

## BAYARD TAYLOR'S MINNESOTA VISITS

WHEN BAYARD TAYLOR RETURNED from Europe in December, 1853, after two years of foreign travel which had included visits to England, Spain, India, China, and Japan, he was already recognized as one of the greatest of American travelers. Ever since he began, as a lad of nineteen, those wanderings which he later chronicled in *Views Afoot*, he had been an almost constant globe-trotter. Indeed an unkind observer once remarked that Taylor had traveled more and seen less than any man alive! Nevertheless, his fame was widespread, and on his return to the United States he was deluged with invitations to lecture and to appear in lyceum courses throughout the country. Taylor at first was hesitant about plunging into this kind of work, but those who had read his travel correspondence in the columns of the *New York Tribune* would not be denied. Moreover, Taylor had recently saddled himself with an enormous country estate, Cedarcroft, near his native Kennett in Pennsylvania. There was no better way to liquidate his debts than to mount the public rostrum, and mount the rostrum he did.

It is hard to realize today the endurance required by a popular lyceum speaker of the fifties and sixties. Lectures in all kinds of places ranging from auditoriums to dimly lighted and poorly heated barns, innumerable introductions to strangers, poor accommodations, bad food, almost incessant travel—this was the portion of Emerson, of Wendell Phillips, and particularly of Bayard Taylor. One wonders if any other lecturer of the time spoke as frequently and in as many places as did Taylor. On his first tour, which lasted from January to May, 1854, he fulfilled ninety engagements, for which he was paid fifty dollars apiece. In the nine-year period between 1858 and 1867 he spoke over

six hundred times and, lest his lecturing be considered as a minor activity, found time as well to publish nine books.<sup>1</sup> In these extensive peregrinations, which took Taylor to almost every important city in the land, he could not well have missed Minnesota, and it is interesting to note that he paid the state three visits, in 1859, in 1871, and in 1874.

Taylor's first appearance in Minnesota was the result of his willingness to help the growth of infant libraries. In the spring of 1859 he announced that he would lecture before any literary society which would pay his expenses and a small fee (usually fifty dollars), the balance of the proceeds to be devoted to the benefit of the society which sponsored his appearance. As a result the Young Men's Christian Association of St. Paul induced Taylor to give six lectures in Minnesota, guaranteeing him three hundred dollars plus expenses. Two of these lectures were delivered in St. Paul, and one each in St. Anthony, Minneapolis, Stillwater, and Winona.<sup>2</sup>

Taylor arrived in St. Paul on the evening of May 21, 1859. He and his wife made the last part of their journey by steamboat and they both enjoyed greatly the voyage up the Mississippi. Taylor himself left no record of his impressions of this, his earliest visit to the Northwest, but there is an interesting description of St. Paul in the book which Marie Hansen-Taylor later wrote about her husband.

On the evening of the second day we went aboard the small steamer which was to carry us up the Mississippi to St. Paul. The trip, which occupied several days — the boat steamed between the low and sparsely settled banks of the river and past numerous small green islands — was not without its charm. . . . Saturday evening we finally arrived in St. Paul. The ten-year-old city, with its 10,000 inhabitants, rises in a series of terraces on both sides of the broad river. As in all these new towns of the West, the dwelling houses are built separately, scattered over a disproportionately large area. Here also everything is still in the rough and incomplete; it is evident that the buildings were put up in haste, and that the settlers had an eye more to business

<sup>1</sup> Albert H. Smyth, *Bayard Taylor*, 102, 178 (Boston, 1896).

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Pioneer and Democrat* (St. Paul), May 27, 1859.

profit than to comfort and convenience. I know of nothing more uncongenial than such a youthful city, much as I admire the courage and energy to which it owes its existence.

Mrs. Taylor concluded her account with two blunt sentences about St. Paul's neighbors to the west.

St. Anthony, not far distant, with its falls of the Mississippi reminding me of the Rhine falls at Schaffhausen, and the four-year-old town of Minneapolis across the river, are situated at the end of civilisation. North of these two places the only inhabitants are Indians, bears and wolves.<sup>3</sup>

Some days before the lecturer's arrival the St. Paul papers had printed announcements of his appearance as well as the subjects of his two local lectures, "Moscow" and "Life in the North." Tickets sold for fifty cents apiece, and it was understood that the net proceeds would be devoted to the library fund of the Young Men's Christian Association.<sup>4</sup> The *Pioneer and Democrat* of May 21 announced that Taylor would speak that evening at the First Presbyterian Church and feared that the audience might tax the capacity of the building. The paper especially solicited "the sympathy and kind forbearance of the ladies," and it respectfully requested "that their scope be made to correspond to the pressing exigencies of the occasion." The *Minnesotian* of the same date saluted Taylor in verse, the "Lines to Bayard Taylor" being written expressly for the event by a poetess who signed herself A. N. S.

