MOORED at the St. Paul levee in 1859 are steamers of the type that "Viator" probably sailed on two years earlier. He saw numerous claim shanties (below, left) and visited the Winnebago Indians, commenting on full-length blankets such as Chief Little Hill is shown wearing.
Impressions of Minnesota Territory by a Pennsylvania Visitor of 1857

Introduction by Paul H. Giddens

BACK IN the 1930s when I was searching for materials for my book, The Birth of the Oil Industry (Macmillan, 1938), I examined many newspapers published in the oil region of northwestern Pennsylvania in the 1860s and 1870s. Among them were the Titusville Morning Herald, the Bradford Era, the Oil City Derrick, the Venango Spectator (Franklin), the Crawford Democrat (Meadville), and the Warren Mail.

One of the features I frequently found in these newspapers was the publication of letters from local citizens who were traveling in the region west of the Mississippi River or else had settled there. To let friends or relatives in Pennsylvania know what the West was like, they often wrote letters to the editor which were then run in the local newspaper.

In the Venango Spectator, published in Franklin, I found eight letters that one “Viator” wrote about his trip to and from Minnesota Territory in July, August, and September, 1857. I recently rediscovered these letters in my files and made them available to Minnesota History. “Viator” traveled from Franklin to Erie, Pennsylvania, where he caught the train for Cleveland and Chicago. Then he headed northward to Prairie du Chien and La Crosse, Wisconsin, and into Minnesota, where he visited such towns as Winona, Red Wing, Hastings, Faribault, Mankato, St. Paul, St. Anthony, and Minneapolis before returning home by way of Chicago and Erie.

I have not been able to identify “Viator” but am inclined to believe he was a resident of Franklin or of the Franklin area. He may have been a gentleman farmer because in the last letter he refers to “my farmer’s eye.” The editor’s announcement of the letters in the July 15, 1857, issue of the Venango Spectator failed to shed light on the identity of “Viator”: “A gentleman, now traveling in the West, has kindly promised us a series of letters, descriptive of the country, etc., for publication.” In his first letter, “Viator” admits to being “somewhat solitary in my habits,” but he advises “my young friend” (the editor?) not to travel alone. Early in his trip “Viator” rejoices to meet a “fellow pilgrim” who also remains unidentified.

The letters contain comments and observations not only about the settlements he visited but also Fort Snelling, the Mississippi and St. Peter rivers, the Falls of St. Anthony, the pre-emption of land and land speculation, life among the Winnebago Indians, the mosquitoes, the waving green grass, the flowers, the birds, the gophers, the soil, the people, the hotels, and many other aspects of Minnesota life. Although a number of his descriptions are typical of travelers of the time, “Viator” also is capable of less obvious comments and insights. He works in some poetical allusions and religious comments and sometimes is guilty of gratuitous observations, particularly regarding Indian women and Indian customs, that reflect prejudices of the time.

The letters appear intact except for the elimination of a few passages where “Viator” philosophizes at some length. Also, a number of superfluous commas and dashes have been removed in the interest of readability.

I want especially to thank Mrs. Helen M. Ray of the
Mr. Editor: — A few jottings by the way may not be uninteresting to you. The motion of a western steamer is not very favorable either to consecutive thought nor legible penmanship, so if you find a want of connexion [sic] in the few ideas embodied in these letters, or the manuscript doubtful in its hieroglyphics, be kind enough to impute it to the force of circumstances.

I find myself beginning to partake somewhat of the reciprocity of the times out here, and of course losing something of the slow, staid manner of the Venango bill country. The world is moving rather fast out here, and it requires one to be more than usually dull and obtuse to keep out of the current. I am trying to look at things coolly and philosophically, but it will not do. There is something infectious in the very atmosphere. You feel your nerves bracing up, and your very blood quickening and tingling in your veins and running races through every artery. It is a great country out here — a very great country. But of this more anon. For the present, a few words by the way.

It is a new feeling one experiences as he quits the jogging, lumbersome, snail-like motion of our back country hacks and coaches and begins to move forward smoothly, rapidly and gracefully in the railroad car. You feel at ease, you are comfortable, and you are moving over terra firma almost on the wings of the wind. No jolts nor jars — nor weariness at three or four miles per hour. No wearing out of flesh and sinews, as your panting horses are urging you forward. You feel that the power by which you are propelled is the power of the elements, guided and restrained by human skill and science. You may lean quietly back in your corner and read your Times or Tribunes in peace, provided your eyes are good enough to distinguish between the true and heretical opinions that are broached by all the prominent journals of the day.

From Erie to Cleveland is about one hundred miles. This road is a delightful one, although it does not pass thro’ the best region of the country. Every here and there you come within sight of Lake Erie and feel its bracing and exhilarating breezes. I always feel my chest dilating and my nostrils expanding, as I sniff in health and vigor from the near approach of the Lake.

In three hours from Erie, we are in Cleveland, and land in a depot that seems a great world in itself. What a din, turmoil and confusion are here! Porters, runners, hackmen, all are determined to be heard. Each one represents the best house, the finest omnibusses and the fastest horses in the city. Surely chaos has come again! The Weddell House being [an] old favorite, was selected as the temporary home. A company of volunteers, however, had taken possession, “with all the pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war,” rendering it anything but a home for a recluse.¹

Cleveland is a beautiful city — none more so either East or West. Its elevation above the lake secures for it a beautiful breeze, with dry and fertile soil. It has two or three streets lined with the finest and most costly private residences you will find anywhere.

At this place, I picked up a friend who is to be my fellow pilgrim, far out to the West. Although somewhat solitary in my habits, as the world counts me, but as a few know to be a mistake, I was rejoiced to meet the fellow pilgrim, and in company to make arrangements for the movement onward. It is not good to be alone. And the worst possible kind of solitude is to be found in the midst of “the hum and shock of men,” where every face is strange, and where every voice that falls upon your ear is destitute of a single familiar tone. Never travel alone, my young friend. Live at home, in solitude, if you will, but when you come to move out into the great world, go not alone.

From Cleveland, we took the Northern Indiana road for Chicago, by way of Toledo. Leaving at six o’clock in the evening, there was a prospect of testing the night air, and the feasibility of sleeping in a low backed seat. The air was not damp, nor the temperature too low for comfort, but the accommodations were by no means good, and there was very little sleep. At half past three in the morning, we arrived at White Pigeon, Ill., where the proper functionary informed us that we would have fifteen minutes for breakfast.

It is a heathenish way for a Christian man or woman to eat a meal, unwashed, uncombed, with hat and bonnet on, and bolting the edibles as though it itself depended on the rapidity of our movements. In fact, eating, however necessary it may be, is a very unpolitical thing at best, and needs to be attended to under the

¹The Weddell House, which opened in June, 1847, at the northwest corner of Superior and Bank (West Sixth) streets in Cleveland, was known in its prime as “the best hotel west of the Alleghany.” Famous for its cuisine and sumptuous furnishings, it counted among its guests such well-known people as Abraham Lincoln, James A. Garfield, Rutherford B. Hayes, William McKinley, and singer Jenny Lind. It did not close until August, 1903. See Ohio Historical Records Survey Project, Work Projects Administration, Historic Sites of Cleveland: Hotels and Taverns, 613-616. 700 (Columbus, 1942).
most favorable circumstances possible in order to be interesting.

