

Union contains twenty millions of inhabitants, as it was when it contained one-fourth of that number, and, probably, will be still as great, when a hundred millions inhabit this northern continent, and until the waves of the Pacific forbid the further advance of the living tide. Until that time comes, there will be no nearer approach between the relative conditions of the European and American population; and, if it were desirable, it is not to be brought about by such feeble means as the speculations of politicians or political economists as to what is best, or what ought to be.

The transatlantic emigration, so necessary to the United States, you will observe, required little of enterprise on the part of the emigrants. They learned, in their own country, that at the end of a short voyage they might obtain high, very high wages. Arrived at the end of the voyage, they either remained in or near the Atlantic cities, or, in pursuit of still higher wages, they were slowly led to the westward, where, by means of English money, the great public works were undertaken, and were accomplished principally by foreign labour. Once transported to the westward, some become proprietors of land, many congregate about the new cities and towns of the interior, and many, far too many, compose the tribes of itinerant diggers and delvers, who wander from one public work to another—who travel a thousand miles for an advance in daily pay—who cover the sides of creels with their graves, and who continue comparatively poor because they are improvident, unambitious, and contented.

The American emigration to the westward had a re-active effect upon the greatness and prosperity of the east, which far surpassed the wildest speculations of that most speculative people. At first the eastern country was drained of its inhabitants, its money, its provisions, to supply the moving masses; at first the emigration was only felt by its demands upon those who were stationary, but in a few years the returning tide of wealth began to pour towards the sea. The rivers were crowded, the canals were choked, the wharves were piled, and the warehouses groaned with the produce of the interior. Ships for its transport crowded the Atlantic ports, to bear the superabundance to other lands; and towns, which had languished for a preceding century, with a limited population and small resources, suddenly changed from being the market places of a State or district, into the great commercial capitals of a vast continent, equalling and surpassing the famous cities of Europe—cities which were great and renowned long before their new rivals were known as the trading posts of the humble plantations in America; and opening to the old world, by the same process of re-action, profitable commerce, great and important in its present condition, and almost unbounded in its promises for the future.

I ascribe to the enterprising spirit of emigration much, if not the greater portion of this amazing progress. Many are fond of attributing it to republican institutions. They are right insofar as they give these institutions the merit of throwing no impediment in the way of prosperity—the merit of leaving an enterprising people individually free to work their own way, unfettered by the attempt to carry into effect, in