

THE TRANS-MISSISSIPIANS AND THEIR FAIR AT OMAHA.

BY ALBERT SHAW.

NEBRASKA, like Kansas, has suffered in its outside reputation from the fact that the name covers a large range of territory in which conditions are far from being uniform. Eastern Kansas is very much like Missouri in its endowments of soil and climate. In like manner, eastern Nebraska does not differ materially from western Iowa. It has not only great fertility of soil, but also a sufficient amount of rainfall, usually distributed in such a way as to favor the production, year after year, of large crops of cereals and grasses. Western Nebraska, on the other hand, like western Kansas, lies beyond the limit of sufficient regular rainfall, and it is not a safe farming country, except in those portions which can be irrigated. In the earlier days—that is to say, in the sixties, after the war, and in the seventies—these regions were the home of great herds of cattle. But the railroads had pressed across them, and they were in due time surveyed and opened to settlement, partly by the land-grant railroads, and partly, under the pre-emption and homestead laws, by the United States Land Office. There had been a great boom in Western farm-lands, and not merely scores of thousands but hundreds of thousands of people had been moving westward, particularly from the older farm-lands of Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa, with many, of course, from Ohio, Indiana, and States farther east. The State immigration bureaus of the West at that time were vying with the land agents of the railroad companies in efforts to populate the prairies.

The Red River valley, on the eastern edge of North Dakota, and the Sioux valley, together with a few tiers of counties of South Dakota, have a reasonable certainty of sufficient rainfall for the safe growth of cereals. But the western part of the Dakotas, as of Nebraska and Kansas, belongs to the region of grazing rather than to the safe farming belt of the Mississippi valley. There was a theory current, however, that the once recognized "Great American Desert" had always been a myth, and that in any case the climate had been rapidly changing with the movement of population westward, so that rainfall

might be confidently expected throughout Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas—in their central and western regions as well as along the eastern borders.

The population grew very rapidly. There was great spirit and ambition in those new communities. They saw no reason why they should wait a single year to enjoy the full benefits of American civilization. On the contrary, starting anew, it seemed to them reasonable to believe that life ought to be lived on a higher plane than in the less progressive neighborhoods from which they had come. The constant influx of people brought a certain amount of ready money. The speculation in town sites became a great business. Excellent hotels were built to accommodate prospectors and real-estate agents, and it was found extremely easy to float issues of county and municipal bonds on the Eastern market, with the proceeds of which issues pretentious county court-houses were rapidly constructed, and bridges were built across streams—most of which, unfortunately, were almost always the dry beds of watercourses. Excellent school-houses were built, also, with careful regard for modern ideas, and everybody believed that old-fashioned pioneering hardships were as unnecessary as they were out of date.

A good many people, it is true, imitated the earliest of the ante-railroad pioneers, and lived for a while in sod houses and dugouts. But the accommodating agent of the Eastern farm-loan companies was at hand, and it was fascinatingly easy for the newcomer who had bought a quarter-section from the railroad, or had pre-empted or homesteaded government land, to borrow a good large sum on mortgage with which to build a comfortable frame house and a barn, and to stock up with a variety of modern farm-machinery. Moreover, if the sum realized on the land had not been sufficient to do more than erect the buildings and the barbed-wire fences, then the great farm-machinery houses were exceedingly accommodating, and were ready to take the farmers' notes, payable in a series of annual instalments. These notes, of course, drew a good round rate of

interest, and the price for the machinery when sold in this way was considerably larger than the "spot cash" price. All this was based upon the idea that the land was really valuable and could be sold at any time for from ten to twenty dollars per acre, or even more. And these valuations rested upon the accepted notion that the land would produce good crops of corn, wheat, oats, and hay, which could be sold at profitable prices, or fed to live stock with the result of a still greater profit.

The reaction came when it slowly but inevitably dawned upon the mass of the population that the country could not be relied upon to produce crops. Now and then the promise of a great crop was almost fulfilled; the wheat-heads swelled out; the harvest-time approached; and then perhaps a scorching simoon from the southwest shriveled up the whole crop before it matured. Or else a drought came earlier, and the heads of the cereals never filled out at all with the milky kernels. At certain times one cause was assigned, at other times another; but year after year the crops failed. It was not a farming country. Some men held on longer than others, but the majority gave up hope when the demonstration had become reasonably complete.

We shall probably never know just how many people who had lived in the vicinity of these fine new court-houses, high schools, iron bridges, and other appurtenances of a progressive era in the western part of the States that I have named, deserted their homes, whether in town or on the farm, and went back to the States from which they had come. It is possible that the number approached a million. But, even if there were not more than five or six hundred thousand, that was enough to constitute a tremendous movement, having a far-reaching effect. The land-mortgage companies had sold the Nebraska or Kansas loans, either directly or through the medium of the company's own debentures, to savings-banks and small investors in New England and the East. The companies failed, and the investors for the most part had lost their investment. This was quite as true of those whose mortgages were secured upon houses and buildings in the county towns as upon the farm-lands; and not only were the holders of private mortgages thus affected, but also in very many cases those who had invested in the bonds of the new counties and new municipalities found their investment worthless. Those splendid high-school buildings

were still standing out on the prairies, but the people had gone away, and nobody was left to pay the taxes with which to meet the interest on the school bonds. Where the lands were foreclosed by the Eastern mortgage-holders, they soon found that there was no profit in their paying heavy taxes for the benefit of the holders of bonds which had been issued to construct abandoned school-houses, deserted court-houses, and other public buildings. The refugees, who had suffered untold hardships before they had abandoned their farms on the plains, having lost everything and returned to what they called "God's country," had no longer any pride in maintaining the credit of western Nebraska and Kansas. On the other hand, the Eastern holders of mortgages and of county, school, and municipal bonds were even more harsh in their denunciation of a region that had repudiated its obligations.

