states the fact, and, moreover, adds that the engraving upon the rock was executed in “a masterly style.”41

41 Since the remarks relative to “the remarkable cavern in the vicinity of *Tower Rock*, and not far from Hurricane Island,” were in type, the subjoined notice of a similar cave, probably the same referred to, has casually fallen under my observation. The reader will recognise in this description the outlines of *Rock-Inn-Cave*, previously noticed. It is not a little singular that none of our party, which was a numerous one, observed the “hieroglyphics” here alluded to. The passage is from Priest's “American Antiquities.”

“ *A Cavern of the West, in which are found many interesting Hieroglyphics, supposed to have been made by the Ancient Inhabitants.*

“On the Ohio, twenty miles below the mouth of the Wabash, is a cavern in which are found many hieroglyphics and representations of such delineations as would induce the belief that their authors were indeed comparatively refined and civilized. It is a cave in a rock, or ledge of the mountain, which presents itself to view a little above the water of the river when in flood, and is situated close to the bank. In the early settlement of Ohio this cave became possessed by a party of Kentuckians called Wilson's Gang.' Wilson, in the first place, brought his family to this cave, and fitted it up as a spacious dwelling; erected a signpost on the water side, on which were these words: 'Wilson's Liquor Vault and House of Entertainment.' The novelty of such a tavern induced almost all the boats descending the river to call for refreshments and amusement. Attracted by

these circumstances, several idle characters took up their abode at the cave, after which it continually resounded with the shouts of the licentious, the clamour of the riotous, and the blasphemy of gamblers. Out of such customers Wilson found no difficulty in forming a band of robbers, with whom he formed the plan of murdering the crews of every boat that stopped at his tavern, and of sending the boats, manned by some of his party, to New-Orleans, and there sell their loading for cash, which was to be conveyed to the cave by land through the States of Tennessee and Kentucky; the party returning with it being instructed to murder and rob on all good occasions on the road.

“After a lapse of time the merchants of the upper country began to be alarmed on finding their property make no returns, and their people never coming back. Several families and respectable men who had gone down the river were never heard of, and the losses became so frequent that it raised, at length, a cry of individual distress and general dismay. This naturally led to an inquiry, and large rewards were offered for the discovery of the perpetrators of such unparalleled crimes. It soon came out that Wilson, with an organized party of forty-five men, was the cause of such waste of blood and treasure; that he had a station at Hurricane Island to arrest every boat that passed by the mouth of the cavern, and that he had agents at Natchez and New-Orleans, of presumed respectability, who converted his assignments into cash, though they knew the goods to be stolen or obtained by the commission of murder.

“The publicity of Wilson's transactions soon broke up his party; some dispersed, others were taken prisoners, and he himself was killed by one of his associates, who was tempted by the reward offered for the head of the captain of the gang.

“This cavern measures about twelve rods in length and five in width; its entrance presents a width of eighty feet at its base and twenty-five feet high. The interior walls are smooth rock. The floor is very remarkable, being level through the whole length of its centre, the sides rising in stony grades, in the manner of seats in the pit of a theatre. On a diligent scrutiny of the walls, it is plainly discerned that the ancient inhabitants at a very remote

period had made use of the cave as a house of deliberation and council. The walls bear many hieroglyphics well executed, and some of them represent animals which have no resemblance to any now known to natural history.

“This cavern is a great natural curiosity, as it is connected with another still more gloomy, which is situated exactly above, united by an aperture of about fourteen feet, which, to ascend, is like passing up a chimney, while the mountain is yet far above. Not long after the dispersion and arrest of the robbers who had infested it, in the upper vault were found the skeletons of about sixty persons, who had been murdered by the gang of Wilson, as was supposed.

“But the tokens of antiquity are still more curious and important than a description of the mere cave, which are found engraved on the sides within, an account of which we proceed to give:

“The sun in different stages of rise and declension; the moon under various phases; a snake biting its tail, and representing an orb or circle; a viper; a vulture; buzzards tearing out the heart of a prostrate man; a panther held by the ears by a child; a crocodile; several trees and shrubs; a fox; a curious kind of hydraserpent; two doves; several bears; two scorpions; an eagle; an owl; some quails; *eight* representations of animals which are now unknown. Three out of the eight are like the elephant in all respects except the tusk and the tail. Two more resemble the tiger; one a wild boar; another a sloth; and the last appears a creature of fancy, being a quadruman instead of a quadruped; the claws being alike before and behind, and in the act of conveying something to the mouth, which lay in the centre of the monster. Besides these were several fine representations of men and women, *not naked*, but clothed; not as the Indians, but much in the costume of Greece and Rome.”— Flagg.

Comment by Ed. This same account is given by Collins (op. cit., in note 40), and is probably true.

76

From this spot the river stretches away in a long delightful reach, studded with beautiful islands, among which 77 “Hurricane Island,” a very large one, is chief.42 Passing the compact little village of Golconda with its neat courthouse, and the mouth of the Cumberland River with its green island, once the rendezvous of Aaron Burr and his chivalrous band, we next reached the town of Paducah, at the outlet of the Tennessee.43 This is a place of importance,44 though deemed unhealthy: it is said to have derived its name from a captive Indian woman, who was here sacrificed by a band of the Pawnees after having been assured of safety. About eight miles below Paducah are situated the ruins of

42 Hurricane Island, four miles below Cave-in-Rock, is more than five miles in length. The “Wilson gang” for some time used this island for a seat of operation.— Ed.

43 Golconda is the seat of Pope County, Illinois. See Woods's *English Prairie*, in our volume x, p. 327, note 77.

On or just before Christmas, 1806, Aaron Burr came down the Cumberland River from Nashville and joined Blennerhasset, Davis Floyd, and others who were waiting for him at the mouth of the river, and together they started on Burr's illfated expedition (December 28, 1806). Their united forces numbered only nine batteaux and sixty men. See W. F. McCaleb, *Aaron Burr's Conspiracy* (New York, 1903), p. 254 ff.

For a short account of Paducah, see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxii, p. 203, note 110.— Ed.

44 It has since been nearly destroyed by fire.— Flagg.

78 Fort Massac, once a French military post of importance.45 There is a singular legend respecting this fort still popular among the inhabitants of the neighbouring region, the outlines of which [47] are the following: The fortress was erected by the French while

securing possession of the Western Valley, and, soon after, hostilities arising between them and the natives, the latter contrived a stratagem, in every respect worthy the craft and subtlety of the race, to obtain command of this stronghold. Early one morning a body of Indians, enveloped each in a bearskin, appeared upon the opposite bank of the Ohio. Supposing them the animal so faithfully represented, the whole French garrison in a mass sallied incontinently forth, anticipating rare sport, while the remnant left behind as a guard gathered themselves upon the glacis as spectators of the scene. Meanwhile, a large body of Indians, concealed in rear of the fort, slipped silently from their ambush, and few were there of the French who escaped to tell the tale of the scene that ensued. They were *massacred* almost to a man, and hence the name of *Massac* to the post. During the war of the revolution a garrison was stationed upon the spot for some years, but the structures are now in ruins. A few miles below is a small place consisting of a few farmhouses, called Wilkinsonville,46 on the site where Fort Wilkinson once stood; just opposite, along the shore, commences the “Grand Chain” of rocks so famous to the Ohio pilot, extending four miles. The little village of Caledonia is here laid off among the

45 On Fort Massac, see A. Michaux's Travels, in our volume iii, p. 73, note 139.— Ed.

46 Wilkinsonville, named for General James Wilkinson, was a small hamlet located on the site of the Fort Wilkinson of 1812, twenty-two miles above Cairo. Two or three farm houses are today the sole relics of this place; see Thwaites, *On the Storied Ohio,* p. 291.

Caledonia is still a small village in Pulaski County, Illinois. Its post-office is Olmstead.— Ed.

79 bluffs. It has a good landing, and is the proposed site of a marine hospital.

It was sunset when we arrived at the confluence of the rivers. In course of the afternoon we had been visited by a violent thunder-gust, accompanied [48] by hail. But sunset came, and the glorious “bow of the covenant” was hung out upon the dark bosom of the clouds, spanning woodland and waters with its beautiful hues. And yet, though the hour

was a delightful one, the scene did not present that aspect of vastness and sublimity which was anticipated from the celebrity of the streams. For some miles before uniting its waters with the Mississippi; the Ohio presents a dull and uninteresting appearance. It is no longer the clear, sparkling stream, with bluffs and woodland painted on its surface; the volume of its channel is greatly increased by its union with two of its principal tributaries, and its waters are turbid; its banks are low, inundated, and clothed with dark groves of deciduous forest-trees, and the only sounds which issue from their depths to greet the traveller's ear are the hoarse croakings of frogs, or the dull monotony of countless choirs of moschetoes. Thus rolls on the river through the dullest, dreariest, most uninviting region imaginable, until it sweeps away in a direction nearly southeast, and meets the venerable Father of the West advancing to its embrace. The volume of water in each seems nearly the same; the Ohio exceeds a little in breadth, their currents oppose to each other an equal resistance, and the resultant of the forces is a vast lake more than two miles in breadth, where the united waters slumber quietly and magnificently onward for leagues in a common bed. On the right come rolling in the turbid floods of the Mississippi; and on looking upon it for the first time with preconceived ideas of the magnitude of the mightiest [49] river on the globe, the spectator is always disappointed. He considers 80 only its breadth when compared with the Ohio, without adverting to its vast depth. The Ohio sweeps in majestically from the north, and its clear waters flow on for miles without an intimate union with its turbid conqueror. The characteristics of the two streams are distinctly marked at their junction and long after. The banks of both are low and swampy, totally unfit for culture or habitation. “Willow Point,” which projects itself into the confluence, presents an elevation of twenty feet; yet, in unusual inundations, it is completely buried six feet below the surface, and the agitated waters, rolling together their masses, form an enormous lake. How strange it seemed, while gazing upon the view I have attempted to delineate, now fading away beneath the summer twilight — how very strange was the reflection that these two noble streams, deriving their sources in the pellucid lakes and the clear icy fountains of their highland-homes, meandering majestically through scenes of nature and of art unsurpassed in beauty, and draining, and irrigating, and fertilizing the

loveliest valley on the globe — how strange, that the confluence of the waters of such streams, in their onward rolling to the deep, should take place at almost the only stage in their course devoid entirely of interest to the eye or the fancy; in the heart of a dreary and extended swamp, waving with the gloomy boughs of the cypress, and enlivened by not a sound but the croaking of bullfrogs, and the deep, surly misery note of [50] moschetoes! Willow Point is the property of a company of individuals, who announce it their intention to elevate the delta above the power of inundations, and here to locate a city.47 There are as yet, however, but a few storehouses on the spot; and when we consider the incalculable expense the only plan for rendering it habitable

47 For account of the attempt at settlements at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi, see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxii, p. 204, note 111.— Ed.

81 involves, we can only deem the idea of a city here as the chimera of a Utopian fancy. For more than twelve miles above the confluence, the whole alluvion is annually inundated, and forbids all improvement; but were this site an elevated one, a city might here be founded which should command the immense commerce of these great rivers, and become the grand central emporium of the Western Valley.

Upon the first elevated land above the confluence stands the little town called America. This is the proposed *terminus* to the grand central railroad of the Internal Improvement scheme of Illinois, projected to pass directly through the state,48 uniting its northern extremity with the southern. The town is said to have been much retarded in its advancement by the circumstance of a sand-bar obstructing the landing. It has been contemplated to cut a basin, extending from the Ohio to a stream called “Humphrey's Creek,” which passes through the place, and thus secure a harbour. Could this plan be carried into execution, America would soon become a town of importance.

Ohio River.

48 For America see Ogden's *Letters*, our volume xix, p. 44, note 30, and Woods's *English Prairie*, our volume x, p. 327, note 77.

The scheme known as the “Internal Improvement Policy” was authorized over the governor's veto by the Illinois general assembly on February 27, 1837, in response to the popular clamor for its adoption. The object was to open the country for immigration and hasten its natural development by constructing railroads and canals as yet not needed commercially. Ten million two hundred thousand dollars were appropriated by the act, including two hundred thousand dollars to be given directly to the counties not favored. Surveys were made, and speculation was rife. Then followed a collapse, and six million five hundred thousand dollars were added to the state debt. The scheme was later referred to as the General Insanity Bill.— Ed.

82

V

“The groves were God's first temples.”

Bryant.

“Oh! it's hame, and it's hame, it's hame wad I be, Hame, hame, hame, to my ain countrie.”

Cunningham.

“Those Sabbath bells, those Sabbath bells, I hear them wake the hour of prime.”

Lamb.

“She walks the waters like a thing of life.”

Byron.

It was late before we had passed the confluence of the Ohio with the dark-rolling tide of the “endless river,” and the mellow gorgeousness of summer sunset had gently yielded to the duskiness of twilight, and that to the inky pall of night. The moon had not risen, and the darkness became gradually so dense that doubts were entertained as to the prudence of attempting to stem the mighty current of the Mississippi on such a night. These, however, were overruled; and, sweeping around the low peninsula of Cairo, our steamer met the torrent and quivered in every limb. A convulsed, motionless struggle ensued, in which the heavy labouring of the engine, the shrill whistle of the safety-valve, the quick, querulous crackling of the furnaces, the tumultuous rushing of the wheels, and the stern roar of the scape-pipe, gave evidence of the fearful power summoned up to overcome the flood. At length we began very slowly to ascend the stream. [52] Our speed was about five miles an hour, and the force of the current nearly the same, which so impedes advancement that it requires as long to ascend from the confluence to St. Louis as to descend to the same point from the Falls, though the distance is less than half. All night our steamer urged herself slowly onward against the current, and the morning found us threading a narrow channel amid a 83 cluster of islands, from whose dense foliage the night-mists were rising and settling in dim confusion. Near the middle of the stream, above this collection, lays a very large island, comprising eight or ten thousand acres. It is called English Island;49 is heavily timbered; huge vines of the wild grape are leaping like living things from branch to branch, and the wild pea flourishes all over the surface of the soil in most luxuriant profusion. The stream here expands itself to the breadth of four miles, and abounds with islands.

49 The English Island of 1836 is probably the Power's Island of today. It is three miles long, and forms a part of Scott County, Missouri, more than twenty miles above Cairo.—Ed.

As the morning advanced the sun burst gloriously forth from the mists; and as I gazed with tranquillized delight upon the beautiful scenery it unrolled, I remembered that it was the

morning of the Sabbath — the peaceful Sabbath. It is a sweet thing to pass the hours of holy time amid the eloquent teachings of inanimate nature. It is pleasant to yield up for a season the sober workings of reason to the warm gushings of the heart, and to suffer the homage of the soul to go up before the Author of its being unfettered by the chill formalities, the bustling parade, the soulless dissembling of the unbending courtesies of ordinary life. Amid the [53] crowded assemblage, there is but little of that humbleness of spirit and that simple-hearted fervour of worship which it is in man to feel when communing within the shadowy solitudes of Nature with his God. There are moments, too, when the soul of man is called back from the heartlessness of life, and pours forth its emotions, gush upon gush, in all the hallowed luxuriance of its nature; when, from the fevered turmoil of daily existence, it retires to well up its sympathies alone beneath the covert of a lulled and peaceful bosom; and surely such a season is the calm, 84 waveless hour of Sabbath sacredness. And it is a blessed appointment that, in a world whose quietude too often is disturbed by the untamed heavings of unholy feeling, there should yet be moments when the agitated events of the past are forgotten, when the apprehensions of the future are unthought of, and the generous emotions of the heart are no more repressed. Such moments are the crystal fount of the oasis, girt, indeed, by the sands and barrenness of the desert; yet laughing forth in tinkling melody amid its sprinkled evergreens, in all the sparkling freshness of mimic life, to bathe the languid lip of the weary one. Such moments are the mellow radiance of the departing sun when the trials of the day are over; and tenderly and softly do their influences descend upon the heart. Like the pure splendour of the star of even, how calmly does the sacred Sabbath-time beam out from the dark, unquiet firmament of life! 'Tis the blessed rainbow of promise and of consolation amid the rough storms of our pilgrimage, [54] and its holy influences elicit all the untold richness of the heart. It is a season soft as the memorial of buried affection, mild as the melody of departed years, pure as the prayer of feebleness from the lip of childhood, beautiful as yon floating islet sleeping in sunset radiance on the blue evening wave. “Gone, gone for ever!” Another Sabbath is over, and from its gathering shades it is good to cast back a glance of reflection.

A company of emigrants, in course of the morning, were landed from our boat at a desolate-looking spot upon the Missouri shore; men, women, and little ones, with slaves, household stuff, pots, kettles, dogs, implements of husbandry, and all the paraphernalia of the backwood's farm heaped up promiscuously in a heterogeneous mass among the undergrowth beneath the lofty trees. A similar party from the State of Vermont were, during our passage, landed near the mouth of the Wabash, one of whom was a pretty, delicate female, with an infant boy in her arms. They had been *deck-passengers* , and we had seen none of them before; yet their situation could not but excite interest in their welfare. Poor woman! thought I, as our boat left them gazing anxiously after us from the inhospitable bank, little do you dream of the trials and the privations to which your destiny conducts, and the hours of bitter retrospection which are to come over your spirit like a blight, as, from these cheerless solitudes, you cast back many a lingering thought to your dear, distant home in New-England; whose very mountaincrags and fierce storms [55] of winter, harsh and unwelcome though they might seem to the stranger, were yet pleasant to you:

“My native land! my native land! Though bare and bleak thou be, And scant and cold thy summer smile, Thou'rt all the world to me.”

A few years, and all this will have passed away. A new home and new ties will have sprung up in the wilderness to soothe the remembrance of the old. This broad valley will swarm with population; the warm breath of man will be felt upon the cheek, and his tread will be heard at the side; the glare of civilization and the confused hum of business will have violated these solitudes and broken in upon their gloom, and here empire shall have planted her throne; and then, perchance, that playful boy upon the bosom may rise to wield the destinies of his fellows. But many a year of toil and privation must first have passed away; and who shall record their annals? A thousand circumstances, all unlooked for, will seize upon the feelings of the emigrant; the harshness of strangers, the cold regard of recent acquaintance, the absence of relatives and of friends long cherished,

the distance which separates him from his native home, and the dreary time which must elapse between all communications of the pen. And then the sweet chime of the Sabbath-bell 86 New-England, pealing out in “angels' music”50 on the clear mountain-air, to usher in the hours of holy time, and to summon the soul of man to communion with its Maker; will this be heard amid the forest solitude? and all that quiet [56] intermingling of heart with heart which divests grief of half its bitterness by taking from it all its loneliness? And the hour of sickness, and of death, and of gushing tears, as they come to all, may not be absent here; and where are the soothing consolations of religious solemnity, and the sympathies of kindred souls, and the unobtrusive condolence of those who alone may enter the inner temple of the breast, where the stranger intermeddleth not? Yes, it must be — notwithstanding the golden anticipations indulged by every humble emigrant to this El Dorado of promise — it must be that there will arise in his bosom, when he finds himself for the first time amid these vast forest solitudes, attended only by his wife and children, a feeling of unutterable loneliness and desertion. Until this moment he has been sustained by the buoyancy of anticipated success, the excitement of change, the enlivening influences of new and beautiful scenes; and the effect of strange faces and strange customs has been to divert the attention, while the farewell pressure of affection yet has warmly lingered. All this is over now, and his spirit, left to its own resources, sinks within him. The sacred spot of his nativity is far, far away towards the morning sun; and there is the village church and the village graveyard, hallowed by many a holy remembrance; there, too, are the playmates and the scenes of his boyhood-days; the trysting-place of youthful love and of youthful friendship, spots around which are twined full many a tendril of his heart; and he has turned from them all *for ever.* Henceforth he is a wanderer, and a distant soil must [57] claim his ashes.

50 Herbert.— Flagg.

87 He who, with such reflections, yearns not for the home of his fathers, is an alien, and no true son of New-England.

It was yet early in the morning of our first day upon the Mississippi that we found ourselves beneath the stately bluff upon which stands the old village of Cape Girardeau.51 Its site is a bold bank of the stream, gently sloping to the water's edge, upon a substratum of limerock. A settlement was commenced on this spot in the latter part of the last century. Its founders were of French and German extraction, though its structures do not betray their origin. The great earthquakes of 1811, which vibrated through the whole length of the Western Valley, agitated the site of this village severely; many brick houses were shattered, chimneys thrown down, and other damage effected, traces of the repairs of which are yet to be viewed. The place received a shock far more severe, however, in the removal of the seat of justice to another town in the county: but the landing is an excellent one; iron ore and other minerals are its staples of trade, and it is again beginning to assume a commercial character. The most remarkable objects which struck our attention in passing this place were several of those peculiarly novel mills put in motion by a spiral water-wheel, acted on by the current of the river. These screw-wheels float upon the surface parallel to the shore, rising or falling with the water, and are connected with the gearing in the millhouse upon the bank by a long shaft. The action of the current upon [58] the spiral thread of the wheel within its external casing keeps it in constant motion, which is communicated by the shaft to the machinery of the mills. The contrivance betrays much ingenuity, and for purposes where a *motive* of inconsiderable power is required, may be

51 For a sketch of Cape Girardeau, see A. Michaux's *Travels*, in our volume iii, p. 80, note 154.— Ed.

 useful; but for driving heavy millstones or a saw, the utility is more than problematical.

In the vicinity of Cape Girardeau commences what is termed the “Tyowapity Bottom,” a celebrated section of country extending along the Missouri side of the stream some thirty miles, and abounding with a peculiar species of potter's clay, unctuous in its nature, exceedingly pure and white, and plastic under the wheel.52 This stratum of clay is said to vary from one foot to ten in depth, resting upon sandstone, and covered by limestone

abounding in petrifactions. A manufactory is in operation at Cape Girardeau, in which this substance is the material employed. Near the northern extremity of this bottom the waters of the Muddy River enter the Mississippi from Illinois.53 This stream was discovered by the early French voyageurs, and from them received the name of *Rivière au Vase* , or *Vaseux.* It is distinguished for the salines upon its banks, for its exhaustless beds of bituminous coal, for the fertility of the soil, and for a singularly-formed eminence among the bluffs of the Mississippi, a few miles from its mouth. Its name is " *Fountain Bluff* ," derived from the circumstance that from its base gush out a number of limpid springs.54 It is said to measure eight miles [59] in circumference, and to have an altitude of several hundred feet. Its western declivity looks down upon the river, and its northern side is a precipitous crag, while that

52 A superior quality of kaolin, or china clay, is mined in large quantities in Cape Girardeau County. Marble ninety-nine per cent pure, is procured in abundance.— Ed.

53 "Muddy River," usually called "Big Muddy," is the English translation of the French *Rivière au Vase*, or *Vaseux.* Formed by the union of two branches rising in Jefferson County, Illinois, it flows in a southwesterly direction and empties into the Mississippi about twenty-five miles above Cape Girardeau. It is one hundred and forty miles long.— Ed.

54 Fountain Bluff is six miles above the mouth of the Big Muddy. Flagg's descriptions are in the main accurate.— Ed.

89 upon the south slopes away to a fertile plain, sprinkled with farms.

A few miles above the Big Muddy stands out from the Missouri shore a huge perpendicular column of limestone, of cylindrical formation, about one hundred feet in circumference at the base, and in height one hundred and fifty feet, called the "Grand Tower."55 Upon its summit rests a thin stratum of vegetable mould, supporting a shaggy crown of rifted cedars, rocking in every blast that sweeps the stream, whose turbid current boils, and chafes, and rages at the obstruction below. This is the first of that celebrated range

of heights, upon the Mississippi usually pointed out to the tourist, springing in isolated masses from the river's brink upon either side, and presenting to the eye a succession of objects singularly grotesque. There are said to exist, at this point upon the Mississippi, indications of a huge parapet of limestone having once extended across the stream, which must have formed a tremendous cataract, and effectually inundated all the alluvion above. At low stages of the water ragged shelves, which render the navigation dangerous, are still to be seen. Among the other cliffs along this precipitous range which have received names from the boatmen are the “Devil's Oven,” “Testable,” Backbone, &c., which, with the “Devil's Anvil,” “Devil's Island,” &c., indicate pretty plainly the divinity most religiously propitiated [60] in these dangerous passes.56 The “Oven”

55 Grand Tower, seventy-five feet high, and frequently mentioned by early writers, is a mile above the island of the same name, at the mouth of the Big Muddy, and stands out some distance from the Missouri side. Grand Tower Island was an object of much dread to boatmen during the days of early navigation on the Mississippi. A powerful current sweeping around Devil's Oven, frequently seized frail or unwieldy craft to dash it against this rock. Usually the boatmen landed, and by means of long ropes towed their vessels along the Illinois side, past this perilous rock.— Ed.

56 The Mississippi between the mouth of the Kaskaskia River and Cape Girardeau offered many obstructions to early navigation. As at Grand Tower, the boatmen frequently found it necessary to land and tow their boats past the dangerous points, and here the Indians would lie in ambush to fall upon the unfortunate whites. The peril of these places doubtless lent color to their nomenclature. Flagg's descriptions are fairly accurate except in the matter of dimensions, wherein he tends to exaggeration.— Ed.

90 consists of an enormous promontory of rock, about one hundred feet from the surface of the river, with a hemispherical orifice scooped out of its face, probably by the action, in ages past, of the whirling waters now hurrying on below. It is situated upon the left bank of the stream, about one mile above the “Tower,” and is visible from the river. In front rests a huge fragment of the same rock, and in the interval stands a dwelling and a garden

spot. The “Teatable” is situated at some distance below, and the other spots named are yet lower upon the stream. This whole region bears palpable evidence of having been subjected, ages since, to powerful volcanic and diluvial action; and neither the Neptunian or Vulcanian theory can advance a superior claim.

For a long time after entering the dangerous defile in the vicinity of the *Grand Tower* , through which the current rushes like a racehorse, our steamer writhed and groaned against the torrent, hardly advancing a foot. At length, as if by a single tremendous effort, which caused her to quiver and vibrate to her centre, an onward impetus was gained, the boat shot forward, the rapids were overcome, and then, by chance, commenced one of those perilous feats of rivalry, formerly, more than at present, frequent upon the Western waters, A RACE. Directly before us, a steamer of a large class, deeply laden, was roaring and struggling against the torrent under her highest pressure. During our passage we had several times passed and repassed each other, as either boat was delayed [61] at the various woodyards along the route; but now, as the evening 91 came on, and we found ourselves gaining upon our antagonist, the excitement of emulation flushed every cheek. The passengers and crew hung clustering, in breathless interest, upon the galleries and the boiler deck, wherever a post for advantageous view presented; while the hissing valves, the quick, heavy stroke of the piston, the sharp clatter of the *eccentric* , and the cool determination of the pale engineer, as he glided like a spectre among the fearful elements of destruction, gave evidence that the challenge was accepted. But there was one humble individual, above all others, whose whole soul seemed concentrated in the contest, as from time to time, in the intervals of toil, his begrimed and working features were caught, glaring through the lurid light of the furnaces he was feeding. This was no less a personage than the doughty fireman of our steamer; a long, lanky individual, with a cute cast of the eye, a knowing tweak of the nose, and an interminable longitude of phiz. His checkered shirt was drenched with perspiration; a huge pair of breeches, begirdling his loins by means of a leathern belt, covered his nether extremities, and two sinewy arms of “whipcord and bone” held in suspension a spadelike brace of hands. During our

passage, more than once did I avail myself of an opportunity of studying the grotesque, good-humoured visage of this *unique* individual; and it required no effort of fancy to imagine I viewed before me some lingering remnant of that “horse and alligator race,” now, like [62] the poor Indian, fast fading from the West before the march of steamboats and civilization, *videlicet* , “the Mississippi boatman.” And, on the occasion of which I speak, methought I could catch no slight resemblance in my interesting fireman, as he flourished his ponderous limbs, to that faithful portraiture of his majesty of the Styx in Tooke's Pantheon! though, as touching this latter, I must confess me of much dubiety in boyhood days, 92 with the worthy “gravedigger” Young, having entertained shrewd suspicions whether the “tyrant ever sat.”

But in my zeal for the honest Charon I am forgetting the exciting subject of the race. During my digression, the ambitious steamers have been puffing, and sweating, and glowing in laudable effort, to say nothing of stifled sobs said to have issued from their labouring bosoms, until at length a grim smile of satisfaction lighting up the rugged features of the worthy Charon, gave evidence that not in vain he had wielded his mace or heaved his wood. A dense mist soon after came on, and the exhausted steamers were hauled up at midnight beneath the venerable trees upon the banks of the stream. On the first breakings of dawn all was again in motion. But, alas! alas! in spite of all the strivings of our valorous steamer, it soon became but too evident that her mighty rival must prevail, as with distended jaws, like to some huge fish, she came rushing up in our wake, as if our annihilation were sure. But our apprehensions proved groundless; like a civil, well-behaved rival, she speeded on, hurling forth a triple bob-major of [63] curses at us as she passed, doubtless by way of salvo, and disappeared behind a point. When to this circumstance is added that a long-winded racer of a mail-boat soon after swept past us in her onward course, and left us far in the rear, I shall be believed when it is stated that the steamer on which we were embarked was distinguished for anything but speed; a circumstance by none regretted *less* than by myself.

Mississippi River.

93

VI

“I linger yet with Nature.”

Manfred.

“Onward still I press, Follow thy windings still, yet sigh for more.”

Goethe.

“God's my life, did you ever hear the like! What a strange man is this!”

Ben Jonson.

But a very few years have passed away since the navigation of the Mississippi was that of one of the most dangerous streams on the globe; but, thanks to the enterprising genius of the scientific Shreve, this may no longer with truth be said. In 1824 the first appropriation 57 was voted by Congress for improving the navigation of the Western rivers; and since that period thousands of snags, sawyers, [64] planters, sand-bars, sunken rocks, and fallen trees have been removed, until all that now remains is to prevent new obstacles from accumulating where the old have been eradicated. For much of its course in its lower sections, the Mississippi is now quite safe; and as the progress of settlements advances upon its banks, the navigation of this noble stream will doubtless become unobstructed in its whole magnificent journey from the falls of the “Laughing Water” to the Mexican Gulf. The indefatigable industry, the tireless perseverance, the indomitable enterprise, and the enlarged and scientific policy of Captain Shreve, the projector and accomplisher of the grand national operations upon the Western rivers, can never be estimated beyond their

merit. The execution of that gigantic undertaking, the removal of the Red River Raft, has identified his history with that of the empire West;58 his fame will endure so long

57 $105,000.— Flagg.

58 For Red River raft, see James's *Long's Expedition*, in our volume xvii, p. 70, note 64.— Ed.

94 as those magnificent streams, with which his name is associated, shall continue to roll on their volumed waters to the deep.

These remarks have been suggested by scenes of constant recurrence to the traveller on the Mississippi. The banks, the forests, the islands all differ as much as the stream itself from those of the soft-gliding Ohio. Instead of those dense emerald masses of billowy foliage swelling gracefully. up from the banks of “the beautiful river,” those of the Mississippi throw back a rough, ragged outline; their sands piled with logs and uprooted trees, while heaps of wreck and drift-wood betray the wild ravages of the stream. In the midst of [65] the mass a single enormous sycamore often rears its ghastly limbs, while at its foot springs gracefully up a light fringe of the pensile willow. Sometimes, too, a huge sawyer, clinging upon the verge of the channel, heaves up its black mass above the surface, then falls, and again rises with the rush of the current. Against one of these sawyers is sometimes lodged a mass of drift-wood, pressing it firmly upon the bottom, till, by a constant accumulation, a foundation is gradually laid and a new island is formed: this again, by throwing the water from its course, causes a new channel, which, infringing with violence upon the opposite bank, undermines it with its colonnade of enormous trees, and thus new material in endless succession is afforded for obstructions to the navigation. The deposites of alluvion along the banks betray a similar origin of gradual accumulation by the annual floods. In some sections of the American Bottom,59 commencing at its southern extremity with the Kaskaskia River, the mould, upward of thirty feet in depth, is made up of numerous strata of earth, which may be readily distinguished and counted by the colours.

59 In reference to the American Bottom, see Ogden's *Letters*, in our volume xix, p. 62, note 48.— Ed.

95

About twenty miles above the mouth of the Kaskaskia is situated Ste. Genevieve, grand deposite of the lead of the celebrated ancient mines *La Motte* , and *A'Burton* , and others, some thirty miles in the interior, and the market which supplies all the mining district of the vicinity.60 It was first commenced about the year 1774 by the original settlers of Upper Louisiana; and the Canadian [66] French, with their descendants, constitute a large portion of its present inhabitants. The population does not now exceed eight hundred, though it is once said to have numbered two thousand inhabitants. Some of the villagers are advanced in years, and among them is M. Valle, one of the chief proprietors of *Mine la Motte* , who, though now some ninety years of age, is almost as active as when fifty.61 Ste. Genevieve

60 For an account of Ste. Genevieve, see Cuming's *Tour*, in our volume iv, p. 266, note 174.

According to Austin, cited below, La Motte (or La Mothe) Cadillac, governor of Louisiana, went on an expedition (1715) to the Illinois in search of silver, and found lead ore in a mine which had been shown him fifteen miles west of the Mississippi. It is believed by some authorities that this was the famous “Mine la Mothe,” at the head of the St. Francis River. Schoolcraft, however, says that Philip Francis Renault, having received mining grants from the French government, left France in 1719, ascended the Mississippi, established himself the following year near Kaskaskia, and sent out small companies in search of precious metals; and that La Mothe, who had charge of one of these companies, soon discovered the mine that still bears his name. It was operated only at intervals, until after the American occupation, when its resources were developed. Under the Spanish domination (1762–1800), little was done to develop the mine. In 1763, however, Francis Burton discovered the “Mine à Burton,” on a branch of Mineral Fork. Like the “Mine la Mothe,” it was known to

the Indians before the discovery by the whites, and both are still operated. Burton was said to have been alive in 1818, at the age of a hundred and six; see Colonel Thomas Benton's account of him in St. Louis *Enquirer*, October 16, 1818.

For an account of primitive mining operations, see Thwaites, *Wisconsin Historical Collactions*, xiii, pp. 271–292; Moses Austin, “Lead Mines of Ste. Geneviè and St. Louis Counties,” *American State Papers* (*Public Lands*), iii, pp. 609–613; and H. R. Schoolcraft, *Lead Mines of Missouri* (New York, 1819).— Ed.

61 From 1738 to 1744, the mines were considered as public property: but in the year last mentioned François Vallé received from the French government a grant of two thousand arpents of land (1,666 acres) including “Mine la Mothe,” and eighteen years later twenty-eight thousand arpents (23,333 acres) additional.

At Vallé's death the land passed to his sons, François and John, and Joseph Pratt, a transfer confirmed by Congress in 1827. The next year it was sold to C. C. Vallé, L. E. Linn, and Everett Pratt. In 1830 it was sold in part and the remainder leased. In 1868 the estate passed from the hands of the Vallés.— Ed.

96 is situated about one mile from the Mississippi, upon a broad alluvial plain lying between the branches of a small stream called *Gabourie.* Beyond the first bottom rises a second steppe, and behind this yet a third, attaining an elevation of more than a hundred feet from the water's edge. Upon this elevated site was erected, some twenty years since, a handsome structure of stone, commanding a noble prospect of the river, the broad American Bottom on the opposite side, and the bluffs beyond the Kaskaskia. It was intended for a literary institution; but, owing to unfavourable reports with regard to the health of its situation, the design was abandoned, and the edifice was never completed. It is now in a state of “ruinous perfection,” and enjoys the reputation, moreover, of being *haunted.* In very sooth, its aspect, viewed from the river at twilight, with its broken windows outlined against the western sky, is wild enough to warrant such an idea or any other. A courthouse and Catholic chapel constitute the public buildings. To the south of the

village, and lying upon the river, is situated the common field, originally comprising [67] two thousand *arpens* ; but it is now much less in extent, and is yearly diminishing from the action of the current upon the alluvial banks. These common fields were granted by the Spanish government, as well as by the French, to every village settled under their domination. A single enclosure at the expense of the villagers was erected and kept in repair, and the lot of every individual was separated from his neighbour's by a double furrow. Near this field the village was formerly located; but in the inundation of 1785, called by the old *habitans "L'annee des grandes eaux* ," so much of the bank was 97 washed away that the settlers were forced to select a more elevated site. The Mississippi was at this time swelled to thirty feet above the highest water-mark before known; and the town of Kaskaskia and the whole American Bottom were inundated.

Almost every description of minerals are to be found in the county, of which Ste. Genevieve is the seat of justice. But of all other species, iron ore is the most abundant. The celebrated *Iron Mountain* and the *Pilot Knob* are but forty miles distant.62 Abundance of coal is found in the opposite bluffs in Illinois. About twelve miles from the village has been opened a quarry of beautiful white marble, in some respects thought not inferior to that of Carrara. There are also said to be immense caves of pure white sand, of dazzling lustre, quantities of which are transported to Pittsburg for the manufacture of flint glass. There are a number of beautiful fountains in the neighbourhood, one of which is said to be of surpassing loveliness. It is several [68] yards square, and rushes up from a depth of fifteen or twenty feet, enclosed upon three sides by masses of living rock, over which, in pensile gracefulness, repose the long glossy branches of the forest trees.

62 Pilot Knob is a conical-shaped hill, a mile in diameter, in Iron County, Missouri, seventy-five miles southwest of St. Louis, and is rich in iron ore. In the War of Secession it was the scene of a battle between General Ster ling Price and General Hugh B. Ewing (September 26, 27, 1864).

Iron Mountain is an isolated knob of the St. François Mountains in St. François County, eighty miles south of St. Louis. One of the richest and purest iron mines in the United States is found there.— Ed.

The early French settlers manufactured salt a few miles from the village, at a saline formerly occupied by the aborigines, the remains of whose earthen kettles are yet found on the spot. About thirty years since a village of the Peoria Indians was situated where the French common field now stands;63 and from the ancient mounds found in the vicinity,

63 The Peoria were one of the five principal tribes of the Illinois Confederation. They resided around the lake in the central portion of Illinois, which bears their name. In 1832 they were removed to Kansas, and in 1854 to Indian Territory, where, united with other tribes, they still reside.— Ed.

98 and the vast quantities of animal and human remains, and utensils of pottery exhumed from the soil, the spot seems to have been a favourite location of a race whose destiny, and origin, and history are alike veiled in oblivion. The view of Ste. Genevieve from the water is picturesque and beautiful, and its landing is said to be superior to any between the mouth of the Ohio and the city of St. Louis. The village has that decayed and venerable aspect characteristic of all these early French settlements.

As we were passing Ste. Genevieve an accident occurred which had nearly proved fatal to our boat, if not to the lives of all on board of her. A race which took place between another steamer and our own has been noticed. In some unaccountable manner, this boat, which then passed us, fell again in the rear, and now, for the last hour, had been coming up in our wake under high steam. On overtaking us, she attempted, contrary to all rules and regulations [69] for the navigation of the river provided, to pass between our boat and the bank beneath which we were moving; an outrage which, had it been persisted in a moment longer than was fortunately the case, would have sent us to the bottom. For a single instant, as she came rushing on, contact seemed inevitable; and, as her force was far superior to our own, and the recklessness of many who have the guidance of

Western steamers was well known to us all, the passengers stood clustering around upon the decks, some pale with apprehension, and others with firearms in their hands, flushed with excitement, and prepared to render back prompt retribution on the first aggression. The pilot of the hostile boat, from his exposed situation and the virulent feelings against him, would have met with certain death; 99 and he, consequently, contrary to the express injunctions of the master, reversed the motion of the wheels just at the instant to avoid the fatal encounter. The sole cause for this outrage, we subsequently learned, was a private pique existing between the pilots of the respective steamers. One cannot restrain an expression of indignant feeling at such an exhibition of foolhardy recklessness. It is strange, after all the fearful accidents of this description upon the Western waters, and that terrible prodigality of human life which for years past has been constantly exhibited, there should yet be found individuals so utterly regardless of the safety of their fellow-men, and so destitute of every emotion of generous feeling, as to force their way heedlessly onward into [70] danger, careless of any issue save the paltry gratification of private vengeance. It is a question daily becoming of more startling import, How may these fatal occurrences be successfully opposed? Where lies the fault? Is it in public sentiment? Is it in legal enactment? Is it in individual villany? However this may be, our passage seemed fraught with adventure, of which this is but an incident. After the event mentioned, having composed the agitation consequent, we had retired to our berths, and were just buried in profound sleep, when crash—our boat's bow struck heavily against a snag, which, glancing along the bottom, threw her at once upon her beams, and all the passengers on the elevated side from their berths. No serious injury was sustained, though alarm and confusion enough were excited by such an unceremonious turn-out. The dismay and tribulation of some of our worthy company were entirely too ludicrous for the risibles of the others, and a hearty roar of cachinnation was heard even above the ejaculations of distress; a very improper thing, no doubt, and not at all to be recommended on such occasions, as one would hardly wish to make a grave “unknell'd and uncoffin'd” L. of C. 100 in the Mississippi, with a broad grin upon his phiz.

In alluding to the race which took place during our passage, honourable mention was made of a certain worthy individual whose vocation was to feed the furnaces; and one bright morning, when all the others of our company had bestowed themselves in their berths because of the intolerable [71] heat, I took occasion to visit the sooty Charon in the purgatorial realms over which he wielded the sceptre. “Grievous work this building fires under a sun like that,” was the salutation, as my friend the fireman had just completed the toilsome operation once more of stuffing the furnace, while floods of perspiration were coursing down a chest hairy as Esau's in the Scripture, and as brawny. Hereupon honest Charon lifted up his face, and drawing a dingy shirt sleeve with emphasis athwart his eyes, bleared with smut, responded, “Ay, ay, sir; it's a sin to Moses, such a trade;” and seizing incontinently upon a fragment of tin, fashioned by dint of thumping into a polygonal dipper of unearthly dimensions, he scooped up a quantity of the turbid fluid through which we were moving, and deep, deep was the potation which, like a succession of rapids, went gurgling down his throat. Marvellously refreshed, the worthy genius dilated, much to my edification, upon the glories of a fireman's life. “Upon this hint I spake” touching the topic of our recent race; and then were the strings of the old worthy's tongue let loose; and vehemently amplified he upon “our smart chance of a gallop” and “the slight sprinkling of steam he had managed to push up.” “Ah, stranger, I'll allow, and couldn't I have teetotally obfusticated her, and right mightily used her up, hadn't it been I was sort of bashful as to keeping path with such a cursed old mud-turtle! But it's all done gone;” and the droughty Charon seized another swig from the unearthly 101 dipper; and closing hermetically his lantern jaws, and resuming his *internal* [72] labours, to which those of Alcmena's son or of Tartarean Sysiphus were trifles, I had the discretion to betake myself to the upper world.

During the night, after passing Ste. Genevieve, our steamer landed at a woodyard in the vicinity of that celebrated old fortress, Fort Chartres, erected by the French while in possession of Illinois; once the most powerful fortification in North America, but now a pile of ruins.64 It is situated about three miles from Prairie de Rocher, a little antiquated French hamlet, the scene of one of Hall's Western Legends.65 We could see nothing

of the old fort from our situation on the boat; but its vast ruins, though now a shattered heap, and shrouded with forest-trees of more than half a century's growth, are said still to proclaim in their finished and ponderous masonry its ancient grandeur and strength. In front stretches a large island in the stream, which has received from the old ruin a name. It is not a little surprising that there exists no description of this venerable pile worthy its origin and eventful history.

64 For a short account of Fort Chartres, see A. Michaux's *Travels*, in our volume iii, p. 71, note 136.— Ed.

65 For Prairie du Rocher see A. Michaux's *Travels*, in our volume iii, p. 70, note 133. The legend referred to is, “Michel de Couce” by James Hall, in his *Legends of the West.*

Contrary to Flagg's statement that there exists no description of Fort Chartres worthy of its history, Philip Pittman, who visited the place in 1766, gives a good detailed description of the fort in his *Present State of the European Settlements on the Missisippi* (London, 1770), pp. 45, 46.— Ed.

Mississippi River.

102

VII

“The hills! our mountain-wall, the hills!”

Alpine Omen.

“But thou, exulting and abounding river! Making thy waves a blessing as they flow Through banks whose beauty would endure for ever, Could man but leave thy bright creation so—”

Childe Harold.

There are few objects upon the Mississippi in which the geologist and natural philosopher may claim a deeper interest than that singular series of limestone cliffs already alluded to, which, above its junction with the Ohio, present themselves to the traveller all along the Missouri shore. The principal ridge commences a few miles above Ste. Genevieve; and at sunrise one morning we found ourselves beneath a huge battlement of crags, rising precipitously from the river to the height of several hundred feet. Seldom have I gazed upon a scene more eminently imposing than that of these hoary old cliffs, when the midsummer-sun, rushing upward from the eastern horizon, bathed their splintered pinnacles and spires and the rifted tree-tops in a flood of golden effulgence. The scene was not unworthy Walter Scott's graphic description of the view from the Trosachs of Loch Katrine, in the “Lady of the Lake:”

“The *eastern* waves of *rising* day Roll'd o'er the *stream* their level way; Each purple peak, each flinty spire, Was bathed in floods of living fire.

Their rocky summits, split and rent, Form'd turret, dome, or battlement, Or seem'd fantastically set With cupola or minaret, Wild crests as pagod ever decked Or mosque of eastern architect.”

[74] All of these precipices, not less than those on the 103 Ohio, betray palpable indication of having once been swept by the stream; and the fantastic excavations and cavernous fissures which their bold escarpments expose would indicate a current far more furious and headstrong than that, resistless though it be, which now rolls at their base. The idea receives confirmation from the circumstance that opposite extends the broad American Bottom, whose alluvial character is undisputed. This tract once constituted our western border, whence the name.

The bluffs of Selma and Herculaneum are distinguished for their beauty and grandeur, not less than for the practical utility to which they have been made subservient. Both places are great depositories of lead from the mines of the interior, and all along their cliffs, for

miles, upon every eligible point, are erected tall towers for the manufacture of shot.. Their appearance in distant view is singularly picturesque, perched lightly upon the pinnacles of towering cliffs, beetling over the flood, which rushes along two hundred feet below. Some of these shot manufactories have been in operation [75] for nearly thirty years.66 Herculaneum has long been celebrated for those in her vicinity. The situation of the town is the mouth of Joachim Creek; and the singular gap at this point has been aptly compared to an enormous door, thrown open in the cliffs for the passage of its waters. A few miles west of this village is said to exist a great natural curiosity, in shape of a huge

66 For location and date of settlement of Herculaneum, see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxii, p. 212, note 122.

On a perpendicular bluff, more than a hundred feet in height, in the vicinity of Herculaneum, J. Macklot erected (1809) what was probably the first shot-tower this side of the Atlantic. The next year one Austin built another tower at the same point. According to H. R. Schoolcraft in his *View of the Lead Mines of Missouri* (New York, 1819), pp. 138, 139, there were in 1817 three shot-towers near Herculaneum, producing in the eighteen months ending June 1 of that year, 668, 350 pounds of shot. From the top of small wooden towers erected on the edge of the bluff, the melted lead was poured through holes in copper pans or sieves.— Ed.

104 rock of limestone, some hundred feet in length, and about fifty feet high. This rock is completely honeycombed with perforations, and has the appearance of having been pierced by the mytilus or some other marine insect.

A few miles above Herculaneum comes in the Platine Creek;67 and here commence the “Cornice Rocks,” a magnificent escarpment of castellated cliffs some two or three hundred feet in perpendicular altitude from the bed of the stream, and extending along the western bank a distance of eight or ten miles. Through the fagade of these bluffs pours in the tribute of the Merrimac, a bright, sparkling, beautiful stream.68 This river is so clear and limpid that it was long supposed to glide over sands of silver; but the idea has been

abandoned, and given place to the certainty of an abundant store of lead, and iron, and salt upon its banks, while its source is shaded by extensive forests of the white pine, a material in this section of country almost, if not quite, as valuable.69 Ancient works of various forms are also found upon the banks of the Merrimac. There is an

67 For the location of the Platine (usually spelled Plattin), see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxii, p. 212, note 123. Lead mining has been carried on in this district, intermittently, since 1824.— Ed.

68 See Maximilian's Travels, in our volume xxii, p. 212, note 123.— Ed.

69 The following extract from the Journal of Charlevoix, one of the earliest historians of the West, with reference to the Mines upon the Merrimac, may prove not uninteresting. The work is a rare one.

“On the 17th (Oct., 1721), after sailing five leagues farther, I left, on my right, the river Marameg, where they are at present employed in searching for a silver mine. Perhaps your grace may not be displeased if I inform you what success may be expected from this undertaking. Here follows what I have been able to collect about this affair, from a person who is well acquainted with it, and who has resided for several years on the spot.

“In the year 1719, the Sieur de Lochon, being sent by the West India Company, in quality of founder, and having dug in a place which had been marked out to him, drew up a pretty large quantity of ore, a pound whereof, which took up four days in smelting, produced, as they say, two drachms of silver; but some have suspected him of putting in this quantity himself. A few months afterward he returned thither, and, without thinking any more of the silver, he extracted from two or three thousand weight of ore fourteen pounds of very bad lead, which stood him in fourteen hundred francs. Disgusted with a labour which was so unprofitable, he returned to France.

“The company, persuaded of the truth of the indications which had been given them, and that the incapacity of the founder had been the sole cause of their bad success, sent, in his room, a Spaniard called Antonio, who had been taken at the siege of Pensacola; had afterward been a galley-slave, and boasted much of his having wrought in a mine at Mexico. They gave him very considerable appointments, but he succeeded no better than had done the Sieur de Lochon. He was not discouraged himself, and others inclined to believe that he had failed from his not being versed in the construction of furnaces. He gave over the search after lead, and undertook to make silver; he dug down to the rock, which was found to be eight or ten feet in thickness; several pieces of it were blown up and put into a crucible, from whence it was given out that he extracted three or four drachms of silver; but many are still doubtful of the truth of this fact.

“About this time arrived a company of the King's miners, under the direction of one *La Renaudiere*, who, resolving to begin with the lead mines, was able to do nothing; because neither he himself nor any of his company were in the least acquainted with the construction of furnaces. Nothing can be more surprising than the facility with which the company at that time exposed themselves to great expenses, and the little precaution they took to be satisfied of the capacity of those they employed. La Renaudiere and his miners not being able to procure any lead, a private company undertook the mines of the Marameg, and Sieur Renault, one of the directors, superintended them with care. In the month of June last he found a bed of lead ore two feet in thickness, running to a great length over a chain of mountains, where he has now set his people to work. He flatters himself that there is silver below the lead. Everybody is not of his opinion, but will discover the truth.”— Flagg.

105 immense cemetery near the village of Fenton, containing [76] thousands of graves of a pigmy size, the largest not exceeding four feet in length. This cemetery is now enclosed and cultivated, so that the graves are no longer visible; but, previous to this, it is said that headstones were to be seen bearing unintelligible hieroglyphical inscriptions.70

Human remains, ancient pottery, arrow-heads, and stone axes are daily thrown up by the ploughshare, while the numerous

70 Flagg's account agrees with a much longer treatment by Lewis C. Beck, in his *Gazetteer of the States of Illinois and Missouri* (Albany, 1823), with the exception that the latter says there were no inscriptions to be found on the gravestones. Beck himself makes extended quotations from the *Missouri Gazette*, November 6, 1818, and subsequent numbers; Though no doubt exaggerated, these accounts were probably based on facts, for a large number of prehistoric remains have been found in St. Louis County and preserved in the Peabody Museum at New Haven, Connecticut, and elsewhere.— Ed.

106 mounds in the vicinity are literally composed of the same materials. Mammoth bones, such as those discovered on the Ohio and in the state of New-York, are said also to have been found at a salt-lick near this stream.

It was a bright morning, on the fifth day of an exceedingly long passage, that we found ourselves approaching St. Louis. At about noon we were gliding beneath the broad ensign floating from the flagstaff of Jefferson Barracks.71 The sun was gloriously bright; the soft summer wind was rippling the waters, and the clear cerulean of the heavens was imaged in their depths. The site of the quadrangle of the barracks enclosing the parade is the broad summit of a noble bluff, swelling up from the water, while the outbuildings are scattered picturesquely along the interval beneath; the view from the steamer cannot but strike the traveller as one of much scenic beauty. Passing the venerable village of Carondelet, with its whitewashed cottages crumbling with years, and old Cahokia buried in the forests on the opposite bank, the gray walls of the Arsenal next stood out before us in the rear of its beautiful esplanade.72 A fine quay is erected upon the river in front, and the extensive grounds [77] are enclosed by a wall of stone. Sweeping onward, the lofty spire and dusky walls of St. Louis Cathedral, on rounding a river bend, opened upon the eye, the gilded crucifix

71 For an account of Jefferson Barracks, see Townsend's *Narrative*, in our volume xxi, p. 122, note 2.— Ed.

72 For the history of Carondelet, see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxii, p. 215, note 124.

For reference to Cahokia, see A. Michaux's Travels, in our volume iii, p. 70, note 135.

On May 20, 1826, Congress made an appropriation of fifteen thousand dollars to the secretary of war, for the purpose of purchasing the site for the erection of an arsenal in the vicinity of St. Louis. Lands now far within the southeastern limits of the city were purchased, and the buildings erected which were used for arsenals until January x6, 1871, when they were occupied as a depot for the general mounted recruiting service.— Ed.

107 gleaming in the sunlight from its lofty summit; and then the glittering cupolas and church domes, and the fresh aspect of private residences, mingling with the bright foliage of forest-trees interspersed, all swelling gently from the water's edge, recalled vividly the beautiful “Mistress of the North,” as my eye has often lingered upon her from her magnificent bay. A few more spires, and the illusion would be perfect. For beauty of outline in distant view, St. Louis is deservedly famed. The extended range of limestone warehouses circling the shore give to the city a grandeur of aspect, as approached from the water, not often beheld; while the dense-rolling forest-tops stretching away in the rear, the sharp outline of the towers and roofs against the western sky, and the funereal grove of steamboat-pipes lining the quay, altogether make up a combination of features novel and picturesque. As we approached the landing all the uproar and confusion of a steamboat port was before us, and our own arrival added to the bustle.

And now, perchance, having escaped the manifold perils of sawyer and snag, planter, wreck-heap, and sand-bar, it may not be unbecoming in me, like an hundred other tourists,

to gather up a votive offering, and—if classic allusion be permissible on the waters of the wilderness West—hang it up before the shrine of the “Father of Floods.”

[78] It is surely no misnomer that this giant stream has been styled the “eternal river,” the “terrible Mississippi;”73 for we may find none other imbodying so many elements of the fearful and the sublime. In the wild rice-lakes of the far frozen north, amid a solitude broken only by the shrill clang of the myriad water-fowls, is its home. Gushing out from its fountains clear as the air-bell, it sparkles over the white pebbly sand-beds, and, breaking over the

73 A name of Algonquin origin— *Missi* signifying great, and *sepe* a river.— Flagg.

108 beautiful falls of the “Laughing Water,”74 it takes up its majestic march to the distant deep. Rolling onward through the shades of magnificent forests, and hoary, castellated cliffs, and beautiful meadows, its volume is swollen as it advances, until it receives to its bosom a tributary, a rival, a conqueror, which has roamed three thousand miles for the meeting, and its original features are lost for ever. Its beauty is merged in sublimity! Pouring along in its deep bed the heaped-up waters of streams which drain the broadest valley on the globe; sweeping onward in a boiling mass, furious, turbid, always dangerous; tearing away, from time to time, its deep banks, with their giant colonnades of living verdure, and then, with the stern despotism of a conqueror, flinging them aside again; governed by no principle but its own lawless will, the dark majesty of its features summons up an emotion of the sublime which defies contrast or parallel. And then, when we think of its far, lonely course, journeying onward in proud, dread, solitary grandeur, [79] through forests dusk with the lapse of centuries, pouring out the ice and snows of arctic lands through every temperature of clime, till at last it heaves free its mighty bosom beneath the Line, we are forced to yield up ourselves in uncontrolled admiration of its gloomy magnificence. And its dark, mysterious history, too; those fearful scenes of which it has alone been the witness; the venerable tombs of a race departed which shadow its waters; the savage tribes that yet roam its forests; the germes of civilization expanding upon its borders; and the deep solitudes, untrodden by man, through which it rolls, all conspire to

throng the fancy. Ages on ages and cycles upon cycles have rolled away; wave after wave has swept the broad fields of the Old World; an hundred generations have arisen from the cradle and flourished in their freshness, and, like autumn leaflets, have withered in the

74 Indian name for the “Falls of St. Anthony.”— Flagg.

109 tomb; and the Pharaohs and the Ptolemies, the Cæsars and the Caliphs, have thundered over the nations and passed away; and here, amid these terrible solitudes, in the stem majesty of loneliness, and power, and pride, have rolled onward these deep waters to their destiny!

“Who gave you your invulnerable life, Your strength, your speed, your fury, and your joy? God! let the torrents, like a shout of nations, Answer!”

There is, perhaps, no stream which presents a greater variety of feature than the Mississippi, or phenomena of deeper interest, whether we regard the soil, productions, and climate of its valley, its individual character and that of its tributaries, or [80] the outline of its scenery and course. The confluents of this vast stream are numerous, and each one brings a tribute of the soil through which it has roamed. The Missouri pours out its waters heavily charged with the marl of the Rocky Mountains, the saffron sands of the Yellow Stone, and the chalk of the White River; the Ohio holds in its floods the vegetable mould of the Alleghanies, and the Arkansas and Red Rivers bring in the deep-died alluvion of their banks. Each tributary mingles the spoils of its native hills with the general flood. And yet, after the contributions of so many streams, the remarkable fact is observed that its breadth and volume seem rather diminished than increased.75

75 That the Mississippi, the Missouri, and, indeed, most of the great rivers of the West, are annually enlarging, as progress is made in clearing and cultivating the regions drained by them, scarcely admits a doubt. Within the past thirty years, the width of the Mississippi has sensibly increased; its overflows are more frequent, while, by the diminution of obstructions, it would seem not to have become proportionally shallow. In 1750, the French settlements began upon the river above New-Orleans, and for twenty years the

banks were cultivated without a *levee.* Inundation was then a rare occurrence: ever since, from year to year, the river has continued to rise, and require higher and stronger embankments. A century hence, if this phenomenon continues, what a magnificent spectacle will not this river present! How terrific its freshets! The immense forest of timber which lies concealed beneath its depths, as evinced by the great earthquakes of 1811, demonstrates that, for centuries, the Mississippi has occupied its present bed.— Flagg.

110 Above the embouchure of the Missouri, fifteen hundred miles from the Mexican gulf, it is broader than at NewOrleans, with scarce one tenth of its waters; and at the foot of St. Anthony's Falls its breadth is but one third less. This forms a striking characteristic of the Western rivers, and owes, perhaps, its origin partially to the turbid character of their waters: as they approach their outlet they augment in volume, and depth, and impetuosity of current, but contract their expanse. None, however, exhibit these features so strikingly as the grand central stream; and while, for its body of water, it is the narrowest stream known, it is charged with heavier solutions and has broader alluvions than any other. The depth of the stream is constantly varying. At New-Orleans it exceeds one hundred feet. Its width is from half of one mile to two miles; the breadth of its valley [81] from six miles to sixty; the rapidity of its current from two miles to four; its mean descent six inches in a mile, and its annual floods vary from twelve feet to sixty, commencing in March and ending in May. Thus much for Statistics.