As the sun rose we came in sight of Lake Michigan. The land in the region of the Lake is one unmitigated swamp, telling one of damp exhalations, miasmatic vapors and agues and fevers, with other nameless ills. In the water, numerous Pond or Water lilies were looking out from their stagnant resting places, "like jewels in an Ethiopian's ear." I never could admire either the taste or the judgment of this beautiful flower in selecting the stagnant pool for its bed. But there is always good in evil.

In Chicago by nine in the morning. This is a great city. It is even now verging on towards rivalry with New York.

At Chicago we took the Fond du Lac and Prairie du Chien road. The distance is about 250 miles, leading in a Northwester[n] direction through the state of Wisconsin. Madison, the capital of the State, is one of the most beautiful places I ever saw. It is surrounded by three lakes, the largest about ten miles long and five broad. The Capitol is a fine building with a noble dome. A State University is located here.

The last few miles this road passes over are unbroken prairie, where the rails seem laid upon the green turf, save where it crosses the Wisconsin river. Reached Prairie du Chien by nine o'clock in the evening. Of this old French town, more next time.

Yours truly.

Viator.

IN HIS SECOND letter, dated July 22, 1857. "Viator" gives his impressions of Prairie du Chien, La Crosse, Winona, Red Wing, and Hastings as he travels up the Mississippi. Then he takes a stagecoach from Hastings to Faribault but gets stuck in the prairie mud in the Chub Creek area of Dakota County.

Mr. Editor: — My last letter had reference to matters along the Railroad. In this, I will speak of the region along the Mississippi river — not of the river itself, for I will reserve the great "Father of Waters" for a separate letter; but of the towns along its banks.

Prairie du Chien is a very old French town, about 200 miles below St. Paul. It is situated on the second bank of the river, surrounded by a large open prairie. The town itself is a little better than a sand-hill, with a few indifferent dwelling houses, and two or three public houses with high-sounding names.

The principal point of interest here, is the ruins of the old United States Fort. The buildings are constructed around the four sides of a quadrangle, leaving an open court in the centre of perhaps 150 by 200 feet. These buildings are of stone, and are partially inhabited by a mongrel set of living creatures, apparently bearing some resemblance to the human race, but mixed with various kinds of blood — French, Indian and American. There is also in connection with these buildings, a stockade formed of timbers planted endwise about twelve feet high, and designed as a protection against the Indians during the Black Hawk War. Prairie du Chien is noticeable now principally as the terminus of the Chicago[,] Janesville and Fond du Lac Railroad.

La Crosse, further up the river, is the most important river town in Wisconsin. It presents a fine appearance from the river. Its finest Hotel, the Augusta House, looms up like a fairy palace, as the eye almost wearies with the wilderness of prairie grass, and overtopping bluffs and blooming flowers, of the regions above and below. The appearance of the buildings at this point denotes a more permanent and enduring state of things than most other towns along the river.

Of Winona, in Minnesota, I would speak more particularly, as it was, for a time, the Jerusalem to which all the Franklinians went up to worship. My impression when I arrived there was that it was no longer Jerusalem but Samaria. The shrine was there; but not the pilgrims — they had sought another, and a more highly gilded one. Winona is a beautiful site for a town. It is also beautifully laid out on the western bank of the Mississippi. Its elevation is not great above the river, but it is free from inundation, unless under the pressure of unwanted floods. The bluffs on either side of the river are quite high and precipitous, some places covered with verdure and at other places exhibiting the outcropping of the naked rocks. Through these bluffs, ravines lead the way up and out to the surrounding country.

The place claims a population of 3,500 inhabitants. This is a greater number than would be supposed by a stranger in passing through it. This, in fact, is the case with all new western towns. The houses are small, and many families often occupy, temporarily, the same building. Lots are selling high here — higher than you would think them worth in your town. But they are calculating on a great place. It is to be on the line of the Transit
THREE TOWNS on the Mississippi River that the Pennsylvania traveler visited during his trip into Minnesota Territory were Red Wing (above, circa 1860), whose Barn Bluff shows prominently in this oil painting owned by the New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown; Winona (lower left, circa 1860), in a drawing by A. Ruger "looking south"; and Hastings (from a daguerreotype dating to the 1850-1860 period). "Viator" was particularly impressed with Winona but not with Hastings.
Railroad. The removal of the Land Office from this place has left it rather dull — in fact it seemed to me quite dull for a place of such pretentions. When the Railroad is constructed, it will no doubt galvanize it into new life.

What wonderful incentives to hope these new railroads are. They keep ambitious towns from sinking down into blank despair, even though distance is the only element that "lends enchantment to the view." Hope is everything with us. It gilds all things here with the sweet radiance and beauty of the setting sun. This road is certain of construction, however, as a most munificent grant of land has been given by the U.S. Government to the Territory for railroad purposes.

Redwing is one hundred miles farther up the river. It is still a new town, and lies immediately at the head of the Wabashaw half-breed reservation. It was for a time important as the site of the Land office of the Redwing district.

At Hastings, thirty miles above Redwing, we left the river to go back to Faribault. This is a two year old town, but it has already got free from its swaddling bands, and claims to be a city. In all the town there is not one solitary garden, and I believe not a single door yard. This is a peculiarity of these new towns. The back portion of the town is as public as the front. If you are taking a walk, you are as likely to go back of the buildings as in front of them. There is, consequently, great publicity in all the out-door avocations of life. Inquiring "the price of the corner lots" in Hastings, which is the first question out here, the Host pointed to an ordinary looking lot, saying that [the] owner received $400 per annum for permitting a small eight-by-ten office to stand upon it, and had refused $3000 for the lot. Editors could not buy corner lots there. I think the situation of Hastings is not pleasant. It is rocky and when we were there the streets were unconsciously muddy. They said they had no time to make gardens, or improve the streets.

The road from Hastings to Faribault (pronounced Faribu) is over a continuous prairie for forty miles. When we passed over it, the rains had made it very bad indeed. Every here and there we came to a marshy, muddy, miry spot, such as they call sloops out there. It is a very common thing for teams to get slooped in these marshes. If a team gets in, nothing but a good stout yoke of oxen can relieve them. One day we met an honest Hibernian, who pointed us to the deep marsh, where his cattle and wagon were enjoying a delightful mud bath, and declared he had "got slooped" with the best yoke of cattle in all the Territory. We were obliged to leave him with his troubles, for it was out of our power to assist, and we turned and sought a road in a different direction. Soon our own grievous trouble came. In the midst of one of these sloughs, our stage stuck fast. The passengers must get out. But how? The mud and swamp are all around us. It is murky and sticky, and for binding to the eye and touch. We climb on the driver's perch. We creep out on the pole between the wheel horses, and make a vigorous spring between the leaders — a splash and a jump, and we are out on terra firma. But we are in the midst of the prairie, and who shall assist us? Providentially, after a few ineffectual plunges and falls, some emigrant wagons heave in sight, and three yoke of oxen, hitched to a long chain, pull horses and coach out of the difficulty.

