

## CHAPTER XIV.

### AD ASTRA.

It is often difficult, some one has said, to manage the future of an heroic action — a problem no more formidable for individuals than for states. An exceptional, brilliant past demands a present and a future that shall not be out of harmony or fall into anti-climax. Kansas has a significant and memorable history; the territorial struggle converted a wilderness, which had little claim upon the interest of mankind, into historic ground.

But now we reach a different epoch. From the date of settlement until the close of the war for the Union, though in the later stages it broke down into discreditable political intrigue and murderous bushfighting, the history of Kansas pursued a single theme. The war for the Union caught up and nationalized the verdict of the territorial broil.

In the large influx of colored people from the South in 1878-79 there was indeed a striking after-piece of the border conflict. Out of the unsettled condition of affairs in the South, out of the frictions and hardships unavoidable in a radical

reconstruction of society, an extensive colored exodus sprang. Reports were rife that in Kansas — a name glorified in their minds as having some vague connection with emancipation — better homes, larger opportunities, kindlier treatment, awaited them than could be expected elsewhere. A colored convention, attended by delegates from fourteen states, met at Nashville, Tennessee, May 7th, 1879, and advised colored people of the South to “emigrate to those states and territories where they can enjoy all the rights which are guaranteed by the laws and constitution of the United States.” The excitement, fanned by outrages and demagogues, became intense. Notwithstanding the conciliatory efforts of Southern planters and the warnings of prominent colored leaders, who opposed migration as a remedy for grievances, not less than forty thousand negroes reached Kansas in every stage of destitution. These fugitives relief societies took in charge; provided with shelter, clothing, and food; organized into new colonies, or distributed among the older communities. On the whole, they seem to have improved their circumstances by the flight, though at the expense of much temporary discomfort. It was dramatically befitting — a fact not destitute of pathetic and poetic suggestion — that Southern negroes, in the extremities of reconstruction, should have turned their eyes toward the state where the first blow was struck for their freedom.

The people of Kansas in 1865 dropped the sword and grasped the plow. "A happy nation," says Ruckin, "may be defined as one in which the husband's hand is on the plow and the housewife's on the needle." Though embarrassed from 1864 to 1870 by Indian hostilities, in which at least a thousand citizens lost their lives and much property was destroyed; though scorched by occasional droughts; though visited in 1874 by plagues of locusts which desolated large districts, devouring fruits, vegetables, and grains with inexhaustible voracity, so that the familiar story of destitute, starving Kansas was heard once more, yet few American commonwealths have ever made so much material progress in twenty years.

This progress appears the more remarkable when we consider the geographical notions current fifty years ago, not to mention those that Senator Green, of Missouri, avowed so late as the Leecompton debate. Fifty years ago no agricultural future was thought possible for Kansas. It belonged to that vast Mediterranean tract, the greater part of which Irving thought would "form a lawless interval between the abodes of civilized man, like the wastes of the ocean or the deserts of Arabia. . . . Here may spring up new and mongrel races, like new formations in geology, the amalgamations of the debris and abrasions of former races civilized and savage; . . . the descendants of wandering hunters and trappers; of fu-

gitives from the Spanish and American frontiers; of adventurers and desperadoes of every class and country, yearly ejected from the bosom of society into the wilderness."

Irving's prophecy went wide of the mark. No mongrel races, the detritus of neighboring civilizations, overrun Kansas. The wastes have disappeared or are disappearing. And recent writers do not hesitate to pronounce the Great American Desert a myth.

Little was done, as has been said before, to test the material resources of Kansas until the close of the Rebellion. The Indians, it is true, dabbled in agriculture. They succeeded in raising slender crops of corn, beans, and pumpkins. Rev. Thomas Johnson and other missionaries tried ineffectually to deepen their practical interest in the soil. During the territorial period political interests compelled a paramount attention. When the war for the Union broke out there followed a still greater diversion from farm industry. "One half of our entire population, between the ages of eighteen and forty-five," Governor Robinson wrote September 1st, 1862, "is in the army."

