

SETH OF COLORADO

A STORY OF THE SETTLEMENT OF DENVER

BY
JAMES OTIS



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FORWARD

The author of this series of stories for children has endeavored simply to show why and how the descendants of the early colonists fought their way through the wilderness in search of new homes. The several narratives deal with the struggles of those adventurous people who forced their way westward, ever westward, whether in hope of gain or in answer to "the call of the wild," and who, in so doing, wrote their names with their blood across this country of ours from the Ohio to the Columbia.

To excite in the hearts of the young people of this land a desire to know more regarding the building up of this great nation, and at the same time to entertain in such a manner as may stimulate to noble deeds, is the real aim of these stories. In them there is nothing of romance, but only a careful, truthful record of the part played by children in the great battles with those forces, human as well as natural, which, for so long a time, held a vast portion of this broad land against the advance of home seekers.

With the knowledge of what has been done by our own people in our own land, surely there is no reason why one should resort to fiction in order to depict scenes of heroism, daring, and sublime disregard of suffering in nearly every form.

JAMES OTIS

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HOW I CAME TO WRITE MY STORY

It concerns no one but myself if I choose to spend a portion of my well-earned leisure writing the story of how I happened to come into this country, which is now called Colorado, and of how I have grown up with it from the time it was taken possession of by men from the East, who in their eagerness for gold believed, poor, foolish souls, that they had but to dig in the sands for a few days in order to make themselves rich for life.



Some of my friends laughed at me when I told them of my plan, but I am not to be turned from a road, having once decided upon it, and those who have ridiculed the idea that I can make a readable tale out of my experiences need not trouble themselves to find out whether I have succeeded or failed.

WHO I AM

In order to start properly, as practiced story-tellers do, I suppose I ought first to give some account of myself, so that in case others chance to scan what I have written, they may in that way become acquainted with the writer.

In the year 1857 I was living in Lawrence, Kansas, with my father and mother, and a happier lad it would be difficult to find, for my home was a most pleasant one. I had as loving a mother as any boy could desire, and my father, while stern now and then, had a warm place for me in his heart I understood this well when, from time to time, without speaking, he would press me closely to his breast, then turn quickly away, as if ashamed of having shown any token of love.

Even then, before affliction overtook me, there was a strong desire in my heart to become a farmer, although both my father and mother insisted that I should do all in my power first to gain an education, with the idea that it might be possible for me to take my place among men of position in the land.

While I was not inclined to any other way of life than that of a farmer, loving outdoor work and finding my greatest enjoyment in seeing the seed I had planted spring up from the earth and bear fruit, yet I was obedient in doing as my parents would have me, believing that they knew best what would be to my advantage.

MY GREAT LOSS

In those happy days when I would have changed places with no lad whom I knew or had ever heard of, the blow suddenly came which left me orphaned. Within one week both my father and mother died of a fever, and it was as if the sun had been blotted out from the heavens. I could see no ray of

light anywhere, and young though I was, my one desire was to join my loved parents, for it seemed as if this world held no place for Seth Wagner.



There were many in Lawrence who befriended me in that time of sorrow, and the one who tried the hardest to comfort me was Mrs. Middleton, a dear soul who had boys of her own, although they were younger than I. I believe she was all the more tender to me because of asking herself what her little sons would do if, in the short space of a week, they should be deprived of both father and mother.

Kind though she was, and doing her best to lighten the sorrow which hung about me like a black cloud, there was small consolation for me from words; but in time I became accustomed in a certain measure to the loss which had befallen me.

MY WORLDLY WEALTH

To carry out the plan which my father had formed for me, and by gaining an education to take up the practice of law or of medicine when I was older, had now become an impossibility.



When all my father's property had been sold and the debts paid by Mr. Middleton, who did everything in his power to guard my interests, I had one hundred and sixty-one dollars as the sum total of my father's estate. With this small amount I must make my way in the world until I should stand on a solid foundation.

Had there been money enough left to me, I should have bought a farm near Lawrence, and there have set myself to work laying up sufficient of this world's goods to provide me with the necessaries, if not the comforts, of life.

It may be you will say that a youngster of my age would not naturally look so far ahead into the future as to realize that he must make provision against what people call a "rainy day"; but bear in mind that grief sometimes ages a lad wonderfully.

When the sharpest edge of my sorrow had been worn away by time, it was as if I had all at once become a man, with a clear sense of all that I must do in order to win a footing in the world. In a night, as it were, I had added twenty years to my twelve.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

My first resolve was that my tiny patrimony should be put carefully away, where it might earn me somewhat in the way of interest, and at the same time be kept as a "nest egg," so that when I found opportunity for investing a small sum to good advantage it would be ready to hand.

Next came to my mind the fact that I must be up and doing, instead of living upon the bounty of Mr. Middleton, as I had been since that dreadful day when I was led away from the last earthly resting place of my dear parents.

It was not practicable for me to find steady employment in the town of Lawrence, eager though I was for work, and in order to gain sufficient money to support myself, I always stood ready and anxious to turn my hand to whatever opportunities came my way. Thus it was that during the winter of 1857 and 1858 I worked at whatever was offered me, sometimes sawing and splitting wood, or doing chores around one of the stores, running errands, taking care of cattle while the owners were away from home, and, in fact, acting as jack-of-all-trades until the time came when the townsfolk of Lawrence were attacked with what seemed like a regular fever, because gold had been discovered beyond the western

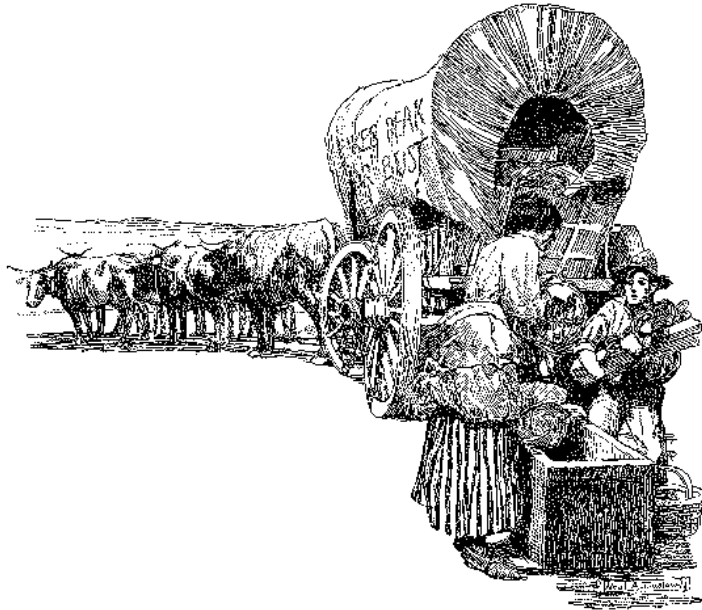
boundary of Kansas, in the unsettled territory which we know now as the state of Colorado.



THE GOLD FEVER

It was somewhere near Pikes Peak, as I remember, that our people of Lawrence believed they might find, after a few days' search, enough of the yellow metal to make them wealthy beyond their wildest dreams. The entire population, men, women, and even children, talked of gold and dreamed of gold. They seemed, indeed, to have given up every desire in life save the one of taking from the earth vast riches.

It is not to be supposed that I failed to catch this fever. When I heard rumored wondrous tales of those who had gone into that country and found more gold than they could carry away, the thought came to me that here was my opportunity: that I might go out there and after digging a few weeks, or perhaps months, get enough gold to carry out my father's plans for my future.



Our people of Lawrence were making it a costly undertaking to journey as far as Pikes Peak. They outfitted themselves with huge wagons, drawn by three, four, or even five yoke of cattle, and large enough to carry all their household goods.

For me such an outfitting was of course an impossibility, and for a time I was busy devising schemes by which to become a regular member of one of the companies, believing that there was no other way by which a lad of my age could succeed in winning his way so surely and so speedily to the goal he had set.

MY GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT

With a heavy heart I saw two of the companies start forth from our town, their faces set toward Pikes Peak, with the intention of traveling thither by what was known as the Arkansas Valley trail. I am ashamed to say that I shed bitter tears because of not being allowed a place with one or the other; first, because I was looked upon as too young to do a man's work, and again owing to the fact that even though I gave up all my inheritance, it would not be sufficient to pay my proper share of the expenses.



As the days wore on, there came straggling back by way of our town of Lawrence man after man, and company after company of the gold seekers, who had turned homeward in discouragement, having wasted all they had in their useless ventures.

Their stories of the disappointments of gold digging, and the knowledge that there was no truth in the tales of wealth gained by a few days' work, helped to cure me of that fever which I had caught from the people with whom I had

come in contact. Finally it became clear to my mind that whoever would set himself to perform honest labor, whatever it might be, would succeed in earning more money than, he could hope to gain by gold hunting.

CURED OF THE GOLD FEVER

I realized, of course, that now and again there might be found a man who had been extraordinarily successful and had made himself suddenly rich in a few hours; but, fortunately, I had common sense enough to grasp the fact that it was all a matter of chance.



Thus I made rapid recovery from the fever, and no longer indulged in foolish dreams of journeying to that Tom Tiddler's ground of Colorado, where a fortune could be picked up for the taking; but I resolutely worked at such tasks as came to hand, saving up every penny I earned that was not needed to pay for my food and clothing.

Gradually I had come to believe that all my life would be spent in the little town of Lawrence; that my humble part was to be that of one who earns his daily bread by what the Bible calls the "sweat of his face."

One day Mrs. Middleton surprised me by the announcement that she and her husband, with their children, and forty or more of their fellow-townspople, had made up their minds to journey into the land of gold, not with the intention of digging, but with the hope of finding in the Colorado country a better farm than could be had in Kansas, for a small expenditure of money. There were in the company, however, some who were bent only on mining; but, as Mrs. Middleton made clear, her husband had no such idea. After having explained, as far as she knew, what they hoped to accomplish, she ended by saying, in her kindly way, putting her arms about my neck much as my own mother would have done:—

"Why not go with us, Seth? You say you want to be a farmer, and with the money which you have put away, I believe it might be possible to buy land enough to be called a real farm."

MY OPPORTUNITY

I replied that such a plan was impossible, because even if I gave up all the money I had, it would not be sufficient to pay my share of the cost of the journey; but at once she went on, showing how long and how carefully she had been thinking out this plan to help me:—

"I am certain that if you will agree to aid Mrs. Holmes and me in caring for the children, and will do your share of driving the cattle, you can go with us, if you wish, free of expense."

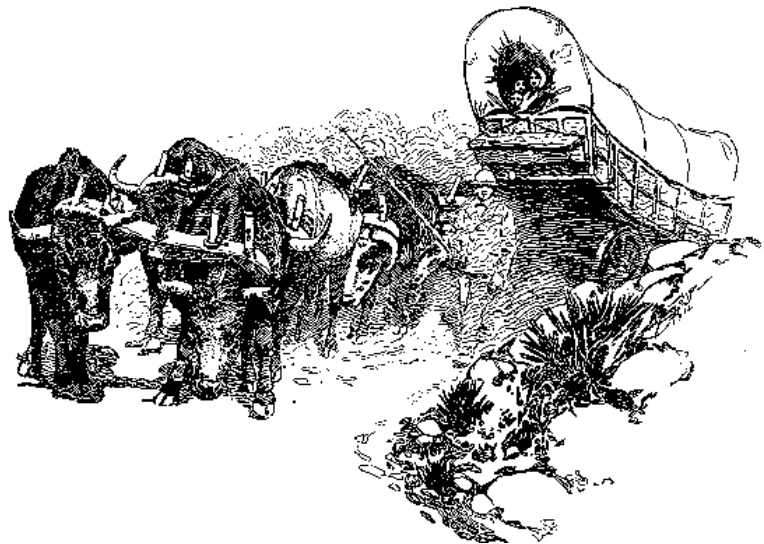
Again the Colorado fever seized me; but this time there came with it no vision of sudden riches. The suggestion

appealed to me strongly, boy though I was, that in a wild country like that I might be able to buy a fair-sized claim of land with perhaps no more than half my savings, and have the remainder to spend for tools and stock.

Or I might, thought I, venturing far away from the others, at the risk, to be sure, of being wiped out by the Indians, enter a claim of my own at no larger cost of purchase than the government demanded, and thus be forehanded at the start.

HOW I MIGHT WORK MY WAY

It was an absorbing dream which came upon me thus suddenly, and so deeply was I engrossed with it, that I hardly heeded the good woman's question, which she put again and again as to whether I should like to go as helper to Mrs. Holmes and herself, doing my full share of tending the cattle during the journey.



What answer I gave her at last is easily guessed, but for the purpose of my story, I need not go into the details of our preparations and of the journey itself.

For a long time emigrants had been crossing our country on their way to the Far West, and every one of us had become well informed as to what an outfit consisted of, how the journey was made, and what were the hardships or dangers that might be expected.



We of Lawrence, going over the Arkansas Valley trail, would have but a short distance to travel, as compared with those people who had started from the Missouri River to make their way to Oregon or to California, yet we realized it would be a laborious journey, tedious and wearisome.

KEEPING MY PART OF THE BARGAIN

Mr. Middleton and Mr. Holmes had, as I learned, already agreed to my going with them as servant, and certainly I lived up to my share of the bargain, striving from early dawn to the late hours of the night to perform more work than was required of me, in order that my employers might not think they had made a bad trade in taking me.

That I succeeded in my purpose, which was to show that even a lad of barely thirteen years of age could do a man's work, was made clear again and again when Mrs. Middleton praised my industry, or thanked me for little acts of thoughtfulness which I had been able to perform.

AT PUEBLO

When we arrived at Pueblo, the first settlement of any size we had come to since leaving Lawrence, I supposed that we had reached our journey's end, and a feeling of disappointment swept over me as I gazed about me, for it was by no means the kind of a country I had expected to find.

Although I could not call myself an expert farmer, I knew that the soil which we had left behind us in Lawrence was much more fertile than the sandy bottom lands about Pueblo, and I began anxiously to debate the question as to how any one could earn a living in such a forlorn place.



As Mrs. Middleton told me, shortly after we came to a halt, this settlement had been established by the Mexicans, who later had practically abandoned it, although there were still four or five families living in the less ruinous of the houses.

The buildings were all made of sun dried brick which the Mexicans call adobe, but the greater number of them had fallen into a state of decay. Some of the houses were roofless; the side walls or chimneys of, others had tumbled in, and only

now and then might one find a dwelling that would come somewhere near to being weather tight.

It was a scene of ruin and desolation, and in despair I asked myself whether, after struggling so hard to reach this wretched spot, I could do better than to find some means of retracing my steps, long and wearisome though the journey had been.

It was foolish of me to borrow trouble concerning this place, as I soon came to know. The leaders of our company had stopped there only to decide upon some definite course, for, as I learned then, they had left their homes without any clear plan of action, save that they were all of one mind as to their intention of reaching the gold country.



When we turned our backs on Lawrence I had understood that nearly all the people with whom I journeyed were looking forward to tilling the land, believing that the soil of Colorado would be found to be more generous than that of Kansas; but now that we had actually come into the land of treasure I soon gathered that there had been aroused in the minds of many of the men a keen desire to try gold digging, while but few, and among them Mr. Middleton, still held firm to the resolution they had made before setting out.