A hearty welcome we would give  
Thee and thy stranger bride;  
Thou art in all thy wanderings,  
Our country's joy and pride.

Later Taylor was apostrophized as

A traveler with thy sandals on,  
'Tis thus we think of thee,

<sup>3</sup> Marie Hansen-Taylor, *On Two Continents*, 72 (New York, 1905). Marie Hansen, daughter of a Danish mathematician, was Taylor's second wife. Mary Agnew, whom he married on October 24, 1850, died in December of the same year.

<sup>4</sup> *Pioneer and Democrat*, May 7, 12, 17, 18, 1859.

and was asked whether he had found any spot, in frigid or torrid zone, which he preferred to Minnesota.

Taylor's lectures in St. Paul were well attended. According to the *Daily Times* of May 25 both occasions were interesting and profitable.

Those who heard his lecture on Moscow, the once proud capital of a mighty empire, were charmed with the artistic and finished style of the lecturer, and the gorgeous manner in which he painted with words its splendor and magnificence. His lecture upon the Arctic Regions, all were delighted with, and regretted that the time passed so quickly during its delivery.

The fullest account of Taylor's first St. Paul visit appeared in the *Minnesotian* of May 23. In an editorial commenting on the lecture on Moscow the paper observed:

Mr. Taylor is not as large a man as many had been led to expect from previous descriptions. He might be called handsome; of a light complexion and somewhat browned by travel. This lecture was wisely adapted to the public requirements—preserving the proper medium between shallowness and profundity. It was made up of a perfect *melange* of facts, fancies, anecdotes, picturesque descriptions, and lively historical allusions.

Taylor's language, the *Minnesotian* remarked, was "what the women call beautiful"—in other words almost too rococo and sparkling. Yet the lecturer impressed his audience by his good sense in shaping and adapting his material, by his judicious arrangement of what he had to say, and by his pleasant delivery. The paper predicted that the lecture would live in the memory of its hearers as "a glittering, glancing, moving panorama of genius and jewels, tartars, turbans, feathers and frippery."<sup>5</sup>

Following his second lecture in St. Paul on May 23 Taylor went to St. Anthony, where he repeated his talk on Moscow, and to Minneapolis, where he again discussed life

<sup>5</sup> During Taylor's sojourn in St. Paul two local papers reprinted extracts from his writings. The *Pioneer and Democrat* of May 22 printed an article which it captioned "Bayard Taylor's Christmas Ride in Norrland." In the *Daily Times* for the same date appeared Taylor's "First Difficulties with Foreign Tongues."

in northern Europe. In both cities he was welcomed by large and enthusiastic audiences. According to the *Falls Evening News* of May 24,

Taylor is the most genial letter-writer, and resolute traveler America has ever produced, and will draw a larger audience than any other cis Atlantic contemporary. He is in demand the year round, and his presence with us at this time will be received as a most fortunate event, and improved as such a rare circumstance deserves to be.

Later the same paper remarked that Taylor lectured "for F-A-M-E—'Fifty And My Expenses.'" He speaks of St. Anthony Falls as being very grand and picturesque and as far exceeding their reputation." Taylor pleased the editor by praising the Winslow House, a hotel of which St. Anthony was justly proud.<sup>6</sup>

Taylor's Minneapolis appearance, at the Methodist Church on Oregon Street on the evening of May 25, has a special interest today because of the lecturer's connection with the formation of the Minneapolis Athenaeum. Earlier in the month a group of Minneapolis citizens had resolved to organize a literary association and to avail themselves of Taylor's offer to lecture. The result of this meeting was the appointment of a committee, which eventually recommended the adoption of a constitution. The Young Men's Literary Association of Minneapolis was then organized, and it adopted a constitution and elected officers. When Taylor spoke on May 25 the proceeds grossed \$141.75; Taylor was paid \$58.25 as fee and expenses, and the balance, \$83.50, was turned over to the newly formed association, presumably for the purchase of books.<sup>7</sup> This was the beginning of a municipal library in Minneapolis. On the occasion of Taylor's second visit to Minnesota the *St. Paul Daily Pioneer* of July 27, 1871, recalled the lecturer's earlier visit with its literary associations. "The Athenaeum of today," it re-

<sup>6</sup> *Falls Evening News* (St. Anthony and Minneapolis), May 26, 1859.

