

I find no definition of Alabama. In the interest of historical truth, I call attention to the subject, and hope that some one, properly qualified, will explain the real meaning of the word "Iowa."

SAMUEL PRENTIS CURTIS.

THE WEST:

A DESCRIPTIVE POEM OF THE BEAUTIFUL, GRAND, AND SUBLIME IN AMERICAN SCENERY, ESPECIALLY THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY.

BY R. B. GROFF.

To BAYARD TAYLOR,

MY AFFECTIONATE FRIEND AND SCHOOLMATE, AS A TOKEN OF RESPECT FOR HIS TALENTS, SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES, NOBLE EFFORTS TO DEVELOPE A PURE NATIONAL LITERATURE, AND ALL LOVERS OF THE BEAUTIFUL, GRAND, AND SUBLIME IN THE GREAT NORTHWEST, THIS POEM IS INSCRIBED, BY THE AUTHOR.

COPY OF A LETTER FROM BAYARD TAYLOR, ACCEPTING THE DEDICATION.

NEW YORK, September 10.

MY DEAR SIR:—I find your letter awaiting my return from the banks of Newfoundland, and hasten to reply.

I cannot refuse the flattering request you have made of me, and beg you to accept my thanks for the implied compliment. I remember your performance in the poetic line at Unionville, Pennsylvania, but had supposed that your practical western life had led you to abandon the Muse. I shall be curious to see in what manner the inspiration of the West has acted upon your mind.

Trusting that you have been successful in life, and that the world goes well with you, I remain

Very truly yours,
BAYARD TAYLOR.

J'aime mon patrie.—FENELON.

Huc undique gaza.—VIRGIL.

Westward the Star of Empire takes its way :
The four first acts already past,
The fifth shall close the drama of the day :
Time's noblest offspring is the last.

—BISHOP BERKLEY.

I SEE Niagara's waters headlong roll,
Her lovely brow successive wreathed with foam ;
I hear the thunder of the mighty whole,
The world of mighty waters hiss and roar !
And find in the abyss no resting home !
Receiving ceaseless floods into its breast,
'Mid rainbow wreaths of glowing, fiery foam ;
Convolving clouds continuous o'er it pressed,
The foaming outlet of the mighty West.

The blossom-breasted billow, downwards hurl'd
Into the yawning gulf, with thundering sound,
In hollow grandeur, seems to shake the world,
And, conscious, shakes the solid ground ;
The wrathful billows, with prodigious bound,
Leap, vast, but sluggish, from their giddy poise,
Then rush like lightning through the dark profound ;
Lashed into foam, the seething vapors rise,
And vivid rainbows paint the glistening skies.

Almighty Author! here Thy boundless power
Wakes into grandeur, majesty and awe ;
Man feels that he, the creature of an hour,
Knows nothing of Thy might or nature's law,
Till stationed here, amid this awful scene,
He views the wonders of Thy mighty arm—
Gigantic wonder of this fair terrene ;
The God-like here with holy rapture warm,
The skeptic shakes with horror and alarm.

Next view our spacious lakes, those inland seas,
Whose glossy grandeur stretches far and wide;
Where floating palaces, with grace and ease,
In kingly glory breast the heaving tide,
Tho' nations different lay on either side—
With joy we view the silver-breasted lake.
No longer wars our interests divide;
But meek-ey'd peace, with blessings in her wake,
Propitious smiles, and points the path we take.

The Mississippi rolls her purple floods;
Missouri's yellow laves her shifting shore;
Ohio's green comes from exhaustless woods,
Commingling thence, in one huge sheet they pour,
Binding our western nations more and more
By this broad band of sparkling waters gay,
Which makes adjoining freemen gladly pour
Their commerce, wealth and beautiful array,
In floating palaces that deck its way!

Their flowing currents are distinctly seen,
While side by side their abstract currents run,
And then with glowing, glossy, silvery sheen,
They arm in arm commingling flow in one!
Their countless drops are carried ceaseless on,
Into the clear, blue, boundless, foaming sea,
Upon whose pathless brow no furrows run—
The waveless, shoreless, trackless, boundless free!
Th' untrodden footprints of immensity!

Gigantic pathway! most imperial thou,
Emporium of freedom, wealth and power,
Exhaustless commerce floats upon thy brow,
Millions, dependent, labor every hour,
And many a gay, sweet, fair, enameled flower
Stands sportive on thy many beauteous isles,
And rocky bluffs upon thy margin tow'r,
And draining areas of unknown miles,
Where nature's fadeless glory ceaseless smiles.

