

## Comment by the Editor

### PIONEERING

As the covered wagon typifies the great migration during the winning of the West, so also the log cabin, homespun clothing, and johnny-cake are effective reminders of a time when men and women were engaged in the venturesome exploit of living on the American frontier. The people who settled the country are now called pioneers, and the things peculiar to their mode of life have become symbolical of pioneering. Yet pioneering means more than crude tools, plain clothing, and simple food: it means leadership in place of imitation; progress rather than stagnation; hope of the future more than satisfaction with the past; self-reliance instead of dependence — in short, it implies a frontier. For a frontier is not merely a geographical area; it is also a condition and an attitude of mind — the abode of pioneers in thought as well as action. Pioneering consists of surmounting obstacles for the first time and smoothing the way for others.

Pioneering was not entirely a matter of covered wagons and log cabins even in the days of boots and hoop skirts. The pioneers of commerce possessed as much vision and courage as those who cleared the forest and tilled the soil. If the men who brought

the telegraph to Iowa seem to have been short-sighted in some respects, what of the farmers who thought that the prairie was non-productive and that the western part of the State would never be settled? The telegraph builders were men of personality and conviction, like Oliver H. Kelley, the first operator in Muscatine, who later fathered the pioneer movement to organize the farmers of America. Almost single-handed and in the face of the most trying discouragement he clung to his ideal until he saw the fruit of his efforts ripen into a notable achievement. Who shall say that his years of penury, ridicule, and frustration were less hard to endure than the poverty and physical hardships of the men who lived in log cabins?

But the pioneers of commerce were not always unerring in foresight. Among the sponsors of internal improvements were those whose plans turned out to be only abortive delusions. At one time such men as Governor Grimes and Senator Harlan believed in "hard surfacing" the highways of Iowa with planks — but the mud swallowed the planks and the money invested. Henry O'Reilly, the father of the western telegraph, thought he could make the Des Moines River navigable, but at the end of four years he had only "obstructed the river, causing loss to boatmen and shippers." He who succeeds is hailed as a man of vision, but he who fails is said to be only a dreamer.

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