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PRAIRIE PHILOSOPHY.

Contributed to the Westminster
Review by Wm. Trant.

If a comparison be made between persons living in England and the settlers in the Great Lone Land of North-West Canada, or the more remote backwoodsmen of the Rockies, it will be found there is so little in common, and so much that is diverse, that it is natural the sayings and doings, manners and customs, of dwellers in log-huts and wooden shanties are invested with a sort of rude romance by those who live in houses of brick and stone. It is recognized that many, if not most, of the men who have "gone West" to "rough it" have exchanged comfortable homes, garnished with orthodox furniture, have sacrificed four square meals a day, and ordinary comforts, luxuries, pastimes and amusements, for a mere hut of one chamber, with self-made and, therefore, roughly constructed furniture, for self-provided and self-cooked meals, and for such enjoyment as a solitary canter on the prairie a gun or a fishing-rod may perhaps afford. There is a sort of notion among the Canadian settler's friends in the old country that their erst companion has somewhat degenerated towards savagery and barbarism; and he who has run his terms at the University is pictured in a slouched hat, unshaven chin, broad belt and revolvers, riding wildly after cattle, having encounters with Indians, and, indeed, being generally transformed from a drawing-room dude into a rollicking swashbuckler. I may so far anticipate my philosophy as to remark that these notions are about half true and half false.

It must have been often remarked that the country to which an emigrant goes is invariably described by some adjective denoting vastness, and formidable arrays of figures are given to justify the description. We hear or read of "the great lone land," of the "boundless prairie," or of the "everlasting plains." I confess that my senses have not been impressed with the idea of "extent" or "magnitude" indicated by these poetic phrases. I suppose it is the sameness of the prairie that causes this inability to recognize mere extent. To one who has seen so much variety in travelling from York to London in six hours, the journey from Niagara to El Paso de Norte, or from the Atlantic to the Pacific in six days, is a wearisome, tiresome monotony. The traveller does not feel to have seen so much in the one case as in the other. Nor, indeed, has he. The prairie of the second day is so nearly like that of the first, and this to all the others, including the last, that all idea of newness and freshness is lost, and the notion of extent is overpowered by a yearning for contrast. Indeed, it is difficult to realize that any progress has been made, and one's occupation becomes a series of attempts to kill time. The view from an eminence in Chicago of uninterrupted prairie all around, with a circular horizon and offing as clearly defined as at sea, conveys a far more impressive idea of the "boundless prairie" than the wide slices of alternate pasture and desert seen from a Pullman car travelling through Kansas and Texas, or through Manitoba and the North-West territories. It is the same with great cities. The vastness of unwieldy London asserts itself, not so much by its seven thousand miles of streets, as its continually changing aspects. The mind can hardly grasp the fact that Belgravia, the city and the East-end slums are parts of the same wilderness of houses. On the other hand, I question if any one were ever impressed with the size of Paris, so similar are all its boulevards, and so wanting is any attempt to relieve the eye by architectural variety. As to New York, it is quite dwarfed by the persistent protrusion of Broadway, which, with the Fifth Avenue, seems to comprise the whole city, the Bowery being attached to its tail. There are, then, conditions necessary to impress one with the notion of extent, and those conditions must not be fitful; they must be salient. I was told that after "the boundless prairies of America," I should experience the vastness of "the great Mexican plateau," and be duly impressed with the magnitude of the country over which, I was assured, the Monroe doctrine is mighty, and must ultimately prevail. I was impressed quite otherwise. Look where I would I could always see signs of a limit to the wide expanse. There was never "that horizon's fair deceit, where earth and heaven but seem to meet." A mountain peeped across the plain, or a forest prepared a sombre resting-place for the sun, or a "horseshoe curve" dispelled the illusion of

vastness by suddenly introducing a lively mining village. I was differently impressed when I stood on the Himalayas. Here, indeed, is there the idea of infinity materialized, so to speak. On every side, and in the grandest profusion, these majestic giants rear their mighty heads to the abode of the everlasting snows, and one can well imagine that there is nothing on earth beyond such an array of grandeur and splendor. Vast as are the snow-clad prairies of the Great Lone Land, and vast as they appear, they yet seem puny compared with this stupendous spectacle. Flatness is not consistent with vastness. The majesty of a storm at sea speaks amid its roar of illimitable extent and indefinite profundity; a calm ocean seems a huge pond, but yet only a pond. Perhaps the association of ideas helps this notion of insignificance, because geometry tells us that, given the height of the ship's deck and the earth's diameter, the distance of the visible horizon is only eight or nine miles. On the other hand, who has seen the long light trembling on the rippling bosom of Lake Superior, growing fainter and fainter until its quivering ceases and seems to meet and melt in "the witch'ry of the soft blue sky," and has not felt that he was gazing into another world? Here, again, it is association of ideas that helps the illusion. We know the ocean is vast, and therefore portions of it look small; we know that Superior is a lake, and the great portions of it visible are not easily realized as only part of what we know to be small. There is, then, this essential condition to the realization of vastness—a *coup d'oeil*—the view must not be taken as are some medicines, in "small doses but often." A person may travel day after day across the rolling prairie, and yet not feel the sense of distance as strongly as when standing on the platform at the railway station of Regina, the capital of Assiniboia, whence (he is told) he can see fifty miles of telegraph poles in a straight line. This, his mathematics tells him, is impossible, but so perfect is the illusion that his eye makes him doubt his mathematics.