The population of Kansas in 1865 was 135,807. In the two succeeding decades the increase reached nearly a million souls, an immigration scarcely preceded in volume. A corresponding agricultural development followed, which placed Kansas, according to the census of 1880, seventeenth on

the list of states in value of farm products, and eighth in value of live stock. In 1884 the wheat crop was 48,050,431 bushels against 25,279,884 in 1880. The corn crop rose from 101,421,718 bushels in 1880 to 120,870,686 in 1884. Other branches of farm industry advanced proportionally during the years 1882-84, so that in 1884 Kansas ranked among the foremost states in agricultural products.

Meteorological changes have accompanied the settlement of Kansas. However the fact may be explained, whatever agency the sudden and extensive agriculture or the planting of artificial forests, which, including fruit-trees, were estimated in 1884 at 171,810 acres, may have exerted, the amount of annual rain-fall, according to the foremost Kansas authority in such matters, Professor Snow, of the State University, shows an increase of five inches in Eastern Kansas during the last twenty years compared with a like pre-settlement period. In this augmented precipitation the western third of Kansas has shared, but so moderately as to promise little for agriculture. Apparently successful farming in that region must await the introduction of some practicable system of irrigation.

The creation of a great state in the wilderness of Kansas since 1865 is mainly a feat of the railroad. "If this invention," said Emerson, "has reduced England to a third of its size by bring-

ing people so much nearer, in this country it has given a new celerity to *time*, or anticipated by fifty years the planting of tracts of land." Without the adventurous forecast and push of railway corporations, which drew public attention to the resources of Kansas and put them within reach, its settlement, like that of older states, would have stretched over a much longer period. By a system of advertising which skillfully seized upon avenues of communication — newspapers, pamphlets, traveling agents, national and international exhibitions — these corporations greatly abridged the ordinary course of events. Railways now penetrate every part of the state, —

"And thatch with towns the prairies broad."

At the last national census Kansas had reached the ninth place among the states in railway mileage. January, 1885, the amount of main track exceeded four thousand miles.

Certainly Kansas is assured of whatever starward energy may reside in numbers or in material prosperities. That their tendency is not altogether ennobling and uplifting social philosophers have been careful to point out. Matthew Arnold ventures his hope for the future on remnants in Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Carlyle sneers at political economy, and disparages Americans in particular as a generation of dollar-hunters.

"Oh, better far the briefest hour  
 Of Athens self-consumed whose plastic power  
 Hid beauty safe from Death in words or stone;  
 Of Rome, fair quarry where those eagles crowd  
 Whose fulgurous vanes about the world had blown  
 Triumphant storm and seeds of polity;  
 Of Venice, fading o'er her shipless sea,  
 Last iridescence of a fading cloud;  
 Than this inert prosperity  
 This bovine comfort in the sense alone!"

More bigness will not do much for a state or nation except in politics, where heavy weights tell. Holland, with limited area and population, is the mother of illustrious statesmen, soldiers, and scholars, and at one time championed the cause of freedom for the world. But while industrial and numerical progress does not necessarily imply progress in culture, yet it lays broad foundations upon which culture may build. It enlarges the scope of possibilities. The outcome of a splendid material development will turn on the question whether high moral, intellectual, aesthetic, and idealizing forces mingle in it, —

"And set our pulse in tune with moods divine."

Kansas is not wanting in these superior forces. The New England colonists, though feebly influenced by motives of technical theology, gave immediate attention to the establishment of a church. October 1st, 1854, Rev. S. Y. Linn preached at Lawrence the first sermon delivered to white men in the territory. The Pioneer Hotel served as a meeting-house. "A few rough boards were

brought for seats," Mrs. Robinson wrote, "and with singing by several good voices among the pioneers the usual church services were performed. . . . The people then, as on many succeeding sabbaths, were gathered together by the ringing of a large dinner bell." Plymouth Congregational Church was organized October 15th, with seven members, and is the oldest in Kansas. Other denominations began work in the territory at an early day. But as the religious history of the commonwealth exhibits little that is exceptional, it will not now be set forth at large. To home missionaries — to their patient, self-denying, heroic and sometimes perilous service — Kansas is heavily indebted. The State had 2046 church organizations in 1884, with a membership upwards of 185,000.