But I must tell you about the passage of Chubb creek, with its sloughs on either side. We had more grievous tribulations there than even poor Christian had in the slough of Despond. Chubb creek is twenty miles west of the Mississippi. It was utterly impossible when we were there, save by oxen. The stages met coming each way, and with five of the passengers in a lumber wagon drawn by two yoke of oxen, we were dragged across — the remaining six following with three yoke of cattle. Such a noise as that ox-driver made in urging his unwilling beasts across, would have put to shame a Sioux warrior, on his first war path. We praise the bridge[,] however, that bears us safely over.

I will not tell you of the horrible trip we had over the last six miles before coming to Faribault. Wading through mud, sticky as putty — the rain pouring in torrents — the perspiration rolling from our faces, and the horses unable to draw us. But we got through safely. Next letter will speak of Faribault.

Yours,
Via tor

THE THIRD LETTER, which appeared in the Venango Spectator on July 29, 1857, deals with Faribault and, even more, with the manner of pre-empting lands in

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Minnesota Territory. The writer then describes an Indian woman who impressed him.

Mr. Editor: — In this letter I was to speak of Faribault. (Did you tell them to pronounce Faribo?) This town contains a population of 2,000, and is built of Basswood. I mean by this that the buildings are all of Basswood — not from taste but from necessity. There is a belt of timber forty miles in length, skirting the Cannon river. This timber being Basswood is used for all building purposes.

Faribault is the site of the U.S. Land Office for the Winona District. The principal portion of the Land Office business is carried on by ex-citizens of Franklin Pennsylvania, who are “making a good thing” out of it, as they term it out here. From these young men we received very much substantial kindness. Some of them have the genuine blue, Puritan blood in their veins, and it is very hard to work this blood out, even in the far West. May these young men live a thousand years, and their shadows never be less.

This place takes its name from Mr. Faribault — whose father is a French trader and whose mother, a sable daughter of the forest. His own wife is an Indian woman. Faribault will always be a place of some importance, as it is the county seat of Rice county, and the centre of a rich and beautiful country. Lots are rather high now, and should the Land Office be removed it will lose much of its vitality and interest. I think the people are much deceived in regard to its real importance as a business place. There is now a constant going and coming of “actuals”, as they term those engaged in pre-empting land. The hotels are crowded by speculators in lands and money, and all this gives a business appearance to the place. If they fail in getting their Railroad, it will be about as dull as “the nursery of great men [Franklin],” and just as far out of the world.

Two miles from Faribault is Lake Marion — and “thereby hangs a tale” — a beautiful sheet of water, whose name bears a decidedly Floridian odor. Beyond this is Cedar Lake, and still farther, Lake Elystan, all abounding in fish. These fish are much like some of the people who come here — they bite at the naked hook.

A word in regard to the manner of pre-empting lands. All public lands in the Territory must be obtained by pre-emption. The modus operandi is this: A man must seek a quarter section, or 160 acres, that is vacant, file his intention of pre-empting it, in the land office, and then go and build his house upon it and live [there] for ninety days. Not only so, he must fence in and cultivate a certain portion of land. At the expiration of three months he must appear again at the Land Office with a competent witness and make oath that he has never preempted land in the United States before, that he is not the owner of 320 acres of land, that he is pre-empting for his own sole use, and not for speculation. His witness testifies to the same facts, and the land is then paid for at government price, either by a Land Warrant or in cash. But one warrant, however, can be located on a quarter section, and if it is not sufficiently large, the balance is made up in cash. It need not be stated here that wholesale corruptions and perjury are carried on by these pre-emptors. Any one at all acquainted with human nature will readily imagine that this will be the case.

The whole country throughout the Land District is being rapidly pre-empted. Go where you will, over the broad prairie, and you see the pre-emptor’s shanty and his little improvement. But I will tell you moreover what I saw of these improvements in traveling through the interior of Territory of Minnesota.

The house a board pen, about twelve feet square, with a door and six lights of glass. Or perhaps a rude hovel of turf. The fence, perhaps, composed of a dozen poles, — the ploughing, half a dozen furrows, twenty rods long, with a few hills of corn. The pre-emptor had perhaps been on the ground a week or ten days, got his pre-emption papers by swearing, as neither you nor I would like to do, and then sold out to some speculator for three or four or five hundred dollars, as the case might be, and left the premises. The officers of the Land Office can only be guided by the oath of the applicant and that of his witness. The responsibility of this kind of procedure must therefore rest upon the “actuals” themselves.

The young men who make out the papers for settlers have a wonderful facility for anticipating their wants. They can tell an “actual” as far as they can trace the outlines of a man, and are at once ready to fit him out for the Land Office ordeal. Wonderful the kindness of the human heart! Call this world not a wilderness, after such views of man’s disposition to assist his fellow man. You need not go behind the screen to inquire for a motive different from that of philanthropy [sic]. Try and have as good an opinion of your race as possible. You need all the charity for your kind that you can possibly muster.

From Faribault, we took a Northwesterly direction toward the Minnesota, or St. Peter river. We had a strong disposition to see a little more of savage life than we had yet encountered — a touch of Indian life in the wigwam, as well as in the town. So we negotiated with the stage agent and made out the country of the
Winnebago Indians, with permission to remain over night in the principal settlement. Before we go to look upon the wigwam and the blanket, however[,] let me tell you about a queenly looking woman we seen in Fairbault—a very Caspopeia amongst the red women of the forest. She was probably forty-five years of age, erect, and graceful in her carriage as though she had never mingled in the haunts of civilization. Her dress was simple and yet rich and exceedingly becoming. It consisted of a moderately full skirt of fine blue broadcloth, reaching to the knee, with drawers of the same material rather narrow, reaching to the ankle, and trimmed with red ribbon—perhaps the ladies would call it pink. I am not certain. This trimming ran around the bottom and up the outer seam of the drawers, and was about three-fourths of an inch in width. Upon her feet she wore mocasins, elaborately wrought with colored porcupine quills and beads. Whilst over her shoulders was thrown in the most careless and negligent manner a bright red shawl—just the color to please one of good taste. Her head was bare, and her coal black hair hung in masses over her shoulders and back. Was she beautiful? No. Her features were all too large and roughly hewn for that, but she was a fine, a noble looking woman. She was one of Nature’s queens. She was one, to whom you would instinctively take off your hat, as you passed her on the street, of whom you would think respectfully and admiringly when the bedizzened [sic], heaped, hooped, butterfly of civilization has been forgotten.

You read much of Indian beauty in works of romance, but I think it has little foundation in reality. I never saw a beautiful Indian countenance. I never expect to see one. The manners and customs, and modes of life among the savages, are all unfavorable to this. They lack the soul of cultivation. In their roughly chiseled, bronzed faces you cannot trace the working of intellect and thought. You notice only the traces of the passions, and these of the lower order.

But I must close. In my next, I will tell you of my visit to the Winnebago camp.