Below its confluence with its turbid tributary, the Mississippi, as has been observed, is no longer the clear, pure, limpid stream, gushing forth from the wreathy snows of the Northwest; but it whirls along against its ragged banks a resistless volume of heavy, sweeping floods, and its aspect of placid magnificence is beheld no more. The turbid torrent heaves onward, wavering from side to side like a living creature, as if to overleap its bounds; rolling along in a deepcut race-path, through a vast expanse of lowland meadow, from whose exhaustless mould are reared aloft those enormous shafts shrouded in the fresh emerald of their tasselled parasites, for which its alluvial bottoms are so famous. And 111 yet the valley of the “endless river” cannot be deemed heavily timbered when

contrasted with the forested hills of the Ohio. The sycamore, the elm, the linden, the cottonwood, the cypress, and other trees of deciduous foliage, may attain a greater diameter, but the huge trunks are more sparse and more isolated in recurrence.

But one of the most striking phenomena of the Mississippi, in common with all the Western rivers, and one which distinguishes them from those which disembogue their waters into the Atlantic, is the uniformity of its meanderings. The river, in its onward course, makes a semicircular sweep almost [82] with the precision of a compass, and then is precipitated diagonally athwart its channel to a curve of equal regularity upon the opposite shore. The deepest channel and most rapid current is said to exist in the bend; and thus the stream generally infringes upon the *bend-side* , and throws up a sandbar on the shore opposite. So constantly do these sinuosities recur, that there are said to be but three *reaches* of any extent between the confluence of the Ohio and the Gulf, and so uniform that the boatmen and Indians have been accustomed to estimate their progress by the number of bends rather than by the number of miles. One of the sweeps of the Missouri is said to include a distance of forty miles in its curve, and a circuit of half that distance is not uncommon. Sometimes a " *cut-off* ," in the parlance of the watermen, is produced at these bends, where the stream, in its headlong course, has burst through the narrow neck of the peninsula, around which it once circled. At a point called the "Grand Cut-off," steamers now pass through an isthmus of less than one mile, where formerly was required a circuit of twenty. The current, in its more furious stages, often tears up islands from the bed of the river, removes sandbars and points, and sweeps off whole acres of alluvion with their superincumbent forests. 112 In the season of flood the settlers, in their log-cabins along the banks, are often startled from their sleep by the deep, sullen crash of a "land-slip," as such removals are called.

The scenery of the Mississippi, below its confluence [83] with the Missouri, is, as has been remarked, too sublime for beauty; and yet there is not a little of the picturesque in the views which meet the eye along the banks. Towns and settlements of greater or less extent appear at frequent intervals; and then the lowly log-hut of the pioneer is

not to be passed without notice, standing beneath the tall, branchless columns of the girdled forest-trees, with its luxuriant maize-fields sweeping away in the rear. One of these humble habitations of the wilderness we reached, I remember, one evening near twilight; and while our boat was delayed at the woodyard, I strolled up from the shore to the gateway, and entered easily into confabulation with a pretty, slatternly-looking female, with a brood of mushroom, flaxenhaired urchins at her apron-string, and an infant at the breast very quietly receiving his supper. On inquiry I learned that eighteen years had seen the good woman a denizen of the wilderness; that all the responsibilities appertained unto herself, and that her “man” was proprietor of some thousand acres of *bottom* in the vicinity. Subsequently I was informed that the worthy woodcutter could be valued at not less than one hundred thousand! yet, *en verite* , reader mine, I do asseverate that my latent sympathies were not slightly roused at the first introduction, because of the seeming poverty of the dirty cabin and its dirtier mistress!

St. Louis.

113

VIII

“Once more upon the waters, yet once more!”

Childe Harold.

“I believe this is the finest confluence in the world.”

Charlevoix.

“'Tis twilight now; The sovereign sun behind his western hills In glory hath declined”

Blackwood's *Magazine.*

A Bright, sunny summer morning as ever smiled from the blue heavens, and again I found myself upon the waters. Fast fading in the distance lay the venerable little city of the French, with its ancient edifices and its narrow streets, while in anticipation was a journeying of some hundred miles up the Illinois. Sweeping along past the city and the extended line of steamers at the landing, my attention was arrested by that series of substantial stone mills situated upon the shore immediately above, and a group of swarthy little Tritons disporting themselves in the turbid waters almost beneath our paddle-wheels. Among other singular objects were divers of those nondescript inventions of Captain Shreve, yclept by the boatmen “Uncle Sam's Tooth-pullers;” and, judging from their ferocious physiognomy, and the miracles they have effected in the navigation of the great waters of the West, well do they correspond to the *soubriquet.* [85] The craft consists of two perfect hulls, constructed with a view to great strength; united by heavy beams, and, in those parts most exposed, protected by an armature of iron. The apparatus for eradicating the snags is comprised in a simple wheel and axle, auxiliary to a pair of powerful steam-engines, with the requisite machinery for locomotion, and a massive beam uniting the bows of the hulls, sheathed with iron. The *modus operandi* in tearing up a snag, or sawyer, or any like obstruction from the bed 114 of the stream, appears to be this: Commencing at some distance below, in order to gain an impetus as powerful as possible, the boat is forced, under a full pressure of steam, against the snag, the head of which, rearing itself above the water, meets the strong transverse beam of which I have spoken, and is immediately elevated a number of feet above the surface. A portion of the log is then severed, and the roots are torn out by the windlass, or application of the main strength of the engines; or, if practicable, the first operation is repeated until the obstacle is completely eradicated. The efficiency of this instrument has been tested by the removal of some thousand obstructions, at an average expense of about twelve or fifteen dollars each.

Along the river-banks in the northern suburbs of the city lie the scattered ruins of an ancient fortification of the Spanish government, when it held domination over the territory;

and one circular structure of stone, called “Roy's Tower,” now occupied as a dwelling, yet remains entire. There is also an [86] old castle of stone in tolerable preservation, surrounded by a wall of the same material.76 Some of these venerable relics of former time—alas! for the irreverence of the age—have been converted into limekilns, and into lime itself, for aught that is known to the contrary! The waterworks, General Ashley's beautiful residence, and that series of ancient mounds for which St. Louis is famous, were next passed in succession, while upon the right stretched

76 In 1764 Auguste Chouteau made tentative plans for the fortification of St. Louis. In obedience to an order by Don Francisco Cruzat, the lieutenant-governor, he made a survey in 1781 for the purpose of perfecting these earlier plans. In the same year the stockade was begun immediately south of the present site of the courthouse. In 1797 the round stone tower which Flagg mentions was constructed and preparations made for building four additional towers; the latter were never completed. From 1804 to 1806 these fortifications were used by the United States troops, and then abandoned for military purposes. The commandant's house served as a courthouse from 1806 to 1816; and the tower as a jail until 1819. For a detailed description of the plans, see J. F. Scharf, *St. Louis City and County* (Philadelphia, 1883), p. 136 ff.— Ed.

115 out the long low outline of “Blood Island” in the middle of the stream.77 For several miles above the city, as we proceeded up the river, pleasant villas, with their white walls and cultivated grounds, were caught from time to time by the eye, glancing through the green foliage far in the interior. It was a glorious day. Silvery cloudlets were floating along the upper sky like spiritual creations, and a fresh breeze was rippling the waters: along the banks stood out the huge spectral Titans of the forest, heaving aloft their naked limbs like monuments of “time departed,” while beneath reposed the humble hut and clearing of the settler.

77 For a brief sketch of William H. Ashley see Maximilian's Travels, in our volume xxii, p. 250, note 198. He purchased (1826 or 1827) eight acres on the present site of Broadway, between Biddle and Bates streets, St. Louis, where he built a handsome residence.

Bloody Island, now the Third Ward of East St. Louis, was formed about 1800 by the current cutting its way through the neck in a bend of the river. For a long time it was not determined to what state it belonged, and being considered neutral ground many duels were fought there, notably those between Thomas H. Benton and Charles Lucas (1817), United States District Attorney Thomas Rector and Joshua Barton (1823), and Thomas Biddle and Spencer Pettis (1830). The name was derived from these bloody associations. — Ed.

It was nearly midday, after leaving St. Louis, that we reached the embouchure of the Missouri. Twenty miles before attaining that point, the confluent streams flow along in two distinct currents upon either shore, the one white, clayey, and troubled, the other a deep blue. The river sweeps along, indeed, in two distinct streams past the city of St. Louis, upon either side of Blood Island, nor does it unite its heterogeneous floods for many miles below. At intervals, as the huge mass rolls itself [87] along, vast whirls and swells of turbid water burst out upon the surface, producing an aspect not unlike the sea in a gusty day, mottled by the shadows of scudding clouds. Charlevoix,78 the chronicler of the early French explorations in North America,

78 For a sketch of Charlevoix, see Nuttall's *Journal*, in our volume xiii, p. 116, note 81.— Ed.

116 with reference to this giant confluence, more than a century since thus writes: “I believe this is the finest confluence in the world. The two rivers are much of the same breadth, each about half a league, but the Missouri is by far the most rapid, and seems to enter the Mississippi like a conqueror, through which it carries its white waves to the opposite shore without mixing them. Afterward it gives its colour to the Mississippi, which it never loses again, but carries quite down to the sea.” This account, with all due

consideration for the venerable historian, accords not precisely with the scene of the confluence at the present day, at least not as it has appeared to myself. The Missouri, indeed, rolls in its heavy volume with the impetuosity and bearing of a “conqueror” upon the tranquil surface of its rival; but entering, as it does, at right angles, its waters are met in their headlong course, and almost rolled back upon themselves for an instant by the mighty momentum of the flood they strike. This is manifested by, and accounts for, that well-defined line of light mud-colour extending from bank to bank across its mouth, bounded by the dark blue of the Upper Mississippi, and flowing sluggishly along in a lengthened and dingy stain, like a fringe upon the western shore. The breadth of the embouchure is about one mile, and its [88] channel lies nearly in the centre, bounded by vast sand-bars —sediment of the waters—upon either side. The alluvial deposites, with which it is heavily charged, accumulate also in several islands near the confluence, while the rivers united spread themselves out into an immense lake. As the steamer glides along among these islands opposite the Missouri, the scene with its associations is grand beyond description. Far up the extended vista of the stream, upon a lofty bluff, stands out a structure which marks the site of the ancient military post of “Belle Fontaine;”79 while on the opposite bank,

79 D'Ulloa, the first Spanish governor of Louisiana, sent a detachment of soldier to St. Louis in 1767. Later, these troops were transferred to the south bank of the Missouri, a few miles above its mouth, where “Old Fort St. Charles the Prince” was erected. General Wilkinson built Fort Bellefontaine on this site in 1805. From 1809 to 1815 this was the headquarters of the military department of Louisiana (including Forts Madison, Massac, Osage, and Vincennes). It was the starting point of the Pike, Long, and Atkinson expeditions. On July 10, 1826, it was abandoned for Jefferson Barracks, but a small arsenal of deposits was maintained here until 1834. The land was eventually sold by the government (1836). See Walter B. Douglas's note in Thwaites, *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (New York, 1905), v, pp. 392, 393— Ed.

117 stretching inland from the point heavily wooded, lies the broad and beautiful prairie of the “Mamelles.”80 Directly fronting the confluence stand a range of heights upon the Illinois shore, from the summit of which is spread out, like a painting, one of the most extraordinary views in the world.

80 North of Missouri River, twenty miles above its confluence with the Mississippi, where the bluffs of the two streams unite, two smooth, treeless, grass-covered mounds stand out from the main bluffs. These mounds, a hundred and fifty feet in height, were called by the early French “mamelles” from their fancied resemblance to the human breast.— Ed.

The Mississippi, above its junction with its turbid tributary, is, as has been remarked, a clear, sparkling, beautiful stream; now flashing in silvery brilliance over its white sand-bars, then retreating far into the deep indentations of its shady banks, and again spreading out its waters into a tranquil, lakelike basin miles in extent, studded with islets.

The far-famed village of Alton, situated upon the Illinois shore a few miles above the confluence, soon rose before us in the distance. When its multiform declivities shall have been smoothed away by the hand of enterprise and covered with handsome edifices, it will doubtless present a fine appearance [89] from the water; as it now remains, its aspect is rugged enough. The Penitentiary, a huge structure of stone, is rather too prominent a feature in the scene. Indeed, it is the first object which strikes the attention, and reminds one of a gray old baronial castle of feudal days 118 more than of anything else. The churches, of which there are several, and the extensive warehouses along the shore, have an imposing aspect, and offer more agreeable associations. As we drew nigh to Alton, the fireman of our steamer deemed proper, in testimonial of the dignity of our arrival, to let off a certain rusty old swivel which chanced to be on board; and to have witnessed the marvellous fashion in which this important manœuvre was executed by our worthies, would have pardoned a smile on the visage of Heraclitus himself. One lanky-limbed genius held a huge dipper of gunpowder; another, seizing upon the extremity of a hawser, and severing a generous fragment, made use thereof for wadding; a third rammed home the

charge with that fearful weapon wherewith he poked the furnaces; while a fourth, honest wight—all preparation being complete—advanced with a shovel of glowing coals, which, poured upon the touchhole, the old piece was briefly delivered of its charge, and the woods, and shores, and welkin rang again to the roar. If we made not our entrance into Alton with “pomp and circumstance,” it was surely the fault of any one but our worthy fireman.

The site of Alton, at the confluence of three large and navigable streams; its extensive back country [90] of great fertility; the vast bodies of heavy timber on every side; its noble quarries of stone; its inexhaustible beds of bituminous coal only one mile distant, and its commodious landing, all seem to indicate the design of Nature that here should arise a populous and wealthy town. The place has been laid off by its proprietors in liberal style; five squares have been reserved for public purposes, with a promenade and landing, and the corporate bounds extend two miles along the river, and half a mile into the interior. Yet Alton, with all its local and artificial advantages, is obnoxious to objections. Its situation, in one section abrupt and precipitous, 119 while in another depressed and confined, and the extensive alluvion lying between the two great rivers opposite, it is believed, will always render it more or less unhealthy; and its unenviable proximity to St. Louis will never cease to retard its commercial advancement.

The *city* of Alton, as it is now styled by its charter, was founded in the year 1818 by a gentleman who gave the place his name;81 but, until within the six years past, it could boast but few houses and little business. Its population now amounts to several thousands, and its edifices for business, private residence, or public convenience are large and elegant structures. Its stone churches present an imposing aspect to the visiter. The streets are from forty to eighty feet in width, and extensive operations are in progress to render the place as uniform as its site will admit. A contract has been recently entered upon to construct a culvert over the Little Piasa Creek, [91] which passes through the centre of the town, upon which are to be extended streets. The expense is estimated at sixty thousand dollars. The creek issues from a celebrated fountain among the bluffs

called “Cave Spring.” Alton is not a little celebrated for its liberal contribution to the moral improvements of the day. To mention but a solitary instance, a gentleman of the place recently made a donation of ten thousand dollars for the endowment of a female seminary at Monticello,82 a village five miles to the north; and measures are in progress to

81 Alton, twenty-five miles above St. Louis, is the principal city of Madison County, Illinois. In 1807 the French erected here a small trading post. Rufus Easton laid out the town (1818), and named it for his son. The state penitentiary was first built at Alton (1827), but the last prisoner was transferred (1860) to the new penitentiary at Joliet, begun in 1857. Alton was the scene of the famous anti-Abolitionist riot of November 7, 1837, when Elijah P. Lovejoy was killed.— Ed.

82 Captain Benjamin Godfrey donated fifteen acres of land and thirty-five thousand dollars for the erection of a female seminary at Godfrey, Madison County, Illinois. The school was opened April 11, 1838, under the title of the Monticello Female Seminary, with Rev. Theron Baldwin for its first principal.— Ed.

120 carry the design into immediate execution. Two railroads are shortly to be constructed from Alton; one to Springfield, seventy miles distant, and the other to Mount Carmel on the Wabash. The stock of each has been mostly subscribed, and they cannot fail, when completed, to add much to the importance of the places. Alton is also a *proposed* terminus of two of the state railroads, and of the Cumberland Road.83

83 The plans mentioned here were probably being agitated when Flagg visited Alton in 1836. The act incorporating the first railroad in Illinois was approved January 17, 1835; it provided for the construction of a road from Chicago to a point opposite Vincennes. By the internal improvement act of February 27, 1837, a road was authorized to be constructed from Alton to Terre Haute, by way of Shelbyville, and another from Alton to Mount Carmel, by way of Salem, Marion County; but the act was repealed before the roads were completed. The Cumberland road was constructed only to Vandalia, Fayette County, though the internal improvement act contemplated its extension to St. Louis.— Ed.

At Alton terminates the “American Bottom,” and here commences that singular series of green, grassy mounds, rounding off the steep summits of the cliffs as they rise from the water, which every traveller cannot but have noticed and admired. It was a calm, beautiful evening when we left the village; and, gliding beneath the magnificent bluffs, held our way up the stream, breaking in upon its tranquil surface, and rolling its waters upon either side in tumultuous waves to the shore. The rich purple of departing day was dying the western heavens; the light gauzy haze of twilight was unfolding itself like a veil over the forest-tops; “Maro's shepherd [92] star” was stealing timidly forth upon the brow of night; the flashing fireflies along the underbrush were beginning their splendid illuminations, and the mild melody of a flute and a few fine voices floating over the shadowy waters, lent the last touching to a scene of beauty. A little French village, with its broad galleries, and steep roofs, and venerable church, in a few miles appeared among the underbrush on the left.84 Upon the opposite shore the

84 The French village is no doubt Portage des Sioux. In 1799 Francis Leseuer, a resident of St. Charles, visited the place, which was then an Indian settlement. Pleased with the location he returned to St. Charles, and secured a grant of the land from Don Carlos Dehault Delassus, lieutenant-governor of Upper Louisiana, organized a colony from among the French inhabitants of St. Charles and St. Louis, and occupied the place the same autumn.— Ed.

121 bluffs began to assume a singular aspect, as if the solid mass of limestone high up had been subjected to the excavation of rushing waters. The cliffs elevated themselves from the river's edge like a regular succession of enormous pillars, rendered more striking by their ashy hue. This giant colonnade—in some places exceeding an altitude of an hundred feet, and exhibiting in its façade the openings of several caves—extended along the stream until we reached Grafton,85 at the mouth of the Illinois; the calm, beautiful, ever-placid Illinois; beautiful now as on the day the enthusiast voyageur first deemed it the pathway to a “paradise upon earth.” The moon was up, and her beams were resting mellowly upon the landscape. Far away, even to the blue horizon, the mirror-surface of

the stream unfolded its vistas to the eye; upon its bosom slumbered the bright islets, like spirits of the waters, from whose clear depths stood out the reflection of their forests, while to the left opened upon the view a glimpse of the “Mamelle Prairie,” rolling its bright waves of verdure beneath the moonlight like a field of fairy land. For an hour we gazed upon this magnificent scene, and the bright [93] waves dashed in sparkles from our bow, retreating in lengthened wake behind us, until our steamer turned from the Mississippi, and we were gliding along beneath the deep shadows of the forested Illinois.

85 Grafton, Jersey County, Illinois, was settled in 1832 by James Mason, and named by him in honor of his native place. It was laid out (1836) by Paris and Sarah Mason.— Ed.

Illinois River.

122

IX

“A tale of the times of old! The deeds of days of other years!”

Ossian.

“Thou beautiful river! Thy bosom is calm And o'er thee soft breezes are shedding their balm; And Nature beholds her fair features portray'd, In the glass of thy bosom serenely display'd.”

Bengal Annual.

“Tam saw an unco sight.”

Burns.

It is an idea which has more than once occurred to me, while throwing together these hasty delineations of the beautiful scenes through which, for the past few weeks, I have

been moving, that, by some, a disposition might be suspected to tinge every outline indiscriminately with the “ *coleur de rose.* ” But as well might one talk of an exaggerated emotion of the sublime on the table-rock of Niagara, or amid the “snowy scalps” of Alpine scenery, or of a mawkish sensibility to loveliness amid the purple glories of the “ *Campagna di Roma* ,” as of either, or of both combined, in the noble “valley beyond the mountains.” Nor is the interest experienced [94] by the traveller for many of the spots he passes confined to their scenic beauty. The associations of by-gone times are rife in the mind, and the traditionary legend of the events these scenes have witnessed yet lingers among the simple forest-sons. I have mentioned that remarkable range of cliffs commencing at Alton, and extending, with but little interruption, along the left shore of the Mississippi to the mouth of the Illinois. Through a deep, narrow ravine in these bluffs flows a small stream called the Piasa. The name is of aboriginal derivation, and, in the idiom of the Illini, denotes “ *The bird that devours men.* ” Near the mouth of this little stream rises a bold, precipitous bluff, and upon its smooth face, at an elevation seemingly 123 unattainable by human art, is graven the figure of an enormous bird with extended pinions. This bird was by the Indians called the “ *Piasa;* ” hence the name of the stream. The tradition of the Piasa is said to be still extant, among the tribes of the Upper Mississippi, and is thus related:86

86 The Illinois Indians (from “Illini,” meaning “men”) were of Algonquian stock, and formerly occupied the state to which they gave the name. They were loyal to the French during their early wars, later aided the English, and were with great difficulty subdued by the United States government. Separate tribes of the Illinois Indians were the Cahokia, Kaskaskia, Michigami, Moingewena, Peoria, and Tamaroa.

On a high bluff just above Alton there was formerly to be seen a huge painted image known among the Indians as the Piasa Bird. To the natives it was an object of much veneration, and in time many superstitions became connected therewith. First described in the *Journal* of Father Jacques Marquette (1673) its origin was long a subject of speculation among early writers. Traces of this strange painting could be seen until 1840 or 1845,

when they were entirely obliterated through quarrying. See P. A. Armstrong, *The Piasa or the Devil among the Indians* (Morris, Illinois, 1887).

The version of the tradition given by Flagg was probably from the pen of John Russell, who in 1837 began editing at Grafton, Illinois, the *Backwoodsman*, a local newspaper. Russell had in 1819 or 1820 published in the *Missourian* an article entitled “Venomous Worm,” which won for him considerable reputation. Russell admitted that the version was largely imaginative; nevertheless it had a wide circulation.— Ed.

“Many thousand moons before the arrival of the pale faces, when the great megalonyx and mastodon, whose bones are now thrown up, were still living in the land of the green prairies, there existed a bird of such dimensions that he could easily carry off in his talons a full-grown deer. Having obtained a taste of human flesh, from that time he would prey upon nothing else. He was as artful as he was powerful; would dart suddenly and unexpectedly upon an Indian, bear him off to one of the caves in the bluff, and devour him. Hundreds of warriors attempted for years to destroy him, but without success. [95] Whole villages were depopulated, and consternation spread throughout all the tribes of the Illini. At length *Owatoga* , a chief whose fame as a warrior extended even beyond the great lakes, separating 124 himself from the rest of his tribe, fasted in solitude for the space of a whole moon, and prayed to the Great Spirit, the Master of Life, that he would protect his children from the *Piasa.* On the last night of his fast the Great Spirit appeared to him in a dream, and directed him to select twenty of his warriors, each armed with a bow and pointed arrows, and conceal them in a designated spot. Near the place of their concealment another warrior was to stand in open view as a victim for the *Piasa* , which they must shoot the instant he pounced upon his prey. When the chief awoke in the morning he thanked the Great Spirit, returned to his tribe, and told them his dream. The warriors were quickly selected and placed in ambush. *Owatoga* offered himself as the victim, willing to die for his tribe; and, placing himself in open view of the bluff, he soon saw the *Piasa* perched on the cliff, eying his prey. *Owatoga* drew up his manly form to its utmost height; and, placing his feet firmly upon the earth, began to chant the death-song

of a warrior: a moment after, the *Piasa* rose in the air, and, swift as a thunderbolt, darted down upon the chief. Scarcely had he reached his victim when every bow was sprung and every arrow was sped to the feather into his body. The *Piasa* uttered a wild, fearful scream, that resounded far over the opposite side of the river, and expired. *Owatoga* was safe. [96] Not an arrow, not even the talons of the bird had touched him; for the Master of Life, in admiration of his noble deed, had held over him an invisible shield. In memory of this event, this image of the Piasa was engraved in the face of the bluff."

Such is the Indian tradition. True or false, the figure of the bird, with expanded wings, graven upon the surface of solid rock, is still to be seen at a height perfectly inaccessible; and to this day no Indian glides beneath the spot in his canoe without discharging at this figure his gun. Connected with this tradition, as the spot to which the Piasa 125 conveyed his human victims, is one of those caves to which I have alluded. Another, near the mouth of the Illinois, situated about fifty feet from the water, and exceedingly difficult of access, is said to be crowded with human remains to the depth of many feet in the earth of the floor. The roof of the cavern is vaulted. It is about twenty-five feet in height, thirty in length, and in form is very irregular. There are several other cavernous fissures among these cliffs not unworthy description.

The morning's dawn found our steamer gliding quietly along upon the bright waters of the Illinois. The surface of the stream was tranquil; not a ripple disturbed its slumbers; it was currentless; the mighty mass of the Mississippi was swollen, and, acting as a dam across the mouth of its tributary, caused a *back-water* of an hundred miles. The waters of the Illinois were consequently stagnant, tepid, and by no means agreeable to the taste. There was present, also, a peculiarly bitter twang, [97] thought to be imparted by the roots of the trees and plants along its banks, which, when motionless, its waters steep; under these circumstances, water is always provided from the Mississippi before entering the mouth of the Illinois. But, whatever its qualities, this stream, to the eye, is one of the most beautiful that meanders the earth. As we glided onward upon its calm bosom, a graceful little fawn, standing upon the margin in the morning sunlight, was bending

her large, lustrous eyes upon the delicate reflection of her form, mirrored in the stream; and, like the fabled Narcissus, so enamoured did she appear with the charm of her own loveliness, that our noisy approach seemed scarce to startle her; or perchance she was the pet of some neighbouring log-cabin. The Illinois is by many considered the “ *belle rivière* ” of the Western waters, and, in a commercial and agricultural view, is destined, doubtless, to occupy an important rank. Tonti, 126 the old French chronicler, speaks thus of it:87 “The banks of that river are as charming to the eye as useful to life; the meadows, fruit-trees, and forests affording everything that is necessary for men and beasts.” It traverses the entire length of one of the most fertile regions in the Union, and irrigates, by its tributary streams, half the breadth. Its channel is sufficiently deep for steamers of the larger class; its current is uniform, and the obstacles to its navigation are few, and may be easily removed. The chief of these is a narrow bar just below the town of Beardstown,88 stretching like a wing-dam quite across to the western bank; and any boat which may pass this bar [98] can at all times reach the port of the Rapids. Its length is about three hundred miles, and its narrowest part, opposite Peru, is about eighty yards in width. By means of a canal, uniting its waters with those of Lake Michigan, the internal navigation of the whole country from New-York to New-Orleans is designed to be completed.89

87 For a sketch of Tonty, see Nuttall's *Journal*, in our volume xiii, p. 117, note 85.— Ed.

88 Beardstone, Cass County, Illinois, was laid out by Thomas Beard and Enoch Marsh (1827). During the Black Hawk War (1832), it was the principal supply base for the Illinois volunteers.— Ed.

89 For an account of the Illinois Canal, see Flint's *Letters*, in our volume ix, p. 186, note 93.— Ed.

The banks of the Illinois are depressed and monotonous, liable at all seasons to inundation, and stretch away for miles to the bluffs in broad prairies, glimpses of whose lively emerald and silvery lakes, caught at intervals through the dark fringe of cypress

skirting the stream, are very refreshing. The bottom lands upon either side, from one mile to five, are seldom elevated much above the ordinary surface of the stream, and are at every higher stage of water submerged to the depth of many feet, presenting the appearance of a stream rolling its tide through an ancient and 127 gloomy forest, luxuriant in foliage and vast in extent. It is not surprising that all these regions should be subject to the visitations of disease, when we look upon the miserable cabin of the woodcutter, reared upon the very verge of the water, surrounded on every side by swamps, and enveloped in their damp dews and the poisonous exhalations rising from the seething decomposition of the monstrous vegetation around. The traveller wonders not at the sallow complexion, the withered features, and the fleshless, agueracked limbs, which, as he passes, peep forth upon him from the luxuriant foliage of this region of sepulchres; his only astonishment is, that in such an atmosphere the human constitution [99] can maintain vitality at all. And yet, never did the poet's dream image scenery more enchanting than is sometimes unfolded upon this beautiful stream. I loved, on a bright sunny morning, to linger hours away upon the lofty deck, as our steamer thridded the green islets of the winding waters, and gaze upon the reflection of the blue sky flecked with cloudlets in the bluer wave beneath, and watch the startling splash of the glittering fish, as, in exhilarated joyousness, he flung himself from its tranquil bosom, and then fell back again into its cool depths. Along the shore strode the bluebacked wader; the wild buck bounded to his thicket; the graceful buzzard—vulture of the West—soared majestically over the tree-tops, while the fitful chant of the fireman at his toil echoed and re-echoed through the recesses of the forests.

Upon the left, in ascending the Illinois, lie the lands called the “ *Military Bounty Tract* ,” reserved by Congress for distribution among the soldiers of the late war with Great Britain.90 It is comprehended within the peninsula

90 By act of Congress approved May 6, 1812, three tracts of land, not exceeding on the whole six million acres, were authorized to be surveyed and used as a bounty for the soldiers engaged in the war begun with Great Britain in that year. The tract surveyed in

Illinois Territory comprehended the land lying between the Mississippi and Illinois rivers, extending seven miles north of Quincy, on the former stream, and to the present village of De Pue, in southeastern Bureau County, on the latter; it embraced the present counties of Calhoun, Pike, Adams, Brown, Schuyler, Hancock, McDonough, Fulton, Peoria, Stark, Knox, Warren, Henderson, and Mercer, and parts of Henry, Bureau, Putnam, and Marshall.— Ed.

128 of the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers, about an hundred and seventy miles in length and sixty broad, embracing twelve of the northwest counties of the state. This tract of country is said to be exceedingly fertile, abounding in beautiful prairies and lakes; but the delta or alluvial regions cannot but prove unhealthy. Its disposition for the purpose of military bounties has retarded its settlement behind that of any other quarter of the state; a very inconsiderable portion has been appropriated by the soldiers; most of the titles have [100] long since departed, and the land has been disposed of past redemption for taxes. Much is also held by non-residents, who estimate it at an exorbitant value; but large tracts can be obtained for a trifling consideration, the purchaser risking the title, and many flourishing settlements are now springing up, especially along the Mississippi.

Near the southern extremity of the Military Tract, at a point where the river sweeps out a deep bend from its western bank, about fifty years since was situated the little French village of *Cape au Gris* , or Grindstone Point, so named from the neighbouring rocks. The French seem to have vied with the natives in rendering the “signification” conformable to the “thing signified,” in bestowing names upon their explorations in the West. The village of *Cape au Gris* was situated upon the bank of the river, and, so late as 1811, consisted of twenty or thirty families, who cultivated a “common field” of five hundred acres on the adjacent prairie, stretching across the peninsula towards the Mississippi. At the commencement of the 129 late war they were driven away by the savages, and a small garrison from the cantonment of Belle Fontaine, at the confluence, was subsequently stationed near the spot by General Wilkinson. A few years after the close of the war

American emigration commenced. This is supposed to have been the site, also, of one of the forts erected by La Salle on his second visit to the West.91

91 Cap au Gris was a point of land on the Mississippi, in Calhoun County, Illinois, just above the mouth of the Illinois. J. M. Peck, in his *Gazetteer of Illinois* (1837), from which Flagg derives his account of this place, says that a settlement had been formed there about forty years earlier. The town of this name is now in Lincoln County, Missouri. There is no foundation for the belief that La Salle had erected a fort here.— Ed.

As we ascended the Illinois, flourishing villages were constantly meeting the eye upon either bank of the stream. Among these were the euphonious [101] names of Monroe, Montezuma, Naples, and Havana! At Beardstown the rolling prairie is looked upon for the first time; it afterward frequently recurs. As our steamer drew nigh to the renowned little city of Pekin, we beheld the bluffs lined with people of all sexes and sizes, watching our approach as we rounded up to the landing.92 Some of our passengers, surprised at such a gathering together in such a decent, well-behaved little settlement as Pekin, sagely surmised the loss of a day from the calendar, and began to believe it the first instead of the last of the week, until reflection and observation induced the belief that other rites than those of religion had called the multitude together. Landing, streets, tavern, and groceries —which latter, be it spoken of the renowned Pekin, were like anything but “angel's visits” in recurrence—all were swarmed by a motley assemblage, seemingly intent upon *doing nothing* , and that, too, in the

92 Montgomery, on the right bank of Illinois River, in Pike County, was laid out by an Alton Company, for a new landing. Naples is a small village in Scott County. Havana, founded in 1827, is the seat of justice for Mason County. Pekin is in Tazewell County.— Ed.

130 noisiest way. Here a congregation of keen-visaged worthies were gathered around a loquacious land-speculator, beneath the shadow of a sign-post, listening to an eloquent holding-forth upon the merits, relative and distinctive, of prairie land and bluff; there a cute-looking personage, with a twinkle of the eye and sanctimoniousness of phiz, was vending

his wares by the token of a flaunting strip of red baize; while lusty viragoes, with infants at the breast, were battering their passage through the throng, crowing over a “bargain” on which the “cute” pedler had cleared not *more* than cent. per cent. And then there were sober men and men not sober; individuals half seas over and whole seas [102] over, all in as merry trim as well might be; while, as a sort of presiding genius over the bacchanal, a worthy wag, tipsy as a satyr, in a long calico gown, was prancing through the multitude, with infinite importance, on the skeleton of an unhappy horse, which, between *nicking* and *docking* , a spavined limb and a spectral eye, looked the veritable genius of misery. The cause of all this commotion appeared to be neither more nor less than a redoubted “monkey show,” which had wound its way over the mountains into the regions of the distant West, and reared its dingy canvass upon the smooth sward of the prairie. It was a spectacle by no means to be slighted, and “divers came from afar” to behold its wonders.

For nothing, perhaps, have foreign tourists in our country ridiculed us more justly than for that pomposity of nomenclature which we have delighted to apply to the thousand and one towns and villages sprinkled over our maps and our land; instance whereof this same renowned representative of the Celestial Empire concerning which I have been writing. Its brevity is its sole commendation; for as to the taste or appropriateness of such a name for such a place, to say naught of the euphony, there's none. And then, 131 besides Pekin, there are Romes, and Troys, and Palmyras, and Belgrades, Londons and Liverpools, Babels and Babylons *without account* , all rampant in the glories of log huts, with sturdy porkers forth issuing from their sties, by way, doubtless, of the sturdy knight-errants of yore caracoling from the sally-ports of their illustrious [103] namesakes. But why, in the name of all propriety, this everlasting plagiarizing of the Greek, Gothic, Gallic patronymics of the Old World, so utterly incongruous as applied to the backwoods settlements of the New! If in very poverty of invention, or in the meagerness of our “land's language,” we, as a people, feel ourselves unequal to the task—one, indeed, of no ordinary magnitude—of christening all the newborn villages of our land with melodious and appropriate appellations, may it not be advisable either to nominate certain worthy

dictionary-makers for the undertaking, or else to retain the ancient Indian names? Why discard the smooth-flowing, expressive appellations bestowed by the injured aborigines upon the gliding streams and flowery plains of this land of their fathers, only to supersede them by affixes most foreign and absurd? “Is this proceeding just and honourable” towards that unfortunate race? Have we visited them with so *many* returns of kindness that this would overflow the cup of recompense? Why tear away the last and only relic of the past yet lingering in our midst? Have we too many memorials of the olden time? Why disrobe the venerable antique of that classic drapery which alone can befit the severe nobility of its mien, only to deck it out in the starched and tawdry preciseness of a degenerate taste?

Illinois River.

132

X

“It is a goodly sight to see What Heaven hath done for this delicious land! What fruits of fragrance blush on every tree! What goodly prospects o'er the hills expand!”

Childe Harold.

“good-evening, sir; a good-evening to ye, sir; pleased with our village, sir!” This was the frank and free salutation a genteel, farmer-looking personage, with a broad face, a broad-brimmed hat, and a broad-skirted coat, addressed to me as I stood before the inn door at Peoria, looking out upon her beautiful lake. On learning, in reply to his inquiry, “Whence do ye come, stranger?” that my birth spot was north of the Potomac, he hailed me with hearty greeting and warm grasp as a brother. “I am a Yankee, sir; yes, sir, I am a genuine export of the old ‘Bay State.’ Many years have gone since I left her soil; but I remember well the ‘Mistress of the North,’ with her green islands and blue waters. In my young days, sir, I wandered all over the six states, and I have not forgotten the valley of the Connecticut. I have seen the ‘Emporium’ with her Neapolitan bay, and I have looked on the ‘city of the monuments and fountains;’ but in all my journeyings, stranger, I have

not found a spot so pleasant as this little quiet Peoria of the Western wilderness!" Whether to smile in admiration [105] or to smile at the oddity of this singular compound of truth and exaggeration, propounded, withal, in such grandiloquent style and language, I was at a loss; and so, just as every prudent man would have acted under the circumstances, *neither* was done; and the quiet remark, "You are an enthusiast, sir," was all that betrayed to the worthy man the emotions of the sublime and ridiculous of which he had been the unwitting cause.

133

But, truly, the little town with this soft Indian name is a beautiful place, as no one who has ever visited it has failed to remark. The incidents of its early history are fraught with the wild and romantic. The old village of Peoria was one of the earliest settlements of the French in the Mississippi Valley; and, many years before the memory of the present generation, it had been abandoned by its founders, a new village having been erected upon the present site, deemed less unhealthy than the former. The first house is said to have been built in new Peoria, or *La ville de Maillet* , as was its *nom de nique* , about the year 1778; and the situation was directly at the outlet of the lake, one mile and a half below the old settlement.93 Its inhabitants consisted chiefly of that wild, semi-savage race of Indian traders, hunters, trappers, voyageurs, *couriers du bois* , and half-breeds, which long formed the sole link of union between the northern lakes and the southwest. After

93 Peoria, now the second largest city in Illinois, is situated a hundred and sixty miles southwest of Chicago, on the west bank and near the outlet of Lake Peoria, an expansion of the Illinois River. Its site was visited in 1680 by La Salle. Early in the eighteenth century a French settlement was made a mile and a half farther up, and named Peoria for the local Indian tribe. French missionaries were in this neighborhood as early as 1673–74. In 1788 or 1789 the first house was built on the present site of Peoria and by the close of the century the inhabitants of the old town, because of its more healthful location, moved to the new village of Peoria, which at first was called La Ville de Maillet, in honor of a French Canadian who commanded a company of volunteers in the War of the Revolution. Later

the name was changed to its present form. At the opening of the War of 1812–15, the French inhabitants were charged with having aroused the Indians against the Americans in Illinois. Governor Ninian Edwards ordered Thomas E. Craig, captain of a company of Illinois militia, to proceed up the Illinois River and build a fort at Peoria. Under the pretense that his men had been fired upon by the inhabitants, when the former were peaceably passing, in their boats, Craig burned half the town of Peoria in November, 1812, and transferred the majority of the population to below Alton. In the following year, Fort Clark —named in honor of General George Rogers Clark—was erected by General Benjamin Howard on this site; but after the close of the war the fort was burned by the Indians. After the affair of 1812, Peoria was not occupied, save occasionally, until 1819, when it was rebuilt by the Americans. The American Fur Company established a post there in 1824. See C. Ballance, *History of Peoria* (Peoria, 1870).— Ed.

134 residing nearly half a century on this pleasant spot, in that happy harmony with their ferocious neighbours for which the early French were so remarkable, they were at length, in the [106] autumn of 1812, exiled from their ancient home by the militia of Illinois, on charge of conniving at Indian atrocities upon our people, a party having been fired on at night while anchored before the village in their boats. The villagers fled for refuge to their friends upon the Mississippi. In the autumn of the succeeding year, General Howard,94 with 1400 men, ascended the Illinois; a fortress was constructed at Peoria in twelve days from timber cut on the opposite side of the lake. It was named Fort Clarke, and was occupied by a detachment of United States' troops. In course of a few weeks the whole frontier was swept of hostile Indians. On the termination of hostilities with Great Britain the fort was abandoned, and soon after was burned by the Indians, though the ruins are yet to be seen. The present settlement was commenced by emigrants but a few years since, and has advanced with a rapidity scarcely paralleled even in the West. Geographically, it is the centre of the state, and may at some future day become its seat of government. It is the shire town of a county of the same name; has a handsome courthouse of freestone; the neighbouring regions are fertile, and beds of bituminous coal are found in the vicinity.

These circumstances render this spot, than which few can boast a more eventful history, one of the most eligible *locales* in the state for the emigrant.

94 Benjamin Howard (1760–1814) was elected to the state legislature of Kentucky (1800), to Congress (1807–10); appointed governor of Upper Louisiana Territory (1810), and in March, 1813, brigadier-general of the United States army in command of the 8th military department. He died at St. Louis, September, 1814.— Ed.

Its situation is indescribably beautiful, extending along the lake of the same name, the Indian name of which was *Pinatahwee* , for several miles from its outlet. This 135 water-sheet, which is little more than an expansion of the stream of from one to three miles, stretches away for about twenty, and is divided near its middle by a contraction called the *Narrows.* Its waters are exceedingly limpid, gliding gently over a pebbly bottom, and abounding in fish of fifty different species, from which an attempt for obtaining oil on a large scale was commenced a few years since, but was abandoned without success. Some of the varieties of these fish are said to be rare and curious. Several specimens of a species called the “Alligator Garr” have been taken. The largest was about seven feet in length, a yard in circumference, and encased in armour of hornlike scales of quadrilateral form, impenetrable to a rifle-ball. The weight was several hundred pounds; the form and the teeth —of which there were several rows—similar to those of the shark, and, upon the whole, the creature seemed not a whit less formidable. Another singular variety found is the “spoonfish,” about four feet in length, with a black skin, and an extension of the superior mandible for two feet, of a thin, flat, shovel-like form, used probably for digging its food. The more ordinary species, pike, perch, salmon, trout, buffalo, mullet, and catfish, abound in the lake, while the surface is covered with geese, ducks, gulls, a species of water turkey, and, not unfrequently, swans and pelicans. Its bottom contains curious petrifactions and carnelions of a rare quality.

From the pebbly shore of the lake, gushing out with fountains of sparkling water along its whole extent, rises a rolling bank, upon which now stands most of the village. A short

distance and you ascend a second eminence, and beyond this you reach [108] the bluffs, some of them an hundred feet in height, gracefully rounded, and corresponding with the meandering of the stream below. From the summit of these bluffs the prospect is uncommonly fine. 136 At their base is spread out a beautiful prairie, its tall grasstops and bright-died flowerets nodding to the soft summer wind. Along its eastern border is extended a range of neat edifices, while lower down sleep the calm, dear waters of the lake, unruffled by a ripple, and reflecting from its placid bosom the stupendous vegetation of the wooded alluvion beyond.

It was near the close of a day of withering sultriness that we reached Peoria. Passing the Kickapoo, or Red Bud Creek,95 a sweep in the stream opened before the eye a panorama of that magnificent water-sheet of which I have spoken, so calm and motionless that its mirror surface seemed suspended in the golden mistiness of the summer atmosphere which floated over it. As we were approaching the village a few sweet notes of a bugle struck the ear; and in a few moments a lengthened troop of cavalry, with baggage-cars and military paraphernalia, was beheld winding over a distant roll of the prairie, their arms glittering gayly in the horizontal beams of the sinking sun as the ranks appeared, were lost, reappeared, and then, by an inequality in the route, were concealed from the view. The steamer “Helen Mar” was lying at the landing as we rounded up, most terribly shattered by the collapsing of the flue of one of her boilers a few days before in the vicinity. She had been swept by the death-blast from one extremity [109] to the other, and everything was remaining just as when the accident occurred, even to the pallets upon which had been stretched the mangled bodies, and the remedies applied for their relief. The disasters of steam have become, till of late, of such ordinary occurrence upon the waters of the West, that they have been thought of comparatively but little; yet in no aspect does the angel of

95 Kickapoo Creek rises in Peoria County, flows southeasterly and enters Illinois River two miles below Peoria.— Ed.

137 death perform his bidding more fearfully. Misery's own pencil can delineate no scene of horror more revolting; humanity knows no visitation more terrible! The atmosphere of hell envelops the victim and sweeps him from the earth!

Happening casually to fall in with several gentlemen at the inn who chanced to have some acquaintance with the detachment of dragoons I have mentioned, I accepted with pleasure an invitation to accompany them on a visit to the encampment a few miles from the town. The moon was up, and was flinging her silvery veil over the landscape when we reached the bivouac. It was a picturesque spot, a low prairie-bottom on the margin of the lake, beneath a range of wooded bluffs in the rear; and the little white tents sprinkled about upon the green shrubbery beneath the trees; the stacks of arms and military accoutrements piled up beneath or suspended from their branches; the dragoons around their tents, engaged in the culinary operations of the camp, or listlessly lolling upon the grass as the laugh and jest went free; the horses grazing among the thickets, while over the whole was resting the misty splendour of the moonlight, [110] made up a *tout ensemble* not unworthy the crayon of a Weir.96 The detachment was a small one, consisting of only one hundred men, under command of Captain S——, on an excursion from Camp des Moines, at the lower rapids of the Mississippi, to Fort Howard, on Green Bay, partially occasioned by a rumour of Indian hostilities

96 Robert Walter Weir (1803–89), after studying and painting in New York, Florence (1824–25), and Rome (1825–27), opened a studio in New York, and became an associate and later academician of the National Academy of Design. He was professor of drawing in the United States Military Academy at West Point from 1832 to 1874. Weir is best known for his historical paintings, prominent among which are “The Bourbons' Last March,” “Landing of Hendric Hudson,” “Indian Captives,” and “Embarkation of the Pilgrims.” He built and beautified the Church of Holy Innocents at Highland Falls, West Point. His two sons, John Ferguson and Julian Alden, became noted artists.— Ed.

138 threatened in that vicinity.97 They were a portion of several companies of the first regiment of dragoons, levied by Congress a few years since for the protection

of the Western frontier, in place of the “Rangers,” so styled, in whom that trust had previously reposed. They were all Americans, resolute-looking fellows enough, and originally rendezvoused at Jefferson Barracks. The design of such a corps is doubtless an excellent one; but military men tell us that some unpardonable omissions were made in the provisions of the bill reported by Congress in which the corps had its origin; for, according to the present regulations, all approximation to discipline is precluded. Captain S —— received us leisurely reclining upon a buffalo-robe in his tent; and, in a brief interview, we found him possessed

97 By order of the war department (May 19, 1834), Lieutenant-Colonel S. W. Kearny was sent with companies B, H, and I of the Ist United States dragoons to establish a fort near the mouth of Des Moines River. The present site of Montrose, Lee County, Iowa, at the head of the lower rapids of the Mississippi, was chosen. The barracks being completed by November, 1834, they were occupied until the spring of 1837, when the troops were transferred to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

As early as 1721 a French fort (La Baye) had been erected at Green Bay, on the left bank of Fox River, a half league from its mouth. After suffering many vicissitudes during the Fox wars it was later strengthened, and when occupied by English troops in 1761, was re-named Fort Edward Augustus. After the close of the War of 1812–15, the United States government determined to exercise a real authority over the forts on the upper Great Lakes, where, in spite of the provision of Jay's Treaty (1794), its power had been merely nominal. In 1815 John Bowyer, the first United States Indian agent for the Green Bay district, established a government trading post at Green Bay, and made an ineffectual attempt to control the fur trade of the region. The following year, Fort Howard, named in honor of General Benjamin Howard, was built on the site of the old French fort. With the exception of 1820–22, when the troops were transferred to Camp Smith, on the east shore, Fort Howard was continuously occupied until 1841, when its garrison was ordered to Florida and Mexico. Later, from 1849 to 1851, it was occupied by Colonel Francis Lee and Lieutenant-Colonel B. L. E. Bonneville, and then permanently abandoned as

a garrison, although a volunteer company was stationed there for a short time during the War of Secession. Almost every trace of the old fort has been obliterated. Consult *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, xvi, xvii; also William L. Evans, “Military History of Green Bay,” in Wisconsin Historical Society *Proceedings*, 1899, pp. 128–146.— Ed.

139 of all that gentlemanly *naïveté* which foreign travellers would have us believe is, in our country, confined to the profession of arms. The night-dews of the lowlands had for some hours been falling when we reached the village drenched with their damps.

Much to our regret, the stage of water in the Illinois would not permit our boat to ascend the stream, as had been the intention, to Hennepin, some twenty miles above, and Ottawa, at the foot of the rapids.98 Nearly equidistant between these [III] flourishing towns, upon the eastern bank of the Illinois, is situated that remarkable crag, termed by the early French “ *Le Rocher* ,” by the Indian traditions “ *Starved Rock* ,” and by the present dwellers in its vicinity, as well as by Schoolcraft and the maps, “ *Rockfort.* ” It is a tall cliff, composed of alternate strata of lime and sandstone, about two hundred and fifty feet in height by report, and one hundred and thirty-four by actual measurement. Its base is swept by the current, and it is perfectly precipitous upon three sides. The fourth side, by which alone it is accessible, is connected with the neighbouring range of bluffs by a natural causeway, which can be ascended only by a difficult and tortuous path. The summit of the crag is clothed with soil to the depth of several feet, sufficient to sustain a growth of stunted cedars. It is about one hundred feet in diameter, and comprises nearly an acre of level land. The name of “Starved Rock” was obtained by this inaccessible battlement from a legend of Indian tradition, an outline of which may be found in Flint's work upon the Western Valley, and an interesting story wrought from its incidents in Hall's “Border Tales.” A band of the Illini having assassinated Pontiac, the Ottoway chieftain, in 1767, the tribe

98 Hennepin, on the east bank of the Illinois River, was laid out in 1831 and made the seat of justice for Putnam County.

Ottawa, the county seat of La Salle, was laid off by the canal commissioners (1830) at the junction of the Fox and Illinois rivers.— Ed.

140 of the Pottawattamies made war upon them. The Illini, being defeated, fled for refuge to this rock, which a little labour soon rendered inaccessible to all the assaults of their enemy. At this crisis, after repeated repulse, the besiegers determined to reduce the hold by *starvation* , as the only method remaining. The tradition of this siege affords, perhaps, [112] as striking an illustration of Indian character as is furnished by our annals of the unfortunate race. Food in some considerable quantity had been provided by the besieged; but when, parched by thirst, they attempted during the night to procure water from the cool stream rushing below them by means of ropes of bark, the enemy detected the design, and their vessels were cut off by a guard in canoes. The last resource was defeated; every stratagem discovered; hope was extinguished; the unutterable tortures of thirst were upon them; a terrific death in anticipation; yet they yielded not; the speedier torments of the stake and a triumph to their foes was the alternative. And so they perished—all, with a solitary exception—a woman, who was adopted by the hostile tribe, and was living not half a century since. For years the summit of this old cliff was whitened by the bones of the victims; and quantities of remains, as well as arrow-heads and domestic utensils, are at the present day exhumed. Shells are also found, but their *whence* and *wherefore* are not easily determined. At the only accessible point there is said to be an appearance of an intrenchment and rampart. A glorious view of the Illinois, which, forming a curve, laves more than half of the column's base, is obtained from the summit. An ancient post of the French is believed to have once stood here.99

99 Flagg's description of this noted bluff is accurate. After careful investigations, Francis Parkman, the historian, was convinced that *Le Rocker* or Starved Rock is the site of Fort St. Louis, erected by La Salle in December, 1682. On his departure in the autumn of 1683, La Salle left the post in command of his lieutenant, Henri de Tonty, who was soon succeeded by De Baugis. In 1690 Tonty and La Forest were granted the proprietorship of the stronghold, but in 1702 it was abandoned by royal order. By 1718 it was again

occupied by the French, although when Father Charlevoix passed three years later, it was once more deserted. The tradition which gave rise to the name Starved Rock was well known; see *Tales of the Border* (Philadelphia, 1834); Osman Eaton, *Starved Rock, a Historical Sketch* (Ottawa, Illinois, 1895); and Francis Parkman, *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West* (Boston, 1869).

Pontiac was assassinated in 1769 instead of 1767. For accounts of the Ottawa and Potawotami, see Croghan's *Journals*, in our volume i, p. 76, note 37, and p. 115, note 84, respectively.— Ed.

141

Brightly were the moonbeams streaming over the blue lake Pinatahwee as our steamer glided from its waters. Near midnight, as we swept past Pekin, we were roused from our slumbers by the plaintive [113] notes of the “German Hymn,” which mellowly came stealing from distance over the waters; and we almost pardoned the “Menagerie” its multifold transgressions because of that touching air. There is a chord in almost every bosom, however rough and unharmonious its ordinary emotions, which fails not to vibrate beneath the gentle influences of “sweet sounds.” From this, as from the strings of the wind-harp, a zephyr may elicit a melody of feeling which the storm could never have awakened. There are seasons, too, when the nerves and fibres of the system, reposing in quietness, are most exquisitely attempered to the mysterious influences and the delicate breathings of harmony; and such a season is that calm, holy hour, when deep sleep hath descended upon man, and his unquiet pulsings have for an interval ceased their fevered beat. To be awakened then by music's cadence has upon us an effect unearthly! It calls forth from their depths the richest emotions of the heart. The moonlight serenade! Ah, its wild witchery has told upon the romance of many a young bosom! If you have a mistress, and you would woo her *not vainly* , woo her thus! I remember me, when once a resident of the courtly city of 142 L——, to have been awakened one morning long before the dawn by a strain of distant music, which, swelling and rising upon the still night-air, came floating like a spirit through the open windows and long galleries of the building. I arose; all was calm, and

silent, and deserted through the dim, lengthened streets of the city. Not a light gleamed from a casement; not a [114] footfall echoed from the pavement; not a breath broke the stillness save the crowing of the far-off cock proclaiming the morn, and the low rumble of the marketman's wagon; and then, swelling upon the night-wind, fitfully came up that beautiful gush of melody, wave upon wave, surge after surge, billow upon billow, winding itself into the innermost cells of the soul!

“Oh, it came o'er my ear like the sweet South, That breathes upon a bank of violets, Stealing and giving odour.”

Illinois River.

XI

“You will excuse me if I do not strictly confine myself to narration, but now and then interpose such *reflections* as may offer while I am writing.”— Newton.

“Each was a giant heap of mouldering clay; There slept the warriors, women, friends, and foes; There, side by side, the rival chieftains lay, And mighty tribes swept from the face of day.”

Flint.

More than three weeks ago I found myself, one bright morning at sunrise, before the city of St. Louis on descending the Illinois; and in that venerable little city have I ever since been a dweller. A series of those vexatious delays, ever occurring to balk the designs of the tourist, have detained me longer than could have been anticipated. Not the [115] most inconsiderable of these preventives to locomotion in this bustling, swapping, chaffering little city, 143 strange as it may seem, has been the difficulty of procuring, at a conscionable outlay of dollars and cents, a suitable steed for a protracted jaunt. But, thanks to the civility or *selfism* of a friend, this difficulty is at an end, and I have at length

succeeded in securing the reversion of a tough, spirited little bay, which, by considerate usage and bountiful foddering, may serve to bear me, with the requisite quantum of speed and safety, over the prairies. A few days, therefore, when the last touch of *acclimation* shall have taken its leave, and “I'm over the border and awa'.”

The city of San' Louis, now hoary with a century's years, was one of those early settlements planted by the Canadian French up and down the great valley, from the Northern Lakes to the Gulf, while the English colonists of Plymouth and Jamestown were wringing out a wretched subsistence along the sterile shores of the Atlantic, wearied out by constant warfare with the thirty Indian tribes within their borders. Attracted by the beauty of the country, the fertility of its soil, the boundless variety of its products, the exhaustless mineral treasures beneath its surface, and the facility of the trade in the furs of the Northwest, a flood of Canadian emigration opened southward after the discoveries of La Salle, and the little villages of Cahokia, Kaskaskia, Prairie du Po, Prairie du Rocher, St. Phillipe, St. Ferdinand, Peoria, Fort Chartres, Vuide Poche, Petites Cotes, now St. Charles, Pain Court, now St. Louis, and others, successively sprang up in [116] the howling waste. Over nearly all this territory have the Gaul, the Spaniard, the Briton, and the Anglo-American held rule, and a dash of the national idiosyncrasy of each may be detected. Especially true is this of St. Louis. There is an antiquated, venerable air about its narrow streets and the ungainly edifices of one portion of it; the steep-roofed stone cottage of the Frenchman, and the tall stuccoed-dwelling 144 of the Don, not often beheld. A mellowing touch of time, which few American cities can boast, has passed over it, rendering it a spot of peculiar interest to one with the slightest spirit of the antiquary, in a country where all else is new. The modern section of the city, with its regular streets and lofty edifices, which, within the past fifteen years, has arisen under the active hand of the northern emigrant, presents a striking contrast to the old.

The site of St. Louis is elevated and salubrious, lying for some miles along the Mississippi upon two broad plateaux or steppes swelling up gently from the water's edge. Along the first of these, based upon an exhaustless bed of limestone, which furnishes material for

building, are situated the lower and central portions of the city, while that above sweeps away in an extensive prairie of stunted blackjack oaks to the west. The latter section is already laid out into streets and building-lots; elegant structures are rapidly going up, and, at no distant day, this is destined to become the most courtly and beautiful portion of the city. It is at a pleasant remove from the dust and bustle of the landing, [117] while its elevation affords a fine view of the harbour and opposite shore. Yet, with all its improvements of the past few years, St. Louis remains emphatically “a little *French* city.” There is about it a cheerful village air, a certain *rus in rube* , to which the grenadier preciseness of most of our cities is the antipodes. There are but few of those endless, rectilinear avenues, cutting each other into broad squares of lofty granite blocks, so characteristic of the older cities of the North and East, or of those cities of tramontane origin so rapidly rising within the boundaries of the valley. There yet remains much in St. Louis to remind one of its village days; and a stern *eschewal* of mathematical, angular exactitude is everywhere beheld. Until within a few years there was no such thing 145 as a row of houses; all were disjoined and at a considerable distance from each other; and every edifice, however central, could boast its humble *stoop* , its front-door plat, bedecked with shrubbery and flowers, and protected from the inroads of intruding man or beast by its own tall stoccade. All this is now confined to the southern or French section of the city; a right Rip Van Winkle-looking region, where each little steep-roofed cottage yet presents its broad piazza, and the cosey settee before the door beneath the tree shade, with the fleshy old burghers soberly luxuriating on an evening pipe, their dark-eyed, brunette daughters at their side. There is a delightful air of “old-fashioned comfortableness” in all this, that reminds us of nothing we have seen in our own country, but much of the antiquated villages of which we have [118] been told in the land beyond the waters. Among those remnants of a former generation which are yet to be seen in St. Louis are the venerable mansions of Auguste and Pierre Chouteau, who were among the founders of the city.100 These extensive mansions stand upon the principal street, and originally occupied, with their grounds, each of them an entire square, enclosed by lofty walls of heavy masonry, with loopholes and watch-towers for defence. The march of improvement has encroached

upon the premises of these ancient edifices somewhat; yet they are still inhabited by the posterity of their builders, and remain, with their massive walls of stone, monuments of an earlier era.

100 For a biographical sketch of Pierre and Auguste Chouteau, the elders, see James's Long's *Expedition*, in our volume xvi, p. 275, note 127.— Ed.