It is only when prosaic comparisons are made that the vastness of the new world is fully realized. I remember once travelling for the larger portion of an hour in Kent through acre after acre of hops ready for picking. A taciturn passenger, who frequently consulted a spirit-flask, as often ejaculated "hops, hops, hops again," adding, as he alighted, "There will be no lack of beer next October." How would such a person be impressed were he whirled in a train, not minute after minute, or even hour after hour, but day after day through miles of wheat ripe unto the harvest! Would the poet Thomson, had he visited the North-West, have spoken of little England (little more than the size of some individual estates) as the "exhaustless granary of the world"? What would an English farmer think if he visited the Bell Farm and saw furrows each four miles long?

When I saw Paris in flames, on the suppression of the Commune, I thought it something big in fires; but since then I have lived in a dense smoke for three days, caused by a prairie fire hundreds of miles away. I have seen the ruthless destroyer creeping devouringly along mile after mile; and I have driven through devastation over an area equal to that of two or three English counties. There was a talk in England some time ago about "three acres and a cow" as sufficient upon which a man might live. Double the number of acres per head, and Manitoba, the North-West Territories and British Columbia could support a population of a hundred millions each of persons and cattle. In the great cities of the world we wonder whence comes the flour to feed so many people; in the vast areas of North America we wonder where are the people to eat so much wheat. Nor can it be forgotten that in passing from one chief town to another there has been traversed what in Europe would be an empire. The North-West Territories alone are as large as France and Germany combined. The distance from the Atlantic to the Pacific is almost as great as from London to St. Petersburg, and from Niagara to the city of Mexico as from London to Siberia; and the railway journeys between those is accomplished with far fewer changes of carriages than is the case between these. Instead of village after village, town after town, nation after nation, the traveller across the prairies of Canada knows that the vast plains, through which he travels during a railway car residence of several days, are a portion of one great nation, a young giant drawing its sustenance from all the corners of the earth, a Frankenstein conjured into being by civilization, but without the terrors of its prototype.

(To be Continued.)

PLAIN ENGLISH. DISCONTENT.

The old type of the British workman—the man who loved the squire and his relations and always voted as his employer told him to, and whose daughter went to a charity school that she might be wheeled into due obsequiousness, and whose son's first duty was to grovel to the parish vicar must be far on the road to extinction. Every day the labor movement assumes larger and larger proportions, and in each successful struggle with capital the forces of the workers show signs of steadily improving organization. The actual gains, so far, may not amount to much, but the history of the dockers' strike in London, the collapse of the wealthy corporation of Leeds in its conflict with the gas stokers, the partial insurrection of the London policemen, and the species of upheaval which has taken place among the postmen and telegraph operators of the metropolis show that the new doctrine of Discontent is taking firm root in the country. The Blessedness of Contentment is an old, exhausted subject; and its preachers, from the eminent capitalist who sat on the ivory throne of Jerusalem downwards, have invariably been men of wealth and rich clothes and substantial dinners, who bore up manfully against the fact that the outside world was hungry and despondent. Contentment is a dull, apoplectic thing at the best—it is the virtue of the gorged snake and the bulgy frog sleeping in a swamp; and a contented nation is only a dead sea of humanity with no aspirations or hope of progress. The seething dissatisfaction of Europe, whether it takes the form of strikes or dynamite—whether it reveals itself in trades unionism or in shooting the landlord from behind a hedge, in riots, anarchy, communism, or any other form—is at least a proof that the people of the Old World are advancing towards better things; and if these manifestations of discontent should die out before the emancipation of labor is finally accomplished and avoidable poverty is extinguished, it will be an infallible sign of national decay and degeneration. No doubt discontent is an expensive thing, but unfortunately experience has proved that contentment is fifty times more ruinous. The landlord who is murdered because the oppressed and ignorant peasant has not been educated up to any higher mode of expressing his dissatisfaction, may be a passing loss; but the country can grow a new landlord if it wants one, and even a thousand dead landlords are a smaller and cheaper calamity than that state of animal stupefaction which is commonly described as peace and general tranquillity. A Czar who has been shot and shattered by a bomb thrown in an almost hopeless cause may not be an attractive spectacle, but Czars are plentiful, and bombs are comparatively cheap, and it is better that a monarch should be killed by an oppressed people than that a nation of slaves should lack the courage to kill a monarch at all. Even the Tae-ping rebel, who went out with his bow and arrows and antiquated musket to protest against lifeless tyranny which had lasted for forty centuries, was a nobler being, according to his lights, than that Christian soldier, the lamented Gordon, who crushed out the last flickering spark of the Tae-ping insurrection, and restored the regime of the Peacock's Feather. Discontent, though hidden in many an unattractive disguise, is a holy thing. It is the living principle of progress—the one and only security of civilization against barbarism. It was the men who were discontented with the placid, fatuous ignorance of their contemporaries who made every discovery that was ever made for the benefit of humanity, from the day when the first prophet preached the doctrine of Christianity and taught the world to look for a heaven because it was discontented with earth and hell, down to the era when trades unionism arose because man was dissatisfied with constant hunger and constant hopeless toil. The apostle and the Nihilist are moved by the same motive. The Fenian who shoots the landlord, the Communist, the Anarchist and the prophets of Israel are all members of one great family. Discontent is the mainspring of life, and in the fact that Europe is smouldering with the elements of revolt we see only sure promise that its future may be brighter than its past.—Melbourne Bulletin.