A WELCOME TIME OF REST

We had reached the settlement, or perhaps I should say the ruins, of Pueblo shortly before noon, and when the cattle had been fed and I had received my portion of the dinner which Mrs. Middleton prepared in one of the tumbledown shacks, I promised myself a good rest during the remainder of the day.



It was indeed a happy change to be able to stretch one's self at full length on the sun baked sand, knowing that one might lounge idling there four and twenty hours, if he wished, without being forced, at a given signal, to plod off by the side of the patient oxen, directing their way; but, even if one dislikes work, which I did not, idleness soon becomes monotonous and wearisome, and hardly more than two hours had passed when I was eager once more to be up and doing.

Before sunset those who were fascinated by the notion of delving in the earth for gold received tidings which were not to their liking. A company of seven men, who had been

prospecting, straggled into the village thoroughly disheartened and inclined to believe that all the stories of wealth taken from the soil were falsehoods.

I heard one of them say that during the past three months they had worked industriously throughout nearly every hour of daylight and failed to find traces of gold. Then I reasoned that the would-be gold seekers of our company, hearing such stories told by men of experience, would give up their dreams and join us in tilling the land, if we chanced to come upon soil that gave promise of richness.

Instead of being turned from their purpose, however, all treated the account given by these returned prospectors as of no value, saying to one another that if the men had gone here or gone there, if they had worked a little harder on a certain day, or done less on another, they might have been successful.

ANOTHER OUTBREAK OF THE GOLD FEVER

It was as if we had but just arrived at Pueblo when the gold fever broke out anew, and our people could hardly wait to make the necessary preparations for going over the same ground and for taking the same chances of disappointment as had the prospectors listened.

That evening after supper, while the women were doing their best to make some of the ruins habitable, that they might sleep inside four walls instead of on the narrow beds of the wagons, the men began again to discuss the situation.

While they were thus engaged, a second company, consisting of four travel-stained, discouraged looking men, came up, and the stories which they had to tell were the same as had been heard from the other party.

Their recital of hard work, baffled hopes, and severe hardships made it appear that there was not enough gold in the earth thereabouts to satisfy the most modest wants of one man.

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR MONEY GETTING

I listened with no very keen interest to the tales of disappointment, for I was entirely cured of the gold fever; but when I overheard some of the men complaining that they had been forced to pay ten cents a pound for corn, and from thirty to fifty cents a pound for potatoes, I pricked up my ears.



Eagerly I asked Mr. Holmes how many people he reckoned were roaming about searching for gold, and he answered in all seriousness that they might be numbered by thousands, for he knew of many very large companies which had gone into the diggings. It was undoubtedly true, he said, that a steady stream of men had been flowing into Colorado ever since the first reports had been spread abroad that gold was to be found there.

It would be folly for me, thought I, to dream of turning back simply because the soil around Pueblo was not to my liking. There must be other places where one could count on getting fair crops. If those gold hunters were so numerous, why might it not be possible, I asked myself, for me to turn their madness to good account?

I was burning with eagerness to set out in search of some place where I could plant corn and potatoes, even though I should be no more than a squatter on the land. By this I mean that I should be tilling soil which did not belong to me and without the consent of the rightful owner.

MR. MIDDLETON AGREES WITH ME

Late that night, after the unsuccessful miners had finished "swapping" their tales of woe and had gone to sleep, I confided to Mr. Middleton what I had been pondering over, and clapping me on the shoulder in his friendly fashion, he said heartily—:



"Ah, now you have got at the root of the matter, my boy! Did you think that I would wander hither and yon over this country looking for gold when I could make a home for my wife and children and find more wealth here than I could gain if I became a successful miner? We'll settle down as soon as we come to a favorable spot, and there you and I will make the beginnings of a town, while we raise corn and potatoes for those crazy dreamers who are shirking honest work, and hope to become suddenly wealthy by some lucky stroke of the pick or shovel."

Mr. Middleton went on to tell me that, after halting at Pueblo only long enough to rest the cattle, he, with four or five of the other men, had already laid plans to push on until they should reach a region where the soil gave good promise, taking care, meanwhile, to keep along the trail over which the gold seekers were coming and going.

Then, without delay, even before spending the time to build houses, we could live in the wagons for a while longer, seed was to be put into the ground.

MR. MIDDLETON'S PROPOSITION

I, thinking only of myself, asked what part I would have in this scheme, and he answered that he would willingly pay me fair wages, in fact twice as much as I could have earned in Lawrence; but if such a plan did not please me, I might go farther and take up a claim of land for myself.



This last did not appear to me to be practicable, for a lad like myself would not be able, unaided, to do all the heavy work necessary. Besides, I had neither cattle nor tools, and my small inheritance would not go very far toward providing me with the necessary implements in a land where everything was

so expensive, if one might judge by the extravagant prices which the gold seekers were paying for food.

During the greater portion of that night I kept turning the matter over and over in my mind, unable to sleep very long at a time because of excitement, and by sunup I had fully determined to join with Mr. Middleton until I should have earned enough money to start out properly for myself.

We remained at Pueblo four or five days, and weary enough were all of us of that desolate place and its few Mexican inhabitants.

A SETTLEMENT OF GOLD SEEKERS

Then we broke camp once more, traveling in the direction of Pikes Peak until we reached a small settlement of both Americans and Mexicans. Hardly more than fifteen people had settled at this place, the greater number planning to use the village simply as headquarters, whence they could in search of gold, leaving behind them a roof to cover their heads when they returned for an interval of rest.

Here also were small buildings made of sun dried bricks. Two or three were of logs, the roofs formed by covering poles with sods, and an odd sight it was to see grass growing thickly around a chimney base, or waving over what, in a regularly built house, would have been the eaves.

We had now penetrated into a section of the country which looked to me more promising, and Mr. Middleton was of much the same mind, for after we had been at this place for two or three days, and some of our company had already left for the diggings, he informed me that we were to set off at once toward the Ute Pass, where he and the others who were bent on farming had decided to make their first attempt at a settlement.



LAND CLAIMS

I learned then for the first time that a newcomer into this country, was allowed to take up what is called a land claim, that is, he could stake out a given number of acres and enter claim to them at the office of the nearest government land agent, without paying more than the regular fees which, at that time, amounted to about twenty-five cents an acre. The whole sum might be paid by installments within a certain number of years, in case the settler was not able to complete the transaction at once.

The question rose again in my mind as to whether I might not start out for myself at once, venturing all the little money I had in cattle and seed, and perhaps in the hiring of

one man, for I could not hope to do all the work without help, if I cultivated many acres.

Once more I decided that it would be better to serve Mr. Middleton, at least until we had proved whether our plan of selling our crops to the gold seekers was feasible, for there would be no other way of disposing of them, and I had grave doubts as to whether the prices for corn and potatoes, which we had been told were willingly paid by the miners, would continue to hold. Our project appeared to me so much like a speculation that I judged it a wise plan to remain under Mr. Middleton's wing. It was well I did so, as will speedily be seen.

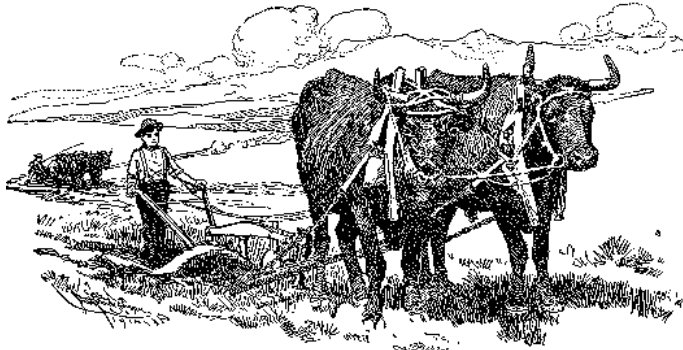


Out of our entire number, there were but five men who held to the original agreement not to waste their time gold hunting. This small company Mrs. Middleton being the only woman, and her children and myself the only young people, set off once more on our travels, journeying by slow stages until we came to a river with the odd name of Fontaine qui Bouille, the boiling spring, where all of us believed we had found what we were looking for.

OUR RANCH

The soil was rich and not so heavy but that we could easily dig ditches from the river into our cornfields, for you must know that in this land to which we had come very little rain falls, and if one would cultivate the ground, he must find some means of keeping it well moistened.

If we settled along this river, we could plant many acres and keep them watered at no other expense than that of ditch digging.. There was not one of the company who was not hopeful that we had arrived at our journey's end, and when we came to a place where the land sloped gently away from the river bank, and the leading team came to a stop, there was no need of any discussion. Before anything had been done except to turn the cattle loose to feed upon the lush grass, we busied ourselves with staking out claims.



From this time on, until we had a fair acreage plowed and corn planted, there was no rest for any of us during the hours of daylight; meanwhile we lived in the wagons as we had done during the journey from Lawrence. Once the planting was over, Mr. Middleton lost no time in building a house for himself. He took pride in doing so, for, as he said to me, it was his belief that our settlement would grow into a town of considerable size, perhaps big enough to be called a city, and he wanted to get the credit of having erected the first building.

BUILDING A DWELLING

I had laughed at those houses in the settlement we came upon after leaving Pueblo, with their roofs of green sods, but when Mr. Middleton and I set about planning the family homestead, we were glad enough to use the same humble material for our roof, because it could be put on more quickly than any other.

In order to save the labor of felling and shaping as many trees as would be needed for high walls, we dug down into the earth four or five feet, so that, as one of the children said, our house was hardly more than a hole in the ground.

The floor was beaten hard by the aid of short lengths of logs which we held upright with pegs for handles, raising and dropping them until the earth was so solid that one's footprints made no mark.



The walls were raised five feet above the top of the excavation, making the height from the floor to where the roof began not less than ten feet on the side which we intended for the front, through which we cut a doorway and window openings.

The roof poles were put on slanting, for it was to be a shed roof, the rear wall of the house being only about seven feet high, and the slope of the top not less than three feet, while the width of the building was only ten. Our covering of sod would serve, on so steep a pitch, to shed water admirably.



In wet weather we did not suffer from the dampness because of our lack of glazed windows, for a blanket hung up in front of the openings served to keep us comfortable, and it was only occasionally that we had to shield ourselves from the outer air, so friendly was the climate.

CORN AND GOLD

We did not allow ourselves to be so occupied with building that we neglected the land.

Only at odd times when there was no pressing work to be done in the fields did we work at home making, and it so happened that on the very day when the first tiny blades of corn pricked up through the brown clods, Mrs. Middleton moved her household goods from the wagon into this shanty which we called a house.

It must not be supposed that we had ceased constantly to hear rumors of finding gold. It had been reported in Lawrence that the gold fever had spent itself and that the time had come for those who desired homes in the Colorado country to be on the spot; but we were no sooner settled, or in the way to being so, on the bank of the river, than the feverish excitement broke out afresh.



We heard from those who passed through our settlement on their way to the mines, that large quantities of gold had been located here, there, and one might almost say

everywhere, and if you could believe all the wild tales that were flying about, you would fancy the entire soil of Colorado was veined with the yellow metal.

A company of men from Chicago, under the leadership of George Johnson, had come upon what they claimed was the richest find yet discovered, and the mine had been named the Chicago Bar.

We learned of this from the throngs of men who passed us at our work, the greater number of whom ridiculed us for being content with such laborious tasks when we might go along with them and reap an unsown harvest of riches.

DREAMS OF A HARVEST

Time and again did those gold-frenzied dreamers laugh us to scorn because we were content to spend our energies building log shanties when we might be handling pick and shovel, and more than once did Mr. Middleton say grimly to me

"Let them laugh! We shall see who has the best of it when autumn comes. The more there are of them, the greater will be the demand for food, and if corn is worth ten cents a pound now, it will surely bring fifteen by wintertime, for some of those fellows, who are counting on taking something from the earth instead of putting anything into it by the way of seed, are likely to go hungry."

How carefully we watched over the corn as it came up, and how astonished we were by the rapidity and luxuriance of its growth! Never before had I seen corn shoot up at such an amazing rate, and I was more than ever convinced that the wealth of this land of Colorado lay in the hands of the farmer rather than under the shovel of the miner.

We dug ditch after ditch, bringing water down across the land which Mr. Middleton had staked out as his own, until every single square yard of it was irrigated as it should be, and

well were we rewarded for the labor, wearisome and severe though it was, by seeing the green stalks springing minute by minute, higher and higher, and stouter and stouter. We had in all six acres covered with the waving grain, and giving promise of a yield even more valuable than that from the rich lodes of the Chicago Bar mine.



DISAPPOINTED PROSPECTORS

When the corn was in tassel, the ditches dug and filled, and a breathing space had come when we might wait more at our ease for the returns from our venture, there appeared at the bank of the river a company of nineteen gold seekers from Missouri, who, having failed in their quest, were now bound homeward, worn out and disheartened.

Their cattle were lean almost to the verge of starvation from having hauled the heavy wagons so many miles over rocky hills and sandy plains, and the men themselves looked as if they had been on the tramp half a dozen years.

News of their coming to camp on our side of the river spread quickly, and all our company, including Mrs. Middleton and the children, went out to welcome them, taking

bread and bacon, for we had had experience before of the appetites of disappointed miners.

Hungry? They were near to famishing, and although it appeared to me as if we carried them plenty of food, every crumb disappeared so suddenly that it seemed as if magic were at work. Even then the travel-worn prospectors looked at us wistfully, their tired eyes asking dumbly for more.



We ministered to their wants that night to the best of our ability, giving them food which should have been kept for ourselves, and never thinking of asking a penny in return.

RETURNING EVIL FOR GOOD

I believe that all of us went to sleep happier for having fed the hungry Missourians; but when we arose at daybreak next morning and looked out on our broad acres covered by a forest of cornstalks swaying to and fro in the summer breeze, our hearts were filled first with amazement and then with hot anger.

Those miners from Missouri, who had come to us almost starving and had had their wants supplied freely, had

actually turned all their cattle into our cornfields, and there the beasts were feeding ravenously, as they trampled down the stalks.

I was the first out of our shanty that morning, and it was fully two minutes before I could persuade myself that people whom we had so befriended were capable of playing us such a mean trick.



The truth was, however, forced home to me, and I called loudly for Mr. Middleton.

Such an uproar did I make in my anger and excitement, that not only Mr. Middleton but his wife and children rushed out to learn what was happening, and then, like myself, they stood in open-mouthed astonishment, gazing at the scene of destruction.

Suddenly we heard distant shouts of anger from up and down the river bank, where the neighboring homesteaders had their fields planted, and, roused from our trance, we all set about trying to drive the hungry beasts from among our growing corn.

STRIVING TO SAVE OUR CORN

It had been many a long day since the poor cattle had come upon such rich fodder, and they were, of course, unwilling to leave it, doubling back and forth when we attempted to drive them along the furrows, and trampling down hill after hill of the stalks in their efforts to remain in so bountiful a pasture.