It had all been one huge mistake. Agricultural Nebraska and agricultural Kansas were in fact no more to be blamed for the failure to turn a grazing region into a farming district than were any of the States farther east. But since the names "Kansas" and "Nebraska" had been stretched over so wide a territory, as I remarked at the beginning, it came to pass that there was much injustice done through the failure of outsiders to make due discrimination. I do not know how many farmers abandoned western Nebraska, nor how large a shrinkage there was in the population of the towns which had been built up to serve the agricultural community. But it is possible that the plight of western Nebraska was never quite so lamentable as that of western Kansas, from which two hundred and fifty thousand people are said to have been beaten back by drought and heat and the total failure of the country to succumb to the endeavor to reduce it to an agricultural régime. Perhaps western Nebraska lost from one hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand people.

The reaction could not seriously affect agriculture in the eastern part of Nebraska or Kansas, but it must inevitably have affected the larger towns, for reasons readily understood. Omaha and Kansas City, like St. Paul and Minneapolis, for example, were the great distributing-points for immense areas of territory. So long as "Westward ho!" was the inspiring cry, crowds of people from points farther east—many of them immigrants from Europe—were converging at Omaha, to be distributed through western Nebraska, the Dakotas, and else-

where. Most of these people brought some money with them. Still more of them, after locating on the land, were able to borrow money, which aggregated great sums, by the simple process of signing their names to mortgages. These sums of money were forthwith expended—millions upon millions of dollars—for lumber with which to build houses, for farm-machinery, and for all sorts of supplies. The city of Omaha must needs have prospered very materially and increased its population rapidly by reason of its opportunity to supply these hundreds of thousands of newcomers with the wares that were sent out by the jobbers of groceries, dry-goods, clothing, boots and shoes, hardware, farm-implements, and every sort of material needed in the creation of those hundreds of new villages and tens of thousands of new farmsteads.

When the reaction came, those hundreds of thousands of newcomers, having spent all the money they could borrow, and having no visible means of support by reason of the continual failure of their crops, ceased to make demands upon Omaha merchants, except as they asked contributions to supply them with seed-grain for one more forlorn gamble with a capricious climate. Then the merchants began to realize that the disastrous experiment of trying to turn a grazing country into a farming country was in the long run a bad thing also for a city like Omaha. The outfitting business had largely ceased. The great immigrant trains, which had poured thousands of people into Omaha as the gateway to the railroad lands and government lands that had been so extensively and alluringly advertised, brought a steadily diminishing stream, until finally the movement was virtually dried up. The eastward return tide was not profitable to Omaha. It furnished only opportunities for the alleviation of dire distress. Many of the people who returned had friends in the East who paid their railroad-fares. But the majority of them probably made their way back, gaunt and hungry themselves, in creaking wagons drawn by thin horses that had forgotten the taste of oats and corn. The process was inevitable. We need not dwell upon the grim and harrowing details.

These last few years have been witnessing a gradual readjustment of things. As a grazing country under great syndicates and cattle barons in the early days, western Nebraska, like the similar regions of Kansas and Dakota, had been a source of considerable wealth, and had brought no reproach upon

the fair name and fame of the State. It was only when the cattle barons had been driven off the public lands (which, in truth, they had taken without due right or recompense) that the chapter of disaster fairly began. The homestead system had no proper place on those plains. The land departments of the land-grant railroad companies, and still more the land authorities of the Interior Department of the government of the United States, ought to have known better than to induce hundreds of thousands of innocent people to locate farms on quarter-section blocks in that part of the country. Congress ought to have sharply discriminated between the lands fit for agriculture and those suitable only for cattle-grazing. The "barons" certainly ought not to have been allowed to seize the watercourses and thus to monopolize great tracts of *hinterland*; but the government itself ought to have adopted some equitable plan for giving the largest possible access to the water, while disposing of the grazing land in tolerably large tracts for the only use that could reasonably be made of the country.

The process of liquidation has been going on apace. Foreclosures, tax sales, the buying up of defaulted mortgages—these and other methods are clearing up the titles, and the land is coming into the possession of men who are restoring it to its only possible use. The ranges are not so vast as they were in the pre-agricultural period, because the present-day cattle-ranges are in the main made up of lands which the cattle-grazers actually own, and for the possession of which they have expended money, time, and trouble in getting the encumbered old titles smoothed out. The process will have been pretty fairly completed, let us suppose, by the end of the present decade. The State of New York is entirely reconciled to the idea that the Adirondacks, the Catskills, and some other regions, which in the aggregate make up a considerable part of the area of the commonwealth, should remain almost wholly uninhabited. It is no reproach to the Empire State that farming has never amounted to much in the Adirondack clearings.

In like manner, when the adjustment has come about, it will be no reproach whatsoever to the State of Nebraska that its stretches of rolling plain lying west of a certain meridian are devoted to the business of cattle-grazing, and are not expected to produce much corn, wheat, oats, or cultivated hay. The irrigated tracts will yield lavish crops. Streams and artesian wells will furnish water

for the cattle. Native bunch-grass and prairie-hay of exceptionally nutritive quality will more and more be stacked and stored for the winter use of the cattle. The grazing business will be conducted on steadily improving principles, so that its prosperity will undoubtedly continue to increase. It will be a source of very large wealth to the State, and, far from being a precarious and speculative industry, it will tend to become one of the most certain and calculable factors in the whole range of Western production, in that respect probably surpassing in evenness the prosperity of the agricultural belt lying to the eastward and the mining belt lying to the westward.

