

FORTY-FOUR YEARS AGO AND NOW. To the editor of THE CONSERVATIVE:

My experience in finding my way into Nebraska in 1854 suggests the remarkable change and progress in transportation facilities between Chicago and the Missouri river during those four and forty years. My first objective point was Keokuk, Iowa, where my father, the late Lorin Miller, was in waiting for me to join him in the movement on Omaha which had been previously planned. It became necessary to reach Keokuk to go from Chicago by railway to Alton, thence by boat up the river. Attracted by the kindness of a U. S. army officer who was returning from California to his St. Louis home, and somewhat persuaded by his marked attention to the stranger, I decided to go down the Mississippi river to St. Louis before going up to Keokuk that I might see the city which, then as now, was the head of the broad-water navigation on the Mississippi, and renew acquaintance with Mr. Ben Stickney and his brother, the Major, who were natives of Boonville, New York, where my own eyes first beheld the sunlight. The major had been my schoolmate, and the Stickney's and the Planters' Hotel of that day were as widely known as the hotel men of the West and South, as the Stetson's and the Astor House were in the East. It was on that visit that I first saw a black man owned as property by a white man. It was also on that visit that I had my heart first warmed and my narrow head broadened by that hospitality which is so peculiar and remarkable that it has never been known to the northern states. But I must stop this kind of narrative. My object is in this contribution to THE CONSERVATIVE to tell its readers about travel facilities into Nebraska in 1854, and not to relate incidents of travel. Perhaps I ought to mention the fact that St. Louis and Chicago had no connection with each other by railway in that year. As I remember we rode nearly twenty-four hours in making the journey between Chicago and Alton, on the Chicago and Alton railway. I am informed by its courteous general passenger manager that he cannot find any time schedule of that early day on that road, but the trip between the two cities of St. Louis and Chicago is now made in less than one-half of the time that was made in those days. No Pullmans had been dreamed of then. We sat up all night in common seats with hand luggage for pillows. No modern platformed or vestibuled cars, or airbrakes were in existence. The rattle of the handbrake and the links of the short chains that connected the old style platforms, and the bumps and jerks and clatter over the rough rails and rail beds, the slow speed of the trains furnished the music and

the weariness of personal transportation in Illinois in 1854.

Arriving at Keokuk by the great river no time was lost for the start in a Concord coach of the Western Stage Co., of Col. Hooker memory, for Omaha.

Five days and four nights in that prairie craft moving into a wild and unsettled region to the young man who had never been west of Geneva, New York, before in his life, was an experience for which, even now, it is not easy for the old one to account. The migrations of men, like those of the birds, are mysteries in most cases. There is a well remembered charm about that journey and many others that succeeded it by the same means. Not a single iron rail had been laid at that time on Iowa soil. The western half of the state now the opulent home of a million of people who are rich in everything which brings happiness to rational and enlightened men and women, was practically unsettled. It lacked even improved wagon roads and bridges. The smaller streams were forded, horses and coaches swimming betimes in the swift and narrow currents of the smaller streams. I remember to have spent a whole night and a part of a day in the agreeable company of seven or eight stage passengers, waiting for a small creek to fall down and let us pass. Part of the night some of us tried to sleep in front of a fireplace in a log cabin, and so did several pigs and chickens. Over hill and down dale, day after day and night after night, did the coaches and four roll along toward the land of uncertain promise. There was so much that was new in imagination and the spirit of adventure as to mark that first journey across Iowa when the west half of it was condemned to sterility, and of being incapable of successful occupation by many, as one of the most enjoyable incidents of a long manhood life.

It was a dark and gloomy evening of October, 1854, when the ordinary song of the "breaks" on the wheels of the coach set up an unearthly howl which told of the steep descent and sharp turns down the high hills into Council Bluffs and the valley of the Missouri. The long journey was ended and the new life began, of which you, sir, have been so much a part.

I will not take the space to point the contrasts, or to attempt to measure the almost magical changes which have been made here in transportation facilities by the progress of railways and the power of steam in the last past forty years. In a journey I once made from Omaha in mid-winter, partly in sleighs and partly on wheels, to Iowa City, I was seven nights and eight days on the road. Paper mails, and even letter mails, were weeks in coming from Chicago to Omaha. I now receive The Chicago Times-Herald with regularity at my Deerfield postoffice at 5 o'clock p.

m. on the day of its publication, and The New York Herald on the second day after its publication. With a choice of four lines of the finest railways and the most luxurious equipments in moving palaces, men and women leave Omaha late in the evening, sleep the sleep into which smooth tracks, a sense of perfect security and a gentle swaying motion rock them, and they are sometimes disturbed at being aroused for early breakfast in the marvelous metropolis on lake Michigan next morning.

I have purposely omitted even mention of the transportation in the early days by river, which properly belongs to the subject of this communication, and, if permitted, I may refer to it and to the memory of boating life on the Missouri in "The Fifties."

GEORGE L. MILLER.

CORN PROPAGANDA IN EUROPE. Some very respectable citizens of the United States organized about two years ago a propaganda to preach corn foods—edibles made out of Indian maize—to all the hungry of Europe.

The propaganda was, however, purely philanthropic and without available cash for carrying on its missionary labors. Therefore with childlike helplessness it began to importune the federal government for money with which to send its benevolent members abroad to preach cornbread and hasty puddings. It asked that the money wasted heretofore in purchasing packets of common seeds for statesmen to send to their constituents, be diverted to defray the expenses of those endeavoring to instruct the cornless in preparing and consuming foods made from American corn. But paternalism even at Washington and in congress was not quite sentimental and affectionate enough to stop seed and begin cornbread distribution.

CORN, LIKE CHARITY, SHOULD BEGIN AT HOME. But as has been demonstrated by actual experiment in a Nebraska regiment a corn ration among soldiers is popular, useful and wholesome. Then in a practical way the consumption by mankind of food made from Indian corn should begin at home where charity properly begins, Rations of good corn grits, cornmeal and corn flour should be furnished United States soldiers in the field. A useful experiment, thus practically made, is worth a thousand sentimental and unpractical proselytes in Europe traveling at government expense and extruding twaddle in favor of making a diet of cold corn bread.

The subjoined letter explains itself:

WAR DEPARTMENT,
WASHINGTON.

JULY 22, 1898.

MY DEAR SIR:

I have your letter of the 18th instant relative to the new cereal ra-