The gymnastic classes of the M. A. A. A. will be opened this evening at the gymnasium, Mansfield street.

IS HE JACK THE RIPPER?

Sensational Story Told by a White-chapel Lodging-house Keeper.

LONDON, Oct. 13.—A sensation has been caused here by a statement made by a lodging-house keeper in the Whitechapel district that Jack the Ripper lived at her house during his crimes committed thereabouts. The woman came to Mr. Albert Backert, the chairman of the Vigilance Committee, and told her story. She says a young man engaged a bedroom at her house. He said he had been to sea up to that time, but did not work at all then. He was in receipt of £1 per week, and his brother, who was a physician, gave him a further small allowance. He had a great quantity of clothing, and had revolvers, guns and many other articles not often found in the outfit of a workman. He asked for a door key, and she noticed that he went out and came in at unusual and regular hours of the night. He was in the habit of lying abed generally until the afternoon, and would rise about five o'clock and leave the house. What first excited her suspicion was the bloody condition in which she often found the towels sent to his room. For this she finally spoke to the man. He said he was very fond of painting, and in his preparations for artistic moments he was in the habit of wiping his brushes on the towels and thereby stained them. He sent several persons pieces of what appeared to be raw liver. One afternoon she happened in his room, and there saw him with a newspaper spread on his table and upon it a large piece of raw meat that she took to be liver. He said it was a piece of frozen mutton that had been given him by a friend who was employed on a boat that came from New Zealand bearing a cargo of this meat. She saw the man do up a piece of this meat in a small box and address it to the chairman of the Vigilance Committee, and leave the house with the box under his arm. She saw the man place small bits of flesh in envelopes, which he addressed to different news agencies and newspapers, and also to prominent members of the police. With great apparent carelessness he left these envelopes and their contents in the room when he vacated it, and the woman threw them into the dust bin. On two occasions he brought home with him blood-stained aprons, which he gave to her, and which she still has and is ready to turn over to the police, believing now that they belong to two of his victims, for now she is convinced her lodger was Jack the Ripper.

On the morning of the Castle Alley murder, which was the last Jack has thus far committed, her lodger left and has not yet returned. In addition to the envelopes that he left behind him, the woman found in his closet a pair of silent shoes, several bags and a long overcoat, all of which, she asserts, are blood-stained in almost every part.

THE GAMBLERS' CHURCH.

How El Paso Paid for its First Place of Worship.

"The first church built in El Paso, Tex., was put up by the gamblers," said Harry Wicks, a frontier sporting man. "In the early days of that border town everybody gambled. It was a good-sized town and we had no church. You see, I'm counting myself in. Well, along came a minister and said he would preach for us if we would build him a church. I don't recollect his politics—I mean his religion.

"The boys wanted me to raise the pot for the building. I did all of that kind of charity work, and a few days before had taken up a collection for the widow of a fellow we had hanged for shooting a man without giving him a show for his life. There were seven gambling houses and—the population of the town was about 1,000, not counting the several hundred cow-boys that came in from the plains at night. So I took round the hat, and all the boys chipped in from \$5 to \$20 each, and I soon had a big stake.

"I wanted to give something and did not have a cent. So when I was passing the hat round at one of the faro tables I saw that the jack had lost through two deals and chopped. Well, that means that on the third deal the jack won. I always play system, and just knew the jack would win out, and as I wanted to give something to the church I just took \$20 out of the hat and played it open on the jack for me and the church. It won on the turn, and I played the deal out, winning \$340, which, with the \$800 raised from the boys, made a good stake for the church. It is a custom among the profession that when a man stakes a player to give him half of the winnings. I did not claim what I was entitled to, but gave it all to the church."

The New Hoops for children just received at S. Carsley's are really beautiful, and the assortment is very large.

LARGE CROWDS attending the sale of dress goods at S. Carsley's.

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