Educational matters have awakened strong interest in Kansas and exhibit praiseworthy progress, though the expectations of the Senate Committee on Education for 1858-9 have not as yet been realized. "It should be the aim of the educators of Kansas," said the optimistic committee, in a report recommending that the schools should be supplied with Webster's dictionaries, "to make this territory a model state in American literature. In this new territory we have all the requisite elements for building up a system of universities, colleges, schools, and seminaries of learning unequalled by any other on the globe.

Your committee believe it is the province of the people of Kansas to inaugurate an educational system which shall perfect the English language as well as English literature." It may have been sympathy, more or less conscious, with these liberal expectations that induced the territorial legislature in the sessions of 1855-60 to incorporate eighteen universities and ten colleges! Out of these twenty-eight institutions, twenty-five have perished — a mortality unparalleled in the history of education.

Governor Reeder commended the subject of schools to the legislature assembled at Pawnee, saying, with admirable point, "It is always better to pay for the education of a boy than the punishment of a man." The first territorial legislature, which was more modest in the matter of universities than most of the legislatures that followed, since it incorporated only three, provided for the establishment of schools in each county, "which shall be open and free to every class of white citizens," and directed that half the fines paid into county treasuries should be applied to their support. When the legislature fell into the hands of the free-state men in 1857, they reconstructed and liberalized the school system, and created the office of territorial superintendent. Yet, as a matter of fact, almost nothing was done under territorial laws until 1859. January 1st, 1859, not more than five school districts had been

organized in Douglass County which was better circumstanced in this matter than the other counties. But before June, thirty additional districts were organized. And during this period considerable educational machinery was set up in the rest of the territory.

In Lawrence private schools began at an early date. "You have laid out grounds for a college," Mr. Lawrence wrote Governor Robinson, November 21st, 1854, "and will have a good one, without doubt, in due time; but in the first place you must have a preparatory school." On the 16th of January, 1855, a private school — the earliest in the territory of any kind — was opened in the Emigrant Aid building. It continued fourteen or fifteen weeks, with an attendance of twenty scholars. From its close, three terms of private school, for three months or less, comprised all the educational facilities of Lawrence until the 30th of March, 1857, when a select school of larger pretensions was opened. It continued for two years, with C. L. Edwards as principal, and was called the "Quincy High School," in honor of Josiah Quincy, of Boston. "A school is now in progress under the Unitarian Church, with two teachers and about fifty scholars," said a letter-writer April 17th, 1857.

In the spring of 1857 Mr. Lawrence gave ten thousand dollars to the city of Lawrence, the income of which should be devoted to school pur-

posed. Originally a memorial college seems to have been in mind. "You shall have a college," he wrote Rev. Ephraim Nute, of Lawrence, December 16th, 1856, "which shall be a school of learning, and at the same time a monument to perpetuate the memory of those martyrs of liberty who fell during the recent struggles. Beneath it their dust shall rest. In it shall burn the light of liberty, which shall never be extinguished. . . . It shall be called the 'Free State College,' and all the friends of freedom shall be invited to lend a helping hand." The dream had a touching, though accidental and shadowy realization. No free-state college was ever built, but in making excavations for the main building of the State University workmen disinterred the remains of a dead soldier.

For a time the income of the ten thousand dollars was applied to the support of the Quincy High School. This fund attracted the attention of religious denominations, among which no less than three—Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Episcopalians—lured by hopes of obtaining it as a nucleus for endowment, attempted the establishment of a college in Lawrence. The Presbyterians were first in the field, secured a site, and laid the foundations of a college building. In the spring of 1859 the "Circular of the Lawrence University" appeared, announcing that an "Institution of Learning of the first class has been

chartered and established at Lawrence, Kansas. . . . The institution will open on the 11th of April next [1859], and continue for a term of three months." In the faculty "eminent teachers" and "distinguished educators" were found, so that the institution confidently promised to furnish the "culture and discipline essential to success and eminence in any walk of life." But the undertaking did not prosper. Denominational feuds hurt it, and failure to get possession of the Lawrence fund completed its ruin. "We did not feel justified as a board," wrote the secretary of the trustees to Mr. Lawrence, "to commence a university in Kansas at the present time without the benefit of your fund." In 1860 the Congregationalists took up the enterprise and proposed to build a "Monumental College." An act of incorporation was procured, a board of trustees elected, and a subscription paper circulated. The subscription paper met with some success. Money and material to the amount of four thousand dollars, town lots, twenty acres of land in Lawrence and twelve hundred elsewhere were pledged, provided thirty thousand dollars should be raised before January 1st, 1861. That sum could not be secured, and the effort failed. Finally the Episcopalians took the business in hand. They effected an organization, chose trustees, and solicited funds to complete the "Lawrence University." Governor Robinson writes May 22d, 1861,