If we had been astounded at seeing the beasts ruining our fields, we were dumb with angry amazement when those men from Missouri, discovering our efforts to save our crops from destruction, came up with weapons in their hands, barefacedly demanding that we cease to disturb their cattle.

Our people could not stop to argue with them, for all the time the beasts were devouring more and more of the corn. Then it was that the Missourians loudly threatened that they would shoot us down, if we dared persist in driving out the marauders.

DEFENDING OUR OWN

It is not possible for me to set down all which was said at that time, nor is it well that I should do so, for the air was thick with anger, and we who were being thus abused were not, as you may well suppose, tender in our words when we reproached those people.

At first a fight seemed unavoidable, for Mr. Middleton at least was ready to defend his property with his life.

After having been driven back by four or five of the men, he rushed into the shanty, and I, following and seeing him load his rifle, caught frantically at his arm and begged him to consider whether we could stand up against so many. It was as if the distracted man had not realized until that moment how strong the enemy was as compared with our own force. There were not less than nineteen of them, while we had but five

men, six if you choose to count me, and in case of a struggle what chance had we farmers against so many desperate miners?



On every other farm in the neighborhood a similar contest was going on, for the miners had told off three or four men to confront each claim holder, so that we might be frightened into submitting to the depredations of the cattle. Suddenly realizing that he could not safely offer armed resistance, Mr. Middleton bade me hasten and call all our people together into his shanty. "Make them come here at once, Seth!" he cried furiously. "Tell them it is useless for us to resist single-handed. We must join together and form some plan for mutual protection."

A COUNCIL OF WAR

Every moment was precious, for those hungry cattle were making short work of our corn. Breathless with excitement and haste, I ran from claim to claim until I had repeated to each farmer Mr. Middleton's message.



It was a full hour before I could bring all the men to realize that it was folly to oppose the miners until we had formed some plan for defense. Finally the task was accomplished, but when our people had assembled in front of Mr. Middleton's shanty, it was exceedingly difficult for a speaker to hold their attention, so great was the rage which possessed them.

I was not near enough to hear what plan was first determined upon, for I had been sent to drive our horses farther up into the timber, lest the Missourians seize them; but when I got back, Mr. Middleton was on the point of setting out for the river bank, where the men from Missouri had gathered.



I followed him, curious to know why he was going out alone and unarmed to confront those who had so plainly shown themselves to be our enemies.

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE ENEMY

The Missourians seemed bewildered at our sudden change of plan, and they waited our coming massed in a little company, watching curiously all that went on, while at the same time they were sure that their oxen were allowed to continue the ravages among the corn.

I expected that Mr. Middleton would use violent language; therefore my surprise was great when he began in a

mild tone as if addressing friends, but at the same time he spoke firmly, demanding that they allow us to rid our fields of their cattle, or else repay us for the damage as much money as the corn was then worth. I cannot remember now his exact words; but the substance of it was that he demanded half as much as he counted on receiving for the ripened crop.



THE MISSOURI MINERS MAKE SPORT OF US

He had hardly finished speaking when the Missouri miners laughed long and loud, behaving as if it were impossible for them to speak for amusement, and all the while Mr. Middleton stood calmly facing them, determined, but unable to enforce his demands by so much as a hair's breadth.

Presently one of those fellows we had fed so generously only the night before, swaggered up to Mr. Middleton like a bully, and shaking his fist savagely, shouted that their cattle must have fodder; that they would take as

much of our corn as they wanted; perhaps at the end of three days they would be off and trouble us no more.

At the end of three days! Long before then every blade of green would have been devoured. He might as well have said plainly that he would go when there was nothing left, and had I been in Mr. Middleton's place I would have told him without mincing words that they were thieves.

"Mind, you shall pay us for our corn," Mr. Middleton repeated calmly. "The price will be less, if you take your cattle away now; but you will certainly have to give us a fair return for what has been eaten."

"And when do you expect to get the money?" the leader of the Missourians asked with a rude laugh which exasperated me more even than the mirth of the others.

"Before you break camp we shall receive our pay, and you are to decide whether the account shall be closed now, or shall run on until we bankrupt you."

HOW TO COLLECT THE DEBT

Again the miners held their sides with mirth, which was their way of showing that they believed us powerless to mend matters, and having said his say, Mr. Middleton turned sharply on his heel and walked slowly away, I following closely behind him, in the direction of our shanty.

I made bold at last to pluck at his sleeve and inquire by what means he counted on getting from the miners, who doubtless had spent all their money, the price of our corn, and he answered with a grim smile, which had in it more of anger than of mirth:

"Follow me, Seth, and you shall hear our scheme for collecting the debt, for you must have a hand in putting it through."

As a matter of course, I followed him, and at our cabin door we found the other settlers awaiting our return with stern, set faces. This was ample evidence to me that they intended to resist the Missourians at any cost, even of their lives.



The plan outlined was a simple one; but whether it could be carried into execution was quite another question. It consisted simply in our hovering around the cornfields, and at every opportunity, when safely out of sight of our foes, driving off their cattle, one by one, until all the beasts had been taken beyond the settlement, where we had a common pasture for our animals.

Once all the beasts were within an inclosure, so Mr. Middleton declared, we would hold them at the muzzles of our guns until their owners had paid for the damage done to the corn.

WE TAKE POSSESSION OF THE CATTLE

Much to my surprise, the Missourians did not keep a very strict watch upon us. They appeared satisfied with the assurance that we were taking no direct action to drive the cattle out of the fields, and what had promised to be a difficult task proved to be quite simple.

By good fortune I was one of the first to make a capture, and under cover of the standing grain I drove one of the oxen out past Mr. Middleton's house and back into the pasture, where three of our men were standing guard with loaded weapons.

From then on, throughout the day, we were kept on the jump, and when night fell we had half of the oxen corralled without the Missourians apparently being any the wiser. The darkness made our task still easier, and by two hours before midnight the fields were cleared of trespassers, although the crops which had promised us so rich a return were sadly shorn of their beauty.



The greater part of our corn had been either trampled down or cropped close to the roots, and I thought sorrowfully that even if we kept the cattle, taking in addition all the wagons and stores these robbers had with them, their value would not be equivalent to as much, or half as much, as we had counted on receiving for the harvested crop.

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE BATTLE

That night our people slept securely, believing the Missourians would not guess what we had done until daylight revealed it; but you may count it as very certain that before there was the faintest sign of color in the eastern sky, every man, and I reckoned myself as one, stood on the alert, ready to defend his rights.



It was nearly sunrise before the miners discovered how the farmers they had supposed helpless had tricked them, and they remained a full half hour discussing the matter before making any move toward regaining possession of their cattle.

A WAR OF WORDS

As the first broad shafts of light were striking across the fields, the Missourians came on in warlike array, every man of them with a loaded rifle in his hands. Our people, meanwhile, had taken station midway between the cornfield and the pasture where there were trees in sufficient number to afford shelter, in case it should be necessary to fight.

Mr. Middleton checked the advance of the Missourians by stepping out from behind his covert and demanding by what right they were attacking us.

Then began a battle of words, for the prospectors attempted to carry matters with a high hand, and threatened that if their cattle were not allowed to go back into our cornfields without delay, they would open fire upon us, shooting down every man as if he were a dangerous beast.

Mr. Middleton unquestionably gave them as good as they sent, for in reply to this unreasonable and unjust demand he repeated his declaration of the night before, that the cattle would be held until we received fair payment for such of our crops as had been destroyed, and wound up with the bold statement that every one of us was determined to stand to his gun while life remained.

THE PROSPECTORS TRY TO KILL US

Mr. Middleton had hardly finished speaking when one of the miners fired at him point blank, but, fortunately, without taking careful aim. Before another weapon could be discharged, he was behind a tree, screened from view, ready to use his rifle in self-defense.

You may be sure that I had already sought shelter behind one of the trees. In fact, when the Missourians first came in sight. I took good care not to expose myself to a stray shot, although the idea never occurred to me that those lawless

miners would actually open fire upon us, when it was they and not we who were in the wrong.



A REAL BATTLE

Within five minutes after the first shot, we of the settlement were engaged in a bloody fight, and although I was as frightened as a boy well could be, I was very careful to make every bullet tell.

Now and then I could hear Mr. Middleton shout out, not only to me but to the men, that we must make every missile count, now that we were certain that these lawless men had no other thought than that of shedding blood wantonly.

Strange as it may seem, I cannot set down of my own knowledge very much concerning that battle, which lasted nearly three hours. I was like a person in a dreadful nightmare, not realizing what I did and having always before me the terrible fear that in another moment I would be sent into the Beyond, or be crippled for life by a Missouri bullet.

Everything before my eyes was the color of blood. The smell of gunpowder must have mounted to my brain, for I did not grasp anything clearly save that the barrel of my musket was growing hot from having been discharged so rapidly, and that my store of ammunition was nearly exhausted.



A TRUCE

When I came to my senses, I gathered that during those three hours of worse than needless battle, two of our men had been severely wounded, and no less than five of the Missourians were much the worse for having dared to face a sheltered foe.

Mr. Middleton declared we had killed two; but of that we had no proof, save as we saw them carrying away man after man either severely wounded or dead.

The first idea I had that the enemy wanted peace was when one of our people shouted to me to stop firing; and when

I obeyed, staggering out into the open, hardly knowing what I did, but being possessed with the idea that I must show myself, a certain number of the men from Missouri were fronting us with their weapons lying on the ground before them.



Then I turned to one of our people, asking if the fight was over.

"Ay, lad, it would seem so, and none too soon, for we have two disabled, and if those ruffians had stood to their rifles a while longer, we might have been wiped out of existence."

It turned out that the men from Missouri were the first to show signs of wanting a truce, and our people were only too glad to grant it.

TRYING TO MAKE TERMS OF PEACE

Then came another parley, during which the miners offered to go away, if we would give up their cattle peaceably; but Mr. Middleton held firmly to his demand for payment.



It looked as if we might once more be forced to defend ourselves, for the Missourians flatly refused to agree to anything of the kind, declaring that in a wild country they had the right to pasture famished cattle wherever fodder was offered, but when Mr. Middleton held out stoutly, they decided to confer among themselves, and answer us before sundown.

That was a sorry way in which to inaugurate the settlement of a new country, and I said to myself that if there

was any truth in omens, this town which we had so hopefully planned to build by the river side would prove an ill-fated place.

It seemed strange to me then, and does now, that, after we had cared for our wounded, and while we were awaiting the decision of those Missouri miners, we should have decided to remain where we were and build up a town; and even while the reek of battle still hung thick in the air, we agreed that the place should be known as Fountain City, naming it after the river.

I remember well that Mr. Middleton declared that he would defend his own in the new town against all oppression, that it would in time become a prosperous city, and that we who had fought to save our corn would ever be known as its founders.

At that time all of us believed that we would do as he had said, and yet before many months passed, we came reluctantly to the belief that it would be better to look for another location, even though we had already ditched the land to such an extent that it would bring forth bountiful crops.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE ENEMY SURRENDERS

We waited until half an hour or more after sunset, when once again the Missourians came toward us; but this time they were without weapons and tried to make it appear as if their intentions were friendly.

They no longer refused to pay for the damage which had been done. Although outnumbering us three to one, they had come to realize that we might be able to carry out our threat of holding their cattle in payment for the injury to our crops, and it was absolutely necessary they should recover the beasts in order to return to their homes.

They seemed to have only one desire, which was to make the best bargain possible, and until far into the night they haggled over the price to be paid, at first claiming that they were penniless and without sufficient provisions for the homeward journey; but, later on, finding that our people held out stoutly, they admitted having considerable money with them.



Whether Mr. Middleton held out for as much as we had counted as our due, I cannot rightly say, but on the following morning the men paid over for damage to the growing crops five times as much as we could have gained from a bountiful harvest in Lawrence, giving the greater part of the amount in money and the remainder in goods.

THE PROSPECTORS DEPART

When the Missourians yoked up their beasts and drove away, with their wounded in the wagon, the men were no longer swaggering and insolent, but conducted themselves in a fairly decent manner, while I, boy though I was, felt that we had done a great thing in holding our own and forcing them to repair the wrong they had done us.

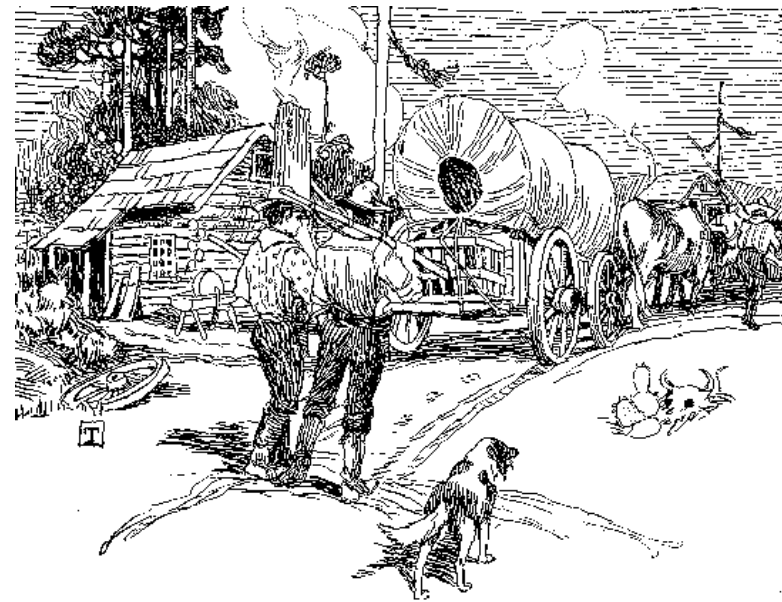


But now, grown older, I question whether we were wholly within our rights to hold the cattle. It seems to me that we should have been justified in killing the beasts that were trespassing upon our lands, but to seize them and fight a pitched battle, taking the law into our own hands, may not have been right, although at the time we benefited by it, and plumed ourselves not a little in having stood off this force, so much larger than our own, and bringing them to terms.

As soon as our troublesome visitors had departed, we set about repairing the mischief as far as possible, replanting the hills where the corn had been trampled down or eaten, and otherwise effacing the evidences of the struggle.

THE GROWTH OF OUR CITY

As the days wore on, it seemed certain that we might fulfill the prediction Mr. Middleton had made when he said this Fountain City of ours was destined to grow into a prosperous settlement. Well-meaning men joined us who had come into the country to make homes, rather than to seek for gold, adding to our numbers day by day until for a full mile on the western side of the stream, houses such as Mr. Middleton had built stretched far away into the green of the outlying forest. So rapid was the growth of our city during that first summer, that I prophesied that it would within another year outstrip Lawrence.



So, even now, I believe it might have grown and prospered, but for that great curse, the thirst for gold, which seized upon our people at intervals, when miners coming out disappointed or going into the hills full of hope, told of this lucky find or of that man who, after only two months of labor, had become fabulously rich.

Despite the fact that we were situated as pleasantly as any people could desire, and although the lands were yielding so bountifully that it really seemed as if one need only to thrust in the seed and then lie at ease until the crop was ripe for harvest, yet our people, or some of them at least, yearned to try their "luck" in the diggings. We might on one day gain four or five new settlers, to lose on the next day seven or eight who had gone suddenly mad in their desire to try mining.