Indeed, a trans-Mississippi exhibition intended to set forth the conditions of life, labor, and material progress would be sadly out of focus if it failed to impress the Eastern visitor with the immense importance of the cattle industry. The sales from the livestock-herds of the trans-Mississippi regions now reach a yearly total of not less than four hundred million dollars; and this amount will tend steadily to increase. From the nomadic methods of the earlier ranchmen and cattle kings there is coming about a complete transformation. The business has ceased to be speculative, and has become methodical and permanent. It is the most conservative of all Western business interests. The bankers of Omaha, Kansas City, and other Western towns take "cattle paper" in preference to anything else. So popular, indeed, has cattle paper become, as a safe and profitable outlet for ready capital, that there may be some slight danger lest its popularity may suffer abuse, precisely as farm loans suffered some years ago.

The range-men,—that is, the cattle-raisers,—as I have already shown, have been buying out the homesteaders who had ventured beyond the limit of profitable farming; and there has come about a most advantageous coöperation between the farmers of the corn belt and the cattle-men of the ranges or the grazing belt. The range-men do not fatten the cattle for market, but sell them at an average age of three years and an average weight of, say, one thousand pounds. They are shipped into the great stock-yards of Omaha, Kansas City, and other packing-points accessible to the ranges and also accessible to the corn-growers. These stock-yards are a clearing-house, whence the cattle are distributed to farmers to be fed for market. The forehanded and successful farmer no longer sells his corn or hay, nor does he,

on the other hand, find it profitable to breed and raise beef-cattle. He finds it a great deal better business to put his hay in the mows and his corn in the cribs, and to buy each year as many range-cattle as his crop will fatten. An ordinary farmer with one hundred and sixty acres of land will perhaps handle two or three car-loads each season; that is, from forty to sixty head of cattle.

This feeding and care of the cattle comes in the half of the year when the farmer is not engaged in the fields in the production of his crops. A certain waste of food is involved in feeding cattle, and this is absorbed by hogs, the raising of which may be regarded as a by-product and a source of almost clear profit to the farmer who is fattening cattle. If at the same time the farmer is engaged in dairying to some extent, his milk goes to the nearest creamery, or butter-factory, where the cream is immediately extracted by machinery, and the milk (minus the cream), still fresh and sweet, goes back to the farm, where it is the best possible food for the pigs. This system of cattle-feeding, combined with some hog-raising and dairying, readily adapts itself to an advantageous rotation of crops that maintains the fertility of the soil. Even the farmers who are beyond the line of sure rainfall, as in the James River valley of Dakota, are learning, by a wise combination of cattle-keeping with crop-rotation, to make the good years balance the lean years, and to get on in the world—safely, even if slowly.

The good prices of cattle during the last two years have greatly improved conditions throughout the entire West. This fact, taken together with the perfecting of the process by which the different zones and regions are coöperating with one another to give the guest at the New York hotels the finest steaks in the world, has brought back a condition of really good times west of the Mississippi River. It is the peculiarity of good times that most men do not realize it when they have come. The principal factor in bringing them is that season of stern discipline, of strict economy, of studious adaptation of means to ends, and of the struggle that eliminates the unfit and strengthens the survivors, that we call hard times. The Western country had finally settled down to the hard-times basis, prepared to fight it out on that line if it took half a century. Everybody was thoroughly sobered. Booms had vanished. The boomer himself had become an extinct species. Men on the line of uncertain rainfall had begun to talk soberly of

being able to exist and make some money on a crop of three or four bushels of wheat to the acre. So when everybody was at last sober and in his right mind, ready to accept the hard facts of pioneering, the situation began to improve very perceptibly.

This period of reaction will soon have transformed the speculative wheat-grower or corn-grower into a real farmer, or else will have wiped him out and put his mortgaged land into the hands of a ranchman or a cattle company. The worst is now known and faced with wide-open eyes. The glittering prospectuses that used to invite the world to come to the "banana belt" of the Dakotas are not now, as fifteen years ago, circulated by the millions. Men do not talk of forty bushels of wheat to the acre as a reasonable expectation, but speak soberly and contentedly of ten bushels. I think they will learn by and by to produce twenty-five, but that will mean a later stage of fertilization and really scientific agriculture.

To find the cattle business best set forth at Omaha, the visitor must wait until October. Then he may find three great exhibits. One will be the exhibit of live stock on the fair-grounds. Great preparations are making, and it is expected that this will be the largest and most representative cattle-show that has ever been seen in the United States. It will prove the great attention the trans-Mississippi States are now giving to all sorts of live-stock questions—the best breeds for the production of beef-cattle, and the best for the immensely rapid growth of the dairy interests of Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Kansas. Horses and sheep, both of which have become very large Western interests, will also be well represented. It was manifestly not feasible to maintain a great aggregation of animals on the fair-grounds during the entire period of the exposition, and the month of October was selected as on all accounts the most desirable. The second exhibit of the live-stock interests of the West that the visitor to Omaha may find in October—this, indeed, at any other time—will not be on the exposition grounds, but in the stock-yards. There the gigantic business of the assemblage and distribution of cattle is going on constantly, but it will be particularly heavy, of course, at that season of the year. The third exhibit will be found in the great packing-houses. The largest cattle-packing establishment in the world has recently been built at Omaha. When one has seen the exhibition of fine cattle on the fair-grounds, the ordinary operations

