

Comment by the Editor

OUTFITTING FOR THE WEST

Probably it comes as a surprise to most of us to find that Iowa City was an outfitting post for a series of expeditions as considerable as those described by Miss Gallaher in the story of the Handcart Expeditions. And yet it is a natural enough incident in the history of that time. Iowa City was the western end of the railroad, which reached the town on January first, 1856, and it was in the following summer that the hundreds of European proselytes to the Mormon faith gathered there in a camp two miles from town and waited for the busy citizens to make them handcarts and otherwise profit by their preparations for the long overland trail.

Other towns had already become outfitting places. Before the days of the railroad Burlington and Dubuque, lying beside the great waterway, had served travelers who left the river to go into the interior wilderness. Mormons crossing in the great trek of 1846-1847 made their own camps as they went, but established on the site of Council Bluffs the outfitting town of Kaneshville which served Mormons and Gentile for long years before it changed its name to Council Bluffs.

The Fifty-niners with their canvas covered wag-

ons flaunting the slogan of "Pike's Peak or Bust" traveled across Iowa by the thousands and sampled the supplies and the good cheer of the town on the Missouri before they crossed on the ferry and began the trail across the plains.

It was through Iowa that the railroads from the East first penetrated on their way to the far West, and the railhead was always more or less of a jumping off place. Sioux City as well as Council Bluffs soon succeeded to this advantage. In the seventies when the gold strike in the Black Hills stirred the adventurers of the country, Sioux City became the outfitting post for many expeditions.

But the towns of Iowa served these purposes only as temporary functions and with the westward flight of the frontier they settled down to the more prosaic and more permanent task of acting as community centers for an agricultural State.

J. C. P.