FARMING OR MINING

Surely we tillers of the earth got more wealth out of it than did those who searched among the hills, or in the beds of the streams. There was a steady sale for everything we raised, owing to the hundreds upon hundreds of miners who came through our settlement, and we saw the time before snow came when we were enabled to sell all the corn we had raised for fifteen cents a pound, while potatoes could be disposed of readily at from forty to fifty cents a pound.

Talk about digging for gold! We who had founded Fountain City were digging it out of the earth by the basketful! Even the lucky ones who made what was called a strike were not averaging for their day's labor half so much as we who depended on the honest labor of our hands.

MY SHARE OF THE HARVEST

Had I staked out a claim for myself and planted as much of it as I could have handled, I might have paid for the

land many times over from the proceeds of one half the crops. Yet, as it was, Mr. Middleton gave me wages in proportion to the prices he received, so that when the season was ended I had in hand one hundred and thirty-two dollars; besides this, I owned a horse which, having suddenly gone lame, had been left behind by one of the miners, but which had grown apparently sound once more.



You will recall that some of the people who journeyed with us from Lawrence had been attacked by the gold fever. Finding it was not possible to gain a livelihood by mining, they had wandered here and there seeking a place for a settlement, until they had come to what was known as Cherry Creek. There they staked out claims to one hundred and eighty acres of land on the east side of the stream, calling the place St. Charles, and believing, as had we of Fountain City, that they were laying the foundation of a great town.

MR. MIDDLETON GOES ON A JOURNEY

When we had harvested our crops and had sold all the corn, save what was kept for our own needs, Mr. Middleton decided to look up our old neighbors, and leaving me in charge of the house, he departed, making use of my horse, and agreeing to pay me a dollar a day for the services of the animal.

In order that the reasons which led us soon after to abandon Fountain City may be made plain, I must go ahead somewhat in my story, and repeat what Mr. Middleton told his wife and me when he came back from the journey to the new town of St. Charles.



It appears that when he arrived at Cherry Creek he found that our people from Lawrence, having grown homesick, or having again been attacked by the gold fever, had deserted their claims, some of them making for the mountains, and others returning to Lawrence with the intention of coming back in the spring.

At about this time, or it may have been before the people abandoned St. Charles, a company of men from Iowa came into the Colorado country, and decided to settle on the west bank of Cherry Creek. When Mr. Middleton arrived there and found that his old neighbors were no longer in the vicinity, the new settlement, Auraria, had already taken on the appearance of a real town, and it was such a likely place for a city that emigrants were gathering there rapidly.

AURARIA AND DENVER

Mr. Middleton became possessed of the idea that by settling down in this new town as a trader he might make more money than if he remained in Fountain City farming. While he was turning his new project over in his mind, a company of men arrived from Leavenworth.

Instead of buying land within the limits of Auraria, these people went across to the settlement of St. Charles, which I have said had been abandoned for the time being by those who first staked out the claim, and took possession of it, as a Colorado man would say, "by jumping the claim." In other words, although this land had been taken up in due form and several buildings erected, it was not then occupied, and the newcomers gave no heed to the previous owners, but claimed that the land was theirs by right of possession.

Then they renamed the place Denver, in honor of the governor of Kansas.

MR. MIDDLETON TURNS TRADER

After he had explained all this in such simple language that I came somewhere near understanding it, Mr. Middleton broached the thoughts which must have been in his mind for some time, by declaring his purpose of giving up farming. He proposed to leave his claim in Fountain City, and to set

himself up as a merchant in one or the other of the Cherry Creek towns, leaning, however, to Auraria.

It seemed to him, as it did to me, that those who had settled in Auraria came nearer to owning the land than did those in Denver, and that it was not unlikely serious trouble might arise when those men who had staked out the town of St. Charles, returned to take possession of it once more.



At first I supposed it was Mr. Middleton's purpose to leave me behind and I was half glad that such should be the case, for I said to myself that I would hold his land and house, and thus become in truth a farmer, with sufficient backing to enable me to hire laborers and to put all the acres within the limits of the claim under cultivation.

Mr. Middleton may have guessed the thought in my mind, for he went on gravely, before giving his wife time to express her opinion of his new scheme:—

MR. MIDDLETON'S PLAN

"It is not possible, Seth, that we can continue to sell corn and potatoes at such prices as we have been receiving. There are many more people taking up land to make homes for themselves in Colorado than there were last spring, all of whom, learning of our success, are bent on trying the same venture. Therefore I predict that by the time another harvest comes, farm produce will be selling at somewhat near its real value."

"Even though that be true, sir, can we not reap a richer harvest than on any farm you know of in Kansas?"

"Ay, lad, if you are inclined to give all your life to farming, it will be possible to succeed fairly well; but I have a notion that he who sets himself up as a merchant now, while people are flocking here by hundreds and by thousands to build up new cities, will have a fair chance of prospering exceedingly. Whoever has goods to sell such as the newcomers are needing, will double or treble his money at the cost of less labor and less danger than a bare livelihood can be earned here in Fountain City. You have nearly three hundred dollars in cash; invest it with me, taking such proportion of the profits of the business as your capital entitles you to, and we will set up a store together in Auraria."

DECIDING A WEIGHTY PROBLEM

As a matter of course I was greatly flattered at his offer to make a partner of me; but I was too young and inexperienced to grasp fully the advantages of his scheme.

It seemed to me wellnigh impossible that we could get goods so far out in the wilderness, having them hauled by ox teams such a distance as would be necessary, and sell them at any great profit, because of the heavy cost of bringing them over the trail.

As he went on with the details of his plan, however, and proved that there was small likelihood of my losing the little horde which I was depending upon for my start in life, the scheme began to look more attractive, and when he ended I glanced at Mrs. Middleton.

She, reading the question in my eyes, said quickly:—

"I do not believe, Seth, that it would be well for you to remain here alone. Even though Fountain City has grown rapidly, those who know best are not inclined to believe that it will continue to prosper. My firm opinion is, it would be better for you to cast in your lot with us, for I have come to look upon you as one of the family."

I trembled at the thought of venturing my small store of money, for if it should be lost, I would be penniless, and even worse off, because in that new town of Auraria there was little chance I could stake out such a claim as I already had at Fountain City.

Yet because of their friendly urging I agreed to the plan readily, and thus, instead of continuing as a farmer, as I had always hoped to be, I came to be as feverishly eager to adventure in the new business as I had ever been to search for gold when that fever was upon me, and repeatedly begged Mr. Middleton to make no delay in setting off to buy goods.

I BECOME MR. MIDDLETON'S PARTNER

Before he left Fountain City all the details of the partnership between us were agreed upon. I was to surrender into his keeping my precious savings, which amounted at that time to two hundred and ninety-three dollars. In addition, I was to put in my horse at a valuation of one hundred dollars, and instead of demanding from Mr. Middleton the price of a dollar a day which he had agreed to pay me for the use of the animal, the hire was roughly reckoned at half cost, or, in other words, I was given credit for the sum of four hundred dollars

in this new concern, which was to be known as "Middleton & Wagner."

The thought that my name would some day appear painted upon a sign over a shop doorway, as being a partner with Mr. Middleton, made me feel as if I had already attained to a man's estate.



Indeed from the time I learned what the name of the new firm was to be, no one could have persuaded me to keep to my chosen career of farming. I was puffed up quite a bit with pride, and at night, alone in the dark with no one to hear me, I practiced repeating again and again the name of "Middleton & Wagner," until I fancied I could read it in golden letters upon a black ground, in some conspicuous place, where every one might see and admire it.

Fortunately, perhaps, I had little time to indulge in dreams, for work was plenty.

Mr. Middleton needed slight urging from me to set off for Leavenworth without delay to buy such goods as could be sold to the best advantage in a new country. When he had gone, it fell to me to move the family with all our belongings from Fountain City to Auraria, where we were to live in the wagon until the return of my partner.

PREPARATIONS FOR A CHANGE OF HOMES

If there had been any grief in my heart at leaving our first settlement, it would have been soothed when

I saw our neighbors also making preparations to leave; but my mind was too deeply stirred by the excitement of departure to leave place for sorrow.

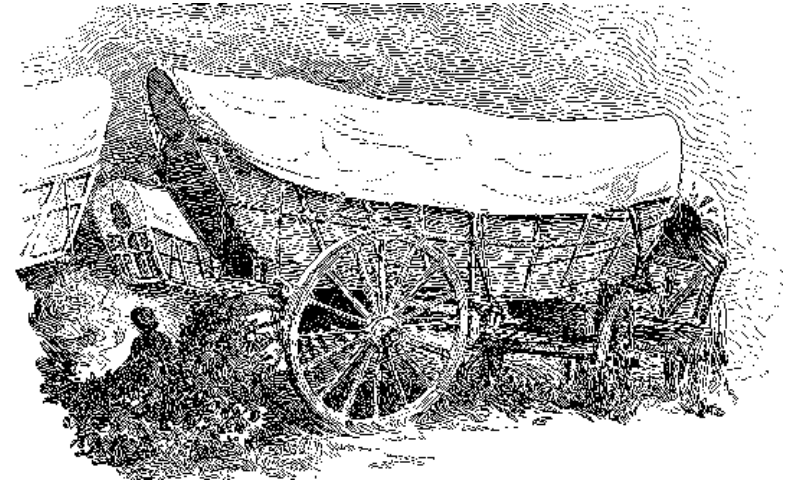
Two had decided to join the gold seekers, and the others, learning that it was Mr. Middleton's purpose to move to Auraria, immediately announced their intention of accompanying him. Within a week after the firm of "Middleton & Wagner" had come into existence, we who could rightfully be called the original settlers of Fountain City were making ready to leave it.

Because there were three families of us journeying in company to the new town, I had less anxiety than would otherwise have been the case. Those neighbors of ours, more experienced in such matters than a lad of my age, at once took charge of affairs after Mr. Middleton had left for Leavenworth, and I was called upon to do no more than obey orders, which suited me better than a position of greater responsibility.

Once more we set off on the trail, this time, however, with brighter dreams even than when we departed from Lawrence, and I felt certain that at last the time had come when I could take my place among men as a man and not as a boy.

I shall not delay my story by telling how we fared, sleeping in the wagons at night with no thought of danger, and

having with us only as many cattle as could be picketed near at hand, where the grass was so abundant that there was little risk of their straying.



THE ARRIVAL AT AURARIA

It was hardly more than a pleasant summer excursion, and when we came within sight of the two towns of Auraria and Denver, I said to Myself, and repeated it to Mrs. Middleton, that we were certainly wise in coming to a place through which must pass all the people who were rushing into the country, either in search of gold or of homes.

I thought joyfully that we had found here the one spot above all others in this Colorado country that would prove most to our advantage, and when we drew up the wagons in a circle that night, within a short half mile from the outermost shanties of the settlement, I was almost too excited to sleep.

Who would choose to be a very successful farmer, when he might have his name emblazoned in golden letters on a signboard proclaiming him, for all the world to see, as one of the merchants of Auraria?

We were not the only people who encamped about those two settlements. I believe there were at least three hundred wagons in sight when I unyoked the oxen at the close of the day's work, and within a wide radius on all sides were white tents dotting the plain until it looked as if a mighty army had come up to besiege the new settlers.

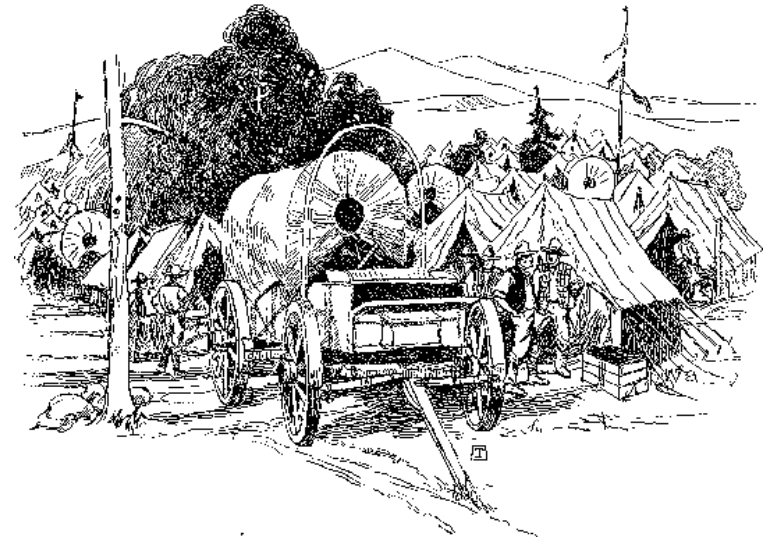
THE TOWN OF DENVER

As has already been said, Mr. Middleton and I had decided that Auraria was the settlement in which we would set up our shop, because it seemed as if we stood less chance there of being molested, and yet we made a mistake, as can be told by what I read in print very shortly after the sign of Middleton & Wagner had been nailed up over a building containing a stock of hardware and carpenter's materials.

This is what was set down concerning Denver, which was once called St. Charles, copied word for word as Mr. John Cotton Dana wrote it, lest you should think I have been drawing a long bow:—

"Denver was a rival of Auraria. Her supremacy was settled early in 1859 by thirty wagons which came up the Platte and unloaded their merchandise on the Denver side of Cherry Creek. In the spring of 1859 a large company, perhaps one thousand, were encamped in and about the new town. The Pikes Peak excitement became intense. A new gold fever was on. Mr. William M. Byers reached Denver April 21, 1859, with a printing outfit, and issued the first number of the first paper printed in Colorado April 23rd. On his way across he met the returning tide. Report said one hundred and fifty thousand started that spring across the plains; fifty thousand turned back; one hundred thousand went on to the mountains; not over forty thousand of them stayed. The early months of 1859 were troublous times; the foolish, reckless gold seekers, set west on half knowledge, tried to lay the blame for their

folly on the shoulders of others. Gold in paying quantities was as yet far from common."



Well, of course, we were not able to look ahead to see the day when Auraria would be swallowed by Denver, but settled ourselves on the outskirts of the town, looking about for a claim where we might build a store. I took it upon myself to search for a location, and if opportunity had offered I would have bought any piece of land at a reasonable price, without waiting for Mr. Middleton's opinion.

WE HIRE A SHOP

Perhaps it was fortunate that I did not succeed, for by the time he came back with information that he had arranged for the hauling of the stock of hardware and general building material, so many new settlers had flocked into the town of Denver, as to make it seem the more desirable town.

While we were still making out to live in the wagons, disappointed prospectors came pouring into the settlement like a flood in springtime, the greater number of whom appeared to

have no juster idea of the rights of others than had those people from Missouri who attacked us at Fountain City.



With nothing to do save care for the cattle night and morning, moving them about from place to place to find fresh pasturage, it was only natural I should hear and see everything that was going on, and that I should become almost a part of those two tides which were surging, one towards the mountains and the other away from them.

From the newcomers I heard only hopeful talk of gold which had been found in various localities, or I listened to the threats of these disappointed ones who declared they would take it out of the men who had lured them from their homes.

