

## CONSTRUCTION OF NEW COMMUNITIES AND STATES IN THE NORTHWEST.

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VERY little strictly relevant to the objects of this Society ought to be expected from a paper by one who has always lived in Wisconsin and Minnesota. These States have no antiquities, although they possess a very considerable history. It has, nevertheless, occurred to me that some details may not be entirely uninteresting concerning the construction of new communities and States in the Northwest, which have been the subjects of personal observation and reflection, by one who has seen the process, and has been from early life in close contact with the men who began the work, and with the conditions under which it has been performed. Such observations may, in a slight degree, have some relevancy to other questions of importance and difficulty.

As civilization advances toward perfection, the desire increases to know the secrets of its beginnings. The question is asked, out of what situations and relations grew this or that institution, and by what processes was it established? What were the customs, manners, morals of the primitive man? Homer is questioned. Etruscan pottery is interrogated. The inscriptions on Assyrian bricks and Egyptian stones are deciphered. The derivatives from ancient languages are traced. Family records are exhumed. The books of mediæval guilds are studied. Genealogies are constructed. The writers of old letters address themselves to correspondents who live centuries after them. Municipal, mercantile and legal memorials

are sought for. Vast arches of speculative thought are sprung over the widest intervals of space and time. Mr. Douglas Campbell attempts to prove that the influence of the Dutch upon the Puritans was impressive to a degree heretofore unsuspected. Sir Henry Maine by a wonderful exertion of juridical and archaic induction endeavors to demonstrate that the recently published Brehon laws of earliest Ireland were derived, in that immemorial migration of the Aryan race, from the precepts and ordinances of the Hindoos, alike applicable to the family, the clan, the tribe, the caste, the nation. He ascends a stream, divergent from the great flood, to Italy, and proves beyond doubt, I think, that certain important Roman institutions were developed from the same origin, and that, in a large and general identity of outline, they were substantially the same with those of the ancient Irish tribes. Much of all this research is chiefly interesting because it teaches how human nature and human intellect act when they are compelled or have the voluntary opportunity to form that social organization called a State.

And yet, with all this study of extreme antiquity which so often to the student, like Oblivion to Sir Thomas Browne, "mumbleth something, but what it is he heareth not," there has taken place in the sight of the investigator of the present day, a constructive process, which, making all allowance for the influence of precedents immediately connected with it, gives answer to many of these questions. Though not entirely neglected, this contemporaneous development has not perhaps received sufficient steady attention. If we can see primeval man at work in our own time, we can determine quite accurately what his performance was in the undiscoverable ages. In investigating antiquity we should deeply consider our own times, for they are the oldest. This was Francis Bacon's truth who said, "and to speak truly *antiquitas saeculi juventus mundi*. These times are the ancient times, when the

world is ancient, and not those which we account ancient, *ordine retrogrado*, by a computation backwards from ourselves."

The effect of the irruption of alien races can also be discerned in some of the new States. The coalescence of several stocks and the production of a new type are visibly taking place. This process is one of the most recondite topics of speculative history, and it is frequently of impenetrable obscurity. And yet such influx, intermixture and modification have been operative peacefully in the United States on a scale so vast as to offer most accurate results to enlightened thought.

The settlement of that portion of the Northwest which we are now considering began about sixty years ago. There was then little immigration from Europe. That tide set in after the famine in Ireland, and after the revolutionary disturbances in 1848 upon the continent, and when the courses had been made for it by the extension of railroads to our western frontier. The consequence was that the pioneers were men of American ancestry from all the Northern States. They were young men who had not been ineffaceably impressed by the institutions and methods of the communities of their birth. They were plastic to the new situation, and to the various theories and methods thus brought into comparative competition. Very few of them intended to work for wages. Most of the immigrants sought farms; the others were professional and business men. It was a select multitude physically and mentally. Its members were aggressively self-asserting, and each one brought to the new community which he was to help to construct, a conception of methods of his native State.

Settlements were often made on the bases of State origin. The community in which I was reared was Waukesha, Wisconsin. It was settled almost entirely by people of New England ancestry whose fathers had gone

into New York at the beginning of the present century. Their descendants preserved with great distinctness the New England methods and customs of the early times, unmodified by the changes which took place afterwards in the parent States. The village was a New England town. The first Church was Congregational. My earliest recollections are of that bleak, comfortless meeting-house. It was insufficiently heated. The old ladies kept their feet warm during the long service by resting them upon little boxes filled with coals. In the summer these same good women nodded over large bunches of caraway and dill. A Puritanic shoemaker kept the boys in order. The sermons were long and doctrinal, and two were preached every Sunday. The minister had a sort of authority over the temporal affairs of his congregation. The belief in special providences and in the immediate efficacy of prayer was implicit.