Adieu,

Viator

UNLIKE the three preceding it, the fourth letter, published on August 5, 1857, indicates ahead of the text its place of origin: “Winnebago Agency, M.T.” Although

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7 The Winnebago Indians were rather forlorn wanderers who moved from Wisconsin to Iowa in the 1830s and, in 1848, were forced to settle on the Long Prairie Reservation in Todd County, Minnesota, presumably to serve as a buffer between the warring Sioux and Chippewa Indians. Unhappy at Long Prairie, the Winnebago were moved again in 1855 to a reservation on rich land near Mankato, where “Viator” found them in 1857. See Folwell, Minnesota, 1:308—320, for an account of the various moves of the Winnebago Indians.

Mr. Editor—As intimated in my last [letter], I am now to give you some observations of life among the natives. I need scarcely premise that there is very little poetry, or romance even, in Indian life as now seen in the West. There may have been much to please the careless eye in the free and easy life of the savage when this continent was first discovered by Europeans. There is very much of romance in Indian life as you read of it in the works of Cooper and Bird, but I think it will all vanish as you enter their wigwams, and mingle with them in their every day life and habits.

The Winnebago Reservation is situated some ten or twelve miles from Mankato, on the Minnesota river, about 170 miles from its mouth. It is a most beautiful tract of land—the finest I saw in all the Territory, consisting partly of prairie and partly of timber land. It is twenty-six miles in length and thirteen in breadth, occupying a large portion of the counties of Le Sueur [Le Sueur] and Blue Earth. The number of Indians on this reservation is about 2,000, and a more indolent, independent set of red blanket aristocrats it would be hard to find of a summer morning.

We visited the Agency under very favorable circumstances, as the semi-annual annuity had just been paid, and each man, woman and child felt as happy as lords. My fellow voyageur and I had negotiated with an accommodating stage agent to pass through the agency, and spend the night among the wigwams, in order that we might have a full opportunity of seeing all that was interesting.

It was a pleasant evening as we drove through their territory, and began to pass among their wigwams. The wigwam in fashion here is probably a fair specimen of the Indian dwelling. Its frame work is of slender poles set on the ground and bended to represent the outline of the proposed structure, until they meet at the top. Cross poles are bound to these at intervals of eighteen inches or two feet, when the whole is covered with green bark from the trunk of the bass or cedar tree. An opening is left at the top for the escape of smoke, and another at the side for a door. This door is closed by a mat made either of prairie grass, or the tender bark of trees. The form is somewhat circular, but more generally an oblong, somewhat flattened on the top. You need not inquire about the furniture. The Indian is altogether independent of the arts. He requires no bed, for the homon of mother earth is soft enough for him and his dogs, as they repose side by side. He needs neither table nor chairs, for his homon is easily transferred from the one pot of the household to his mouth by means of a piece of bark or
slightly hallowed stick. There is no display of crockery, in which our ladies so much rejoice, for its use would bring with it labor and care, two matters relating to civilized life that the Indian most heartily eschews.

ALL THE vanity of the Indian, and he has a perfect mine of it, is expended in dress. Both men and women delight in a brilliant costume. Their wardrobe is not very extensive, truly, nor would it require long to enumerate the articles necessary to constitute a full dress costume, but with all the Indian loves to appear well. If his blanket is not as clean as when it came from Uncle Sam's storehouse, it matters not, if it has a good bright color and reaches from his shoulders to his heels.

The costume of the lord savage is something like this: — a pair of moccasins, ornamented with porcupine quills, or beads if the state of his finances will permit, a pair of buckskin leggings reaching above the knees and over all a heavy woolen blanket reaching from the shoulders to the very heels. This blanket, with Indians of taste and judgment, is always red — where there is a degenerated or depraved idea of colors it may be white or blue. The Indian wears nothing on his head. He would disdain to put any other thatch there than that with which nature has furnished him.

In the warmest days of summer, the blanket is wrapped closely around the form, and the Indian boy or girl longs for the time when the blanket will be assumed, as ardently as the civilized boy longs for the skirted coat and the upright collar. Until the age of ten years, clothing is very little incumbrance to the young savage — nothing worth speaking of, comfort and ease of movement is the main thing.

We noticed some grotesque attempts at imitating the dress of their white neighbors. One old brave, with more ambition than good taste, had become possessed of a wretchedly shabby old blue coat — evidently cast off by a passing soldier. This was buttoned up to the throat, but it lacked the remaining toggery of civilization, and the old veteran presented much the same appearance that a good sized mastiff would [if] arrayed in the one article of a coat, as we have seen them so dressed by boys in their sport.

The lady savages were generally adorned in new blankets, as they had just secured their pay from the government and were no doubt duly impressed with the liberality of their great father at Washington. One enviable lady had by some means become the possessor of a large shawl — red as you could reasonably desire. This shawl was constantly promenading up and down, and was the observed of all observers.

As mentioned before, the time of our visit was the time of their semi-annual payment. The arrangements of government are most liberal toward this tribe. Semi-annually, each man, woman and child receives twelve dollars and a half in cash. Annually, they receive $20,000 in provisions, and some $15,000 in merchandize. They are, therefore, entirely independent, and if provident, might live as prairie or forest princes. I am not sure, however, of their forethought, or the judicious investment of their means.

When we drove in among their wigwams, they were gathered in crowds, many of them engaged in gambling. Men and women were engaged together in this very equivocal kind of pastime. Each person had his or her amount of funds wrapped in a cloth and held in the left hand, taking out one or more pieces with the right, according as the exigencies of the game demanded. The games were with the cards of the white man, and my fellow voyageur, who had perhaps seen some games.

FARIBAULT is pictured in 1862 or 1863 in this Benjamin F. Upton photograph. "Viator," who visited it five or six years earlier, said the town was built of basswood that grew nearby along the Cannon River.
WINNEBAGO WIGWAMS, built of birch bark, are pictured in a photograph that is thought to date fairly close to the Pennsylvania visitor’s brief stay on the Indian reservation in 1857. Two towns (below) that he saw while traveling on the St. Peter (Minnesota) River were St. Peter (left), pictured in 1868, and Henderson (right), shown in 1854 in a photo owned by the Sibley County Historical Society. "Not much of a place," was the reaction of "Viator" to Henderson.
played in his more juvenile days, said that the games were the same as those in vogue among some of the whites.

One thing was most remarkable. Throughout the game there was not the slightest evidence of excitement. Although the money was rapidly changing hands, yet not a word was spoken. Those engaged in the game, and the spectators that crowded around, were alike impassive as ebony statues.

Our entertainers for the night was a half breed. He spoke English well, but was most fluent in French, which he used in his family. We had a comfortable meal, and after taking a patrol through the Indian camp, and noticing that the gambling was still going forward, although 11 o'clock, we retired to our dormitory, which was the attic of friend Jean Meun's cabin. But there was not much sleep that night. The rafters were too near the head for good ventilation, the overcoat was too hard a pillow, the mosquitos too venomous, and above all, the savages kept a continual yelling and howling the whole night, so that it was rather a rest than a sleep.

I noticed among these people some whose great age was unmistakable. Their hair was grizzly, the faces literally seemed and battered, and parchment like, as though they had witnessed the hardships of many years.

The females were positively hideous, both old and young. Great staring eyes, huge mouths, roughly hewn features. There was not a redeeming trait in their appearance, unless it was in their free and erect carriage. There was no poetry in that visit to the Indians, but there was a painful lesson learned of the weakness of poor human nature.