I REGRET HAVING TURNED MERCHANT

Hardly any one kept a level head, and even though my mind's eye could still discern that sign with the golden letters which proclaimed me a merchant and a man of standing among men, I often regretted that we had abandoned the claim at Fountain City where, although we might not have been able to gather in great wealth, we could have lived honestly and

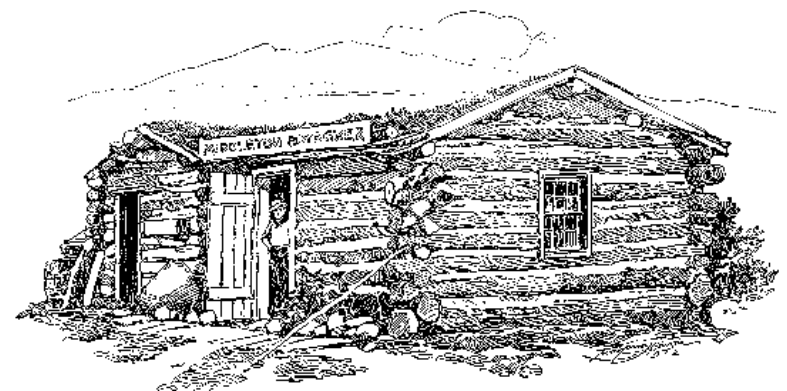
soberly. No one had urged us to move from Fountain City to Auraria; there was no reason, save our own will, why we should have done so; but having come, I felt pledged to stand by my decision like a man.

The looked-for day of Mr. Middleton's return at last arrived, and we hired a log building, putting up over the door no gaudy sign such as I had dreamed of, but a roughhewn plank with the names, "Middleton & Wagner," painted on it in the rudest of letters.

Yet I surveyed it with swelling pride, never entering the doorway without stopping for an instant to crane my neck and gaze up at that name which showed without doubt that I had at last attained to manhood.

HOW WE TRANSPORTED OUR GOODS

Mr. Middleton had found it a difficult job to get transportation for the goods which he bought in Leavenworth. All the wagon trains setting out from that place to the Colorado country were loaded with the goods of the emigrants, and so strong was the tide of people setting toward the mines that any one who could not command a team of his own was forced to seek high and low, and end by paying extravagant prices to people who would consent to carry his goods over the trail.



Those crazy prospectors offered to pay almost any price to get their goods hauled, acting more like madmen than like sensible citizens, for it seemed as if they believed that an hour earlier in arriving at the mines would make them rich beyond the dreams of avarice, while by delaying ever so short a time they might lose all chance of getting their share of the gold which nature had hidden so cunningly.



Mr. Middleton had been able to arrange for hauling only a part of the merchandise he had bought, trusting that the remainder would be forwarded as soon as might be possible. Thus, when our place of business was first opened, we had only the skeleton of a stock of goods; but yet it made a beginning, and gave me the pleasure of regarding myself as a real merchant.

When I learned that we must wait many a long day before getting our shop in proper order, it seemed to me that many chances were slipping by us. I had become somewhat like those would-be gold seekers who counted every moment precious; and I might have fretted until I had become a nuisance to those around me, had not Mr. Middleton one day reproved me

MR. MIDDLETON'S ADVICE

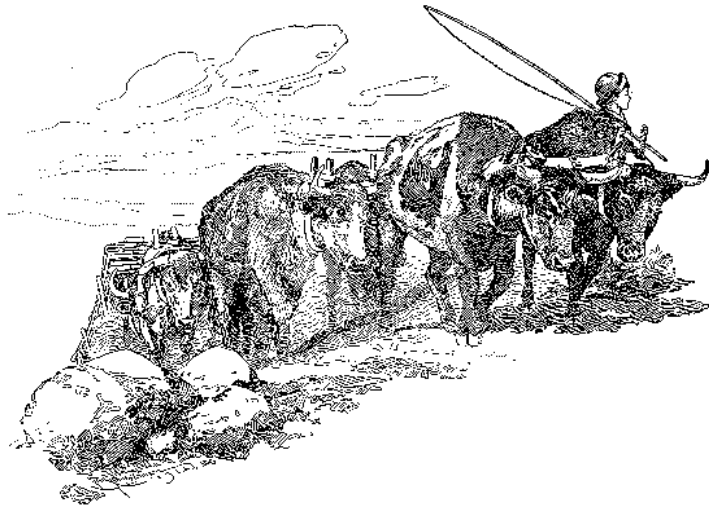
"Take things calmly, Seth, my boy. Weeks, perhaps months, will go by before this vast army of gold seekers will be able to return to their homes. The time is not yet ripe for us to sell our building material, because thousands upon thousands of people now at the mines must come to the realization that gold is not to be had simply by reaching out one's hand, before they will be ready to turn their attention to making homes and settling down to sober employment. When they have once decided to remain here to help build up this land, we shall find our customers. So sit you quiet, Seth, and while we are waiting we must fill in our time with building a home for the family, because we shall not be satisfied to live in a wagon all our days."

Our shop was on that side of the creek which had been named Auraria, and it seemed natural that we should build a home near by; but failing to find any place which could be purchased at a reasonable price, Mr. Middleton crossed the creek into the younger settlement of Denver. There, from a friend, he bought sufficient land for a home, a lot nearly two hundred feet square, and although situated in another town, it was not so far from our place of business that we would need spend much time walking to and fro.

Twenty miles away was a sawmill that had been set up by a Mr. Oakes, on the bank of Plum Creek, and there it was possible for us to procure lumber, if we could find means of hauling it.

This was well within our power, for Mr. Middleton still owned the four yoke of cattle which had drawn our wagons from Fountain City, therefore I set about working as teamster, while he played carpenter to the best of his ability, hiring now and then to help him a man who, returning penniless from the gold fields, had been forced to turn his hand to whatever he might, in order to provide food for himself.

I shall not undertake to set down here how we built this home, the second one set up by us since we left Kansas, for it happened that I knew very little about it.



THE TIDE OF EMIGRATION

The reason for my ignorance sounds more like a fairy tale than sober truth, and yet there is nothing in it which may not be proved by any man who lived either in Denver or in Auraria during the year 1859.

I have quoted already the words of another regarding the human tide which rolled toward the mines and then back again, therefore it is but repetition when I say that no less than sixty thousand men came back from their gold seeking disappointed, and very many hundreds of them, perhaps thousands, had loaded their wagons with goods of various kinds, counting on selling them in the mines, where it was supposed gold would be so plentiful.

Having become discouraged, however, all this vast army, grown homesick, turned their faces toward the Missouri River, or whatever portion of the country they came from, and rather than haul back the goods with which their carts were

laden, actually threw the merchandise away on the road. The cattle, neglected to the verge of starvation while the owners were off gold digging, were in no fit condition to haul heavy loads the distance of five or six hundred miles which lay between them and the more thickly settled country.

These people, and there were thousands of them, had become so disheartened and longed so ardently for home, that their minds had only the desire to get out of the country into which they claimed they had been lured by falsehood, and to accomplish this they were ready to sacrifice everything.

I am telling no more than the plain truth when I say that the trail from the diggings down to Denver was lined with goods of every description which had been abandoned by the owners.



FINDING GOODS BY THE ROADSIDE

I had had ample evidence of this while hauling lumber from Plum Creek, and when I had brought in three loads, which made up sufficient material with which to close in a fairly good-sized house, I suggested to Mr. Middleton that money could be made by driving along the trail and gathering up this abandoned property.

I proffered my suggestion with some timidity, believing he would call me foolish for imagining it might be profitable to pick up what others had thrown away; but greatly to my surprise he grasped at the idea eagerly, and declared that instead of taking time just then to finish putting up the house, he would join me.

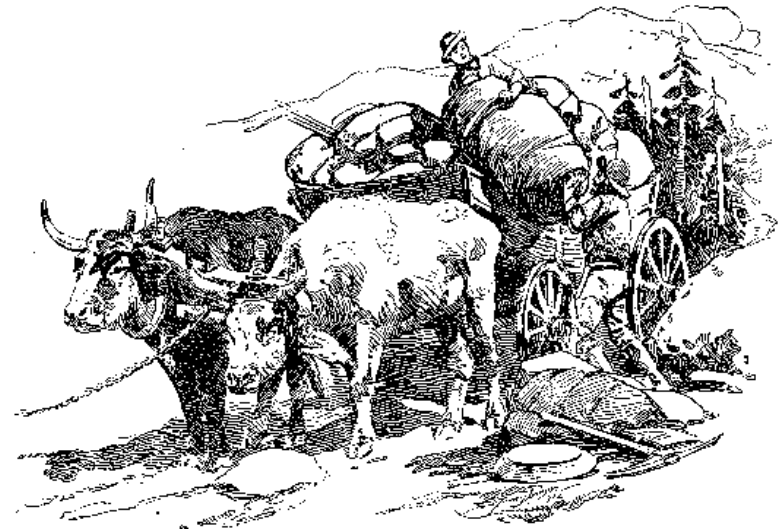


To furnish Mrs. Middleton and the children with shelter in our absence, he bought a canvas tent from one of the returning prospectors, and there we left the good woman and the boys, while we set out on this new venture, closing for the time being our shop with its incomplete stock of goods.

Six times we drove out from Auraria, over a distance of not more than forty miles, and six times did we return with our wagon loaded to its utmost capacity, having picked up from the wayside, without paying a single dollar for it, valuable stuff which would in due time command a ready sale at the settlement.

When the last load had been brought in, by which I mean the last which we could afford to go in search of, because the remainder of our stock of goods had by now been

carted from Leavenworth, Mr. Middleton, roughly figuring up the results of our labor, announced that we had at least doubled our capital, or in other words, instead of owning four hundred dollars' worth of goods as I had when he made the purchase at Leavenworth, I could count myself as having eight hundred dollars invested.



It was a handsome profit for a boy of my age, when nothing save the labor of his hands and the use of the oxen were to be balanced against it.

GOLD IN COLORADO

It is possible I have made it appear as if there was no gold to be found in the country of Colorado, and that all who went among the mountains were disappointed in their quest.

This, however, is not the fact, although it is true that the majority of the gold seekers failed of success. Here and there wonderful finds were made, and it was these occasional discoveries which caused the fever to continue.

Word would come to us in Auraria that a gold-bearing quartz vein had been discovered, and while this brought luck

to possibly four or five men out of two hundred thousand, the story sped eastward until rumor had it that every man had made a lucky strike.



Now and then, at intervals of perhaps a week or ten days, we would get definite word that rich lodes had been found, and then those people who had come back from the mines disappointed, but who still had sufficient money for the necessary expenses, would turn their faces once more toward Pikes Peak, perhaps only to be did appointed again, or, in very few cases, to succeed finally.

It was the good fortune of the few which kept the general excitement up to fever pitch, while the failure of the many caused one town and another to spring suddenly up, for the wiser ones realized that wealth was to be gained in this land of Colorado, even though it could be better won by raising crops than by delving in the earth.

I knew of perhaps half a dozen men who were making themselves wondrously rich through fortunate discoveries of gold, and I saw thousands upon thousands, who, having spent every dollar they had brought with them from the east, were

returning home disappointed and hopeless, declaring that all the tales told about this country were untrue, and that they had been persuaded by false reports to risk their all in a fruitless venture.

HOW THE CITIES GREW

I shall not weary you by any long recountal of the troubles and annoyances which beset the firm of "Middleton & Wagner"; but rather I shall describe how the country became settled around us.

Let me set down what I have since read regarding our settlement of Auraria, and the making of this country of Colorado.

In his account of the events of this year of 1859 Bancroft, the historian, writes:—



"Those who returned to the states carried reports sufficiently confirmed by the gold exhibited, to re-arouse the gold fever, causing an emigration the following summer equal to, if not exceeding, that of 1859. The settlements already founded were greatly enlarged, and new ones made both in the mining and agricultural districts. Over six hundred miles of

road from the Missouri to the mountains, a stream of wealth rolled in, which was expected to flow back again in a stream of gold dust a few months later.

"Fortunately for the prosperity of Colorado at this period, there was nothing to interrupt the influx of people or of property. The freight trains of Russell and Major dragged their winding lengths along the Arkansas or Smoky Hill route day after day, bringing cargoes of goods, which were stored at their depots and sold to retail merchants on their own account, or carrying the goods of others. Many thousand wagons stretched in a continuous line along the Platte also, from its mouth to its source. Prices were necessarily high, and likewise high because everybody who had anything to sell desired to become rich out of it without loss of time. Mail facilities were introduced, and more quickly than could have been anticipated, correspondence with the east became established."

A POST OFFICE IN AURARIA

This company which Mr. Russell and Mr. Major formed was got together early in the year 1859 for the purpose of running a stage line from Leavenworth to Denver to carry the mail. The concern was called the Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express Company, and it charged, as extra postage on each letter, twenty-five cents, leaving the mail at the post office of Auraria and other towns.

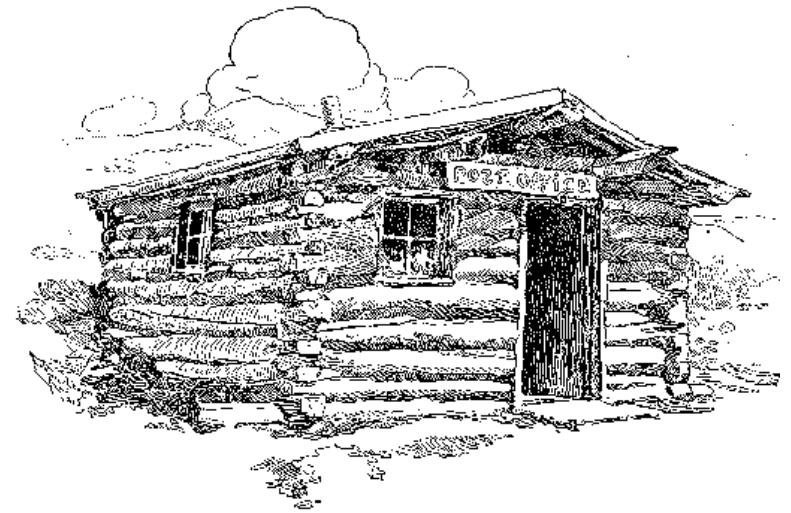
The postmaster at Leavenworth delivered all mail matter for Pikes Peak to this express company, so long as they would carry it without expense to the government.

Therefore almost as soon as a dozen or more settlements had sprung up, we had a post office in our town of Auraria, and not only that, but we could calculate on receiving letters to and from Leavenworth and beyond at least once every week.

LETTERS FROM HOME

How often have I stood in our shop door watching those homesick miners as they waited for the coming of Russell and Major's teams, hoping to receive letters from kinsmen and friends in the East, and perhaps also expecting to receive remittances so that they might be able to return to their homes wiser, and certainly sadder, men.

At such times when we had reason to believe the wagon was near at hand, the street near the post office would be thronged with anxious-looking, expectant men, many of whom I have seen trembling as with an ague fit, while watching the postmaster sort out the mail matter for delivery.



