

## KANSAS.

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Kansas is the navel of the Nation.

Diagonals drawn from Duluth to Galveston, from Washington to San Francisco, from Tallahassee to Olympia, from Sacramento to Augusta, intersect at its centre.

Kansas is the nucleus of our political system, around which forces assemble, to which its energies converge, and from which its energies radiate to the remotest circumference.

Kansas is the focus of freedom, where the rays of heat and light concentrated into a flame that melted the manacles of the slave and cauterized the heresies of State sovereignty and disunion.

Kansas is the core and kernel of the country, containing the germs of its growth and the quickening ideas essential to its perpetuity.

The history of Kansas is written in capitals. It is punctuated with exclamation points. Its verbs are imperative. Its adjectives are superlative. The commonplace and prosaic are not defined in its lexicon. Its statistics can be stated only in the language of hyperbole.

The aspiration of Kansas is to reach the unattainable; its dream is the realization of the impossible. Alexander wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. Kansas, having vanquished all competitors, smiles complacently as she surpasses from year to year her own triumphs in growth and

glory. Other States could be spared with irreparable bereavement, but Kansas is indispensable to the joy, the inspiration, and the improvement of the world.

It seems incredible that there was a time when Kansas did not exist; when its name was not written on the map of the United States; when the Kansas cyclone, the Kansas grass-hopper, the Kansas boom, and the Kansas Utopia were unknown.

I was a student in the Junior class at Williams College when President Pierce, forgotten but for that signature, approved the act establishing the Territory of Kansas, May 30, 1854. I remember the inconceivable agitation that preceded, accompanied, and followed this event. It was an epoch. Destiny closed one volume of our annals, and, opening another, traced with shadowy finger upon its pages a million epitaphs, ending with "Appomattox."

Kansas was the prologue to a tragedy whose epilogue has not yet been pronounced; the prelude to a fugue of battles whose reverberations have not yet died away.

Floating one summer night upon a moonlit sea, I heard far over the still waters a high, clear voice singing:

' To the West! To the West! To the land of the free,  
 Where the mighty Missouri rolls down to the sea;  
 Where a man is a man if he 's willing to toil,  
 And the humblest may gather the fruits of the soil."

A few days later, my studies being completed, I joined the uninterrupted and resistless column of volunteers that marched to the land of the free. St. Louis was a squalid border town, the outpost of civilization. The railroad ended at Jefferson City. Transcontinental trains, with sleepers and dining-cars,

annihilating space and time, were the vague dream of the future century.

Overtaking at Hermann a fragile steamer that had left her levee the day before, we embarked upon a monotonous voyage of four days along the treacherous and tortuous channel that crawled, between forest and cottonwood and barren bars of tawny sand, to the frontier of the American Desert.

It was the mission of the pioneer with his plough to abolish the frontier and to subjugate the desert. One has become a boundary and the other an oasis. But with so much acquisition, something has been lost for which there is no compensation or equivalent. He is unfortunate who has never felt the fascination of the frontier; the temptation of unknown and mysterious solitudes; the exultation of helping to build a State; of forming its institutions, and giving direction to its career.

Kansas, in its rudimentary stage, extended west six hundred and fifty-eight miles to the crest of the Rocky Mountains, the eastern boundary of Utah. By subsequent amputation and curtailment it was shorn to its present narrow limits of fifty-two million acres; three thousand square miles in excess of the entire area of New England. Denver, Manitou, Pueblo, Pike's Peak, and Cripple Creek are among the treasures which the State-makers of 1859, like the base Indian richer than all his tribe, threw unconsciously away.

Thirty years ago, along the eastern margin of the grassy quadrangle which geographers called Kansas, the rude forefathers of Atchison, Leavenworth, Wyandotte, Lawrence, and Topeka slept in the intervals of their strife with the petty tyrants of their fields, and beyond their western horizon the rest was silence, solitude, and the wilderness, to the Rio

Grande, to the Yellowstone, to the Sierra Nevada; like the lonely steppes of Turkestan and Tartary; inhabited by wandering tribes whose occupation was war, whose pastime was the chase; pastured for untold centuries by the roaming herds that followed the seasons in their recurring migrations from the Arctic Circle to the Gulf.