The site upon which stands St. Louis was selected in 1763 by M. Laclede, a partner of a mercantile association at New-Orleans, to whom D'Abbadie, Director-general of the province of Louisiana, had granted the exclusive privilege of the commerce in furs and peltries with the Indian 146 tribes of the Upper Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. By the treaty of that year France had ceded all her possessions east of the Mississippi to Great Britain, and there was on the western shore only the small village of Ste. Genevieve. This was subsequently deemed too distant from the mouth of the Mississippi to be a suitable depôt and post for the fur-trade; and Laclede, having surveyed all the neighbouring region, fixed upon the spot where St. Louis now stands as a more eligible site. Whether this site was selected by the flight of birds, by consultation of the entrails of beasts, or the voice of an oracle; whether by accident [119] or design, tradition averreth not. Yet sure is it, that under the concurrence of all.these omens, a more favourable selection could not have been made than this has proved. It *is related* , however, that when the founder of the city first planted foot upon the shore, the imprint of a human foot, naked and of gigantic dimensions, was found enstamped upon the solid limestone rock, and continued in regular succession as if of a man advancing from the water's edge to the plateau above.101 By a more superstitious age this circumstance

101 The imprint of a human foot is yet to be seen in the limestone of the shore not far from the landing at St. Louis.

With reference to the *human footprints in the rock at St. Louis*, I have given the local tradition. Schoolcraft's detailed description, which I subjoin, varies from this somewhat. The print of a human foot is said to have been discovered also in the limestone at

Herculaneum. Morse, in his *Universal Geography*, tells us of the tracks of an army of men and horses on a certain mountain in the State of Tennessee, fitly named the Enchanted Mountain.

“Before leaving Harmony, our attention was particularly directed-to a tabular mass of limestone, containing two apparent prints or impressions of the naked human foot. This stone was carefully preserved in an open area, upon the premises of Mr. Rappe, by whom it had previously been conveyed from the banks of the Mississippi, at St. Louis. The impressions are, to all appearance, those of a man standing in an erect posture, with the left foot a little advanced and the heels drawn in. The distance between the heels, by accurate measurement, is six and a quarter inches, and between the extremities of the toes thirteen and a half. But, by a close inspection, it will be perceived that these are not the impressions of feet accustomed to the European shoe; the toes being much spread, and the foot flattened in the manner that is observed in persons unaccustomed to the close shoe. The probability, therefore, of their having.been imparted by some individual of a race of men who were strangers to the art of tanning skins, and at a period much anterior to that to which any traditions of the present race of Indians reaches, derives additional weight from this peculiar shape of the feet.

“In other respects, the impressions are strikingly natural, exhibiting the muscular marks of the foot with great precision and faithfulness to nature. This circumstance weakens very much the supposition that they may, *possibly*, be specimens of antique sculpture, executed by any former race of men inhabiting this continent. Neither history nor tradition has preserved the slightest traces of such a people. For it must be recollected that, as yet, we have no evidence that the people who erected our stupendous Western tumuli possessed any knowledge of masonry, far less of sculpture, or that they had even invented a chisel, a knife, or an axe, other than those of porphyry, hornstone, or obsidian.

“The average length of the human foot in the male subject may, perhaps, be assumed at ten inches. The length of each foot, in our subject, is ten and a quarter inches: the breadth,

taken across the toes, at right angles to the former line, four inches; but the greatest spread of the toes is four and a half inches, which diminishes to two and a half at the heel. Directly before the prints, and approaching within a few inches of the left foot, is a well-impressed and deep mark, having some resemblance to a scroll, whose greatest length is two feet seven inches, and greatest breadth twelve and a half inches.

“The rock containing these interesting impressions is a compact limestone of a grayish-blue colour. It was originally quarried on the left bank of the Mississippi at St. Louis, and is a part of the extensive range of calcareous rocks upon which that town is built. It contains very perfect remains of the encrinite, echinite, and some other fossil species. The rock is firm and well consolidated, as much so as any part of the stratum. A specimen of this rock, now before us, has a decidedly sparry texture, and embraces a mass of black blende. This rock is extensively used as a building material at St. Louis. On parting with its carbonic acid and water, it becomes beautifully white, yielding an excellent quick-lime. Foundations of private dwellings at St. Louis, and the military works erected by the French and Spaniards from this material sixty years ago, are still as solid and unbroken as when first laid. We cite these facts as evincing the compactness and durability of the stone—points which must essentially affect any conclusions, to be drawn from the prints we have mentioned, and upon which, therefore, we are solicitous to express our decided opinion.”— Flagg.

147 would have been deemed an omen, and, as such, commemorated in the chronicles of the city. On the 15th of February, 1764, Colonel Auguste Chouteau, with a number of persons from Ste. Genevieve, Cahokia, and Fort Chartres, arrived at the spot, and commenced a settlement by felling a splendid grove of forest-trees which then reared itself upon the bank, and erecting a building where the 148 market-house now stands. The town was then laid off, and named in honour of Louis XV., the reigning monarch of France, though the settlers were desirous of giving it the name of its founder: to this Laclede would not consent. He died at the post of Arkansas in 1778; Colonel Chouteau followed him in the month of February of 1829, just sixty-four years from the founding of the city. He had

been a constant resident, had seen the spot merge from the wilderness, and had become one of its most opulent citizens.

For many years St. Louis was called “ *Pain* [120] *Court* ,” from the scarcity of provisions, which circumstance at one period almost induced the settlers to abandon their design. In 1765 Fort Chartres was delivered to Great Britain, and the commandant, St. Ange, with his troops, only twenty-two in number, proceeded to St. Louis; and assuming the government, the place was ever after considered the capital of the province.102 Under the administration of St. Ange, which is said to have been mild and patriarchal, the *common field* was laid open, and each settler became a cultivator of the soil. This field comprised several thousand acres, lying upon the second steppe mentioned, and has recently been divided into lots and sold to the highest bidder. Three years after the arrival of St. Ange, Spanish troops under command of Don Rious took possession of the province agreeable to treaty;103 but, owing to the dissatisfaction of the inhabitants, no official authority was exercised until 1770. Thirty years afterward the province was retroceded to France,

102 For the history of Fort Chartres, see A. Michaux's *Travels*, in our volume iii, p. 71, note 136.

For a biographical sketch of St. Ange, see Croghan's *Journals*, in our volume i, p. 138, note 109.— Ed.

103 At the close of 1767 Captain Francisco Rios arrived at St. Louis in pursuance of an order of D'Ulloa, governor of Louisiana. The following year he built Fort Prince Charles, and although at first coldly received, won the respect of the inhabitants by his tact and good judgment. After the expulsion of D'Ulloa in the revolution of 1768, Rios returned with his soldiers to New Orleans.— Ed.

149 and from that nation to the United States. In the spring of 1778 an attack was made upon the village by a large body of the northern Indians, at the instigation of the English. They were repulsed with a loss of about twenty of the settlers, and the year was

commemorated as “ *L'annee du grand coup.* ”104 In the spring of 1785, the Mississippi rose thirty feet above the highest water-mark previously known, and the American Bottom was inundated. This year was remembered as “ *L'annee des grandes eaux.* ”

104 Spain retroceded Louisiana to France by the treaty of San Ildefonso (October 1, 1800). The latter transferred the territory to the United States by the treaty signed at Paris, April 30, 1803.

The attack on St. Louis mentioned by Flagg, occurred May 26, 1780. The expedition, composed of Chippewa, Winnebago, Sioux, and other Indian tribes, with a Canadian contingent numbering about seven hundred and fifty, started from Mackinac. See R. G. Thwaites, *France in America* (New York and London, 1905), p. 290; and “Papers from Canadian Archives,” *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, xi, pp. 152–157.— Ed.

At that period commerce with New-Orleans, for [121] the purpose of obtaining merchandise for the fur trade, was carried on exclusively by keel-boats and barges, which in the spring started upon their voyage of more than a thousand miles, and in the fall of the year slowly returned against the current. This mode of transportation was expensive, tedious, and unsafe; and it was rendered yet more hazardous from the murders and robberies of a large band of free-booters, under two chiefs, Culburt and Magilbray, who stationed themselves at a place called Cotton Wood Creek, on the Mississippi, and captured the ascending boats. This band was dispersed by a little fleet of ten barges, which, armed with swivels, ascended the river in company. This year was remembered as “ *L'annee des bateaux.* ”105 All the inconvenience of this method of transportation

105 Dangerous passes on the Mississippi were rendered doubly perilous to early navigators by the presence of bands of robbers. An incident occurred early in 1787, which led to a virtual extermination of these marauders. While ascending the rivers, Beausoliel, a wealthy merchant of New Orleans, was attacked near Cotton Wood Creek by the Culbert and Magilhay freebooters. After being captured, the merchants made good their escape through the strategy of a negro, killed many of their captors, and returned to New Orleans

to report the state of affairs. The following year (1788) the governor issued a proclamation forbidding boats to proceed singly to St. Louis. Accordingly a fleet of ten boats ascended and destroyed the lair at Cotton Wood Creek, the remaining robbers having fled at their approach. This bloodless victory marks the close of the freebooting period. The year was afterwards known in local annals as *L'Annee des dix Bateaux.* See L. U. Reaves, *Saint Louis* (St. Louis, 1875), pp. 21, 22; and Scharf, *St. Louis*, ii, p. 1092.— Ed.

150 continued to be experienced until the introduction of steam upon the Western waters; and the first boat of this kind which made its appearance at the port of St. Louis was the “General Pike,” in 1814. This boat was commanded by Captain Jacob Reed, and, at the time of its arrival, a large body of a neighbouring Indian tribe chanced to have an encampment in the suburbs of the city. Their astonishment, and even *terror* , at first sight of the evolutions of the steamer, are said to have been indescribable. They viewed it as nothing less than a living thing; a monster of tremendous power, commissioned by the “Great Spirit” for their extermination, and their humiliation was proportional to their terror. Great opposition was raised against steamers by the boatmen, some thousands of whom, by their introduction, would [122] be thrown out of employment; but this feeling gradually passed away, and now vessels propelled by steam perform in a few days a voyage which formerly required as many months. A trip to the city, as New-Orleans, *par excellence* , was styled, then demanded weeks of prior preparation, and a man put his house and household in order before setting out: now it is an ordinary jaunt of pleasure. The same dislike manifested by the old French *habitans* to the introduction of the steamer or *smoke-boat* , “bateau à vapeur,” as they termed it, has betrayed itself at every advance of modern improvement. Erected, as St. Louis was, with no design of a city, its houses 151 were originally huddled together with a view to nothing but convenience; and its streets were laid out too narrow and too irregular for the bustle and throng of mercantile operations. In endeavouring to correct this early error, by removing a few of the old houses and projecting balconies, great opposition has been encountered. Some degree of uniformity in the three principal streets parallel to the river has, however, by this method been attained. Water-street is well built up with a series of lofty limestone warehouses; but an irretrievable

error has been committed in arranging them at so short a distance from the water. On some accounts this proximity to the river may be convenient; but for the sake of a broad arena for commerce; for the sake of a fresh and salubrious circulation of air from the water; for the sake of scenic beauty, or a noble promenade for pleasure, there should have been no encroachment upon the precincts [123] of the “eternal river.” In view of the miserable *plan* of St. Louis, if it may claim anything of the kind, and the irregular manner and singular taste with which it has been built, the regret has more than once been expressed, that, like Detroit,106 a conflagration had not swept it in its earlier days, and given place to an arrangement at once more consistent with elegance and convenience.

106 In 1805.— Flagg.

Comment by Ed. Every house save one was destroyed by fire on June 11, 1805. The memory of the disaster is preserved in the motto of the present seal of the city: *Resurget Cineribus* (she arises from the ashes).

From the river bank to the elevated ground sweeping off in the rear of the city to the west is a distance of several hundred yards, and the height above the level of the water cannot be far from an hundred feet. The ascent is easy, however, and a noble view is obtained, from the cupola of the courthouse on its summit, of the Mississippi and the 152 city below, of the broad American Bottom, with its bluffs in the distance, and a beautiful extent of natural scenery in the rear. Along the brow of this eminence once stood a line of military works, erected for the defence of the old town in 1780 by Don Francois de Cruzat, lieutenant governor “ *de la partie occidentale des Illinois* ,” as the ancient chronicles style the region west of the Mississippi.107 These fortifications consisted of several circular towers of stone, forty feet in diameter and half as many in altitude, planted at intervals in a line of stoccade, besides a small fort, embracing four demilunes and a parapet of mason-work. For many years these old works were in a dismantled and deserted state, excepting the fort, in one building of which was held [124] the court, and another superseded the necessity of a prison. Almost every vestige is now swept away. The great earthquakes

of 1811 essentially assisted in toppling the old ruins to the ground. The whole city was powerfully shaken, and has since been subject to occasional shocks.108

107 Lieutenant-Colonel Francisco Cruzat, who succeeded (May, 1775) Captain Don Pedro Piernas, the first lieutenant-governor of Upper Louisiana, followed the liberal policy of his predecessor and was highly esteemed by his people. He was followed in 1778 by Captain Fernando de Leyba, who was sadly lacking in tact and political ability; he was displaced for incompetency after the Indian attack of May 26, 1780. Cruzat was reappointed in September and served until November, 1787. One of the first acts of his second administration was to direct Auguste Chouteau to make plans for the fortification of St. Louis; see note 76, *ante.*— Ed.

108 One, which occurred during the summer of the present year, was extensively felt. In the vicinity of this fortification, to the south, was an extensive burial-ground; and many of its slumbering tenants, in the grading of streets and excavating of cellars, have been thrown up to the light after a century's sleep.— Flagg.

It is in the northern suburbs of the city that are to be seen those singular ancient mounds for which St. Louis is so celebrated; and which, with others in the vicinity, form, as it were, a connecting link between those of the north, commencing in the lake counties of Western New-York, and those of the south, extending deep within the boundaries 153 of Mexico, forming an unbroken line from one extremity of the great valley to the other. Their position at St. Louis is, as usual, a commanding one, upon the second bank, of which I have spoken, and looking proudly down upon the Mississippi, along which the line is parallel. They stand isolated, or distinct from each other, in groups; and the outline is generally that of a rectangular pyramid, truncated nearly one half. The first collection originally consisted of ten tumuli, arranged as three sides of a square area of about four acres, and the open flank to the west was guarded by five other small circular earth-heaps, isolated, and forming the segment of a circle around [125] the opening. This group is now almost completely destroyed by the grading of streets and the erection of edifices, and

the eastern border may alone be traced. North of the first collection of tumuli is a second, four or five in number, and forming two sides of a square. Among these is one of a very beautiful form, consisting of three stages, and called the “Falling Garden.” Its elevation above the level of the second plateau is about four feet, and the area is ample for a dwelling and yard; from the second it descends to the first plateau along the river by three regular gradations, the first with a descent of two feet, the second of ten, and the lower one of five, each stage presenting a beautiful site for a house. For this purpose, however, they can never be appropriated, as one of the principal streets of the city is destined to pass directly through the spot, the grading for which is already commenced. The third group of mounds is situated a few hundred yards above the second, and consists of about a dozen eminences. A series extends along the west side of the street, through grounds attached to a classic edifice of brick, which occupies the principal one; while opposite rise several of a larger size, upon one of which is situated the residence of General Ashley, and upon another the reservoir 154 which supplies the city with water, raised from the Mississippi by a steam force-pump upon its banks. Both are beautiful spots, imbowered in forest-trees; and the former, from its size and structure, is supposed to have been a citadel or place of defence. [126] In excavating the earth of this mound, large quantities of human remains, pottery, half-burned wood, &c., &c., were thrown up; furnishing conclusive evidence, were any requisite farther than regularity of outline and relative position, of the artificial origin of these earth-heaps. About six hundred yards above this group, and linked with it by several inconsiderable mounds, is situated one completely isolated, and larger than any yet described. It is upward of thirty feet in height, about one hundred and fifty feet long, and upon the summit five feet wide. The form is oblong, resembling an immense grave; and a broad terrace or apron, after a descent of a few feet, spreads out itself on the side looking down upon the river. From the extensive view of the surrounding region and of the Mississippi commanded by the site of this mound, as well as its altitude, it is supposed to have been intended as a vidette or watch-tower by its builders. Upon its summit, not many years ago, was buried an Indian chief. He was a member of a deputation from a distant tribe to the agency in St. Louis; but, dying while there, his remains, agreeable to

the custom of his tribe, were deposited on the most commanding spot that could be found. This custom accounts for the circumstance urged against the antiquity and artificial origin of these works, that the relics exhumed are found near the surface, and were deposited by the present race. But the distinction between the remains found near the surface and those in the depths of the soil is too palpable and too [127] notorious to require argument. From the *Big Mound* , as it is called, a *cordon* of tumuli stretch away to the northwest for several miles along the bluffs 155 parallel with the river, a noble view of which they command. They are most of them ten or twelve feet high; many clothed with forest-trees, and all of them supposed to be tombs. In removing two of them upon the grounds of Col. O'Fallon,109 immense quantities of bones were exhumed. Similar mounds are to be found in almost every county in the state, and those in the vicinity of St. Louis are remarkable only for their magnitude and the regularity of their relative positions. It is evident, from these monuments of a former generation, that the natural advantages of the site upon which St. Louis now stands were not unappreciated long before it was pressed by the first European footstep.

109 Colonel John O'Fallon (1791–1865), a nephew of George Rogers Clark, born near Louisville, served his military apprenticeship under General William Henry Harrison during the War of 1812–15. Resigning his position in the army (1818), he removed to St. Louis where he turned his attention to trade and accumulated a large fortune. He endowed the O'Fallon Polytechnic Institution, which was later made the scientific department of St. Louis University, contributed liberally to Washington University, and built a dispensary and medical college. It is estimated that he gave a million dollars for benevolent purposes.—Ed.

It is a circumstance which has often elicited remark from those who, as tourists, have visited St. Louis, that so little interest should be manifested by its citizens for those mysterious and venerable monuments of another race by which on every side it is environed. When we consider the complete absence of everything in the character of a public square or promenade in the city, one would suppose that individual taste and

municipal authority would not have failed to avail themselves of the moral interest attached to these mounds and the beauty of their site, to have formed in their vicinity one of the most attractive spots in the West. These ancient tumuli could, at no considerable expense, have been [128] enclosed and ornamented with shrubbery, and walks, and flowers, and thus preserved for coming generations. As it is, they are passing rapidly away; man and beast, as well as the elements, are busy with them, and in a 156 few years they will quite have disappeared. The practical utility of which they are available appears the only circumstance which has attracted attention to them. One has already become a public reservoir, and measures are in progress for applying the larger mound to a similar use, the first being insufficient for the growth of the city. It need not be said that such indifference of feeling to the only relics of a by-gone race which our land can boast, is not well in the citizens of St. Louis, and should exist no longer; nor need allusion be made to that eagerness of interest which the distant traveller, the man of literary taste and poetic fancy, or the devotee of abstruse science, never fails to betray for these mysterious monuments of the past, when, in his tour of the Far West, he visits St. Louis; many a one, too, who has looked upon the century-mossed ruins of Europe, and to whose eye the castled crags of the Rhine are not unfamiliar. And surely, to the imaginative mind, there is an interest which attaches to these venerable beacons of departed time, enveloped as they are in mystery inscrutable; and from their origin, pointing, as they do, down the dim shadowy vista of ages of which the ken of man telleth not, there is an interest which hallows them even as the hoary piles of old Egypt are hallowed, and which feudal Europe, with all her [129] time-sustained battlements, can never boast. It is the mystery, the impenetrable mystery veiling these aged sepulchres, which gives them an interest for the traveller's eye. They are landmarks in the lapse of ages, beneath whose shadows generations have mouldered, and around whose summits a gone *eternity* plays! The ruined tower, the moss-grown abbey, the damp-stained dungeon, the sunken arch, the fairy and delicate fragments of the shattered peristyle of a classic land, or the beautiful frescoes of Herculaneum and Pompeii — around *them* time has indeed flung the silvery mantle of eld while he has 157 swept them with decay; but *their* years may be *enumerated* , and the circumstances,

the authors, and the purposes of their origin, together with the incidents of their ruin, are chronicled on History's page for coming generations. But who shall tell the era of the origin of these venerable earthheaps, the race of their builders, the purpose of their erection, the thousand circumstances attending their rise, history, desertion? Why now so lone and desolate? Where are the multitudes that once swarmed the prairie at their base, and vainly busied themselves in rearing piles which should exist the wonder of the men of other lands, and the sole monument of their own memory long after they themselves were dust? Has war, or famine, or pestilence brooded over these beautiful plains? or has the fiat of Omnipotence gone forth that as a race their inhabitants should exist no longer, and the death-angel been commissioned to sweep them from off the face of [130] the earth as if with destruction's besom? We ask: the inquiry is vain; we are answered not! Their mighty creations and the tombs of myriads heave up themselves in solemn grandeur before us; but from the depths of the dusky earth-heap comes forth no voice to tell us its origin, or object, or story!

“Ye mouldering relics of a race departed, Your names have perished; not a trace remains, Save where the grassgrown mound its summit rears From the green bosom of your native plains.”

Ages since — long ere the first son of the Old World had pressed the fresh soil of the New; long before the bright region beyond the blue wave had been the object of the philosopher's revery by day and the enthusiast's vision by night — in the deep stillness and solitude of an unpeopled land, these vast mausoleums rose as now they rise, in lonely grandeur from the plain, and looked down, even as now 158 they look, upon the giant flood rolling its dark waters at their base, hurrying past them to the deep. So has it been with the massive tombs of Egypt, amid the sands and barrenness of the desert. For ages untold have the gloomy pyramids been reflected by the inundations of the Nile; an hundred generations, they tell us, have arisen from the cradle and reposed beneath their shadows, and, like autumn leaves, have dropped into the grave; but from the deep midnight of by-gone centuries comes forth no daring spirit to claim these kingly sepulchres as his own!

And shall the dusky piles on the plains of distant Egypt affect so deeply our reverence for the [131] departed, and these mighty monuments, reposing in dark sublimity upon our own magnificent prairies veiled in mystery more inscrutable than they, call forth no solitary throb? Is there no hallowing interest associated with these aged relics, these tombs, and temples, and towers of another race, to elicit emotion? Are they *indeed* to us no more than the dull clods we tread upon? Why, then, does the wanderer from the far land gaze upon them with wonder and veneration? Why linger fondly around them, and meditate upon the power which reared them and is departed? Why does the poet, the man of genius and fancy, or the philosopher of mind and nature, seat himself at their base, and, with strange and undefined emotions, pause and ponder amid the loneliness which slumbers around? And surely, if the far traveller, as he wanders through this Western Valley, may linger around these aged piles and meditate upon a power departed, a race obliterated, an influence swept from the earth for ever, and dwell with melancholy emotions upon the destiny of man, is it not meet that those into whose keeping they seem by Providence consigned should regard them with interest and emotion? that they should gather up and preserve every incident relevant to 159 their origin, design, or history which may be attained, and avail themselves of every measure which may give to them perpetuity, and hand them down, undisturbed in form or character, to other generations?

The most plausible, and, indeed, the only plausible argument urged by those who deny the artificial [132] origin of the ancient mounds, is *their immense size.* There are, say they, “many mounds in the West that exactly correspond in *shape* with these supposed antiquities, and yet, from their *size* , most evidently were not made by man;” and they add that “it would be well to calculate upon the ordinary labour of excavating canals, how many hands, with spades, wheelbarrows, and other necessary implements, it would take to throw up mounds like the largest of these within any given time.”110 We are told that in the territory of Wisconsin and in northern Illinois exist mounds to which these are molehills. Of those, Mount Joliet, Mount Charles, Sinsinewa, and the Blue Mounds vary from one to four hundred feet in height; while west of the Arkansas exists a range of earth-heaps ten

or twelve miles in extent, and two hundred feet high: there also, it might be added, are the Mamelle Mountains, estimated at one thousand feet.111

110 This quotation is from the pen of an exceedingly accurate writer upon the West, and a worthy man; so far its sentiment is deserving of regard. I have canvassed the topic personally with this gentleman, and upon other subjects have frequently availed myself of a superior information, which more than twenty years of residence in the Far West has enabled him to obtain. I refer to the Rev. J. M. Peck, author of “Guide for Emigrants,” &c.— Flagg.

111 For recent scientific conclusions respecting the mounds and their builders, see citations in note 33, *ante*, p. 69.

Mount Joliet, on the west bank of the Des Plaines River, in the southwestern portion of Cook County, Illinois; Mount St. Charles, in Jo Daviess County, Illinois; Sinsinawa, in Grant County, Wisconsin, and Blue Mounds, in Dane County, Wisconsin, are unquestionably of natural formation. For descriptions of the artificial mounds of Wisconsin, see I. A. Lapham, “Antiquities of Wisconsin,” Smithsonian Institution *Contributions*, volume vii; Alfred Brunson, “Antiquities of Crawford County,” and Stephen D. Peet, “Emblematic Mounds in Wisconsin,” in *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, iii and ix, respectively.— Ed.

160 The adjacent country is prairie; farms exist on the summits of the mounds, which from their declivity are almost inaccessible, and *springs gush out from their sides.* With but one exception I profess to know nothing of these mounds from personal observation; and, consequently, can hazard no opinion of their character. The fact of the “gushing springs,” it is true, [133] savours not much of artificialness; and in this respect, at least, do these mounds differ from those claimed as of artificial origin. The earth-heaps of which I have been speaking can boast no “springs of water gushing from their sides;” if they could, the fact would be far from corroborating the theory maintained. The analogy between these mounds is admitted to be strong, though there exist diversities; and were there *none* , even Bishop Butler says that we are not to infer a thing true upon slight presumption, since

“there may be probabilities on both sides of a question.” From what has been advanced relative to the character of the mounds spoken of, it is believed that the probabilities strongly preponderate in favour of their artificial origin, even admitting their *perfect* analogy to those “from whose sides gush the springs.” But more anon.

St. Louis.

XII

“Where, through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault, The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.”

Gray.

“Some men have been Who loved the church so well, and gave so largely to't, They thought it should have canopied their bones Till doomsday.”

There are few more delightful views in the vicinity of St. Louis of a fine evening than that commanded by the 161 summit of the “Big Mound,” of which I have spoken, in the northern suburbs of the city. Far away from the north comes the Mississippi, sweeping on in a broad, smooth sheet, skirted by woodlands; and the rushing of its waters along the ragged rocks of the shores below is fancied faintly to reach the ear. Nearly in the middle of the stream are stretched out the long, low, sandy shores of “Blood Island,” a spot notorious in the annals of duelling. Upon the Illinois shore beyond it is contemplated erecting a pier, for the purpose of throwing the full volume of the current upon the western shore, and thus preserving a channel of deep water along the landing of the city. Within a few years past an extensive sand-bar has accumulated opposite the southern section of the city, which threatens, unless removed, greatly to obstruct, if not to destroy, the harbour. To remedy this, an appropriation [135] has been made by Congress, surveys have been taken, measures devised and their execution commenced.112 Upon the river-

bank opposite the island stands the “Floating Dry Dock,” an ingenious contrivance, the invention of a gentleman of St. Louis, and owned by a company of patentees.113 It

112 About 1817, when the first steamboat arrived at St. Louis a sand-bar began forming at the lower end of the city; by 1837, this had extended as far north as Market street, forming an island more than two hundred acres in extent. Another sand-bar was formed at the upper end of the city, west of Blood Island. In 1833 the city authorities undertook the work of removal, and John Goodfellow was employed to plow up the bars with ox teams, in order that high waters might carry away the sand. After three thousand dollars had been expended without avail, the board of aldermen petitioned Congress (1835) for relief. Through the efforts of Congressman William H. Ashley, the federal government appropriated (July 4, 1836) fifteen thousand dollars — later (March 3, 1837) increased to fifty thousand dollars — for the purpose of erecting a pier to deflect the current of the river. The work was supervised by Lieutenant Robert E. Lee and his assistant, Henry Kayser. Begun in 1837, it was continued for two years, the result being that the current was turned back to the Missouri side and the sand washed out; but dikes were necessary to preserve the work that had been accomplished.— Ed.

113 The dry floating dock was patented by J. Thomas, of St. Louis, March 26, 1834.— Ed.

162 consists of an indefinite number of floats, which may be increased or diminished at pleasure, each of them fourteen feet in breadth, and about four times that length, connected late rally together. After being sunk and suspended at the necessary depth in the water, the boat to be repaired is placed upon them, and they rise till her hull is completely exposed.

As the spectator, standing upon the Mound, turns his eye to the south, a green grove lies before him and the smaller earth-heaps, over which are beheld the towers and roofs of the city rising in the distance; far beyond is spread out a smooth, rolling carpet of tree-tops, in the midst of which the gray limestone of the arsenal is dimly perceived. The extent between the northern suburbs of St. Louis and its southern extremity along the river curve

is about six miles, and the city can be profitably extended about the same distance into the interior. The prospect in this direction is boundless for miles around, till the tree-tops blend with the western horizon. The face of the country is neither uniform nor broken, but undulates almost imperceptibly away, clothed in a dense forest of black-jack oak, interspersed with thickets of the wild-plum, the crab-apple, and the hazel. Thirty years ago, and this broad plain was a treeless, shrubless waste, [136] without a solitary farmhouse to break the monotony. But the annual fires were stopped; a young forest sprang into existence; and delightful villas and country seats are now gleaming from the dark foliage in all directions. To some of them are attached extensive grounds, adorned with groves, orchards, fish-ponds, and all the elegances of opulence and cultivated taste; while in the distance are beheld the glittering spires of the city rising above the trees. At one of these, a retired, beautiful spot, residence of Dr. F——, have passed many a pleasant hour. The sportsman 163 may here be indulged to his heart's desire. The woods abound with game of every species: the rabbit, quail, prairiehen, wild-turkey, and the deer; while the lakes, which flash from every dell and dingle, are swarmed with fish. Most of these sheets of water are formed by immense springs issuing from *sink-holes* ; and are supposed, like those in Florida, which suggested the wild idea of the *fountain of rejuvenescence* , to owe their origin to the subsidence of the bed of porous limestone upon which the Western Valley is based. Many of these springs intersect the region with rills and rivulets, and assist in forming a beautiful sheet of water in the southern suburbs of the city, which eventually pours out its waters into the Mississippi. Many years ago a dam and massive mill of stone was erected here by one of the founders of the city; it is yet standing, surrounded by aged sycamores, and is more valuable and venerable than ever. The neighbouring region is abrupt and broken, varied by a delightful vicissitude of hill and dale. The borders [137] of the lake are fringed with groves, while the steep bluffs, which rise along the water and are reflected in its placid bosom, recall the picture of Ben Venue and Loch Katrine:114

114 Three miles from the Mississippi, near the end of Laclede Avenue, St. Louis, is a powerful spring marking the source of Mill Creek (French, *La Petite Rivière*). Joseph

Miguel Taillon went to St. Louis (1765), constructed a dam across this creek, and erected a mill near the intersection of Ninth and Poplar streets. Pierre Laclede Liguest bought the property in 1767, but at his death (1778), Auguste Chouteau purchased it at public auction and retained the estate until his own death in 1829. The latter built a large stone mill to take the place of Taillon's wooden structure, and later replaced it by a still larger stone mill. The mill to which Flagg probably refers was not demolished until 1863. Chouteau enlarged the pond formed by Taillon's dam and beautified it. This artificial lake, a half mile in length and three hundred yards in width, was long known as Chouteau's Pond, and a noted pleasure-resort. In 1853 it was sold to the Missouri Pacific Railroad, drained, and made the site of the union railway station and several manufacturing establishments.—Ed.

“The mountain shadows on her breast Were neither broken nor at rest; In bright uncertainty they lie, Like future joys to Fancy's eye.”

This beautiful lake and its vicinity is, indeed, unsurpassed for scenic loveliness by any spot in the suburbs of St. Louis. 164 At the calm, holy hour of Sabbath sunset, its quiet borders invite to meditation and retirement. The spot should be consecrated as the trysting-place of love and friendship. Some fine structures are rising upon the margin of the waters, and in a few years it will be rivalled in beauty by no other section of the city.

St. Louis, like most Western cities, can boast but few public edifices of any note. Among those which are to be seen, however, are the large and commodious places of worship of the different religious denominations; an elegant courthouse, occupying with its enclosed grounds one of the finest squares in the city; two market-houses, one of which, standing upon the river-bank, contains on its second floor the City Hall; a large and splendid theatre, in most particulars inferior to no other edifice of the kind in the United States; and an extensive hotel, which is now going up, to be called the “St. Louis House,” contracted for one hundred and twenty thousand dollars. The Cathedral of St. Luke, the University,

Hospital, Orphan Asylum, and the [138] “Convent of the Sacred Heart,” are Catholic Institutions, and well worthy of remark.115 For many years

115 N. M. Ludlow, assisted by Colonel Meriwether Lewis Clark and Colonel Charles Keemle, in 1835 secured subscriptions to the amount of thirty thousand dollars, later increased to sixty-five thousand, for the purpose of erecting a theatre on the southeast corner of Third and Olin streets. The first play was presented on July 3, 1837. Designed by George I. Barnett, the building was of Ionic architecture externally and internally Corinthian. It was used until July 10, 1851, when it was closed, the property having been purchased by the federal government as the site for a custom house; see Scharf, *St. Louis*, i, p. 970.

The Planter's Hotel was probably the one Flagg referred to, instead of the St. Louis House. It was located between Chestnut and Vine streets, fronting Fourth street. The company was organized in 1836, the ground broken for construction in March, 1837, and the hotel opened for guests in 1841.

Joseph Rosati (1789–1843) went to St. Louis in 1817 and was appointed bishop of the Roman Catholic diocese of St. Louis, created two years earlier. Active in benevolent work, he founded two colleges for men and three academies for young women, aided in establishing the order of Ladies of the Sacred Heart, and was the chief promoter in the organization of the Sisters' Hospital and the first orphan asylum. He was called to Rome in 1840, and at the Feast of St. Andrew, 1841, appointed Peter R. Kenrick as his coadjutor. Bishop Rosati died at Rome, in 1843.— Ed.

165 after its settlement, the Roman Catholic faith prevailed exclusively in St. Louis. The founders of the city and its earliest inhabitants were of this religious persuasion; and their descendants, many of whom are now among its most opulent and influential citizens, together with foreign immigrants of a recent date, form a numerous and respectable body. The names of Chouteau, Pratte, Sarpy, Cabanné, Menard, Soulard, &c., &c., are those of early settlers of the city which yet are often heard.116

116 John B. Sarpy and his two younger brothers, Gregoire B. and Silvestre D. came to America from France about the middle of the eighteenth century. After engaging in the mercantile business in New Orleans, John B. went to St. Louis (1766) and was one of its earliest merchants. After twenty years' residence there, he returned to New Orleans. His nephew of the same name, at the age of nineteen (1817) was a partner with Auguste Chouteau and was later a member of the firm of P. Chouteau Jr. and Company, one of the largest fur companies then in America.

Pierre Menard (1766–1844) was in Vincennes as early as 1788. He later made his home at Kaskaskia, and held many positions of public trust in Illinois Territory. He was made major of the first regiment of the Randolph County militia (1795), was appointed judge of common pleas in the same county (1801), and United States sub-agent of Indian affairs (1813). He was also a member of several important commissions, notably of that appointed to make treaties with the Indians of the Northwest. His brothers, Hippolyte and Jean François, settled at Kaskaskia. The former was his brother's partner; the latter a well-known navigator on the Mississippi River. Michel Menard, nephew of Pierre, had much influence among the Indians and was chosen chief of the Shawnee. He founded the city of Galveston, Texas. Pierre Menard left ten children.

Henry Gustavus Soulard, the second son of Antoine Pierre Soulard, was born in St. Louis (1801). Frederic Louis Billon, in his *Annals of St. Louis* (1889), mentions him as the last survivor of all those who were born in St. Louis prior to the transfer of Louisiana to the United States (1803).

For short sketches of the Chouteaus, see James's *Long's Expedition*, in our volume xvi, p. 275, note 127, and Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxii, p. 235, note 168; for Pratte and Cabanné, see our volume xxii, p. 282, note 239, and p. 271, note 226, respectively.—Ed.

The “Cathedral of St. Luke” is a noble structure of 166 stone.117 It was consecrated with great pomp in the autumn of #34, having occupied three years in its erection. The site is unfavourable, but it possessed an interest for many of the old citizens which no other spot could claim. Here had stood their ancient sanctuary, with which was associated the holy feelings of their earliest days; here had been the baptismal font and the marriage altar; while beneath reposed the sacred remains of many a being, loved and honoured, but passed away. The former church was a rude structure of logs. The dimensions of the present building are a length of about one hundred and forty feet, to a breadth of eighty and an altitude of forty, with a tower of upward of an hundred feet, surmounted by a lofty cross. The steeple contains a peal of six bells, the three larger of which were cast in Normandy, and chime very pleasantly; upon the four sides of the tower are the dial-plates of a clock, which strikes the hours upon [139] the bells. The porch of the edifice consists of four large columns of polished freestone, of the Doric order, with corresponding entablature, cornice, pediment, and frieze, the whole surface of the latter being occupied with the inscription “ *In honorem S. Ludovici. Deo Uni et Trino, Dicatum, A. D. MDCCCXXXIV* ,” the letters elevated in *basso-relievo.* Over the entrances, which are three in number, are inscribed, in French and in English, passages from Scripture, upon tablets of Italian marble. The porch is protected from the street by battlements, surmounted by an iron railing, and adorned by lofty candelabra of stone. The body of the building is divided

117 Within six years after the founding of St. Louis, the first Catholic church was built. This log structure falling into ruins, was replaced in 1818 by a brick building. The corner-stone of the St. Louis cathedral (incorrectly written in Flagg as cathedral of St. Luke) was laid August 1, 1831, and consecrated October 26, 1834.— Ed.

167 by two colonnades, of five pillars each, into three aisles. The columns, composed of brick, stuccoed to imitate marble, are of the Doric order, supporting a cornice and entablature, decorated with arabesques and medallions; and upon them reposes the arch of the elliptic-formed and panelled ceiling. Between the columns are suspended eight

splendid chandeliers, which, when lighted at night, produce a magnificent effect. The walls are enriched by frescoes and arabesques, and the windows are embellished with transparencies, presenting the principal transactions of the Saviour's mission. This is said to be one of the first attempts at a substitute for the painted glass of the Middle Ages, and was executed, together with the other pictorial decorations of the edifice, by an artist named *Leon* , sent over for the purpose from France. The effect is grand. Even the garish sunbeams are mellowed down as they struggle dimly through the richly-coloured [140] hangings, and the light throughout the sacred pile seems tinged with rainbow hues. In the chancel of the church, at the bottom of the centre aisle, elevated by a flight of steps, and-enclosed by a balustrade of the Corinthian order, is situated the sanctuary. Upon either side stand pilasters to represent marble, decorated with festoons of wheat-ears and vines, symbolical of the eucharist, and surmounted with caps of the Doric order. On the right, between the pilasters, is a gallery for the choir, with the organ in the rear, and on the left side is a veiled gallery for the “Sisters of Charity” connected with the conyent and the other institutions of the church. The altar-piece at the bottom of the sanctuary represents the Saviour upon the cross, with his mother and two of his disciples at his feet; on either side rise two fluted Corinthian columns, with a broken pediment and gilded caps, supporting a gorgeous entablature. Above the whole is an elliptical window, hung with the transparency of a dove, emblematic of the Holy Ghost, shedding 168 abroad rays of light. The high altar and the tabernacle stand below, and the decorations on festal occasions, as well as the vestments of the officiating priests, are splendid and imposing. Over the bishop's seat, in a side arch of the sanctuary, hangs a beautiful painting of St. Louis, titular of the cathedral, presented by the amiable Louis XVI. of France previous to his exile.118 At the bottom of each of the side aisles of the church stand two chapels, at the same elevation with the sanctuary. Between two fluted columns of the Ionic order is suspended, in each chapel, an [141] altarpiece, with a valuable painting above. The piece on the left represents St. Vincent of Gaul engaged in charity on a winter's day, and the picture above is the marriage of the blessed Virgin. The altar-piece of the right represents St. Patrick of Ireland in his pontifical robes, and above is a painting of our Saviour and

the centurion, said to be by Paul Veronese. At the opposite extremity of the building, near the side entrances, are two valuable pieces; one said to be by Rubens, of the Virgin and Child, the other the martyrdom of St. Bartholemew.119 Above rise extensive galleries in three rows; to the right is the baptismal font, and a landscape of the Saviour's immersion in Jordan. Beneath the sanctuary of the church is the lower chapel, divided into three aisles by as many arches, supported by pilasters, which, as well as the walls, are painted to imitate marble. There is here an altar and a marble tabernacle, where mass is performed during the week, and the chapel

118 The painting of St. Louis was presented by Louis XVIII to Bishop Louis Guillaume Valentin Du Bourg, while the latter was in Europe (1815–17).— Ed.

119 For the early appreciation of fine arts in St. Louis, see the chapter entitled “Art and Artists,” written by H. H. Morgan and W. M. Bryant in Scharf, *St. Louis*, ii, pp. 1617–1627. Scharf, in speaking of the paintings in the St. Louis cathedral says, “of course the paintings of the old masters are copies, not originals.”— Ed.

169 is decorated by fourteen paintings, representing different stages of the Saviour's passion.120

120 In this outline of the Cathedral the author is indebted largely to a minute description by the Rev. Mr. Lutz, the officiating priest, published in the Missouri Gazetteer.— Flagg.

In the western suburbs of the city, upon an eminence, stand the buildings of the St. Louis University, handsome structures of brick.121 The institution is conducted by Jesuits, and most of the higher branches of learning are taught. The present site has been offered for sale, and the seminary is to be removed some miles into the interior. Connected [142] with the college is a medical school of recent date. The chapel of the institution is a large, airy room, hung with antique and valuable paintings. Two of these, suspended on each side of the altar, said to be by Rubens, are master-pieces of the art. One of them represents Ignatius Loyola, founder of the order of Jesuits; the other is the full-length picture of the

celebrated Francis Xavier, apostle to the Indies, who died at Goa while engaged in his benevolent labours. In an oratory above hangs a large painting by the same master; a powerful, though unfinished production. All the galleries of the buildings are decorated with paintings, some of which have but little to commend them to notice but their antiquity. The library embraces about twelve hundred volumes, mostly in the French language. The *Universal Geography* of Braviara, a valuable work of eleven folios, brilliantly illuminated, and the *Actæ Sanctorum* , an enormous work of *forty-two* folio

121 In 1823, at the solicitation of the federal government, a band of Jesuit missionaries left Maryland and built a log school-house at Florissant, Missouri (1824) for educating the Indians. See sketch of Father de Smet in preface to this volume. The building was abandoned in 1828 and the white students transferred to the Jesuit college recently constructed at St. Louis. On December 28, 1832, the state legislature passed “an act to incorporate the St. Louis University.” The faculty was organized on April 4, 1833.— Ed.

170 volumes, chiefly attract the visiter's attention.122 The philosophical apparatus attached to the institution is very insufficient. Most of the pupils of the institution are French, and they are gathered from all quarters of the South and West; a great number of them are from Louisiana, sons of the planters.

122 We are informed by Rev. J. C. Burke, S.J., librarian of St. Louis University, that the work referred to by Flagg is, *Atlas Major, sive, Cosmographia Blaviana, qua Solum, Salum, Cælum accuratisrime describuntur* (Amsterdami, Labore et Sumpibus Joannis Blaeu MDCLXXII), in 11 folio volumes.

The *Acta Sanctorum* (Lives of the Saints) were begun at the opening of the seventeenth century by P. Heribert Rosweyde, professor in the Jesuit college of Douai. The work was continued by P. Jean Bolland by instruction from his order, and later by a Jesuit commission known as the Bollandists. Work was suspended at the time of the French invasion of Holland (1796) but resumed in 1836 under the auspices of Leopold I of Belgium. Volume lxvi was issued in 1902.— Ed.

St. Louis.

XIII

“Away! away! and on we dash! Torrents less rapid and less rash.”

Mazeppa.

“Mark yon old mansion frowning through the trees, Whose hollow turret woos the whistling breeze.”

Rogers.

It was a pleasant afternoon when, in company with a number of friends, I left the city for an excursion into its southern suburbs, and a visit to the military works, a few miles distant. The atmosphere had that mild, mellowy mistiness which subdues the fierce glare of the sunbeams, and flings over every object a softened shade. A gentle breeze from the south was astir balmily and blandly among the leaves; in fine, it was one of those grateful, genial seasons, when the senses sympathize with the quietude of external creation, and there is no reason, earthly or unearthly, why the inward man should not sympathize with the man without; 171 a season when you are at peace with yourself, and at peace with every object, animate, inanimate, or vegetable, about you. Our party consisted of eight precious souls, and “all agog to dash through thick and thin,” if essential to a jovial jaunt. And now fain would I enumerate those worthy individuals, together with their several peculiarities and dispositions, good and bad, did not a certain delicacy forbid. [144] Suffice it to say, the excursion was devised in honour, and for the especial benefit, of a young and recently-married couple from “the city of monuments and fountains,” who were enjoying their honey-moon in a trip to the Far West. Passing through the narrow streets and among the ancient edifices of the *old* city, we came to that section called South St. Louis. This is destined to become the district of manufactures; large quantities of bituminous coal, little inferior to that of the Alleghanies, is here found; and railroads to the celebrated Iron

Mountain, sixty miles distant, and to the coal-banks of the Illinois bluffs, as well as to the northern section of the city, are projected. The landing is good, the shore being composed of limestone and marble, of two different species, both of which admit a high degree of polish. There is also quarried in this vicinity a kind of freestone, which, when fresh from the bed, is soft, but, on exposure to the atmosphere, becomes dense and hard. We passed a number of commodious farmhouses as we ambled along; and now and then, at intervals through the trees, was caught a glimpse of the flashing sheen of the river gliding along upon our left. At a short distance from the road were to be seen the ruins of the “Eagle Powder-works,” destroyed by fire in the spring of #36. They had been in operation only three years previous to their explosion, and their daily manufacture was three hundred pounds of superior powder. The report and concussion of the explosion was perceived miles around the country, and the loss sustained by the 172 proprietors was estimated [145] at forty thousand dollars. The site of these works was a broad plain, over which, as our horses were briskly galloping, a circumstance occurred which could boast quite as much of reality as romance.

To my own especial gallantry — gallant man — had been intrusted the precious person of the fair bride, and lightly and gracefully pressed her fairy form upon the back of a bright-eyed, lithe little animal, with a spirit buoyant as her own. The steed upon which I was myself mounted was a powerful creature, with a mouth as unyielding as the steel bit he was constantly champing. The lady prided herself, not without reason, upon her boldness and grace in horsemanship and her skill in the *manège* ; and, as we rode somewhat in advance of our cavalcade, the proposal thoughtlessly dropped from her that we should elope and leave our companions in the lurch. Hardly had the syllables left her lip, than the reins were flung loose upon the horses' manes; they bounded on, and away, away, away the next moment were we skirring over the plain, like the steed of the Muses on a steeple-chase. A single shout of warning to my fair companion was returned by an ejaculation of terror, for her horse had become his own master. The race of John Gilpin or of Alderman Purdy were, either or both of them, mere circumstances to ours. For more than a mile our

excited steeds swept onward in their furious course to the admiration of beholders; and how long the race might have been protracted is impossible to say, had not certain sons of Erin — worthy souls [146] — in the innocence of their hearts and the ignorance of their heads, and by way of perpetrating a notable exploit, thought proper to throw themselves from the roadside directly before us. The suddenness of the movement brought both our animals nearly upon their haunches, and the next minute saw the fair bride quietly seated in the dust beneath their feet. 173 The shock had flung her from her seat, but she arose uninjured. To leap from my saddle and place the lady again in hers was the work of a moment; and when the cortége made its appearance, our runaway steeds were ambling along in a fashion the most discreet and exemplary imaginable.

The situation of the Arsenal, upon a swelling bank of the river, is delightful. It is surrounded by a strong wall of stone, embracing extensive grounds, through which a green, shady avenue leads from the highway. The structures are composed chiefly of unhewn limestone, enclosing a rectangular area, and comprise about a dozen large buildings, while a number of lesser ones are perceived here and there among the groves. The principal structure is one of four stories, looking down upon the Mississippi, with a beautiful esplanade, forming a kind of natural glacis to the whole armory, sweeping away to the water. Upon the right and left, in the same line with the rectangle, are situated the dwellings of the officers; noble edifices of hewn stone, with cultivated garden-plats and fruit-trees. The view of the stream is here delightful, and the breeze came up from its surface fresh and free. A pair of pet deer were frolicking along the shore. Most of the remaining structures are offices and [147] workshops devoted to the manufacture of arms. Of these there were but few in the Arsenal, large quantities having been despatched to the South for the Florida war. It is designed, I am informed, to mount ordnance at these works — to no great extent, probably; there were several pieces of artillery already prepared. The slits and loop-holes in the deep walls, the pyramids of balls and bombshells, and the heavy carronades piled in tiers, give the place rather a warlike aspect for a peaceable inland fortress.

A ride of a few miles brought us to the brow of a considerable 174 elevation, from which we looked down upon the venerable little hamlet of Carondelet, or Vuide Poche, as it is familiarly termed; a *nom de nique* truly indicative of the poverty of pocket and the richness of fancy of its primitive habitans. The village lies in a sleepy-looking hollow, scooped out between the bluffs and the water; and from the summit of the hill the eye glances beyond it over the lengthened vista of the river-reach, at this place miles in extent. Along the shore a deeply-laden steamer was toiling against the current on her passage to the city. Descending the elevation, we were soon thridding the narrow, tortuous, lane-like avenues of the old village. Every object, the very soil even, seemed mossgrown and hoary with time departed. More than seventy years have passed away since its settlement commenced; and now, as then, its inhabitants consist of hunters, and trappers, and river-boatmen, absent most of the year on their various excursions. The rude, crumbling tenements [148] of stone or timber, of peculiar structure, with their whitewashed walls stained by age; the stoccade enclosures of the gardens; the venerable aspect of the ancient fruit-trees, mossed with years, and the unique and singular garb, manner, and appearance of the swarthy villagers, all betoken an earlier era and a peculiar people. The little dark-eyed, dark-haired boys were busy with their games in the streets; and, as we paced leisurely along, we could perceive in the little *cabarets* the older portion of the *habitans* , cosily congregated around the table near the open door or upon the balcony, apparently discussing the gossip of the day and the qualities of sundry potations before them. Ascending the hill in the rear of the village, we entered the rude chapel of stone reared upon its brow: the inhabitants are all Catholics, and to this faith is the edifice consecrated. The altar-piece, with its decorations, was characterized by simplicity and taste. Three ancient paintings, representing 175 scenes in the mission of the Saviour, were suspended from the walls; the brass-plated missal reposed upon the tabernacle; the crucifix rose in the centre of the sanctuary, and candles were planted on either side. Evergreens were neatly festooned around the sanctuary, and every object betrayed a degree of taste. Attached to the church is a small burial-ground, crowded with tenants. The Sisters of Charity have an asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, in a prosperous condition. Our

tarry was but a brief one, as the distrust with which our movements were regarded by the villagers was evident; nor is this [149] suspicion at all to be wondered at when we consider the numberless impostures of which, by immigrants, they have been made the victims.

A few miles through groves of oaks brought us in view of that beautiful spot, Jefferson Barracks. The buildings, constructed of stone, are romantically situated on a bold bluff, the base of which is swept by the Mississippi, and were intended to garrison an entire regiment of cavalry for frontier service. Three sides of the quadrangle of the parade are bounded by the lines of galleried barracks, with fine buildings at the extremities for the residence of the officers; while the fourth opens upon a noble terrace over-looking the river. The commissary's house, the magazines, and extensive stables, lie without the parallelogram, beneath the lofty trees. From the terrace is commanded a fine view of the river, with its alluvial islands, the extensive woodlands upon the opposite side, and the pale cliffs of the bluffs stretching away beyond the bottom. In the rear of the garrison rises a grove of forest-trees, consisting of heavy oaks, with broad-spreading branches, and a green, smooth sward beneath. The surface is beautifully undulating, and the spot presents a specimen of park scenery as perfect as the country can boast. A neat burial-ground is located 176 in this wood, and the number of its white wooden slabs gave melancholy evidence of the ravages of the cholera among that corps of fine fellows which, four years before, garrisoned the Barracks. Many a one has here laid away his bones to rest far from the home of his nativity. There is another cemetery [150] on the southern outskirts of the Barracks, where are the tombs of several officers of the army.

The site of Jefferson Barracks was selected by General Atkinson as the station of a *corps de reserve* , for defence of the Southern, Western, and Northern frontiers. For the purpose of its design, experience has tested its efficiency. The line of frontier, including the advanced post of Council Bluffs on the Missouri,123 describes the arch of a circle, the chord of which passes nearly through this point; and a reserve post here is consequently available for the entire line of frontier. From its central position and its proximity to the mouths of the great rivers leading into the interior, detachments, by means of steam

transports, may be thrown with great rapidity and nearly equal facility into the garrison upon the Upper Mississippi, the Missouri, the Arkansas, Red, or Sabine Rivers. This was tested in the Black Hawk war, and, indeed, in every inroad of the Indian tribes, these troops have first been summoned to the field. When disengaged, the spot furnishes a salubrious position for the reserve of the Western army. By the latest scheme of frontier defence, a garrison of fifteen hundred troops is deemed necessary for this cantonment.

123 For accounts of General Henry Atkinson and of Council Bluffs, see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxii, p. 229, note 152, and p. 275, note 231, respectively.— Ed.

A few miles below the Barracks, along the river-bank, is situated quite a remarkable cave.124 I visited and explored

124 The cave described here is Cliff or Indian Cave, more than two miles below Jefferson Barracks on the Missouri side.— Ed.

177 it one fine afternoon, with a number of friends. With some difficulty, after repeated inquiry, we succeeded in discovering the object of our search, and from a neighbouring farmhouse [151] furnished ourselves with lights and a guide. The latter was a German, who, according to his own account, had been something of a hero in his way and day; he was with Napoleon at Moscow, and was subsequently taken prisoner by Blucher's Prussian Lancers at Waterloo, having been wounded in the knee by a musket-ball. To our edification he detailed a number of his “moving accidents by flood and field.” A few steps from the farmhouse brought us to the mouth of the cavern, situated in the face of a ragged limestone precipice nearly a hundred feet high, and the summit crowned with trees and shrubbery; it forms the abrupt termination to a ravine, which, united to another coming in on the right, continues on to the river, a distance of several hundred yards, through a wood. The entrance to the cave is exceedingly rough and rugged, piled with huge fragments of the cliff which have fallen from above, and it can be approached only with difficulty. It is formed indeed, by the rocky bed of a stream flowing out from the cave's mouth, inducing the belief that to this circumstance the ravine owes its origin.

The entrance is formed by a broad arch about twenty feet in altitude, with twice that breadth between the abutments. As we entered, the damp air of the cavern swept out around us chill and penetrating. An abrupt angle of the wall shut out the daylight, and we advanced by the light of our candles. The floor, and roof, and sides of the cavern became exceedingly irregular as we proceeded, and, after penetrating to the depth of several hundred yards, [152] the floor and ceiling approached each other so nearly that we were forced to pursue our way upon our hands and knees. In some chambers the roof and walls assumed grotesque and singular shapes, caused by the water 178 trickling through the porous limestone. In one apartment was to be seen the exact outline of a human foot of enormous size; in another, that of an inverted boat; while the vault in a third assumed the shape of an immense coffin. The sole proprietors of the cavern seemed the bats, and of these the number was incredible. In some places the reptiles suspended themselves like swarms of bees from the roof and walls; and so compactly one upon the other did they adhere, that scores could have been crushed at a blow. After a ramble of more than an hour within these shadowy realms, during which several false passages upon either side, soon abruptly terminating, were explored, we at length once more emerged to the light and warmth of the sunbeams, thoroughly drenched by the dampness of the atmosphere and the water dripping from the roof.

Ancient Indian tumuli and graves are often found in this neighbourhood. On the *Rivière des Pères* ,125 which is crossed by the road leading to the city, and about seven miles distant, there are a number of graves which, from all appearance, seem not to have been disturbed for centuries. The cemetery is situated on a high bluff looking down upon the stream, and is said to have contained skeletons of a gigantic size. Each grave consisted of a shallow basin, formed by flat stones [153] planted upon their edges; most of them, however, are mossed by age, or have sunk beneath the surface, and their tenants have crumbled to their original dust. Some years since, a Roman coin of a rare species was found upon the banks of the *Rivière des Pères* by an Indian. This may, perhaps, be

classed among the other antiquities of European origin which are frequently found. A number of Roman coins, bearing an early date

125 River des Pères is a small stream rising in the central portion of St. Louis County, flowing southeast, and entering the Mississippi at the southern extremity of South St. Louis, formerly Carondelet.— Ed.

179 of the Christian era, are said to have been discovered in a cave near Nashville, in the State of Tennessee, which at the time excited no little interest among antiquaries: they were doubtless deposited by some of the settlers of the country from Europe. Settlements on the *Rivière des Pères* are said to have been commenced at an early period by the Jesuits, and one of them was drowned near its mouth: from this circumstance it derived its name. In the bed of this stream, about six miles from the city, is a sulphur spring, which is powerfully sudorific; and, when taken in any quantity, throws out an eruption over the whole body. A remarkable cavern is said to be situated on this river, by some considered superior to that below the Barracks. A short distance from *Vuide Poche* are to be seen the remains of a pile of ruins, said to be those of a fort erected by La Salle when, on his second visit, he took possession of the country in the name of the King of France, and in honour of him called it Louisiana.126

126 This is an historical error. La Salle did not build a fort at this place, nor did he here take possession of Louisiana.— Ed.

St. Louis.

180

XIV

“Here I have 'scaped the city's stifling heat, Its horrid sounds and its polluted air; And, where the season's milder fervours beat, And gales, that sweep the forest borders, bear

The song of bird and sound of running stream, Have come a while to wander and to dream.”

Bryant.

“I lingered, by some soft enchantment bound, And gazed, enraptured, on the lovely scene; From the dark summit of an Indian mound I saw the plain outspread in living green; Its fringe of cliffs was in the distance seen, And the dark line of forests sweeping round.” Flint.

There are few things more delightfully refreshing, amid the fierce fervour of midsummer, than to forsake the stifled, polluted atmosphere of the city for the cool breezes of its forest suburbs. A freshened elasticity seems gliding through the languid system, bracing up the prostrated fibres of the frame; the nerves thrill with renewed tensity, and the vital flood courses in fuller gush, and leaps onward with more bounding buoyancy in its fevered channels. Every one has experienced this; and it was under circumstances like these that I found myself one bright day, after a delay at St. Louis which began at length to be intolerably tedious, forsaking the sultry, sun-scorched streets of [155] the city, and crossing the turbid flood for a tour upon the prairies of Illinois. How delightful to a frame just freed from the feverish confinement of a sick-chamber, brief though it had been, was the fresh breeze which came careering over the water, rippling along the polished surface, and gayly riding the miniature waves of its own creation! The finest point from which to view the little “City of the French” is from beneath the enormous sycamores upon the opposite bank of the Mississippi. It is from this spot alone that anything approaching 181 to a cosmorama can be commanded. The city, retreating as it does from the river's brink-its buildings of every diversity of form, material, and structure, promiscuously heaped the one upon the other, and the whole intermingled with the fresh green of forest-trees, may boast of much scenic beauty. The range of white limestone warehouses, circling like a crescent the shore, form the most prominent feature of the foreground, while the forest of shrub-oaks sweeps away in the rear. For some time I gazed upon this imposing view, and then, slowly turning my horse's head, was upon the dusty thoroughfare to Edwardsville.