Then long lines would be formed, reaching far up the street, the men waiting patiently, moving pace by pace, being perhaps two or three hours before they could gain the post-office window, to find, in many cases, that there was nothing for them. I have seen men, who had failed to receive any word from the loved ones at home, turn away with heartsickness written plainly on their faces.



You must bear in mind that we of Auraria considered our town much the more important of the two, because we had a post office and Russell and Major's storehouses, while Denver claimed no such elegances of civilization. They on the east side of the creek, however, had a hotel, not much better to be sure than a log building with a canvas roof, perhaps thirty feet wide and a hundred feet long; but nevertheless it was a hotel, and we in Auraria were decidedly jealous because we could boast of no such structure.

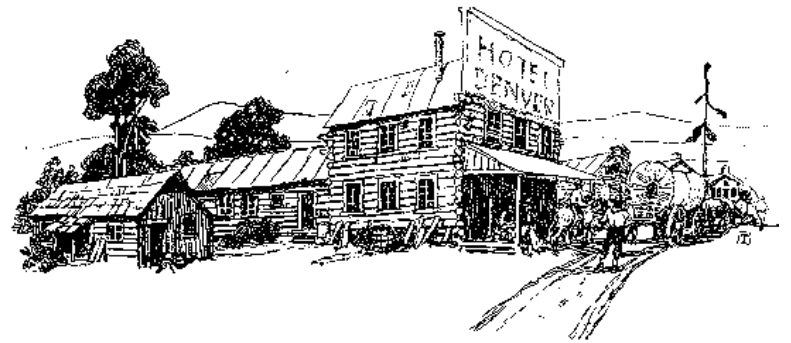
HOW OUR BUSINESS FLOURISHED

The firm of "Middleton & Wagner" had no reason to complain of slack business. From the day when we got the last of our stock from Leavenworth and were fitted up with a full line of building materials, together with the somewhat scanty stock of provisions and general merchandise which I had gathered from the trail, we had all the work we could handle, and I knew without Mr. Middleton's telling me that we were making handsome profits on all we sold, even though the cost of freighting the goods five or six hundred miles had been very heavy.

We received double, yes, treble, sometimes quadruple, what we had paid for our wares, and better still got the returns in cash, for there was no merchant in either Auraria or Denver who would have been so reckless as to give credit to those people who were shifting to and fro like a herd of stampeded cattle, having no regular abiding place.

One day the rush was all toward the mines, and again the tide turned eastward. People moved from one place to another restlessly, and we shopkeepers in the two settlements made rich profits from the gold madness, taking heed meanwhile that it did not attack us.

As time passed, house after house was built in Denver and Auraria. The dwellings were not such as would be found in the east. They were built, as a rule, of cottonwood logs, with only one story, no floors, and never a pane of glass among them all.



Many had what we called "mud and brush" roofs, which were made by laying the branches of trees over the logs, and plastering them thickly with mud, a method which required less labor than putting up a roof of sods.

As many of the miners had settled down in this location or that, where sufficient gold could be found to pay fair wages, our two settlements grew with amazing speed; but it caused me many a pang to see Denver increasing more rapidly than our own city.

DENVER OUTSTRIPPING AURARIA

Unquestionably the settlement on the east side of the creek was better situated than ours, and one after another the shops were moved from Auraria across the stream, until, when the Denver hotel was built, we on the west side were forced to admit that the time must come when we should be compelled to join hands with the rival town.

Built on the two banks of the creek, there was nothing save the narrow stream to divide our settlements, and it was only common sense which prompted the first proposition made by the people to unite in one city.

CLAIM JUMPING

A matter which troubled us all for by this time I considered myself on a footing with any man in either town because of being Mr. Middleton's partner was the jumping of claims.



I have already tried to define what I mean by this term, and I will again strive to make the matter clear. When a man goes into a new country he stakes out his claim, that is to say, he locates himself upon land which no one owns, and drives down his stakes to mark out a farm, or a town lot, as the case may be.

After this has been done, he waits until the people have formed a government of some kind, and when land offices have been opened he "makes an entry," that is to say, he reports to the officials in the land office the boundary lines of his claim.

Until a claim has been properly recorded, the would-be owner must live on the land in order to hold possession, or at least that was the unwritten law in the country where we then were.

It often happens that a man, having entered a claim and put up a shanty to shelter him from the weather, goes off on business and leaves his claim unguarded for a time, as those people did who first laid out the settlement of the town then called St. Charles, but which is now known as Denver.

When the rightful owner is gone other men come, and, finding the shanty abandoned, even though it be for only a short time, settle down there, and this act is called "jumping" the claim. When the one who had originally laid out the boundary lines comes back, he finds others in possession, whereupon much trouble ensues.

THE CLAIM CLUB

Now because there came up, day after day, complications caused by this claim jumping, a number of men of Denver banded themselves together in what they called a Claim Club, the members being bound to defend the original settlers of the land against the squatters.

There was no written law in all this matter, because we had as yet no regularly organized government; but people took affairs into their own hands, settling the claims as if they really constituted a court of law, and in this way trouble was as a rule averted.

Mr. Middleton made a point of joining this club, so that there might be no danger of the claim which he had

bought in the Denver settlement being disputed by claim jumpers.

To those who have never gone into a new country, the idea that a man's land may be taken from him by force seems almost ridiculous, and yet such wrong was often done, so that to us on the banks of Cherry Creek it was of the utmost importance that we should have some semblance of law.

Before coming to Colorado I had never realized how sorely people need the machinery of government. It had always seemed to me that a governor, a legislature, a sheriff, and judges were of no great importance to peaceable citizens, except as they served to make up what we call a state. Perhaps I looked upon a government as an ornament, rather than as a necessity.

But once I came to a place where there was no one authorized to assure equal justice to all, I began to understand that the machinery of a state was fully as necessary as churches and schools. In fact, I learned for the first time what is meant by government; how nearly it affects the least among us, and how exceedingly difficult it is for a community to get along without certain forms as the means of enforcing good behavior upon its citizens.

THE TURKEY WAR

This was impressed upon my mind even more strongly when there broke out among us what was known as the Turkey War.

What with that vast host passing through our settlement on their way to the mines, and disappointed ones returning, we frequently had among us reckless men, who, knowing they were in a country where there was no form of law to restrain them, acted oftentimes in as high-handed a way as did the Missourians who fed their cattle upon our corn, and

tried to supply their needs by force from those who were weaker than they.

It chanced that a party of hunters from the southern portion of what was known as the Territory of Jefferson, came in with a large number of wild turkeys to sell, arriving at Auraria at a time when there was a greater number than usual of ruined, reckless men loafing about the settlement. These last some of them, perhaps, not having money with which to buy food, set upon the hunters and took, or stole, if you please, before the owners' eyes the greater number of the turkeys.



It was only natural that the hunters should defend their property, and the better class of citizens, both in Denver and Auraria, joined forces with the men who had been robbed, to drive the outlaws from the town.

The result of it was that all the lawless people combined against the hunters, and against our citizens who strove to see justice done them, and during three or four days the two parties were actually arrayed against each other.

They would have fought to the death but for the cooler heads among us, who insisted that there must be no such blot upon the settlements as that we shot down people without due

cause, and finally this Turkey War was brought to an end by our driving from the two towns the ringleaders of these ruffians.

Following this example, the Claim Club of Denver took up a similar line of action, and notified the claim jumpers that they must leave the settlements, or suffer such punishment as would be dealt out by those whom they had wronged.

THE NEED OF ORGANIZED GOVERNMENT

This last was not accomplished without serious disturbance. More than once there were encounters between members of the Claim Club and the claim jumpers, wherein weapons were discharged and blood shed, although no lives were taken.

It was fortunate for us who had settled in Auraria and Denver with the intention of making our homes there, that we had cool-headed men among us, who were determined there should be no lawlessness in either settlement, so far as it could be avoided.

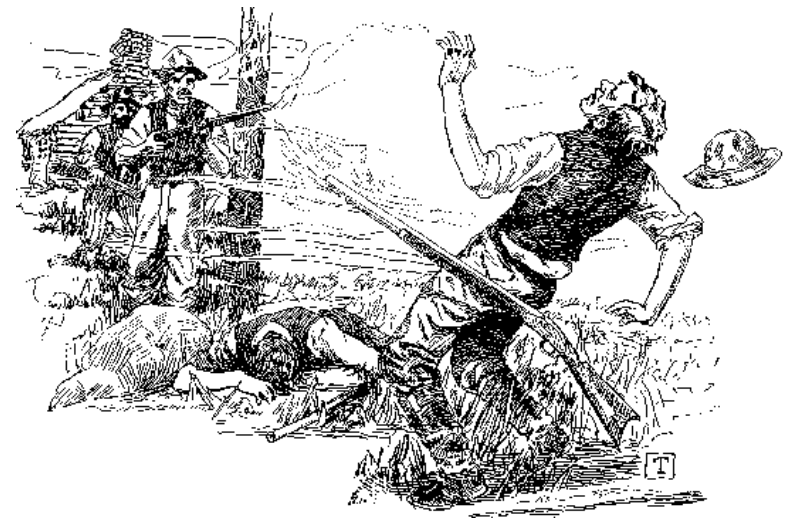
While stories of bloody affrays in different localities of the mining country were commonly heard, our own settlements were free from such scenes, until one day when a desperate man, named Carl Wood, made an attack upon Mr. Myers of the *Rocky Mountain News*, attempting to kill him because of something that had been published in his paper.

Wood was ejected from the settlement, as the claim jumpers and the turkey stealers had been; but when a man by the name of James Gordon deliberately killed Jacob Gantz, our people at once organized a provisional court, appointing a judge and selecting a jury of twelve citizens, to try the prisoner for his life.

After this semblance of a government, for it was only a semblance, the citizens set about ridding the settlements of other undesirable individuals, and in several cases such severe

punishment was dealt out that it began to seem as if we should be able to govern ourselves without going through the form of electing legislatures and establishing courts.

During all this time I heard much discussion of the benefits of a territorial government, preparatory to the entrance of Colorado into the Union as a state; but that was a matter in which I took little interest, it shames me to say, for even with all these examples of law breaking, I failed to realize how essential it was to our future prosperity that we should settle all questions by proper legal procedure.



THE UNION OF DENVER AND AURARIA

The one subject which interested me, outside the selling of goods, was the discussion as to whether Auraria and Denver should unite as one settlement. We on the west side of the creek believed Denver ought to be absorbed into the town of Auraria, while the east-siders formed an opinion directly contrary.

We of Auraria could not but acknowledge that Denver had grown more rapidly, than our settlement. The best of our business men were already moving across the creek. In

Denver, they had a hotel, a newspaper, and, what was more to the purpose, a school had been established, as well as a church. Struggle against the idea as we might, in time we were forced to admit that we were the ones who must yield to Denver, not the people of Denver to us, and thus the matter was ultimately settled.

I was one of the company of business men of Auraria who crossed the bridge to meet the citizens of the east side, there agreeing that the two settlements should become one, which should be known by the name of Denver.



Shortly after, we held a meeting of all the citizens, I voting as if already a man grown, and the following order, or law, whichever you choose to call it, was passed, thus legally, so far as was within our power, making one town on both sides of the creek:—

"Whereas the towns at and near the mouth of Cherry River are, and of rights ought to be, one, therefore, be it

"Resolved, that from this time Auraria proper shall be known as Denver city, west division, and we hereby authorize the board of directors to change the name on the plat accordingly."

WHAT OTHERS THOUGHT OF US

I have seen our two settlements described as follows:—

"Denver and Auraria were separated by Cherry Creek, at that time a very significant stream, which had a flow of water in the spring from ten to twenty feet wide and about six inches deep. The high water continued two or three months, after which it diminished to a silvery, threadlike current. The rise and fall of the stream were considered of so little consequence that houses were built close to the water's brink, many in the channel itself. Two flattened pine logs, with a rough board railing, formed a footbridge from bank to bank. A flour barrel had been sunk at this point, which supplied the citizens with water."

To my mind, flushed with pride as I was at being counted a full-fledged merchant, Auraria appeared one of the principal towns in the United States, and the rough plank bridge so slightly mentioned in the paragraph above, a structure more beautiful than any I had then seen, possibly because one end of it was within thirty yards of that doorway over which hung the sign bearing the words "Middleton & Wagner."

Within a few days after we had become one town, even I ceased to regret the fact that Auraria had disappeared to give place to Denver, for matters moved with rapidity and to our advantage. A meeting of the citizens was at once called to make laws for better government. A regular court, which we called the People's Court, was established. We elected J. C. Moore mayor, and Major Downing judge; we had a city council; we assessed and collected taxes, and when those things were done it really seemed as if we were what we claimed to be, the chief town in the Territory of Jefferson.

THE TERRITORY OF COLORADO

Not long after this the Congress of the United States suddenly discovered that a nation had been born among the mountains, and voted that it should be called the Territory of Colorado.



President Lincoln appointed William Gilpin our first governor, and we early pioneers into the wilderness rejoiced exceedingly, because now at last we had a place among the states, and could hope that in time we might be admitted to the Union on an equal footing with the older colonies. It was a matter of great pride to me that I, Seth Wagner, had had a hand in its making, for as our boundaries were marked out by the law makers of Washington, the Territory of Colorado comprised one hundred and four thousand, five hundred square miles, or in other words sixty-six million, eight hundred and eighty thousand acres of land.

Think of that for a territory, and then say whether a lad might not be excused if he was proud of being among the

foremost to bring such a vast country as this to the notice of the eastern states!

From this time on, and with good cause, we called our settlements a city, and God has permitted me to live to see them change from a collection of rude cotton-wood log buildings, to as sightly a city as can be found from ocean to ocean, boasting of people who are as loyal to it as these earliest settlers.

STRIVING FOR GOOD CITIZENSHIP

During all this time while Denver was waxing vigorous, the firm of "Middleton & Wagner" flourished wonderfully, and at times I believed that helping hands were held out to us because I, the junior partner, was the youngest man in the settlement.

It may be, however, that I took overmuch to myself, for all our people of Denver were kind to each other in those early days. Each realized fully that if our town was to grow as we would have it grow, we must dwell together in peace and harmony, observing so far as lay within our power the precepts of the Golden Rule.

I am not trying to make it appear that we were model people, for there was much crime among us; but those who had the best interests of the city at heart did all they could to keep out desperate and ruined prospectors or ne'er-do-wells, who cared nothing either for gold digging or for gaining a living by honest means, but who seemed to think that because our settlement was on the very edge of the wilderness, it might afford them opportunity to ply their evil trades.

The greater number of the merchants had shifted from that quarter of Denver which some of us still called Auraria over to the other side of the creek, because the largest buildings were there and the greatest activity of business; but "Middleton & Wagner" held to their first location.

As Mr. Middleton said, we had prospered so far beyond our expectations in our log warehouse that it would be like flying in the face of Fortune to desert it, and when our capital was sufficiently increased, we purchased the site on which the rude structure stood, in order to put up a building that would be an ornament to our growing city.