It has been sometimes obscurely intimated that the typical Kansan lacks in reserve, and occasionally exhibits a tendency to exaggeration in dwelling upon the development of the State and the benefits and burdens of its citizenship. Censorious scoffers, actuated by envy, jealousy, malignity, and other evil passions, have hinted that he unduly vaunteth himself; that he brags and becomes vainglorious; that he is given to boomer, tall talk, and magiloquence.

There have not been wanting those who affirm that he magnifies his calamities as well as his blessings, and desires nothing so much as to have the name of Kansas in any capacity always in the ears and mouths of men.

Such accusations are well calculated to make the judicious grieve. They result from a misconception of the man and his environment.

The normal condition of the genuine Kansan is that of shy and sensitive diffidence. He suffers from excess of modesty. He blushes too easily. There is nothing he dislikes so much as to hear himself talk. He hides his light under a bushel. He keeps as near the tail-end of the procession as possible. He never advertises. He bloweth not his own horn, and is indifferent to the band-wagon.

He is oppressed by the vast responsibility of being an inhabitant of a commonwealth so immeasurably superior in

all the elements of present glory, in all the prophecies of future renown, to his inferior companions.

To be a denizen of a State that surpasses all other communities as Niagara excels all other cataracts, as well as the sun transcends all other luminaries, imposes obligations that render levity impossible.

The every-day events of Kansas would be marvels elsewhere; our platitudes would be panegyrics; the trite and commonplace are unknown. It is impossible to overestimate the value of citizenship in a State that sent more soldiers into the Union armies than it had voters when Sumter fell; that exceeded all quotas without draft or bounty; that had the highest rate of mortality upon the field of battle. That a State so begotten and nurtured should be as indomitable in peace as it was invincible in war, was inevitable. Its gestation was heroic. It represented ideas and principles; conscience, patriotism, duty; the "unconquerable mind and freedom's holy flame."

No other State encountered such formidable obstacles of Nature and Fortune. Our disasters and catastrophes have been monumental. Swarms of locusts eclipsing the sun in their flight, whose incredible voracity left the forests, and the orchards, and the fields of June as naked as December; drouths changing the sky to brass and the earth to iron; siroccos that in a day devastated provinces and reduced thousands from comfort to penury—these and the other destructive agencies of the atmosphere have been met by a courage that no danger could daunt, and by a constancy unshaken by adversity.

The statistics of the census tables are more eloquent than the tropes and phrases of the rhetorician. The story of Kansas

needs no reinforcement from the imagination. Its arithmetic is more dazzling than poetry, and the historian is compelled to be economical of truth and parsimonious in his recital of facts, in order not to impose too great a strain upon the capacity of human credulity.

Notwithstanding the mishaps of husbandry and the fatalities of Nature, it is a moderate and conservative statement that no community ever increased so rapidly in population, wealth, and civilization, nor gained so great an aggregate in so brief a time as the State of Kansas. There is no other State where the rewards of industry have been so ample, and the conditions of prosperity so abundant, so stable, and so secure as here.

It is a distinctly American State, with a trivial fraction of illiteracy, the largest school population, and but one detected criminal to two thousand of its inhabitants.

In popular estimation, Kansas is classified as an exclusively agricultural and pastoral region. It has harvested the largest wheat crop ever gathered in any State, and will strive this year to break its own record. In corn, fruit, and small grains computation and measurement have been abandoned as superfluous and impracticable. But these are only fragments of its material resources.

Its fields of natural gas rival those of Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Its mines supply one fourth of the zinc and much of the lead of the world.

Its deposits of bituminous coal are inexhaustible.

Vast areas are underlaid with petroleum.

Its salt mines are richer than those of Michigan or New York.

Its treeless and unwatered plains sent the biggest walnut log to the World's Fair, and have a subterranean flow that is capable of irrigating an area more fertile and extensive than the valley of the Nile. The indescribable beauty of the palaces of the Exposition, with their white domes and pinnacles, and statues and colonnades, and terraces and towers, came from the cement quarries of the Saline and Smoky Hill.

And this is but the dawn. We stand in the vestibule of the temple. Much less than one-half the surface of the State has been broken by the plough. Its resources have been imperfectly explored. It has developed at random. Science will hereafter reinforce the energies of Nature, and the achievements of the past will pale into insignificance before the completed glory of the century to come.

*Atchison, May 10, 1896.*