

## Comment by the Editor

### THE PASSING OF THE EXPLORER

Columbusing as a general practice has become almost obsolete. To the explorers of 1492 the biggest part of the world lay undiscovered; and they merely led the way. In the fifteen hundreds hardy seamen like Drake or Frobisher could make wonderful finds simply by sailing around in boats. De Soto and Coronado, not content with cruising, took to the interior and marched tremendous distances with proportionately small results.

During the next century adventuring in the new world was quite the vogue. And in the seventeen hundreds monarchs whose intrepid men had rambled over the new regions began to contest in earnest for these spots. They sent out more adventurers and followed them with armies; and as the century drew to a close nations came to a rough division of the spoils and began to ask what their possessions were like.

More chance for the explorers. They set out upon the westerling waters in search of trade routes. They moved in canvas topped Ninas and Pintas and Santa Marias across the interminable plains in search of gold. More prosaic settlers came and filled in the intervening spaces.



As the Twentieth Century came in the people of the world began to see the limits of discovery. Scarcely any region remained except a few islands in the South Seas, and the North and South Poles. Now the poles have been found and the islands of the ocean explored, and the dark skinned Eskimos and the dusky southern belles have somewhat lost their novelty. The world has been discovered, and adventuring Columbuses are faced with unemployment.

#### VERTICAL EXPLORATION

Nevertheless, there is hope. Horizontal exploration is waning but the vertical quest is hardly begun. The explorers have turned from the ships of the sea and the plain, and interested themselves in the pick and shovel. They have taken to intensive discovery. Under the sands of Egypt, beneath the tangle of tropical foliage in Central America, buried on the hill tops of the Andes, or underlying the plains of the Mississippi Valley are the new lands they hunt.

The discoveries are astonishing. In Egypt within a very few years buried cities have given up enormous quantities of papyrus manuscripts — among them a Biblical manuscript a century earlier than any before known. The clearing away of underbrush and soil reveals the wonderful city of Machu Picchu in Peru and the ancient pyramids and writings of Central America.



Under the soil of the North American Continent lie the remains of ancient man and the signs of his culture. And scattered and hidden in the old wallows and tar beds are the still more ancient bones of the mammoth and the sabre-toothed tiger. But a Columbus nowadays must be more than a hardy adventurer. Archaeology has become a fine art and the tar beds, and burial mounds, and effigies, and cliff dwellings must be explored by those who know how, or the results are worse than useless. In several of the States archaeological surveys have been begun under scientific auspices. Iowa offers an exceptional field for intensive exploration.

#### RAILROAD HISTORY

It seems a far cry from prehistoric relics to the era of railroad building. But even that recent era is full of haze and oblivion. Back in the early days of railroad promotion and construction, companies were started which have long since been forgotten. The stakes on old lines of survey have rotted away, the long straight embankments of abandoned work are overgrown with weeds or perhaps have been obliterated. And even the beginnings of surviving companies are indistinct in memory and record.

The publication of some railroad material in the January number of the *PALIMPSEST* has brought interesting responses. We have since had the pleasure of looking over a *Corporate History of the Chicago*,



*Burlington & Quincy Railroad Company* prepared by W. W. Baldwin, vice president. It is a large volume of nearly five hundred pages and it is notable, among other things, for the care with which the salient facts have been gathered and presented, together with separate maps, for each one of the 204 companies which had a part in building the network known as the Burlington System.

We understand that the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Company is preparing a history of that organization in connection with the commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the initial operation of trains in 1852. It was this line from Chicago to Rock Island which the old M. & M. Railroad Company was organized to extend. A reference by Mr. Usher in one of the letters printed in January to the effect that Mr. Farnam, the road-builder of the Rock Island road in Illinois, finished his contract a year ahead of time and was running it on his own hook for that year, brings this comment from a son, Mr. Henry W. Farnam of New Haven, Connecticut, in a letter to Mr. A. N. Harbert of Iowa City:

It is true that the firm of Sheffield and Farnam, in which Mr. Joseph E. Sheffield of New Haven was associated with my father, contracted to build the Chicago & Rock Island Railroad and finished it about eighteen months in advance of the time specified and I believe that the contractors had the right to run the road for their own profit during that time. But, in point of fact, they did not. The first train



passed over the road from Chicago to Rock Island February 22nd and on July 10th the road was formally turned over to the company. Mr. Usher's letter was written May 8th so that I presume my father was actually running the road at the time, but he ran it for less than five months and not for a year.

#### THE ANTOINE LE CLAIRE

The coming of the railroad to the east bank of the river in 1854 turned men's thoughts to bridge building, but the first locomotive to cross the Mississippi did not wait for the completion of the bridge. It came over on a flatboat and was christened the Antoine Le Claire. In the article on the M. & M. Railroad in the January PALIMPSEST this event is given as occurring in July, 1854, in accordance with various printed statements to that effect. However, this antedates the fact by a year as we have since been able to determine. Conflicting statements sent us back to contemporary sources. Newspapers are not always the most authentic records, but in fixing the chronology of events happening at the time and not then subject to controversy they are apt to be more accurate than later secondary accounts. The *Keokuk Gate City* for July 25, 1855, prints an item chronicling the arrival in Davenport of the Antoine Le Claire, and comments on this coming of the first locomotive to Iowa.

We would give much to know the later history of the veteran engine. The first printing press to run



off a newspaper in Iowa stands in state in the museum of a neighboring Commonwealth, which it also served. But perhaps the locomotive, being of a more adventurous spirit and a more dangerous occupation in life, came to a violent end, and disintegrated into unhistoric scrap iron.

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