For the first time I found myself upon the celebrated “American Bottom,” a tract of country which, for fertility and depth of soil, is perhaps unsurpassed in the world. A fine road of baked loam extended along my route. Crossing Cahokia Creek, which cuts its deep bed diagonally through the bottom from the bluffs some six miles distant, and threading a grove of the beautiful *pecan* , with its long trailing boughs and [156] delicate leaves, my path was soon winding gracefully away among those venerable monuments of a race now passed from the earth. The eye is struck at first by the number of these eminences, as well as by their symmetry of form and regularity of outline; and the most familiar resemblance suggested is that of gigantic hay-ricks sprinkled over the uniform surface of the prairie on every side. As you advance, however, into the plain, leaving the range of mounds upon the left, something of arrangement is detected in their relative position; and a design too palpable is betrayed to mistake them for the handiwork of Nature. Upward of one hundred of these mounds, it is stated, may be enumerated within seven miles of St. Louis, their altitude varying from ten to sixty feet, with a circumference at the base of about as many yards. One of these, nearly in the centre of the first collection, is remarked as considerably 182 larger than those around, and from its summit is commanded an extensive view of the scene. The group embraces, perhaps, fifty tumuli, sweeping off from opposite the city to the northeast, in form of a crescent, parallel to the river, and at a distance from it of about one mile: they extend about the same distance, and a belt of forest alone obstructs their view from the city. When this is removed, and the prairie is under cultivation, the scene laid open must be beautiful. The outline of the mounds is ordinarily that of a gracefully-rounded cone of varying declivity, though often the form is oblong, approaching the rectangle or ellipse. In some instances [157] they are perfectly square, with a level area upon the summit sufficient for a dwelling and the necessary purlieus. Most of them are clothed with dense thickets and the coarse grass of the bottom; while here and there stands out an aged oak, rooted in the mould, tossing its green head proudly to the breeze, its rough bark shaggy with moss, and the pensile parasite flaunting from its branches. Some few of the tumuli, however, are quite naked, and present a rounded, beautiful surface from the surrounding plain. At this point, about half a mile from the riverbank, commencing with the

first group of mounds, extends the railroad across the bottom to the bluffs. The expense of this work was considerable. It crosses a lake, into the bed of which piles were forced a depth of ninety feet before a foundation for the tracks sufficiently firm could be obtained. Coal is transported to St. Louis upon this railway direct from the mines; and the beneficial effects to be anticipated from it in other respects are very great. A town called *Pittsburg* has been laid out at the foot of the coal bluffs.127

127 Pittsburg, laid out in 1836, is a hamlet in Cahokia Precinct, St. Clair County. A railroad six miles in length was constructed (1837) between Pittsburg and a point opposite St. Louis.— Ed.

183

Leaving the first collection of tumuli, the road wound away smooth and uniform through the level prairie, with here and there upon the left a slight elevation from its low surface, seeming a continuation of the group behind, or a link of union to those yet before. It was a sweet afternoon; the atmosphere was still and calm, and summer's golden haze was sleeping magnificently on the far-off bluffs. At intervals the soft breath of the “sweet South” [158] came dancing over the tall, glossy herbage, and the manyhued prairie-flowers flashed gayly in the sunlight. There was the *heliotrope* , in all its gaudy but magnificent forms; there the deep cerulean of the fringed *gentiana* , delicate as an iris; there the mellow gorgeousness of the *solidago* , in some spots along the pathway, spreading out itself, as it were, into a perfect “field of the cloth of gold;” and the balmy fragrance of the aromatic wild thyme or the burgamot, scattered in rich profusion over the plain, floated over all. Small coveys of the prairie-fowl, *tetrao pratensis* , a fine species of grouse, the ungainly form of the partridge, or that of the timid little hare, would appear for a moment in the dusty road, and, on my nearer approach, away they hurriedly scudded beneath the friendly covert of the bright-leaved sumach or the thickets of the rosebush. Extensive groves of the wild plum and the crab-apple, bending beneath the profusion of clustering fruitage, succeeded each other for miles along the path as I rode onward; now extending in continuous thickets, and then swelling up like green islets from the surface of the

plain, their cool recesses affording a refreshing shade for the numerous herds. The rude farmhouse, too, with its ruder outbuildings, half buried in the dark luxuriance of its maize-fields, from time to time was seen along the route.

After a delightful drive of half an hour the second group of eminences, known as the "Cantine Mounds," appeared 184 upon the prairie at a distance of three or four miles, the celebrated "Monk Hill," largest monument of the kind yet discovered in North America, heaving up its giant, forest-clothed [159] form in the midst.128 What are the reflections to which this stupendous earth-heap gives birth? What the associations which throng the excited fancy? What a field for conjecture! What a boundless range for the workings of imagination! What eye can view this venerable monument of the past, this mighty landmark in the lapse of ages, this gray chronicler of hoary centuries, and turn away uninterested?

128 This group of Indian mounds, probably the most remarkable in America, is on the American Bottom, along the course of Canteen Creek, which rises in the southern portion of Madison County, Illinois, flows west, and enters Cahokia Creek. Monk, or Cahokia, Mound, about eight miles from St. Louis, is the most important of the group. William McAdams, who made a careful survey of this mound, wrote a good description of it in his *Records of Ancient Races in the Mississippi Valley* (St. Louis, 1887); also E. G. Squier and E. H. Davis, "Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley, comprising the Result of extensive original Surveys and Explorations," in Smithsonian *Contributions*, i.— Ed.

As it is first beheld, surrounded by the lesser heaps, it is mistaken by the traveller for an elevation of natural origin: as he draws nigh, and at length stands at the base, its stupendous magnitude, its lofty summit, towering above his head and throwing its broad shadow far across the meadow; its slopes ploughed with yawning ravines by the torrents of centuries descending to the plain; its surface and declivities perforated by the habitations of burrowing animals, and carpeted with tangled thickets; the vast size of the aged oaks rearing themselves from its soil; and, finally, the farmhouse, with its various

structures, its garden, and orchard, and well rising upon the broad area of the summit, and the carriage pathway winding up from the base, all confirm his impression that no hand but that of the Mightiest could have reared the enormous mass. At that moment, should he be assured that this vast earth-heap was of origin demonstrably 185 artificial, he would smile; but credulity the most sanguine would fail to credit the assertion. But when, with jealous eye, slowly and cautiously, and with measured footsteps, he has circled its base; when he has surveyed its slopes and declivities from every position, and has [160] remarked the peculiar uniformity of its structure and the mathematical exactitude of its outline; when he has ascended to its summit, and looked round upon the piles of a similar character by which it is surrounded; when he has taken into consideration its situation upon a river-bottom of nature decidedly diluvial, and, of consequence, utterly incompatible with the *natural* origin of such elevations; when he has examined the soil of which it is composed, and has discovered it to be uniformly, throughout the entire mass, of the same mellow and friable species as that of the prairie at its base; and when he has listened with scrutiny to the facts which an examination of its depths has thrown to light of its nature and its contents, he is compelled, however reluctantly, yet without a doubt, to declare that the gigantic pile is incontestibly the WORKMANSHIP OF MAN'S HAND. But, with such an admission, what is the crowd of reflections which throng and startle the mind? What a series of unanswerable inquiries succeed! When was this stupendous earth-heap reared up from the plain? By what race of beings was the vast undertaking accomplished? What was its purpose? What changes in its form and magnitude have taken place? What vicissitudes and revolutions have, in the lapse of centuries, rolled like successive waves over the plains at its base? As we reflect, we anxiously look around us for some tradition, some time-stained chronicle, some age-worn record, even the faintest and most unsatisfactory legend, upon which to repose our credulity, and relieve the inquiring solicitude of the mind. But [161] our research is hopeless. The present race of aborigines can 186 tell nothing of these tumuli. To them, as to us, they are veiled in mystery. Ages since, long ere the white-face came, while this fair land was yet the home

of his fathers, the simple Indian stood before this venerable earth-heap, and gazed, and wondered, and turned away.

But there is another reflection which, as we gaze upon these venerable tombs, addresses itself directly to our feelings, and bows them in humbleness. It is, that soon our memory and that of our *own* generation will, like that of other times and other men, have passed away; that when these frail tenements shall have been laid aside to moulder, the remembrance will soon follow them to the land of forgetfulness. Ah, if there be an object in all the wide universe of human desires for which the heart of man yearns with an intensity of craving more agonizing and deathless than for any other, it is that the memory should live after the poor body is dust. It was this eternal principle of our nature which reared the lonely tombs of Egypt amid the sands and barrenness of the desert. For ages untold have the massive and gloomy pyramids looked down upon the floods of the Nile, and generation after generation has passed away; yet their very existence still remains a mystery, and their origin points down our inquiry far beyond the grasp of human ken, into the boiling mists, the “wide involving shades” of centuries past. And yet how fondly did they who, with the toil, and blood, and sweat, and misery of ages, upreared these stupendous piles, anticipate [162] an immortality for their name which, like the effulgence of a golden eternity, should for ever linger around their summits! So was it with the ancient tomb-builders of this New World; so has it been with man in every stage of his existence, from the hour that the giant Babel first reared its dusky walls from the plains of Shinar down to the era of the present generation. And yet how hopeless, desperately, eternally 187 hopeless are such aspirations of the children of men! As nations or as individuals, our memory we can never embalm! A few, indeed, may retain the forlorn relic within the sanctuary of hearts which loved us while with them, and that with a tenderness stronger than death; but, with the great mass of mankind, our absence can be noticed only for a day; and then the ranks close up, and a gravestone tells the passing stranger that we lived and died: a few years — the finger of time has been busy with the inscription, and we are as *if we had never been.* If, then, it must be even so,

“Oh, let keep the soul embalm'd, and pure In living virtue; that, when both must sever, Although corruption may our frame consume, Th' immortal spirit in the skies may bloom.”

St. Clair Co., Illinois.

XV

“Are they here, The dead of other days? And did the dust Of these fair solitudes once stir with life And burn with passion? All is gone; All, save the piles of earth that hold their bones, The platforms where they worship'd unknown gods, The barriers which they builded from the soil To keep the foe at bay.”

The Prairies.

The antiquity of “Monk Mound” is a circumstance which fails not to arrest the attention of every visiter. That centuries have elapsed since this vast pile of earth was heaped up from the plain, no one can doubt: every circumstance, even the most minute and inconsiderable, confirms an idea which the venerable oaks upon its soil conclusively demonstrate. With this premise admitted, consider for a moment the destructive effects of the elements even for a limited period upon the works of our race. Little more 188 than half a century has elapsed since the war of our revolution; but where are the fortifications, and parapets, and military defences then thrown up? The earthy ramparts of Bunker Hill were nearly obliterated long ago by the levelling finger of time, and scarce a vestige now remains to assist in tracing out the line of defence. The same is true with these works all over the country; and even those of the last war — those at Baltimore, for example [164] — are vanishing as fast as the elements can melt them away. Reflect, then, that this vast earth-heap of which I am writing is composed of a soil far more yielding in its nature than they; that its superfices are by no means compact; and then conceive, if you *can* , its stupendous character before it had bided the rains, and snows, and storm-winds of centuries, and before the sweeping floods of the “Father of Waters” had ever circled its

base. Our thoughts are carried back by the reflection to the era of classic fiction, and we almost fancy another war of the Titans against the heavens —

“Conati imponere Pelio Ossam — — atque Ossæ frondosum involvere Olympum,”

if a quotation from the sweet bard of Mantua, upon a topic like the present, may be pardoned. How large an army of labourers, without the use of iron utensils, as we have every reason to suppose was the case, would be required for scraping up from the prairie's surface this huge pile; and how many years would suffice for its completion? No one can doubt that the broad surface of the American Bottom, in its whole length and breadth, together with all the neighbouring region on either bank of the Mississippi, once swarmed with living men and animals, even as does now the depths of its soil with their remains. The collection of mounds which I have been attempting to describe would seem to indicate two extensive cities within the extent of five 189 miles; and other groups of the same character may be seen upon a lower section of the bottom, to say nothing of those within the more immediate vicinity of St. [165] Louis. The design of these mounds, as has been before stated, was various, undoubtedly; many were sepulchres, some fortifications, some watch-towers or videttes, and some of the larger class, among which we would place Monk Hill, were probably devoted to the ceremonies of religion.

The number of the earth-heaps known as the Cantine Mounds is about fifty, small and great. They lie very irregularly along the southern and eastern bank of Cahokia Creek, occupying an area of some miles in circuit. They are of every form and every size, from the mere molehill, perceptible only by a deeper shade in the herbage, to the gigantic Monk Mound, of which I have already said so much. This vast heap stands about one hundred yards from the creek, and the slope which faces it is very precipitous, and clothed with aged timber. The area of the base is about six hundred yards in circumference, and the perpendicular altitude has been estimated at from ninety to upward of a hundred feet. The form is that of a rectangle, lying north and south; and upon the latter extremity, which commands a view down the bottom, is spread out a broad terrace, or rather a steppe to

the main body, about twenty feet lower than the summit, extending the whole length of the side, and is one hundred and fifty feet in breadth. At the left extremity of this terrace winds up the sloping pathway from the prairie to the summit of the mound. Formerly this road sloped up an inclined plane, projecting from the middle of the terrace, ten feet in breadth and twenty in extent, and seemed graded for that purpose at [166] the erection of the mound. This declivity yet remains, but now forms part of a corn-field.

The view from the southern extremity of the mound, which 190 is free from trees and underbrush, is extremely beautiful. Away to the south sweeps off the broad river-bottom, at this place about seven miles in width, its waving surface variegated by all the magnificent hues of the summer Flora of the prairies. At intervals, from the deep herbage is flung back the flashing sheen of a silvery lake to the oblique sunlight; while dense groves of the crab-apple and other indigenous wild fruits are sprinkled about like islets in the verdant sea. To the left, at a distance of three or four miles, stretches away the long line of bluffs, now presenting a surface naked and rounded by groups of mounds, and now wooded to their summits, while a glimpse at times may be caught of the humble farmhouses at their base. On the right meanders the Cantine Creek, which gives the name to the group of mounds, betraying at intervals its bright surface through the belt of forest by which it is margined. In this direction, far away in the blue distance, rising through the mist and forest, may be caught a glimpse of the spires and cupolas of the city, glancing gayly in the rich summer sun. The base of the mound is circled upon every side by lesser elevations of every form and at various distances. Of these, some lie in the heart of the extensive maize-fields, which constitute the farm of the proprietor of the principal mound, presenting a beautiful exhibition of light and shade, shrouded as they are in the dark, twinkling leaves. The most [167] remarkable are two standing directly opposite the southern extremity of the principal one, at a distance of some hundred yards, in close proximity to each other, and which never fail to arrest the eye. There are also several large square mounds covered with forest along the margin of the creek to the right, and groups are caught rising from the declivities of the distant bluffs.

Upon the western side of Monk Mound, at a distance of several yards from the summit, is a well some eighty or 191 ninety feet in depth; the water of which would be agreeable enough were not the presence of sulphur, in some of its modifications, so palpable. This well penetrates the heart of the mound, yet, from its depth, cannot reach lower than the level of the surrounding plain. I learned, upon inquiry, that when this well was excavated, several fragments of pottery, of decayed ears of corn, and other articles, were thrown up from a depth of sixty-five feet; proof incontestible of the artificial structure of the mound. The associations, when drinking the water of this well, united with its peculiar flavour, are not of the most exquisite character, when we reflect that the precious fluid has probably filtrated, part of it, at least, through the contents of a sepulchre. The present proprietor is about making a transfer, I was informed, of the whole tract to a gentleman of St. Louis, who intends establishing here a house of entertainment. If this design is carried into effect, the drive to this place will be the most delightful in the vicinity of the city.

Monk Mound has derived its name and much of [168] its notoriety from the circumstance that, in the early part of the present century, for a number of years, it was the residence of a society of ecclesiastics, of the order *La Trappe* , the most ascetic of all the monastic denominations. The monastery of La Trappe was originally situated in the old province of Perche, in the territory of Orleannois, in France, which now, with a section of Normandy, constitutes the department of Orne. Its site is said to have been the loneliest and most desolate spot that could be selected in the kingdom. The order was founded in 1140 by Rotrou, count of Perche; but having fallen into decay, and its discipline having become much relaxed, it was reformed in 1664, five centuries subsequent, by the Abbé Armand Rance. This celebrated ecclesiastic, history informs us, 192 was in early life a man of fashion and accomplishments; of splendid abilities, distinguished as a classical scholar and translator of Anacreon's Odes. At length, the sudden death of his mistress Montbazon, to whom he was extremely attached, so affected him that he forsook at once his libertine life, banished himself from society, and introduced into the monastery of La Trappe an austerity of discipline hitherto unknown.129 The vows were chastity, poverty, obedience,

and perpetual silence. The couch was a slab of stone, the diet water and bread once in twenty-four hours, and each member removed a spadeful of earth every day from the spot of his intended grave. The following passage relative to this monastery I find quoted from an old French author; and as the [169] language and sentiments are forcible, I need hardly apologize for introducing it entire.

129 The monastery of La Trappe was founded in 1122 (sometimes incorrectly given as 1140). Originally affiliated with the order of Fontrevault, it was made a branch of the Cistercian order (1148). Contrary to Flagg's account, La Trappe did not have a separate existence until the time of Rançe, who was made abbot in 1664. The account of Rançe's conversion given here by Flagg, is recognized by historians as merely popular tradition. See Gaillardin, *Les Trappistes* (Paris, 1844), and Pfaunenschmidt, *Geschichte der Trappisten* (Paderborn, 1873).— Ed.

“C'est la que se retirent, ceux qui ont commis quelque crime secret, dont les remords les poursuivent; ceux qui sont tourmentes de vapeurs mélancoliques et religieuse; ceux qui ont oublie que Dieu est le plus miséricordieux des pères, et qui ne voient en lui, que le plus cruel des tyrans; ceux qui reduisent à vieu, les souffrances, la mort et la passion de Jesu Crist, et qui ne voient la religion que du cote effrayent et terrible: c'est la que sont pratique des austerite qui abregent la vie, et sont injure à la divinité.”

During the era of the Reign of Terror in France, the monks of La Trappe, as well as all the other orders of priesthood, were dispersed over Europe. They increased greatly, however, notwithstanding persecution, and societies 193 established themselves in England and Germany. From the latter country emigrated the society which planted themselves upon the American Bottom. They first settled in the State of Kentucky; subsequently they established themselves at the little French hamlet of Florisant, and in 1809 they crossed the Mississippi, and, strangely enough, selected for their residence the spot I have been describing.130 Here they made a purchase of about four hundred acres, and petitioned Congress for a pre-emption right to some thousands adjoining. The buildings which they

occupied were never of a very durable character, but consisted of about half a dozen large structures of logs, on the summit of the mound about fifty yards to the right [170] of the largest. This is twenty feet in height, and upward of a hundred and fifty feet square; a well dug by the Trappists is yet to be seen, though the whole mound is now buried in thickets. Their outbuildings, stables, granaries, &c., which were numerous, lay scattered about on the plain below. Subsequently they erected an extensive structure upon the terrace of the principal mound, and cultivated its soil for a kitchen-garden, while the area of the summit was sown with wheat. Their territory under cultivation consisted of about one hundred acres, divided into three fields, and embracing several of the mounds.

130 The Trappists went to Gethsemane, Nelson County, Kentucky, in 1805. Three or four years later they moved to Missouri, but almost immediately recrossed the Mississippi and built the temporary monastery of Notre Dame de Bon Secours on Cahokia Mound, given to them by Major Nicholas Jarrot. For a description of this establishment by an eye witness, see H. M. Brackenridge, *Views of Louisiana* (Pittsburg, 1814), appendix 5. New Melleray, a Trappist monastery twelve miles southwest of Dubuque, Iowa, was commenced in 1849 and completed in 1975. For its history, together with a short account of the Trappists' activity, see William Rufus Perkins, *History of the Trappist Abbey of New Melleray* (Iowa City, 1892).— Ed.

The society of the Trappists consisted of about eighty monks, chiefly Germans and French, with a few of our own 194 countrymen, under governance of one of their number called Father Urbain.131 Had they remained, they anticipated an accession to their number of about two hundred monks from Europe. Their discipline was equally severe with that of the order in ancient times. Their diet was confined to vegetables, and of these they partook sparingly but once in twenty-four hours: the stern vow of perpetual silence was upon them; no female was permitted to violate their retreat, and they dug their own graves. Their location, however, they found by no means favourable to health, notwithstanding the severe simplicity of their habits. During the summer months fevers prevailed among them to an alarming extent; few escaped, and many died. Among the latter was Louis Antoine

Langlois, a native of Quebec, more familiarly known as François [171] Marie Bernard, the name he assumed upon entering the monastery. He often officiated in the former Catholic church of St. Louis, and is still remembered by the older French inhabitants with warm emotions, as he was greatly beloved.

131 Father Urbain Guillet is recorded as having officiated several times in the Catholic church at St. Louis.— Ed.

The Trappists are said to have been extremely industrious, and some of them skilful workmen at various arts, particularly that of watchmaking; insomuch that they far excelled the same craft in the city, and were patronised by all the unruly timepieces in the region. They had also a laboratory of some extent, and a library; but the latter, we are informed, was of no marvellous repute, embracing chiefly the day-dreams of the Middle Ages, and the wondrous doings of the legion of saints, together with a few obsolete works on medicine. Connected with the monastery was a seminary for the instruction of boys; or, rather, it was a sort of asylum for the orphan, the desolate, the friendless, the halt, the blind, the deaf, and the dumb, and also for the aged 195 and destitute of the male sex. They subjected their pupils to the same severe discipline which they imposed upon themselves. They were permitted to use their tongues but two hours a day, and then very *judiciously* : instead of exercising that “unruly member,” they were taught by the good fathers to gesticulate with their fingers at each other in marvellous fashion, and thus to communicate their ideas. As to juvenile sports and the frolics of boyhood, it was a sin to dream of such things. They all received an apprenticeship to some useful trade, however, and were no doubt trained [172] up most innocently and ignorantly in the way they should go. The pupils were chiefly sons of the settlers in the vicinity; but whether they were fashioned by the worthy fathers into good American citizens or the contrary, tradition telleth not. Tradition doth present, however, sundry allegations prejudicial to the honest monks, which we are bold to say is all slander, and unworthy of credence. Some old gossips of the day hesitated not to affirm that the monks were marvellously filthy in their habits; others, that they were prodigiously keen in their bargains; a third class, that

the younger members were not so obdurate towards the gentler part of creation as they *might have been* ; while the whole community round about, *una voce* , chimed in, and solemnly declared that men who neither might, could, would, or should speak, were a little worse than dumb brutes, and ought to be treated accordingly. However this may have been, it is pretty certain, as is usually the case with our dear fellowcreatures where they are permitted to know nothing at all about a particular matter, the good people, in the overflowings of worldly charity, imagined all manner of evil against the poor Trappist, and seemed to think they had a perfect right to violate his property and insult his person whenever they, in their wisdom and kind feeling, thought proper to do so. But this was soon at an end. In 1813 the monks disposed 196 of their personal property, and leaving fever and ague to their persecutors, and the old mounds to their primitive solitude, forsook the country and sailed for France.

[173] Though it is not easy to palliate the unceremonious welcome with which the unfortunate Trappist was favoured at the hand of our people, yet we can readily appreciate the feelings which prompted their ungenerous conduct. How strange, how exceedingly strange must it have seemed to behold these men, in the garb and guise of a distant land, uttering, when their lips broke the silence in which they were locked, the unknown syllables of a foreign tongue; professing an austere, an ancient, and remarkable faith; denying themselves, with the sternest severity, the simplest of Nature's bounties; how strange must it have seemed to behold these men establishing themselves in the depths of this Western wilderness, and, by a fortuitous concurrence of events, planting their altars and hearths upon the very tombs of a race whose fate is veiled in mystery, and practising their austerities at the forsaken temple of a forgotten worship! How strange to behold the devotees of a faith, the most artificial in its ceremonies among men, bowing themselves upon the high places reared up by the hands of those who worshipped the Great Spirit after the simplest form of Nature's adoration! For centuries this singular order of men had figured upon the iron page of history; their legends had shadowed with mystery the bright leaf of poetry and romance, and with them were associated many a wild vision of fancy.

And here they were, mysterious as ever, with cowl, and crucifix, and shaven head, and the hairy “crown of thorns” encircling; ecclesiastics the most severe of all the orders of monarchism. How strange must it all [174] have seemed! and it is hardly to be wondered at, unpopular as such institutions undoubtedly were and ever have been in this blessed land of ours, that a feeling of intolerance, 197 and suspicion, and prejudice should have existed. It is not a maxim of *recent* date in the minds of men, that “whatever is peculiar is false.”

Madison County, Ill.

XVI

“Let none our author rudely blame, Who from the story has thus long digress'd.”

Davenant.

“Nay, tell me not of lordly halls! My minstrels are the trees; The moss and the rock are my tapestried walls, Earth sounds my symphonies.”

Blackwood's *Mag.*

“Sorrow is knowledge; they who know the most Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth; The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life.”

Manfred.

There are few lovelier villages in the Valley of the West than the little town of Edwardsville, in whose quiet inn many of the preceding observations have been sketched.132 It was early one bright morning that I entered Edwardsville, after passing a sleepless night at a neighbouring farmhouse. The situation of the village is a narrow ridge of [1751] land swelling abruptly from the midst of deep and tangled woods. Along this elevation extends the principal street of the place, more than a mile in length, and upon either side runs a

range of neat edifices, most of them shaded by forest-trees in their front yards. The public buildings are a courthouse and jail of brick, neither of them worthy

132 Thomas Kirkpatrick, of South Carolina, made the first settlement on the site of Edwardsville (1805). During the Indian troubles preceding the War of 1812–15, he built a block-house, known as Thomas Kirkpatrick's Fort. When Madison County was organized (1812), Kirkpatrick's farm was chosen as its seat. He made the survey for the town plat in 1816, and named the place in honor of Ninian Edwards. See W. R. Brink and Company, *History of Madison County, Illinois* (Edwardsville, 1882).— Ed.

198 of farther mention, and two plain, towerless churches, imbosomed in a grove somewhat in the suburbs of the village. There is something singularly picturesque in the situation of these churches, and the structures themselves are not devoid of beauty and symmetrical proportion. At this place, also, is located the land-office for the district. On the morning of my arrival at the village, early as was the hour, the place was thronged with disappointed applicants for land; a lean and hungry-looking race, by-the-by, as it has ever been my lot to look upon. Unfortunately, the office had the evening before, from some cause, been closed, and the unhappy speculators were forced to trudge away many a weary mile, through dust and sun, with their heavy specie dollars, to their homes again. I remember once to have been in the city of Bangor, “away down East in theS tate of Maine,” when the public lands on the Penobscot River were first placed in the market. The land mania had for some months been running high, but could hardly be said yet to have reached a crisis. From all quarters of the Union speculators had been hurrying to the place; and day and night, for the week past, the steamers had been disgorging upon the city their ravenous freights. The important [176] day arrived. At an early hour every hotel, and street, and avenue was swarming with strangers; and, mingling with the current of living bodies, which now set steadily onward to the place of sale, I was carried resistlessly on by its force till it ceased. A confused murmur of voices ran through the assembled thousands; and amid the tumult, the ominous words “ *land—lumber—title-deed* ,” and the like, could alone be distinguished. At length, near noon, the clear tones of the auctioneer

were heard rising above the hum of the multitude: all was instantly hushed and still; and gaining an elevated site, before me was spread out a scene worthy a Hogarth's genius and pencil. Such a mass of working, agitated features, glaring with the fierce passion of avarice 199 and the basest propensities of humanity, one seldom is fated to witness. During that public land-sale, indeed, I beheld so much of the selfishness, the petty meanness, the detestable heartlessness of man's nature, that I turned away disgusted, sick at heart for the race of which I was a member. We are reproached as a nation by Europeans for the contemptible vice of avarice; is the censure unjust? Parson Taylor tells us that Satan was the first speculator in land, for on a certain occasion he took Jesus up into an exceedingly high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory thereof, and said to him, “All these things will I give to thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me,” when, in fact, the devil did not own one inch of land to give!

“Think of the devil's brazen phiz, When not an inch of land was his!”

[177] Yet it is to be apprehended that not a few in our midst would not hesitate to barter soul and body, and fall down in worship, were a sufficient number of *acres* spread out before them as the recompense.

Among other objects worthy the traveller's notice in passing through Edwardsville is a press for the manufacture of that well-known, agreeable liquid, *castor oil* : it is situated within the precincts of what is termed, for distinction, the “Upper Village.” The apparatus, by means of which the oil is expressed from the bean and clarified, is extremely simple, consisting merely of the ordinary jack-screw. One bushel of the castor beans— *palma Christi* —yields nearly two gallons of the liquid. The only previous preparation to pressing is to dry the beans in an oven. This establishment133 has been in operation upward of ten years, and has rendered its proprietor, Mr. Adams, a wealthy man.134 He

133 In May, 1838, it was entirely consumed by fire.— Flagg.

134 John Adams later retired from business, and was elected sheriff on the Whig ticket. Flagg's account seems to be considerably overdrawn.— Ed.

200 has a delightful villa, with grounds laid out with taste; and though many years have passed away since he left his native New-England, yet the generosity of his heart and the benevolence of his character tell truly that he has not yet ceased the remembrance of early principles and habits. The village of Edwardsville and its vicinity are said to be remarkably healthy; and the location in the heart of a fertile, well-watered, heavily-timbered section of country, tilled by a race of enterprising yeomanry, gives promise of rapid advancement. The town plat was first laid off in 1815; but the place advanced but little in importance until five years afterward, when a new [178] town was united to the old. About twelve miles southeast from Edwardsville is situated the delightful little hamlet of Collinsville, named from its founder, to which I paid a hasty visit during my ramble on the prairies.135 It was settled many years ago, but till very recently had not assumed the dignity of a town. Its site is the broad, uniform surface of an elevated ridge, ascending gently from the American Bottom, beautifully shaded by forest-trees, and extending into the interior for several miles. It is almost entirely settled by northern emigrants, whose peculiarities are nowhere more strikingly exhibited. Much attention is bestowed upon religion and education; not a grocery exists in the place, nor, by the charter of the town, can one be established for several years. This little village presents a delightful summer-retreat to the citizens of St. Louis, only ten miles distant.

135 Collinsville was platted May 12, 1837. Augustus, Anson, and Michael Collins, three brothers from Litchfield, Connecticut, had settled here a few years earlier and built an ox-mill for grinding and sawing, a distillery, tanning yards, and cooper and blacksmith shops. The town was first named Unionville, and John A. Cook made the first settlement about 1816— Ed.

The sun had not yet risen when I left Edwardsville, after a pleasant visit, and, descending into the Bottom, pursued my route over the plain to Alton. The face of the country, 201 for

a portion of the way, is broken, and covered with forests of noble trees, until the traveller finds himself on the deep sand-plains, stretching away for some miles, and giving support to a stunted, scragged growth of shrub-oaks. The region bears palpable evidence of having been, at no distant period, submerged; and the idea is confirmed by the existence, at the present time, of a lake of considerable extent on the southern border, which, from the character of the surface, a slight addition of water would spread for miles. I shall not [179] soon forget, I think, the day I entered Alton for the second time during my ramble in the West. It was near the noon after an exceedingly sultry morning; and the earth beneath my horse's hoofs was reduced by protracted drought to an impalpable powder to the depth of several inches. The blazing sunbeams, veiled by not a solitary cloud, reflected from the glassy surface of the Mississippi as from the face of an immense steely mirror and again thrown back by the range of beetling bluffs above, seemed converged into an intense burning focus along the scorched-up streets and glowing roofs of the village. I have endured heat, but none more intolerable in the course of my life than that of which I speak.

In the evening, when the sultriness of the day was over, passing through the principal street of the town, I ascended that singular range of bluffs which, commencing at this point, extend along the river, and to which, on a former occasion, I have briefly alluded. The ascent is arduous, but the glorious view from the summit richly repays the visiter for his toil. The withering atmosphere of the depressed, sunburnt village at my feet was delightfully exchanged for the invigorating breezes of the hills, as the fresh evening wind came wandering up from the waters. It was the sunset hour. The golden, slanting beams of departing day were reflected from the undulating bosom of the river, 202 as its bright waters stretched away among the western forests, as if from a sea of molten, gliding silver. On the left, directly at your feet, reposes the village of Alton, overhung by hills, with the gloomy, castellated [180] walls of the Penitentiary lifting up their dusky outline upon its skirts, presenting to the eye a perfect panorama as you look down upon the tortuous streets, the extensive warehouses of stone, and the range of steamers, alive with

bustle, along the landing. Beyond the village extends a deep forest; while a little to the south sweep off the waters of the river, bespangled with green islands, until, gracefully expanding itself, a noble bend withdraws it from the view. It is at this point that the Missouri disgorges its turbid, heavy mass of waters into the clear floods of the Upper Mississippi, hitherto uncheckered by a stain. At the base of the bluffs, upon which you stand, at an elevation of a hundred and fifty feet, rushes with violence along the crags the current of the stream; while beyond, upon the opposite plain, is beheld the log hut of the emigrant couched beneath the enormous sycamores, and sending up its undulating thread of blue, curling smoke through the lofty branches. A lumber steam-mill is also here to be seen. Beyond these objects the eye wanders over an interminable carpet of forest-tops, stretching away till they form a wavy line of dense foliage circling the western horizon. By the aid of a glass, a range of hills, blue in the distance, is perceived outlined against the sky: they are the bluffs skirting the beautiful valley of the Missouri. The heights from which this view is commanded are composed principally of earth heaped upon a massive ledge of limerock, which elevates itself from the very bed of the waters. As the spectator gazes and reflects, he cannot but be amazed that the [181] rains, and snows, and torrents of centuries have not, with all their washings, yet swept these earth-heaps away, though the deep ravines between the mounds, which 203 probably originated their present peculiar form, give proof conclusive that such diluvial action to some extent has long been going on. As is usually found to be the case, the present race of Indians have availed themselves of these elevated summits for the burial-spots of their chiefs. I myself scraped up a few decaying fragments of bones, which lay just beneath the surface.

At sunrise of the morning succeeding my visit to the bluffs I was in the saddle, and clambering up those intolerably steep hills on the road leading to the village of Upper Alton, a few miles distant. The place is well situated upon an elevated prairie; and, to my own taste, is preferable far for private residence to any spot within the precincts of its rival namesake. The society is polished, and a fine-toned morality is said to characterize the inhabitants. The town was originally incorporated many years ago, and was then a place of

more note than it has ever since been; but, owing to intestine broils and conflicting claims to its site, it gradually and steadily dwindled away, until, a dozen years since, it numbered only *seven* families. A suit in chancery has happily settled these difficulties, and the village is now thriving well. A seminary of some note, under jurisdiction of the Baptist persuasion, has within a few years been established here, and now comprises a very respectable body of students.136 It originated in a seminary [182] formerly established

136 Upper Alton, two and a half miles from Alton, was laid out in 1817 by Joseph Meacham, of Vermont, who came to Illinois in 1811; see *History of Madison County*, p. 396.

The origin of Shurtleff College was the “Theological and High School” commonly known as the Rock Spring Seminary, established (1827) by John M. Peck, D. D. The latter was closed in 1831, and opened again the following year at Alton, under the name of Alton Seminary. In March, 1832, the state legislature incorporated the institution as “Alton College of Illinois.” For religious reasons the charter was not accepted until 1835, when the terms of incorporation had been made more favorable. In January, 1836, the charter was amended, changing its title to Shurtleff College, in honor of Benjamin Shurtleff, M. D., who had donated ten thousand dollars to the institution. Although from the first emphasizing religious instruction, a theological department was not organized until 1863. The school is still under Baptist influence.— Ed.

204 at Rock Spring in this state. About five years since a company of gentlemen, seven in number, purchased here a tract of several hundred acres, and erected upon it an academical edifice of brick; subsequently a stone building was erected, and a preparatory school instituted. In the year 1835, funds to a considerable amount were obtained at the East; and a donation of $10,000 from Dr. Benjamin Shurtliff, of Boston, induced the trustees to give to the institution his name. Half of this sum is appropriated to a college building, and the other half is to endow a professorship of belles lettres. The present buildings are situated upon a broad plain, beneath a walnut grove, on the eastern skirt of the village; and the library, apparatus, and professorships are worthy to form the

foundation of a *college* , as is the ultimate design, albeit a Western college and a Northern college are terms quite different in signification. I visited this seminary, however, and was much pleased with its faculty, buildings, and design. All is as it should be. What reflecting mind does not hail with joy these temples of science elevating themselves upon every green hill and broad plain of the West, side by side with the sanctuaries of our holy religion! It is intelligence, *baptized intelligence* , which alone can save this beautiful valley, if indeed it is to be saved from the inroads of arbitrary rule and false religion; which is to hand down to another generation our civil and religious immunities unimpaired. In most of the efforts for the advancement of education in [183] the West, it is gratifying to perceive that this principle has not been overlooked. Nearly all those seminaries of learning which have been established profess for their design the culture of the *moral* powers as well as those of the *intellect.* That *intelligence* is an essential requisite, a prime constituent of civil and religious 205 freedom, all will admit; that it is the *only* requisite, the sole constituent, may be questioned. “Knowledge,” in the celebrated language of Francis Bacon, “is power;” ay! POWER; an engine of tremendous, incalculable energy, but blind in its operations. Applied to the cause of wisdom and virtue, the richest of blessings; to that of infidelity and vice, the greatest of curses. A lever to move the world, its influence cannot be over-estimated; as the bulwark of liberty and human happiness, its effect has been fearfully miscalculated. Were man inclined as fully to good as to evil, then might knowledge become the sovereign panacea of every civil and moral ill; as man by nature unhappily is, “the fruit of the tree” is oftener the stimulant to evil than to good. Unfold the sacred record of the past. Why did not intelligence save Greece? Greece! the land of intellect and of thought; the birthspot of eloquence, philosophy, and song! whose very populace were critics and bards! Greece, in her early day of pastoral ignorance, was free; but from the loftiest pinnacle of intellectual glory she fell; and science, genius, intelligence, all could not save her. The buoyant bark bounded beautifully over the blue-breasted billows; but the helm, the helm of [184] *moral* culture was not there, and her broad-spread pinions hurried her away only to a speedier and more terrible destruction.

Ancient Rome: in the day of her rough simplicity, *she* was free; but from her proudest point of *intellectual* development —the era of Augustus—we date her decline.

France: who will aver that it was popular *ignorance* that rolled over revolutionary France the ocean-wave of blood? When have the French, *as a people* , exhibited a prouder era of mind than that of their sixteenth Louis? The encyclopedists, the most powerful men of the age, concentrated all their vast energies to the diffusion of science among the people. Then, as now, the press groaned in constant parturition; 206 and essays, magazines, tracts, treatises, libraries, were thrown abroad as if by the arm of Omnipotent power. Then, as now, the supremacy of human reason and of human society flitted in “unreal mockery” before the intoxicated fancy; and wildly was anticipated a career of upward and onward advancement during the days of all coming time. France was a nation of philosophers, and the great deep of mind began to heave; the convulsed labouring went on, and, from time to time, it burst out upon the surface. Then came the tornado, and France, refined, intelligent, scientific, etherealized France, was swept, as by Ruin's besom, of every green thing. Her own children planted the dagger in her bosom, and France was a nation of scientific, philosophic parricides! But “France was poisoned [185] by infidelity.” Yes! so she was: but why was not the subtle element neutralized in the cup of *knowledge* in which it was administered? Is not “knowledge omnipotent to preserve; the salt to purify the nations?”

England: view the experiment there. It is a matter of parliamentary record, that within the last twenty years, during the philanthropic efforts of Lord Henry Brougham and his whig coadjutors, crime in England has more than tripled. If knowledge, pure, defecated knowledge, be a conservative principle, why do we witness these appalling results?

What, then, shall be done? Shall the book of knowledge be taken from the hands of the people, and again be locked up in the libraries of the few? Shall the dusky pall of ignorance and superstition again be flung around the world, and a long starless midnight of a thousand years once more come down to brood over mankind? By no means. *Let* the sweet streams of knowledge go forth, copious, free, to enrich and irrigate the garden

of mind; but mingle with them the pure waters of that “fount which 207 flows fast by the oracles of God,” or the effect now will be, as it ever has been, only to intoxicate and madden the human race. There is nothing in cold, dephlegmated intellect to warm up and foster the energies of the moral system of man. Intellect, mere intellect, can never tame the passions or purify the heart.

Upper Alton, Ill.

XVII

“The fourth day roll'd along, and with the night Came storm and darkness in their mingling might. Loud sung the wind above; and doubly loud Shook o'er his turret-cell the thunder-cloud.”

The Corsair.

“These The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful, For which the speech of England has no name— The prairies.”

Bryant.

Whoever will take upon himself the trouble to run his eye over the “Tourist's Pocket Map of Illinois,” will perceive, stretching along the western border of the state, parallel with the river, a broad carriage highway, in a direction nearly north, to a little village called Carlinville; if then he glances to the east, he may trace a narrow pathway striking off at right angles to that section of the state. Well, it is here, upon this pathway, just on the margin of a beautiful prairie, sweeping away towards the town of Hillsborough,137 that I find myself at the close of the day, after a long and fatiguing ride. The afternoon has been one of those dreary, drizzly, disagreeable seasons which relax the nerves and ride like an incubus upon the spirits; and my route has conducted me over a broad-spread, desolate plain; for, lovely as

137 Hillsboro, the seat of Montgomery County, twenty-eight miles from Vandalia, was platted in 1823.— Ed.

208 may appear the prairie when its bright flowerets and its tall grass-tops [187] are nodding in the sunlight, it is a melancholy place when the sky is beclouded and the rain is falling. There is a certain indescribable sensation of loneliness, which steals over the mind of the solitary traveller when he finds himself alone in the heart of these boundless plains, which he cannot away with; and the approach to a forest is hailed with pleasure, as serving to quiet, with the vague idea of *society* , this sense of dreariness and desertion. Especially is this the case when rack and mist are hovering along the border, veiling from the view those picturesque woodland-points and promontories, and those green islandgroves which, when the sky is clear, swell out upon every side into the bosom of the plain. Then all is fresh and joyous to the eye as a vision: change the scene, and the grand, gloomy, misty magnificence of old ocean presents itself on every side. The relief to the picture afforded by the discovery of man's habitation can hardly be described.

It was near nightfall, when, wearied by the fatigue of riding and drenched with mist, I reached the log-cabin of an old pioneer from Virginia, beneath whose lowly roof-tree I am seated at this present writing; and though hardly the most sumptuous edifice of which it has been my lot to be an inmate, yet with no unenviable anticipations am I looking forward to hearty refreshment and to sound slumber upon the couch by my side. There are few objects to be met with in the backwoods of the West more unique and picturesque than the dwelling of the emigrant. After selecting an elevated spot as [188] a site for building, a cabin or a log-house—which is somewhat of an improvement upon the first—is erected in the following manner. A sufficient number of straight trees, of a size convenient for removing, are felled, slightly hewn upon the opposite sides, and the extremities notched or mortised with the axe. 209 They are then piled upon each other so that the extremities lock together; and a single or double edifice is constructed, agreeable to the taste or ability of the builder. Ordinarily the cabin consists of two quadrangular apartments, separated by a broad area between, connected by a common floor, and covered by a common roof,

presenting a parallelogram triple the length of its width. The better of these apartments is usually appropriated to the entertainment of the casual guest, and is furnished with several beds and some articles of rude furniture to correspond. The open area constitutes the ordinary sitting and eating apartment of the family in fine weather; and, from its coolness, affords a delightful retreat. The intervals between the logs are stuffed with fragments of wood or stone, and plastered with mud or mortar, and the chimney is constructed much in the same manner. The roof is covered with thin clapboards of oak or ash, and, in lieu of nails, transverse pieces of timber retain them in their places. Thousands of cabins are thus constructed, without a particle of iron or even a common plank. The rough clapboards give to the roof almost the shaggy aspect of thatch at a little distance, but they render it impermeable to even the heaviest and [189] most protracted rain-storms. A rude gallery often extends along one or both sides of the building, adding much to its coolness in summer and to its warmth in winter by the protection afforded from sun and snow. The floor is constructed of short, thick planks, technically termed “puncheons,” which are confined by wooden pins; and, though hardly smooth enough for a ballroom, yet well answer every purpose for a dwelling, and effectually resist moisture and cold. The apertures are usually cut with a view to free ventilation, and the chimneys stand at the extremities, outside the walls of the cabin. A few pounds of nails, a few boxes of glass, a few hundred feet of lumber, and a few days' assistance 210 of a house-carpenter, would, of course, contribute not a little to the comfort of the *shieling* ; but neither of these are indispensable. In rear of the premises rise the outbuildings; stables, corn-crib, meat-house, &c., all of them quite as perfect in structure as the dwelling itself, and quite as comfortable for residence. If to all this we add a well, walled up with a section of a hollow cotton-wood, a cellar or cave in the earth for a pantry, a zigzag rail fence enclosing the whole clearing, a dozen acres of Indian corn bristling up beyond, a small garden and orchard, and a host of swine, cattle, poultry, and naked children about the door, and the *tout ensemble* of a backwoods farmhouse is complete. Minor circumstances vary, of course, with the peculiarities of the country and the origin of the settlers; but the principal features of the picture everywhere prevail. The present mode of cultivation [190] sweeps

off vast quantities of timber; but it must soon be superseded. Houses of brick and stone will take the place of log-cabins; hedge-rows will supply that of rail enclosures, while coal for fuel will be a substitute for wood.

At Upper Alton my visit was not a protracted one. In a few hours, having gathered up my *fixens* and mounted my *creetur* , I was threading a narrow pathway through the forest. The trees, most of them lofty elms, in many places for miles locked together their giant branches over the road, forming a delightful screen from the sunbeams; but it was found by no means the easiest imaginable task, after once entering upon the direct route, to continue upon it. This is a peculiarity of Western roads. The commencement may be uniform enough, but the traveller soon finds his path diverging all at once in several different directions, like the radii of a circle, with no assignable cause therefor, and not the slightest reason presenting itself why he should select one of them in preference to 211 half a dozen others, equally good or bad. And the sequel often shows him that there in reality existed no more cause of preference than was apparent; for, after a few tortuosities through the forest, for variety's sake, the paths all terminate in the same route. The obstacle of a tree, a stump, a decaying log, or a sand-bank often splits the path as if it were a flowing stream; and then the traveller takes upon him to exercise the reserved right of radiating to any point of the compass he [191] may think proper, provided always that he succeeds in clearing the obstruction.

Passing many log-cabins, such as I have described, with their extensive maize-fields, the rude dwelling of a sturdy old emigrant from the far East sheltered me during the heat of noon; and having luxuriated upon an excellent dinner, prepared and served up in right New-England fashion, I again betook myself to my solitary route. But I little anticipated to have met, in the distant prairies of Illinois, the habitation of one who had passed his life in my own native state, almost in my own native village. Yet I know not why the occurrence should be a cause of surprise. Such emigrations are of constant occurrence. The farmer had been a resident eight years in the West; his farm was under that high cultivation characteristic of the Northern emigrant, and peace and plenty seemed smiling around. Yet

was the emigrant satisfied? So far from it, he acknowledged himself a disappointed man, and sighed for his native northern home, with its bleak winds and barren hillsides.

The region through which, for most of the day, I journeyed was that, of very extensive application in the West, styled “Barrens,” by no means implying unproductiveness of soil, but a species of surface of heterogeneous character, uniting prairie with *timber* or forest, and usually a description of land as fertile, healthy, and well-watered as may be 212 found. The misnomer is said to have derived its origin from the early settlers of that section of Kentucky south of Green River, which, presenting [192] only a scanty, dwarfish growth of timber, was deemed of necessity *barren* , in the true acceptation of the term.138 This soil there and elsewhere is now considered better adapted to every variety of produce and the vicissitudes of climate than even the deep mould of the prairies and river-bottoms. The rapidity with which a young forest springs forward, when the annual fires have once been stopped in this species of land, is said to be astonishing; and the first appearance of timber upon the prairies gives it the character, to some extent, of barrens. Beneath the trees is spread out a mossy turf, free from thickets, but variegated by the gaudy petals of the heliotrope, and the bright crimson buds of the dwarf-sumach in the hollows. Indeed, some of the most lovely scenery of the West is beheld in the landscapes of these barrens or “oak openings,” as they are more appropriately styled. For miles the traveller wanders on, through a magnificence of park scenery on every side, with all the diversity of the slope, and swell, and meadow of human taste and skill. Interminable avenues stretch away farther than the eye can reach, while at intervals through the foliage flashes out the unruffled surface of a pellucid lake. There are many of these circular lakes or “sinkholes,” as they are termed in Western dialect, which, as they possess no inlet, seem supplied by subterraneous springs or from the clouds. The

138 In his description of the barrens, Flagg follows quite closely J. M. Peck, *Gazetteer of Illinois* (Jacksonville, 1837), pp. 11, 12. The term barrens, according to the_ *Century Dictionary*, is “a tract or region of more or less unproductive land partly or entirely treeless. The term is best known in the United States as the name of a district in Kentucky, ‘The

Barrens,' underlaid by the subcarboniferous limestone, but possessing a fertile soil, which was nearly or quite treeless when that state began to be settled by the whites, but which at present where not cultivated, is partly covered with trees." See a good description in our volume iii, pp. 217–224. — Ed.

213 outline is that of an inverted cone, as if formed by the action of whirling waters; and, as sinkholes exist in great numbers in the vicinity of the rivers, and possess an outlet [193] at the bottom through a substratum of porous limestone, the idea is abundantly confirmed. In the State of Missouri these peculiar springs are also observed. Some of them in Greene county burst forth from the earth and the fissures of the rocks with sufficient force to whirl a *run* of heavy buhrstones, and the power of the fountains seems unaffected by the vicissitudes of rain or drought. These same sinkholes, circular ponds, and gushing springs are said to constitute one of the most remarkable and interesting features of the peninsula of Florida. There, as here, the substratum is porous limestone; and it is the subsidence of the layers which gives birth to the springs. The volume of water thrown up by these boiling fountains is said to be astonishingly great; many large ones, also, are known to exist in the beds of lakes and rivers. From the circumstance of the existence of these numerous springs originated, doubtless, the tradition which Spanish chroniclers aver to have existed a mong the Indians of Porto Rico and Cuba, that somewhere among the Lucayo Islands or in the interior of Florida there existed a fountain whose waters had the property of imparting *rejuvenescence* and perpetuating perennial youth. Only twenty years after the discoveries of Columbus, and more than three centuries since, did the romantic Juan Ponce de Leon, an associate of the Genoese and subsequent governor of Porto Rico, explore the peninsula of Florida in search of this traditionary fountain; of the success of the enterprise we have no account. Among the other poetic founts of the "Land of [194] Flowers," we are *told* of one situated but a few miles from Fort Gaines, called "Sappho's Fount," 139 from the idea which prevails that its

139 According to the War Department's *List of Military Forts, etc., established in the United States from its Earliest settlement to the present time* (Washington, 1902), a Fort Gaines

was at one time located at Gainesville, Alachua County, Florida. The town is now the seat of East Florida Seminary, a military school. Among the numerous lakes in the vicinity, Alachua, the largest, occupies what was formerly Payne's Prairie. Through this prairie a stream issuing from Newman's Lake flowed to a point near the middle of the district, where it suddenly fell into an unfathomed abyss named by the Indians Alachua (the bottomless pit). The whites gave this name to the county, and called the abyss “Big Sink.” This place became a favorite pleasure resort until 1875, when the sink refused longer to receive the water, and Payne's Prairie, formerly a rich grazing land, was turned into a lake. Numerous tales connected with Big Sink were circulated, and it seems probable that Flagg is referring to this locality.— Ed.

214 waters impart the power of producing sweet sounds to the voices of those who partake of them.

It was near evening, when, emerging from the shades of the *barrens* , which, like everything else, however beautiful, had, by continuous succession, begun to become somewhat monotonous, my path issued rather unexpectedly upon the margin of a wide, undulating prairie. I was struck, as is every traveller at first view of these vast plains, with the grandeur, and novelty, and loveliness of the scene before me. For some moments I remained stationary, looking out upon the boundless landscape before me. The tall grasstops waving in the billowy beauty in the breeze; the narrow pathway winding off like a serpent over the rolling surface, disappearing and reappearing till lost in the luxuriant herbage; the shadowy, cloud-like aspect of the far-off trees, looming up, here and there, in isolated masses along the horizon, like the pyramidal canvass of ships at sea; the deep-green groves besprinkled among the vegetation, like islets in the waters; the crimson-died prairie-flower flashing in the sun—these features of inanimate nature seemed strangely beautiful to one born and bred amid the bold mountain scenery of the North, and who now gazed upon them “for the first.”

“The prairies! I behold them for the first, And my heart swells, while the dilated sight Takes in the encircling vastness.”

215

[195] As I rode leisurely along upon the prairie's edge, I passed many noble farms, with their log-cabins couched in a corner beneath the forest; and, verily, would a farmer of Yankee-land “stare and gasp” to behold the prairie cornfield of the Western emigrant; and yet more would he be amazed to witness the rank, rustling luxuriance of the vegetable itself. Descending a swell of the prairie near one of these farms, a buck with his doe leaped out from a thicket beside my path, and away, away bounded the “happy pair” over the grass-tops, free as the wind. They are often shot upon the prairies, I was informed by an old hunter, at whose cabin, in the middle of the plain, I drew up at twilight, and with whom I passed the night. He was a pioneer from *the dark and bloody ground* , and many a time had followed the wild buck through those aged forests, where Boone, and Whitley, and Kenton once roved.140 Only fifty years ago,

140 For a sketch of Daniel Boone, see Bradbury's *Travels*, in our volume v, p. 43, note 16; and for a more complete account consult Thwaites, *Daniel Boone* (New York, 1902).

Simon Kenton (1755–1836) having, as he supposed, killed a neighbor in a fight, fled from his home in Virginia to the headwaters of the Ohio River. He served as a scout in Dunmore's War (1774) and in 1775 with Boone, explored the interior of Kentucky. Captured by the Indians (1778), he was condemned to death and taken to the native village at Lower Sandusky, whence he made his escape. Later he served with distinction in campaigns under George Rogers Clark, and was second only to Daniel Boone as a frontier hero. In 1784, Kenton founded a settlement near Limestone (Maysville), Kentucky. He took part in Wayne's Campaign (1793–94), and was present at the Battle of the Thames (1813). In 1820 he moved to Logan County, Ohio, and sixteen years later died there in poverty, although before going to Ohio in 1802 he was reputed as one of the wealthiest men in Kentucky. See R. W. McFarland, “Simon Kenton,” in Ohio State

Archæological and Historical Society Publications (1904), xiii, pp. 11–39; also Edward S. Ellis, *Life and Times of Col. Daniel Boone with sketches of Simon Kenton, Lewis Wetzel, and other Leaders in the Settlement of the West* (Philadelphia, 1884).

Colonel William Whitley (1749–1813), born in Virginia, set out for Kentucky about 1775, and built in 1786 or 1787 one of the first brick houses in the state, near Crab Orchard, in Lincoln County. A noted Indian fighter, he participated in the siege of Logan's fort (1777), and Clark's campaigns of 1786. He also led several parties to recover white captives—his best known feat of this character being the rescue of Mrs. Samuel McClure (1784). In 1794 he was the active leader of the successful Nickajack expedition, directed against the Indians south of Tennessee River. He fell at the Battle of the Thames (1813), whereat it was maintained by some of his admirers, he killed the Indian chief Tecumseh. See Collins, *Kentucky*, ii, pp. 403–410; but this doubtful honor was also claimed by others.— Ed.

216 and for the first time were the beautiful fields of Kentucky turned up by the ploughshare of the Virginia emigrant; yet their very descendants of the first generation we behold plunging deeper into the wilderness West. How would the worthy old Governor Spotswood stand astounded, could he now rear his venerable bones from their long resting-place, and look forth upon this lovely land, far away beyond the Blue Ridge of the Alleghany hills, the very passage of which he had deemed not unworthy “the horseshoe of gold” and “the order tramontane.” “ *Sic juvat transcendere montes.* ” Twenty years before Daniel Boone, “backwoodsman of Kentucky,” was [196] born, Alexander Spotswood, governor of Virginia, undertook, with great preparation, a passage of the Alleghany ridge. For this expedition were provided a large number of horseshoes, an article not common in some sections of the “Old Dominion;” and from this circumstance, upon their return, though without a glimpse of the Western Valley, was instituted the “ *Tramontane Order* , or *Knights of the Golden Horseshoe* ,” with the motto above. The badge of distinction for having made a passage of the Blue Ridge was a golden horseshoe worn upon the breast. Could the young man of that day have protracted the limits of life but a few years beyond his threescore and ten, what astonishment would not have filled him to behold *now* , as

“the broad, the bright, the glorious West,” the region *then* regarded as the unknown and howling *wilderness beyond the mountains!* Yet even thus it is.141

141 Alexander Spotswood (1676–1740) was appointed governor of Virginia (1710). Taking a lively interest in the welfare of the colonists, he attained among them high popularity. Quite early, he conceived the idea of extending the Virginia settlement beyond the mountains, to intercept the French communications between Canada and the Gulf of Mexico; but he failed to secure the aid either of his province or of the mother country. In the summer of 1716 he organized and led an expedition for exploring the Appalachian Mountains, named two peaks George and Spots-wood, and took possession of the Valley of Virginia in the name of George I. On his return, he established the order of “Tramontane,” for carrying on further explorations, whose members were called “Knights of the Golden Horseshoe,” for the reason which Flagg gives. For a contemporary account of this expedition, see “Journal of John Fontaine” in Anna Maury, *Memoirs of a Huguenot Family* (New York, 1853). Spotswood was displaced as governor in 1722, but was later (1730) appointed deputy postmaster of the colonies.— Ed.

217

A long ride over a dusty road, beneath a sultry sun, made me not unwilling to retire to an early rest. But in a few hours my slumbers were broken in upon by the glare of lightning and the crash of thunder. For nearly five weeks had the prairies been refreshed by not a solitary shower; and the withered crops and the parched soil, baked to the consistency of stone or ground up to powder, betrayed alarming evidence of the consequence. Day had succeeded day. The scorching sun had gone up in the firmament, blazed from his meridian throne, and in lurid sultriness descended to his rest. The subtle fluid had been gathering and concentrating in the skies; and, early on the night of [197] which I speak, an inky cloud had been perceived rolling slowly up from the western horizon, until the whole heavens were enveloped in blackness. Then the tempest burst forth. Peal upon peal the hoarse thunder came booming over the prairies; and the red lightning would glare, and stream, and almost hiss along the midnight sky, like Ossian's storm-spirit riding on the

blast. At length there was a hush of elements, and all was still—“still as the spirit's silence; ” then came one prolonged, deafening, terrible crash and rattle, as if the concave of the firmament had been rent asunder, and the splintered fragments, hurled abroad, were flying through the boundlessness of space; the next moment, and the torrents came weltering through the darkness. I have witnessed thunder-storms on the deep, 218 and many a one among the cliffs of my native hills; but a midnight thunder-gust upon the broad prairie-plains of the West is more terrible than they. A more sublimely magnificent spectacle have I never beheld than that, when one of these broad-sheeted masses of purple light would blaze along the black bosom of the cloud, quiver for an instant over the prairie miles in extent, flinging around the scene a garment of flame, and then go out in darkness.

“Oh night, And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong, Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light Of a dark eye in woman!”

“Most glorious night! Thou wert not sent for slumber! let me be A sharer in thy fierce and far delight, A portion of the tempest and of thee!”