That Church was openly abolitionist. Its members prayed for Torrey during his tribulations in Baltimore. They hid fugitive slaves who had escaped from north-eastern Missouri. Sometimes when the lake ports were closed, or were too closely watched, some farmer, aided by contributions from his neighbors, would transport the slave in his wagon, travelling nights when necessary, from Waukesha, around the southern end of Lake Michigan to Windsor in Canada, opposite to Detroit.

I remember well the first negro I ever saw. It was early one Saturday morning, and there was no school that day. I had made ready my little fishing-rod the night before, intending to commence early, when fish are eager for their breakfast bite, in the hope of catching a mythical bass of huge proportions which all boys said lay near a large stone in the river that ran through my father's farm. I hurried through my breakfast and rushed into the woodshed where I kept my rod. Within stood a man who was as black as midnight darkness. I was then reading *The*

Pilgrim's Progress and, in my fright, believed that I confronted Apollyon himself, and that his purpose then and there was, as John Bunyan said, "to spill my soul." But his smile reassured me. He put some sinkers on my line. I observed that he made them of buckshot taken from a pouch that hung upon a gun which he carried. He had been hid in the barn over night and was waiting in the woodshed for his breakfast.

The town meeting was an important institution in that community. Everybody attended. Nothing was considered without debate. I remember that it was very earnest, and I have no doubt it was very able.

This factor of self-government has ceased to exist in the Northwest. The population soon became mixed, and many were foreign born, to whom such an institution was utterly strange. So it passed away. The town ceased to be the primary political unit, and became the geographical congressional township, six miles square. The elective action of the people was applied to the choice of the county officers, to whose administration the most important interests of the people of every county were finally committed. The towns ceased to be considered as in themselves a basis of legislative representation. The consequence has been changed methods of town and county government, through general or special statutes, by boards of administration under various names. That this should be so was probably inevitable. Any intelligent community is quite sure to adopt the processes of government best suited to its conditions and limitations.

The new system has undoubtedly destroyed much of the individualism which the former system produced. The leaders in the town, the men of strong conviction and mighty in debate, have disappeared. The men who were and who could do all this are still there, and a few of them display their qualities in the broader and more general field.

The lesson taught by this is the tendency to centralize government in all communities in which the original scheme is subjected to the pressure of new accessions of population by invasion or immigration. This pressure has been as irresistible in our time as it was at the first emergence of man into the state of government, from family, through clan and tribe, to nation. It has been in powerful operation in the United States ever since the war. The social structure of the South, based as it was upon the master and the slave, by its very primitive simplicity, generated and finally made militant the doctrines of State rights. This was the civilized aspect of the almost indomitable assertion in ruder ages of the independence of the clan or tribe. The warlike resistance of the slave power to the resistless process of social and State evolution was the same that was made in the earliest times by the family, the clan, the tribe, the caste, against those consolidating processes which are the cause and the condition of that ultimate differentiation of functions and organization, in which consists the perfection of every material, ideal or social existence.

Minnesota became a territory in 1849. Its first political centres were the business houses of the factors of the rival fur companies. These men were surrounded by retainers as devoted and unscrupulous as any clansmen. The lumberman who came from Maine soon entered into competition with these chieftains. The result was a rude division of political power. In the course of a few years such an influx as I have described broke down the narrow exclusiveness of its predecessors. A spirit of enterprise took possession of the people, and it was far-sighted, aggressive and able.

In 1854 there was not a railroad within 300 miles of the city of St. Paul. Minnesota did not then contain 40,000 white people. The stigmatic words "the Great American Desert" extended across the school maps of that region.

There was not a practical railroad man in the Territory. Under these conditions a few young men who saw far into the "visioned future" conceived and put into the coercive form of statutes, federal and territorial, the present railway system of Minnesota. It radiates from St. Paul and Minneapolis like the spokes of an immense wheel, extending far beyond the limits of the State, and is represented by not less than ten thousand miles of constructed railways.

In 1857 it became certain that Minnesota would soon be admitted into the Union with its present boundaries, leaving that part of its former area which is now a very large portion of the States of North Dakota and South Dakota without any government whatever, and with no provision for the organization of one by the people who should go there.