<sup>7</sup> *Subject Catalogue of the Minneapolis Athenaeum Library*, iii (Minneapolis, 1884).

marked, "is the harvest that has been gathered from the seed planted at that time."

Twelve years elapsed before Taylor returned to Minnesota, this time not as a lecturer but as a journalist and reporter. In the interim he had visited England and Germany, he had acted as secretary of the legation at St. Petersburg, he had seen Switzerland and the Italian lakes. In addition he had dabbled as a war correspondent, had delivered lectures on German literature at Cornell University, and had covered most of California on a return speaking tour. In the summer of 1871, Taylor once more interrupted his literary work (he was then engaged on the second part of his great translation of *Faust*) to accept a newspaper commission. At that time the financier Jay Cooke was deeply interested in the construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad, and his house was attempting to float first mortgage gold bonds to finance the work.<sup>8</sup> If the railroad was to be built, it was necessary to win the interest and confidence of the public. Cooke, as a consequence, organized a journalistic tour which included representatives of the leading newspapers of the country and which was planned to acquaint the travelers with the terrain which the new railroad would exploit. Taylor, of course, represented the *New York Tribune*.

The itinerary of the "editorial excursionists," as the party was soon dubbed, included a boat trip from Buffalo to Duluth, then a rail journey to the Twin Cities, and a combined rail, stagecoach, and steamboat excursion to Winnipeg and Fort Garry. Taylor recorded his experiences in a series of eight fascinating letters to the *New York Tribune*, running at intervals through August, 1871, and captioned "The North-West."

<sup>8</sup> For a typical advertisement see the *New York Tribune*, July 19, 1871, in which the bonds are announced as redeemable in gold and secured by a first and only mortgage on the entire road and its equipment, as well as on twenty-three thousand acres of land for every mile of road completed. The bonds were also announced as tax exempt.

The journalists reached Duluth on July 20 on the steamer "R. G. Coburn" after having seen Isle Royale and Thunder Cape en route. Taylor was greatly impressed by the grandiose scenery of the North Shore of Lake Superior, which he compared to the fjords and pinnacles of the Norwegian coast. Duluth also interested him, although he spoke contemptuously of the new epithet which the town's ambitious citizens had recently adopted: "The Zenith City of the Unsalted Seas"!<sup>9</sup> "One would think that life was too short, and American nature too practical, for such a phrase; but there it is." But he observed that Duluth had a royal situation; "her houses are so lifted by the slope that they all show, and the first impression is that of a larger place." He praised his hotel for its elegance and comfort, and declared that the city had accomplished a great deal in three short years. Already it was a town of four thousand people, with spacious streets, five churches, and a daily train and steamboat. "When the hideous burnt forests around it shall have been cut away, the ground smoothed, cleaned, and cultivated, and gardens shall have forced the climate to permit their existence," Taylor predicted, Duluth "will be one of the most charming towns in the North-West." He observed the shortage of arable land but prophesied a future prosperity dependent on the slate and granite quarries, the iron mines, and the wheat fields of the Red River Valley. Already that year, he reported, Duluth had shipped half a million bushels of wheat. Railroad connections would amplify and cement this activity.<sup>10</sup>

The citizens of Duluth did not neglect the opportunity to impress their visitors. The journalists were entertained at "a charming hop in their honor . . . gotten up at the Clark House," were regaled with a "splendid supper and dance at the same place," and were taken for a steamboat

<sup>9</sup> *New York Tribune*, July 29, 1871. The epithet is said to have been used first by Dr. Thomas Foster in a speech delivered July 4, 1868. See *Duluth News-Tribune*, July 4, 1937.