[198] And a sharer in the tempest surely was “a certain weary pilgrim, in an upper chamber” of a certain log-cabin of the prairie. Unhappily for his repose or quiet, had he desired either, the worthy host, in laudable zeal for a window when erecting his hut, had thought proper to neglect or to forget one of the indispensables for such a convenience in shape of sundry panes of glass. Wherefore, as is easy to perceive, said aperture commanding the right flank of the pilgrim's dormitory, the warring elements without found abundant entrance for a by-skirmish within. Sad to relate, the pilgrim was routed, “horse, foot, and dragoons;” whereupon, agreeable to Falstaff's *discretionary* views of valour, seizing upon personal effects, he beat a retreat to more hospitable realms.

Greene County, Ill.

219

XVIII

“What earthly feeling unabash'd can dwell In Nature's mighty presence? mid the swell Of everlasting hills, the roar of floods, And frown of rocks and pomp of waving woods? These their own grandeur on the soul impress, And bid each passion feel its nothingness.”

Hiemans.

La grace est toujours unie à la magnificence, dans les scenes de la nature.”—Chateaubriand 'S “ *Atala.* ”

It was morning. The storm had passed away, and the early sunlight was streaming gloriously over the fresh landscape. The atmosphere, discharged of its electric burden, was playing cool and free among the grass-tops; the lark was carolling in the clouds above its grassy nest; the deer was rising from his sprinkled lair, and the morning mists were rolling heavily in masses along the skirts of the prairie woodlands, as I mounted my horse at the door of the cabin beneath whose roof I had passed the night. Before me at no great distance, upon the edge of the plain, rose an open park of lofty oaks, with a mossy turf beneath; and the whole scene, lighted up by the sunbeams breaking through the ragged mists, presented a most gorgeous spectacle. The entire wilderness of green; every bough, spray, leaf; every blade of grass, wild weed, and floweret, was hung with trembling [200] drops of liquid light, which, reflecting and refracting the sun-rays, threw back all the hues of the iris. It was indeed a morning of beauty after the tempest; and Nature seemed to have arrayed herself in her bridal robes, glittering in all their own matchless jewellery to greet its coming.

Constituted as we all naturally are, there exist, bound up within the secresies of the bosom, certain emotions and sentiments, designed by our Creator to leap forth in joyousness 220 in view of the magnificence of his works; certain springs of exquisite delicacy deep hidden in the chambers of the breast, but which, touched or breathed

upon never so lightly, strike the keys of feeling and fill the heart with harmony. And I envy not the feelings of that man who, amid all “the glories of this visible world,” can stand a passionless beholder; who feels not his pulses thrill with quickened vibration, and his heart to heave in fuller gush as he views the beneficence of his Maker in the magnificence of his works; who from all can turn calmly away, and in the chill, withering accents of Atheism, pronounce it the offspring of blind fatality, the resultant of meaningless chance!

When we look abroad upon the panorama of creation, so palpable is the impress of an omnipotent hand, and so deeply upon all its features is planted the demonstration of design, that it would almost seem, in the absence of reason and revelation, we need but contemplate the scenery of nature to be satisfied of the existence of an all-wise, all-powerful Being, whose workmanship it is. The [201] firmament, with its marshalled and glittering hosts; the earth, spread out in boundlessness at our feet, now draperied in the verdant freshness of springtime, anon in the magnificent glories of summer sultriness, again teeming with the mellow beauty of autumnal harvesting, and then slumbering in the chill, cheerless desolation of winter, all proclaim a Deity eternal in existence, boundless in might. The mountain that rears its bald forehead to the clouds; the booming cataract; the unfathomed, mysterious sounding ocean; the magnificent sweep of the Western prairie; the eternal flow of the Western river, proclaim, in tones extensive as the universe—tones not to be misunderstood, that their Creator lives.

It is a circumstance in the character of the human mind, 221 which not the most careless or casual observer of its operations can fail to have remarked, that the contemplation of all grand and immeasurable objects has a tendency to enlarge and elevate the understanding, lend a loftier tone to the feelings, and, agreeable to the moral constitution of man, carry up his thoughts and his emotions directly to their Author, “from Nature up to Nature's God.” The savage son of the wilderness, as he roams through his grand and gloomy forests, which for centuries have veiled the soil at their base from the sunlight, perceives a solemn awe stealing over him as he listens to the surges of the winds rolling among the heavy branches; and in Nature's simplicity, untaught but by her untutored

promptings, he believes that “the Great Spirit is whispering in [202] the tree tops.” He stands by the side of Niagara. With subdued emotions he gazes upon the majestic world of floods as they hurry on. They reach the barrier! they leap its precipice! they are lost in thunder and in foam! And, as the raging waters disappear in the black abyss; as the bow of the covenant, “like hope upon a deathbed,” flings its irised arch in horrible beauty athwart the hell of elements, the bewildered child of nature feels his soul swell within his bosom; the thought rises solemnly upon him, “the Great Spirit is here;” and with timid solicitude he peers through the forest shades around him for some palpable demonstration of His presence. And such is the effect of all the grand scenes of nature upon the mind of the savage: they lead it up to the “Great Spirit.” Upon this principle is the fact alone to be accounted for, that no race of beings has yet been discovered destitute of *all* idea of a Supreme Intelligence to whom is due homage and obedience. It is *His* voice they hear in the deep hour of midnight, when the red lightning quivers along the bosom of the cloud, and the thunder-peal rattles 222 through the firmament. It is *He* they recognise in the bright orb of day, as he blazes from the eastern horizon; or, “like a monarch on a funeral pile,” sinks to his rest. *He* is beheld in the pale queen of night, as in silvery radiance she walks the firmament, and in the beautiful star of evening as it sinks behind his native hills. In the soft breathing of the “summer wind” and in the terrible sublimity of the autumn tempest; in the gentle dew of heaven and [203] the summer torrent; in the sparkling rivulet and the wide, wild river; in the delicate prairie-flower and the gnarled monarch of the hills; in the glittering minnow and the massive narwhal; in the fairy humbird and the sweeping eagle; in each and in all of the creations of universal nature, the mind of the savage sees, feels, *realizes* the presence of a Deity.

“Earth with her thousand voices praises God!”

is the beautiful sentiment of Coleridge's hymn in the Vale of Chamouni; and its truth will be doubted by no man of refined sensibility or cultivated taste. In viewing the grand scenery of nature, the mind of the savage and the poet alike perceive the features of Deity; on the bright page of creation, in characters enstamped by his own mighty hand, they read his

perfections and his attributes; the vast volume is spread out to every eye; he who will may read and be wise. And yet, delightful and instructive as the study of Nature's creations cannot fail to be, it is a strange thing that, by many, so little regard is betrayed for them. How often do we gaze upon the orb of day, as he goes down the western heavens in glory to his rest; how often do we look away to the far-off star, as it pursues in beauty its lonely pathway, distinct amid the myriads that surround it; how often do we glance abroad upon the splendours of earth, and then, from all this demonstration of Omnipotent goodness turn 223 away with not *one* pulsation of gratitude to the Creator of suns and stars; with not one aspiration of feeling, one acknowledgment of regard to [204] the Lord of the universe? Yet surely, whatever repinings may at times imbitter the unsanctified bosom in view of the moral, the intellectual, or social arrangements of existence, there should arise but one emotion, and that— *praise* in view of *inanimate* nature. Here is naught but power and goodness; now, as at the dawn of Creation's morning, “all is very good.” But these are scenes upon which the eye has turned from earliest infancy; and to this cause alone may we attribute the fact, that though their grandeur may never weary or their glories pall upon the sense, yet our gaze upon them is often that of coldness and indifferent regard. Still their influence upon us, though inappreciable, is sure. If we look abroad upon the race of man, we cannot but admit the conviction that natural scenery, hardly less than climate, government, or religion, lays its impress upon human character. It is where Nature exhibits herself in her loftiest moods that her influence on man is most observable. 'Tis there we find the human mind most chainlessly free, and the attachments of patriotic feeling most tenacious and exalted. To what influence more than to that of the gigantic features of nature around him, amid which he first opened his eyes to the light, and with which from boyhood days he has been conversant, are we to attribute that indomitable hate to oppression, that enthusiastic passion for liberty, and that wild idolatry of country which characterizes the Swiss mountaineer? *He* would be free as the geyer-eagle of his native cliffs, whose eyrie hangs in the clouds, whose eye brightens, in [205] the sunlight, whose wild shriek rises on the tempest, and whose fierce brood is nurtured amid crags untrodden by the footstep of man. To *his* car the sweep 224 of the terrible *lauwine* , the

dash of the mountain cataract, the sullen roar of the mountain forest, is a music for which, in a foreign land, he pines away and dies. And all these scenes have but one language—and that is chainless *independence!*

It is a fact well established, and one to be accounted for upon no principle other than that which we advance, that the dwellers in mountainous regions, and those whose homes are amid the grandeur of nature, are found to be more attached to the spot of their nativity than are other races of men, and that they are ever more forward to defend their ice-clad precipices from the attack of the invader. For centuries have the Swiss inhabited the mountains of the Alps. They inhabit them still, and have never been entirely subdued. But

“The free Switzer yet bestrides *alone* His chainless mountains.”

Of what *other* nation of Europe, if we except the Highlands of Scotland, may anything like the same assertion with truth be made? We are told that the mountains of Caucasus and Himmalaya, in Asia, still retain the race of people which from time immemorial have possessed them. The same accents echo along their “tuneful cliffs” as centuries since were listened to by the patriarchs; while at their base, chance, and change, and conquest, like successive floods, have swept the delta-plains of [206] the Ganges and Euphrates. These are but isolated instances from a multitude of similar character, which might be advanced in support of the position we have assumed. Nor is it strange that peculiarities like these should be witnessed. There must ever be *something* to love, if the emotion is to be permanently called forth; it matters little whether it be in the features of inanimate nature or in those of man; and, alike in both cases, do the boldest and most prominent 225 create the deepest impression. Just so it is with our admiration of character; there must exist bold and distinctive traits, good or bad, to arouse for it unusual regard. A monotony of character or of feeling is as wearisome as a monotony of sound or scenery.

But to return from a digression which has become unconscionably long. After a brisk gallop of a few hours through the delightful scenery of the Barrens, I found myself

approaching the little town of Carlinville. As I drew nigh to the village, I found it absolutely reeling under the excitement of the “Grand Menagerie.” From all points of the compass, men, women, and children, emerging from the forest, came pouring into the place, some upon horses, some in farm-wagons, and troops of others on foot, slipping and sliding along in a fashion most distressing to behold. The soil in this vicinity is a black loam of surpassing fertility; and, when saturated with moisture, it adheres to the sole with most pertinacious tenacity, more like to an amalgam of soot and soap-grease than to any other substance that has ever come under my cognizance. The inn [207] was thronged by neighbouring farmers, some canvassing the relative and individual merits of the *Zebedee* and the *Portimous* ; others sagely dwelling upon the mooted point of peril to be apprehended from the great *sarpent — Boy Contractor* ; while little unwashen wights did run about and dangerously prophecy on the recent disappearance of the big elephant.

Carlinville is a considerable village, situated on the margin of a pleasant prairie, on the north side of Macoupin Creek, and is the seat of justice for the county. The name *Macoupin* is said to be of aboriginal derivation, and by the early French chroniclers was spelled and pronounced *Maqua-pin* , until its present uncomely combination of letters became legalized on the statute-book. The term, we are 226 told by Charlevoix, the French *voyageur* , is the Indian name of an esculent with a broad corolla, found in many of the ponds and creeks of Illinois, especially along the course of the romantic stream bearing its name. The larger roots, eaten raw, were poisonous, and the natives were accustomed to dig ovens in the earth, into which, being walled up with flat stones and heated, was deposited the vegetable. After remaining for forty-eight hours in this situation, the deleterious qualities were found extracted, and the root being dried, was esteemed a luxury by the Indians. The region bordering upon Carlinville is amazingly fertile, and proportionally divided into prairie and timber—a circumstance by no means unworthy of notice. There has been a design of establishing [208] here a Theological Seminary, but the question of its site has been a point easier to discuss than to decide.142 My tarry at the village was a brief one, though I became acquainted with a number of its worthy citizens;

and in the log-office of a young limb of *legality* , obtained, as a special distinction, a glance at a forthcoming “Fourth-of-July” oration, fruitful in those sonorous periods and stereotyped patriotics indispensable on such occasions, and, at all hazard, made and provided for them.

142 Macoupin Creek flows southwesterly through the county of the same name, westerly through Greene County, and empties into Illinois River at the southwestern extremity of the latter county. It is now believed that Macoupin is derived from the Indian word for white potatoes, which were said to have been found growing in abundance along the course of this stream.

Carlinville, named for Thomas Carlin, governor of the state in 1834–42, was settled about 1833.

Gideon Blackburn, a Presbyterian minister, laid a plan in 1835 for founding a college to educate young men for the ministry. He entered land from the government at the price of one dollar and twenty-five cents an acre, and disposed of it to the friends of his cause at two dollars, reserving twenty-five cents for his expenses and turning over the remaining fifty cents to the proposed college. By May, 1837, he had entered over 16,656 acres. The people of Carlinville purchased eighty acres from him for the site of the school. The enterprise lay dormant until 1857, when the state chartered the school under the title of Blackburn University, which was opened in 1859— Ed.

227 As I was leaving the village I was met by multitudes, pouring in from all sections of the surrounding region, literally thronging the ways; mothers on horseback, with young children in their arms; fathers with daughters and wives *en croupe* , and at intervals an individual, in quiet possession of an entire animal, came sliding along in the mud, in fashion marvellously entertaining to witness. A huge cart there likewise was, which excited no small degree of admiration as it rolled on, swarmed with women and children. An aged patriarch, with hoary locks resting upon his shoulders, enacted the part of charioteer to this primitive establishment; and now, in zealous impatience to reach the scene of action,

from which the braying horns came resounding loud and clear through the forest, he was wretchedly belabouring, by means of an endless whip, six unhappy oxen to augment their speed.

I had travelled not many miles when a black cloud spread itself rapidly over the sky, and in a few moments the thunder began to bellow, the lightnings to flash, and the rain to fall in torrents. [209] Luckily enough for me, I found myself in the neighbourhood of man's habitation. Leaping hastily from my steed, and lending him an impetus with my riding whip which carried him safely beneath a hospitable shed which stood thereby, I betook myself, without ceremony or delay, to the mansion house itself, glad enough to find its roof above me as the first big raindrops came splashing to the ground. The little edifice was tenanted by three females and divers flaxen-pated, sun-bleached urchins of all ages and sizes, and, at the moment of my entrance, all in high dudgeon, because, forsooth, they were not to be permitted to drench themselves in the anticipated shower. Like Noah's dove, they were accordingly pulled within the ark, and thereupon thought proper to set up their several and collective *Ebenezers.*

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“Well!” was my exclamation, in true Yankee fashion, as I bowed my head low in entering the humble postern; “we're going to get pretty considerable of a sprinkling, I guess.” “I reckon,” was the sententious response of the most motherly-seeming of the three women, at the same time vociferating to the three larger of the children, “Oh, there, you Bill, Sall, Polly, honeys, get the gentleman a cheer! Walk in, sir; set down and take a seat!” This evolution of “setting down and taking a seat” was at length successfully effected, after sundry manœuvrings by way of planting the three pedestals of the uncouth tripod upon the same plane, and avoiding the fearful yawnings in the *puncheon* floor. When all was at length quiet, I [210] improved the opportunity of gazing about me to explore the curious habitation into which I found myself inserted.

The structure, about twenty feet square, had originally been constructed of rough logs, the interstices stuffed with fragments of wood and stone, and daubed with clay; the chimney was built up of sticks laid crosswise, and plastered with the same material to resist the fire. Such had been the backwoodsman's cabin in its primitive prime; but time and the elements had been busy with the little edifice, and sadly had it suffered. Window or casement was there none, neither was there need thereof; for the hingeless door stood ever open, the clay was disappearing from the intervals between the logs, and the huge fireplace of stone exhibited yawning apertures, abundantly sufficient for all the purposes of light and ventilation to the single apartment of the building. The *puncheon* floor I have alluded to, and it corresponded well with the roof of the cabin, which had never, in its best estate, been designed to resist the peltings of such a pitiless torrent as was now assailing it. The water soon began trickling in little rivulets upon my shoulders, and my only alternative was my umbrella for shelter. The 229 furniture of the apartment consisted of two plank-erections designed for bedsteads, which, with a tall clothes-press, divers rude boxes, and a side-saddle, occupied a better moiety of the area; while a rough table, a shelf against the wall, upon which stood a water-pail, a gourd, and a few broken trenchers, completed the household paraphernalia [211] of this most unique of habitations. A half-consumed flitch of bacon suspended in the chimney, and a huge iron pot upon the fire, from which issued a savoury indication of the seething mess within, completes the “still-life” of the picture. Upon one of the beds reclined one of the females to avoid the rain; a second was alternating her attentions between her infant and her needle; while the third, a buxom young baggage, who, by-the-by, was on a visit to her sister, was busying herself in the culinary occupations of the household, much the chief portion of which consisted in watching the huge dinner-pot aforesaid, with its savoury contents.

After remaining nearly two hours in the cabin, in hopes that the storm would abate, I concluded that, since my umbrella was no sinecure *within* doors, it might as well be put in requisition *without* , and mounted my steed, though the rain was yet falling. I had proceeded but a few miles upon the muddy pathway when my compass informed me

that I had varied from my route, a circumstance by no means uncommon on the Western prairies. During the whole afternoon, therefore, I continued upon my way across a broad pathless prairie, some twelve or eighteen miles in extent, and dreary enough withal, until nightfall, when I rejoiced to find myself the inmate of the comfortable farm-house upon its edge from which my last was dated.

Hillsborough, Ill.

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XIX

“Skies softly beautiful, and blue As Italy's, with stars as bright; Flowers rich as morning's sunrise hue, And gorgeous as the gemm'd midnight. Land of the West! green Forest Land, Thus hath Creation's bounteous hand Upon thine ample bosom flung Charms such as were her gift when the green world was young! ”

Gallagher.

“Go thou to the house of prayer, I to the woodlands will repair.”

Kirk White.

“There is religion in a flower; Its still small voice is as the voice of conscience.”

Bell.

More than three centuries ago, when the romantic Ponce de Leon, with his chivalrous followers, first planted foot upon the southern extremity of the great Western Valley, the discovery of the far-famed “Fountain of Youth” was the wild vision which lured him on. Though disappointed in the object of his enterprise, the adventurous Spaniard was enraptured with the loveliness of a land which even the golden realms of “Old Castile” had never realized; and *Florida* ,143 “the Land of Flowers,” was the poetic name it inspired.

Twenty years, and the bold soldier Ferdinand de Soto, of Cuba, [213] the associate of Pizarro, with a thousand steel-clad warriors at his back, penetrated the valley to the far-distant post of Arkansas, and " *El padre de las aguas* " was the expressive name of the mighty stream he discovered, beneath the eternal flow of whose surges he laid his bones to their rest.144 " *La Belle Rivière* !" was the delighted

143 Others say the peninsula was discovered on Easter-day; *Pasqua florida*, feast of flowers; whence the name.— Flagg.

144 In the year 1538, *Ferdinand de Soto*, with a commission from the Emperor *Charles V.*, sailed with a considerable fleet for America. He was a Portuguese gentleman, and had been with *Pizarro* in the conquest (as it is called) of Peru. His commission constituted him governor of Cuba and general of Florida. Although he sailed from St. Lucar in 1538, he did not land in Florida* until May 1539. With about 1000 men, 213 of whom were provided with horses, he undertook the conquest of Florida and countries adjacent. After cutting their way in various directions through numerous tribes of Indians, traversing nearly 1000 miles of country, losing a great part of their army, their general died upon the banks of the Mississippi, and the survivors were obliged to build vessels in which to descend the river; which, when they had done, they sailed for Mexico. This expedition was five years in coming to nothing, and bringing ruin upon its performers. A populous Indian town at this time stood at or near the mouth of the Mobile, of which Soto's army had possessed themselves. Their intercourse with the Indians was at first friendly, but at length a chief was insulted, which brought on hostilities. A battle was fought, in which, it is said, 2000 Indians were killed and 83 Spaniards." — *Drake's Book of the Indians*, b. iv., c. 3.— Flagg.

Comment by Ed. Consult Edward G. Bourne (Ed.), *Career of Hernando de Soto* (New York, 1904).

* “So called because it was first discovered by the Spaniards on Palm Sunday, or, as the most interpret, Easter-day, which they called *Pasqua-Florida*, and not, as Thenet writeth, for the flourishing verdure thereof.”— *Purchas*, p. 769.

231 exclamation which burst from the lips of the Canadian voyageur, as, with wonder hourly increasing, he glided in his light pirogue between the swelling bluffs, and wound among the thousand isles of the beautiful Ohio. The heroic Norman, Sieur La Salle, when for the first time he beheld the pleasant hunting-grounds of the peaceful Illini, pronounced them a “Terrestrial Paradise.” Daniel Boone, the bold pioneer of the West, fifty years ago, when standing on the last blue line of the Alleghanies, and at the close of a day of weary journeying, he looked down upon the beautiful fields of “Old Kentucke,” now gilded by the evening sun, turned his back for ever upon the green banks of the Yadkin and the soil of his nativity, hailing the glories of a new-found home.145

145 “After a long and fatiguing journey through a mountainous wilderness, in a westward direction, I at last, from the top of an eminence, saw with pleasure the beautiful land of Kentucky. It was in June; and at the close of day the gentle gales retired, and left the place to the disposal of a profound calm. Not a breeze shook the most tremulous leaf. I had gained the summit of a commanding ridge, and, looking round with astonishing delight, beheld the ample plains, the beauteous tracts below. Nature was here a series of wonders and a fund of delight. Here she displayed her ingenuity and industry in a variety of flowers and fruits, beautifully coloured, elegantly shaped, and charmingly flavoured; and I was diverted with innumerable animals presenting themselves continually before my view. The buffaloes were more frequent than I have seen cattle in the settlements, browsing on the leaves of the cane, or cropping the herbage on these extensive plains, fearless because ignorant of man.“—[Narrative of Colonel Daniel Boone, from his first arrival in Kentucky in 1769, to the year 1782. — Flagg.

Comment by Ed. Boone's Narrative was actually written by John Filson, from interviews with the pioneer. The stilted style is of course far from being Boone's product.

“Fair wert thou, in the dreams Of elder time, thou land of glorious flowers, And summer winds, and low-toned silvery streams, Dim with the shadows of thy laurel bowers.”

And thus has it ever been; and even yet the “pilgrim from the North” rejoices with untold joy over the golden beauties of the Valley beyond the Mountains.

[214] It was a fine Sabbath morning when I mounted my steed at the gate of the log farmhouse where I had passed the night, to pursue my journey over the prairie, upon the verge of which it stood. The village of Hillsborough was but a few miles distant, and there I had resolved to observe the sacredness of the day. The showers of the preceding evening had refreshed the atmosphere, which danced over the plain in exhilarating gales, and rustled among the boughs of the green woodlands I was leaving. Before me was spread out a waving, undulating landscape, with herds of cattle sprinkled here and there in isolated masses over the surface; the rabbit and wildfowl were sporting along the pathway, and the bright woodpecker, with his splendid plumage and querulous note, was flitting to and fro among the thickets. Far away along the eastern horizon stretched the dark line of forest. The gorgeous prairie-flower flung out its crimson petals upon the breeze, “blushing like a banner bathed in slaughter,” and methought it snapped more gayly in the morning sunbeams than it was wont; the long grass rustled musically its wavy masses back and forth, and, amid the Sabbath 233 stillness around, methought there were there notes of sweetness not before observed. The whole scene lay calm and quiet, as if Nature, if not man, recognised the Divine injunction *to rest* ; and the idea suggested itself, that a solitary Sabbath on the wild prairie, in silent converse with the Almighty, might not be all unprofitable. [215]

“Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright, The bridal of the earth and sky, Sweet dews shall weep thy fall to-night, For thou must die.”146

146 George Herbert.— Flagg.

From the centre of the prairie the landscape rolled gracefully away towards the eastern timber, studded along its edge with farms. The retrospect from beneath the tall oaks of the prairie over which I had passed was exceedingly fine; the idea strikes the spectator at once, and with much force, that the whole plain was once a sheet of water. Indeed, were we to form our opinion from the *appearance* of many of the prairies of Illinois, the idea would be irresistible, that this peculiar species of surface originated in a submersion of the whole state. There are many circumstances which lead us to the conclusion that these vast meadows once formed the bed of a body of water similar to the Northern lakes; and when the lowest point at the *Grand Tower* 1 on the Mississippi was torn away by some convulsion of nature, a uniform surface of fine rich mud was left. The ravines were ploughed in the soft soil by subsequent floods, and hence, while the elevated lands are fertile, those more depressed are far less so. The soil of the prairies is of a character decidedly alluvial, being composed of compact strata of loam piled upon each other, like that at the bottom of bodies of water long stagnant. The first stratum is a black, pliable mould, from two feet to five in depth; the second a red clay, amalgamated with 234 sand, from [216] five to ten feet in thickness; the third a blue clay, mixed with pebbles, of beautiful appearance, unctuous to the feeling, and, when exposed to the atmosphere, of a fetid smell. Lakes are often found in the prairies abounding in fish, which, when the waters subside, are removed by cartloads. The origin of these vast prairie-plains is, after all, no easy matter to decide; but, whatever the cause, they have doubtless been perpetuated by the autumnal fires which, year after year, from an era which the earliest chronicles of history or tradition have failed to record, have swept their surface; for, as soon as the grass is destroyed by the plough, the winged seeds of the cotton-wood and sycamore take root, and a young growth of timber sprouts forth. The same is true along the margin of creeks and streams, or upon steril or wet prairies, where the vegetation does not become sufficiently heavy or combustible for conflagration to a great extent. These fires originated either in the friction of the sear and tinder-like underbrush, agitated by the high winds, or they were kindled by the Indians for the purpose of dislodging game. The mode of hunting by circular fires is said to have prevailed at the time when Captain Smith first visited

the shores of Chesapeake Bay, where extensive prairies then existed. These plains, by cultivation, have long since disappeared. Mungo Park describes the annual fires upon the plains of Western Africa for a similar purpose and with the same result.147 Tracts of considerable extent in [217] the older settlements of the country, which many years since were meadow, are clothed with forest.

147 Mungo Park, born in Scotland (1771), was engaged by the African Society (1795) to explore the course of the Niger, which he reached July 20, the following year. While on a subsequent tour he was drowned in that river (1805). See his *Travels in the interior district of Africa* (London, 1816).— Ed

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“Coot morning, shur! A pleashant tay, shur! Coome in, shur!” was the hospitable greeting of mine host, or rather of the major domo of the little brick hostelrie of Hillsborough as I drove up to the bar-room entrance. He was a comical-looking, bottle-shaped little personage, with a jolly red nose, all the brighter, doubtless, for certain goodly potations of his own goodly admixtures; with a brief brace of legs, inserted into a pair of inexpressibles *a la Turque* , a world too big, and a white capote a world too little, to complete the Sunday toilet. He could boast, moreover, that amazing lubricity of speech, and that oiliness of tongue wherewith sinful publicans have ever been prone to beguile unwary wayfarers, *taking in travellers* , forsooth! Before I was fully aware of the change in my circumstances, I found myself quietly dispossessed of horse and equipments, and placing my foot across the threshold. The fleshy little Dutchman, though now secure in his capture, proceeded to redouble his assiduities.

“Anything to trink, shur? Plack your poots, shur? shave your face, shur?” and a host of farther interrogatories, which I at length contrived to cut short with, “Show me a chamber, sir!”

The Presbyterian Church, at which I attended worship, is a neat little edifice of brick, in modern style, but not completed. The walls remained unconscious of plaster; the orchestra, a naked scaffolding; the pulpit, a box of rough boards; and, [218] more *picturesque* than all, in lieu of pews, slips, or any such thing, a few coarse slabs of all forms and fashions, supported on remnants of timber and plank, occupied the open area for seats. And marvellously comfortless are such seats, to my certain experience. In the evening I attended the “Luteran Church,” as my major domo styled it, at the special instance of one of its worthy members. This house of worship is designed for a large 236 one—the largest in the state, I was informed—but, like its neighbour, was as yet but commenced. The external walls were quite complete; but the rafters, beams, studs, and braces within presented a mere skeleton, while a few loose boards, which sprang and creaked beneath the foot, were spread over the sleepers as an apology for a floor. There's practical utility for an economist! Because a church is unfinished is no good and sufficient reason why it should remain unoccupied!

As we entered the building, my *cicerone* very unexpectedly favoured me with an introduction to the minister. He was a dark, solemn-looking man, with a huge Bible and psalm-book choicely tucked under his left arm. After sundry glances at my dress and demeanour, and other sundry whisperings in the ear of my companion, the good man drew nigh, and delivered himself of the interrogatory, “Are you a clergyman, sir?” At this sage inquiry, so sagely administered, my rebellious lips struggled with a smile, which, I misdoubt me much, was not unobserved by the dark-looking minister; [219] for, upon my reply in the negative, he turned very unceremoniously away, and betook him to his pulpit. By-the-by, this had by no means been the first time I had been called to answer the same inquiry during my ramble in the West.

On returning to our lodgings after service, we found quite a respectable congregation gathered around the signpost, to whom my pink of major domos was holding forth in no measured terms upon the propriety of “letting off the pig guns” at the dawning of the ever-

memorable morrow,148 “in honour of the tay when our old farders fought like coot fellows; they tid so, py jingoes; and I'll pe out at tree o'glock, py jingoes, I will so,” raphsodied the little Dutchman, warming up under the fervour of his own

148 July 4.— Flagg.

237 eloquence. This subject was still the theme of his rejoicing when he marshalled me to my dormitory and wished me “pleashant treams.”

The first faint streak of crimson along the eastern heavens beheld me mounting at the door of the inn; and by my side was the patriotic domo, bowing, and ducking, and telling over all manner of kind wishes till I had evanished from view. A more precious relic of the true oldfashioned, swaggering, pot-bellied publican is rarely to be met, than that which I encountered in the person of the odd little genius whose peculiarities I have recounted: even the worthy old “Caleb of Ravenswood,” that miracle of major domos, would not [220] have disowned my *Dutchy* for a brother craftsman. The village of Hillsborough is a pleasant, healthy, thriving place; and being intersected by some of the most important state routes, will always remain a thoroughfare. An attempt has been made by one of its citizens to obtain for this place the location of the Theological Seminary now in contemplation in the vicinity rather than at Carlinville, and the offer he has made is a truly munificent one. The site proposed is a beautiful mound, rising on the prairie's edge south of the village, commanding a view for miles in every direction, and is far more eligible than any spot I ever observed in Carlinville.

After crossing a prairie about a dozen miles in width, and taking breakfast with a farmer upon its edge, I continued my journey over the undulating plains until near the middle of the afternoon, when I reached my present stage. The whole region, as I journeyed through it, lay still and quiet: every farmhouse and log-cabin was deserted by its tenants, who had congregated to the nearest villages to celebrate the day; and, verily, not a little did my heart smite me at my own heedless desecration of the political Sabbath of our land.

Vandalia, Ill.

238

XX

“There is a pleasure in the pathless woods, There is a rapture on the lonely shore, There is society where none intrudes—”

Childe Harold.

“The sun in all his broad career Ne'er looked upon a fairer land, Or brighter skies or sweeter scenes.”

Ever since the days of that king of vagabonds, the mighty Nimrod of sacred story, and, for aught to the contrary, as long before, there has existed a certain roving, tameless race of wights, whose chief delight has consisted in wandering up and down upon the face of the earth, with no definite object of pursuit, and with no motive of peregrination save a kind of restless, unsatisfied craving after change; in its results much like the migratory instinct of passagebirds, but, unlike that periodical instinct, incessant in exercise. Now, whether it so be that a tincture of this same vagrant, Bohemian spirit is coursing my veins under the name of “Yankee enterprise,” or whether, in my wanderings through these wild, unsettled regions, I have imbibed a portion thereof, is not for me to decide. Nevertheless, sure it is, not unfrequently are its promptings detected as I journey through this beautiful land.

It is evening now, and, after the fatigues of a pleasant day's ride, I am seated beneath the piazza [222] of a neat farmhouse in the edge of a forest, through which, for the last hour, my path has conducted, and looking out upon a broad landscape of prairie. My landlord, a high-minded, haughty Virginia emigrant, bitterly complains because, forsooth, in the absence of slave-labour, he is forced to cultivate his own farm; and though, by the aid of a Dutchman, he has made a pretty place of it, yet he vows by all he loves 239 to lay his bones within the boundaries of the “Ancient Dominion.” My ride since noon has

been delightful; over broad plains, intersected by deep creeks, with their densely-wooded bottoms. These streams constitute one of the most romantic features of the country. I have crossed very many during my tour, and all exhibit the same characteristics: a broad, deep-cut channel, with precipitous banks loaded with enormous trees, their trunks interwoven and matted with tangled underbrush and gigantic vegetation. As the traveller stands upon the arch of the bridge of logs thrown over these creeks, sometimes with an altitude at the centre of forty feet, he looks down upon a stream flowing in a deep, serpentine bed, and winding away into the dusky shades of the overhanging woods, until a graceful bend withdraws the dark surface of the waters from his view. In the dry months of summer, these creeks and ravines are either completely free of water, or contain but a mere rivulet; and the traveller is amazed at the depth and breadth of a channel so scantily supplied. But at the season of the spring or autumnal rains the scene is changed: a deep, turbid torrent rolls [223] wildly onward through the dark woods, bearing on its surface the trunks of trees and the ruins of bridges swept from its banks; and the stream which, a few weeks before, would scarcely have wet the traveller's sole, is now an obstacle in his route difficult and dangerous to overcome.

Within a few miles of my present quarters an adventure transpired of some slight interest to *myself* , at least, as it afforded me a weary trudge beneath a broiling sun. As I was leisurely pursuing my way through the forest, I had chanced to spy upon the banks of the roadside a cluster of wild flowers of hues unusually brilliant; and, with a spirit worthy of Dr. Bat,149 I at once resolved they should

149 The Prairie.— Flagg.

240 enrich my “ *hortus siccus.* ” Alighting, therefore, and leaving my steed by the roadside, I at length succeeded, after most laudable scramblings for the advancement of science, in gathering up a bouquet of surpassing magnificence. Alas! alas! would it had been less so; for my youthful steed, all unused to such sights and actions, and possessing, moreover, a most sovereign and shameful indifference to the glories of botany, had long, with suspicious and sidelong glances, been eying the vagaries of his truant master; and

now, no sooner did he draw nigh to resume his seat and journey, than the ungracious and ungrateful quadruped flung aloft his head, and away he careered through the green branches, mane streaming and saddle-bags flapping. In vain was the brute addressed in language the most mild and conciliatory that ever insinuated itself into horse's lug; in vain was he ordered, [224] in tones of stem mandate, to cease his shameless and unnatural rebellion, and to surrender himself incontinently and without delay to his liege: entreaty and command, remonstrance and menace, were alike unsuccessful; and away he flew, “with flowing tail and flying mane,” in utter contempt of all former or future vassalage. At one moment he stood the attitude of humbleness and submission, coolly cropping the herbage of the high banks; and then, the instant the proximity of his much-abused master became perilous to his freedom, aloft flew mane and tail, and away, away, the animal was off, until an interval consistent with his new-gained license lay behind him. After an hour of vexatious toiling through dust and sun, a happily-executed manoeuvre once more placed the most undutiful of creatures in my power. And then, be ye sure, that in true Gilpin fashion, “whip and spur did make amends” for all arrears of unavenged misbehaviour.

“Twas for your pleasure that I *walked* , Now you shall RUN for mine,” 241 was the very Christian spirit of retaliation which animated the few succeeding miles.

“But something too much of this.” Some pages back I was entering the capital of Illinois. The town is approached from the north, through a scattered forest, separating it from the prairies; and its unusually large and isolated buildings, few in number as they are, stationed here and there upon the eminences of the broken surface, give the place a singularly novel aspect viewed from the adjacent [225] heights. There is but little of scenic attraction about the place, and, to the traveller's eye, still less of the picturesque. Such huge structures as are here beheld, in a town so inconsiderable in extent, present an unnatural and forced aspect to one who has just emerged from the wild waste of the neighbouring prairies, sprinkled with their humble tenements of logs. The scene is not in keeping; it is not picturesque. Such, at all events, were my “first impressions” on entering the village, and *first* impressions are not necessarily false. As I drew nigh to the huge white

tavern, a host of people were swarming the doors; and, from certain uncouth noises which from time to time went up from the midst thereof, not an inconsiderable portion of the worthy multitude seemed to have succeeded in rendering themselves gloriously tipsy in honour of the glorious day. There was one keen, bilious-looking genius in linsey-woolsey, with a face, in its intoxicated state, like a red-hot tomahawk, whom I regarded with special admiration as high-priest of the bacchanal; and so fierce and high were his objurgations, that the idea with some force suggested itself, whether, in the course of years, he had not screamed his lean and hungry visage to its present hatchet-like proportions. May he forgive if I err. But not yet were my adventures over. Having effected a retreat from the abominations of the bar-room, I had retired to 242 a chamber in the most quiet corner of the mansion, and had seated myself to endite an epistle, when a rap at the door announced the presence of mine host, leading along an old [226] yeoman whom I had noticed among the revellers; and, having given him a ceremonious introduction, withdrew. To what circumstance I was indebted for this unexpected honour, I was puzzling myself to divine, when the old gentleman, after a preface of clearings of the throat and scratchings of the head, gave me briefly to understand, much to my admiration, that I was believed to be neither more nor less than an “Agent for a Western Land Speculating Company of the North,” etc., etc.: and then, in a confidential tone, before a syllable of negation or affirmation could be offered, that he “owned a certain tract of land, so many acres prairie, so many timber, so many cultivated, so many wild,” etc., etc.: the sequel was anticipated by undeceiving the old farmer forthwith, though with no little difficulty. The cause of this mistake I subsequently discovered to be a very slight circumstance. On the tavern register in the bar-room I had entered as my residence my native home at the North, more for the novelty of the idea than for anything else; or because, being a sort of cosmopolitan, I might presume myself at liberty to appropriate any spot I thought proper as that of my departure or destination. As a matter of course, and with laudable desire to augment their sum of useful knowledge, no sooner had the traveller turned from the register than the sagacious host and his compeer brandy-bibbers turned towards it; and being unable to conceive any reasonable excuse for a man to be wandering so far from his home except for lucre's

sake, the conclusion at once and irresistibly followed that [227] the stranger was a land-speculator, or something thereunto akin; and it required not many 243 moments for such a wildfire idea to run through such an inflammable mass of curiosity.

With the situation and appearance of Vandalia I was not, as I have expressed myself, much prepossessed; indeed, I was somewhat disappointed.150 Though not prepared for anything very striking, yet in the capital of a state we always anticipate something, if not superior or equal, at least not inferior to neighbouring towns of less note. Its site is an elevated, undulating tract upon the west bank of the Kaskaskia, and was once heavily timbered, as are now its suburbs. The streets are of liberal breadth—some of them not less than eighty feet from kerb to kerb—enclosing an elevated public square nearly in the centre of the village, which a little expenditure of time and money might render a delightful promenade. The public edifices are very inconsiderable, consisting of an ordinary structure of brick for legislative purposes; a similar building originally erected as a banking establishment, but now occupied by the offices of the state authorities; a Presbyterian Church, with cupola and bell, besides a number of lesser buildings for purposes of worship and education. A handsome structure of stone for a bank is, however, in progress, which, when completed, with other public buildings in contemplation, will add much to the aspect of the place. Here also is a land-office for the district, and the Cumberland Road is permanently located and partially constructed to the [228] place. An historical and antiquarian society has here existed for about ten years, and its published proceedings evince much research and information. “The Illinois Magazine” was the name of an ably-conducted periodical commenced at this town some years since, and prosperously

150 For an account of Vandalia, see Woods's *English Prairie*, in our volume x, p. 326, note 75.— Ed.

244 carried on by Judge Hall, but subsequently removed to Cincinnati.151 Some of the articles published in this magazine, descriptive of the state, were of high merit. It is passing strange that a town like Vandalia, with all the natural and artificial advantages

it possesses; located nearly twenty years ago, by state authority, expressly as the seat of government; situated upon the banks of a fine stream, which small expense would render navigable for steamers, and in the heart of a healthy and fertile region, should have increased and flourished no more than seems to have been the case. Vandalia will continue the seat of government until the year 1840; when, agreeable to the late act of Legislature, it is to be removed to Springfield, where an appropriation of $50,000 has been made for a state-house now in progress.

151 The first number of the *I'llinois Monthly Magazine* was issued in October, 1830. Late in 1832 Hall removed to Cincinnati, when he soon began issuing the *Western Monthly Magazine*, or continuation of the former publication, whose subject matter was largely historical, dealing with the early settlement of the West. For an account of Judge James Hall see *ante*, p. 31, note 2.— Ed.

The growth of Vandalia, though tardy, can perhaps be deemed so only in comparison with the more rapid advancement of neighbouring towns; for a few years after it was laid off it was unsurpassed in improvement by any other. We are told that the first legislators who assembled in session at this place sought their way through the neighbouring prairies as the mariner steers over the trackless ocean, by his knowledge of the cardinal points. [229] Judges and lawyers came pouring in from opposite directions, as wandering tribes assemble to council; and many were the tales of adventure and mishap related at their meeting. Some had been lost in the prairies; some had slept in the woods; some had been almost chilled to death, plunging through creeks and rivers. A rich growth of majestic oaks then covered the site of the future metropolis; tangled 245 thickets almost impervious to human foot surrounded it, and all was wilderness on every side. Wonderful accounts of the country to the north; of rich lands, and pure streams, and prairies more beautiful than any yet discovered, soon began to come in by the hunters.152 But over that country the Indian yet roved, and the adventurous pioneer neither owned the soil he cultivated, nor had the power to retain its possession from the savage. Only eight years after this, and a change, as if by magic, had come over the little village of Vandalia; and not only

so, but over the whole state, which was now discovered to be a region more extensive and far more fertile than the “sacred island of Britain.” The region previously the frontier formed the heart of the fairest portion of the state, and a dozen new counties were formed within its extent. Mail-routes and post-roads, diverging in all directions from the capital, had been established, and canals and railways had been projected. Eight years more, and the “Northern frontier” is the seat of power and population; and [230] here is removed the seat of government, because the older settlements have not kept pace in advancement.

152 Hall.— Flagg.

It was a fine mellow morning when I left Vandalia to pursue my journey over the prairies to Carlisle. For some miles my route lay through a dense clump of old woods, relieved at intervals by extended glades of sparser growth. This road is but little travelled, and so obscure that for most of the way I could avail myself of no other guide than the “ *blaze* ” upon the trees; and this mark in many places, from its ancient, weather-beaten aspect, seemed placed there by the axe of the earliest pioneer. Rank grass has obliterated the pathway, and overhanging boughs brush the cheek. It was in one of those extended glades I have mentioned that a nobly-antlered buck and his beautiful 246 doe sprang out upon the path, and stood gazing upon me from the wayside until I had approached so near that a rifle, even in hands all unskilled in “gentle woodcraft,” had not been harmless. I was even beginning to meditate upon the probable effect of a pistol-shot at twenty paces, when the graceful animals, throwing proudly up their arching necks, bounded off into the thicket. Not many miles from the spot I shared the rough fare of an old hunter, who related many interesting facts in the character and habits of this animal, and detailed some curious anecdotes in the history of his own wild life. He was just about leaving his lodge on a short hunting excursion, and the absence of a rifle alone prevented me from accepting a civil request to bear him company.

[231] Most of the route from Vandalia to Carlisle is very tolerable, with the exception of one detestable spot, fitly named “Hurricane Bottom;” a more dreary, desolate, purgatorial

region than which, I am very free to say, exists not in Illinois.153 It is a densely-wooded swamp, composed of soft blue clay, exceedingly tenacious to the touch and fetid in odour, extending nearly two miles. A regular highway over this mud-hole can scarcely be said to exist, though repeated attempts to construct one have been made at great expense: and now the traveller, upon entering this “slough of despond,” gives his horse the reins to slump, and slide, and plunge, and struggle through among the mud-daubed trees to the best of his skill and ability.

153 Hurricane Creek rises near the line of Montgomery and Shelby counties, flows southerly through the western portion of Fayette County, and enters Kaskaskia River twelve miles below Vandalia. The banks of this creek were formerly heavily timbered, and the low bottoms were occasionally inundated. Flagg considerably exaggerated the actual condition of this region.— Ed.

Night overtook me in the very heart of a broad prairie; and, like the sea, a desolate place is the prairie of a dark night. It demanded no little exercise of the eye and judgment 247 to continue upon a route where the path was constantly diverging and varying in all directions. A bright glare of light at a distance at length arrested my attention. On approaching, I found it to proceed from an encampment of tired emigrants, whose ponderous teams were wheeled up around the blazing fire; while the hungry oxen, released from the yoke, were browsing upon the tops of the tall prairie-grass on every side. This grass, though coarse in appearance, in the early stages of its growth resembles young wheat, and furnishes a rich and succulent food for cattle. It is even asserted that, when running at large in fields where the young wheat covers the [232] ground, cattle choose the prairie-grass in the margin of the field in preference to the wheat itself. A few scattered, twinkling lights, and the fresh-smelling air from the Kaskaskia, soon after informed me that I was not far from the village of Carlisle.154 This is a pleasant, romantic little town, upon the west bank of the river, and upon the great stage-route through the state from St. Louis to Vincennes. This circumstance, and the intersection of several other state thoroughfares, give it the animated, business-like aspect of a market town, not often

witnessed in a village so remote from the advantages of general commerce. Its site is elevated and salubrious, on the border of a fertile prairie: yet, notwithstanding all these advantages, Carlisle cannot be said to have increased very rapidly when we consider that twenty years have elapsed since it was first laid off for a town. It is the seat of justice for Clinton county, and can boast a wooden

154 Carlyle, the seat of Clinton County, forty-eight miles east of St. Louis, was laid out in 1818.

The Vincennes and St. Louis stage route passed through Lebanon, Carlyle, and Salem. At the last place, the road divided, one branch running south to Fairfield, the other passing through Maysville and both again uniting at Lawrenceville. Augustus Mitchell, in his *Illinois in 1837* (Philadelphia, 1837), p. 66, says: “From Louisville, by the way of Vincennes to St. Louis, by stage, every alternate day, 273 miles through in three days and a half. Fare, seventeen dollars.”— Ed.

248 courthouse in “ruinous perfection.” In its vicinity are some beautiful country-seats. One of these, named “Mound Farm,” the delightful residence of Judge B——, imbowered in trees and shrubbery, and about a mile from the village, I visited during my stay. It commands from its elevated site a noble view of the neighbouring prairie, the village and river at its foot, and the adjacent farms. Under the superintendence of cultivated taste, this spot may become one of the loveliest retreats in Illinois.

Clinton County, Ill.

XXI

“To him who, in the love of Nature, holds Communion with her visible forms, she speaks A various language.”

Thanatopsis.

“The sunny Italy may boast The beauteous tints that flush her skies, And lovely round the Grecian coast May thy blue pillars rise: I only know how fair they stand About my own beloved land.”

The Skies. — Bryant.

To the man of cultivated imagination and delicate taste, the study of nature never fails to afford a gratification, refined as it is exquisite. In the pencilled petals of the flower as it bows to the evening breeze; in the glittering scales of the fish leaping from the wave; in the splendid plumage of the forest-bird, and in the music-tinklings of the wreathed and enamelled sea-shell rocked by the billow, he recognises an eloquence of beauty which he alone can appreciate. For him, too, the myriad forms of animate creation unite with inanimate nature in one mighty hymn of glory to their Maker, from the hum of the sparkling ephemeroid as he blithely dances away his little life in the 249 beams of a summer sun, and the rustling music of the prairie-weed swept by the winds, to the roar of the shaggy woods upon the mountain-side, and the fierce, wild shriek of the ocean-eagle. To investigate [234] the more minute and delicate of Nature's workings is indeed a delightful task; and along this fairy and flowery pathway the cultivated fancy revels with unmingled gratification; but, as the mind approaches the vaster exhibitions of might and majesty, the booming of the troubled ocean, the terrible sublimity of the midnight storm, the cloudy magnificence of the mountain height, the venerable grandeur of the aged forest, it expands itself in unison till lost in the immensity of created things. Reflections like these are constantly suggesting themselves to the traveller's thoughts amid the grand scenery of the West; but at no season do they rise more vividly upon the mind than when the lengthened shadows of evening are stealing over the landscape, and the summer sun is sinking to his rest. This is the “magic hour” when

“Bright clouds are gathering one by one, Sweeping in pomp round the dying sun; With crimson banner and golden pall, Like a host to their chieftain's funeral.”

There is not a more magnificent spectacle in nature than summer sunset on the Western prairie. I have beheld the orb of day, after careering his course like a giant through the firmament, go down into the fresh tumbling billows of ocean; and sunset on the prairies, which recalls that scene, is alone equalled by it.

Near nightfall one evening I found myself in the middle of one of these vast extended plains, where the eye roves unconfined over the scene, for miles unrelieved by a stump, or a tree, or a thicket, and meets only the deep blue of the horizon on [235] every side, blending with the billowy foliage of the distant woodland. Descending a graceful slope, 250 even this object is lost, and a boundless landscape of blue above and green below is unfolded to the traveller's vision; again, approaching the summit of the succeeding slope, the forest rises in clear outline in the margin of the vast panorama. For some hours the heavens had been so enveloped in huge masses of brassy clouds, that now, when the shadows deepened over sky and earth, one was at a loss to determine whether the sun had yet gone down, except for a broad zone of sapphire girding the whole western firmament. Upon the superior edge of this deep belt now glistened the luminary, gradually revealing itself to the eye, and blazing forth at length “like angels' locks unshorn,” flinging a halo of golden effulgence far athwart the dim evening prairie. A metamorphosis so abrupt, so rapid, so unlooked for, seemed almost to realize the fables of enchantment. One moment, and the whole vast landscape lay veiled in shadowy dimness; the next, and every grass blade, and spray, and floweret, and nodding wild-weed seemed suffused in a flood of liquid effulgence; while far along, the uniform ridges of the heaving plain gleamed in the rich light like waves of a moonlit sea, sweeping away, roll upon roll, till lost in distance to the eye. Slowly the splendid disk went down behind the sea of waving verdure, until at length a single point of intense, bewildering brightness flamed out above the mass of green. An instant, this too was gone—as

“An angel's wing through an opening cloud, Is seen and then withdrawn:”—

[236] and then those deep, lurid funeral fires of departing day streamed, flaring upward even to the zenith, flinging over the vast concave a robe of unearthly, terrible magnificence! Then, as the fount of all this splendour sank deeper and deeper beneath the horizon, the blood-red flames died gently away into the mellow glories of summer evening 251 skylight, bathing the brow of heaven in a tender roseate, which hours after cheered the lonely traveller across the waste.

The pilgrim wanderer in other climes comes back to tell us of sunnier skies and softer winds! The blue heavens of Italy have tasked the inspiration of an hundred bards, and the warm brush of her own Lorraine has swept the canvass with their gorgeous transcript! But what pencil has wandered over the grander scenes of the North American prairie? What bard has struck his lyre to the wild melody of loveliness of the prairie sunset? Yet who shall tell us that there exists not a glory in the scene, amid the untrod wastes of the wilderness West, which even the skies of “sunny Italy” might not blush anew to acknowledge? No wandering Harold has roamed on a pilgrimage of poetry over the sublime and romantic scenery of our land, to hymn its praise in breathing thoughts and glowing words; yet here as there,

“Parting day Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues With a new colour as it gasps away: The last still loveliest, till—'tis gone—and all is gray!”

I cannot tell of the beauties of climes I have never seen; but I have gazed upon all the varied loveliness of my own fair, native land, from the rising [237] sun to its setting, and in vain have tasked my fancy to image a fairer.

A pleasant day's ride directly west from Carlisle, over extensive and beautiful prairies, intersected by shady woods, with their romantic creeks, and the traveller finds himself in the quiet village of Lebanon. Its site is a commanding, mound-like elevation in the skirts of a forest, swelling gently up from the prairie on the west bank of Little Silver Creek.155

155 Lebanon was laid out by Governor William Kinney and Thomas Ray in July, 18252.

Little Silver Creek rises in the northeastern portion of St. Clair County and flowing southwesterly joins Silver Creek two miles below Lebanon. The latter stream is about fifty miles in length, rises in the northern part of Madison County, runs south into St. Clair County, and enters Kaskaskia River.— Ed.

252 This stream, the larger branch, received its name from the circumstance that the early French settlers of the country, in the zeal of their faith and research for the precious metals, a long while mistook the brilliant specula of *horneblende* which flow in its clear waters for silver, and were unwilling to be undeceived in their extravagant anticipations until the absence of the material in their purses aroused them from their error. In the neighbourhood of Rock Spring a shaft for a mine was sunk.156 It was early one beautiful morning that I found myself approaching the village of Lebanon, though many miles distant in the adjacent plain; appropriately named for its loveliness the “Looking-glass Prairie.” The rosy sunbeams were playing lightly over the pleasant country-seats and neat farmhouses, with their white palings, sprinkled along the declivity before me, imbowered in their young orchards and waving maizefields; while flocks and herds, [238] gathered in isolated masses over the intervening meadow, were cropping the rich herbage. To the right and left, and in the rear, the prairie stretches away beyond the view. The body of the village is situated about one mile from these suburbs, and its character and history may be summed up in the single sentence, *a pleasant little Methodist country village.* The peculiarities of the sect are here strikingly manifested to the traveller in

156 *Tradition* telleth of vast treasures here exhumed; and, on strength of this, ten years ago a company of fortune-seekers dug away for several months with an enthusiasm worthy of better success than awaited them.— Flagg.

Comment by Ed. Rock Spring was a mere settlement in St. Clair County, eighteen miles from St. Louis, on the Vincennes stage road, and about three miles southwest of Lebanon. Its name was derived from a series of springs issuing from a rocky ledge in the vicinity.

John W. Peck selected this site (1820) for his permanent residence, and established the Rock Spring Theological Seminary and High School (1827), which four years later was transferred to Alton and made the foundation of Shurtleff College. In 1834 Rock Spring consisted of fourteen families.

253 all the ordinary concerns and occupations of life, even in the every-day garb and conversation of its sober-browed citizens. It presents the spectacle, rare as it is cheering, of an entire community characterized by its reverence for religion. Located in its immediate vicinity is a flourishing seminary, called M'Kendreean College.157 It is under the supervision of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and has at present two instructers, with about fifty pupils in the preparatory department. It has a commodious frame building, presenting from its elevated site an imposing view to the traveller. As is usually the case with these little out-of-the-world villages, when any object comes up in the midst around which the feelings and interests of all may cluster, upon this institution is centred the heart and soul of every man, to say not a word of all the women and children, in Lebanon; and everything not connected, either remotely or immediately, with its welfare, is deemed of very little, if of any importance. " *The Seminary* ! *The Seminary* !" I defy a traveller to tarry two hours in the village without hearing rung all the changes upon that topic for his edification. The surrounding region is fertile, populous, [239] and highly cultivated; and for an inland, farming village, it is quite as bustling, I suppose, as should be expected; though, during my visit, its streets— which, by-the-by, are of very liberal breadth—maintained a most Sabbath-like aspect.

157 Peter Cartwright is said to have suggested the idea of founding a Methodist college at Lebanon. After the citizens of the town had contributed $1,385, buildings were erected and instruction commenced in 1828. The college was named in honor of Bishop William McKendree, who made a liberal donation to the school (1830).— Ed.

The route from Lebanon to Belleville is, in fine weather, very excellent. Deep woods on either side of the hard, smooth, winding pathway, throw their boughs over the head,

sometimes lengthening away into an arched vista 254 miles in extent. It was a sultry afternoon when I was leisurely travelling along this road; and the shadowy coolness of the atmosphere, the perfume of wild flowers and aromatic herbs beneath the underbrush, and the profusion of summer fruit along the roadside, was indescribably delightful. Near sunset, a graceful bend of the road around a clump of trees placed before me the pretty little village of Belleville; its neat enclosures and white cottages peeping through the shrubbery, now gilded by the mellow rays of sunset in every leaf and spray.158 Whether it was owing to this agreeable coincidence, or to the agreeable visit I here enjoyed, that I conceived such an attachment for the place, I cannot say; but sure it is, I fell in love with the little town at *first* sight; and, what is more marvellous, was not, according to all precedent, cured at second, when on the following morning I sallied forth to reconnoitre its beauties “at mine own good leisure.” Now it is to be presumed that, agreeable to the taste of six travellers in a dozen, I have passed through many a village in Illinois quite as attractive as this same Belleville: but to convince me of the fact would be no [240] easy task. “Man is the sport of circumstance,” says the fatalist; and however this may be in the moral world, if any one feels disposed to doubt upon the matter in the item before us, let him disembark from a canal-boat at Pittsburgh on a rainy, misty, miserable morning; and then, unable to secure for his houseless head a shelter from the pitiless peltings, let him hurry away through the filthy streets, deluged with inky water, to a crowded Ohio steamer; and if “ *circumstances* ” do not force him to dislike Pittsburgh ever after, then his human

158 In March, 1814, a commission appointed by the state legislature the preceding year, selected the site of Belleville for the seat of St. Clair County. George Blair, whose farm was chosen as the site, platted and named the county seat. The town was incorporated in 1819. See *History of St. Clair County, Illinois* (1881, pp. 183, 185.— Ed.

255 nature is vastly more forbearing than my own. Change the picture. Let him enter the quiet little Illinois village at the gentle hour of sunset; let him meet warm hospitality, and look upon fair forms and bright faces, and if he fail to be pleased with that place, why, “ he's not the man I took him for.”

The public buildings of Belleville are a handsome courthouse of brick, a wretched old jail of the same material, a public hall belonging to a library company, and a small framed Methodist house of worship. It is situated in the centre of “Turkey-hill Settlement,” one of the oldest and most flourishing in the state, and has a fine timber tract and several beautiful country-seats in its vicinity.

Leaving Belleville with some reluctance, and not a few “longing, lingering looks behind,” my route continued westward over a broken region of alternating forest and prairie, sparsely sprinkled with trees, and yet more sparsely with inhabitants. At length, having descended a precipitous hill, the rounded summit of which, as well as the adjoining heights, commanded an immense expanse of level [241] landscape, stretching off from the base, I stood once more upon the fertile soil of the “ *American Bottom.* ” The sharp, heavy-roofed French cottages, with low verandahs running around; the ungainly outhouses and enclosures; the curiously-fashioned vehicles and instruments of husbandry in the barnyards and before the doors; the foreign garb and dialect of the people; and, above all, the amazing fertility of the soil, over whose exhaustless depths the maize has rustled half a century, constitute the most striking characteristics of this interesting tract, in the section over which I was passing. This settlement, extending from the foot of the bluffs for several miles over the Bottom, was formed about forty years ago by a colony from Cahokia, and known by the name of “ *Little French Village;* ” it now comprises 256 about twenty houses and a grogshop. In these bluffs lies an exhaustless bed of bituminous coal: vast quantities have been transported to St. Louis, and for this purpose principally is the railway to the river designed. This vein of coal is said to have been discovered by the rivulet of a spring issuing from the base of the bluffs. The stratum is about six feet in thickness, increasing in size as it penetrates the hill horizontally. Though somewhat rotten and slaty, it is in some particulars not inferior to the coal of the Alleghanies; and the vein is thought to extend from the mouth of the Kaskaskia to that of the Illinois. About three miles below the present shaft, a continuation of the bed was discovered by fire communicated from the root of a tree; the bank of coal burnt for upward of a [242] twelvemonth, and the conflagration was

then smothered only by the falling in of the superincumbent soil. St. Clair county, which embraces a large portion of the American Bottom, is the oldest settlement in the state. In 1795 the county was formed by the Legislature of the Northwestern Territory, and then included all settlements in Illinois east of the Mississippi.