Adieu.

Viator.

THE FIFTH LETTER. published on August 12, 1857.

was written from "St. Peter River, M.T.". It is essentially an account of the writer's steamboat trip down the St. Peter or Minnesota River from about Mankato to Fort Snelling and St. Paul. Although "Viator" describes the passing scene, he places more emphasis on curious people he observed on the steamboat.

Mr. Editor: — From the Winnebago Reservation our course was Northwest towards the St. Peter or Minnesota river. The distance is but twelve miles, but the road was very bad indeed. It was mostly through the timber as they call it here. They never speak of woods or timber

The mosquitos in this timber land are very large, very numerous and very ravenous. They are almost like Egypt's plague of flies, and in default of mosquito bars, our little party were obliged to tie our heads up in our hankerschiefs. As we were all in the same predicament, no one could with propriety laugh at the grotesque and absurd appearance of his neighbor.

But as timber is scarce here I wish to speak in commendation of the region just passed through. It is from ten to twelve miles wide, skirting the Le Sueur river, and is most luxuriant in its growth. The trees are not only very large, but stand thickly upon the ground. Bass wood is the principal variety, but there are likewise the Elm, White Walnut, the Hickory, and the Cotton wood. The soil through this timber is a rich black loam, very deep and very light, and would answer admirably for Corn. But it is owned principally by the Indians, and the timber will stand to the end of time before they clear it off.

The St. Peter runs a Northeasterly course and puts into the Mississippi at Fort Snelling, six miles above St. Paul.

Mankato, like other western towns, is somewhat ambitious. It is some two or three years old, and contains a population of 1000. It is the county seat of Blue-Earth county, but they have neither court-house nor jail. In fact, I have as yet seen neither courthouses nor jails in the Territory. They have no time to go to law yet, and lawyers turn speculators, and beside the usual tin sign, have the word BANK in great staring capitals.

Corner lots are high in Mankato, ranging from $1000 up as high as you wish to go. In fact, I have heard of no place in Minnesota as yet where Editors could buy corner lots, unless it be at Ojibway, but as I was not there and saw no one who had been there, I could not recommend you to go there. The situation of Mankato is not very pleasant, being somewhat rough, but the people there have as great hopes of it as a mother has of her only son.

At this point we embarked on board the steamer Medora, for St. Paul. There were a goodly number of passengers, and the number increased as we passed.
down the river. Hardly had we pushed out into the current, when a small company of gamblers commenced operations and in the course of half an hour fleeced a verdant young man out of a considerable sum of money, and sent him adrift, prepared to pre-empt again.

Thirty-five miles below Mankato is St. Peter[,] the residence of ex-governor [Willis A.] Gorman. It is on an elevated plateau of land, and in situation most delightful. The bluff is back from the river about a mile, leaving a beautiful prairie around the town. Last winter[,] through the influence of Gov. Gorman, an act was passed for the removal of the capitol to this place. But the probabilities are strongly against such removal, and in favor of St. Paul, as the permanent seat of legislation.

As an instance of the winding character of this river, an adventure of one of the passengers might be related. It was the only lady passenger on board. At St. Peter, she left the boat and went up into the town and we expected to see her no more, as the boat pushed out into the channel and left without her. After pushing down the river five miles to a place called Traverse des[es] Sioux, we found our lady waiting for us on the bank, and ready to come on board. The fact was she had crossed the bend — the towns being one mile apart, whilst we had hoated it around five miles.

One hundred miles above St. Paul, we came to Henderson, the site of the Land Office for the Red Wing District. This is not much of a place. The situation[,] however, is fine, and open to improvement. At this point a perfect tornado of "actuals" came on board. They had procured their pre-emption papers, and were leaving with their doubts relieved, however their consciences may have been affected.

The borders of the river are skirted with a growth of willow and cotton wood. This latter has some value as timber. It resembles somewhat our Poplar, or White-wood. It is a coarse and rough timber[,] however, and does not answer so good a purpose for lumber. But the people here are thankful for small favors. The timber line, and regard the Cottonwood as an important item of the country. The grass was most luxuriant along the banks of the St. Peter. It grew quite up to the edge of the bank, looking like a meadow waving invitingly for the scythe. The grass as it stood would average probably one ton per acre, although it had not arrived at full maturity.

Among our little world of passengers were a goodly number of French, among them some old voyageurs who had engaged in the fur trade and had braved the dangers of trapping among the wild beasts and Indians. They were stern, stalwart, bronzed veterans, familiar with hardship, and disliking the settlements and the crowd almost as much as the natives themselves. The soft, sweet and gliding cadences of their "parlez vous" sounded gratefully to the ear after the harsh gutt[ure]als of the Indians. There was also a Swiss Baron, who was just returning from a hunting expedition, with his dog and guns. He looked as though he had a democratic time in the wilderness, as his wardrobe was sadly damaged. Upon the whole he looked as though he had had his own adventures whilst "roughing it in the bush."

There was not much sleep on the boat the last night on the river. The number of passengers had swelled till there was hardly room for more recent comers to stretch their bones on the floor. In addition to this a company of men, who delighted in cards, weared out the entire night at the games that they had practiced until they were their only solace and joy. Noise and confusion were the order of the night. It was a worse night for sleep than we had passed among the Winnebagoes.

Just as day dawned we approached the mighty Mississippi. I am not a model of early rising. It never was one of my few accomplishments, but that morning there was no sleep — too much noise — too much rattling of change among the players. So I arose and went out on the forecastle just to see "the meeting of the waters." The St. Peter looks very small by the side of the Mississippi. In fact it suffers wonderfully by the contrast.

At the mouth of the St. Peter and immediately on the western bank of the Mississippi is Fort Snelling, now occupied by a section of the U[nnited] States army. It is a grand and imposing establishment, built of a light colored stone, with its bastions and towers and flagstaff almost coming up to one[,]s idea of an old feudal castle.

Six miles below Fort Snelling we arrived at Saint Paul. This is a great place, but a few thoughts in relation to it and Saint Anthony must be reserved for another letter.

Adieu,

Viator.

IN THE sixth letter, published on August 19, 1857, "Viator" is impressed with St. Paul and devotes a paragraph to Pembina traders and their wooden carts seen in the territorial capital. The writer also deals with St. Anthony and Minneapolis and laments the encroachments of civilization upon St. Anthony Falls. Then he goes down the Mississippi, describing Lake Pepin and retelling the Winona legend that fascinated so many travelers. He concludes with a chapsody on the "Mississippi by moonlight!"

Mr. Editor: — Saint Paul, the capital of the Territory of Minnesota, contains a population of from 10,000 to 12,000. It is at present the great place of business, the
ST. PAUL was described as "a fine city" by the Pennsylvania visitor in 1857, the same year that these panoramic views were made by Benjamin F. Upton from the courthouse roof. The visitor was also impressed with St. Anthony Falls (below, circa 1865) but lamented that man had "marred" the scene. In the background is St. Anthony, with its Winslow House (left).
center of wealth and influence, as well as the center of legislation. It is situated on the eastern bank of the Mississippi, on an elevated portion of land, and has a fine prospect of the river. The streets are not laid out regularly, nor are they as wide as good taste would dictate, yet withal it is a fine city. One cannot well avoid noticing the evidences of wealth and ambition in the streets and buildings. Finer carriages or faster horses you could not find in any eastern city. A remark of one of the business men perhaps exhibits something of the feeling of the people, that "A man is nobody at all, unless he keeps a fast horse."