<sup>10</sup> *New York Tribune*, August 5, 1871.

excursion around the bay and over to Superior; while for those who preferred angling there was a fishing expedition along the shore to Knife and French rivers. A grand banquet was given with the mayor presiding and Colonel Charles H. Graves acting as toastmaster. Taylor, one of several speakers, chose the sentiment "Round the World." On the morning of July 22 the party left Duluth for the Twin Cities, a group of local celebrities escorting the journalists some sixty miles.<sup>11</sup>

The Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad followed for some distance the course of the St. Louis River, which so interested Taylor that he and Dana rode in the cab of the locomotive. The dalles, he observed, provided "the first approach to really fine scenery which we have yet found." The narrow river valley soon was transformed into a gorge, the rapids becoming cataracts and the dark brown water itself altering to an amber foam. But from Thomson onward the country grew poor and ugly. "Mile after mile of ragged, ugly, stunted forest," Taylor reported, "standing in its own rot and ruin, only varied, now and then, by reedy, stagnant-looking pools or lakes, which had the effect of blasting the trees nearest to them." After eighty miles of this the members of the editorial party reached the division point of Sicoots, where they were entertained at lunch by Colonel D. C. Lindsley, chief engineer of the Northern Pacific Railroad. The afternoon journey Taylor found less diverting than the morning travel, although he observed that in the vicinity of Hinckley the pineries of the St. Croix began to fade until they were replaced by open, slightly rolling agricultural country. Dusk overtook the travelers near Wyoming so that the approach to the Twin Cities was utterly obscured, but Taylor was quick to discern a change in the settlements which he had not seen for twelve years.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Duluth Daily Herald, Duluth Minnesotian*, July 22, 1871.

<sup>12</sup> *New York Tribune*, August 16, 1871; *Pioneer*, July 23, 1871.



In St. Paul, he wrote,

We were installed in a hotel [*Metropolitan Hotel*] of metropolitan proportions and character; the streets had become massive and permanent in appearance; the ragged-looking, semi-savage suburbs were wonderfully transformed into sumptuous residences and gardens—in short, St. Paul seemed to be not only fifty years older, but to have been removed three degrees further south. Its former bleak, Northern aspect had entirely vanished.

Everywhere the traveler observed smooth lawns, pleasant foliage. In Minneapolis he found to his inextinguishable regret that the beautiful Falls of St. Anthony had been sacrificed to business. Sight-seeing occupied much of the visitors' time, and Taylor was shown among other spectacles Minnehaha Falls and Colonel William S. King's farm with its famous blooded stock. He was not greatly impressed by the former, commenting on the fact that its commercial possibilities had not been realized. But, he reasoned,

After a while Minneapolis will stretch down in that direction, and the gorge will be filled up by an immense manufacturing establishment, with the cascade driving its huge wheels. Minnehaha is the luckiest waterfall in the world; it has achieved more renown on a smaller capital of performance than any other I ever saw. Norway has a thousand nameless falls of greater height and beauty; Ithaca, New-York, has two-score, only locally known; but this pretty, unpretending tumble of less than a hundred feet is celebrated all over the world.

The Twin Cities, he asserted, were natural and bitter rivals and would continue to be so because of their proximity to each other until one or the other gained an insurmountable ascendancy. Taylor did not predict when that time would be or which city would triumph, but he did add one blunt remark: "There is certainly more industry in Minneapolis, and more wealth in St. Paul—more life in the former, more comfort in the latter." He closed his third *Tribune* letter with praise for the Nicollet House, both for its furnishings and for its food, and with a reference to a dinner and a serenade which the visitors had been tendered.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *New York Tribune*, August 16, 1871.

The morning of July 25 the "editorial excursionists" set out for Fort Garry, a special train conveying them over the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad as far as Morris; from Morris they traveled via stagecoach to Pomme de Terre and thence to Nolan's Tavern, opposite Fort Abercrombie on the Red River. Taylor was immensely pleased and perhaps a bit surprised by the farm land adjoining the Twin Cities.

The belt of carefully-farmed country around Minneapolis is still narrow, but it has all the charm of an older region. The tracts of timber are constantly interrupted by little lakes, from one to three miles in extent; and it is remarkable how a farm-house and a few grain fields give to each of these an air of long-established cultivation and comfort. Lake Minnetonka, 15 or 20 miles from Minneapolis, is a charming sheet of water, about 25 miles long, but with so many indented arms and bays that it has a shore line of nearly 200 miles. There is here a Summer hotel, a little propellor for excursions, and a few sail-boats for fishing parties.

