

that have had their home in those parts of the world where the struggle for existence has been least arduous is rather admonitory. The very things which we are apt to desiderate in a country are those which are likely to produce effeminacy and early decline. The people who have their homes in the deltas of great rivers, in fat valleys, and on great and fruitful plains, have, indeed, rapidly risen to great prosperity, distinction and renown, but their decadence has been no less rapid. They have run the course quickly. Northern races who have lived under leaden skies, and have had to contend with an unpropitious climate and a comparatively sterile soil have been the imperial races. The history of Great Britain and of the leonine race that have sprung from her rugged bosom is full of instruction, especially when compared with that of some parts of southern Europe where Nature has been more lavish in the bestowment of her gifts. The same story is told by the part which the Scandinavians and the Switzers of the Alps have played in the history of Europe. And it is just possible that the history of the old world may repeat itself in this respect, as well as others, in the new. The progress which the Great Mississippi Valley has made in all that pertains to material prosperity and in all the arts of civilized life, is certainly one of the greatest marvels of history. Let us hope that luxury and effeminacy shall not there, as elsewhere, act as a poisonous worm at the root of this prosperity, so that the decline shall be as marvellous as the progress has been.

Already indications are not wanting that the character of the people on these great plains shall be essentially oriental. This becomes more and more apparent the further one goes west. The idea which seems to impress the mind of everybody is that of largeness. Hyperbole is their most natural and inevitable figure of speech.

They can scarcely speak without it. And this is the form in which their wit and humor almost invariably expresses itself. Even New Englanders with all their affectation of exactitude and precision catch the trick of speaking in this way when they get out on these great plains, on the margin of great rivers which have little to commend them but their considerable volume and great length, and especially, when within sight of the great mountains. One of them impressively set forth his sense of the essential littleness of a certain man whom both he and I happened to know. "O," said he "he could colonize for a thousand generations on the point of a cambric needle and there would be land enough and to spare." Another giving me a notion of the extreme poverty of a community of "Pukes," in the southern part of Missouri that he had recently visited, said: "You wouldn't believe it, but it is literally true: they are so poor that the dogs have to sit down to bark, and the pigs have to prop themselves against the fence-corners to be able to squeal." Even when they are talking to their horses, they address them in the same oriental style. One of them who drove me recently with a pair of horses a few miles over the prairie, said to one of the horses, a beautiful young mare, that was evidently to him as the apple of his eye, but was a little frisky and playful and disposed to kick up her heels—addressing her in the most confidential and affectionate manner—"Honestly, Doll, if you don't behave yourself I'll cut you in two." All that he meant was that he would give her a sharp cut of the whip; indeed I doubt whether he meant even so much as that, but such was the expression of it in the language of the prairie.

Of the hospitality of these people of the plain it is not easy to speak in too high terms. In this, as in other respects, their character conforms to.