

HERODOTUS CORROBORATED. Herodotus discovered that the crocodile made friends with a particular bird, which he allowed to enter his mouth in order, as the writer supposed, to rid the reptile of the leeches which infested his jaws. Pliny says nothing of these pests, but considers the complaisance of the crocodile to be due to the satisfaction he felt in having his teeth picked by the bird. Both authors speak of the bird as a wren; later naturalists describe it as being as large as a thrush; while it has been reserved for the present generation of travelers to identify this useful friend of the crocodile as the spur-winged plover. Of the fact of the alliance there is not the least doubt. The operation has been frequently witnessed by numerous independent observers, one of the latest of whom considers that the bird does actually perform the functions of a toothpick, "a process which the crocodile enjoys." With such corroboration the narrative of Herodotus, subject to qualifications as it must be, is at least to be taken seriously and no longer regarded as the visionary idea of a mere fabulist.

RICHES ARE RELATIVE. An aged pioneer, one of the Argonauts of 1854, sat, in a reflective mood, looking into a bright wood fire burning in the grate at his commodious and comfortable home. His family and a few friends, with here and there a grandchild, were gathered around him and calling for stories of the early territorial days in Nebraska. They asked for descriptions of the primitive domiciles, constructed of logs and sods, which first established themselves as the pickets of civilization; and also for detailed accounts of their furniture and conveniences.

"Well," said the old man, "my first cabin was made of logs. It had a main room fourteen by sixteen and a smaller cabin ten by twelve built against the east end of it. Between the logs there was a chinking of sticks and stones which held the mortar that had been thrown in to keep out the cold and storms. The floors were made of 'puncheons,' planks split and hewn out of cottonwood tree trunks, and the roofs were of riven oak. These oak rives, as we called them, were about four feet in length, four to eight inches in width and a half inch in thickness. They reached from one roof-log, laid horizontally with the cabin, to another. Upon the top of this roofing we placed lengthwise up and down the slope long prairie grasses from the bottom or valley lands. This grass was laid smoothly and to average a thickness, when compactly weighed down, of about three or four inches. And upon top of it we placed the black surface soil of Nebraska and pounded it to a stone-like solidity. That

sort of covering made the house impervious to rain and kept out the fine drifting snow of the blizzards. My cabin was an extra comfortable one because I lined it up on the inside with buffalo robes which I bought of the Omaha Indians at two dollars apiece. We had no chairs, we had no tables, but our four trunks were covered, by the deft and tireless fingers of your grandmother, with little pillows that were made of bright colored calico and stuffed with prairie grass, and tables were made out of dry goods boxes that our bedding came in. Those trunks, when against the wall, looked like old-fashioned ottomans and were really comfortable seats, and with their drapery which concealed the lock in front and the handles on the ends, seemed exceedingly luxurious. And the tables were also disguised by the same cheerful and ingenious woman so that mahogany could have served us no better.

"We were young folks then. The nearest neighbors were the Omaha Indians. That entire tribe lived right down on the Missouri river bottom, just below the bluff on which our cabin stood, and there were twelve hundred of them then. They were as peaceful and as lazy as the smoke that curled up from their tepees. Among them we made many good and faithful friends. For fidelity and honesty in friendship I have never found a stronger, nobler people. This was at Bellevue where the American Fur Company had a trading post under the management of Col. Peter A. Sarpy, and the Presbyterian church had a mission school and church in charge of Rev. William Hamilton.

"I was twenty-two years of age and your grandmother was twenty months my junior. We considered ourselves rich in comparison with some emigrants who were camped out and only protected by their wagons from the winter blasts. We were full of health and hope. We dreamed of innumerable tomorrows in which we should do great work and achieve great results. We were ambitious to be among the first and foremost founders of a mighty state. The then present was to us only a rough vestibule to a magnificent future. The thought of acquiring wealth was remote, except as a means of social and economic progression. We were relatively, when compared to the Indians in their paraflesh tepees and the unhoused emigrants in their wagons, rich and positively happy. Our daily fare was plain; pickled pork, beans, beets, split peas and bread, as a rule, day in and day out. But once in awhile we had venison and prairie chickens, though never any potatoes to cook with them. And so we wintered and in the early summer of 1855 began to build, on our 'claim' of 160 acres, a one story cottage.

"I never shall forget the day the frame was put up. After the rafters were placed I sat down and mentally pictured the luxury and enjoyment which were to be mine under the roof to be laid thereon. Wife, children, friends, relatives from the East, and gatherings for entertainment danced through my brain, materialized in that cottage, the skeleton of which had just been flung against the horizon. Then I was indeed rich in hopes, ambitions and will-power. The log cabin was behind us; the cozy cottage before us. Twenty years it served as shelter and delight. Around it trees were planted and grew and bloomed and fruited. In it music and children and beautiful flowers vied with the sunshine and smiles of the competent wife and mother in making it attractive. There was then a wealth of contentment and a poverty of envy. Those men and women are richest who have the fewest wants. And in the beginnings of a state none is wealthy in the sense that the word is used regarding those who enjoy luxuries. There was then a genuine democracy of effort, hospitality and unanimity of purpose. In a new and sparsely peopled country there are no 'old families' and therefore no false social distinctions. In primitive lodgments of civilization, along the edges of an unexplored, unknown wilderness, the gregarious instinct, which is common to all humanity, develops a heartiness of hospitality which extends itself to strangers as to neighbors. All comers to the cabin or cottage are welcome and cordiality and courtesies are a spontaneity. The pioneers in all the homely and frugal virtues which embellish and adorn home life were relatively richer than their successors on these plains. By this I mean to say that where a community is made up entirely of newcomers who are intent upon bettering their conditions, where the masterful motive of the great majority is to found, to establish, to beautify and love a Home that confidence is mutual and good-wishes for the success of each are entertained by all. Society is of one class then.

"History proves that colonies are always made up of the best types of men and women belonging to the state whence they emigrated. Only those who have self-reliance and courage enough to abandon homes of safety and ease settle new and untried lands. The luxurious, the weak never open up the wilderness to civilization. Nebraska has been no exception to this historical averment. The men who began to lead in territorial affairs, in business, commerce and the professions in 1854 have never been supplanted except by old age and death. They were intellectually and physically sturdy and rugged, self-reliant and self-denying. They had to be. The influence