Among the public buildings are twelve or fourteen churches, the Capitol, the Court House and two theatres. A sight that is occasionally seen there is a train of traders from Pembina, a settlement far up on the Red River of the North. These trains consist of wooden carts, without a particle of iron in their construction, drawn either by a single ox or a poor Indian pony, most generally by the former. The wheels are altogether guileless of grease, and the consequence is that like the brazen wheels of Lucifer's host, as described by Milton, they "grate horrible discord." These carts are laden with furs and skins. which they traffic for the articles that are needed in their primitive habits. These Pembinoans never lodge in the houses of St. Paul. They encamp in the suburbs and are independent of the inhabitants. There is something wild and elfin like in their very looks. But civilization is rapidly encroaching upon their limits and they must succumb to its power, or plunge again into the wilds of the still more remote Northwest.

From St. Paul to the Falls of St. Anthony is ten miles. The navigation of the Mississippi is of course interrupted by these falls. The communication between St. Paul and the Falls is by stage. A four horse coach leaves each point every two hours. Midway between, on the western bank of the river, is the falls of Min-ne-ha-ha, immortalized in the poem of Longfellow — "The Dream [Song] of Hiawatha." This fall is on the creek of the same name, a short distance from its mouth. I regretted deeply our inability to visit this poetic shrine, but there was no conveyance there. The breast of the fall is laden with sawlogs and the entire region cumbered with lumber. This utility of ours — it is the ruin of the beautiful — the harmonious — the poetic. Man in his grasping after the coin of earthly stamp would mar the stamp of heaven.

A tremendous water power is created at these falls. A tremendous water power is created at these falls. All the machinery of the world almost might be driven in the space of this mile of dashing water. An immense amount of pine lumber is sawed here. The logs are driven down from the pinery up at the head waters, manufactured into lumber and rafted to the country below. There are two bridges across the river at this point — one a wire suspension, the other a wooden structure.

There is something grand and striking in these falls of St. Anthony. But man has marred God's beautiful workmanship. His sacrilegious hands are laid upon this mighty cataract that for many centuries had been sounding the awful Diapason of the Creator's praise. The roar of the waters is now mingled with the hum of machinery. The breast of the fall is laden with sawlogs and the entire region cumbered with lumber. This utility of ours — it is the ruin of the beautiful — the harmonious — the poetic. Man in his grasping after the coin of earthly stamp would mar the stamp of heaven.

The falls of course obstruct the navigation, but steamboats are built above them, and run up to Crowwing, some 300 miles above. Near this point the Pinery, or Pine timber, commences and extends some 400 miles still further up, to Lake Itasca, that is really the head of the Mississippi river.

The Western is a tremendous country. You never feel that you have gotten fully out of doors until you get out there. You feel that you are all adrift, and that you would drift on if there were no one to pull you back again.

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11 The university building was what came to be called Old Main, whose west wing and extension were built in 1858 despite difficulties complicated by the panic of 1857. The hotel was the Winslow House, completed in 1857 to entice visitors from the South and East. It did good business until the Civil War stopped travel for pleasure. See James Gray, The University of Minnesota, 1852-1951, 21-22 (Minneapolis, 1951), and Marion D. Shutter, History of Minneapolis: Gateway to the Northwest, 1:145-146 (Chicago, 1923).
are no longer "cribbed, confined and cabined in" by boundaries and limits as you are in the East.

From the Falls of St. Anthony down to Prairie du Chien — French for dog prairie — the distance is 300 miles. The mighty "father of waters" is well named. It resembles no other river. The bluffs on either side are very high and generally precipitous, with here and there the outcropping of the magnesian limestone, resembling in almost innumerable instances the remains of old castles and fortifications. The river is all widths, from one to five miles, and often so full of islands, and timber, as to look like a mighty lake. The traveler is often in utter ignorance in what direction the channel leads or in what way he is to find his way out of the labyrinth. The water is somewhat the color of coffee, arising probably from the color of the soil. Some sixty or seventy miles below the falls you enter lake Pepin. This lake is merely an enlargement of the river, but it has still all the characteristics of a lake. Its size is twenty-five miles long by six or seven wide. Its depth is very considerable. On the eastern side of the lake is a lofty eminence, called "Maiden's Rock," or Cap des Sions. It is a perpendicular wall of magnesian limestone, about 400 feet high. The legend connected with it is something like this: [A] long time ago when the red man considered himself lord of the soil, an Indian maiden named Winona had exchanged vows of eternal fidelity — as maidens will, now and then — with a dusky savage, having a keen love of scalps and a yell like a panther. But "the course of true love never did run smooth." Her parents urged her to give her affections to another brave, who boasted more scalps to girdle, and perhaps a fiercer yell, than her cavalier. Winona ascended the terrific rock, chanted the death dirge, and leaped headlong from the dizzy height. The city of Winona is named after this romantic maiden. The copper-headed maidens must have degenerated since those days, as I saw none to whom could be ascribed any higher species of romance than eating hominy with the fingers, and smearing the hair, coarse and harsh as a horse's mane, with possum fat and red lead.

At Wabasbaw, near the foot of the Lake, we saw quite a bevy of savages, and not one solitary maid who looked as though she could get up romance sufficient to climb the top of the lover's leap and jump off into the Lake. The great Ogre's looks more like scalping you alive, than anything else, with their restless black eyes and great gaping mouths. Not that a large mouth is particularly objectionable. It is sometimes very convenient, especially when you are seated in a dentist's chair and the dentist is making a workshop out of your throat, but I do object to a mouth without character and without expression, and to a countenance indicative of no more intellect than that of an oyster.

Mississippi by moonlight! Beauty and grandeur and poetry all combined! The light falls upon the water as it is disturbed by the motion of the boat, like shivered arrows. Whilst the gentle shimmering of the light gradually glides away towards the shore. The bold bluffs stand out, now in full relief, now gently immersed in the soft shadows of night. Dim and misty the faint outline of hill and valley extends out in the distance, until you feel that you are in an enchanted land. You feel as tho' you could linger forever in the midst of the entrancing loveliness of the scene, and bathe your spirit, weary of this world's common place things, in its soft, graceful influences. The Mississippi by moonlight! It is one of the scenes that is remembered and treasured up in one's memory forever. It is one of the few pictures that one hangs up in the most sacred and beautiful chambers of the heart, to look upon and wonder at and admire, when weary and sick and disgusted with the ruins that sin has scattered with such a lavish hand over this once fair world. It was one of those scenes that we cannot describe, of which Byron speaks —

"We gaze and turn away, and know not where.
Dazzled and drunk with beauty, till the heart
Reels with its fullness."

But we may not dwell longer on the remembrance of the fair scenes that come up to view, as we think of a long — a very long evening, as measured by the watch, but very short as measured by the enjoyment of the scene, that we spent on the deck of the steamer. That was no night for sleep — the moonlight and the shadows were all too soft — the scenery was all too lovely, and a solitary Danish artist and myself kept long and silent tryst. But the scene vanishes. The dream is broken. The romance has flown. It is but faint glimpses of beauty that we obtain here.