that the "Episcopal College trustees" have purchased the site and basement of the building commenced last year by the Presbyterians, and are anxious to secure the Lawrence fund. But they did not get the money, and accomplished little beyond a partial completion of the unfinished building.

The much-sought ten thousand dollars fell at last to the State University, as did the assets of all the contemplated colleges in Lawrence that preceded it, and had decisive influence in determining where it should be placed. "The legislature has passed a law," Governor Robinson wrote Mr. Lawrence February 23d, 1863, "locating the State University at Lawrence, on condition that fifteen thousand dollars shall be paid into the treasury in six months, and forty acres of land given to the University. If these conditions are not complied with, then the University is [to be] located at Emporia. . . . It was with great difficulty that the location was secured here, and nothing saved us but the inducements of your fund."

The school system of Kansas does not require elaborate exposition in this place. In addition to primary and intermediate schools, the state supports three higher institutions, which are in successful and progressive operation, the Normal School at Emporia, the Agricultural College at Manhattan, and the University at Lawrence. Seven religious denominations have established

colleges or universities which constitute an important factor of educational work in the state. Among Kansas teachers, it is due them to say, a commendable alertness, enthusiasm, and ambition prevail. Their work gives evidence that the very highest mission of education is not wholly unappreciated. That mission cannot be accomplished by processes, however admirable, of drill and acquisition alone. Recognizing the fact that moral and sentimental problems are by no means the least important\* for a community; that the first order of citizenship is impossible without the service of the impassioned imagination to body forth living, vivid conceptions of ethical and æsthetic realities, the ideal education creates vitalized intelligence, alive and responsive to whatever is nobly said or done.

In the ministry of physical environment, which, in its higher forms, is a perennial source of æsthetic, idealizing, poetic inspirations for communities as well as individuals, Kansas at once has drawbacks and advantages. Expanses of rolling prairie, flattening on the western border into level plains, sparingly watered with brooks and rivers, unbroken by great mountain ranges, without the shadows, recesses, and deep seclusions of primeval forests, exposed and bare to all the garish sunshine of the year, have obvious limitations of scenic power. Yet there are compensations. Some phases of beauty shine in magnificent exhibition.

There may be seen gorgeous splendors of cloud-glory; lustrous starlight and moonlight in comparison with which northern heavens seem faded and withdrawn; the winter greenery of wheat fields; the faint, delicate blush of maple buds that sometimes give signs of life in February; the brilliant bloom of wild crab-apple and Judas trees, greeting the spring; expanses of landscape rich with half tropical vegetation, figured with infinite interplay of light and shade, —

"Vast as the sky against whose sunset shores,  
Wave after wave the hilly greenness pours."

It only remains to note the eager, restless, progressive spirit which distinguishes Kansas. This spirit has appeared and is appearing variously. It is exhibited in the great and as yet unsettled temperance agitation, which amended the organic law of the state by the introduction of a prohibitory clause; in the admission of both sexes to the State University from the date of its foundation; in the service of women as county superintendents of schools and as university regents and professors; in literary and art circles, which form an interesting feature of various towns; in the Woman's Social Science Club, an organization that embraces Kansas and Western Missouri, and holds semi-annual meetings for the discussion of social, domestic, hygienic, and literary topics. Such an aggressive and ambitious temper, which has the nerve to venture, to experiment, if need be, at the expense

of tradition and precedent, promises effectual defense against enervating influences—against the insidious lethargy of fierce summer heats and that "bovine comfort" of broad and teeming acres which Lowell deprecates.

The history of Kansas which began three decades ago with a wilderness, with the fence and skirmish that preluded a tremendous civil war, closes with a great commonwealth rich in the material and immaterial things essential to life.