Farther on he noticed that the country grew wilder and more lonely. Farmers were cutting meadow grass for hay, the dry season making the practice profitable. The travelers, speeding along at thirty miles per hour, did not find the trip monotonous but instead enjoyed the varying shades of green and the undulations of the land. "After a number of first faint efforts at towns," Taylor wrote, "we reached Litchfield, aged two years, and already grown into some large frame buildings, an elegant hotel, and \$600 lots." He praised the Scandinavians for the readiness with which they adapted themselves to strange conditions and he thought that the country through which he traveled bore a distinct resemblance to the valley of the Platte in central Nebraska. The town of Benson proved to be only a cluster of houses, while Morris, the temporary end of the railroad, was a mere six months old and had many of the earmarks of a portable community. At Morris, where it was necessary to shift to stagecoaches, a considerable redistribution of personal effects was made; and Taylor commented on the changed appearance and the lightened luggage of the travelers. Flan-

nel replaced boiled shirts, sardines and crackers and cigars peeped out from convenient crannies, and fowling pieces were everywhere visible.

The coach ride was at first not unpleasant. Taylor compared the terrain with southern Nebraska, which it fully equaled in richness; in addition it boasted "numberless little lakes, bright, lonely tarns, generally with a timbered bluff on the northern side. All the most attractive situations are being rapidly claimed by settlers." But Taylor remembered Pomme de Terre only for its filth and soot and for the clouds of pestiferous mosquitoes. The stage journey was brought to an end at the banks of the Red River. Across from the travelers loomed Fort Abercrombie, with adjacent Indian lodges silhouetted against the crimson sunset. Even for a man who had seen the Orient the scene was impressive. Taylor was romantic enough not to forget the beauty of the prairie contrast.<sup>14</sup>

At Fort Abercrombie Taylor and his party were welcomed warmly by the officers and were conducted officially around the post. But the correspondent was obviously more interested in the settlers moving rapidly into the new country than he was in the garrison. For one who had been with Commodore Perry in Japan, sailors and soldiers were hardly a novel spectacle. Taylor observed that the tides of immigration were already sweeping in over the great fertile plain of western Minnesota. Between Brainerd and the Red River he estimated that there were thirty thousand people established on the land, and he repeated the comment made to him by a native that in one day twelve hundred wagons had been seen, all bound for the vicinity of Detroit Lakes. Twenty-five miles beyond Fort Abercrombie the party stopped at the hut of a Norwegian settler who had recently augmented his original cabin. "He has laid in a good stock of prairie hay for the Winter," Taylor reported, "but his agriculture is still scanty. He came to the

<sup>14</sup> *New York Tribune*, August 16, 1871.

place between two and three years ago, with \$60 in his pocket, and has already been offered \$2,000 for his property. Like every Scandinavian whom I have met in this region, he is perfectly contented, and prefers the new home to the old." But not all the white inhabitants of the country seemed as worthy and as honest. Before entering Oak Port, a temporary camp settled mainly by gamblers and prostitutes, the journalists examined the priming of their revolvers and loosened the pistols in their holsters. The settlement itself proved far less dangerous than they had anticipated, but later Taylor remembered unpleasantly one visible sign of barbarism: a man whose ear had been chewed off in a fight and who kept the loose fragment joined to the side of his head by a piece of court plaster.<sup>15</sup>

From Frog Point, the head of navigation on the Red River during periods of low water, to Fort Garry was a distance of four hundred water miles; and Taylor voiced his surprise at the meandering stream which was to supply the final route to his destination. The Red River he found to be "a deep, swift river, about 70 feet wide, winding between sloping banks of verdure, and elms so old and spreading that their branches almost meet above the water." But a little later he was amazed at the shallowness of the stream and he complained that although the "Selkirk," the little boat on which his party traveled, drew only two feet of water, it was in frequent danger of going aground. Taylor's description of the luxuriant vegetation calls to mind Chateaubriand's fanciful picture of the Mississippi which he never saw.