I had just cleverly cleared the outskirts of the little antediluvian village beneath the bluffs, when a dark, watery-looking cloud came tumbling up out of the west; the thunder roared across the Bottom and was reverberated from the cliffs, and in a few moments down came the big rain-drops dancing in torrents from the clouds, and pattering up like mist along the plain. Verily, groaned forth the wo-begone traveller, this is the home of clouds and the realm of thunder! Never did hapless mortals sustain completer drenchings than did the traveller and his steed, notwithstanding upon the first onset they had plunged themselves into the sheltering depths of the wood. A half hour's gallop over the slippery bottom, and the stern roar of a 257 steamer's 'scape-pipe informed me that I was not far from the “great waters.” A few yards through the belt of forest, and the city of San Louis, with towers and roofs, stood before me.

St. Louis.

XXII

“I have no wife nor children, good or bad, to provide for; a mere spectator of other men's fortunes and adventures, and how they play their parts.”— *Anat. of Melancholy.*

“Oh ye dread scenes, where Nature dwells alone, Serenely glorious on her craggy throne; Ye citadels of rock, gigantic forms, Veiled by the mists, and girdled by the storms; Ravines, and glens, and deep-resounding caves, That hold communion with the torrent waves.”

Hemans.

Ah, the single blessedness of the unmarried state! Such is the sentiment of an ancient worthy, quietly expressed in the lines which I have selected for a motto. After dozing away half his days and all his energies within the dusky walls of a university, tumbling over musty tomes and shrivelled parchments until his very brain had become cobwebbed as the alcoves he haunted, and the blood in his veins was all “adust and thin;” then, forsooth, the shameless old fellow issues forth with his vainglorious sentiment upon his lips! And yet, now that we consider, there is marvellous “method” in the old man's “madness!” In very truth and soberness, there is a blessedness which the bachelor can boast, *single* though it be, in which the “man of family,” though *doubly* blessed, cannot share! To the former, life may be made one long holyday, and its path a varied and flowery one! while to the poor [244] victim of matrimonial toils, *wife and children* are the Alpha and Omega of a weary existence! 258 Of all travelling companionship, forfend us from that of a married man! Independence! He knows not of it! Such is the text and such the commentary: now for the practical application.

It was a balmy July morning, and the flutelike melody of the turtle-dove was ringing through the woodlands. Leaving the pleasant villa of Dr. F. in the environs of North St. Louis, I found myself once more fairly *en route* , winding along that delightful road which sweeps the western bottom of the Mississippi. Circumstances not within my control, Benedict though I am, had recalled me, after a ramble of but a few weeks over the prairies, again to the city, and compelled me to relinquish my original design of a tour of the extreme Northwest. Ah, the despotism of circumstance! My delay, however, proved a brief, though pleasant one; and with a something of mingled *regret* and anticipation it was that I turned from the bright eyes and dark locks of St. Louis—“forgive my folly”—and once again beheld its imposing structures fade in distance.

By far the most delightful drive in the vicinity of St. Louis is that of four or five miles in its northern suburbs, along the river bottom. The road, emerging from the streets of the city through one of its finest sections, and leaving the “Big Mound” upon the right, sweeps off

for several miles upon a succession of broad plateaux, rolling up from the water's edge. To the left lies an extensive range of heights, surmounted by ancient mounds and crowned with [245] groves of the shrub-oak, which afford a delightful shade to the road running below. Along this elevated ridge beautiful country-seats, with graceful piazzas and green Venitian blinds, are caught from time to time glancing through the shrubbery; while to the right, smooth meadows spread themselves away to the heavy belt of forest which margins the 259 Mississippi. Among these pleasant villas the little white farm-cottage, formerly the residence of Mr. C., beneath the hills, surrounded by its handsome grounds, and gardens, and glittering fishponds, partially shrouded by the broad leaved catalpa, the willow, the acacia, and other ornamental trees, presents, perhaps, the rarest instance of natural beauty adorned by refined taste. A visit to this delightful spot during my stay at St. Louis informed me of the fact that, within as well as abroad, the hand of education and refinement had not been idle. Paintings, busts, medallions, Indian curiosities, &c., &c., tastefully arranged around the walls and shelves of an elegant library, presented a feast to the visiter as rare in the Far West as it is agreeable to a cultivated mind. Near this cottage is the intended site of the building of the St. Louis Catholic University, a lofty and commanding spot.159 A considerable tract was here purchased, at a cost of thirty thousand dollars; but the design of removal from the city has for the present been relinquished. Immediately adjoining is situated the stately villa of Colonel O'Fallon, with its highly-cultivated gardens and its beautiful park sweeping off in the rear. In a very few years this must become one of the most delightful spots [246] in the West. For its elegant grounds, its green and hot houses, and its exotic and indigenous plants, it is, perhaps, already unequalled west of Cincinnati. No expense, attention, or taste will be wanting to render it all of which the spot is capable.

159 For a brief history of the inception of St. Louis University, see *ante*, p. 169, note 121. At a meeting of the trustees on May 3, 1836, a commission was appointed to select a new site for the university. A farm of three hundred acres recently purchased, on the Bellefontaine road, three and a half miles from St. Louis, was chosen; plans were

formulated, contracts made, and the foundations dug. On the death of the contractors, the enterprise was abandoned; but the land, sold a few years later, proved a valuable investment. See Scharf, *St. Louis*, i, pp. 860, 861.— Ed.

Leaving the Bottom, the road winds gracefully off from 260 the Mississippi, over the hard soil of the bluffs, through a region broken up by sink-holes, and covered with a meager growth of oaks, with small farms at intervals along the route, until at length the traveller finds himself at that beautiful spot on the Missouri, Belle Fontaine, fifteen miles from St. Louis. On account of the salubrity and beauty of the site, an army cantonment was located here by General Wilkinson in the early part of the present century, and fortifications consisting of palisade-work existed, and a line of log-barracks sufficient to quarter half a regiment. Nothing now remains but a pile of ruins. “The barracks have crumpled into dust, and the ploughshare has passed over the promenade of the sentinel.” Jefferson Barracks, in the southern environs of the city, have superseded the old fortress, and the spot has been sold to a company, which has here laid off a town; and as most of the lots have been disposed of, and a turnpike-road from St. Louis has been chartered, a succeeding tourist may, at no distant period, pencil it in his notebook “a flourishing village.” *Cold Water Creek* is the name of a clear stream which empties itself into the Missouri just above, upon which are several mill-privileges; and from the base of the bluff itself gushes a fountain, on account [247] of which the place received its name from the French. The site for the new town is a commanding and beautiful one, being a bold, green promontory, rising from the margin of the stream about four miles above its confluence with the Mississippi. The view developed to the eye of the spectator from this spot on a fine day is one of mingled sublimity and beauty. For some miles these old giants of the West are beheld roaming along through their deep, fertile valleys, so different in character and aspect that one can hardly reconcile with that diversity the fact that their destiny is soon to become *one* and unchangeably the same. 261 And then comes the mighty “meeting of the waters,” to which no pen can hope to render justice.

There is a singular circumstance related of the discovery of a large *human tooth* many years since at Belle Fontaine, in excavating a well, when at the depth of forty feet. This was the more extraordinary as the spot was not alluvion, and could have undergone no change from natural causes for centuries. Various strata of clay were passed through before the *tooth* was thrown up; and this circumstance, together with the situation of the place, would almost preclude the possibility of a vein of subterraneous water having conveyed it to the spot. This is mysterious enough, certainly; but the fact is authentic.

Returning at an angle of forty-five degrees with the road by which he approaches, a ride of a dozen miles up the Missouri places the traveller upon a bold roll of the prairie, from which, in the beautiful [248] valley below, rising above the forest, appear the steep roofs and tall chimneys of the little hamlet of Florissant.160 Its original name was St. Ferdinand, titular saint of its church; and though one of the most advanced in years, it is by no means the most antique-looking of those ancient villages planted by the early French.. Its site is highly romantic, upon the banks of a creek of the same name, and in the heart of one of the most fertile and luxuriant valleys ever subjected to cultivation.161 The village now embraces about thirty or forty irregular edifices, somewhat modernized in style and structure, surrounded by extensive corn-fields, wandering flocks of Indian ponies, and herds of cattle browsing in the plain. Here also is a Catholic Church, a neat building of brick, with belfry and bell; connected with which is a convent

160 For a note on Florissant, see Townsend's *Narrative*, in our volume xxi, p. 125, note 4. — Ed.

161 This valley appears to have been the bed of an ancient lake.— Flagg.

262 of nuns, and by these is conducted a Seminary for young ladies of some note. This institution-if the Hibernian hostess of the little inn at which I dined is to be credited in her statements—is the most flourishing establishment in all the region far and near! and “ *heducates* the young *leddies* in everything but religion!” For the redoubtable *Tonish* , who whilom figured so bravely on the prairies and in print, I made diligent inquiry. His cottage

—the best in the village—and a dirty little brood of his posterity, were pointed out to me, but the old worthy himself was, as usual, in the regions of the Rocky Mountains: when last seen, he could still tell the stoutest lie with the steadiest muscles of any man in the village, while he and his [249] hopeful son could cover each other's trail so nicely that a lynx-eye would fail to detect them. In the vicinity of Florissant is a settlement called Owen's Station, formerly the site of a stoccade fort for defence against the Indians, and of a Spanish *station* on account of a fine fountain in the vicinity.162

162 Bridgeton, still a village, about fifteen miles northwest of the St. Louis courthouse, was incorporated February 27, 1843. It was settled by French and Spanish families, about the time that St. Louis was established. A fort was built as a protection against the Indians, and William Owens was placed in command. In consequence the place was until the time of its incorporation generally known to the Americans as Owen's Station.— Ed.

The direct route from St. Louis to Florissant is an excellent one, over a high rolling prairie, and commands a noble sweep of scenery. From several elevated points, the white cliffs beyond the American Bottom, more than twenty miles distant, may be seen, while farmhouses and villas are beheld in all directions gleaming through the groves. Scenery of the same general character presents itself upon the direct route to St. Charles, with the exception of steeper hills and broader plains. Upon this route my path entered nearly at right angles soon after leaving the French village. Upon 263 the right shore of the Missouri, not far above Florissant, is situated *La Charbonnière* , a name given to a celebrated coal-bank in a bluff about two hundred feet in altitude, and about twice as long.163 The stratum of coal is about a dozen feet in thickness, and lies directly upon the margin of the river: the quantity in the bank is said to be immense, and it contains an unusual proportion of bitumen. Iron ore has also been discovered at this spot.

163 Until after the middle of the nineteenth century, St. Louis County ranked among the coal-producing districts of Missouri. Today no coal is mined there save for the fire-clay industry or other immediate local use. Dr. B. F. Shumard in his “Description of a Geological

Section on the Mississippi River from St. Louis to Commerce," in Geological Survey of Missouri, *First and Second Annual Reports* (Jefferson City, 1855), p. 176, describes *La Charbonniere* mine; which appears to have been operated at that time. He reports the coal vein as being only about eighteen inches in thickness. On page 184 of the above report, an interesting map is given, showing the location of coal mines in St. Louis County.— Ed.

The road over the Missouri Bottom was detestable, as never fails to be the case after a continued rain-storm, and my horse's leg sank to the middle in the black, unctuous loam almost at every step. Upon either side, like colonnades, rose up those [250] enormous shafts of living verdure which strike the solitary traveller upon these unfrequented bottoms with such awe and veneration; while the huge whirls of the writhing wild-vine hung dangling, like gigantic serpents, from the lofty columns around whose capitals they clung. On descending the bluffs to the bottom, the traveller crosses a bed of limestone, in which is said to exist a fissure perfectly fathomless. In a few moments, the boiling, turbid floods of the Missouri are beheld rolling majestically along at the feet, and to the stranger's eye, at first sight, always suggesting the idea of *unusual* agitation; but so have they rolled onward century after century, age after age. The wild and impetuous character of this river, together with the vast quantities of soil with which its 264 waters are charged, impart to it a natural sublimity far more striking, at first view, than that of the Mississippi. This circumstance was not unobserved by the Indian tribes, who appropriately named it the " *Smoky Water:* " by others it was styled the " *Mad River* ," on account of the impetuosity of its current; and in all dialects it is called the " *Mother of Floods* ," indicative of the immense volume of its waters. Various causes have been assigned for the turbid character of the Missouri: and though, doubtless, heavily charged by the volumes of sand thrown into its channel by the Yellow Stone—its longest tributary, equal to the Ohio—and by the chalky clay of the White River, yet we are told that it is characterized by the same phenomenon from its very source. At the gates of the Rocky Mountains, where, having torn [251] for itself a channel through the everlasting hills, it comes rushing out through the vast prairie-plains at their base, it is the same dark, wild torrent as at its turbid embouchure. And,

strange to tell, after roaming thousands of miles, and receiving into its bosom streams equal to itself, and hundreds of lesser, though powerful tributaries, it still retains, unaltered, in depth or breadth, that volume which at last it rolls into its mighty rival! Torrent after torrent, river after river, pour in their floods, yet the giant stream rolls majestically onward unchanged! At the village of St. Charles its depth and breadth is the same as at the Mandan villages, nearly two thousand miles nearer its source.164 The same inexplicable phenomenon characterizes the Mississippi, and, indeed, all the great rivers of the West; for *inexplicable* the circumstance yet remains, however plausible the theories alleged in explanation. With regard to the Missouri, it is urged that the porous, sandy

164 For an account of St. Charles, see Bradbury's *Travels*, in our volume v, p. 39, note 9.

For the Mandan villages, see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxii, p. 344, and note 316, and volume xxiii, p. 234, note 192.— Ed.

265 soil of its broad alluvions absorbs, on the principle of capillary attraction, much of its volume, conveying it by subterraneous channels to the Mississippi; and of this latter stream it is asserted that large quantities of its waters are taken up by the innumerable bayous, lakes, and lagoons intersecting the lower region of its course; and thus, unperceived, they find their way to the gulf.

The navigation of the Missouri is thought to be the most hazardous and difficult of any of the Western rivers, owing to its mad, impetuous current, to the innumerable obstructions in its bed, and the incessant variation of its channel.165 Insurance and pilotage [252] upon this river are higher than on others; the season of navigation is briefer, and steamers never pursue their course after dusk. Its vast length and numerous tributaries render it liable, also, to frequent floods, of which three are expected every year. The chief of these takes place in the month of June, when the heaped-up snows of the Rocky Mountains are melted, and, having flowed thousands of miles through the prairies, reach the Mississippi. The ice and snows of the Alleghanies, and

165 The following extract from a letter dated September, 1819, addressed by Mr. Austin to Mr. Schoolcraft, respecting the navigation of the Missouri, well portrays the impetuous character of that river. It shows, too, the great improvements in the steam-engine during the past twenty years.

“I regret to state that the expedition up the Missouri to the Yellow Stone has in part failed. The steamboats destined for the Upper Missouri, after labouring against the current for a number of weeks, were obliged to give up the enterprise. Every exertion has been made to overcome the difficulty of navigating the Missouri with the power of steam; but all will not do. The current of that river, from the immense quantity of sand moving down with the water, is too powerful for any boat yet constructed. The loss either to the government or to the contractor will be very great. Small steamboats of fifty tons burden, with proper engines, would, I think, have done much better. Boats like those employed, of twenty to thirty feet beam, and six to eight feet draught of water, must have *uncommon* power to be propelled up a river, every pint of whose water is equal in weight to a quart of Ohio water, and moves with a velocity hardly credible. The barges fixed to move with wheels, worked by men, have answered every expectation; but they will only do when troops are on board, and the men can be changed every hour.”— Flagg.

266 the wild-rice lakes of the far Upper Mississippi, months before have reached their destination, and thus a general inundation, unavoidable had the floods been simultaneous, is prevented by Providence. The alluvions of the Missouri are said to be higher than, and not so broad as, those of the Mississippi; yet their extent is constantly varying by the violence of the current, even more than those of the latter stream. Many years ago the flourishing town of Franklin was completely torn away from its foundations, and its inhabitants were forced to flee to the adjacent heights; and the bottom opposite St. Charles and at numerous other places has, within the few years past, suffered astonishing changes.166 Opposite the town now flow the waters of the river where once stood farms and orchards.

166 For a sketch of Franklin, Missouri, see Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies* in our volume xix, p. 188, note 33.— Ed.

The source of the Missouri and that of the Columbia, we are told, are in such immediate proximity, that a walk of but a few miles will enable the traveller to drink from the fountains of each. Yet how unlike their destiny! One passes off through a region of boundless prairie equal in extent to a [253] sixth of our globe; and, after a thousand wanderings, disembogues its troubled waters into the Mexican Gulf; the other, winding away towards the setting sun, rolls on through forests untrodden by human footstep till it sleeps in the Pacific Seas. Their destinies reach their fulfilment at opposite extremes of a continent! How like, how very like are the destinies of these far, lonely rivers to the destinies of human life! Those who, in the beautiful starlight of our boyhood, were our schoolmates and play-fellows, where are they when our sun of ripened maturity has reached its meridian? and what, and where are they and we, when evening's lengthening shadows are gathering over the landscape of life? Our paths diverged but little 267 at first, but mountains, continents, half a world of waters may divide our destinies, and opposite extremes of “the great globe itself” witness their consummation. Yet, like the floods of the far-winding rivers, the streams of our existences will meet again, and mingle in the ocean—that ocean without a shore— *ETERNITY!*

The gates of the Rocky Mountains, through which the waters of the Missouri rush forth into the prairies of the great Valley, are described as one of the sublimest spectacles in nature. Conceive the floods of a powerful mountaintorrent compressed in mid career into a width of less than one hundred and fifty yards, rushing with the speed of “the wild horse's wilder sire” through a chasm whose vast walls of Nature's own masonry rear themselves on either side from the raging waters to the precipitous [254] height of twelve hundred perpendicular feet; and then consider if imagination can compass a scene of darker, more terrible sublimity! And then sweep onward with the current, and within one hundred miles

you behold a cataract, next to Niagara, from all description grandest in the world. Such are some of the mighty features of the stream upon which I was now standing.

As to the much disputed question which of the great streams of the West is entitled to the name of the *Main River* , I shall content myself with a brief statement of the arguments alleged in support of the pretensions of either claimant. The volume of the Missouri at the confluence far exceeds that of its rival; the length of its course and the number and magnitude of its tributaries are also greater, and it imparts a character to the united streams. On the other hand, the Mississippi, geographically and geologically considered, is the grand Central River of the continent, maintaining an undeviating course from north to south; the valley which it drains is far more extensive and fertile 268 than that of the Missouri; and from the circumstance of having first been explored, it has given a name to the great river of the Western Valley which it will probably ever retain, whatever the right. “ *Sed non nostrum tantas componere lites.* ”

St. Charles , Mo.

XXIII

“Say, ancient edifice, thyself with years Grown gray, how long upon the hill has stood Thy weather-braving tower?”

Hurdis.

“An *honourable* murder, if you will; For naught he did in hate, but all in honour.” “The whole broad earth is beautiful To minds attuned aright.”

Robt. Dale Owen.

The view of St. Charles from the opposite bank of the Missouri is a fine one. The turbid stream rolls along the village nearly parallel with the interval upon which it is situated. A long line of neat edifices, chiefly of brick, with a few ruinous old structures of logs and

plastering, relics of French or Spanish taste and domination, extend along the shore; beyond these, a range of bluffs rear themselves proudly above the village, crowned with their academic hall and a neat stone church, its spire surmounted by the, cross. Between these structures, upon a spot somewhat more elevated, appears the basement section of “a stem round tower of former days,” now a ruin; and, though a very peaceable [10] pile of limestone and mortar, well-fitted in distant view to conjure up a host of imaginings: like Shenstone's Ruined Abbey, forsooth,

“Pride of ancient days; Now but of use to grace a rural scene, Or bound our vistas.”

269

The history of the tower, if tower it may be styled, is briefly this.167 During the era of Spanish rule in this region, before its cession to France half a century since, this structure was erected as a watch-tower or magazine. Subsequently it was dismantled, and partially fell to ruins, when the novel project was started to plant a *windmill* upon the foundation. This was done; but either the wind was too high or too low, too frequent or too rare, or neither; or there was no corn to grind, or the projector despaired of success, or some other of the fifty untoward circumstances which suggest themselves came to pass; the windmill ere long fell to pieces, and left the old ruin to the tender mercies of time and tempest, a monument of chance and change.

167 The first settlement was made at St. Charles in 1769. La Chasseur Blanchette located the site, and established here a military post. The first mill in St. Charles County is said to have been built by Jonathan Bryan on a small branch emptying into Femme Osage Creek (1801). Francis Duquette (1774–1816), a French Canadian who came to St. Charles just before the close of the century, erected a mill on the site of the old round fort.— Ed.

The evening of my arrival at St. Charles I strolled off at about sunset, and, ascending the bluffs, approached the old ruin. The walls of rough limestone are massively deep, and the altitude cannot now be less than twenty feet. The view from the spot is noble, and

peculiarly impressive at the sunset hour. Directly at your feet lies the village, from the midst of which come up the rural sounds of evening; the gladsome laugh of children at their sports; the whistle of the home-plodding labourer; the quiet hum of gossips around the open doors; [II] while upon the river's brink a huge steam-mill sends forth its ceaseless “boom, boom” upon the still air. Beneath the village ripples the Missouri, with a fine sweep both above and below the town not unlike the letter S; while beyond the stream extends its heavily-timbered bottom: one cluster of trees directly 270 opposite are Titanic in dimensions. Upon the summit of the bluff, in the shadow of the ruin by your side, lies a sunken grave. It is the grave of a *duellist.* Over it trail the long, melancholy branches of a weeping willow. A neat paling once protected the spot from the wanderer's footstep, but it is gone now; only a rotten relic remains. All is still. The sun has long since gone down. One after another the evening sounds have died away in the village at the feet, and one after another the lights have twinkled forth from the casements. A fresh breeze is coming up from the water; the rushing wing of the night-hawk strikes fitfully upon the ear; and yonder sails the beautiful “boat of light,” the pale sweet crescent. On that crescent is gazing many a distant friend! What a spot—what an hour to meditate upon the varying destinies of life! I seated myself upon the foot of the grave, which still retained some little elevation from the surrounding soil, and the night-wind sighed through the trailing boughs as if a requiem to him who slumbered beneath. *Requiescat in pace* , in no meaningless ceremony, might be pronounced over him, for his end was a troubled one. Unfortunate man! you have gone to your account; and that tabernacle in which once burned a beautiful flame has long since been mingling with the dust: [12] but I had rather be even as thou art, cold in an unhonoured grave, than to live on and wear away a miserable remnant of existence, that “guilty thing” with crimsoned hand and brow besprinkled with blood. To drag out a weary length of days and nights; to feel life a bitterness, and all its verdure scathed; to walk about among the ranks of men a being

“Mark'd, And sign'd, and quoted for a deed of shame;”

to feel a stain upon the palm which not all the waters of ocean could wash away; a smell of blood which not all 271 the perfumes of Arabia could sweeten; ah! give me death rather than this! That the custom of duelling, under the present arrangements of society and code of honour, in some sections of our country, is necessary, is more than problematical; that its practice will continue to exist is certain; but, when death ensues, "'tis the surviver dies."

The stranger has never, perhaps, stood upon the bluffs of St. Charles without casting a glance of anxious interest upon that lone, deserted grave; and there are associated with its existence circumstances of melancholy import. Twenty years ago, he who lies there was a young, accomplished barrister of superior abilities, distinguished rank, and rapidly rising to eminence in the city of St. Louis. Unhappily, for words uttered in the warmth of political controversy, offence was taken; satisfaction demanded; a meeting upon that dark and bloody ground opposite the city ensued; and poor B— fell, in the sunshine of his spring, lamented by all [13] who had known him. Agreeable to his request in issue of his death, his remains were conveyed to this spot and interred. Years have since rolled away, and the melancholy event is now among forgotten things; but the old ruin, beneath whose shadow he slumbers, will long remain his monument; and the distant traveller, when he visits St. Charles, will pause and ponder over his lonely grave.168

168 One year after the above was written, the author, on a visit to St. Charles, walked out to this spot. The willow was blasted; the relics of the paling were gone; the grave was levelled with the soil, but the old ruin was there still.— Flagg.

"But let no one reproach his memory. His life has paid the forfeit of his folly, Let that suffice."

Ah! the valuable blood which has steeped the sands of that steril island in the Mississippi opposite St. Louis! Nearly thirty years ago a fatal encounter took place between Dr. F. and Dr. G., in which the latter fell: that 272 between young B. and a Mr. C. I have alluded to, and several other similar combats transpired on the spot at about the same time. The

bloody affair between Lieutenants Biddle and Pettis, and that between Lucas and Benton, are of more recent date, and, with several others, are familiar in the memory of all. The spot has been fitly named “Murder” or “Blood Island.”169 Lying in the middle of the stream, it is without the jurisdiction of either of the adjoining states; and deep is the curse which has descended upon its shores!

169 For a description of Bloody Island, see ante, p. 115, note 77.

The duel mentioned by Flagg is probably the one that occurred between Joshua Barton, United States district attorney, and Thomas Rector, on June 30, 1823. Barton had published in the *Missouri Republican* a letter charging William Rector, surveyor general of Missouri, Illinois, and Arkansas, with corruption in office. The latter being absent, his brother Thomas issued the challenge. Barton's body was buried at St. Charles near the old round tower ruins.

In the summer of 1817, Charles Lucas challenged Thomas H. Benton's vote at the polls. On the latter calling him an insolent puppy, Lucas challenged him to a duel. The affair took place August 12, 1817, and both parties were wounded. On September 27 of the same year, a second duel was fought, in which Lucas was mortally wounded. Joshua Barton was the latter's second. In the *Missouri Republican* (St. Louis, March 15, 1882) there was printed an address by Thomas T. Gantt, delivered in Memorial Hall at St. Louis, on the celebration of the centennial birthday of Thomas H. Benton, in which the details of this deed were carefully reviewed.

During the political canvass of 1830, a heated discussion was carried on in the newspaper press between Thomas Biddle and Spencer Pettis. Pettis challenged Biddle to a duel. Both fell mortally wounded, August 29, 1830.— Ed.

[14] The morning star was beaming beautifully forth from the blue eastern heavens when I mounted my horse for a visit to that celebrated spot, “ *Les Mamelles.* ” A pleasant ride of three miles through the forest-path beneath the bluffs brought me at sunrise to the spot.

Every tree was wreathed with the wild rose like a rainbow; and the breeze was laden with perfume. It is a little singular, the difficulty with which visiters usually meet in finding this place. The Duke of Saxe Weimar, among other dignitaries, when on his tour of the West several years since, 273 tells us that he lost his way in the neighbouring prairie by pursuing the river road instead of that beneath the bluffs. The natural eminences which have obtained the appropriate appellation of Mamelles, from their striking resemblance to the female breast, are a pair of lofty, conical mounds, from eighty to one hundred feet altitude, swelling up perfectly naked and smooth upon the margin of that celebrated prairie which owes to them a name. So beautifully are they paired and so richly rounded, that it would hardly require a Frenchman's eye or that of an Indian to detect the resemblance designated, remarkable though both races have shown themselves for bestowing upon objects in natural scenery significant names. Though somewhat resembling those artificial earth-heaps which form such an interesting feature of the West, these mounds are, doubtless, but a broken continuation of the Missouri bluffs, which at this point terminate from the south, while those of the Mississippi, commencing at the same point, stretch away at right angles to the west. [115] The mounds are of an oblong, elliptical outline, parallel to each other, in immediate proximity, and united at the extremities adjoining the range of highlands by a curved elevation somewhat less in height. They are composed entirely of earth, and in their formation are exceedingly uniform and graceful. Numerous springs of water gush out from their base. But an adequate conception of these interesting objects can hardly be conveyed by the pen; at all events, without somewhat more of the quality of patience than chances to be the gift of my own wayward instrument. In brief, then, imagine a huge *spur* , in fashion somewhat like to that of a militia major, with the enormous rowel stretching off to the south, and the heel-bow rounding away to the northeast and northwest, terminated at each extremity by a vast excrescence; imagine all this spread out in the margin 274 of an extended prairie, and a tolerably correct, though inadequate idea of the outline of the Mamelles is obtained. The semicircular area in the bow of the spur between the mounds is a deep dingle, choked up with stunted trees and tangled underbrush of hazels, sumach, and wild-berry, while the range of highlands

crowned with forest goes back in the rear. This line of heights extends up the Missouri for some distance, at times rising directly from the water's edge to the height of two hundred feet, rough and ragged, but generally leaving a heavily-timbered bottom several miles in breadth in the interval, and in the rear rolling off into high, undulating prairie. The bluffs of the Mississippi extend to the westward in a similar [16] manner, but the prairie interval is broader and more liable to inundation. The distance from the Mamelles to the confluence of the rivers is, by their meanderings, about twenty or thirty miles, and is very nearly divided into prairie and timber. The extremity of the point is liable to inundation, and its growth of forest is enormous.

The view from the summit of the Mamelles, as the morning sun was flinging over the landscape his ruddy dyes, was one of eminent, surpassing loveliness. It is celebrated, indeed, as the most beautiful prairie-scene in the Western Valley, and one of the most romantic views in the country. To the right extends the Missouri Bottom, studded with farms of the French villagers, and the river-bank margined with trees which conceal the stream from the eye. Its course is delineated, however, by the blue line of bluffs upon the opposite side, gracefully curving towards the distant Mississippi until the trace fades away at the confluence. In front is spread out the lovely Mamelle Prairie, with its waving ocean of rich flowers of every form, and scent, and hue, while green groves are beheld swelling out into its bosom, and hundreds of cattle are cropping the 275 herbage. In one direction the view is that of a boundless plain of verdure; and at intervals in the deep emerald is caught the gleam from the glassy surface of a lake, of which there are many scattered over the peninsula. All along the northern horizon, curving away in a magnificent sweep of forty miles to the west, rise the hoary cliffs of the Mississippi, in the opposite state, like towers and castles; while [17] the windings of the stream itself are betrayed by the heavy forest-belt skirting the prairie's edge. It is not many years since this bank of the river was perfectly naked, with not a fringe of wood. Tracing along the bold façade of cliffs on the opposite shore, enveloped in their misty mantle of azure, the eye detects the embouchure of the Illinois and of several smaller streams by the deep-cut openings. To the left extends

the prairie for seventy miles, with an average breadth of five from the river, along which, for most of the distance, it stretches. Here and there in the smooth surface stands out a solitary sycamore of enormous size, heaving aloft its gigantic limbs like a monarch of the scene. Upward of fifty thousand acres are here laid open to the eye at a single glance, with a soil of exhaustless fertility and of the easiest culture.

The whole plain spread out at the foot of the Mamelles bears abundant evidence of having once been submerged. The depth of the alluvion is upward of forty feet; and from that depth we are told that logs, leaves, coal, and a stratum of sand and pebbles bearing marks of the attrition of running waters, have been thrown up. Through the middle of the prairie pass several deep canals, apparently ancient channels of the rivers, and which now form the bed of a long irregular lake called *Marais Croche* ; there is another lake of considerable extent called *Marais Temps Clair.* 170 This beautiful prairie once, then, formed a portion

170 Marais Croche (Crooked swamp) is located a few miles northeast of St. Charles, and Marais Temps-Clair (Clear-weather swamp), just southwest of Portage des Sioux. The former is often mentioned for its beauty.— Ed.

276 of that immense lake which at a remote period held possession of the American Bottom; and at the base of the graceful [18] Mamelles these giant rivers merrily mingled their waters, and then rolled onward to the gulf. That ages have since elapsed, the amazing depth of the alluvial and vegetable mould, and the ancient monuments reposing upon some portions of the surface, leave no room for doubt.171 By heavy and continued deposites of alluvion, the vast peninsula gradually rose up from the waters; the Missouri was forced back to the bluff La Charbonnière, and the rival stream to the Piasa cliffs of Illinois.

171 “I cultivated a small farm on that beautiful prairie below St. Charles called 'The Mamelle,' or 'Point prairie.' In my enclosure, and directly back of my house, were two conical mounds of considerable elevation. A hundred paces in front of them was a high bench, making the shore of the 'Marais Croche,' an extensive marsh, and evidently the

former bed of the Missouri. In digging a ditch on the margin of this bench, at the depth of four feet, we discovered great quantities of broken pottery, belonging to vessels of all sizes and characters. Some must have been of a size to contain four gallons. This must have been a very populous place. The soil is admirable, the prospect boundless; but, from the scanty number of inhabitants in view, rather lonely. It will one day contain an immense population again."— *Flint's Recollections*, p. 166.— Flagg.

St. Charles, Mo.

XXIV

"Westward the star of empire holds its way." Berkeley.

"Travellers entering here behold around A large and spacious plain, on every side Strew'd with beauty, whose fair grassy ground, Mantled with green, and goodly beautified With all the ornaments of Flora's pride."

"The flowers, the fair young flowers."

"Ye are the stars of earth."

Ten years ago, and the pleasant little village of St. Charles was regarded as quite the frontier-post of civilized life; now 277 it is a flourishing town, and an early stage in the traveller's route to the Far West. Its origin, with that of most of the early settlements in this section of the valley, is French, and [19] some few of the peculiar characteristics of its founders are yet retained, though hardly to the extent as in some other villages which date back to the same era. The ancient style of some of the buildings, the singular costume, the quick step, the dark complexion, dark eyes and dark hair, and the merry, fluent flow of a nondescript idiom, are, however, at once perceived by the stranger, and indicate a peculiar people. St. Charles was settled in 1769, and for upward of forty years retained its original name, *Les Petites Cotes.* For some time it was under the Spanish government with the

rest of the territory, and from this circumstance and a variety of others its population is made up of a heterogeneous mass of people, from almost every nation under the sun. Quite a flood of German emigration has, within six or seven years past, poured into the county. That wizard spell, however, under which all these early French settlements seem to have been lying for more than a century, St. Charles has not, until within a few years past, possessed the energy to throw off, though now the inroads of American enterprise upon the ancient order of things is too palpable to be unobserved or mistaken. The site of the town is high and healthy, upon a bed of limestone extending along the stream, and upon a narrow *plateau* one or two miles in extent beneath the overhanging bluffs. Upon this interval are laid off five streets parallel with the river, only the first of which is lined with buildings. Below the village the alluvion stretches along the margin of the stream for three miles, until, reaching the termination of the [20] highlands at the Mamelles, it spreads itself out to the north and west into the celebrated prairie I have described. St. Charles has long been a 278 great thoroughfare to the vast region west of the Missouri, and must always continue so to be: a railroad from St. Louis in this direction must pass through the place, as well as the national road now in progress. These circumstances, together with its eligible site for commerce; the exhaustless fertility of the neighbouring region, and the quantities of coal and iron it is believed to contain, must render St. Charles, before many years have passed away, a place of considerable mercantile and manufacturing importance. It has an extensive steam flouring-mill in constant operation; and to such an extent is the cultivation of wheat carried on in the surrounding country, for which the soil is pre-eminently suited, that in this respect alone the place must become important. About six miles south of St. Charles, upon the Booneslick road, is situated a considerable settlement, composed chiefly of gentlemen from the city of Baltimore.172 The country is exceedingly beautiful, healthy, and fertile; the farms are under high cultivation, and the tone of society is distinguished for its refinement and intelligence.

172 At the time Flagg wrote, St. Charles, like many other Western towns, entertained the hope that the Cumberland Road would eventually be extended thereto, thus placing them

upon the great artery of Western travel. See Woods's *English Prairie*, in our volume x, p. 327, note 76. Also consult T. B. Searight, The Old Pike (Uniontown, 1894), and A. B. Hulbert “Cumberland Road,” in *Historic Highways of America* (Cleveland, 1904).

Boone's Lick Road, commencing at St. Charles, runs westward across Dardenne Creek to Cottleville, thence to Dalhoff post-office and Pauldingville, on the western boundary of the county. Its total length is twenty-six miles.— Ed.

The citizens of St. Charles are many of them Catholics; and a male and female seminary under their patronage are in successful operation, to say nothing of a nunnery, beneath the shade of which such institutions invariably repose. “St. Charles College,” a Protestant institute of two or three years' standing, is well supported, having 279 four professors [21] and about a hundred students.173 Its principal building is a large and elegant structure of brick, and the seminary will doubtless, ere long, become an ornament to the place. At no distant day it may assume the character and standing of its elder brothers east of the Alleghanies; and the muse that ever delights to revel in college-hall may strike her lyre even upon the banks of the far-winding, wilderness Missouri.

173 St. Charles College, founded by Mrs. Catherine Collier and her son George, was opened in 1836 under the presidency of Reverend John H. Fielding. The Methodist Episcopal church has directed the institution.

Madame Duchesne, a companion of Mother Madeline Barral, founder of the Society of the Sacred Heart, started a mission at St. Charles in 1819; but the colony was soon removed to St. Louis. In 1828, however, she succeeded in establishing permanently at St. Charles the Academy of the Sacred Heart, with Madame Lucile as superior.— Ed.

Among the heterogeneous population of St. Charles are still numbered a few of those wild, daring spirits, whose lives and exploits are so intimately identified with the early history of the country, and most of whose days are now passed beyond the border, upon the broad buffalo-plains at the base of the Rocky Mountains. Most of them are trappers, hunters,

couriers du bois , traders to the distant post of Santa Fé, or *engagés* of the American Fur Company. Into the company of one of these remarkable men it was my fortune to fall during my visit at St. Charles; and not a little to my interest and edification did he recount many of his “hairbreadth 'scapes,” his “most disastrous chances,”

“His moving accidents by flood and field.”

All of this, not to mention sundry sage items on the most approved method of capturing *deer, bar, buffalo* , and *painters* , I must be permitted to waive. I am no tale-teller, “but your mere traveller, believe me,” as Ben Jonson has it. The proper home of the buffalo seems now to be the vast [22] plains south and west of the Missouri border, called 280 the Platte country, compared with which the prairies east of the Mississippi are mere meadows in miniature. The latter region was, doubtless, once a favourite resort of the animal, and the banks of the “beautiful fiver” were long his grazing-grounds; but the onward march of civilization has driven him, with the Indian, nearer the setting sun. Upon the plains they now inhabit they rove in herds of thousands; they regularly migrate with change of season, and, in crossing rivers, many are squeezed to death. Dead bodies are sometimes found floating upon the Missouri far down its course.

With the village and county of St. Charles are connected most of the events attending the early settlement of the region west of the Mississippi; and during the late war with Great Britain, the atrocities of the savage tribes were chiefly perpetrated here. Early in that conflict the Sacs and Foxes, Miamis, Pottawattamies, Iowas, and Kickapoo Indians commenced a most savage warfare upon the advanced settlements, and the deeds of daring which distinguished the gallant “rangers” during the two years in which, unaided by government, they sustained, single-handed, the conflict against a crafty foe, are almost unequalled in the history of warfare.174 St. Charles county and the adjoining county of Booneslick were the principal scene of a conflict in which boldness and barbarity, courage and cruelty, contended long for the mastery. The latter county to which I have alluded [23] received its name from the celebrated Daniel Boone.175 After being deprived, by

174 For sketches of the Potawotami, Miami, and Kickapoo, see Croghan's *Journals*, in our volume i, pp. 115, 122, 139, notes 84, 87, 111; for the Sauk and Fox, see J. Long's *Voyages*, in our volume ii, p. 185, note 85; for the Iowa, Brackenridge's *Journal*, in our volume vi, p. 51, note 13.— Ed.

175 Flagg makes an error in speaking of Boone's Lick County, since there was none known by that name. He evidently had in mind Warren County, organized in 1833 from the western part of St. Charles County. Boone County created in November, 1820, with its present limits, named in honor of Daniel Boone, is in the fifth tier of counties west from Missouri River.— Ed.

281 the chicanery of law, of that spot for which he had endured so much and contended so boldly in the beautiful land of his adoption, we find him, at the close of the last century, journeying onward towards the West, there to pass the evening of his days and lay away his bones. Being asked " *why* he had left that dear Kentucke, which he had discovered and won from the wild Indian, for the wilderness of Missouri," his memorable reply betrays the leading feature of his character, the *primum mobile* of the man: "Too crowded! too crowded! I want elbow-room!" At the period of Boone's arrival in 1798, the only form of government which existed in this distant region was that of the "Regulators," a sort of military or hunters' republic, the chief of which was styled *commandant.* To this office the old veteran was at once elected, and continued to exercise its rather arbitrary prerogatives until, like his former home, the country had become subject to other laws and other councils. He continued here to reside, however, until the death of his much-loved wife, partner of all his toils and adventures, in 1813, when he removed to the residence of his son, some miles in the interior. Here he discovered a large and productive salt-lick, long and profitably worked, and which still continues to bear his name and give celebrity to the surrounding country. To this lick was the old. hunter accustomed to repair in his aged days, when his sinews were unequal to the chase, and lie in wait for the deer [24] which frequented the spring. In this occupation and in that of trapping beavers he lived

comfortably on until 1818, when he calmly yielded up his adventurous spirit to its God.176 What an eventful

176 For an account of Daniel Boone and Boone's Lick, see Bradbury's *Travels*, in our volume v, pp. 43, 52, notes 16, 24, respectively. Daniel Boone arrived at the Femme Osage district in western St. Charles County, in 1798. He died September 26, 1820 (not 1818).— Ed.

282 life was that! How varied and wonderful its incidents! How numerous and pregnant its vicissitudes! How strange the varieties of natural character it developed! The name of Boone will never cease to be remembered so long as this Western Valley remains the pride of a continent, and the beautiful streams of his discovery roll on their teeming tribute to the ocean!

Of the Indian tribe which formerly inhabited this pleasant region, and gave a name to the river and state, scarcely a vestige is now to be seen. The only associations connected with the savages are of barbarity and perfidy. Upon the settlers of St. Charles county it was that Black Hawk directed his first efforts; 177 and, until within a few years, a stoccade fort for refuge in emergency has existed in every considerable settlement. Among a variety of traditionary matter related to me relative to the customs of the tribe which formerly resided near St. Charles, the following anecdote from one of the oldest settlers may not prove uninteresting.

177 There seems to be little or no foundation for this statement. Consult J. B. Patterson, *Life of Ma-Ka-Tai-Me-She-Kia-Kiak or Black Hawk* (Boston, (1834), and R. G. Thwaites, “The Story of the Black Hawk War,” in *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, xii, pp. 217–265.— Ed.

“Many years ago, while the Indian yet retained a crumbling foothold upon this pleasant land of his fathers, a certain Cis-atlantic naturalist — so the story goes — overflowing with laudable zeal for the advancement of science, had succeeded in penetrating the

wilds of Missouri in pursuit of his favourite study. Early one sunny morning a man in strange [25] attire was perceived by the simple natives running about their prairie with uplifted face and outspread palms, eagerly in pursuit of certain bright flies and insects, which, when secured, were deposited with manifest satisfaction 283 into a capacious tin box at his girdle. Surprised at a spectacle so novel and extraordinary, a fleet runner was despatched over the prairie to catch the curious animal and conduct him into the village. A council of sober old chiefs was called to *sit upon* the matter, who, after listening attentively to all the phenomena of the case, with a sufficiency of grunting, sagaciously and decidedly pronounced the pale-face a *fool.* It was in vain the unhappy man urged upon the assembled wisdom of the nation the distinction between a *natural* and a naturalist. The council grunted to all he had to offer, but to them the distinction was without a difference; they could comprehend not a syllable he uttered. 'Actions speak louder than words — so reasoned the old chiefs; and as the custom was to *kill* all their own fools, preparation was forthwith commenced to administer this summary cure for folly upon the unhappy naturalist. At this critical juncture a prudent old Indian suggested the propriety, as the fool belonged to the 'pale faces,' of consulting their 'Great Father' at St. Louis on the subject, and requesting his presence at the execution. The sentence was suspended, therefore, for a few hours, while a deputation was despatched to General Clarke,178 detailing all the circumstances of the case, and announcing the intention of killing the fool as soon as possible. [26] The old general listened attentively to the matter, and then quietly advised them, as the *fool* was a *pale face* , not to kill him, but to conduct him safely to St. Louis, that he might dispose of him himself. This proposition was readily acceded to, as the only wish of the Indians was to rid the world of a *fool.* And thus was the worthy naturalist relieved from an unpleasant predicament, not, however, without the loss of his box of bugs; a loss he is

178 For biographical sketch of General William Clark, see Bradbury's *Travels*, in our volume v, p. 254, note 143.— Ed.

284 said to have bewailed as bitterly as, in anticipation, he had bewailed the loss of his head." For the particulars of this anecdote I am no voucher; I give the tale as told me; but as it doubtless has its origin in fact, it may have suggested to the author of "The Prairie" that amusing character, "Obed Battius, M.D.," especially as the scene of that interesting tale lies in a neighbouring region.179

179 Obed Battius, M.D., is a character in James Fenimore Cooper's novel, *The Prairie* (1826)— Ed.

It was a sultry afternoon when I left St. Charles. The road for some miles along the bottom runs parallel with the river, until, ascending a slight elevation, the traveller is on the prairie. Upon this road I had not proceeded many miles before I came fully to the conclusion that the route I was then pursuing would never conduct me and my horse to the town of Grafton, Illinois, the point of my destination. In this idea I was soon confirmed by a half-breed whom I chanced to meet. Receiving a few general instructions, therefore, touching my route, all of which I had quite forgotten ten minutes after, I pushed forth into the pathless prairie, and was soon in its centre, almost buried, with my horse beneath me, in the monstrous vegetation. [27] Between the parallel rolls of the prairie, the size of the weeds and undergrowth was stupendous; and the vegetation heaved in masses heavily back and forth in the wind, as if for years it had flourished on in rank, undisturbed luxuriance. Directly before me, along the northern horizon, rose the white cliffs of the Mississippi, which, as they went up to the sheer height, in some places, of several hundred feet, presented a most mountain-like aspect as viewed over the level surface of the plain. Towards a dim column of smoke which curled lazily upward among these cliffs did I now direct my course. The broad disk 285 of the sun was rapidly wheeling down the western heavens; my tired horse could advance through the heavy grass no faster than a walk; the pale bluffs, apparently but a few miles distant, seemed receding like an *ignis fatuus* as I approached them; and there lay the swampy forest to ford, and the "terrible Mississippi" beyond to ferry, before I could hope for food or a resting-place. In simple verity, I began to meditate upon the yielding character of prairie-grass for a couch. And yet, of such

surpassing loveliness was the scene spread out around me, that I seemed hardly to realize a situation disagreeable enough, but from which my thoughts were constantly wandering. The grasses and flowering wild-plants of the Mamelle Prairie are far-famed for their exquisite brilliancy of hue and gracefulness of form. Among the flowers my eye detected a species unlike to any I had yet met with, and which seemed indigenous only here. Its fairy-formed corolla [28] was of a bright enamelled crimson, which, in the depths of the dark herbage, glowed like a living coal. How eloquently did this little flower bespeak the being and attributes of its Maker. Ah!

“There is religion in a flower; Mountains and oceans, planets, suns, and systems, Bear not the impress of Almighty power In characters more legible than those Which he has written on the tiniest flower Whose light bell bends beneath the dewdrop's weight.”

One who has never looked upon the Western prairie in the pride of its blushing bloom can hardly conceive the surpassing loveliness of its summer flora; and, if the idea is not easy to conceive, still less is it so to convey. The autumn flowers in their richness I have not yet beheld; and in the early days of June, when I first stood upon the prairies, the beauteous sisterhood of spring were all in their graves; and the sweet springtime of the year it is when the 286 gentle race of flowers dance over the teeming earth in gayest guise and profusion. In the first soft days of April, when the tender green of vegetation begins to overspread the soil scathed by the fires of autumn, the *viola* , primrose of the prairie, in all its rare and delicate forms; the *anemone* , or wind-flower; the blue dewy harebell; the pale oxlip; the flowering *arbute* , and all the pretty family of the pinks and lilies lie sprinkled, as by the enchantment of a summer shower, or by the tripping footsteps of Titania with her fairies, over the landscape. The blue and the white then tint the perspective, from the most [29] limpid cerulean of an *iris* to the deep purple of the pink; from the pearly lustre of the cowslip to the golden richness of the buttercup. In early springtime, too, the island groves of the prairies are also in flower; and the brilliant crimson of the *cercis canadensis* , or Judas-tree; the delightful fragrance of the *lonicera* or honeysuckle, and the light yellow of the *jasimum* , render the forests as pleasant to the smell as to the eye. But spring-time

passes away, and with her pass away the fair young flowers her soft breath had warmed into being. Summer comes over the prairies like a giant; the fiery dog-star rages, and forth leap a host of bright ones to greet his coming. The *heliotrope* and *helianthus* , in all their rich variety; the wild rose, flinging itself around the shrub-oak like a wreath of rainbows; the *orchis* , the balmy thyme, the burgamot, and the asters of every tint and proportion, then prevail, throwing forth their gaudy, sunburnt petals upon the wind, until the whole meadow seems arrayed in the royal livery of a sunset sky. Scarcely does the summer begin to decline, and autumn's golden sunlight to stream in misty magnificence athwart the landscape, than a thousand gorgeous plants of its own mellow hue are nodding in stately beauty over the plain. Yellow is the garniture of the autumnal Flora of the prairies; and 287 the haughty golden-rod, and all the splendid forms of the *gentiana* , commingling with the white and crimson *eupatorium* , and the red spire of the *liatris* , everywhere bespangle the scene; while the trumpet-formed corolla of the *bignonia radicans* glitters [30] in the sunbeams, amid the luxuriant wreathing of ivy, from the tall capitals of the isolated trees. All the *solidago* species are in their glory, and every variety of the *lobelia* ; and the blood-red sumach in the hollows and brakes, and the *sagittaria* , or arrow-head, with its three-leaved calyx and its three white petals darting forth from the recesses of the dark herbage, and all the splendid forms of the aquatic plants, with their broad blossoms and their cool scroll-like leaves, lend a finished richness of hue to the landscape, which fails not well to harmonize with the rainbow glow of the distant forest.

“— Such beauty, varying in the light Of gorgeous nature, cannot be portrayed By words, nor by the pencil's silent skill; But is the property of those alone Who have beheld it, noted it with care, And, in their minds, recorded it with love.”

What wonder, then, that, amid a scene like this, where the summer reigned, and young autumn was beginning to anticipate its mellow glories, the traveller should in a measure have forgotten his vocation, and loitered lazily along his way!

Portage des Sioux, Mo.

288

XXV

“There's music in the forest leaves When summer winds are there, And in the laugh of forest girls That braid their sunny hair.”

Halleck.

“The forests are around him in their pride, The green savannas, and the mighty waves; And isles of flowers, bright floating o'er the tide That images the fairy world it laves.”

Hemans.

There is one feature of the Mamelle Prairie, besides its eminent beauty and its profusion of flowering plants, which distinguishes it from every other with which I have met. I allude to the almost perfect uniformity of its surface. There is little of that undulating, wavelike slope and swell which characterizes the peculiar species of surface called prairie. With the exception of a few lakes, abounding with aquatic plants and birds, and those broad furrows traversing the plain, apparently ancient beds of the rivers, the surface appears smooth as a lawn. This circumstance goes far to corroborate the idea of alluvial origin. And thus it was that, lost in a mazy labyrinth of grass and flowers, I wandered on over the smooth soil of the prairie, quite regardless of the whereabout my steps were conducting me. The sun was just going down when my horse entered a slight footpath leading into a point of woodland upon [32] the right. This I pursued for some time, heedlessly presuming that it would conduct me to the banks of the river; when, lo! to my surprise, on emerging from the forest, I found myself in the midst of a French village, with its heavy roofs and broad piazzas. Never was the lazy hero of Diedrich Knickerbocker — luckless Rip — more sadly bewildered, after a twenty years' doze 289 among the Hudson Highlands, than was your loiterer at this unlooked-for apparition. To find one's self suddenly translated from the wild, flowery prairie into the heart of an aged, moss-grown village, of such foreign aspect,

withal, was by no means easy to reconcile with one's notions of reality. Of the name, or even the existence of the village, I had been quite as ignorant as if it had never possessed either; and in vain was it that I essayed, in my perplexity, to make myself familiar with these interesting items of intelligence by inquiry of the primitive-looking beings whom I chanced to encounter, as I rode slowly on into the village through the tall stoccades of the narrow streets. Every one stared as I addressed him; but, shaking his head and quickening his pace, pointed me on in the direction I was proceeding, and left me to pursue it in ignorance and single blessedness. This mystery — for thus to my excited fancy did it seem — became at length intolerable. Drawing up my horse before the open door of a cottage, around which, beneath the galleries, were gathered a number of young people of both sexes, I very peremptorily made the demand *where I was.* All stared, and some few took it upon them, graceless youths, to [33] laugh; until, at length, a dark young fellow, with black eyes and black whiskers, stepped forward, and, in reply to my inquiry repeated, informed me that the village was called " *Portage des Sioux;* " that the place of my destination was upon the opposite bank of the Mississippi, several miles above — too distant to think of regaining my route at that late hour; and very politely the dark young man offered to procure for me accommodation for the night, though the village could boast no inn. Keeping close on the heels of my *conducteur* , I again began to thrid the narrow lanes of the hamlet, from the doors and windows of every cottage of which peeped forth an eager group of dark-eyed women and children, in uncontrolled 290 curiosity at the apparition of a stranger in their streets at such an advanced hour of the day. The little village seemed completely cut off from all the world beside, and as totally unconscious of the proceedings of the community around as if it were a portion of another hemisphere. The place lies buried in forest except upon the south, where it looks out upon the Mamelle Prairie, and to the north is an opening in the belt of woods along the river-bank, through which, beyond the stream, rise the white cliffs in points and pinnacles like the towers and turrets of a castellated town, to the perpendicular altitude of several hundred feet. The scene was one of romantic beauty, as the moonbeams silvered the forest-tops and cliffs, flinging their broad shadows athwart the bosom of the waters, gliding in oily rippling at their

base. The site of Portage des Sioux is about seven miles above [34] the town of Alton, and five below the embouchure of the Illinois. Its landing is good; it contains three or four hundred inhabitants, chiefly French; can boast a few trading establishments, and, as is invariably the case in the villages of this singular people, however inconsiderable, has an ancient Catholic church rearing its gray spire above the low-roofed cottages. Attached to it, also, is a “common field” of twelve hundred *arpens* — something less than as many acres — stretching out into the prairie. The soil is, of course, incomparably fertile. The garden-plats around each door were dark with vegetation, overtopping the pickets of the enclosures; and away to the south into the prairie swept the broad maizefields nodding and rustling in all the gorgeous garniture of summer.

My *conducteur* stopped, at length, at the gate of a small brick tenement, the only one in the village, whose modern air contrasted strangely enough with the venerable aspect of everything else; and having made known my necessities 291 through the medium of sundry Babel gibberings and gesticulations, he left me with the promise to call early in the morning and see me on my way.

“What's your *name* , any how?” was the courteous salutation of mine host, as I placed my foot across his threshold, after attending to the necessities of the faithful animal which had been my companion through the fatigues of the day. He was a dark-browed, swarthy-looking man, with exceedingly black hair, and an eye which one might have suspected of Indian origin but for the genuine cunning [35] — the “lurking devil”— of its expression. Replying to the unceremonious interrogatory with a smile, which by no means modified the haughty moroseness of my landlord's visage, another equally civil query was proposed, to which I received the hurried reply, “Jean Paul de —.” From this *amiable* personage I learned, by dint of questioning, that the village of Portage des Sioux had been standing about half a century: that it was originally settled by a colony from Cahokia: that its importance now was as considerable as it ever had been: that it was terribly shaken in the great earthquakes of 1811, many of the old cottages having been thrown down and his own house rent from “turret to foundation-stone”— the chasm in the brick wall

yet remaining — and, finally, that the village owed its name to the stratagem of a band of Sioux Indians, in an expedition against the Missouris. The legend is as follows: “The Sioux being at war with a tribe of the Missouris, a party descended the Upper Mississippi on an expedition for pillage. The Missouris, apprized of their approach, laid in ambush in the woods at the mouth of the river, intending to take their enemies by surprise as their canoes doubled the point to ascend. The Sioux, in the depths of Indian subtlety, apprehending such a manoeuvre, instead of descending to the confluence, landed at the portage, 292 took their canoes upon their backs, and crossed the prairie to the Indian village on the Missouri, several miles above. By this stratagem the design of their expedition was accomplished, and they had returned to their canoes in safety with their plunder long [36] before the Missouris, who were anxiously awaiting them at their ambuscade, were aware of their first approach.”

Supper was soon served up, prepared in the neatest French fashion. While at table a circumstance transpired which afforded me some little diversion. Several of the villagers dropped in during the progress of the meal, who, having seated themselves at the board, a spirited colloquy ensued in the *patois* of these old hamlets — a species of *gumbo-French* , which a genuine native of *La Belle France* would probably manage to unravel quite as well as a Northern Yankee. From a few expressions, however, the meaning of which were obvious, together with sundry furtive glances to the eye, and divers confused withdrawals of the gaze, it was not very difficult to detect some pretty free remarks upon the stranger-guest. All this was suffered to pass with undisturbed *nonchalance* , until the meal was concluded; when the hitherto mute traveller, turning to the negro attendant, demanded in familiar French a glass of water. *Presto* ! the effect was electric. Such visages of ludicrous distress! such stealthy glancing of dark eyes! such glowing of sallow cheeks! The swarthy landlord at length hurriedly ejaculated, “ *Parlez vous Français* ?” while the dark-haired hostess could only falter “ *Pardonnez moi* !” A hearty laugh on my own part served rather to increase than diminish the *empressement* , as it confirmed the suspicion that their guest had realized to the full extent their hospitable remarks. Rising from the table to put an end

to rather an awkward [37] scene, I took my *portfeuille* and seated myself in the gallery to sketch the events of the 293 day. But the dark landlord looked with no favouring eye upon the proceeding; and, as he was by no means the man to stand for ceremony, he presently let drop a civil hint of the propriety of *retiring* ; the propriety of complying with which civil hint was at once perceived, early as was the hour; and soon the whole house and village was buried in slumber. And then “the stranger within their gates” rose quietly from his couch, and in a few moments was luxuriating in the fresh night-wind, laden with perfumes from the flowerets of the prairie it swept. And beautifully was the wan moonlight playing over forest, and prairie, and rustling maize-field, and over the gray church spire, and the old village in its slumbering. And the giant cliffs rose white and ghastly beyond the dark waters of the endless river, as it rolled on in calm magnificence, “for ever flowing and the same for ever.” And associations of the scene with other times and other men thronged “thick and fast” upon the fancy.

The first vermeil flush of morning was firing the eastern forest-tops, when a single horseman was to be seen issuing from the narrow lanes of the ancient village of Portage des Sioux, whose inhabitants had not yet shaken off the drowsiness of slumber, and winding slowly along beneath the huge trees skirting the prairie's margin. After an hour of irregular wandering through the heavy meadow-grass, drenched and dripping in the dews, and glistening in the morning sunlight, he plunges into the [38] old woods on his right, and in a few moments stands beneath the vineclad sycamores, with the brilliant, trumpet-formed flower of the *bignonia* suspended from the branches upon the margin of a stream. It is the “Father of Waters,” and beyond its bounding bosom lies the little hamlet of Grafton, slumbering in quiet beauty beneath the cliffs. The scene is a lovely one: the mighty river rolling calmly and majestically 294 on — the moss-tasselled forest upon its bank — the isles of brightness around which it ripples — the craggy precipice, rearing its bald, broad forehead beyond — the smoking cottages at the base, and the balmy breath of morning, with fragrance curling the blue waters, are outlines of a portraiture which imagination alone can fill up.