of the cattle-market in the stock-yards, and the processes by which thousands of cattle which walk into the packing establishments at one end come out at the other end either in refrigerator-cars or in tin cans, he will have some comprehensive notion of the extent and importance of the cattle industry. If the pioneers were mistaken in their idea that they might begin life on these plains with better school-houses, court-houses, and other appurtenances of progressive communities than the people of Ohio, for instance, have achieved for themselves after a hundred years of industry, it remains true, nevertheless, that those people will continue to maintain and enjoy highly progressive institutions, and will not for a moment consent to abandon their progressive ideals. Their views of material prosperity have been sobered and chastened, on the whole, but they are learning to utilize their resources and to make the best of a situation by no means intolerable. If the weather has its somewhat strenuous extremes, it is, upon the whole, very fine and wholesome. The American race does not deteriorate on these plains, but thrives. It is a fine and sturdy body of students that one finds in the great State university at Lincoln, fitted for college in whole or in part, in the case of most of the student body, by the excellent high schools maintained in all the smaller towns of the State. The educational exhibit at the Omaha Exposition gives many evidences of the steady advance of the trans-Mississippi region in school facilities and school work. In the early part of the exposition season a great educational conference was held under the auspices of the management, its principal participants being the leaders of educational work in Nebraska and the other States west of Illinois. Not only was the program brilliant and strong as it appeared in prospectus, but it was most interesting as it was actually carried out, and highly instructive to all those glad to learn of the progress of school work in the West, from the State universities down through successive stages to the primary schools and the kindergartens.

A great feature of Western education, as suggested in various ways by the exhibits and the conferences at Omaha, has been that of the State agricultural colleges of the whole trans-Mississippi region. These institutions are rendering to their States a service the value of which becomes greater each year. Most of them are connected with the work of holding "farmers' institutes" throughout all the counties, and they are

promoting all sorts of improvements in the management of the soil, in the variation of crops that can be profitably grown, and in the selection and development of the precise varieties suited to particular localities.

The schools of Omaha itself seem naturally to blend in with the educational exhibits

embody all that science has thus far taught us concerning the best arrangement for lighting, heating, and ventilating public-school buildings, and the best arrangement for purposes of study and instruction.

Omaha in its public-school work need not be compared with other Western towns



MANUFACTURES BUILDING.¹

and conferences of the fair. Conspicuously placed on one of the most slightly eminences of the city is the Central High-School building, which stands as an evidence of the early determination of the Omaha people to provide their children with the best possible school system. It was the first important public building that the taxpayers of Omaha erected. It belongs to that thriving period that followed the opening of the Union Pacific Railroad nearly thirty years ago. Omaha at that time had perhaps twenty thousand people. There are now nearly forty public-school buildings belonging to the system so well administered under the eye of Superintendent Pearse, and it is entirely just to say that all the most recently constructed school-buildings are models. They

with a view to any disparagement or discrimination. It may be better considered as typical of that progressive spirit that one finds throughout all this Western part of the country. The exposition itself has emphasized its educational character from beginning to end, and it has not failed to proclaim the opinion of its projectors that the most noteworthy aspects of Western progress are to be found in the educational field.

Since I have already referred at some length to the conditions of trans-Mississippi agriculture, I may well at this point speak of the exhibit on the exposition grounds in the building devoted to farm-machinery. Nothing could be more stimulating to the historical imagination than to saunter up and down those aisles. The creation of the agricultural West since the Civil War has been the most truly revolutionary

¹ The pictures of this article are from photographs taken and copyrighted by F. A. Rinehart.

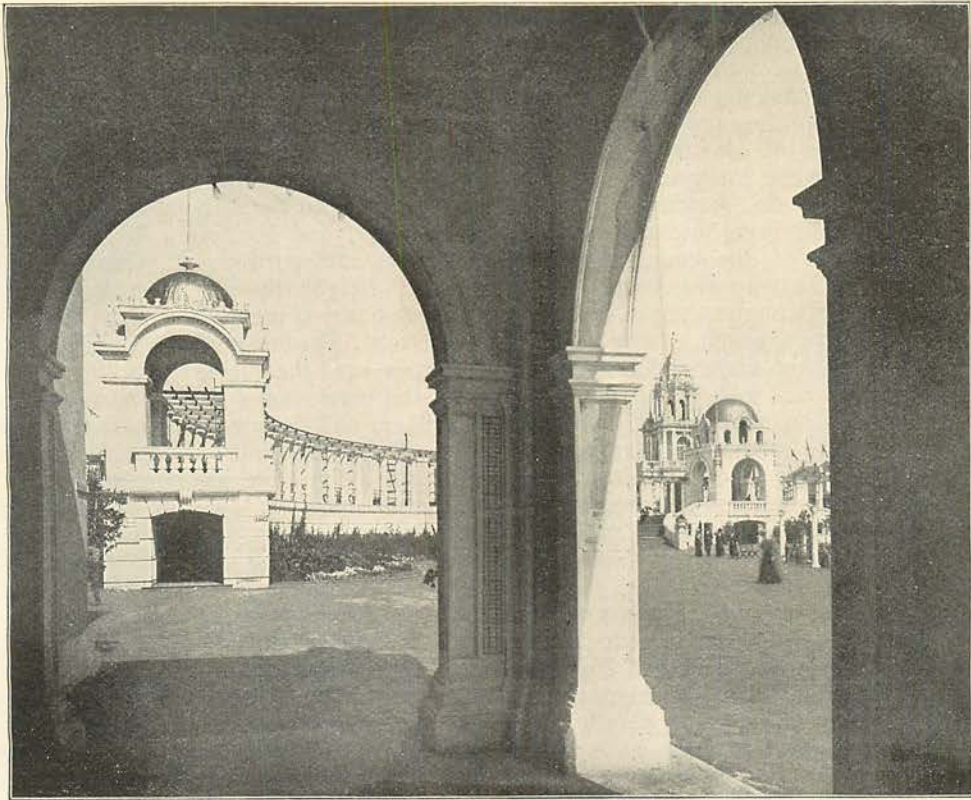
fact in all the economic history of our century; and it is the invention of farm-machinery, in response to the imperative demands made by the ingenuity and aggressive energy of the West, that has rendered possible the transformation of the prairies into the world's chief granary. A single man in the Missouri valley can manage to till as large an area of rich cereal-producing soil as a whole village in the Nile valley can produce with the implements there employed. This improvement in machinery and methods is by no means at a standstill. It has made remarkable strides since 1876, for example. The New England farmer who has never seen a Western double-sulky corn-planter at work, with the check-row attachment, can scarcely imagine how easily a single man will plant forty acres of ground in a single day in long furrows as straight and true as the section-lines that bound the farms. And it is hardly less easy to imagine the facility with which a single man, riding on the seat of a double cultivator, will plow, say, sixty acres of corn per day, keeping it all in as perfect order as the lawns and flower-beds of the country estate of an Eastern millionaire. I mention more particularly the corn-planting and corn-plowing machinery, because corn is the supreme