An unbroken mantle of willow and hazel, knotted together with wild convolvulus and ivy, enveloped both banks down to the water; behind this foliage stood large, scattering elms, ash and box-elder; and all were mixed together in such a tangle of riotous growth that we could well have believed the stream to be the Red River of Louisiana. The current was so swift, and the bends so sharp and frequent, that the steamer was continually bumping against one or the other bank, and

<sup>15</sup> *New York Tribune*, August 17, 1871.

the sun seemed to perform a rapid dance around all quarters of the sky.<sup>16</sup>

After the first shock of surprise, however, the novelty wore away, and Taylor and his companions found the slow voyage to Manitoba rather fatiguing. The fowling pieces laboriously carried this far soon came into play and the travelers shot from the deck at hawks, ducks, owls, pigeons, usually with no great execution. Along the lower reaches of the river, cabins were seldom seen and even the solitary canoe of Indian or voyageur seldom dotted the surface. At Fort Pembina the party was received by the commandant. But Taylor was sadly disappointed by the town of Pembina itself, a straggling, unkempt community of two hundred Chipewya, half-breeds, and soldiers. He found no habitations other than filthy log huts and scant signs of farming or gardening. With the buffalo already three hundred miles westward, he speculated on the food supply of these improvident idlers. The climate he claimed was little different from that of St. Paul, the people were generally enthusiastic about their new home, and if the land seemed deadly monotonous, the monotony was at least fertile! Taylor closed his fifth letter to the *Tribune* with a series of antitheses. Northwestern winters were long and hard like those of Norway, but the land gave signs of growing a plenitude of wheat. Timber was unfortunately wanting, but the soil produced the finest potatoes in the world. Moreover, he gloated with all the zeal for exploitation of Jay Cooke himself, the country was easily accessible by a railroad. "Therefore, it verily hath a future"!

Along the Manitoba shores Taylor saw nothing but half-breeds, who failed to impress him. "Their dark faces, long black hair, gay blankets, and general aspect of dirt and laziness promise nothing for the speedy civilization of the

<sup>16</sup> Taylor's account squares perfectly with the navigation notes made by Eggleston and Thoreau some years earlier on the Red and Minnesota rivers, respectively.

region." Indeed in every way save in their attachment to the soil they resembled the Indians whose blood they shared. Despite the widening of the stream, the "Selkirk" still experienced difficulty in its progress toward Fort Garry, and Taylor again complained of the obstacles confronting navigation. "On approaching a rapid, it was next to impossible to keep her head to the one practicable channel: we grounded at the bow, grounded at the stern, ran against the banks, swung around, ran up stream, swung again, bumped over the rolling bowlders in the river-bed, and so worked our painful way along." Eventually, however, the party reached St. Boniface (like New France, Taylor thought), then Fort Garry and Winnipeg. At this Manitoban village of six hundred souls they were welcomed by the American consul, James W. "Saskatchewan" Taylor, and by a host of citizens eager to fete the visitors. But there was an unpleasant side to the arrival too, since the excitement of the Riel rebellion had only partly subsided, and the settlers tried in vain to mob the attorney general of the province, who had been a passenger on the "Selkirk." Taylor, unfamiliar with the grievances of the métis, expressed his bewilderment at the situation.<sup>17</sup>

During their brief stay, the Americans visited Adams G. Archibald, governor of Manitoba, and Bishop Alexandre Antonin Taché of St. Boniface; they also made a short exploratory trip up the Assiniboine River, a trip which convinced Taylor that the prairie provinces could grow wheat. Indeed he grew so eulogistic about the agricultural possibilities that he deprecated the climatic dangers. He admitted that in winter the extreme cold sometimes touched a temperature of forty degrees below zero, but he claimed that the air was pure and dry and that the snowfall rarely exceeded two feet. Autumn, furthermore, was a delightful season. Indeed, he opined,

<sup>17</sup> *New York Tribune*, August 17, 1871.

Minnesota, Dakota, and Manitoba only require a bridge here and there, and their natural grading does the rest. The rich soil everywhere will carry settlement along as fast as the roads can be built; and it is a very safe prediction to say that some of our party may yet ride in a Pullman car to Slave Lake.<sup>18</sup>

The railroads that Taylor envisaged have since spread their steel web well over the western prairies, and the grassland states have become as he partly foresaw the granary of the nation; but unfortunately even after the lapse of almost seventy years it is still impossible to travel in a Pullman to Slave Lake. And after the economic disappointment of The Pas-Churchill Railroad one must be bold indeed to presage any such rail connection in the immediate future. Yet in the main Taylor's enthusiasm has been vindicated; certainly he was too faithful a reporter to become merely the publicist for Jay Cooke and Company's bonds.