The governmental instinct immediately instructed some of the pioneers of Minnesota that a new commonwealth must be formed upon this reliction. Accordingly, without authority from Congress, these founders proceeded to that region. They established counties and towns; provided for courts; convened a legislature; enacted and printed a body of statutes. They elected a delegate to Congress, but were denied recognition as a territory. They then proceeded to establish a State government; they adopted a constitution, elected a governor and other officers, and demanded admittance into the Union on an equal footing with the original States. The civil war and the Sioux massacre of 1862 blasted this enterprise in its early stage of experimentation.

I do not suppose that any one of these modern Trojans ever heard of Æneas, or of a precisely similar process, by which the hunter pioneers of Tennessee in 1772 organized the government of Watauga under the first written compact for civil rule ever made west of the Alleghenies; and afterwards in 1784 established the State of Frankland.

These performances in Tennessee and in what is now South Dakota, the details of which have been thoroughly preserved, indicate as clearly as do the earliest records of the human race what man will do and how he will do it, when, without any guide or restraint excepting his natural reason and instinct, he places himself where he must set up a government. They disclose also, what such primeval records do not distinctly show, precisely to what extent and how little civilized man has modified the methods of the primitive man. In earliest times and latest times alike, the indigenous inhabitant is to be driven out and a new polity established. Little respect is paid to the supremacy or territorial claims of the so-called parent State.

The most interesting subject of sociology and nascent government presented at the present time is Africa. It were greatly to be wished that something like the different corps of observers and classifiers described by Francis Bacon in the *New Atlantis*, could be organized for the study of this most interesting evolution of humanity in the dark continent. I believe that within a very few years the diversion of migration to that immense region will happily solve some of the malign conditions of the problem of immigration which is now perplexing those statesmen of the United States who see into our affairs a little beyond day after tomorrow.

There was not in the instances in the Northwest thus cursorily suggested, as in the settlement of New England, any controlling impulse of religion or conscience. Consequently they present certain archaic and rudimentary features for which the establishment of the New England colonies does not afford a precedent.

The collision of invading civilization with barbarism frequently destroys the memorials of the event by the violence of the process. As to the Chippewa Indians of Minnesota, however, the people of that State feel a most commendable pride in the result of their intercourse as



disclosed by recent and authentic history. This type of Indians drove the Sioux out of the wooded portions of Minnesota east of the Mississippi River about one hundred and seventy-five years ago. The Sioux became the prairie Indian, to whom no particular forethought was necessary. He owned horses. A few hunters could kill in a day enough buffalo to feed, in the shape of dried meat and pemmican, the entire band for months, and to house and clothe it with the skins. The village could strike its tents, load all its belongings on ponies and be a hundred miles away, for purposes of war or peace, in a few hours. This people became warriors of the greatest skill, bravery and ferocity. It will be difficult to reclaim them. I think the Chippewa is of a better type than his hereditary foe. However this may be, the conditions in which he and his forefathers have lived have produced a race more docile, pacific and humane than the Sioux, though not less manly and brave. The Chippewa has no horses. He lives in a wooded country, into which the buffalo never penetrated, dotted with numerous lakes and traversed by many rivers. He, therefore, produces that ideal of boat building—the birch-bark canoe. He must be provident, so he gathers the wild rice for his winter's subsistence. The vast forests wherein he lives make long journeys difficult at all times and impossible in the winter, and he is thus confined to a fixed habitat. He cuts fuel, builds a log cabin, can go on no long war-path.

Civilization has dealt with him quite successfully. The Church and State have found him tractable and teachable. There are of that people 7,000 in Minnesota and they are increasing. The Indian population upon the White Earth reservation in 1891 was 1,204. They raised that year 162,000 bushels of cereals besides other crops, and being expert woodsmen, produced 17,600,260 feet of pine lumber. They have been taken into the mass of citizenship and they vote.

These results are so different from those of primitive, or even recent man in his contact with barbarous aborigines that I do not know that any historical light radiates from this contemporary experience.

I have little doubt that the disposition of this people was first made tractable by the French who commenced dealing with them more than two hundred years ago, and whose intercourse was constant and exclusive until the peace of Paris in 1763. After that date the Frenchman of the whole or mixed blood was the servant, trapper, trader and negotiator for the factors of the great British and American fur companies, which were the precursors of civilization in that region. The French have always succeeded in maintaining amicable relations with the Indians. The French priests have ventured and lived for years among them, at times and in places where no missionary of our own race could do so. The French soldier or civilian has always maintained peace when the representatives of all other races have provoked war.