Blast after blast from the throat of a huge horn suspended from the limb of an aged cotton-wood, went pealing over the waters; but all the echoes in the surrounding forest had been awakened, and an hour was gone by, before a float, propelled by the sturdy sinews of a single brace of arms, had obeyed the summons. And so the traveller sat himself quietly down upon the bank beneath the tree-shade, and luxuriated on the feast of natural scenery spread out before him.

The site of the town of Grafton is an elevated strip of bottom-land, stretching along beneath the bluffs, and in this respect somewhat resembling Alton, fifteen or twenty miles below. The *locale* of the village is, however, far more delightful than that of its neighbour, whatever the relative advantages for commerce they may boast, though those of the [39] former are neither few nor small. Situated at the *mouth* of the Illinois as to navigation; possessing an excellent landing for steamers, an extensive and fertile interior, rapidly populating, and inexhaustible quarries for the builder, the town, though recently laid off, is going on in the march of improvement; and, with an hundred other villages of the West, bids fair to become a nucleus of wealth and commerce.

Grafton, Ill.

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XXVI

“When breath and sense have left this clay, In yon damp vault, oh lay me not; But kindly bear my bones away To some lone, green, and sunny spot.”

“Away to the prairie! away! Where the sun-gilt flowers are waving, When awaked from their couch at the breaking of day, O'er the emerald lawn the gay zephyrs play, And their pinions in dewdrops are laving.”

On the morning of my arrival at Grafton, while my brisk little hostess was making ready for my necessities, I stepped out to survey the place, and availed myself of an hour of leisure

to visit a somewhat remarkable cavern among the cliffs, a little below the village, the entrance of which had caught my attention while awaiting the movements of the ferryman on the opposite bank of the Mississippi. It is approached by a rough footpath along the [40] river-margin, piled up with huge masses of limestone, which have been toppled from the beetling crags above: these, at this point, as before stated, are some hundred feet in perpendicular height. The orifice of the cave is elliptical in outline, and somewhat regular, being an excavation by the whirling of waters apparently in the surface of the smooth escarpment; it is about twenty feet in altitude, and as many in width. Passing the threshold of the entrance, an immediate expansion takes place into a spacious apartment some forty or fifty feet in depth, and about the same in extreme height: nearly in the centre a huge perpendicular column of solid rock rears itself from the floor to the roof. From this point the cavern lengthens itself away into a series of apartments to the distance of several hundred feet, with two lesser entrances in the same line with that in the middle, and at regular intervals. The 296 walls of the cave, like everything of a geological character in this region, are composed of a secondary limestone, abounding in testaceous fossils. The spot exhibits conclusive evidence of having once been subject to diluvial action; and the cavern itself, as I have observed, seems little else than an excavation from the heart of an enormous mass of marine petrifaction. Large quantities of human bones of all sizes have been found in this cavern, leaving little doubt that, by the former dwellers in this fair land, the spot was employed as a catacomb. I myself picked up the *sincipital* section of a scull, which would have ecstasied a virtuoso beyond measure; and [41] several of the *lumbar vertebræ* , which, if they prove nothing else, abundantly demonstrate the aboriginal natives of North America to have been no pigmy race. The spot is now desecrated by the presence of a party of sturdy coopers, who could not, however, have chosen a more delightful apartment for their handicraft; rather more taste than piety, however, has been betrayed in the selection. The view of the water and the opposite forest from the elevated mouth of the cavern is very fine, and three or four broadleafed sycamores fling over the whole a delightful shade. The waters of the river flow onward in a deep current at the base,

and the fish throw themselves into the warm sunlight from the surface. What a charming retreat from the fiery fervour of a midsummer noon!

The heavy bluffs which overhang the village, and over which winds the great road to the north, though not a little wearisome to surmount, command from the summit a vast and beautiful landscape. A series of inclined planes are talked of by the worthy people of Grafton to overcome these bluffs, and render their village less difficult of inland ingress and regress; and though the idea is not a little amusing, of rail-cars running off at an angle of forty-five 297 degrees, yet when we consider that this place, if it ever becomes of *any* importance, must become a grand thoroughfare and dépôt on the route from St. Louis and the agricultural regions of the Missouri to the northern counties of Illinois, the design seems less chimerical *than it might be.* A charter, indeed, for a railroad [42] from Grafton, through Carrolton to Springfield, has been obtained, a company organized, and a portion of the stock subscribed;180 while another corporation is to erect a splendid hotel. The traveller over the bluffs, long before he stands upon their summit, heartily covets any species of locomotion other than the back of a quadruped. But the scenery, as he ascends, caught at glimpses through the forest, is increasingly beautiful. Upon one of the loftiest eminences to the right stand the ruins of a huge stone-heap; the tumulus, perchance, of some red-browed chieftain of other days. It was a beautiful custom of these simple-hearted sons of the wilderness to lay away the relics of their loved and honoured ones even upon the loftiest, greenest spots of the whole earth; where the freed spirit might often rise to look abroad over the glories of that pleasant forest-home where once it roved in the chase or bounded forth upon the path of war. And it is a circumstance not a little worthy of notice, that veneration for the dead is a feeling universally betrayed by uncivilized nations. The Indian widow of Florida annually despoils herself of her luxuriant tresses to wreathe the headstone beneath which reposes the bones of her husband. The Canadian mother, when her infant is torn from her bosom by the chill hand of death, and, with a heart almost breaking, she has been forced to lay him away

180 An Illinois legislative act approved January 16, 1836, granted to Paris Mason, Alfred Caverly, John Wyatt, and William Craig a charter to construct a railroad from Grafton, in Greene County, to Springfield, by way of Carrollton, Point Pleasant, and Millville, under the title of Mississippi and Springfield Railroad Company. The road was, however, not built.—Ed.

298 beneath the sod, is said, in the touching intensity of her affection, to bathe the tombstone of her little one with that genial flood which Nature poured through her veins for his nourishment [43] while living. The Oriental nations, it is well known, whether civilized or savage, have ever, from deepest antiquity, manifested an eloquent solicitude for the sepulchres of their dead. The expiring Israelite, we are always told, “was gathered to his fathers;” and the tombs of the Jewish monarchs, some of which exist even to the present day, were gorgeously magnificent. The nations of modern Turkey and India wreathe the tombs of their departed friends with the gayest and most beautiful flowers of the season; while the very atmosphere around is refreshed by fountains.

From the site of the stone-heap of which I have spoken, and which may or may *not* have been erected to the memory of some Indian chieftain, a glorious cosmorama of the whole adjacent region, miles in circumference, is unfolded to the eye. At your feet, far below, flow on the checkered waters of the Mississippi, gliding in ripples among their emerald islands; while at intervals, as the broad stream comes winding on from the west, is caught the flashing sheen of its surface through the dense old woods that fringe its margin. Beyond these, to the south, lies spread the broad and beautiful Mamelle Prairie, even to its faint blue blending with the distant horizon laid open to the eye, rolling and heaving its heavy herbage in the breeze to the sunlight like the long wave of ocean. And the bright green island-groves, the cape-like forest-strips swelling out upon its bosom, the flashing surface of lakes and water-sheets, almost buried in the luxuriance of vegetation, with thousands of [44] aquatic birds wheeling their broad flight over them, all contribute to fill up the lineaments of a scene of beauty which fails not to enrapture the spectator. Now 299 and then along the smooth meadow, a darker luxuriance of verdure, with the curling cabin-

smoke upon its border, and vast herds of domestic cattle in its neighbourhood, betray the presence of man, blending *his* works with the wild and beautiful creations of Nature. On the right, at a distance of two miles, come in the placid waters of the Illinois, from the magnificent bluffs in the back-ground stealing softly and quietly into the great river through the wooded islands at its mouth. The day was a sultry one; the atmosphere was like the breath of a furnace; but over the heights of the bluffs swept the morning air, fresh and cool from the distant prairie. For some miles, as is invariably the case upon the banks of the Western rivers, the road winds along among bluffs and sink-holes; and so constantly does its course vary and diverge, that a pocket compass is anything but a needless appendage. Indeed, all his calculations to the contrary notwithstanding, the traveller throughout the whole of this region describes with his route a complete Virginia fence. The road is not a little celebrated for its tortuosity. At length the traveller emerges upon a prairie. On its edge beneath the forest stands a considerable settlement, bordering on Macoupin Creek, from which it takes a name. In the latter part of 1816 this settlement was commenced, and was then the most northern location of whites in the Territory of Illinois.181

181 For a description of Macoupin Creek, see *ante*, p. 226, note 142. Flagg draws his information concerning Macoupin Settlement from Peck, *Gazetteer of Illinois.* According to the latter the settlement was started by Daniel Allen, and John and Paul Harriford, in December, 1816. As regards Peck's statement that Macoupin Settlement was at the time of its inception the most northern white community in the Territory of Illinois, there is much doubt. Fort Dearborn (Chicago), built in 1804, and evacuated on August 15, 1812, was rebuilt by Captain Hezekiah Bradley, who arrived with two companies on July 4, 1816, and a settlement sprang up here at once.— Ed.

[45] It was evening, at the close of a sultry day, that the 300 village of Carrolton appeared before me among the trees.182 I was struck with the quiet air of simple elegance which seemed to pervade the place, though its general outlines are those of every other Western village I have visited. One broad, regular street extends through the town, upon either side of which stand the stores and better class of private residences; while in the back-ground,

scattered promiscuously along the transverse avenues, axe log-cabins surrounded by cornfields, much like those in the villages of the French. Three sides of the town are bounded by forest, while the fourth opens upon the prairie called “String Prairie.” In the centre of the village, upon the principal street, is reserved a square, in the middle of which stands the courthouse, with other public structures adjacent, and the stores and hotels along its sides. One thing in Carrolton which struck me as a little singular, was the unusual diversity of religious denominations. Of these there are not less than five or six; three of which have churches, and a fourth is setting itself in order to build; and all this in a village of hardly one thousand inhabitants. The courthouse is a handsome edifice of brick, two stories, with a neat spire. The neighbouring region is fertile and healthy; well proportioned with prairie and timber, well watered by the Macoupin and Apple Creeks,183 and well populated by a sturdy, thriving race of yeomanry. This is, indeed, strictly an agricultural village; and, so far as my own observation [46] extended, little attention is paid or taste manifested for anything else.

182 The first settler in Carrollton was Thomas Carlin, who arrived in the spring of 1819. In 1821 the place was chosen as the seat of Greene County, and surveyed the same year, although the records were not filed until July 30, 1825. See *History of Greene and Jersey Counties, Illinois* (Springfield, 1885).— Ed.

183 Apple Creek, a tributary of Illinois River, flows in a western trend through Greene County.— Ed

About a dozen miles north of Carrolton is situated the 301 village of Whitehall, a flourishing settlement in the prairie's edge, from the centre of which, some miles distant, it may be seen.184 Three years ago the spot was an uncultivated waste; the town has now two houses of worship, a school, an incorporation for a seminary, two taverns, six hundred inhabitants, and a steam mill to feed them withal. A few miles from this place, on the outskirts of another small settlement, I was met by a company of emigrants from Western New-York. The women and children were piled upon the top of the household stuff with

about as much ceremony as if they constituted a portion thereof, in a huge lumbering baggage-wagon, around which dangled suspended pots and kettles, dutch-ovens and tin-kitchens, cheese-roasters and bread-toasters, all in admired confusion, jangling harsh discord. The cart-wheels themselves, as they gyrated upon the parched axles, like the gates of Milton's hell on their hinges, “grated harsh thunder.” In the van of the cavalcade strode soberly on the patriarch of the family, with his elder sons, axe upon shoulder, rifle in hand, a veritable Israel Bush. For six weeks had the wanderers been travelling, and a weary, bedusted-looking race were they, that emigrant family.

184 Whitehall, in Greene County, forty-five miles north of Alton, was laid out by David Barrow in 1832. Pottery was first made there in 1835, and has since become an important industry, contributing largely to the rapid progress of which Flagg speaks.— Ed.

The rapidity with which a Western village goes forward, and begins to assume importance among the nations, after having once been born and [47] christened, is amazing. The mushrooms of a summer's night, the wondrous gourd of Jonah, the astonishing bean of the giant-killer, or the enchantments of the Arabian Nights, are but fit parallels to the growth of the prairie-village of the Far West. Of all this I was forcibly reminded in passing through quite 302 a town upon my route named Manchester, where I dined, and which, if my worthy landlord was not incorrect, two years before could hardly boast a log-cabin.185 It is now a thriving place, on the northern border of Mark's Prairie, from which it may be seen four or five miles before entering its streets; it is surrounded by a body of excellent timber, always the *magnum desideratum* in Illinois. This scarcity of timber will not, however, be deemed such an insurmountable obstacle to a dense and early population of this state as may have been apprehended, when we consider the unexampled rapidity with which a young growth pushes itself forward into the prairies when once protected from the devastating effects of the autumnal fires; the exhaustless masses of bituminous coal which may be thrown up from the ravines, and creeks, and bluffs of nearly every county in the state; the facility of ditching, by the assistance of blue grass to bind the friable soil, and the luxuriance of hedge-rows for enclosures, as practised

almost solely in England, France, and the Netherlands; and, finally, the convenience of manufacturing brick for all the purposes of building. There is not, probably, any quarter of the state destined to become more populous and powerful [48] than that section of Morgan county through which I was now passing. On every side, wherever the traveller turns his eye, beautiful farms unfold their broad, wavy prairie-fields of maize and wheat, indicative of affluence and prosperity. The *worst* soil of the prairies is best adapted to wheat; it is g *enerally* too fertile; the growth too rapid and luxuriant; the stalk so tall and the ear so heavy, that it is lodged before matured for the sickle. Illinois, consequently, can never become a celebrated wheat region, though for corn and coarser grains it is now unequalled.

185 Manchester is in Scott County, midway between Carrollton and Jacksonville, being about fifteen miles from each. It was settled as early as 1828.— Ed.

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The rapidity with which this state has been peopled is wonderful, especially its northern counties. In the year 1821, that section of country embraced within the present limits of Morgan county numbered but twenty families; in 1830 its population was nearly fourteen thousand, and cannot now be estimated at less than seventeen thousand! Many of the settlers are natives of the New-England States; and with them have brought those habits of industrious sobriety for which the North has ever been distinguished. In all the enterprise of the age, professing for its object the amelioration of human condition and the advancement of civilization, religion, and the arts, Morgan county stands in advance of all others in the state. What a wonderful revolution have a few fleeting years of active enterprise induced throughout a region once luxuriating in all the savageness of nature; while the wild prairie-rose “blushed unseen,” and the wilder forest-son pursued the deer! Fair villages, [49] like spring violets along the meadow, have leaped forth into being, to bless and to gladden the land, and to render even this beautiful portion of God's beautiful

world—though for ages a profitless waste—at length the abode of intelligence, virtue, and peace.

It was near the close of the day that the extent and frequency of the farms on either side, the more finished structure of the houses, the regularity of enclosures, the multitude of vehicles of every description by which I was encountered, and the dusty, hoof-beaten thoroughfare over which I was travelling, all reminded me that I was drawing nigh to Jacksonville, the principal town in Illinois. Passing “Diamond Grove,” a beautiful forest-island of nearly a thousand arces, elevated above the surrounding prairie to which it gives a name,186 and

186 Diamond Grove Prairie, five miles in extent, is a fertile district in Morgan County, just south of Jacksonville. Diamond Grove was formerly a beautifully timbered tract situated in the middle of this prairie, two miles south of Jacksonville. It was some 700 or 800 acres in extent.— Ed.

304 environed by flourishing farms, the traveller catches a view of the distant village stretching away along the northern horizon. He soon enters an extended avenue, perfectly uniform for several miles, leading on to the town. Beautiful meadows and harvest-fields on either side sweep off beyond the reach of the eye, their neat white cottages and palings peeping through the enamelled foliage. To the left, upon a swelling upland at the distance of some miles, axe beheld the brick edifices of “Illinois College,” relieved by a dark grove of oaks resting against the western sky.187 These large buildings, together with the numerous other public structures, imposingly situated and strongly relieved, give to the place a dignified, city-like aspect in distant [50] view. After a ride of more than a mile within the immediate suburbs of the town, the traveller ascends a slight elevation, and the next moment finds himself in the public square, surrounded on every side by stores and dwellings, carts and carriages, market-people, horses, and hotels.

187 Illinois College was founded in 1829 through the effort of a group of Jacksonville citizens directed by the Reverend John M. Ellis and the Yale Band the latter composed

of seven men from that college who had pledged themselves to the cause of Christian education in the home missions of the West. The latter secured from the friends of the enterprise in the East a fund of $10,000. Late in 1829 the organization was completed and in December, 1830, Reverend Edward Beecher, elder brother of Henry Ward Beecher, was persuaded to leave his large church in Boston and accept the presidency of this institution. In 1903 the Jacksonville Female Academy, started in 1830, was merged with the Illinois College, which had from the first been dominated by the Presbyterian Church.—Ed.

Jacksonville, Ill.

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XXVII

“What a large volume of adventures may be grasped in this little span of life by him who interests his heart in everything, and who, having his eyes to see what time and chance are perpetually holding out to him as he journeyeth on his way, misses nothing he can fairly lay his hands on.”— Sterne's *Sentimental Journal.*

“Take this in good part, whosoever thou be, And wish me no worse than I wish unto thee.”

Turner.

It was a remark of that celebrated British statesman, Horace Walpole, that the vicissitudes of no man's life were too slight to prove interesting, if detailed in the simple order of their occurrence. The idea originated with the poet Gray, if an idea which has suggested itself to the mind of every man may be appropriated by an individual. Assuming the sentiment as true, the author of these SKETCHES has alone presumed to lay his observations and adventures as a traveller before the *majesty of the public* ; and upon this principle *solely* must they rely for any interest they may [51] claim. A mere glance at those which have preceded must convince the reader that their object has been by no means exact

geographical and statistical information. Errors and omissions have, doubtless, often occurred in the hasty view which has been taken: partially through negligence, sometimes through lack of knowledge, misinformation, or attempt at brevity, but never through aforethought or malice prepense. Upon the whole, the writer admits himself completely laid open to criticism; and, should any public-spirited worthy deem it his duty to rise up in judgment and avenge the wrongs of literature and the community, he has undoubted right so to do: nathless, he is most veritably forewarned that he will hardly gather up his “labour for his pains!” But *allons.*

It is only ten or twelve years since the town site of Jacksonville, 306 now, perhaps, the most flourishing inland village in Illinois, was first *laid off* ; and it is but within the past five years that its present unprecedented advancement can be dated.188 Its site is a broad elevated roll in the midst of a beautiful prairie; and, from whatever point it is approached, few places present a more delightful prospect. The spot seems marked and noted by Nature for the abode of man. The neighbouring prairie is undulating, and the soil uncommonly rich, even in this land of fertility. It is mostly under high cultivation, and upon its northern and western edge is environed by pleasant groves, watered by many a “sweet and curious brook.” The public square in the centre of the town is of noble dimensions, [52] occupied by a handsome courthouse and a market, both of brick, and its sides filled up with dwelling-houses, stores, law-offices, a church, bank, and hotel. From this point radiate streets and avenues in all directions: one through each side of every angle near its vertex, and one through the middle of every side; so that the town-plat is completely cut up into rectangles. If I mistake not in my description, it will be perceived that the public square of Jacksonville may be entered at no less than twelve distinct avenues. In addition to the spacious courthouse, the public buildings consist of three or four churches. One of these, belonging to the Congregational order, betrays much correct taste; and its pulpit is the most simply elegant I remember ever to have seen. It consists merely of a broad platform in the chancel of the building, richly carpeted; a dark mahogany bar without drapery, highly

polished; and a neat sofa of the same material in a plain back-ground. The outline and proportion are perfect; and, like the doctrines

188 Jacksonville, the seat of Morgan County, was laid out in 1825 on land given to the county for that purpose by Thomas Armitt and James Dial. The town was largely settled by people from New England, who gave a characteristic tone to its society. Jacksonville is today the seat of several important state institutions.— Ed.

307 of the sect which worships here, there is an air of severe, dignified elegance about the whole structure, pleasing as it is rare. The number of Congregational churches in the West is exceedingly small; and as it is always pleasant for the stranger in a strange land to meet the peculiarities of that worship to which from childhood-days he has been attached, so it is peculiarly grateful to the New-England emigrant to recognise in this distant spot the simple faith and ceremony of the Pilgrims. Jacksonville is largely made up of emigrants from [53] the North; and they have brought with them many of their customs and peculiarities. The State of Illinois may, indeed, be truly considered the New-England of the West. In many respects it is more congenial than any other to the character and prejudices of the Northern emigrant. It is not a slave state; internal improvement is the grand feature of its civil polity; and measures for the universal diffusion of intellectual, moral, and religious culture are in active progression. In Henry county, in the northern section of the state, two townplats have within the past year been laid off for colonies of emigrants from Connecticut, which intend removing in the ensuing fall, accompanied each by their minister, physician, lawyer, and with all the various artisans of mechanical labour necessary for such communities. The settlements are to be called Wethersfield and Andover.189

189 In June, 1835, Ithamar Pillsbury, with two associates, sent out under the auspices of the New York Association, entered a large tract of land and selected a site for a town to be styled Andover, which was eventually platted in 1841, in the western portion of Henry County, fifty miles north and northwest of Peoria. The first settlers were principally from Connecticut, but soon several Swedish families migrated thither, and in time the settlement

was composed primarily of that nationality. On returning East in the autumn of 1835, after planting the Andover colony, Pillsbury had an interview with Dr. Caleb J. Tenny, of Wethersfield, Connecticut. At the latter's instigation a meeting of Congregationalists was held, and a group of influential New Englanders organized themselves into the Connecticut Association. Shares were sold at $250 each, which entitled the holder to one hundred and sixty acres of prairie land, twenty acres of timber land, and a town lot in a proposed colony to be founded in Illinois. On May 7, 1836, the first entry was made by the committee of purchase. After the latter's return a new committee was sent out and the town of Wethersfield, in the southeastern corner of Henry County, was laid out in the spring of 1837. For an account of the founding of Andover and Wethersfield, and the names of persons serving on the various prospecting committees, see *History of Henry County, Illinois* (Chicago, 1877), pp. 137–141, 524–556.— Ed.

308 Active measures for securing the blessings of education, religion, temperance, etc., have already been taken.190

190 Since the above was written, the emigrants have removed.— Flagg.

The edifices of “Illinois College,” to which I have before alluded, are situated upon a beautiful eminence one mile west of the village, formerly known as “Wilson's Grove.” The site is truly delightful. In the rear lies a dense green clump of oaks, and in front is spread out the village, with a boundless extent of prairie beyond, covered for miles with cultivation. Away to the south, the wild-flower flashes as gayly in the sunlight, and [54] waves as gracefully when swept by the breeze, as centuries ago, when no eye of man looked upon its loveliness. During my stay at Jacksonville I visited several times this pleasant spot, and always with renewed delight at the glorious scenery it presented. Connected with the college buildings are extensive grounds; and students, at their option, may devote a portion of each day to manual labour in the workshop or on the farm. Some individuals have, it is said, in this manner defrayed all the expenses of their education. This system of instruction cannot be too highly recommended. Apart from the benefits derived in acquiring

a knowledge of the use of mechanical instruments, and the development of mechanical genius, there are others of a higher nature which every one who has been educated at a public institution will appreciate. Who has not gazed with anguish on the sunken cheek and the emaciated frame of the young aspirant for literary distinction? Who has not beheld the funeral fires of intellect while the lamp of 309 life was fading, flaming yet more beautifully forth, only to be dimmed for ever! The lyre is soon to be crushed; but, ere its hour is come, it flings forth notes of melody sweet beyond expression! Who does not know that protracted, unremitting intellectual labour is *always* fatal, unaccompanied by corresponding physical exertion; and who cannot perceive that *any* inducement, be it what it may, which can draw forth the student from his retirement, is invaluable. Such an inducement is the lively interest which the cultivated mind [55] always manifests in the operations of mechanical art.

Illinois College has been founded but five or six years, yet it is now one of the most flourishing institutions west of the mountains. The library consists of nearly two thousand volumes, and its chymical apparatus is sufficient. The faculty are five in number, and its first class was graduated two years since. No one can doubt the vast influence this seminary is destined to exert, not only upon this beautiful region of country and this state, but over the whole great Western Valley. It owes its origin to the noble enterprise of seven young men, graduates of Yale College, whose names another age will enrol among our Harvards and our Bowdoins, our Holworthys, Elliots, and Gores, great and venerable as those names are. And, surely, we cannot but believe that “some divinity has shaped their ends,” when we consider the character of the spot upon which a wise Providence has been pleased to succeed their design. From the Northern lakes to the gulf, where may a more eligible site be designated for an institution whose influence shall be wide, and powerful, and salutary, than that same beautiful grove, in that pleasant village of Jacksonville.

To the left of the college buildings is situated the lordly residence of Governor Duncan, surrounded by its extensive 310 grounds.191 There are other fine edifices scattered

here and there upon the eminence, among which the beautiful little cottage of Mr. C., brother to the great orator of the [56] West, holds a conspicuous station.192 Society in Jacksonville is said to be superior to any in the state. It is of a cast decidedly moral, and possesses much literary taste. This is betrayed in the number of its schools and churches; its lyceum, circulating library, and periodicals. In fine, there are few spots in the West, and none in Illinois, which to the *Northern* emigrant present stronger attractions than the town of Jacksonville and its vicinity. Located in the heart of a tract of country the most fertile and beautiful in the state; swept by the sweet breath of health throughout the year; tilled by a race of enterprising, intelligent, hardy yeomen; possessing a moral, refined, and enlightened society, the tired wanderer may here find his necessities relieved and his peculiarities respected: he may here find congeniality of feeling and sympathy of heart. And when his memory wanders, as it sometimes must, with melancholy musings, mayhap, over the loved scenes of his own distant New-England, it will be sweet to realize that, though he sees not, indeed, around him the beautiful romance of his native hills, yet many a kindly heart is throbbing near, whose emotions, like his own, were nurtured in their rugged bosom. " *Caelum non animum mutatur.* " And is it indeed true, as they often tell us, that New-England character, like her own ungenial dime, is

191 Joseph Duncan, born in Kentucky, was presented with a sword by Congress for his gallant defense of Fort Stephenson in the War of 1812–15. In 1818 he moved to Kaskaskia, was appointed major-general of the Illinois militia (1823), and elected state senator (1824). In 1827 he was sent to Congress by the Jacksonian. Democrats. He resigned in 1834 to accept the governorship of Illinois, which he occupied until 1838. He is said to have erected the first frame building in Jacksonville. He moved to this place in 1829, dying there January 15, 1844.— Ed.

192 Porter Clay (1779–1850), a brother of Henry Clay, was for many years a Baptist minister at Jacksonville.— Ed.

311 cold, penurious, and heartless; while to her brethren, from whom she is separated only by an imaginary boundary, may be ascribed all that is lofty, and honourable, and

chivalrous in man! This is an old [57] calumny, the offspring of prejudice and ignorance, and it were time it were at rest. But it is not for me to contrast the leading features of Northern character with those of the South, or to repel the aspersions which have been heaped upon either. Yet, reader, believe them not; many are false as ever stained the poisoned lip of slander.

It was Saturday evening when I reached the village of Jacksonville, and on the following Sabbath I listened to the sage instruction of that eccentric preacher, but venerable old man, Dr. P. of Philadelphia, since deceased, but then casually present. “ *The Young Men of the West* ” was a subject which had been presented him for discourse, and worthily was it elaborated. The good people of this little town, in more features than one, present a faithful transcript of New-England; but in none do they betray their Pilgrim origin more decidedly than in their devotedness to the public worship of the sanctuary. Here the young and the old, the great and small, the rich and poor, are all as steadily church-goers as were ever the pious husbandmen of Connecticut—men of the broad breast and giant stride—in the most “high and palmy day” of blue-laws and tything men. You smile, reader, yet

“Noble deeds those iron men have done!”

It was these same church-going, psalm-singing husband-men who planted Liberty's fair tree within our borders, the leaves of which are now for the “healing of the nations,” and whose broad branches are overshadowing the earth; and they watered it—ay, watered it with their blood! The Pilgrim Fathers!—[58] the elder yeomanry of New-England! — the Patriots of the American Revolution!— 312 great names! they shall live enshrined in the heart of Liberty long after those of many a railer are as if they had never been. And happy, happy would it be for the fair heritage bequeathed by them, were not the present generation degenerate sons of noble sires.

At Jacksonville I tarried only a few days; but during that short period I met with a few things of tramontane origin, strange enough to my Yankee notions. It was the season approaching the annual election of representatives for the state and national councils, and on one of the days to which I have alluded the political candidates of various creeds *addressed the people* ; that is—for the benefit of the uninitiated be it stated—each one made manifest what great things he had done for the people in times past, and promised to do greater things, should the dear people, in the overflowing of their kindness, be pleased to let their choice fall upon him. This is a custom of universal prevalence in the Southern and Western states, and much is urged in its support; yet, sure it is, in no way could a Northern candidate more utterly defeat his election than by attempting to pursue the same. The charge of *self-electioneering* is, indeed, a powerful engine often employed by political partisans.

The candidates, upon the occasion of which I am speaking, were six or seven in number: and though I was not permitted to listen to the *eloquence* of all, some of these harangues are said to have been powerful productions, especially that of Mr. S. The day [59] was exceedingly sultry, and Mr. W., candidate for the state Senate, was on the *stump* , in shape of a huge meat-block at one corner of the market-house, when I entered.193 He was a broadfaced, farmer-like personage, with features imbrowned

193 Flagg is probably referring to William Weatherford, who served in the state senate (1834–38) from Morgan County.— Ed.

313 by exposure, and hands hardened by honourable toil; with a huge rent, moreover, athwart his left shoulder-blade— a badge of democracy, I presume, and either neglected or produced there for the occasion; much upon the same principle, doubtless, that Quintilian counselled his disciples to disorder the hair and tumble the toga before they began to speak. Now mind ye, reader, I do not accuse the worthy man of having followed the Roman's instructions, or even of acquaintance therewith, or any such thing; but, verily, he did, in all charity, seem to have hung on his worst rigging, and that, too, for

no other reason than to demonstrate the democracy aforesaid, and his affection for the *sansculottes.* His speech, though garnished with some little rhodomontade, was, upon the whole, a sensible production. I could hardly restrain a smile, however, at one of the worthy man's figures, in which he likened himself to “the *morning sun* , mounting a stump to scatter the mists which had been gathering around his fair fame.” Close upon the heels of this *ruse* followed a beautiful simile—“a people free as the wild breezes of their own broad prairies!” The candidates alternated according to their political creeds, and denounced each other in no very measured terms. The approaching election was found, indeed, to be the prevailing topic of thought and conversation all over the land; insomuch [60] that the writer, himself an unassuming wayfarer, was more than once, strangely enough, mistaken for a *candidate* as he rode through the country, and was everywhere *catechumened* as to the articles of his political faith. It would be an amusing thing to a solitary traveller in a country like this, could he always detect the curious surmisings to which his presence gives rise in the minds of those among whom he chances to be thrown; especially so when, from any circumstance, his appearance does not betray his definite rank or calling in life, and 314 anything of mystery hangs around his movements. Internal Improvement seems now to be the order of the day in Northern Illinois. This was the hobby of most of the stump-speakers; and the projected railway from Jacksonville to the river was under sober consideration. I became acquainted, while here, with Mr. C., a young gentleman engaged in laying off the route.

It was late in the afternoon when I at length broke away from the hustings, and mounted my horse to pursue my journey to Springfield. The road strikes off from the public square, in a direct line through the prairie, at right angles with that by which I entered, and, *like* that, ornamented by fine farms. I had rode but a few miles from the village, and was leisurely pursuing my way across the dusty plain, when a quick tramping behind attracted my attention, and in a few moments a little, portly, red-faced man at my side, in linsey-woolsey and a broad-brimmed hat, saluted me frankly with the title of “friend,” and forthwith announced himself a “Baptist [61] circuit-rider!” I became much interested in the

worthy man before his path diverged from my own; and I flatter myself he reciprocated my regard, for he asked all manner of questions, and related all manner of anecdotes, questioned or not. Among other edifying matter, he gave a full-length biography of a “ *billards fever* ” from which he was just recovering; even from the premonitory symptoms thereof to the relapse and final convalescence.

At nightfall I found myself alone in the heart of an extensive prairie; but the beautiful crescent had now begun to beam forth from the blue heavens; and the wild, fresh breeze of evening, playing among the silvered grass-tops, rendered the hour a delightful one to the traveller. “Spring Island Grove,” a thick wood upon an eminence to the right, looked like a region of fairy-land as its dark foliage 315 trembled in the moonlight. The silence and solitude of the prairie was almost startling; and a Herculean figure upon a white horse, as it drew nigh, passed me “on the other side” with a glance of suspicion at my closely-buttoned surtout and muffled mouth, as if to say, “this is too lone a spot to form acquaintance.” A few hours— I had crossed the prairie, and was snugly deposited in a pretty little farmhouse in the edge of the grove, with a crusty, surly fellow enough for its master.

Springfield, Ill.

XXVIII

“Hee is a rite gude creetur, and travels *all* the ground over most faithfully.”

“The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together.”— Shakespeare.

It is a trite remark, that few studies are more pleasing to the inquisitive mind than that of the *nature of man.* But, however this may be, sure it is, few situations in life present greater facilities for watching its developments than that of the ordinary *wayfaring* traveller. Though I fully agree with Edmund Burke, that “the age of chivalry has passed away,” with all its rough virtues and its follies, yet am I convinced that, even in this degenerate era of sophisters, economists, and speculators, when a solitary individual, unconnected with

any great movements of the day, throws himself upon his horse, and sallies fearlessly forth upon the arena of the world, whether in *quest* of adventure or not, he will be quite sure to meet, at least, with some slight “inklings” thereof. A thousand exhibitions of human character will fling themselves athwart his pathway, inconsiderable indeed in themselves, yet which, as days of the year and seconds of the day, go to make up the lineaments of man; and which, from the observation of 316 the pride, and pomp, and circumstance of wealth and equipage, would of necessity be veiled. Under the eye of the solitary [63] wanderer, going forth upon a pilgrimage of observation among the ranks of men—who is met but for once, and whose opinion, favourable or otherwise, can be supposed to exert but trifling influence—there is not that necessity for enveloping those petty weaknesses of our nature in the mantle of selfishness which would, under more imposing circumstances, exist. To the mind of delicate sensibility, unschooled in the ways of man, such exhibitions of human heartlessness might, perchance, be anything but *interesting* ; but to one who, elevated by independence of character above the ordinary contingencies of situation and circumstance, can smile at the frailties of his race, even when exhibited at his own expense, they can but afford a fund of interest and instruction. The youthful student, when with fresh, unblunted feeling he for the first time enters the dissecting-room of medical science, turns with sickened, revolting sensibilities from the mutilated form stretched out upon the board before him, while the learned professor, with untrembling nerve, lays bare its secrecies with the crimsoned knife of science. Just so is it with the exhibitions of human nature; yet who will say that dissection of the moral character of man is not as indispensable to an intimate acquaintance with its phenomena, as that of his physical organization for a similar purpose.

But, then, there are the brighter features of humanity, which sometimes hang across the wanderer's pathway like the beautiful tints of a summer evening bow; and which, as they are oftenest met reposing beneath the cool, sequestered shades of [64] retirement, where the roar and tumult of a busy world are as the heavy swing of the distant wave, so there, oftener than elsewhere, they serve to cheer the 317 pilgrim traveller's heart. Ah! it is very

sweet, from the dull Rembrandt shades of which human character presents but too much, to turn away and dwell upon these green, beautiful spots in the wastes of humanity; these *oases* in a desert of barrenness; to hope that man, though indeed a depraved, unholy being, is not that *thing* of utter detestation which a troubled bosom had sometimes forced us to believe. At such moments, worth years of coldness and distrust, how inexpressibly grateful is it to feel the young tendrils of the heart springing forth to meet the proffered affection; curling around our race, and binding it closer and closer to ourselves. But your pardon, reader: my wayward pen has betrayed me into an episode upon poor human nature most unwittingly, I do assure thee. I was only endeavouring to present a few ideas circumstances had casually suggested, which I was sure would commend themselves to every thinking mind, and which some incidents of my wayfaring may serve to illustrate, when lo! forth comes an essay on human nature. It reminds one of Sir Hudibras, who *told the clock by algebra* , or of Dr. Young's satirised gentlewoman, who *drank tea by stratagem.*

“How little do men realize the loveliness of this visible world!” is an exclamation which has oftentimes involuntarily left my lips while gazing upon the surpassing splendour of a prairie-sunrise. This is at all times a glorious hour, but to a lonely traveller [65] on these beautiful plains of the departed Illini, it comes on with a charm which words are powerless to express. We call our world a RUIN. Ah! it is one in all its moral and physical relations; but, like the elder cities of the Nile, how vast, how magnificent in its desolation! The astronomer, as he wanders with scientific eye along the sparkling galaxy of a summer's night, tells us that among those clustering orbs, far, far 318 away in the clear realms of upper sky, he catches at times a glimpse of *another* world! a region of untold, unutterable brightness! the high empyrean, veiled in mystery! And so is it with our own humbler sphere; the glittering fragment of a world *we* have never known ofttimes glances before us, and then is gone for ever.

Before the dawn I had left the farmhouse where I had passed the night, and was thridding the dark old forest on my route to Springfield. The dusky twilight of morning had been

slowly stealing over the landscape; and, just as I emerged once more upon my winding prairie-path, the flaming sunlight was streaming wide and far over the opposite heavens. Along the whole line of eastern horizon reposed the purple dies of morning, shooting rapidly upward into broad pyramidal shafts to the zenith, till at last the dazzling orb came rushing above the plain, bathing the scene in an effulgence of light. The day which succeeded was a fine one, and I journeyed leisurely onward, admiring the mellow glories of woodland and prairie, until near noon, when a flashing cupola above the trees reminded me I was approaching [66] Springfield.194 Owing to its unfavourable situation and the fewness of its public structures, this town, though one of the most important in the state, presents not that imposing aspect to the stranger's eye which some more inconsiderable villages can boast. Its location is the border of an extensive prairie, adorned with excellent farms, and stretching away on every side to the blue line of distant forest. This town, like Jacksonville,

194 The first settlement on the present site of Springfield was made by John Kelly (1819). In 1822 the lots were laid off, but not recorded until the following year, when the town was named. Soon after its incorporation in 1832, Abraham Lincoln, Stephen A. Douglas, and Edward Baker began agitating the question of moving the state capital to Springfield from Vandalia. After a severe struggle, complicated with the internal improvement policy, their efforts succeeded in 1837. The legislative act of that year went into effect July 4, 1839, and the general assembly commenced its first session at Springfield in the following December.— Ed.

319 was laid out ten or twelve years since, but for a long while contained only a few scattered log cabins: all its present wealth or importance dates from the last six years. Though inferior in many respects to its neighbour and rival, yet such is its location by nature that it can hardly fail of becoming a place of extensive business and crowded population; while its geographically central situation seems to designate it as the capital of the state. An elegant statehouse is now erecting, and the seat of government is to be located here in 1840. The public square, a green, pleasant lawn, enclosed by a railing,

contains the court-house and a market, both fine structures of brick: the sides are lined with handsome edifices. Most of the buildings are small, however, and the humble log cabin not unfrequently meets the eye. Among the public structures are a jail, and several houses of worship. Society is said to be excellent, and the place can boast much literary taste. The plan of Internal Improvement projected for the state, when carried out, cannot fail to render Springfield an important place.

It was a cool, beautiful evening when I left Springfield and held my way over the prairie, rolling its [67] waving verdure on either side of my path. Long after the village had sunk in the horizon, the bright cupola continued to flame in the oblique rays of the setting sun. I passed many extensive farms on my route, and in a few hours had entered the forest and forded Sangamon *River* — so styled out of pure courtesy, I presume, for at the spot I crossed it seemed little more than a respectable creek, with waters clear as crystal, flowing over clean white sand.195

195 Sangamon River is formed by the union, six miles east of Springfield, of its north and south forks. The former, rising in Champaign County, flows through Macon and a part of Sangamon counties; the latter intersects Christian County. The main stream runs in an easterly direction, forms the boundary of Cass County, and joins the Illinois River nine miles above Beardstown. The river is nearly two hundred and forty miles in length, including the north fork, and was named in honor of a local Indian chief.— Ed.

320 At periods of higher stages, however, this stream has been navigated nearly to the confluence of its forks, a distance of some hundred miles; and in the spring of 1832 a boat of some size arrived within five miles of Springfield. An inconsiderable expense in removing logs and overhanging trees, it is said, would render this river navigable for keelboats half the year. The advantages of such a communication, through one of the richest agricultural regions on the globe, can hardly be estimated. The Sangamon bottom has a soil of amazing fertility, and rears from its deep, black mould a forest of enormous sycamores; huge, overgrown, unshapely masses, their venerable limbs streaming with moss. When the traveller enters the depths of these dark old woods, a cold chill runs over

his frame, and he feels as if he were entering the sepulchre. A cheerless twilight reigns for ever through them: the atmosphere he inhales has an earthly smell, and is filled with floating greenish exhalations; the moist, black mould beneath his horse's hoofs, piled with vegetable decay for many feet, and upon whose festering bosom the cheering light of day has not smiled for [68] centuries, is rank and yielding: the enormous shafts leaning in all attitudes, their naked old roots enveloped in a green moss of velvet luxuriance, tower a hundred feet above his head, and shut out the heavens from his view: the huge wild-vine leaps forth at their foot and clasps them in its deadly embrace; or the tender ivy and pensile woodbine cluster around the aged giants, and strive to veil with their mantling tapestry the ravages of time. There is much cathedral pomp, much of Gothic magnificence about all this; and one can hardly fling off from his mind the awe and solemnity which gathers 321 over it amid the chill, silent, and mysterious solitude of the scene.

Emerging from the river-bottom, my pathway lay along a tract of elevated land, among beautiful forest-glades of stately oaks, through whose long dim aisles the yellow beams of summer sunset were now richly streaming. Once more upon the broad prairie, and the fragment of an iris was glittering in the eastern heavens: turning back, my eye caught a view of that singular but splendid phenomenon, seldom witnessed—a heavy, distant rain-shower between the spectator and the departing sun.

Nightfall found me at the residence of Mr. D., an intelligent, gentlemanly farmer, with whom I passed an agreeable evening. I was not long in discovering that my host was a candidate for civic honours; and that he, with his friend Mr. L., whose speech I had subsequently the pleasure of perusing, had just returned from Mechanicsburg,196 a small village in the vicinity, where they had been exerting themselves upon the stump to win the *aura popularis* for the coming election. “ *Sic itur ad astra* !”

196 Mechanicsburg, fifteen miles east of Springfield, was laid out and platted in November, 1832, by William S. Pickrell.— Ed.

[69] Before sunrise I had crossed the threshold of my hospitable entertainer; and having wound my solitary way, partially by twilight, over a prairie fifteen miles in extent,

“Began to feel, as well I might, The keen demands of appetite.”

Reining up my tired steed at the door of a log cabin in the middle of the plain, the nature and extent of my necessities were soon made known to an aged matron, who had come forth on my approach.

“Some victuals you shall get, *stran-ger* ; but you'll just take your *creetur* to the crib and *gin* him his feed; *bekase* , d'ye see, the old man is kind o' *drinkin* to-day; yester' 322 was 'lection, ye know.” From the depths of my sympathetic emotions was I moved for the poor old body, who with most dolorous aspect had delivered herself of this message; and I had proceeded forthwith, agreeable to instructions, to satisfy the cravings of my patient animal, when who should appear but my tipsified host, *in propria persona* , at the door. The little old gentleman came tottering towards the spot where I stood, and, warmly squeezing my hand, whispered to me, with a most irresistible serio-comic air, “ *that he was drunk* ;” and “that he was four hours last night getting home from ' *lection* ,” as he called it. “Now, stran-ger, you won't think hard on me,” he continued, in his maudlin manner: “I'm a poor, drunken old fellow! but old Jim wan't al'ays so; old Jim wan't al'ays so!” he exclaimed, with bitterness, burying his face in his toilworn hands, as, having now regained the house, he seated himself with difficulty upon the [70] doorstep. “Once, my son, old Jim could knock down, drag out, whip, lift, or throw any man in all Sangamon, if he was a *leetle* fellow: but *now* —there's the receipt of his disgrace—there,” he exclaimed, with vehemence, thrusting forth before my eyes two brawny, gladiator arms, in which the volumed muscles were heaving and contracting with excitement; ironed by labour, but shockingly mutilated. Expressing astonishment at the spectacle, he assured me that these wounds had been torn in the flesh by the teeth of infuriated antagonists in drunken quarrels, though the relation seemed almost too horrible to be true. Endeavouring to divert his mind from this disgusting topic, on which it seemed disposed to linger with ferocious delight, I made some

inquiries relative to his farm —which was, indeed, a beautiful one, under high culture — and respecting the habits of the prairie-wolf, a large animal of the species having crossed my path in the 323 prairie in the gray light of dawn. Upon the latter inquiry the old man sat silent a moment with his chin leaning on his hands. Looking up at length with an arch expression, he said, “Stran-ger, I *haint* no *larnin;* I *can't* read; but don't the Book say somewhere about old Jacob and the ring-streaked cattle?” “Yes.” “Well, and how old Jake's ring-streaked and round-spotted *creeturs* , after a leetle, got the better of all the stock, and overrun the univarsal herd; don't the Book say so?” “Something so.” “Well, now for the wolves: they're all colours but ring-streaked and round-spotted; and if the sucker-farmers don't look to it, the prairie-wolves will get [71] the better of all the geese, turkeys, and *hins* in the barnyard, speckled or no!”

My breakfast was now on the table; a substantial fare of corn-bread, butter, honey, fresh eggs, *fowl* , and *coffee* , which latter are as invariably visitants at an Illinois table as is bacon at a Kentucky one, and that is saying no little. The exhilarating herb tea is rarely seen. An anecdote will illustrate this matter. A young man, journeying in Illinois, stopped one evening at a log cabin with a violent headache, and requested that never-failing antidote, *a cup of tea.* There was none in the house; and, having despatched a boy to a distant grocery to procure a pound, he threw himself upon the bed. In a few hours a beverage was handed him, the first swallow of which nearly excoriated his mouth and throat. In the agony of the moment he dashed down the bowl, and rushed half blinded to the fireplace. Over the blaze was suspended a huge iron kettle, half filled with an inky fluid, seething, and boiling, and bubbling, like the witches' caldron of unutterable things in Macbeth. The good old lady, in her anxiety to give her sick guest a *strong* dish of tea, having never seen the like herself or drank thereof, and supposing it something of the nature of soup, 324 very innocently and ignorantly poured the whole pound into her largest kettle, and set it a boiling. Poultry is the other standing dish of Illinois; and the poor birds seem to realize that their destiny is at hand whenever a traveller draws nigh, for they invariably hide their heads beneath the nearest covert. Indeed, so invariably are poultry

and bacon visitants at an Illinois table, that [72] the story *may* be true, that the first inquiry made of the guest by the village landlord is the following: “Well, stran-ger, what'll ye take: wheat-bread and *chicken fixens* , or corn-bread and *common doins* ?” by the latter expressive and elegant soubriquet being signified bacon.

Breakfast being over, my foot was once more in the stirrup. The old man accompanied me to the gateway, and shaking my hand in a boisterous agony of good-nature, pressed me to visit him again when he was *not drunk.* I had proceeded but a few steps on my way when I heard his voice calling after me, and turned my head. “Stran-ger! I say, stran-ger! what do you reckon of sending this young Jack Stewart to Congress?” “Oh, he'll answer.” “Well, and that's what I'm a going to vote; and there's a heap o' people always thinks like old Jim does; and that's what made 'em get me groggy last night.”

I could not but commiserate this old man as I pursued my journey, reflecting on what had passed. He was evidently no common toper; for some of his remarks evinced a keenness of observation, and a depth and shrewdness of thought, which even the withering blight of drunkenness had not completely deadened; and which, with other habits and other circumstances, might have placed him far above the beck and nod of every demagogue.

Decatur, Ill.

325

XXIX

“Ay, but to die, and go we know not where!”.

Measure for Measure.

“Plains immense, interminable meads, And,vast savannas, where the wand'ring eye, Unfix'd, is in a verdant ocean lost.”

Thomson.

“Ye shall have miracles; ay, sound ones too, Seen, heard, attested, everything but true.”

Moore.

“Call in the barber! If the tale be long, He'll cut it short, I trust.”

Middleton.

There are few sentiments of that great man Benjamin Franklin for which he is more to be revered than for those respecting the burial-place of the departed.197 The graveyard is, and should ever be deemed, a holy spot; consecrated, not by the cold formalities of unmeaning ceremony, but by the solemn sacredness of the heart. Who that has committed to earth's cold bosom the relics of one dearer, perchance, than existence, can ever after pass the burialground with a careless heart. There is nothing which more painfully jars upon my own feelings—if I may except that wanton desecration of God's sanctuary in some sections of our land [74] for a public commitia—than to see the grave-yard slighted and abused. It is like wounding the memory of a buried friend. And yet it is an assertion which cannot be refuted, that, notwithstanding the reverence which, as a people, we have failed not to manifest for the memory of our dead, the same delicate regard and obsequy is not with us observed in the sacred rites as among the inhabitants of the Eastern hemisphere. If, indeed, we may be permitted to gather up an opinion

197 “I will never, if possible, pass a night in any place where the graveyard is neglected.” Franklin has no monument!— Flagg.

326 from circumstances of daily notoriety, it would seem that the plat of ground appropriated as a cemetery in many of the villages of our land was devoted to this most holy of purposes solely because useless for every other; as if, after seizing upon every spot for the benefit of the living, this last poor *remnant* was reluctantly yielded as a resting-

place for the departed. And thus has it happened that most of the burial-grounds of our land have either been located in a region so lone and solitary,

“You scarce would start to meet a spirit there,”

or they have been thrust out into the very midst of business, strife, and contention; amid the glare of sunshine, noise, and dust; “the gaudy, babbling, and remorseless day,” with hardly a wall of stones to protect them from the inroads of unruly brutes or brutish men. It is as if the rites of sepulture were refused, and the poor boon of a resting-place in the bosom of our common mother denied to her offspring; as if, in our avarice of soul, we grudged even the last narrow house destined for all; and [75] fain would resume the last, the only gift our departed ones may retain. Who would not dread “ *to die* ” and have his lifeless clay deposited thus'! Who would not, ere the last fleeting particle of existence had “ebbed to its finish,” and the feeble breathing had forsaken its tenement for ever, pour forth the anguish of his spirit in the melancholy prayer,

“When breath and sense have left this clay, In yon damp vault, oh lay me not! But kindly bear my bones away To some lone, green, and sunny spot.”

Reverence for the departed is ever a beautiful feature of humanity, and has struck us with admiration for nations of our race who could boast but few redeeming traits beside. It is, moreover, a circumstance not a little remarkable in 327 the history of funeral obsequy, that veneration for the departed has prevailed in a ratio almost inverse to the degree of civilization. Without attempting to account for this circumstance, or to instance the multitude of examples which recur to every mind in its illustration, I would only refer to that deep religion of the soul which Nature has implanted in the heart of her simple child of the Western forests, teaching him to preserve and to honour the bones of his fathers! And those mysterious mausoleums of a former race! do they convey no meaning as they rise in lonely grandeur from our beautiful prairies, and look down upon the noble streams which for ages have dashed their dark floods along their base!

[76] But a few years have passed away since this empire valley of the West was first pressed by the footstep of civilized man; and, if we except those aged sepulchres of the past, the cities of the dead hardly yet range side by side with the cities of the living. But this cannot *always* be; even in this distant, beautiful land, death *must* come; and here it doubtless has come, as many an anguished bosom can witness. Is it not, then, meet, while the busy tide of worldly enterprise is rolling heavily forth over this fair land, and the costly structures of art and opulence are rising on every side, as by the enchantment of Arabian fiction—is it *not* meet that, amid the pauses of excitement, a solitary thought would linger around that spot, which must surely, reader, become the last resting-place of us all!

I have often, in my wanderings through this pleasant land, experienced a thrill of delight which I can hardly describe, to behold, on entering a little Western hamlet, a neat white paling rising up beneath the groves in some green, sequestered spot, whose object none could mistake. Upon some of these, simple as they were, seemed to have been bestowed more than ordinary care; for they betrayed 328 an elaborateness of workmanship and a delicacy of design sought for in vain among the ruder habitations of the living. This is, *surely* , as it should be; and I pity the man whose feelings cannot appreciate such a touching, beautiful expression of the heart. I have alluded to Franklin, and how pleasant it is to detect the kindly, household emotions of our nature throbbing beneath the [77] starred, dignified breast of philosophy and science. FRANKLIN, the statesman, the sage; he who turned the red lightnings from their wild pathway through the skies, and rocked the iron cradle of the mightiest democracy on the globe! we gaze upon him with awe and astonishment; involuntarily we yield the lofty motto presented by the illustrious Frenchman,198 “ *Eripuit julmen caelo, mox sceptra tyrannis.* ” But when we behold that towering intellect descending from its throne, and intermingling its emotions even with those of the lowliest mind, admiration and reverence are lost in *love.*

198 Turgot.— Flagg.

The preceding remarks, which have lengthened out themselves far beyond my design, were suggested by the loveliness of the site of the graveyard of the little village of Decatur. I was struck with its beauty on entering the place. It was near sunset; in the distance slept the quiet hamlet; upon my right, beneath the grove, peeped out the white paling through the glossy foliage; and as the broad, deep shadows of summer evening streamed lengthening through the trees wide over the landscape, that little spot seemed to my mind the sweetest one in the scene. And should not the burial-ground be ever thus! for who shall tell the emotions which may swell the bosom of many a dying emigrant who here shall find his long, last rest? In that chill hour, how will the thought of home, kindred, friendships, childhood-scenes, come rushing over the memory! 329 and to lay his bones in the [78] quiet graveyard of his own native village, perchance may draw forth many a sorrowing sigh. But this now may never be; yet it will be consoling to the pilgrim-heart to realize that, though the resurrection morn shall find his relics far from the graves of his fathers, he shall yet sleep the long slumber, and at last come forth with those who were kind and near to him in a stranger-land; who laid away his cold clay in no “Potter's Field,” but gathered it to their own household sepulchre. The human mind, whatever its philosophy, can never utterly divest itself of the idea that the spirit retains a consciousness of the lifeless body, sympathizing with its honour or neglect, and affected by all that variety of circumstance which may attend its existence: and who shall say how far this belief—superstition though it be—may smooth or trouble the dying pillow! How soothing, too, the reflection to the sorrow of distant friends, that their departed one peacefully and decently was gathered to his rest; that his dust is sleeping quietly in some sweet, lonely spot beneath the dark groves of the far-land; that his turf is often dewed by the teardrop of sympathy, and around his lowly headstone waves the wild-grass ever green and free! The son, the brother, the loved wanderer from his father's home,

“Is in his grave! After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well.”

The route leading to Decatur from the west lies chiefly through a broad branch of the “Grand Prairie,” an immense plain, sweeping diagonally, with [79] little interruption, through the whole State of Illinois, from the Mississippi to the Wabash. For the first time, in any considerable number, I here met with those singular granite masses, termed familiarly by the settlers “ *lost rocks* ; in geology, *boulders.* They are usually of a mammillated, 330 globular figure, the surface perfectly smooth, sometimes six hundred tons in weight, and always lying completely isolated, frequently some hundred miles from a quarry. They rest upon the surface or are slightly imbedded in the soil; and, so far as my own observation extends, are of distinct granitic formation, of various density and composition. Several specimens I obtained are as heavy as metal, and doubtless contain iron. Many of them, however, like those round masses dug from the ancient works in Ohio, are pyritous in character. There is a mystery about these “lost rocks” not easily solved, for no granite quarry has ever yet been discovered in Illinois. Their appearance, in the midst of a vast prairie, is dreary and lonely enough.

The site of the town of Decatur is somewhat depressed, and in the heart of a grove of noble oaks.199 Long before the traveller reaches it, the whole village is placed before his eye from the rounded summit of the hill, over which winds the road. The neighbouring region is well settled; the prairie high and rolling, and timber abundant. It is not a large place, however; and perhaps there are few circumstances which will render it otherwise for some years. It contains, nevertheless, a few handsome buildings; several trading establishments; a good tavern; is said to be healthy; and, upon the whole, is a far [80] prettier, neater little village than many others of loftier pretensions through which I have passed in Illinois. The village will be intersected by two of the principal railroads of the state, now projected, which circumstance cannot fail to place it in the first rank as an inland trading town.

199 Decatur, surveyed in 1829, is the seat of Macon County, thirty-nine miles from Springfield. It was named for Commodore Stephen Decatur.— Ed.

My visit at Decatur was a short one; and, after tea, just as the moon was beginning to silver the tops of the 331 eastern oaks, I left the village and rode leisurely through the forest, in order to enter upon the prairie at dawn the following day. A short distance from Decatur I again forded the Sangamon; the same insignificant stream as ever; and, by dint of scrambling, succeeded in attaining the lofty summit of its opposite bank, from which the surrounding scenery of rolling forest-tops was magnificent and sublime. From this elevation the pathway plunged into a thick grove, dark as Erebus, save where lighted up by a few pale moonbeams struggling through a break in the tree-tops, or the deep-red gleamings of the evening sky streaming at intervals along the undergrowth. The hour was a calm and impressive one: its very loneliness made it sweeter; and that beautiful hymn of the Tyrolean peasantry at sunset, as versified by Mrs. Hemans, was forcibly recalled by the scene:

“Come to the sunset tree! The day is past and gone; The woodman's axe lies free, And the reaper's work is done. Sweet is the hour of rest! Pleasant the wood's low sigh, And the gleaming of the west, And the turf whereon we lie.”