CIVIL WAR BREAKS OUT

At about the time our first governor was appointed, war broke out between the northern and the southern states. We on the frontier had but little actual concern in that terrible conflict, save that there was urgent danger, as we understood full well, that the Indians, realizing that at such a crisis the government at Washington could pay but little heed to an outlying city, might take it into their heads to work mischief.



Therefore, instead of giving a deep interest to the conflict between the north and the south, our attention was directed almost entirely to keeping an eye on the Indian tribes close at hand. We paid more heed to rumors which reached us

regarding what the savages were doing than concerning this or that great battle which had been fought so far away from us; but our people of Colorado responded heartily when the government called upon all states and territories to raise troops for the army, and therefore our share in the terrors of that awful war was mainly the departing of our volunteers from time to time for some post of danger.

We had one taste of the war, however, in a small way, when McKee, the Texan, with forty or more desperate followers, made an unsuccessful attempt to enter Denver, under the pretense of being a member of the southern army, which he never was.

NEED OF A JAIL

Fortunately for us, our volunteers were not only quick in profiting by their training but courageous as well, and these scalawags were promptly arrested. It was then that we realized the urgent need of a jail, although those of us who lived in the older settlement of Auraria argued desperately, yet vainly, against the putting up of such a building on our side of the creek.

At the time, we felt it almost unfair for all the improvements to be made on the opposite bank, while we, who had had quite as much of a hand as the east-siders in the making of the city, were allotted that most hateful of all government buildings, a jail.

What with attending to my share of the business of "Middleton & Wagner," taking an active part in the affairs of the city, and lending a ready ear to rumors of Indian uprisings, or of the contemplated campaign which was to be made into New Mexico by our Colorado troops, I had my hands full enough during those troublous times, and each day, I must admit, I came to consider myself of more and more importance.

DENVER IN FLAMES

One night in the year 1863 I heard from the opposite side of the creek an alarm of fire, and out of curiosity, rather than because I believed any serious danger threatened, I got up in leisurely fashion and went out to see what steps were being taken to extinguish the flames.



It was then near two o'clock in the morning; but since the day my name had appeared in company with Mr. Middleton's, it had been my custom to wake at four, and I said to myself, as I went down to the bridge to see what might be going on, that I had two hours to spare before it would be time to begin the business of the day, therefore I could well afford to gratify my curiosity.

There was little business done during the next twenty-four hours, save that of fighting the flames and endeavoring to

save the property of our neighbors from destruction, for every man, and even the women and children, labored for the common good.

Before the dawn had fully come, the entire eastern section was in flames, and because we had nothing with which to fight the fiery monster, save buckets and such utensils as could be used for carrying water from the streams, there was little to be done except rescue such goods as we could. During all that day every man on the west side toiled in unceasing effort in behalf of his fellow citizens, even as he would have done for himself.

While the fire raged among those rude buildings, sweeping from one to the other as if driven by, a blast, our entire settlement seemed doomed, and before night-fall I was firmly convinced that everything in the way of worldly goods which I had accumulated since coming to Auraria would be consumed.

OUR LOSS BY FIRE

It is true that no buildings on our side of the creek were burned; but Mr. Middleton and I had stored on the east side, while we were putting up the new shop, a full two thirds of all the stock we owned, and this went with the rest, within the second hour after the conflagration started.

I worked until my strength was exhausted, and my hair so singed that, standing at a distance from me, you would have said that my head was covered with a black cap, yet I question if all of the firm's property that I succeeded in carrying out from the burning buildings would have amounted in value to fifty dollars.

I had no time to sit down and weep over our losses, for every effort in my power was demanded in behalf of those whose possessions might yet be saved. Even as I worked, there kept ringing through my brain those words which I had often

heard my mother read from the Scriptures, that "pride goeth before a fall."

Then I reflected that if Mr. Middleton and I had not been so complacent over our business prospects, we should not have believed it necessary to build a new and more imposing looking shop, in which case our goods need not have been stored on the east side. If we had not done all this, we should have come out from that terrible fire without personal loss.

MRS. MIDDLETON CONSOLES US

The house which we had built on the east side went the way of many another building, and that night when Mrs. Middleton and the children took refuge in the shop with such few of the household effects as had been rescued from the burning dwelling, she, seeing the despairing look upon her husband's face and upon mine, said cheerily that we were not so badly off as when we gave up our farm at Fountain City.

She reminded us that we still had the shop and such goods as yet remained in it, to say nothing of the half-finished building which could now undoubtedly be sold to some of those merchants who would be looking about for a place in which to continue business.

The dear soul tried earnestly to cheer us in every way at her command, and made light of the disaster, as if the terrible conflagration was a matter of small consequence to us, until we were somewhat heartened.

Her brave, cheering words made me realize that it was wicked for me to mourn over the loss of the greater portion of all we owned, when I knew that many of our neighbors were absolutely penniless. I was even guilty of consoling myself with the reflection that I was better off than my partner, because of having, probably, more years remaining to me in this world in which I might repair my loss, while he, an older

man, could not lay so much claim to the future, and must, in addition to providing for himself, secure comfortable maintenance for his wife and children. Thus, selfishly perhaps, did I soothe my sorrow.

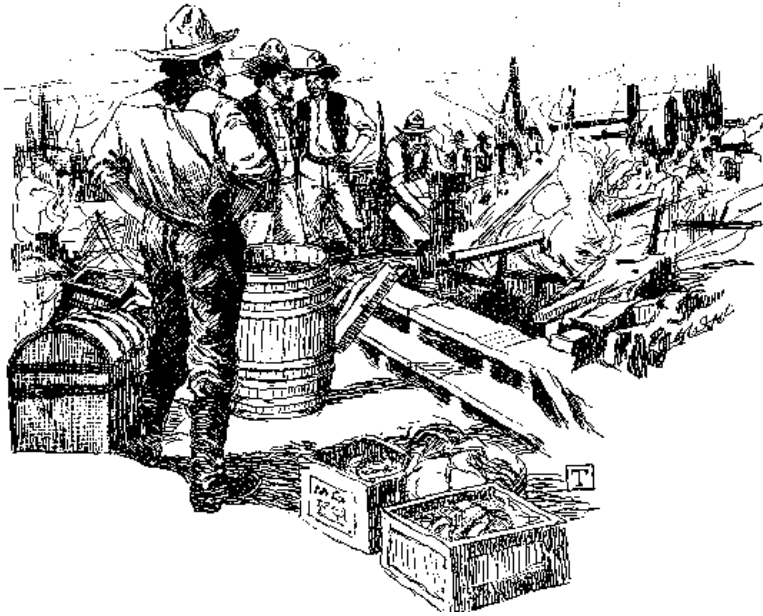


On the night after the flames had been checked I stretched myself on a shakedown under the shop counter, unable to sleep, turning over and over again in my mind all that had happened, until the last selfish thoughts passed away, and I came to understand that it was my duty not only to make up for what had been lost, but to do all I could to help those people who had treated me like a son.

If Mr. Middleton and his wife had not given me the opportunity to come with them into this country of Colorado, most likely I should still have been living in Lawrence, looking about to earn a dollar here or a dollar there, and oftentimes failing to gain money enough to pay the cost of my daily food, whereas, through them I had become a merchant of good repute.

GOOD RESULTING FROM EVIL

Next day, when the merchants met together in front of those blackened ruins which represented the downfall of many a man's hopes, it was inspiring to hear them talk of rebuilding that part of the city without delay, and making it more beautiful than before.



Not a man wasted a moment bewailing his loss; never a one spoke of the fact that he whose signature twenty-four hours previous would have been good for a round sum was reduced to beggary; but all looked forward hopefully to the future.

I even heard one, who had lost not only his shop but his dwelling, and the contents of both, with splendid courage say, that we had reason to rejoice and thank God because no lives had been lost and because we still had our strength and the determination to make our state of Colorado an ornament to the Union.

MR. MIDDLETON'S HONESTY

Our goods in the line of building material which had escaped being burned were sold out within an hour after the people had met together and decided to rebuild the city.

The secret thought had crept into my mind at the moment when this man or that was asking what we had among our stock, that now there was a chance of handsome profit, gaining more than we had been making by the regular sale of our goods. Once more did Mr. Middleton shame me until I turned my head away to hide the flush upon my cheeks, when he said, as if it was a matter which no one would dream of contradicting:—

"Seth, we will look up exactly how much these goods cost us and add the money which has been paid for freight. Then our neighbors shall have whatever they wish by paying us only the full amount. In a time like this one must help another, rather than seek his own advantage, or this city of ours, which we believe will some day rank fairly with the cities of the eastern states, can never prosper."

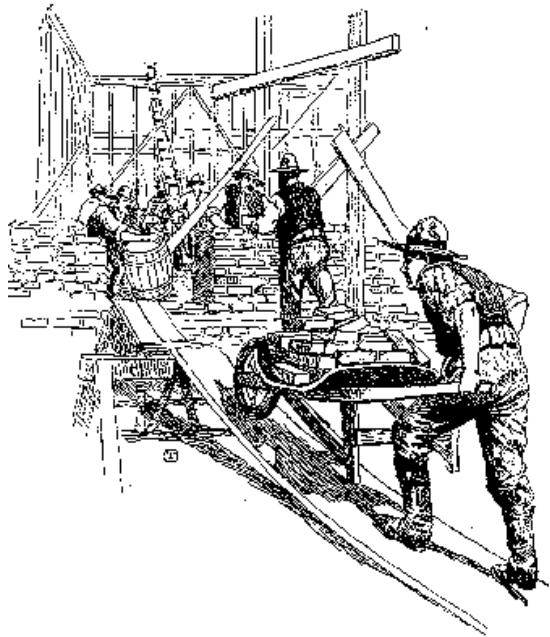
We did as he had said, except that we saved from our stock the material needed for building another dwelling, and within four days after the fire we found ourselves with an empty shop, but with insufficient money in our possession to buy half as much merchandise as was needed to restock it.

Among the business men throughout the town it was a case of each helping the other to the utmost of his ability, and when Mr. Middleton went east once more to buy goods, hoping to get credit there, he found the merchants even at that distance ready to lend a helping hand.

When I learned of the fact, my heart warmed at the thought that there were so many in this land of ours who obeyed the Golden Rule.

I intended, when I began to write this story of mine for my own amusement, to set down all the little incidents and happenings of my life up to this time, never thinking there would be so many which I regarded of importance, and supposing it would be a simple task.

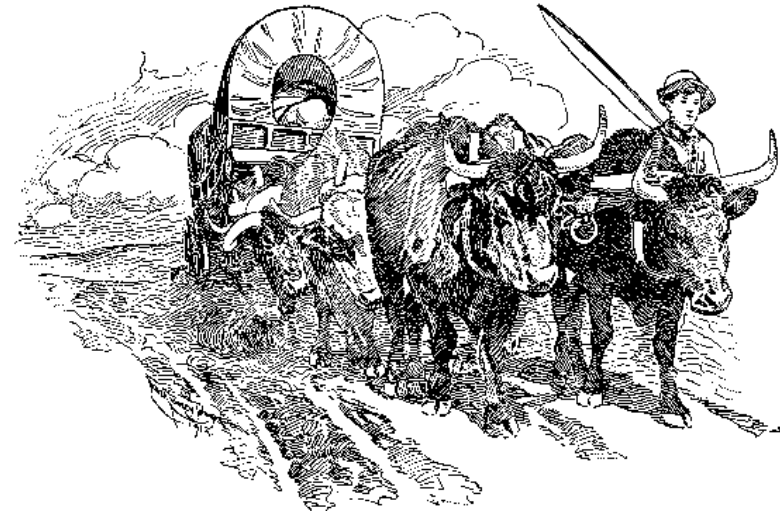
I find now, however, that if I would bring my story within the limits of another's patience, as well as my own, I must hasten somewhat in the telling, else I shall never come to an end.



REBUILDING DENVER

It would be a labor of love if I could set down all I heard and saw during that time when we were re-building Denver, effacing all traces of the fire, and erecting buildings of brick instead of logs. Every one of us, from the man who had lost his all, to him who had suffered but little, came to realize that the conflagration would in the end prove a blessing.

"Middleton & Wagner," whose business was the sale of lumber, flourished bravely during this time of building activity, and before the year was out, we had made good a full half of all our losses; but it had been done at the expense of wearing labor.



I myself had taken a team of five yoke of oxen from Denver to Leavenworth and back again with a load of goods, in order to save the cost of freight, and not only once, but twice had I done this.

My partner was more energetic even than I, while the same may be said of Mrs. Middleton, for she insisted on doing her full share of work in the shop while I was away, and otherwise performed the duties of a clerk, thereby saving us just so much money in the matter of wages.

We were living in our new home on the east side of the creek on the 13th of May, in the year 1864, when a second disaster visited Denver, threatening to destroy our city forever.

THE FLOOD

During the dry season Cherry Creek is a mere thread of water, over which a man may step without risk of wetting the soles of, his boots, and it was only after the spring freshets that it could fairly be counted as a stream.

Now during those days of May the creek lay as unruffled and as threadlike as I had ever seen it. No one dreamed of a flood. In fact, not a man, woman, or child gave more than a passing thought to that tiny stream of water which trickled through our city.



It chanced that on that night I was sleeping in the shop, having worked there until midnight, and rather than spend the time walking home, I had lain down upon a pile of burlap.

I had hardly more than closed my eyes when I was aroused by a loud rumbling noise like continuous thunder, which jarred the very earth, and for the space of twenty seconds I sat bolt upright on my make shift bed, peering into the darkness, terror-stricken, wondering what manner of tempest was upon us.

Amid the uproar I could distinguish the sound of rushing water, and running to the shop door, I threw it back

just as a mighty wall I can compare it to nothing else—tore with lightning-like speed and curling crest down the channel of the creek, the water which formed it spraying out on either side, while great waves rolled up where I had never seen water before, except when it came down from the clouds in rain.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TOWN

It was a flood, and the most terrific I have ever heard of, for as I stood there gazing at this horrible thing which seemed to cleave the darkness sufficiently for one to see with reasonable distinctness, houses on either side of the creek toppled and fell inward, as if the underpinnings had suddenly given way. The horror swept on its way with a thundering roar, amid which one could hear the crash of falling timbers. I believed that the Last Day was at hand, and that we were to be called to Judgment.

I was so overwhelmed that it was impossible for me to stir a finger, watching that scene of destruction with a fear that clutched at my heart, for I remembered that within those buildings which were toppled here and there like houses of cards the children build, there were many human beings who, not forewarned as I had been, might slumber on until overtaken by this monstrous mountain of water.

The flood came surging up into the very shop, and still I stood stupidly on the threshold knee-deep in water. Even though I realized that the peril was great,—for no one could say how much higher this tide might rise,—my half-dazed mind kept revolving the one question, "How could it all have come about?"

There had been no storm in our vicinity, so far as I knew, yet something must have elsewhere, otherwise why were we being thus engulfed?

Until the water had risen nearly waist high, and was pouring into the building with such force that the doors of the

shop were wrenched from their hinges, I stood motionless on the threshold as if my wits had left me, and truly it was so for the time being.