The return up the Red River was a mere repetition of the downward trip with few innovations to prevent boredom. The party detoured slightly so as to visit Oak Lake, Pelican Lake, and Fergus Falls (then a year old, with eighty houses, a newspaper, a sawmill, and a flour mill in prospect) before returning to Morris to board the train. Some of the travelers were enthusiastic about the lake scenery which they had diverged from their itinerary to see, but Taylor's comments are petulant and reveal weariness. In particular he protested against the use of classic names for frontier beauty spots. "A little pond near St. Paul is called 'Como,' from its total unlikeness, let us hope. So a cluster of shanties is called Constantinople, and a miserable station where the refreshments are a lingering death, Paris."<sup>19</sup>

Taylor was obviously glad to return to civilization. Great traveler that he was, the privations of the western frontier and the slow river boats vexed him considerably, and he was eager to be done with this whole western inter-

<sup>18</sup> *New York Tribune*, August 23, 1871.

<sup>19</sup> *New York Tribune*, August 30, 1871.

lude. On Thursday afternoon, August 10, 1871, the citizens of St. Paul gave a grand dinner for the visitors, among the guests being Henry H. Sibley and Governor Horace Austin. The "collation," said the *Pioneer* of August 11, included "peaches, pears, apples and grapes, in abundance." The speeches were as numerous as the fruits and were duly reported by the local newspapers, but Taylor was conspicuously absent. On the morning of August 11, almost before his fellow travelers had left the Twin Cities, he was in Chicago eager to return to Cedarcroft and his family.

Taylor's final Minnesota visit, on one of his last lecture tours, came in the fall of 1874. The preceding winter and spring he had spent in Europe, chiefly in Italy and Germany with a short excursion into Egypt. Then, on the request of Whitelaw Reid of the *Tribune*, he had gone to Iceland to write a series of letters dealing with the millennial celebration of the settling of the island. Early in September he was in America once more, his head buzzing with literary plans. But, as usual, he found it necessary to earn some ready cash before he could execute any of his projects. Once more then he turned to lecturing.<sup>20</sup> This tour began on October 20, 1874, and lasted with intermittent pauses until the middle of the following April. Taylor spoke in many of the middle-western cities and at least four times in Minnesota. His subject was invariably "Ancient Egypt."

The *Pioneer* enthusiastically announced the return of the "greatest traveler and lecturer of modern times" and declared that no person of intelligence would want to miss "his finished and instructive lecture." Taylor was to speak on Thanksgiving Day, and the *Pioneer* of that morning reminded its readers of the double treat in store for them: the turkey and the lecture. The *Press* took a similar attitude. "Everybody is acquainted with Bayard Taylor's writ-

<sup>20</sup> Marie Hansen-Taylor and Horace E. Scudder, *Life and Letters of Bayard Taylor*, 2: 652, 655-657 (Boston, 1885).



ings, but it is worth while to *see and hear talk* one who writes so much and so well." <sup>21</sup>

Taylor's talk was delivered in the Opera House. H. Knox Taylor, who introduced him, reminded the audience that the lecturer had been one of the earliest friends of the St. Paul Library Association and that he had been the organization's first speaker fifteen years before. Since his last appearance in St. Paul, the *Press* reported, Bayard Taylor had become more rotund and obviously grayer; but his enunciation was clear and distinct, and for an hour and a half he captivated his audience by his review of discoveries among the ruins of ancient Egypt. The *Dispatch* was much more explicit.

His forehead is high, his complexion florid, his nose aquiline. He wears a moustache, whiskers upon his chin and spectacles upon his nose. He talks he doesn't lecture. His manner is easy, graceful and refined. He speaks with an evident familiarity with his text and carries his hearers to the scene of his remarks in an irresistible manner, making in all one of the most charming and interesting lecturers before the public.

Taylor's lecture, according to the *Dispatch*, was entertaining and instructive. His thesis apparently was that ancient Egypt provided the genesis of religion, morals, and art, and in exposition of that thesis he touched on many facets of Egyptology: Champolion and the Rosetta stone, domestic life, mythology, literature, Moses, and the Hebrew captivity. "The speaker closed with a fine apostrophe to the spirit of progress and research which now animates the thinking world." <sup>22</sup>

The day following his St. Paul address, on November 27, Taylor repeated his lecture in Minneapolis, before eight hundred people at the Academy of Music. The *Tribune* praised the lecturer highly for his concise and orderly arrangement and for his interesting delivery. "Mr. Taylor is a very clear, impressive speaker, and passages of his lec-

<sup>21</sup> *Pioneer*, November 22, 26, 1874; *Press*, November 26, 1874.