crop of this Western region. Not less ingenious, however, is the labor-saving machinery used for the planting of wheat and other crops, and for harvesting, binding, and threshing the small grains. The gang-plows and the sulky-harrows and other utensils of general agriculture have not tended in the direction of mere fancifulness or needless multiplication of varieties. It is interesting, indeed, to observe that they are all conforming more and more to certain types approved as the result of experience. They show an increasing simplicity and strength of construction, steel, in the main, taking the place of the wooden beams, arms, and other parts that were used one or two decades ago.

When one bears testimony to the fineness and beauty of all this array of machinery,—a beauty that lies in the ever-increasing perfection of its fitness for the conditions that have to be met,—one is really paying a tribute to the brains, energy, and character of the Western farmer. I have been on the Hungarian plains and witnessed the costly attempts of a progressive government to teach the landowners and peasants the use of improved farm-machinery imported from America or else adapted from American types. And I have also observed—what is confessed



GRAND COURT, FROM MINES AND MINING BUILDING.



EAST COLONNADE, FROM MINES AND MINING BUILDING.

by the government and noted by all who visit those regions—the persistent fact of scores of men, women, and children in the corn-fields with old-fashioned hoes, while long rows of white-tunicked men, in the hay-field or the ripe grain, are swinging sickles and short scythes. And a little later in the season it is common enough to see the oxen treading out the grain, or to hear the thud of the descending flail. Meanwhile, the new-fashioned corn-plows are rusting; the rejected mowing- and reaping-machines rot in their neglected corners; and the threshing-machine is viewed askance as an ill-omened monstrosity.

It is all simply a difference in men. It is a great race that has peopled our prairies and plains, and that is producing corn, wheat, and oats by the thousands of millions of bushels where only a few years ago there was the ancient matted sod of the prairies, unbroken for centuries. The men who drive the gang-plow, ride the sulky-cultivator, manipulate the twine-binder, and send millions of horned cattle, hogs, and sheep to the packing establishments of Omaha, Kansas City, and Chicago are to be credited with a

series of achievements worthy not merely of respect, but even of enthusiasm. I cannot for a moment doubt the ability of such men to rear a fine and varied fabric of civilization upon so great a material foundation.

These comments show the trend of the crowding thoughts, reflections, and anticipations that are suggested to the mind of one who knows the West, as he passes through the Farm-Machinery Building at the fair, then visits the Agricultural Building, in which are displayed the products of the farmers' toil, and then in due course inspects the Horticultural Building. There an endeavor is made to show how the trans-Mississippi farmers are rapidly increasing their home comforts and resources of pleasure and prosperity by adding to their main staple crops the pleasant apple, the bright cherry, the ruddy plum, and a wide variety of those fruits, berries, vegetables, flowers, and minor growths that the wise farmer must never neglect.

These sturdy farmer pioneers seem to me to have made one great mistake, which, however, it is not too late to remedy. They have fallen far short of what was easily practica-

ble in the way of tree-planting. At first they used a very few rapidly growing varieties, preferably soft maples, cottonwoods, poplars, and the like, and they neglected for the most part to follow up these first plantings with hardier varieties of slower growth. The pine and the other evergreens will grow magnificently on the prairies; and where tree-planting has been intelligently done, the whole face of the country becomes transformed in a very few years. It remains to do what ought to have been done under the encouragement of the so-called Timber Culture Act, under which many millions of acres of land were given away by the government. The results of that Timber Culture Act have been of the scantiest sort, for the reason principally that its framers seemed to know nothing about forestry, and the administration of the act in most parts of the West was the merest farce. The country is still young, however, and with the new interest in tree-culture, promoted with zeal and real knowledge by such leaders as the Hon. J. Sterling Morton of Nebraska, there will be great accomplishments in that direction within the coming decade. The farmers, moreover, will learn how vital is their interest in the preservation of the great tracts of mountain forest, as influencing river-flow and rainfall.