The reason for this is found in the character of that people,—its politeness, cheerfulness, adaptability,—all summed up in that one word, Tact, which expresses qualities of nearly equal importance with that other more pretentious word, Genius. Their memory is preserved in the names, apostolic or profane, of cities, counties, lakes, rivers. Two hundred years ago they had established themselves in Minnesota, south and far west of St. Paul. They had one fort at Lake Pepin, and another on the Blue Earth River. The sites of these structures cannot be discovered. The last river was named from the blue clay which forms its bed and banks. The commandant at Fort L'Huillier, conceiving that this earth received its color from the copper which he erroneously supposed it to contain, sent a large quantity of it to France for extraction of the ore. It was floated down the Blue Earth into the Minnesota River, thence by way of the Mississippi to New Orleans.

Impressive and peaceful as was the influence of the French, no tradition of any value remains of them among the Indians. They have no tradition of the sites of the forts. I have frequently improved the favorable opportunities which I have possessed for many years, in questioning closely the most intelligent of the Indians for some memorials respecting the French occupancy. The answers are so vague as to make it doubtful if anything has been handed down. The American Indian is the least traditional of men. He has no ballads—those mnemonics of unlettered races;—not enough pride apparently in the warlike achievements of his ancestors to preserve their memories for more than three generations. The most one can get from an Indian is some very slight recollection of what he heard his grandfather say concerning his own time.

The most important social and political problem, not only in the Northwest but in every part of the country, is doubtless presented by the multitudes of foreign born people who have come among us within the last fifty years in such numbers that they and their descendants now compose a very large proportion of our population.

Minnesota has received her share of this accession within the last twenty-five years. She has Irish, French, Germans, Scandinavians, Italians, Bohemians, Poles, Finns and Russians, and taken together they are a very large *per centum* of her people. Most of these immigrants have taken farms, although a portion somewhat undue has remained in the cities. The Finns are nearly all in the mines. I have studied the effect of this influx ever since it became at all noticeable. I am convinced that it is not only presently most beneficial, but that the future historian will record it as one of the most benign events in our history.

It is particularly remarkable that these people, notwithstanding their great, and sometimes (in the strife of

evenly balanced parties) decisive, political power, have very seldom sought to impose upon our system any of the methods of their native countries. They adapt themselves with surprising facility to our institutions. They have not sought to change or modify our system of common schools. They are contented with the principles of our municipal government. They have not attacked our methods of taxation. They are satisfied with our judicial system. They can be relied upon in war.

There is doubtless some inconvenience of intercourse. This always occurs when diverse peoples are brought into the most peaceful contact. The blame for the irritation is nearly always equally on each party. The thing to be considered is what will be the character one hundred years from now of the descendants of the present population of such a State as Minnesota. I am convinced that, taking into consideration the elements of this people and the climate in which they live and are thriving, their descendants will by intermarriage form one of the finest examples that the world has ever seen of a new type or modification of the great race-family to which we belong.

Encouraging as this hope is, it is not to be denied that there are questions in this complex problem that are not so soluble in their application to the entire people of the United States. Quite recently the quality of the immigrants has been deteriorated by the idle, the vicious, the socialist, who is in fact an anarchist. They lodge in the great cities. It is no part of their purpose to acquire any stake in the country such as their own proprietary homes. They hold courts in derision and government generally in contempt. Many of them are propagandists. They have brought the deserving and desirable immigrant into disrepute. It is clearly the duty of the United States, while it promotes immigration, to exercise to the fullest extent all its powers to exclude and suppress the idle, the vicious, criminal and destructive alien.

The African has not been a factor in the Northwest. Many of them are there, but their gregarious instinct keeps them in the cities. I have never known one of this race to avail himself of the homestead or timber culture law and thus acquire a home for himself and family. I do not believe that there is an African farmer in Minnesota, and I never knew more than one in Wisconsin. This is not so in the South, although the progress there of the colored man in this direction since his emancipation has not been entirely satisfactory. I think the African will, in times to come, be a source of great production and power in the United States. He will always be a race by himself, but he is tractable; he stands for law and order; his people have not yet produced an anarchist; he loves the American flag; he has fought and will fight for it.

I am aware how discursive everything that I have said has been. It is presented in the hope that it may be suggestive of research and thought by those who are privileged to enjoy, without the interruption of business or political duties, those calm delights of thought and study by which literature, society and the State have always been benefited so much and so permanently.

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