"If God hath made this world so fair
Where sin and death abound.
How beautiful beyond compare
Will Paradise be found."

Adieu.
Viator.

THE SEVENTH letter, published on September 9, 1857, is an essay on the prairies and especially their flora and fauna. The overwrought writer is moved to compose paragraphs on the "luxurious scenes" and their connection with "God's greatness."

Mr. Editor: — In this letter I wish to say a word about the prairies — those mighty curiosities of the west. No one who has not visited this region of country can form any adequate idea of the grandeur and magnificence and beauty of these Nature's meadows. They spread out in their illimitable expanse like the ocean, filling the mind with awe and wonder. Standing on one of the mighty
of the West, with nothing in view but the waving grass and smiling flowers, and the blue sky seeming to bend down and rest up on the green turf, one learns to feel how magnificent nature is — how great God is.

The Territory of Minnesota is a land of prairies and lakes. Along the course of the rivers you find timber — but the general face of the country is free from tree and shrub and bush. You may travel all day over the green carpet, enameled with flowers, with nothing to interrupt your meditations but the sloughs, or sluds, as they call them here. The prairies are also destitute of stones, or rocks. In a day’s journey you could not find a stone large enough to bruise the head of a Massasauga snake, or stone a Robin, however great the necessity that might arise. The consequence is that the Massasaugas and Robins, I hardly know which to place first, enjoy a perpetual jubilee.

The prairies are of course of various sizes, dependent on the course of the streams. By the way, everything here in the way of a stream is called a river, and their courses are traced distinctly by the woods or timber. We traveled for fifty miles and more without passing through timber. In fact there are places where you are entirely out of sight of timber, with nothing but the vast expanse of green waving grass all around you. The flowers run crazy on these prairies. In fact they are nature’s flower gardens, — planted by the same hand that planted the stars in the canopy above, and nurtured and sustained by the outgushing kindness and care of our all-benevolent Heavenly Father. In fact the flowers are all too numerous, to be appreciated, by you or me. But they are not lost. They have their mission to fulfill, and that mission is doubtless accomplished, although no mortal eye may rest upon them. They breathe out their odor and exhale their beauty in the presence of the great Creator. Gray’s ideas are generally correct, but that beautiful couplet in the Elegy is not strictly true. — "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, and waste its sweetness on the desert air."

You find a variety of flowers here — Ladies’ Slippers, with cavesities large enough for a whole troop of fairies to drink dew from and be satisfied. The Star of Bethlehem, Wild Pea, Lillies, Meadow Pinks, and others "too numerous to mention." But the grand flower of the prairie appeared to be what the Ladies call "Nim Niddies." I do not know what you would call them. Nim Niddy is a ridiculous and absurd name, but you are aware that good authority has asserted that "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet," so you must not quarrel with the name. The Ladies have queer and absurd names for colors and why not for flowers? Of this last flower, you may find an hundred acre farm covered any place you seat yourself down.

Of animated nature, you find birds of various kinds, some singers and others voiceless. The Robin you find everywhere, with its quick spiteful note, seeking for cherries and other contraband articles. The meadow lark and partridge, with their cheerful notes, meet you frequently and tell you that you are not alone amid the flowers.

The Gopher is found frequently on the prairies. This little animal is of two varieties. The pocket gopher is very seldom seen, but his little mound of fresh earth is noticeable all over the prairie. This earth is buried out, from below, and carried in the little fellow’s pockets to the surface and pushed out, forming, in course of time, a formidable mound. The other is the striped gopher. It is somewhat like your chipmunk [sic], or ground squirrel — somewhat larger and more vivacious and quick in its movements. These animals are great enemies to the corn fields, often plucking up the seed corn as fast as it is placed in the ground.

The wild prairie grass grows luxuriantly everywhere. In the sloughs or sluds, however, it grows most rankly. These places are called swoils or meadow marshes, and are sought for to cut hay from. These meadows have a turf that is very thick and strong, and requires a strong and vigorous team to break it up. A "breaking team," as they call it here, consists of four or five yoke of oxen, with a plow that would fairly frighten you if you met anywhere but in the public thoroughfare, and in broad daylight. These plows run without a plowman at the handles, so that the driver or drivers can bestowed their energies in shouting and hallooing at the cattle. The prices of breaking up range from two and a half to five dollars per acre. These plows cut a furrow two feet wide and very shallow.

Upon this newly turned turf, a half crop of corn is sometimes raised without cultivation. They call it "sod corn." The modus operandi is this: After the prairie is broken up, they go along with an axe, and in every third furrow strike it in and place the seed corn, covering it up with the foot. It requires, or rather can receive no further care until harvest. After the first turf decays, the soil is exceedingly light and mellow, and succeeding plowings may be accomplished without difficulty.

Any amount of fresh breeze may be found on these mighty expanses. In summer they are most delightful, but in the winter they must be rather fresh and free. There is nothing to break the fury of the storms, and old Aeolus plays some fantastic tricks at times.

As you travel over these vast plains, you will at this time find any number of pre-emption cabins, looking more like the playhouse you used to build in your more juvenile days than habitations for human beings. A horrible iniquity is that pre-emption operation.

The prairies are a standing miracle. You find a rich luxuriant soil — grass and flowers grow as they grow nowhere else. But there are no forest trees. Why is this? One man will tell you in his wisdom that the fire in the dead grass prevents the growth of the trees. But you find
belts of trees often five miles wide along the rivers. Why does the fire not kill this timber? I think neither you nor I can tell why the broad prairies are treeless, but we may admire them notwithstanding. Some of those long July days will remain in our memories forever. Their scenes will be treasured up in the most sacred chamber of the heart, as fresh kept pictures, to cheer the mind with images of beauty, and to refresh the faint and weary spirit when it would else faint and fail.

In the daytime, bathed in the pure sunlight, there was the waving grass of many shades of color — there were the fair and graceful flowers, the rolling tableland and the swelling bluff, and all around the horizon the calm blue sky seemed to bend over and bless and embrace the living landscape.

In the night, there were the silent and awful mysteries of the starlight. In this region the air is so pure and transparent that the stars seem suspended just overhead, and shine with a beauty and splendor that is almost entrancing. Standing out on the prairie, with the silence of night all around you, and the burning stars hanging over your head, you almost feel as tho' transferred into the immediate presence of Him, who makes the stars of night his diadem, and whose abode is eternal light and purity and love. The voiceless, inaudible song of night is doubly sweet and melodious to the inner ear, on the broad plains of the West. Man's voice is silent. God's voice is all in all. The creature sinks into insignificance — the great Creator is exalted to the topmost throne of the universe.

The wide rolling prairie[s], with their free air and luxurious scenes, and living, glowing pictures of God's greatness and grandeur and glory, will remain in their sweet and joyous memories forever. May they quicken your diligence and mine to reach the fairer and sweeter scenes of "the land that is very far off."

Adieu,
Viator.