Empires lay studded all along thy coast,
Each embryo one still anxiously awaits
Permission, 'mid our galaxy to boast,
A union in the sisterhood of States;
Joy, pleasure, friendship then shall watch their gates,
When legislation's great and sovereign power
Joins them with us, impelling thus the fates
To watch their infant footsteps every hour,
And clear their sky when dark'ning shadows lower.

Pleiads of nation's liberty and men,
What a bright and glorious heritage is yours—
What matchless symmetry—here stalwart men
May feed and fatten, still the soil endures;
Your mighty waters, mellow, sweet, and pure,
From veins and arteries profusely pour'd
Throughout the land, unconscious shall allure
A multitude immense to come and hoard,
The wealth exhaustless in thy bosom stor'd!

To have a home, a heritage, a name
Within the vale, on Mississippi's breast,
Is honor that I love, for one, to claim.
Thou fruitful garden of the mighty West!
Soon will thy soil by noble freemen press'd,
Improv'd and cultivated, dazzling glow,
Like Eden's garden, beautifully dress'd;
Thy citizens true art and science know,
And cities great and famous daily grow!
Still in the West, the Sacramento pours
Her rushing waters to the restless sea.

There giant, snow cap'd mountains heav'nward tow'r,
O'er which bright Phœbus' rays dance joyously!
And sportive streams dash down their sides in glee,
Whose rugged channels, shelving deep and bold,
Expose the glittering sands, and give the key
To mines exhaustless, mixed with yellow mould,
New Eldorado, that is land of gold!

Ye Cis-Atlantic Saxons! yours the gain,
When forests now unopen'd wake to life,
And spread the limits of your vast domain,
Without one cruel war or civil strife,
Save with the bears, the monarchs of the plain,
While lowing herds and fields of waving grain
Rise tier on tier along the mountain side,
And sportive lambkins frisk in gambols wide,
Where limpid rills in rippling murmurs glide.

And up and down, athwart the fertile vale,
The yellow fields beneath the reaper lie,
Where snug like cabins court the flutt'ring gale,
As thick as stars that gem the evening sky!
These are real beauties, now in prospect nigh,
For who can stay the fiat of our God!
When gloomy wilds and trackless mountains high
Yield daily to the plow, and mark the abode
Of pioneers who brave the frontier mode!

Next, see those massive rocks give way to steel,
And form a breastwork for the shining bar,
A pathway for the glorious iron wheel
That bears away the lightning winged car!
While rolling tempests, in the distance far,
Lag far behind; thus forward, like a dream,
Through tunnel'd mountains that would ever mar
The strides of progress, gloriously supreme,
Behold the advent of unconquered steam.

By steam, we sail and navigate the sea;
By steam, we hammer, pound and saw and lift;
Steam makes us independant, sov'reign, free;
By steam, we drive the pump and grind and sift;
By steam, the pow'rful locomotive swift
Speeds on resistless o'er his iron way,
The mightiest, best and choicest, greatest gift
Bestow'd on mortals subject to their sway,
A horse of fire, a charioteer of clay!

This land by iron railroads checker'd o'er,
By measureless canals deep furrow'd wide,
Is filled with luxuries from shore to shore,
Borne by the iron horse or heaving tide!
In endless currents, all our wants supplied.
See tossing navies float at our command—

What nation yet so young can boast such pride,
Such mighty progress, such distinction grand?
Her stars and stripes o'er every sea expand!

Look back on history, have not nations fame,
Which, Phœnix-like, may from their ashes rise?
What gave to Egypt, Greece, or Rome a name,
Save art and science, lo! the glorious prize
Which blows and blossoms, grows, but never dies,
Immortal fame! then up the steps of time,
With ceaseless struggles let us ever climb,
And shine above with brilliancy sublime!

My native country, dear, devoted thou,
Born, reared and nurtur'd on thy glowing breast.
Time but expands thy fair and beauteous brow,
While I, unmourned, must shortly sink to rest;
Soon shall the clods, upon my bosom press'd,
On all my cares and all my sorrows weigh.
Oh! may thy sons be number'd with the blest,
Nor in the paths of sin or sorrow stray,
But charity and love point out the way.

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