[81] After a ride of a few miles my path suddenly emerged from the forest upon the edge of a boundless prairie, from whose dark-rolling herbage, here and there along the distant swells, was thrown back the glorious moonlight, as if from the restless, heaving bosom of the deep. An extensive prairie, beneath a full burst of summer moonlight, is, indeed, a magnificent spectacle. One can hardly persuade himself that he is not upon the ocean-shore. And now a wild, fresh breeze, which all the day had been out playing among the perfumed flowers and riding the green-crested waves, came rolling in from the prairie, producing 332 an undulation of its surface and a murmuring in the heavy forest-boughs perfect in the illusion. All along the low, distant horizon hung a thin mist of silvery gauze, which, as it rose and fell upon the dark herbage, gave an idea of mysterious boundlessness to the scene. Here and there stood out a lonely, weather-beaten tree upon the plain, its trunk shrouded in obscurity, but its leafy top sighing in the night-breeze, and

gleaming like a beacon-light in the beams of the cloudless moon. There was a dash of fascinating romance about the scene, which held me involuntarily upon the spot until reminded by the chill dews of night that I had, as yet, no shelter. On casting around my eye, I perceived a low log cabin, half buried in vegetation, standing alone in the skirt of the wood. Although a miserable tenement, necessity compelled me to accept its hospitality, and I entered. It consisted of a single apartment, in which two beds, two stools, a cross-legged deal table, [82] and a rough clothes-press, were the only household furniture. A few indispensable iron utensils sat near the fire; the water-pail and gourd stood upon the shelf, and a half-consumed flitch of bacon hung suspended in the chimney; but the superlatives of andirons, shovel and tongs, etc., etc., were all unknown in this primitive abode. A pair of “lost rocks”— *lost* , indeed — supplied the first, and the gnarled branch of an oak was substituted for the latter. The huge old chimney and fireplace were, as usual, fashioned of sticks and bedaubed with clay; yet everything looked neat, yea, *comfortable* , in very despite of poverty itself. A young female with her child, an infant boy, in her arms, was superintending the preparation of the evening meal. Her language and demeanour were superior to the miserable circumstances by which she was surrounded; and though she moved about her narrow demesne with a quiet, satisfied air, I was not long in learning 333 that *affection* alone had transplanted this exotic of the prairie from a more congenial soil. What woman does not love to tell over those passages of her history in which the *heart* has ruled lord of the ascendant? and how very different in this respect is our sex from hers! Man, proud man, “the creature of interest and ambition,” often blushes to be reminded that he has a heart, while woman's cheek mantles with the very intensity of its pulsation! The husband in a few minutes came in from attending to my horse; the rough table was spread; a humble fare was produced; all were seated; and then, beneath that miserable roof, [83] around that meager board, before a morsel of the food, poor as it was, passed the lip of an individual, the iron hand of toil was reverently raised, and a grateful heart called down a blessing from the Mightiest! Ah! thought I, as I beheld the peaceful, satisfied air of that poor man, as he partook of his humble evening meal with gratefulness, little does the son of luxury know the calm contentment which fills his breast! And the great

God, as he looks down upon his children and reads their hearts, does he not listen to many a warmer, purer thank-offering from beneath the lowly roof-tree of the wilderness, than from all the palaces of opulence and pride? So it has *ever* been — so it has ever been — and so can it never cease to be while the heart of man remains attempered as it is.

The humble repast was soon over; and, without difficulty, I entered into conversation with the father of the family. He informed me that he had been but a few years a resident of Illinois; that he had been unfortunate; and that, recently, his circumstances had become more than usually circumscribed, from his endeavours to save from speculators a pre-emption right of the small farm he was cultivating. This farm was his *all* ; and, in his solicitude 334 to retain its possession, he had disposed of every article of the household which would in any way produce money, even of a part of his own and his wife's wardrobe. I found him a man of considerable intelligence, and he imparted to me some facts respecting that singular sect styling themselves Mormonites of which I was previously hardly aware. Immense [84] crowds of these people had passed his door on the great road from Terre Haute, all with families and household effects stowed away in little one-horse wagons of peculiar construction, and on their journey to Mount Zion, the New Jerusalem, situated near Independence, Jackson county, Missouri! Their observance of the Sabbath was almost pharisaically severe, never permitting themselves to travel upon that day; the men devoting it to hunting, and the females to washing clothes, and other operations of the camp! It was their custom, likewise, to hold a preachment in every village or settlement, whether men would hear or forbear: the latter must have been the case with something of a majority, I think, since no one with whom I have ever met could, for the life of him, give a subsequent expose of *Mormonism* , “though often requested.”

“I never heard or could engage A person yet by prayers, or bribes, or tears, To name, define by speech, or write on page, The *doctrines* meant precisely by that word, Which surely is exceedingly absurd.”

They assert that an angelic messenger has appeared to Joe Smith, announcing the millennial dawn at hand; that a glorious city of the faithful — the New Jerusalem, with streets of gold and gates of pearl — is about to be reared upon Mount Zion, Mo., where the Saviour will descend and establish a kingdom to which there shall be no end; ergo, argue these everlasting livers, it befits all good citizens to get to Independence, Jackson county, aforesaid, as fast 335 as one-horse wagons will convey them! 200 Large quantities of arms and ammunition have, moreover, been [85] forwarded, so that the item of “the sword being beaten into a ploughshare, and spear into pruning-hook,” seems not of probable fulfilment according to these worthies. The truth of the case is, they anticipated a brush with the long-haired “ *pukes* ” 201 before securing a “demise, release, and for ever quitclaim” to Zion Hill, said pukes having already at sundry times manifested a refractory spirit, and, from the following anecdote of my good man of the hut, in “rather a ridic'lous manner.” I am no voucher for the story: I give it as related; “and,” as Ben Jonson says, “what he has possessed me withal, I'll discharge it amply.”

200 For a later description of the Mormon settlement in Missouri, and an account of their stay at Nauvoo, Illinois, see Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies*, in our volume xx, pp. 94–99 and accompanying notes. For a psychological treatment of Joseph Smith and bibliography of Mormonism, see Isaac W. Riley, *Founder of Mormonism* (New York, 1902). — Ed.

201 Missourians.— Flagg.

“One Sabbath evening, when the services of the congregation of the Mormonites were over, the Rev. Joe Smith, priest and prophet, announced to his expectant tribe that, on the succeeding Sabbath, the baptismal sacrament would take place, when an angel would appear on the opposite bank of the stream. Next Sabbath came, and ‘great was the company of the people’ to witness the miraculous visitation. The baptism commenced, and was now well-nigh concluded: ‘Do our eyes deceive us! can such things be! The prophecy! the angel!’ were exclamations which ran through the multitude, as a fair form, veiled in a

loose white garment, with flowing locks and long bright pinions, stood suddenly before the assembled multitude upon the opposite shore, and then disappeared! All was amazement, consternation, awe! But where is Joe Smith? In a few 336 moments Joe Smith was with them, and their faith was confirmed.

[86] “Again was a baptism appointed — again was the angel announced — a larger congregation assembled — and yet again did the angel appear. At that moment two powerful men sprang from a thicket, rushed upon the angelic visitant, and, amid mingling exclamations of horror and *execrations* of piety from the spectators, tore away his long white wings, his hair and robe, and plunged him into the stream! By some unaccountable metamorphosis, the angel emerged from the river honest Joe Smith, priest of Mormon, finder of the golden plates, etc., etc., and the magi of the enchantment were revealed in the persons of two brawny *pukes.* ” Since then, the story concludes, not an angel has been seen all about Mount Zion! The miracle of walking upon water was afterward essayed, but failed by the removal, by some impious wags, of the benches prepared for the occasion. It is truly astonishing to what lengths superstition has run in some sections of this same Illinois. Not long since, a knowing farmer in the county of Macon conceived himself ordained of heaven a promulgator to the world of a system of “New Light,” so styled, upon “a plan entirely new.” No sooner did the idea strike his fancy, than, leaving the plough in the middle of the furrow, away sallies he to the nearest village, and admonishes every one, everywhere, forthwith to be baptized by his heaven-appointed hands, and become a regenerate man on the spot. Many believed — was there ever faith too preposterous to obtain proselytes? the doctrine, in popular phrase, “took mightily;” and, it must be confessed, the whole world, men, women, and children, were [87] in a fair way for regeneration. Unfortunately for that desirable consummation, at this crisis certain simple-hearted people thereabouts, by some freak of fancy or other, took it into 337 their heads that the priest himself manifested hardly that *quantum* of the regenerated spirit that beseemed so considerable a functionary. Among other peccadilloes, he had unhappily fallen into a habit every Sabbath morning, when he rode in from his farmhouse

— a neat little edifice which the good people had erected for his benefit in the outskirts of the village — of trotting solemnly up before the grocery-door upon his horse, receiving a glass of some dark-coloured liquid, character unknown, drinking it off with considerable gusto, dropping a *picayune* into the tumbler, then proceeding to the pulpit, and, on the inspiration of the mysterious potation, holding vehemently forth. Sundry other misdeeds of the reverend man near about the same time came to light, so that at length the old women pronounced that terrible fiat, “the preacher was no *better* than he should be;” which means, as everybody knows, that he was a good deal *worse.* And so the men, old and young, chimed in, and the priest was politely advised to decamp before the doctrine should get unsavoury. Thus ended the glorious discovery of New-lightism!

It is a humiliating thing to review the aberrations of the human mind: and, believe me, reader, my intention in reviewing these instances of religious fanaticism has been not to excite a smile of transient merriment, nor for a moment to call in question the [88] reality of true devotion. My intention has been to show to what extremes of preposterous folly man may be hurried when he once resigns himself to the vagaries of fancy upon a subject which demands the severest deductions of reason. It is, indeed, a *melancholy* consideration, that, in a country like our own, which we fondly look upon as the hope of the world, and amid the full-orbed effulgence of the nineteenth century, there should exist a body of men, more than twelve thousand in number, as is estimated, professing belief in a faith so 338 unutterably absurd as that styled Mormonism; a faith which would have disgraced the darkest hour of the darkest era of our race. 202 But it is not for me to read the human *heart.*

202 For a year after the above was written, the cause of Mormonism seemed to have received a salutary check. It has since revived, and thousands during the past summer have been flocking to their Mount Zion on the outskirts of Missouri. The late Mormon difficulties in Missouri have been made too notorious by the public prints of the day to require notice.— Flagg.

Shelbyville, Ill.

XXX

“The day is lowering; stilly black Sleeps the grim waste, while heaven's rack, Dispersed and wild, 'tween earth and sky Hangs like a shatter'd canopy!”

Fire-worshippers.

“Rent is the fleecy mantle of the sky; The clouds fly different; and the sudden sun By fits effulgent gilds the illumined fields, And black by fits the shadows sweep along.”

Thomson.

“The bleak winds Do sorely ruffle; for many miles about There's scarce a bush.” *Lear, Act 2.*

“These are the Gardens of the Desert.”

Bryant.

Merrily, merrily did the wild night-wind howl, and whistle, and rave around the little low cabin beneath whose humble roof-tree the traveller had lain himself to rest. Now it would roar and rumble down the huge wooden chimney, and anon sigh along the tall grass-tops and through the crannies like the wail of some lost one of the waste. The moonbeams, at intervals darkened by the drifting clouds and again pouring gloriously forth, streamed in long threads of silver through the shattered walls; while 339 the shaggy forest in the back-ground, tossing its heavy branches against the troubled sky, [90] roared forth a deep chorus to the storm. It was a wild night, and so complete was the illusion that, in the fitful lullings of the tempest, one almost imagined himself on the ocean-beach, listening to the confused weltering of the surge. There was much of high sublimity in all this; and hours passed away before the traveller, weary as he was, could quiet his mind to slumber. There

are seasons when every chord, and nerve, and sinew of the system seems wound up to its severest tension; and a morbid, unnatural excitement broods over the mind, forbidding all approach to quietude. Every one has *experienced* this under peculiar circumstances; few can *describe* it.

The night wore tediously away, and at the dawn the traveller was again in the saddle, pushing forth like a “pilgrim-bark” upon the swelling ocean-waste, sweeping even to the broad curve of undulating horizon beyond. There is always something singularly unpleasant in the idea of going out upon one of these vast prairies *alone* ; and such the sense of utter loneliness, that the solitary traveller never fails to cast back a lingering gaze upon the last low tenement he is leaving. The winds were still up, and the rack and clouds were scudding in wild confusion along the darkened sky;

“Here, flying loosely as the mane Of a young war-horse in the blast; There, roll'd in masses dark and swelling, As proud to be the thunder's dwelling!”

From time to time a heavy blast would come careering [91] with resistless fury along the heaving plain, almost tearing the rider from his horse. The celebrated “Grand Prairie,” upon which I was now entering, stretched itself away to the south thirty miles, a vast, unbroken meadow; and one 340 may conceive, not describe, the terrible fury of a stormwind sweeping over a surface like this. 203 As the morning advanced, the violence of the tempest lulled into fitful gusts; and, as the centre of the vast amphitheatre was attained, a scene of grandeur and magnificence opened to my eye such as it never before had looked upon. Elevated upon a full roll of the prairie, the glance ranged over a scene of seemingly limitless extent; for upon every side, for the first time in my ramble, the deep blue line of the horizon and the darker hue of the waving verdure blended into one.

203 Grand Prairie, as described by Peck in his *Gazetteer of Illinois*, was a general term applied to the prairie country between the rivers which flow into the Mississippi and those which empty into the Wabash. “It is made up of continuous tracts, with long arms

of prairie extending between the creeks and smaller streams. The southern points of the Grand prairie are formed in the northeastern parts of Jackson county and extend in a northeastern course between the streams of various widths, from one to ten or twelve miles, through Perry, Washington, Jefferson, Marion, the eastern part of Fayette, Effingham, through the western portion of Coles, into Champaign and Iroquois counties, where it becomes connected with the prairies that project eastward from the Illinois River and its tributaries. Much of the longest part of the Grand prairie is gently undulatory, but of the southern portion considerable tracts are flat and of rather inferior soil."— Ed.

The touching, delicate loveliness of the lesser prairies, so resplendent in brilliancy of hue and beauty of outline, I have often dwelt upon with delight. The graceful undulation of slope and swell; the exquisite richness and freshness of the verdure flashing in native magnificence; the gorgeous dies of the matchless and many-coloured flowers dallying with the winds; the beautiful woodland points and promontories shooting forth into the mimic sea; the far-retreating, shadowy *coves* , going back in long vistas into the green wood; the curved outline of the dim, distant horizon, caught at intervals through the openings of the forest; and the whole gloriously lighted up by the early radiance of morning, as with rosy footsteps she came dancing [92] over the dew-gemmed landscape; all these 341 constituted a scene in which beauty unrivalled was the sole ingredient. And then those bright enamelled clumps of living emerald, sleeping upon the wavy surface like the golden Hesperides of classic fiction, or, like another cluster of Fortunate Isles in the dark-blue waters, breathing a fragrance as from oriental bowers; the wild-deer bounding in startled beauty from his bed, and the merry note of the skylark, whistling, with speckled vest and dew-wet wing, upon the resin-weed, lent the last touchings to Nature's *chef d'œuvre.*

Oh, beautiful, still beautiful, Though long and lone the way."

But the scene amid which I was now standing could boast an aspect little like this. Here, indeed, were the rare and delicate flowers; and life, in all its fresh and beautiful forms, was leaping forth in wild and sportive luxuriance at my feet. But all was vast,

measureless, Titanic; and the loveliness of the picture was lost in its grandeur. Here was no magnificence of *beauty* , no *gorgeousness* of vegetation, no *splendour* of the wilderness;

“Green isles and circling shores *ne'er* blended here In wild reality!”

All was bold and impressive, reposing in the stern, majestic solitude of Nature. On every side the earth heaved and rolled like the swell of troubled waters; now sweeping away in the long heavy wave of ocean, and now rocking and curling like the abrupt, broken bay-billow tumbling around the [93] crag. Between the lengthened parallel ridges stretch the ravines by which the prairie is drained; and, owing to the depth and tenacity of the soil, they are sometimes almost impassable. Ascending from these, the elevation swells so gradually as to be almost imperceptible to the traveller, until he finds himself upon the summit, and the immense landscape is spread out around him.

342

“The clouds Sweep over with their shadows, and beneath, The surface rolls and fluctuates to the eye; Dark hollows seem to glide along and chase The sunny ridges.”

The diversity of light and shade upon the swells and depressions at the hour of sunrise, or when at midday clouds are drifting along the sky, is endless. A few points here and there are thrown into prominent relief; while others, deeply retreating, constitute an imaginary back-ground perfect in its kind. And then the sunlight, constantly changing its position, is received upon such a variety of angles, and these, too, so rapidly vary as the breeze rolls over the surface, that it gives the scene a wild and shifting aspect to the eye at times, barely reconcilable with the idea of reality.

As the sun reached the meridian the winds went down, and then the stillness of death hung over the prairie. The utter desolateness of such a scene is indescribable. Not a solitary tree to intercept the vision or to break the monotony; not a sound to cheer the ear

or relieve the desolation; not a living [94] thing in all that vast wild plain to tell the traveller that he was not

“Alone, alone, all, all alone, Alone on a wide, wide sea!”

It is at such a season that the question presents itself with more than ordinary vehemence to the mind, *To what circumstance do these vast prairies owe their origin* ? Amid what terrible convulsion of the elements did these great ocean-plains heave themselves into being? What mighty voice has rolled this heaped-up surface into tumult, and then, amid the storm and the tempest, bid the curling billows stand, and fixed them there?

“The hand that built the firmament hath heaved And smooth'd these verdant swells.”

343

The origin of the prairie has given rise to much speculation. Some contend that we are to regard these vast plains in the same light as mountains, valleys, forests, and other grand features of Nature's workmanship. And, it is very true, plains of a character not dissimilar are to be met with all over our earth; at every degree of elevation of every extent, and of every stage of fertility, from the exhaustless fecundity of the delta of the Nile to the barren sterility of the sands of the desert. Northern Asia has her boundless *pastures* and *steppes* , where the wild Tartar feeds his flock; Africa may boast her Bedouin *sands* , her *tablelands* , and her *karroos* ; South America her grassy *llanos* and *pampas* ; Europe her purple *heather* ; India her *jungles* ; the southern sections of our own land their beautiful *savannas* ; and wherefore not the [95] vast regions of the “Far West” their broad-rolling *prairies* ? The word is of French derivation, signifying *meadow* ; and is applied to every description of surface destitute of timber and clothed with grass. It was, then, upon their own fair prairies of Judea and Mesopotamia that the ancient patriarchs pitched their tents. The tough sward of the prairie, when firmly formed, it is well known, refuses to receive the forest; but, once broken into by the ploughshare or by any other cause, and protected from the autumnal flames, and all is soon rolling with green; and the sumach, the hazel, and

the wild-cherry are succeeded by the oak. Such is the argument for the *natural* origin of the prairie, and its cogency none will deny. But, assuming for a moment a *diluvial* origin to these vast plains, as a thousand circumstances concur to indicate, and the phenomena are far more satisfactorily and philosophically resolved. In a soil so exhaustlessly fertile, the grasses and herbs would first secure possession of the surface. Even now, whenever the earth is thrown up, from whatever depth, it is immediately 344 mossed with verdure by the countless embryos buried in its teeming bosom; a proof incontestable of secondary origin. After the grasses succeeded flowering shrubs; then the larger weeds; eventually, thickets were formed; the surface was baked and hardened by the direct rays of the sun, and the bosom of the soil, bound up as if by bands of brass and iron, utterly refused to receive or nourish the seeds of the forest now strewn over it. This is the unavoidable conclusion wherever natural [96] causes have held their sway. Upon the borders of rivers, creeks, and overflowing streams, or wherever the soil has become broken, this series of causes was interrupted, and the result we see in the numerous island-groves, and in the forests which invariably fringe the water-courses, great and small. The autumnal fires, too, aboriginal tradition informs us, have annually swept these vast plains from an era which the memory of man faileth to record, scathing and consuming every bush, shrub, or thicket which in the lapse of ages might have aspired to the dignity of a tree; a nucleus around which other trees might have clustered. Here and there, indeed, amid the heaving waste, a desolate, windshaken, flame-blackened oak rears its naked branches in the distance; but it is a stricken thing, and only confirms the position assumed. From a concurrence of fortuitous circumstances easily conceived, the solitary seed was received into a genial soil; the tender shrub and the sapling were protected from destruction, and at length it had struggled into the upper air, and defied alike the flames and blasts of the prairie.

The argument of *analogy* for the *natural origin* of the prairie may also be fairly questioned, since careful examination of the subject must convince any unprejudiced mind that the similarity of feature between these plains and others with which we are acquainted is not sufficiently 345 striking to warrant comparison. The *pampas* , the *steppes* , and the

sand-plains , though not unlike in the more prominent characteristics, are yet widely different [97] in configuration, extent, and soil. The prairie combines characteristics of each, exhibiting features of all in *common* , of no one in *particular.* Who would institute comparison between the dark-rolling luxuriance of the North American prairie, and the gloomy moor of Northern Europe, with its heavy, funereal mantle of heather and *ling.* Could the rifest fancy conjure up the *weird sisters* , all “so withered and so wild in their attire,” upon these beautiful plains of the departed Illini! Nor do we meet in the thymebreathing downs of “merry England,” the broad rich levels of France, the grape-clad highlands of Spain, or in the golden mellowness of the Italian *Campagna* , with a similitude of feature sufficiently striking to identify our own glorious prairies with them. Europe can boast, indeed, no peculiarity of surface assuming like configuration or exhibiting like phenomena.

When, then, we reflect, that of all those plains which spread out themselves upon our globe, the North American prairie possesses characteristics peculiar to itself, and to be met with nowhere beside; when we consider the demonstrations of a soil of origin incontestably diluvial; when we wander over the heaving, billowy surface, and behold it strewed with the rocky offspring of another region, and, at intervals, encased in the saline crust of the ocean-sediment; when we dive into its fathomless bosom, and bring forth the crumbling relics of man and animal from sepulchres into which, for untold cycles, they have been entombed; and when we linger along those rolling streams by which they [98] are intersected, and behold upon their banks the mighty indications of whirling, subsiding floods, and behold buried in the heart of the everlasting rock 346 productions only of the sea, the conviction is forced upon us, almost resistlessly, that here the broad ocean once heaved and roared. To what circumstance, indeed, but a revolution of nature like this, are we to refer that uniform deposition of earthy strata upon the alluvial bottomland of every stream? to what those deep-cut race-paths which the great streams have, in the lapse of centuries, worn for themselves through the everlasting rock, hundreds of feet? to what those vast salt-plains of Arkansas? those rocky heaps of the same mineral on

the Missouri, or those huge isolated masses of limestone, rearing themselves amid the lonely grandeur, a wonder to the savage? Or to what else shall we refer those collections of enormous seashells, heaped upon the soil, or thrown up to its surface from a depth of fifty feet?

Many phenomena in the Valley of the Mississippi concur to confirm the idea that its vast delta-plains, when first forsaken by the waters of the ocean, were possessed by extensive canebrakes, covering, indeed, its entire surface. If, then, we suppose the Indians, who passed from Asia to America in the early centuries of the Christian era, to have commenced the fires in autumn when the reed was like tinder, and the conflagration would sweep over boundless regions, we at once have an hypothesis which accounts for the origin of the prairies. It is at least as plausible as some others. The occasions of the autumnal fires may have been [99] various. The cane-forests must have presented an insurmountable obstacle in travelling, hunting, agriculture, or even residence; while the friction caused by the tempestuous winds of autumn may have kindled numerous fires among the dry reeds.

The surface peculiar to the prairie is first perceived in the State of Ohio. As we proceed north and west it increases in extent, until, a few hundred miles beyond the 347 Mississippi, it rolls on towards the setting sun, in all the majesty and magnificence of boundlessness, to the base of the Rocky Mountains. Such are the beautiful prairies of the fair Far West; and if, gentle reader, my pen, all rapid though it be, has lingered tediously to thee along their fairy borders, it may yet prove no small consolation to thy weariness to reflect that its errings upon the subject are wellnigh ended.

It was yet early in the day, as I have intimated, when I reached the centre of that broad branch of the Grand Prairie over which I was passing; and, mile after mile, the narrow pathway, almost obliterated here and there by the waving vegetation, continued to wind itself along. With that unreflecting carelessness which characterizes the inexperienced wayfarer, I had left behind me the last human habitation I was for hours to look upon,

without the slightest refreshment; and now the demands of unappeased nature, sharpened by exercise, by the keen atmosphere of the prairies, and, probably, by the force of fancy, which never fails to aggravate privations which we know to be remediless, had become absolutely painful. The faithful animal beneath [100] me, also, from the total absence of water along our path, was nearly exhausted; and there, before and around, and on every side, not an object met the view but the broad-rolling, limitless prairie, and the dim, misty horizon in the distance. Above, the heavens were calm and blue, and the bright sun was careering on in his giant course as gloriously as if the storm-cloud had never swept his path. League after league the prairie lay behind me, and still swell upon swell, wave after wave, heaved up itself in endless succession before the wearied eye. There is a point, reader, in physical, not less than in moral affairs, where forbearance ceases to be a virtue; and, veritably, suggestions bordering on the horrible were 348 beginning to flit athwart the fancy, when, happily, a long, low, wavering cloud-like line was caught stretching itself upon the extremest verge of the misty horizon. My jaded animal was urged onward; and slowly, *very* slowly, the dim outline undulated upward, and the green forest rose gradually before the gladdened vision! A few miles, the path plunged into the green, fresh woods; crossed a deep creek, which betrayed its meandering by the grove along its banks, and the hungry traveller threw himself from his horse before a log cabin imbowered in the trees. The spot was one of those luxuriant copses in the heart of the prairie, comprising several hundred acres, so common in the northern sections of Illinois. “ *Victuals and drink!* ” were, of course, the first demand from a female who showed herself at the door; and, “ *I judge* ” was the laconic but cheering [101] reply. She stared with uncontrolled curiosity at her stranger-guest. At the moment he must have looked a perfect incarnation of ferocity; a very genius of famine and starvation; but, all in good time, he was luxuriating over a huge fragment of swine's flesh, a bowl of honey, and a loaf of bread; and soon were his *miseries* over. What! honey and hog's flesh not a luxury! Say ye so, reader! Verily, then, were ye never half starved in the heart of a Western prairie!

Salem, Ill.

XXXI

No leave take I, for I will ride As far as land will let me.”

“The long sunny lapse of a summer's daylight.” “What fool is this!”

As You Like It.

Among that novel variety of feature which the perspicacity of European tourists in America has enabled them 349 to detect of Cis-atlantic character, two traits seem ever to stand forth in striking relief, and are dwelt upon with very evident satisfaction: I allude to Avarice and Curiosity. Upon the former of these characteristics it is not my purpose to comment; though one can hardly have been a traveller, in any acceptation of the term, or in almost any section of our land, without having arrived at a pretty decided opinion upon the subject. Curiosity, [102] however, it will not, I am persuaded, be denied, *does* constitute a feature, and no inconsiderable one, in our national character; nor would it, perhaps, prove a difficult task to lay the finger upon those precise circumstances in our origin and history as a people which have tended to superinduce a trait of this kind — a trait so disgusting in its ultra development; and yet, in its ultimate nature, so indispensably the mainspring of everything efficient in mind. “ *Low vice* ,” as the author of Childe Harold has been pleased to stigmatize it; yet upon this single propellant may, in retrospect, be predicated the cause of more that contributes to man's happiness than perhaps upon any other. *Frailty of a little mind* , as it *may* be, and is often deemed; yet not the less true is it that the omnipotent workings of this passion have ever been, and must, until the nature of the human mind is radically changed, continue to remain, at once the necessary concomitant and the essential element of a vigorous understanding. If it be, then, indeed true, as writers and critics beyond the waters would fain have us believe, that American national character is thus compounded, so far from blushing at the discovery, we would hail it as a leading cause of our unparalleled advancement as a people in the time past, and as an unerring omen of progression in future.

My pen has been insensibly betrayed into these remarks in view of a series of incidents which, during my few months 350 rambling, have from time to time transpired; and which, while they illustrate forcibly to my mind the position I have assumed, [103] have also demonstrated conclusively the minor consideration, that the passion, in all its *phenomena* , is by no means, as some would have us believe, restricted to any one portion of our land; that it is, in verity, a characteristic of the entire Anglo-American race! Thus much for *sage forensic* upon “that low vice, curiosity.”

My last number left me luxuriating, with all the gusto of an amateur prairie-wolf fresh from his starving lair, upon the *fat* and *honey* of Illinois. During these blessed moments of trencher devotion, several inmates of the little cabin whose hospitality I was enjoying, who had been labouring in the field, successively made their appearance; and to each individual in turn was the traveller handed over, like a bale of suspected contraband merchandise, for supervision. The interrogatories of each were quite the same, embracing name and nativity, occupation, location, and destination, administered with all the formal exactitude of a county-court lawyer. With the inquiries of none, however, was I more amused than with those of a little corpulent old fellow ycleped “Uncle Bill,” with a proboscis of exceeding rubicundity, and eyes red as a weasel's, to say nothing of a voice melodious in note as an asthmatic clarionet. The curiosity of the Northern Yankee is, in all conscience, unconscionable enough when aroused; but, for the genuine quintessence of inquisitiveness, commend your enemy, if you have one, to an army of starving gallinippers, or to a backwoods' family of the Far West, who see a traveller twice a year, and don't take the newspaper! Now [104] mark me, reader! I mention this not as a *fault* of the worthy “Suckers:”204 it is rather a misfortune

204 Illinoisians.— Flagg.

351 tune; or, if otherwise, it surely “leans to virtue's side.” A *peculiarity* , nevertheless, it certainly is; and a striking one to the stranger. Inquiries are constantly made with most unblushing effrontery, which, under ordinary circumstances, would be deemed but a single

remove from insult, but at which, under those to which I refer, a man of sense would not for a moment take exception. It is *true* , as some one somewhere has said, that a degree of inquisitiveness which in the more crowded walks of life would be called impertinent, is perfectly allowable in the wilderness; and nothing is more conceivable than desire for its gratification. As to the people of Illinois, gathered as they are from every “kindred, and nation, and tribe, and language under heaven,” there are traits of character among them which one could wish universally possessed. Kind, hospitable, open-hearted, and confiding have I ever found them, whether in the lonely log cabin of the prairie or in the overflowing settlement; and some noble spirits *I* have met whose presence would honour any community or people.

After my humble but delicious meal was concluded, mine host, a tall, well-proportioned, sinewy young fellow, taking down his rifle from the *beckets* in which it was reposing over the rude mantel, very civilly requested me to accompany him on a hunting ramble of a few hours in the vicinity for deer. Having but a short evening ride before me, I readily consented; and, leaving the cabin, we strolled [105] leisurely through the shady woods, along the banks of the creek I have mentioned, for several miles; but, though indications of deer were abundant, without success. We were again returning to the hut, which was now in sight on the prairie's edge, when, in the middle of a remark upon the propriety of “ *disposing of a part of his extensive farm* ,” the rifle of my companion was suddenly brought to his eye; a sharp crack, and a beautiful doe, which the moment 352 before was bounding over the nodding wild-weeds like the summer wind, lay gasping at our feet.

So agreeable did I find my youthful hunter, that I was wellnigh complying with his request to “tarry with him yet a few days,” and try my own hand and eye, all unskilled though they be, in *gentle venerie* ; or, at the least, to taste a steak from the fine fat doe. *Sed fugit, interea fugit, irreparabile tempus* ; and when the shades of evening were beginning to gather over the landscape, I had passed over a prairie some eight miles in breadth; and,

chilled and uncomfortable from the drenching of a heavy shower, was entering the village of Shelbyville through the trees.205

205 Shelbyville, selected as the seat of Shelby County (1827), was named in honor of Isaac Shelby, early governor of Kentucky. It is located about thirty-two miles southeast of Decatur, and was incorporated in May, 1839.— Ed.

This is a pleasant little town enough, situated on the west bank of the Kaskaskia River, in a high and heavily-timbered tract. It is the seat of justice for the county from which it takes its name, which circumstance is fearfully portended by a ragged, bleak-looking structure called a courthouse. Its shattered windows, and flapping doors, and weather-stained bricks, when associated with the object to which it is appropriated, perched up as it is in the [106] centre of the village, reminds one of a cornfield scarecrow, performing its duty by looking as hideous as possible. *In terrorem* , in sooth. Dame Justice seems indeed to have met with most shameful treatment all over the West, through her legitimate representative the courthouse. The most interesting object in the vicinity of Shelbyville is a huge sulphur-spring, which I did not tarry long enough to visit.

“Will you be pleased, sir, to register your name?” was the modest request of mine host, as, having *settled the bill* , with foot in stirrup, I was about mounting my steed at the door of the little hostlerie of Shelbyville the morning 353 after my arrival. Tortured by the pangs of a curiosity which it was quite evident must now or never be gratified, he had pursued his guest *beyond the threshold* with this *dernier resort* to elicit a name and residence. “Register my name, sir!” was the reply. “And pray, let me ask, where do you intend that desirable operation to be performed?” The discomfited publican, with an expression of ludicrous dismay, hastily retreating to the bar-room, soon reappeared gallanting a mysterious-looking little bluebook, with “Register” in ominous characters portrayed upon the back thereof. A name was accordingly soon despatched with a pencil, beneath about a dozen others, which the honest man had probably managed to *save* in as many years;

and, applying the spur, the last glance of the traveller caught the eager features of his host poring over this new accession to his treasure.

[107] The early air of morning was intensely chilling as I left the village and pursued my solitary way through the old woods; but, as the sun went up the heavens, and the path emerged upon the open prairie, the transition was astonishing. The effect of emerging from the dusky shades of a thick wood upon a prairie on a summer day is delightful and peculiar. I have often remarked it. It impresses one like passing from the damp, gloomy closeness of a cavern into the genial sunshine of a flower-garden. For the first time during my tour in Illinois was my horse now severely troubled by that terrible insect, so notorious all over the West, the large green-bottle prairie-fly, called the “greenhead.” My attention was first attracted to it by observing several gouts of fresh blood upon the rein; and, glancing at my horse's neck, my surprise was great at beholding an orifice quite as large as that produced by the *fleam* from which the dark fluid was freely streaming. The instant one of these fearful insects plants itself upon a 354 horse's body, the rider is made aware of the circumstance by a peculiar restlessness of the animal in every limb, which soon becomes a perfect agony, while the sweat flows forth at every pore. The last year 206 was a remarkable one for countless swarms of these flies; many animals were *killed* by them; and at one season it was even dangerous to venture across the broader prairies except before sunrise or after nightfall. In the early settlement of the county, these insects were so troublesome as in [108] a great measure to retard the cultivation of the prairies; but, within a few years, a yellow insect larger than the “green-head” has made its appearance wherever the latter was found, and, from its sweeping destruction of the annoying fly, has been called the “horse-guard.” These form burrows by penetrating the earth to some depth, and there depositing the slaughtered “green-heads.” It is stated that animals become so well aware of the relief afforded by these insects and of their presence, that the traveller recognises their arrival at once by the quiet tranquillity which succeeds the former agitation. Ploughing upon the prairies was formerly much delayed by these insects, and heavy netting was requisite for the protection of the oxen.

206 1835.— Flagg.

At an inconsiderable settlement called *Cold Spring* , after a ride of a dozen miles, I drew up my horse for refreshment.207 My host, a venerable old gentleman, with brows silvered over by the frosts of sixty winters, from some circumstance unaccountable, presumed his guest a political circuit-rider, and arranged his remarks accordingly. The

207 Eight families from St. Clair County settled (1818) in the vicinity of certain noted perennial springs in the southwestern corner of what was later organized into Shelby County. For some time the colony was known as Wakefield's Settlement, for Charles Wakefield, who had made the first land entry in the county in 1821. John O. Prentis erected the first store there in 1828, and shortly afterwards secured a post-office under the name of Cold Springs.— Ed.

355 old man's politics were, however, not a little musty. Henry Clay was spoken of rather as a young aspirant for distinction, just stepping upon the arena of public life, than as the aged statesman about resigning “the seals of office,” and, hoary with honour, withdrawing from the world. Nathless, much pleased was I with my host. He was a native of Connecticut, and twenty years had seen him a resident in “the Valley.”

Resuming my route, the path conducted through [109] a high wood, and for the first time since my departure from New-England was my ear charmed by the sweet, melancholy note of the robin, beautiful songster of my own native North. A wanderer can hardly describe his emotions on an occurrence like this. The ornithology of the West, so far as a limited acquaintance will warrant assertion, embraces many of the most magnificent of the feathered creation. Here is found the jay, in gold and azure, most splendid bird of the forest; here the woodpecker, with flaming crest and snowy capote; the redbird; the cardinal grosbeak, with his mellow whistle, gorgeous in crimson dies; the bluebird, delicate as an iris; the mockbird, unrivalled chorister of our land; the thrush; the wishton-wish; the plaintive whippoorwill; and last, yet not the least, the turtle-dove, with her flutelike moaning. How often, on my solitary path, when all was still through the grove, and heaven's own

breathings for a season seemed hushed, have I reined up my horse, and, with feelings not to be described, listened to the redundant pathos of that beautiful woodnote swelling on the air! Paley has somewhere 208 told us, that by nothing has he been so touchingly reminded of the benevolence of Deity as by the quiet happiness of the infant on its mother's breast. To myself there is naught in all Nature's beautiful circle which speaks a richer eloquence of praise

208 Philosophy, vol. i.— Flagg.

356 to the goodness of our God than the gushing joyousness of the forest-bird!

All day I continued my journey over hill and [110] dale, creek and ravine, woodland and prairie, until, near sunset, I reined up my weary animal to rest a while beneath the shade of a broad-boughed oak by the wayside, of whose refreshing hospitality an emigrant, with wagon and family, had already availed himself. The leader of the caravan, rather a young man, was reclining upon the bank, and, according to his own account, none the better for an extra dram. From a few remarks which were elicited from him, I soon discovered — what I had suspected, but which he at first had seemed doggedly intent upon concealing — that he belonged to that singular sect to which I have before alluded, styling themselves Mormonites, and that he was even then on his way to Mount Zion, Jackson county, Mo.! By contriving to throw into my observations a few of those tenets of the sect which, during my wanderings, I had gathered up, the worthy Mormonite was soon persuaded — pardon my insincerity, reader — that he had stumbled upon a veritable brother; and, without reserve or mental reservation, laid open to my cognizance, as we journeyed along, “the reasons of the faith that was in him,” and the ultimate, proximate, and intermediate designs of the *party.* And such a chaotic fanfaronade of nonsense, absurdity, nay, madness, was an idle curiosity never before punished with. The most which could be gathered of any possible “ *account* ” from this confused, disconnected mass of rubbish, was the following: That Joe Smith, or Joe Smith's father, or the devil, or some other great personage, had somewhere dug up the golden [111] plates upon which were graven the “Book of Mormon:” that this all-mysterious and much-to-be-admired book embraced the chronicles

of the lost kings of Israel: that it derived its cognomen from one 357 Mormon, its principal hero, son of Lot's daughter, king of the Moabites: that Christ was crucified on the spot where Adam was interred: that the descendants of Cain were all now under the curse, and no one could possibly designate who they were: that the Saviour was about to descend in Jackson county, Missouri; the millennium was dawning, and that all who were not baptized by Joe Smith or his compeers, and forthwith repaired to Mount Zion, Missouri, aforesaid, would assuredly be cut off, and that without remedy. These may, perhaps, serve as a specimen of a host of wild absurdities which fell from the lips of my Mormonite; but, the instant argument upon any point was pressed, away was he a thousand miles into the fields of mysticism; or he laid an immediate embargo on farther proceedings by a barefaced *petitio principii* on the faith of the golden plates; or by asserting that the stranger knew more upon the matter than he! At length the stranger, coming to the conclusion that he could at least boast as *much* of Mormonism, he spurred up, and left the man still jogging onward, to Mount Zion. And yet, reader, with all his nonsense, my Mormonite was by no means an ignorant fanatic. He was a native of Virginia, and for fifteen years had been a pedagogue west of the Blue Ridge, from which edifying profession he had at length been [112] enticed by the eloquence of sundry preachers who had held forth in his schoolhouse. Thereupon taking to himself a brace of wives and two or three braces of children by way of stock in trade for the community at Mount Zion, and having likewise taken to himself a one-horse wagon, into which were bestowed the moveables, not forgetting a certain big-bellied stone bottle which hung ominously dangling in the rear; I say, having done this, and having, moreover, pressed into service a certain raw-boned, unhappy-looking horse, and a certain fat, happy-looking cow, which was 358 driven along beside the wagon, away started he all agog for the promised land.

The grand tabernacle of these fanatics is said to be at a place they call *Kirtland* , upon the shores of Lake Erie, some twenty miles from Cleveland, and numbers no less than four thousand persons. Their leader is Joe Smith, and associated with him is a certain shrewd genius named Sydney Rigdom, a quondam preacher of the doctrine of Campbell.209

Under the control of these worthies as president and cashier, a banking-house was established, which issued about $150,000, and then deceased. The private

209 Sidney Rigdon (1793–1876), after having been a Baptist pastor at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, and later associated with the Disciples in Ohio, established a branch of the Mormon church with one hundred members at Kirtland, Ohio. Joseph Smith, who had founded the last-named church at Fayette, New York (April 6, 1830), went to Kirtland in February of the following year. Aided by Rigdon, Smith attempted to establish a mixed communistic and hierarchical organized community. Mormon tanneries, stores, and other enterprises were built, and the corner-stone of a $40,000 temple laid July 23, 1833. Through improvident financial management, the leaders soon plunged the community deeply in debt. The Kirtland Society Bank, reorganized as the Kirtland Anti-Bankers Company, after issuing notes to the amount of $200,000, failed, and Smith and Rigdon further embarrassed by an accumulation of troubles fled to Jackson County, Missouri, where Oliver Cowdery by the former's order had established the Far West settlement. Joseph Smith was assassinated by a mob (June 27, 1844) at Carthage, Illinois, and Brigham Young succeeded him. Sidney Rigdon, long one of Smith's chief advisers, and one of the three presidents of the Mormon church at Nauvoo, combated the doctrine of plurality of wives. He refused to recognize the authority of Young as Smith's successor, and returned to Pennsylvania, but held to the Mormon faith until his death in 1876. In 1848 the charter granted to the city of Nauvoo by the Illinois state legislature, was repealed. The Mormons thereupon selected Utah as the field of their future activity, save that a few members were left in Missouri for proselyting purposes.

Alexander Campbell (1788–1865), educated at the University of Glasgow, came to the United States (1809) and joined the Presbyterian church. Refusing to recognize any teachings save those of the Bible, as he understood them, he and his father, Thomas Campbell, were dismissed (1812) and with a few followers formed a temporary union with the Baptist church. Disfellowshiped in 1827, they organized the Disciples of Christ, popularly known as the Campbellites. The son published the *Christian Baptist*, a monthly

magazine, its name being changed (1830) to the *Millennial Harbinger.* He held several public offices in the state of Virginia, and in 1840 founded Bethany (Virginia) College.— Ed.

359 residences are small, but the temple is said to be an elegant structure of stone, three stories in height, and nearly square in form. Each of its principal apartments is calculated to contain twelve hundred persons, and has six pulpits arranged gradatim, three at each extremity of the “Aaronic priesthood,” and in the same manner with the “priesthood of Melchisedek.” The [113] slips are so constructed as to permit the audience to face either pulpit at pleasure. In the highest seat of the “Aaronic priesthood” sits the venerable sire of the prophet, and below sit his hopeful Joe and Joe's prime minister, Sydney Rigdom. The attic of the temple is occupied for schoolrooms, five in number, where a large number of students are taught the various branches of the English, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages. The estimated cost of this building is $60,000. 210 Smith is represented as a quiet, placid-seeming knave, with passionless features, perfectly composed in the midst of his heterogeneous multitude of dupes. Rigdom, on the contrary, has a face full of fire, a fine tenour voice, and a mild and persuasive eloquence of speech. Many of their followers are said to be excellent men. The circumstances of the origin, rise, and progress of this singular sect have been given to the public by the pen of an eccentric but polished writer, and there is nothing material to add.

210 Kirtland is now deserted, and the church is occupied for a school.— Flagg.

The close of the day found me once more upon the banks of the Kaskaskia; and early on the succeeding morning, fording the stream, I pursued my route along the great national road towards Terre Haute. This road is projected eighty feet in breadth, with a central carriage-path of thirty feet, elevated above all standing water, and in no instance to exceed three degrees from a perfect level. The work has been commenced along the whole [114] line, and is 360 under various stages of advancement; for most of the way it is perfectly *direct.* The bridges are to be of limestone, and of massive structure, the base of

the abutments being equal in depth to one third their altitude. The work was for a while suspended, for the purpose of investigating former operations, and subsequently through failure of an appropriation from Congress; but a grant has since been voted sufficient to complete the undertaking so far as it is now projected.211 West of Vandalia the route is not yet located, though repeated surveys with reference to this object have been made. St. Louis, Alton, Beardstown, and divers other places upon the Mississippi and its branches present claims to become the favoured point of its destination. Upon this road I journeyed some miles; and, even in its present unfinished condition, it gives evidence of its enormous character. Compare this grand national work with the crumbling relics of the mound-builders scattered over the land, and remark the contrast: yet how, think you, reader, would an hundred thousand men regard an undertaking like this?

211 See Woods's *English Prairie*, in our volume x, p. 327, note 76.— Ed.

My route at length, to my regret, struck off at right angles from the road, and for many a mile wound away among woods and creeks. As I rode along through the country I was somewhat surprised at meeting people from various quarters, who seemed to be gathering to some rendezvous, all armed with rifles, and with the paraphernalia of hunting suspended from their shoulders. At length, near noon, I passed a log-cabin, around which [115] were assembled about a hundred men:and, upon inquiry, learned that they had come together for the purpose of “shooting a beeve,” 212 as the marksmen have it. The regulations I found to be chiefly these: A bull's-eye, with

212 Or “beef.”— Flagg.

361 a centre nail, stands at a distance variously of from forty to seventy yards; and those five who, at the close of the contest, have most frequently *driven the nail* , are entitled to a fat ox divided into five portions. Many of the marksmen in the vicinity, I was informed, could drive the nail twice out of every three trials. Reluctantly I was forced to decline a civil invitation to join the party, and to leave before the sport commenced; but, jogging leisurely along through a beautiful region of prairie and woodland interspersed, I reached near

nightfall the village of Salem.213 This place, with its dark, weather-beaten edifices, forcibly recalled to my mind one of those gloomy little seaports sprinkled along the iron-bound coast of New-England, over some of which the ocean-storm has roared and the ocean-eagle shrieked for more than two centuries. The town is situated on the eastern border of the Grand Prairie, upon the stage-route from St. Louis to Vincennes; and, as approached from one quarter, is completely concealed by a bold promontory of timber springing into the plain. It is a quiet, innocent, gossiping little place as ever was, no doubt; never did any harm in all its life, and probably never will do any. This sage conclusion is predicated upon certain items gathered at the village singing-school; at which, ever-notable place, the traveller, agreeable to invitation [116] attended, and carolled away most vehemently with about a dozen others of either sex, under the cognizance of a certain worthy personage styled *the Major,* whose vocation seemed to be to wander over these parts for the purpose of " *building up* " the good people in psalmody. To say that I was not more surprised than delighted with the fruits of the honest songster's efforts in Salem, and that I was, moreover, marvellously edified by the brisk

213 Salem, the seat of Marion County, was settled about 1823, when the county was organized.— Ed.

362 airs of the "Missouri Harmony," from whose cheerful pages operations were performed, surely need not be done; therefore, prithee reader, question me not.

Mt. Vernon, Ill.

XXXII

"After we are exhausted by a long course of application to business, how delightful are the first moments of indolence and reposel *O che bella coza di farniente* ! — Stewart.

"Shall I not take mine ease in mine innl"

Falstaff.

That distinguished metaphysician Dugald Stewart, in his treatise upon the “Active and Moral Powers,” has, in the language of my motto, somewhere214 observed, that leisure after continued exertion is a source of happiness perfect in its kind; and [1177] surely, at the moment I am now writing, my own feelings abundantly testify to the force of the remark. For more than one month past have I been urging myself onward from village to village and from hamlet to hamlet, through woodland, and over prairie, river, and rivulet, with almost the celerity of an *avant courier* , and hardly with closer regard to passing scenes and events. My purpose, reader, for I may as well tell you, has been to accomplish, within a portion of time to some degree limited, a “tour over the prairies” previously laid out. This, within the prescribed period, I am now quite certain of fulfilling; and here am I, at length “taking mine ease in mine inn” at the ancient and venerable French village Kaskaskia.

214 Philosophy, b. i., chap. I.— Flagg.

It is evening now. The long summer sunset is dying away in beauty from the heavens; and alone in my chamber am I gathering up the fragments of events scattered 363 along the pathway of the week that is gone. Last evening at this hour I was entering the town of Pinkneyville, and my last number left me soberly regaling myself upon the harmonious *vocalities* of the sombre little village of Salem. Here, then, may I well enough resume “the thread of my discourse.”

During my wanderings in Illinois I have more than once referred to the frequency and violence of the thunder-gusts by which it is visited. I had travelled not many miles the morning after leaving Salem when I was assailed by one of the most terrific storms I remember to have yet encountered. All the morning the atmosphere had been most oppressive, [118] the sultriness completely prostrating, and the livid exhalations quivered along the parched-up soil of the prairies, as if over the mouth of an enormous furnace. A gauzy mist of silvery whiteness at length diffused itself over the landscape; an inky cloud came heaving up in the northern horizon, and soon the thunder-peal began to bellow and

reverberate along the darkened prairie, and the great raindrops came tumbling to the ground. Fortunately, a shelter was at hand; but hardly had the traveller availed himself of its liberal hospitality, when the heavens were again lighted up by the sunbeams; the sable cloud rolled off to the east, and all was beautiful and calm, as if the angel of desolation in his hurried flight had but for a moment stooped the shade of his dusky wing, and had then swept onward to accomplish elsewhere his terrible bidding. With a reflection like this I was about remounting to pursue my way, when a prolonged, deafening, terrible crash — as if the wild idea of heathen mythology was indeed about to be realized, and the thunder-car of Olympian Jove was dashing through the concave above — caused me to falter with foot in stirrup, and almost involuntarily to turn my eye in the direction from which the bolt 364 seemed to have burst. A few hundred yards from the spot on which I stood a huge elm had been blasted by the lightning; and its enormous shaft towering aloft, torn, mangled, shattered from the very summit to its base, was streaming its long ghastly fragments on the blast. The scene was one startlingly impressive; one of those few scenes in a man's life the remembrance [119] of which years cannot wholly efface; which he never *forgets.* As I gazed upon this giant forest-son, which the lapse of centuries had perhaps hardly sufficed to rear to perfection, now, even though a ruin, noble, that celebrated passage of the poet Gray, when describing his *bard* , recurred with some force to my mind: in this description Gray is supposed to have had the painting of Raphael at Florence, representing Deity in the vision of Ezekiel, before him:

“Loose his beard and hoary hair Stream'd, like a meteor, to the troubled air,” &c.

A ride of a few hours, after the storm had died away, brought me to the pleasant little town of Mt. Vernon.215 This place is the seat of justice for Jefferson county, and has a courthouse of brick, decent enough to the eye, to be sure, but said to have been so miserably constructed that it is a perilous feat for his honour here to poise the scales. The town itself is an inconsiderable place, but pleasantly situated, in the edge of a prairie, if I forget not, and in every other respect is exactly what every traveller has seen a dozen times elsewhere in Illinois. Like Shelbyville, it is chiefly noted for a remarkable spring in

its vicinity, said to be highly medicinal. How this latter item may stand I know not, but I am quite sure that all of the *pure element* it was my own disagreeable necessity to partake of during

215 Mount Vernon, a village seventy-seven miles southeast of St. Louis, was chosen as the seat of justice for Jefferson County, when the latter was organized in 1808.— Ed.

365 my brief tarry savoured mightily of medicine or of something akin. Epsom salts and alum seemed the chief substances in solution; and with these minerals all the water in the region appeared heavily charged.

[120] It was a misty, miserable morning when I left Mt. Vernon; and as my route lay chiefly through a dense timbered tract, the dank, heavy atmosphere exhaling from the soil, from the luxuriant vegetation, and from the dense foliage of the over-hanging boughs, was anything but agreeable. To endure the pitiless drenching of a summer-shower with equanimity demands but a brief exercise of stoicism: but it is not in the nature of man amiably to withstand the equally pitiless *drenching* of a drizzling, penetrating, everlasting fog, be it of sea origin or of land. At length a thunder-gust — the usual remedy for these desperate cases in Illinois — dissipated the vapour, and the glorious sunlight streamed far and wide athwart a broad prairie, in the edge of which I stood. The route was, in the language of my director, indeed a *blind* one; but, having received special instructions thereupon, I hesitated not to press onward over the swelling, pathless plain towards the *east.* After a few miles, having crossed an arm of the prairie, directions were again sought and received, by which the route became due *south* , pathless as before, and through a tract of woodland rearing itself from a bog perfectly Serbonian. “Muddy Prairie” indeed. On every side rose the enormous shafts of the cypress, the water-oak, and the maple, flinging from their giant branches that gray, pensile, parasitical moss, which, weaving its long funereal fibres into a dusky mantle, almost entangles in the meshes the thin threads of sunlight struggling down from above. It was here for the first time that I met in any considerable numbers [121] with that long-necked, longlegged, long-toed, long-tailed gentry called wild-turkeys: 366 and, verily, here was a host ample to atone for all

former deficiency, parading in ungainly magnificence through the forest upon every side, or peeping curiously down, with outstretched necks and querulous piping, from their lofty perches on the traveller below. It is by a skilful imitation of this same piping, to say nothing of the melodious gobble that always succeeds it, that the sportsman decoys these sentimental bipeds within his reach. The same method is sometimes employed in hunting the deer—an imitated bleating of the fawn when in distress—thus taking away the gentle mother's life through the medium of her most generous impulses; a most diabolical *modus operandi* , reader, permit me to say.

Emerging at length, by a circuitous path, once more upon the prairie, instructions were again sought for the *direct* route to Pinkneyville, and a course nearly *north* was now pointed out. Think of that; *east, south, north* , in regular succession too, over a tract of country perfectly uniform, in order to run a *right* line between two given points! This was past all endurance. To a moral certainty with me, the place of my destination lay away just southwest from the spot on which I was then standing. Producing, therefore, my pocket-map and pocket-compass, by means of a little calculation I had soon laid down the prescribed course, determined to pursue none other, the remonstrances, and protestations, and objurgations of men, women, and children to the contrary notwithstanding. Pushing [122] boldly forth into the prairie, I had not travelled many miles when I struck a path leading off in the direction I had chosen, and which *proved* the direct route to Pinkneyville! Thus had I been forced to cross, recross, and cross again, a prairie miles in breadth, and to flounder through a swamp other miles in extent, to say nothing of the *depth* , and all because of the utter ignorance 367 of the worthy souls who took upon them to direct. I have given this instance in detail for the special edification and benefit of all future wayfarers in Illinois. The only unerring guide on the prairies is the map and the compass. Half famished, and somewhat more than half vexed at the adventures of the morning, I found myself, near noon, at the cabin-door of an honest old Virginian, and was ere long placed in a fair way to relieve my craving appetite. With the little compass which hung at the safety-riband of my watch, and which had done me such rare service during

my wanderings, the worthy old gentleman see med heart-stricken at first sight, and warmly protested that he and the “ *stranger* ” must have “ *a small bit of a tug* ” for that *fixen* , a proposition which said stranger by no means as warmly relished. Laying, therefore, before the old farmer a slight outline of my morning's ramble, he readily perceived that with me the “ *pretty leetle fixen* ” was anything but a superlative. My evening ride was a delightful one along the edge of an extended prairie; but, though repeatedly assured by the worthy settlers upon the route that I could “ *catch no diffick* ulty on my way no how,” my compass was [123] my only safe guide. At length, crossing “Mud River” upon a lofty bridge of logs, the town of Pinkneyville was before me just at sunset.216

216 Mud Creek rises in the northwestern part of Perry County, flows through the southwestern part of Washington and the southeastern part of St. Clair counties, and enters the Kaskaskia two miles below Fayetteville.

In January, 1827, the state legislature in organizing Perry County appointed a commission to select a seat of justice to be known as Pinckneyville (Pinkneyville), its town site being located and platted in January, 1828.— Ed.

Pinkneyville has but little to commend it to the passing traveller, whether we regard beauty of location, regularity of structure, elegance, size, or proportion of edifices, or the cultivation of the farms in its vicinage. It would, 368 perhaps, be a pleasant town enough were its site more elevated, its buildings larger, and disposed with a little more of mathematical exactness, or its streets less lanelike and less filthy. As it is, it will require some years to give it a standing among its fellows. It is laid out on the roll of a small prairie of moderate fertility, but has quite an extensive settlement of enterprising farmers, a circumstance which will conduce far more to the ultimate prosperity of the place. The most prominent structure is a blood-red jail of brick, standing near the centre of the village; rather a savage-looking concern, and, doubtless, so designed by its sagacious architect for the purpose of frightening evil doers.

Having taken these *observations* from the tavern door during twilight, the traveller retired to his chamber, nothing loath, after a ride of nearly fifty miles, to bestow his tired frame to rest. But, alas! that verity compels him to declare it—

“'Tis true, and pity 'tis 'tis true,”

the “ *Traveller's Inn* ” was anything, nay, *every* thing but the comfort-giving spot the hospitable cognomen swinging from its signpost seemed to imply. Ah! the fond visions of quietude and repose, [124] of plentiful feeding and hearty sleeping, which those magic words, “ *Traveller's Inn* ,” had conjured up in the weary traveller's fancy when they first delightfully swung before his eye.

“But human pleasure, what art thou, in sooth! The torrent's smoothness ere it dash below!!”

Well — exhausted, worn down, tired out, the traveller yet found it as utterly impossible quietly to rest, as does, doubtless, “a half-assoilzed soul in purgatory;” and, hours before the day had begun to break, he arose and ordered out his horse. Kind reader, hast ever, in the varyings of thy pilgrimage through this troublous world of ours, when faint, 369 and languid, and weary with exertion, by any untoward circumstance, been forced to resist the gentle promptings of “quiet nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep,” and to count away the tedious hours of the livelong night till thy very existence became a burden to thee; till thy brain whirled and thy nerves twanged like the tense harp-string? And didst thou not, then-didst thou not, from the very depths of thy soul, assever this ill, of all ills mortality is heir to, that one most utterly and unutterably intolerable patiently to endure? 'Tis no very pitiful thing, sure, to consume the midnight taper, “sickly” though it be: we commiserate the sacrifice, but we fail not to appreciate the reward. Around the couch of suffering humanity, who could not outwatch the stars? the recompense is not of *this* world.

“When youth and pleasure meet, To chase the glowing hours with flying feet,”

who asks for “sleep till morn!” But when in weariness [125] of the flesh and in languidness of spirit, the overspent wayfarer has laid down his wearied frame to rest for the toils of the morrow, it is indeed a *bitter* thing rudely to have that rest broken up! “The sleep of the *wayfaring* man is sweet,” and to have that slumber obtruded upon by causes too contemptible for a thought, is not in nature with equanimity to bear! Besides, the luckless sufferer meets with no *commiseration* : it is a matter all too ludicrous for pity; and as for fortitude, and firmness, and the like, what warrior ever achieved a laurel in such a war? what glory is to be gained over a host of starving — but I forbear. You are pretty well aware, kind reader, or ought to be, that the situation of your traveller just then was anything but an enviable one. Not so, however, deemed the worthy landlord on this interesting occasion. His blank bewilderment of visage may be better imagined than 370 described, as, aroused from sleep, his eye met the vision of his stranger guest; While the comic amalgamation of distress and pique in the marvellously elongated features of the fair hostess was so truly laughable, that a smile flitted along the traveller's rebellious muscles, serving completely to disturb the serenity of her breast! The good lady was evidently not a little nettled at the *apparent* mirthfulness of her guest under his manifold miseries — I do assure thee, reader, the mirthfulness was only *apparent* — and did not neglect occasion thereupon to let slip a sly remark impugning his “gentle breeding,” because, forsooth, dame Nature, in throwing together her “cunning workmanship,” had gifted it with a [126] nervous system not quite of steel. Meanwhile, the honest publican, agreeable to orders, having brought forth the horse, with folded hands all meekly listened to the eloquence of his spouse; but the good man was meditating the while a retaliation in shape of a most unconscionable bill of cost, which was soon presented and was as soon discharged. Then, leaving the interesting pair to their own cogitations, with the very *top* of the morning the traveller flung himself upon his horse and was soon out of sight.

Kaskaskia, Ill.

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