The trans-Mississippians have entered upon no line of rural industry with a more intelligent determination to make it a great success than upon dairying, not merely for home consumption, but for larger and more distant markets. There is probably no region in the world better adapted by nature for the production of milk and the making of butter and cheese than Minnesota, Iowa, eastern Nebraska, and portions of other adjacent States. Neighborhood coöperation in the dairying business is everywhere the Western watchword. The creameries—that is, butter factories—and the cheese factories are able, with the employment of the best possible machinery and the precise scientific regulation of all the details of manufacture, to turn out a far more uniform, perfect, and marketable product than any single farmer or private dairyman could hope to accomplish. The State agricultural colleges and the United States government experiment stations, under the effective and enthusiastic leadership of Mr. Wilson, the present Secretary of Agriculture, are promoting in every way the development of the industry and the improvement of the quality of the product, and are also educating the Eastern and European markets as respects the high qualities of Western butter and cheese. The consequence is bound to be that in a very



MINES AND MINING BUILDING.



UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT BUILDING.

short time there will be a strong demand, almost world-wide in its extent, at profitable prices, for the dairy output of the region under discussion. One of the objects of the exhibits and conferences of the exposition is to stimulate the progress of just such new industries as this.

The Dakotas, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Iowa constitute the largest flax-producing area in the world. The production is primarily for the sake of the seed, from which linseed-oil is made, Omaha being one of the centers of that manufacture. For a number of years it has been the growing opinion that some utilization ought to be made of the flax straw, most of which now goes to waste. The McKinley tariff of 1890 contained clauses intended specifically to promote the manufacture of coarse linens in the Northwest from this now neglected material. Western ingenuity at once invented machines for heckling the flax straw and converting it into fiber, and high hopes were raised. The framers of the Wilson tariff did not seem quite to appreciate the facts, and the incipient Northwestern linen industry was nipped in the bud. I have no doubt whatever that before long the flax straw of the Northwest will be converted to a variety of

uses, and that coarse linens, such as toweling and the like, ducks and canvases, binding-twine, cordage, and other products, will be produced in great quantities, affording the farmer a profitable market for his flax straw, and adding a new line of industries to the towns. All this can come about without diminishing the value of the crop for purposes of linseed-oil. Northwestern flax fiber is to be found on exhibition at the fair, as also are Northwestern linseed-oils.

The Secretary of Agriculture has devoted great attention to proving by careful experiment that the sugar-beet—which can be advantageously produced in all these Western regions, and which is grown with notable success in Nebraska—loses none of its nutritive value for the purpose of feeding cattle from the fact that the sugar has been extracted. There can now be no doubt of the rapid progress in the early future of the cultivation of the sugar-beet, in the scheme of crop-diversification throughout the trans-Mississippi farming valleys. It is therefore highly interesting to know that beets can be doubly utilized, and that their value for sugar will not interfere with their use as a food for the dairy herds and the stall-fed beeves. Nebraska already has two beet-sugar



GRAND COURT, LOOKING WEST. (NIGHT.)

factories, the older one at Grand Island, the newer and larger one at Norfolk. The effect of the sugar-beet culture upon the communities that supply these two factories has been nothing short of magical. It has not made the farmers rich, by any means, but it has given just that touch of variety to their output that has supplemented everything else and made the whole agricultural combination work profitably. In the first place, the sugar-beet is a sure crop. It stands drought better than almost anything else. The supply for each of the two factories I have mentioned is produced within a tract of country having perhaps an average diameter of thirty miles, or a radius of fifteen miles from the factory. Almost every farmer raises from five to twenty acres of beets, producing an average of twenty tons per acre, for which he receives five dollars a ton at the factory. Land being abundant, a little additional labor will produce a field of beets with no appreciable diminution of other crops.

I might readily amplify this discussion of cattle-raising, beet-sugar enthusiasms, and agricultural progress in the West, but I will merely refer to the firm faith of the corn belt in the assured value of the American corn crop. It is believed everywhere in the West that corn will enter much more largely in the future than in the past into the world's food consumption. Great efforts have been made within two or three years to accustom the people of the British Islands

and of western and central Europe to the nutritious value of flour made from American maize. There has grown up in the West a very large industry in the making of corn-flour, and in the mixing of the flour of corn with that of wheat. There can be no possible objection to this mixture, if the buyer knows what he is getting. And this has now been made certain by the passage of an act, promoted by the great wheat-flour millers of the Northwest, which requires the plain labeling of mixed flour. The increased use of corn for human food, together with the growth of the cattle-fattening business on the farms, will tend to keep corn at a firm price. Meanwhile, the methods of production have been greatly improved through the development of machinery. Ingenious machines shell the corn, and the cobs as a by-product are useful for fuel, and will probably find a variety of other uses. I recently visited a town in the West which advertises a corn-cob pipe factory as one of its industries. Interesting and ingenious uses have been found for the pith of the corn-stalks. A good deal of glucose and a very fair quality of syrup are manufactured from corn. In fact, the variety of ends this valuable plant can be made to serve is increasing all the time. It was announced, for instance, a few weeks ago that an excellent substitute for rubber was now being made from corn.

The silver question as a factor in politics, so far as Colorado and the mining regions were concerned, was simply the question of

a way to maintain the market price of a leading local product. The cattle-grazers and the farmers had no interest in silver as such, but wanted to promote conditions which would make it easier for them to get good prices for their live stock and farm produce, and thus to pay their debts. They grasped at free silver as drowning men are said to grasp at a straw. Now that they have been getting better prices, and have been paying their debts with astonishing rapidity, they would seem to have lost interest in the silver panacea as a remedy for hard times. I am, of course, mentioning a political tendency rather than a widely realized change of view. The farmers of Nebraska can now borrow at six per cent., and in doing so can draw very largely upon an accumulation of local capital without needing to resort to the Eastern money-vaults. However, as a matter of fact, very few are borrowing. They have been eager to pay off old scores. The fact that capital has been accumulating locally was sufficiently demonstrated in June and July by the manner in which the trans-Mississippi belt subscribed to the new three-per-cent. bonds. I found in cities like Des Moines and Omaha a very ready response to Uncle Sam's call for funds, and the same thing was true in many of the smaller centers. This could not well have happened two or three years ago.