IN THE eighth, and final, letter, published on September 30, 1857, "Viator" summarizes his conclusions about Minnesota's soil, climate, inhabitants, difficulties, and prospects. The letter, he says, are good that Minnesota will become "a fine and growing State."

Mr. Editor: - In this letter I wish to say a few disconnected things about Minnesota in general — its soil — its climate - its inhabitants - its prospects, and its difficulties. I will try and not weary with the prolixity of the subject, as I attempt to give you my own views of these matters, formed, some of them, from first impressions and some of them from particular and close examination.

THE SOIL.

The soil of Minnesota is generally of a good quality. It seems to be a kind of black loam, mingled with a whitish sand, in proportions that adapt it admirably to corn and potatoes, and indeed to root crops generally. The experiment has not been tried on a large scale in the raising of winter wheat, but some of the few farmers are firm in the faith that they can raise winter grain without difficulty. The soil being light, the great fear is that the roots of the crops may become exposed by its crumbling and blowing away. In regard to the soil in general, it does not lack depth or richness, but it may possibly lack permanence. Possibly there is no substratum to retain the enriching matter. It seemed in some parts as though whatever enriching substances might be added would soon leach through and leave the surface as before. There may be a mistake here, but it so seemed to my farmer's eye. The virgin soil[,] however, is of unrivalled richness, as the luxuriant vegetation of the prairies at once testifies.

THE CLIMATE.

I was in the Territory only during the summer season, and can speak only of the summer climate. Of the summer air and temperature no language is too strong in the way of praise. It is delightful. You feel like a new being altogether. You learn for the first time what a luxury it is to breathe. The air is exceedingly dry and bracing, and appears to be overloaded with oxygen. Every inhalation expands your lungs, and causes the blood to go with surprising vigor and richness through the arteries[,] invigorating the body, cheering the mind and causing you to feel yourself a miracle of health and strength. One feels in the Minnesota air as tho' the concentrated essence of the world's atmosphere were all around him, and that he was breathing it fresh from Nature's great laboratory. I could tell you of one young man, who does not receive much credit at home for a robust and vigorous habit, who in that region felt like doing constantly, as the lame man did, who was healed at the Beautiful gate of the Temple. Yes, leaping and shouting are the uppermost thoughts in your mind, as your nostrils expand to take in that glorious, pure and exhilarating air.

The evening air is particularly delightful. The invalid may sit half the night out in the open air and not feel the least inconvenience. The stars look brighter and nearer to you, as they lean down from a dark blue, almost black sky, and you feel as though you were nearer heaven than ever before. This peculiarity arises from the dryness of the atmosphere. The nights are all cool. No sweltering heats - no sleepless nights - no tossing to and fro on an uneasy couch, but deep quiet, refreshing sleep — provided you can persuade yourself to retire to rest. If you are given to sentimentality, as most young men and some young maidens are, you might find it difficult to leave the soft moonlight, and bewitching evening air, even for
years is rather a fast way of settling up a country, but
a little unnatural, but it will soon settle down to a regular
and healthy condition. Towns of 3,000 population in two
coming a fine and growing State. The growth just now is
Chester on the battle field, as reported by one Walter
seem to be acting on the advice the gentleman gave to
the country.

commons ecjual to an anchorite, or have a stomach equal
to those prairies must be trying to flesh and blood.
The winds that are so refreshing in summer must have a
touch of frost in winter. When the storm is abroad in its
wrath, gathering fury from an unbroken race of
thousands of miles, his gambols must be anything but
pleasant. One circumstance, however, is a mitigating
one. The climate, however cold, is regular. The
thermometer remains much at the same point through­
out the winter. Here is one speck of comfort in winter
time.

THE INHABITANTS.

Setting aside the "Actuals", of whom we have spoken
before, the inhabitants seemed to be of a better class
than is usual in new countries. In the towns you have a
difficulty in convincing yourself that you are really so far
West as to be in the immediate neighborhood of sunset.
In Faribault, a good hearted deacon, on the way to
church, suggested to me that I "would see as many bun­
nits, there, as in any Eastern congregation." Not having
any decided taste in the matter of "fine bunnits," I did
not take special notice, but I doubted not the deacon
was correct. I think there is little resort to lynch law, or
few violent outbreaking crimes, if you expect the whole­
sale perjury that blackens and deforms the land, in con­
exion with pre-emption matters. I should fear that
this latter, however, would entail a curse that will blacken
and waste the land.

As to hotels, those of St. Paul, St. Anthony and
Winona are fine. You can take your comfort, and feel that
your health will not suffer from sheer starvation. As to
the hotels through the country, the less said about them
the better. Unless you are trained to fasting, and short
commons equal to an anchorite, or have a stomach equal
in its digestive power to that of an ostrich, you would
most probably not admire the hotels you find throughout
the country.

Still, all the proprietors of the hotels in this region
seem to be acting on the advice the gentleman gave to
Chester on the battle field, as reported by one Walter
Scott —

"Charge, Chester, charge"

THE PROSPECTS.

The prospects of Minnesota, I think, are fair of be­
coming a fine and growing State. The growth just now is
a little unnatural, but it will soon settle down to a regular
and healthy condition. Towns of 3,000 population in two
years is rather a fast way of settling up a country, but

there is a soil there to sustain a densely crowded com­
munity. They have the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers,
and they will soon have many important railroads. The
lands for their construction are already donated by the
general government, more than sufficient to build and
equip them. Lands are also set apart for school and uni­
versity purposes that will amply endow their noble ob­
ject. In fact Minnesota has been a spoiled and petted
child of the general government. With all these advan­
tages, the prospect is an encouraging one for the growth
and prosperity of this Northwestern Territory. If it had
no difficulties in its way, it would be an exception to all
the new countries on the globe. We will conclude by
looking at a few of these.

DIFFICULTIES.

It would be vain to expect to find a place without its
difficulties. There is a beautiful law of compensation that
we find pervading the whole of the Creator's works.
There is good in things evil, and evil in things good.
wherever sin has cast its baleful shadow. Minnesota is
not an exception to the general rule. One great and
prominent difficulty here is the lack of timber. You want	
timber to build your houses, to construct your fences,
and to serve as fuel. We have already mentioned the fact
that the timber is confined to the courses of the streams.
But even this is of a poor quality, if we except the great
pinery of the extreme North. There is nothing that can
compensate for the lack of wood. You may build your
houses of brick, but you will still want wood to furnish it.
You can scarcely find a substitute for rails in fencing.
I doubt much whether hedges will endure the rigor of the
climate, and ditches are a poor substitute for a good
worm fence. As to fuel, the want of timber must be
severely felt. There may be coal buried up in the
ground, but this is doubtful. The researches of geologists
have not been successful in discovering it, and what is
more, all the principles of geology must be at fault if coal
is ever found in the territory. But fire is a luxury that
cannot be dispensed with in a climate where the
thermometer ranges between zero and forty degrees be­
low, throughout the winter months. It must, however,
be an expensive luxury, where wood ranges from five to
eight dollars per cord.

But you have the good and the evil — the lights and
the shadows of Minnesota life, and you can judge
whether the good land is worth seeking, or whether or
not it would be as well to live and die and be buried
among the hills of Northwestern Pennsylvania.

Adieu,
Viator.

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