<sup>22</sup> See the issues of the *Press*, the *Dispatch*, and the *Pioneer* for November 28, 1874.

ture were full of natural eloquence. His audience was delighted with the rich, scholarly treat he presented." Before leaving the state he delivered his talk on Egypt in two southern Minnesota towns, Mankato on November 28, and Faribault on November 30. According to the *Faribault Republican* of December 2, "He has the appearance of one who enjoys life, and could relish a hearty meal. He has a very pleasant and happy style of delivery, and held the attention of his audience very closely throughout." Taylor's address was so successful that the Reading Room Association, which sponsored his appearance, cleared nearly a hundred dollars.<sup>23</sup> In an interesting letter which he wrote to Martha Kimber from Mankato on November 29, Taylor pictured himself in southern Minnesota "on the borders of civilization, on a still, sunny day, and temperature at zero."

He told his correspondent that his audiences were larger than ever before and that his fees averaged a hundred and ten dollars an engagement. Nevertheless, he expressed his dissatisfaction with hot cars, cold rooms, bad dinners, committees, and autograph seekers, the bane of any lecturer's life.<sup>24</sup>

At the completion of the lecture tour of 1874-75 Taylor returned to the East to resume his literary work. His labor in translating *Faust* had stirred in him the desire to write biographies of Goethe and Schiller, and he was already collecting material. For a short time the gods smiled on him, and when he was appointed minister to Germany in February, 1878, he could hardly realize his good fortune. But he had spent his energy carelessly; as correspondent, lec-

<sup>23</sup> *Minneapolis Tribune*, November 28, 1874; *Mankato Weekly Record*, December 5, 1874; *Review* (Mankato), November 24, 1874; *Press*, December 5, 1874.

<sup>24</sup> John R. Schultz, ed., *Unpublished Letters of Bayard Taylor in the Huntington Library*, 183 (San Marino, 1937). In Mankato Taylor met the son of the poet Ferdinand Freiligrath, whom he had known years before in Germany. Writing to his wife, he remarked: "He is settled here as a fur-trader and seems to be doing well. He is quite handsome, remarkably like his father." Hansen-Taylor, *On Two Continents*, 256.

turer, and author he had been indefatigable; and when the crowning honor of his life came his health failed. During the summer and early fall of 1878 he was able to fulfill his duties, but disease slowly sapped his vitality, and on December 19 he died, crying out almost in his last breath, "I want, oh, you know what I mean, that *stuff of life!*"<sup>25</sup>

Little is left today of the fame that was once Bayard Taylor's. His numerous books have survived only in libraries, his poetry and his fiction have been forgotten, his name no longer connotes cosmopolitanism. For his great translation of *Faust* alone he is remembered, and carping critics have objected even here to his retention of the original meters in his version of Goethe's dramatic poem. In general Taylor's contemporaries thought well of him, but even in his own day voices were raised objecting to his superficiality. Surely the author of the obituary in the *Pioneer Press* of December 20, 1878, showed remarkable discernment and literary taste. Pointing out Taylor's versatility, he expressed his regret that the life of Goethe was never completed, for he professed to find little among Taylor's productions that bore the stamp of durability. Indeed, "Mr. Taylor's literary work has not been that of a creative character. His travels are newspaper letters, his novels commonplace and his poems ephemeral. His critical faculty was above his creative, and he was greater as an interpreter of thought than as a thinker."

What, then, gave Taylor his pre-eminent reputation as a lecturer? In the first place, he was a capable reporter; he saw things clearly and in their true perspective, and he sketched them vividly. Secondly, Taylor was a romanticist on a perpetual tour of the world; he had no ax to grind, he was not interested in politics, he sought chiefly the exotic and the novel. In the third place, he had a flair for descriptive language. He could picture clearly and freshly the

<sup>25</sup> Hansen-Taylor and Scudder, *Life and Letters of Bayard Taylor*, 2: 765.

scenes he had viewed, and he could impart details of costume, accounts of strange foods or domestic habits, with little or no loss of verisimilitude. Finally, those of us who depend entirely on the motion picture for our knowledge of foreign lands and people can scarcely realize what a travel lecture meant to a community deprived of intimate contact with other nations. Taylor and his ilk brought the bizarre and the romantic close to home. His present obscurity is not to be deprecated. He fulfilled his function in his own time and his books have since lost their vitality. But life in the sixties and seventies would have been much more insular without the contact with foreign cultures which he provided.

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