One of the most important and representative of the departments of the exposition is very properly that which is devoted to the mining interests of the great trans-Missis-

sippi region. North of Nebraska lies the wonderful Black Hills formation, with its great diversity of mineral wealth, and in another direction lie the coal-fields of Iowa. Still farther to the southward are the lead-mines of Missouri and the almost untouched wealth of the Ozarks, while directly west is the State of Colorado, which, when the silver-mining industry had reached a comparatively low ebb of prosperity, turned promptly to gold-mining, with the result that it has taken first rank among American States in the amount of its gold output. Omaha itself has also its corollary industry, well worthy the attention of those who study the mining exhibits on the fair-grounds. Its great smelting-works for many years have ranked with the principal establishments of the world in the magnitude of their operations. As the trans-Mississippi mining interests have enormously increased, the tendency has been to locate the newer smelting-works at points nearer to the mines. But concentrated ores will continue to be brought to Omaha, and the industry will be maintained on a scale that will, in that regard as in others, continue to make Omaha a permanent, all-the-year-round exhibition of the vital business interests of the trans-Mississippi country.

Within the memory of men now living almost every foot of the great trans-Mississippi country was the habitat of Indian tribes. The Omaha Exposition signalizes the triumph of the Anglo-Saxon pioneers, first, over the aborigines, and, second, over the forces of nature. The Indians that have



GRAND COURT, LOOKING EAST. (NIGHT.)



FINE ARTS BUILDING.

survived are grouped upon reservations in the numerous States and Territories, and their children are undergoing the process of intellectual and industrial training in government schools. By far the most picturesque and distinctive feature of the exposition will have consisted in the so-called "Indian Congress." The word "encampment" would have been, perhaps, better descriptive of the fact than the word "congress." The managers of the exposition had perceived the desirability of bringing representative groups of Indians from all the principal tribes, and placing them on the exposition grounds in such wigwams or other habitations as were strictly characteristic of the particular tribe. In or near those habitations the Indians were to be occupied with the industries originally practised by them, whether weaving, carving, basket-making, arrow-shaping, or otherwise. This gathering of Indians was not to partake in any sense of the character of the Midway diversions or the Wild West shows. It was, on the contrary, to be carried out under the auspices of the government's Indian Bureau, with the aid of the ethnologists of the Smithsonian Institution. The greatest care was to be taken that every tribe should

be costumed, not after the later manner in government blankets, blue calico, and the supplies furnished by the Indian Bureau, but in the fashion of the tribe in its previous state of independence. Characteristic dances and ceremonials of various sorts were to be given.

Thus it happens that the Indian Congress was to afford the last opportunity, presumably, to see the red man in his primitive glory and in his various tribal divisions, under correct conditions of dwelling, costume, industry, and ceremonial. It is entirely safe to predict that in the later weeks of the exposition period, particularly through the month of October, the assemblage of Indians will have attracted not only national but world-wide attention, as the most unusual feature of an exposition interesting for many other reasons. The position of Omaha is such that it was possible to bring Indians from many reservations at a comparatively small expense. The general execution of the project was intrusted to Captain W. A. Mercer, U. S. A., of the Omaha Reservation in Nebraska, while Professor James Mooney of the Bureau of Ethnology was charged with certain phases of the exhibit that were

expected to add very greatly to its scientific interest and value.

The musical congress under the auspices of the exposition afforded evidence of widespread and earnest interest in musical culture in all parts of the West; and though as yet we may not look for great composers or the production of great musical artists in the trans-Mississippi region, it is certainly true that every town has now its considerable group of people trained to an appreciation of good music, with meritorious and conscientious music-teachers at work everywhere. To have heard Dvořák's "American Symphony" rendered by the Thomas Orchestra on the exposition grounds at Omaha, in the presence of a great and enthusiastic audience, is a thing to be remembered, especially when one has just crossed the near-by Iowa prairies which inspired the composition of that noble music. Moreover, it was instructive to note the Omaha enthusiasm for such American music as MacDowell's "Indian Suite" and Kroeger's "Hiawatha Suite," and to witness the response when the orchestra played Chadwick's music, with the composer himself wielding the baton.

The purpose of the art exhibit, well arranged as it is in a most beautiful double

building joined by colonnades inclosing an open court, is not to exhibit the crude beginnings of Western art to Western people, but rather to utilize the exposition period for the purpose of giving the Western visitors an opportunity to see pictures fairly representative of the best European and American painting. The collection of pictures has been made for the exposition by Mr. A. H. Griffiths, director of the admirable art museum of Detroit. It is not easy to improvise a great art gallery for the purposes of a Western exhibition, and those who are best qualified to judge of the comparative success or failure of Mr. Griffiths's undertaking are the very men who have been most unstinting in their expressions of admiration and surprise. It was not to be expected that there should have been developed as yet between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains any distinctive or important school of painting, and it is quite enough to know that the Western towns are developing an intelligent taste and appreciation. This sound point of view as respects pictures is due not a little to the excellent art instruction provided in picture and text by our best magazines. A very worthy part of the exhibit at Omaha is made up of original



COLONNADE AND FINE ARTS BUILDING.



LIBERAL ARTS BUILDING.

drawings and paintings, loaned by New York publishers, from which magazine illustrations have been engraved.

One is scarcely in danger of overestimating the importance of the educational effect upon the trans-Mississippi population of the very general reading of the best magazines and periodicals. We find in these States a distinctively reading community. It is a serious-minded population, a part of America in which art clubs, history classes, and woman's intellectual movements of all sorts have taken deep root. There is not a village of a thousand people in all this wide region which has not its intellectual circle, its men and women who sustain one or more book clubs, magazine clubs, literary societies, and classes for systematic study of some period or phase of literature or history or art. It is precisely because these people feel themselves remote from the great centers that they study and read the more conscientiously. So these trans-Mississippi communities have their good society, in the best sense of the term. The existence of such circles of people scattered through all the towns and villages, with a sprinkling in the farm-houses, throughout the great expanses of the West

provides our publishers of magazines and books with one of the most essential parts of their constituency. There is hard work to be done in these Western communities, and plain living is the rule; but there is plenty of high thinking along with the plain living, and somehow there seems to be more time for thorough reading than in the rush and whirl of the life of Eastern cities.

The library movement has taken firm hold upon the trans-Mississippi country, and the larger towns begin one after another to show something creditable in the founding and support of public libraries. Omaha, for example, has an admirable young public library, with an excellent building. The collection at present numbers about sixty thousand volumes, and Omaha ranks favorably with the best cities of the country in the ratio of actual circulation and use of its library books. Mr. Johnson Brigham, State librarian at Des Moines, an eager promoter of trans-Mississippi reading, writing, and study, sees the peculiarly favorable opportunities that a State like Iowa affords for an application of the traveling-library plan, which has accomplished so much within a year or two in Wisconsin. The Iowa legislature

has made some provision for traveling libraries, and undoubtedly the plan will have a large development in the near future in all these trans-Mississippi States.

The World's Fair at Chicago, one of the greatest architectural achievements of all history, effaced any line that may previously have been supposed to separate Eastern from Western architecture. Western and Eastern architects worked harmoniously together to create the marvelous "White City" in Jackson Park. If the country had been without this Chicago experience, the spectacle of the white buildings harmoniously grouped about the lagoon on the Omaha exposition grounds would have filled the nation and the world with amazement and enthusiasm. It was not to be expected that the fair at Omaha, improvised, so to speak, within a period of a little more than a year, could have rivaled in extent or magnificence the Columbian Exposition, for the success of which such vast resources were poured out, and under circumstances so favorable in every way. Nevertheless, the trans-Mississippi Exposition, as an architectural spectacle to be viewed at a stroke of the eye from any one of several standpoints, does not suffer in comparison with the White City of five years ago. For the very reason that

it is so much smaller, the architectural problem was more readily manageable. As seen from the eastern end of the lagoon in the morning, with domes, pinnacles, and statuary groups outlined against the clear azure, or, even better, as seen from the west end of the lagoon at sunset, with the beautiful towers of the eastern entrance silhouetted against the pure deep blue of a sky that is usually cloudless, the effect is so beautiful that no words can describe it. And the charm of a gondola ride in the evening, with all the buildings fascinatingly illumined by myriads of incandescent electric lights, and the fountains in front of the United States Government Building playing in opalescent tints, can only be suggested.

The lagoon is half a mile long, and the striking feature at the far end of it is the gilded dome of the United States Government Building. The general architects of the exposition are Messrs. Walker & Kimball, who are at once a Boston and an Omaha firm. Certainly no member of a profession whose recent achievements have made the country very proud of its adaptability and its artistic progress would wish to subtract anything from the hearty praise due to Messrs. Walker & Kimball for what they have achieved at Omaha with a surprisingly



AGRICULTURAL BUILDING.

small expenditure of money. These architects-in-chief, on the other hand, are ready to accord the fullest credit to the architects of Omaha, Minneapolis, St. Paul, St. Louis, Denver, Chicago, and other Western towns, who furnished the designs for individual buildings. THE CENTURY early in the year told its readers of the architectural scheme that had been devised for the exposition.

If the architects who laid out the exposition grounds and arranged its architectural scheme could only have been on hand with their present knowledge and an adequate stock of foresight when the original plat of Omaha was surveyed, they would doubtless have insisted upon reserving a rectangular central parkway. All the land facing upon that central oblong parkway they would have carefully reserved for buildings of a public or quasi-public character. About this open space would have been grouped the existing public buildings, which are now scattered in the same vicinity, but which are without any of the cumulative benefit that each building would derive from a harmonious ground-plan. Enough money has been spent, for example, for building the high school, the court-house, the city hall, the public library, and a few quasi-public buildings,

such as theaters, hotels, and the like, to have provided a grouping at the heart of the city of Omaha as effective in its way as the transient but fascinating array of structures that the architects have improvised for the purposes of a single season's exposition.

I cannot forbear to emphasize this lesson. Nearly all the old towns of Europe have their central market square, with the cathedral on one side, the town hall on another, and public buildings along the entire frontage. Our rectangular American towns—Omaha being a conspicuous instance—lack a central point from which the town may radiate naturally and conveniently. It is not yet too late, in our growing trans-Mississippi States, for some of the newer towns to learn the architectural lesson that was taught in Jackson Park five years ago, and that is now taught at Omaha in a still more practical way because on a less overwhelming scale of magnificence. The influence that its external beauty is almost certain to exert upon future municipal development, as respects public grounds and buildings, and the ornamental side of life, may well prove in the long run to have been the best service rendered to Omaha and other trans-Mississippi towns by this year's brilliant exposition.



ILLINOIS BUILDING.