IN GREAT PERIL

Then the instinct to save my own life awoke, and I rushed out, making for the higher ground, but hearing on every hand shrieks of agony and cries of fear, the shouts of men mingled with the wailing of children, as if indeed my first belief was true, and a second deluge was coming upon the earth because of the sins of the people.

I could not, of course, seek out Mr. and Mrs. Middleton, because this rushing torrent lay between our shop and the dwelling, and even though I might have been tempted

to cross over to the east side, it would have been impossible to do so.

The only thing remaining for me was to make for the high ground, as instinct had prompted, and all the while I was struggling to save my own life, I felt like a base coward because of turning my back upon those who I knew were in terrible danger of being drowned.

Yet to have lent a hand in that violent flood would have been beyond the power of man, and I could only do as did hundreds of others about me, seek my own safety, leaving those in danger to their fate until the day dawned, when we might be able to effect something in the way of relief.



Strive as I might, and spend all the hours of life remaining to me in the task, I could not convey to others a sense of all the fearful realities, the chilling horrors of those hours of darkness, when the creek roared like a mad thing, and

continued to pour its waters down upon our city, but so lately recovered from the conflagration.

It was a fearful time, a time when I understood more clearly than ever before how far short I had fallen of doing my duty even when I had done my best. It was a time to make a lad realize that money getting is but the smallest, the most worthless part of life, save when he does it for the comfort and the well-being of those dependent upon him.

THE CITY DESTROYED

When morning came, even I who knew our city so well would hardly have recognized it had I been suddenly taken from some distant place and set down near by the banks of that swollen creek.

So furious had been the onslaught of the water that the stream was no longer confined to its old bed, but cutting out a new channel for itself, it had now turned farther to the northward, making a clean sweep of all that blocked its path.



Of our beautiful city only the dwellings to the westward were still standing as well as those on the extreme easterly border, while between rolled the muddy torrent, and we who stood gazing at the scene in comparative security, trembled as we questioned how many of our people, how many of those whom we knew and loved, had been swept away to sudden death.

Let me quote from a printed account which seems to me to give a fair idea of that terrible time:—

"The surging waters overflowed the bottoms till the valley of the Platte looked like an inland sea. A terrific gale was blowing, and added to the horrors of the situation. A dozen or more persons were drowned, and the property loss was upwards of a million dollars. Some barely escaped with their lives, losing everything they had, even the land on which their houses had stood. But the flood had the effect of wiping out sectional jealousy and rivalry. Henceforth Denver east of the creek forged ahead; people preferred to settle on the higher ground."

OUR LIVES ARE SPARED

God was good to us, inasmuch as the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Middleton and the children were spared. Fortunately our dwelling was not in the track of that mad flood; but it was three days before the creek had subsided so that I could cross over to seek them, or they come in search of me.

During this time, while we on one side were waiting for news of our friends on the other, and they in turn were eager to hear about our fate, every person had a theory of his own to air as to the cause of this sudden onrush of the waters. Some claimed it must have been a waterspout, and others believed that we had been visited by a cloud-burst, but later it was learned that all this ruin was the result of a storm of rain and hail on the Divide, which had raged almost continuously

for four or five days, and, having filled up all the water-courses above us, had burst through the barriers of earth until Denver was overwhelmed.

As at the time of the fire, our people of Denver came together once more to lay plans for the rebuilding of the city; but for four long, weary years it seemed as if the hand of God was laid so heavily upon us that we must fall exhausted beneath the punishment, unable longer to battle against adverse circumstances.

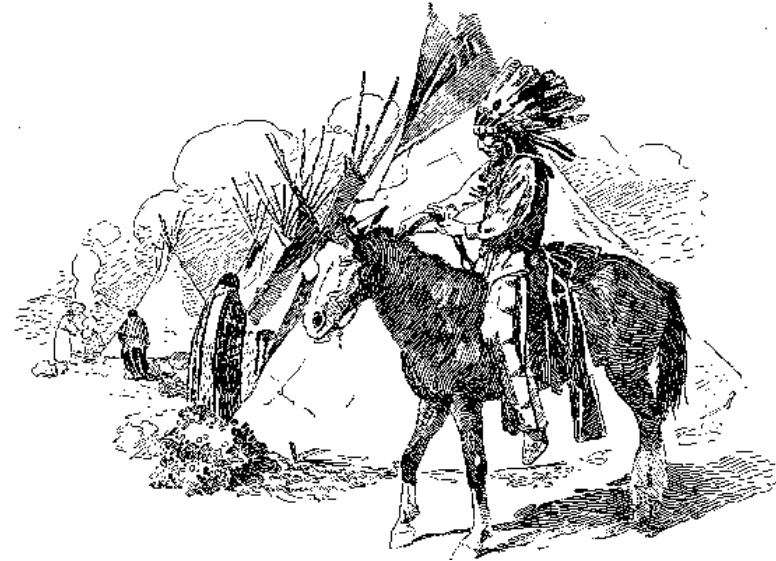
FEARS REGARDING THE FUTURE

It was when our people had hardly recovered from the effects of the fire that this flood came upon us. There were many, like Mr. Middleton and me, who had asked for credit in the east to continue their business, and were not yet sufficiently on their feet to meet this new disaster.

Because of the Civil War, the easterners were no longer flocking in such numbers to the gold fields, and again, what we call placer mining had seemingly come to an end, the supply having been exhausted. Therefore almost on the last wave of the flood came the knowledge that there was no longer anything in our city of Denver, or in the other towns of Colorado, which had flourished like green bay trees, to attract miners or settlers from the states.

Now you must know that placer mining means simply the digging of gold out of the soil, where it has been washed by streams or by floods from some parent mass. At that time miners had no notion of how to crush the metal from the quartz. In fact, ignorance of the methods of treating ore was universal, so that it seemed as if the wealth of our territory of Colorado had suddenly been destroyed or exhausted, not only by fire and by flood, but by the thousands upon thousands who had delved in valleys and on the hillsides, until in all that vast

area the natural deposit of gold near to the earth's surface had been used up.



It makes my heart swell with pride when I remember that all these discouragements failed to break the spirit of those brave pioneers who had built up this city in the wilderness.

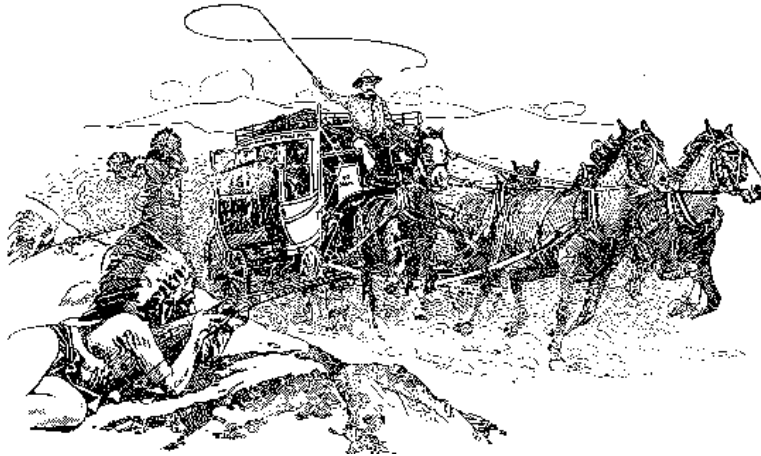
A few faint hearts may have given over the struggle and gone east again; but if such was the case, I failed to hear of it.

All whom I saw or heard stood ready to fight for the life of their city, as they would for their own lives, and it is no exaggeration to say that in those dark days our city seemed threatened with annihilation.

AN UPRISING OF THE INDIANS

Then, when the people were heartening themselves for another struggle, as a runner gathers himself for a race, news came which caused the faces of all to turn ashen and made even the bravest shudder with fear.

The first report of this latest calamity was that a wagon train had been waylaid, and all in charge of it tomahawked by the Indians.



From the time the city was first settled, our people feared that the savages might rise against the whites. When the war between the states first broke out the more timid ones declared that the time had come when the Indians would seize their chance to make trouble for us. Yet when we heard the news that this wagon train had been seized and all the people with it killed, we refused to believe the horrible rumor, because we were afraid to admit our secret dread was at last to be realized.

Each day came reports of fresh troubles, of stages waylaid, of passengers killed and scalped, of wagon trains looted, of the massacres of settlers living at a distance from a town; in short, it was as if suddenly we came to realize that to fire and flood and the loss of the gold were to be added the efforts of the savages to wipe us out of existence.

Who can blame us if now and then in our despair we admitted to ourselves that it was useless to struggle longer?

Yet we did struggle on, and while still showing marks of the ravages of the torrent which had leaped down Cherry Creek like a devouring monster, we turned to face the new foe,

ready to defend our homes, our loved ones, and the fair city which was our pride, against those merciless fiends who were seeking to drive out the white man from their lost hunting grounds.

I shall recount at no greater length than this what we suffered from the Indians during the dreadful time that succeeded the flood, and for many years after, because my plan is to tell only the story of my own life.

More than that I shall leave for those who write history, and, making a trade at such work, can the better gather facts, putting matters in a proper light, whereas if one of us who helped build up Denver should try to tell the story of what was done by the Indians and how we defended ourselves, it would be ever to claim that the white man was in the right and the Indian always in the wrong.



At this later day, however, it is possible for me to realize that the savages had fair grounds of complaint against us, and in many cases were provoked into taking to the warpath.

BEGGING FOR HELP

The leading men of Colorado begged the government at Washington to send soldiers to the relief of the territory; but this was denied, not because the officials had no care concerning us, but owing to the great war which was then raging, when every soldier was needed elsewhere.

Word was sent to us that we must protect ourselves as best we could, regardless of the fact that many of those who should have been defending their own homes had answered the President's call for troops, and were fighting with the northern army.

I myself know little of what went on outside of Denver during those dreadful days, save as this rumor or that was brought in by frightened fugitives or panic-stricken prospectors.

Those in authority over us, however, knew all too well, that scores upon scores of people journeying in the valley of the South Platte were massacred by the savages; that the overland stages were ambushed by the fiends, the horses killed, and the mails destroyed; that lonely ranchers were murdered and their homes burned, and all communication between Colorado and the states in the east was shut off, so that the only word which could come to us from the Missouri River, or farther east, was sent around by water, and thence by way of Mexico or California.

A FAMINE THREATENS

The supplies which we depended upon from the storehouses on the Missouri River, or in Kansas, could no longer be brought in, and, strange though it may seem at this day, the time came when we of Denver saw famine staring us in the face, while in all the country about, the savages were dancing

their war dances, thirsting for our blood and killing all who fell into their hands.



We were compelled to give up all other ideas save that of defending our lives, and when our governor called for mounted men to volunteer for service in the territory, our city was wellnigh deserted, except for cripples and aged people.

Mr. Middleton went out as a volunteer, and I would have accompanied him but for the fact that he declared one or the other of us must remain at home to look after the family, putting the matter in such a way that I could not refuse to obey him.

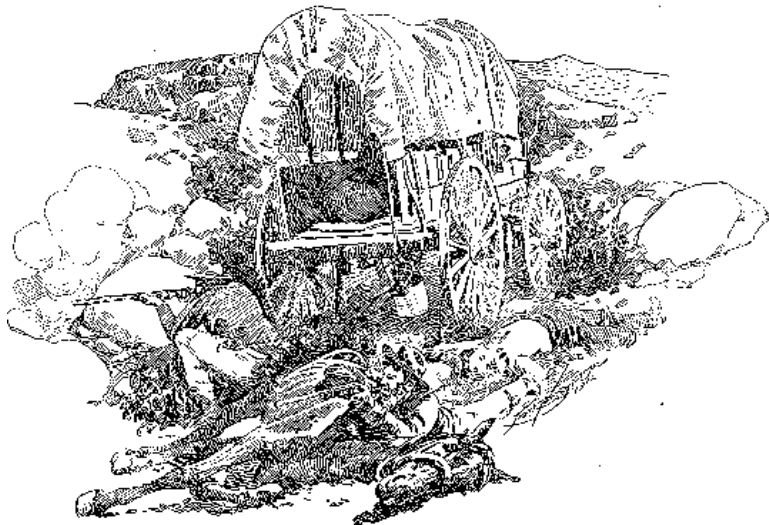
I could tell you of that battle of Sand Creek, if battle it can be called, when the savages, as many of our people claimed, were massacred at a time when they stood ready to sue for peace; but such horrible details make unpleasant reading, and unless one would study the matter closely for some particular purpose, it is not well to fill the mind with bloody doings.

Certain it is, there were many in our city who claimed that in the Sand Creek matter, the white people were the butchers and the Indians the victims.

However that may be, we of Colorado paid a fearful price for that day's work.

HORRORS OF AN INDIAN WAR

The Cheyennes, who up to this time had not molested us to any great extent, declared war against the white people. The Arapahoes, the Kiowas, and the Comanches all went on the warpath, infuriated by what had been done at Sand Creek, while the Sioux and the other tribes who had begun the troubles, joined with them until every redskin in Colorado was thirsting for the blood of the whites and, as it seemed to me, had fixed on Denver as the scene of their most barbarous outrages.



Read the account of the battle of Beecher Island, which can be found in your histories, if you would know how our people struggled in defense of the territory, for then it was that

a company of fifty scouts under command of Colonel Forsyth was surrounded by more than a thousand Indians.



From the evening of the 16th of September until the morning of the 25th, those brave fellows, or what few were left of them, held that enormous body of savages at bay, the gallant defense costing the lives of eight of the scouts, while twenty of them were seriously disabled and the survivors on the verge of starvation before relief came.

I might go on and tell of this skirmish or that battle with the Indians, prolonging the story until it covered a full four years of time, without having told all that we did and suffered, in our efforts to hold fast to our homes in Colorado. Even then I would have set down only the outlines of the story, for scattered all over that country were settlers who sold their lives dearly, or who saved themselves and their families by acts of heroism such as seem hardly credible.

I ask you to read the story of those days for yourselves in the pages of history, if there is in your mind any desire to know at what price we held this territory that it might one day take its place as a state with a star of its own on the azure field of Old Glory.

MY DUTY AT HOME

Mr. Middleton did his full share in "defending the territory, and I played my part fairly, peaceful one as it was, for surely some were needed to look after the women and children while the others were battling with the savages.

Those of us who stayed at home did not have the most enviable time, for we burned to be doing our share of fighting, and could not escape a feeling of shame at remaining in a place of partial security, while our friends and neighbors were hazarding their lives.

At such a time business was practically at a standstill. "Middleton & Wagner" kept open shop through it all, Mrs. Middleton acting as clerk when I had to be away; but we neither hoped nor believed* that it would be possible to reap any great profit.

When the trouble with all the Indians save those of the Ute tribe had quieted down, my partner and I were but little better off than on that day after the fire, and it amounted to our beginning anew, save that we were recognized as among the founders of the town and had gained an enviable standing among the merchants.

BEGINNING OVER AGAIN

There was no time for repining over the years lost through this Indian war, for he who is faint-hearted can never hope to succeed in helping build up a new country. We two, with the efficient aid of our "silent partner," Mrs. Middleton, set our faces stoutly toward the future, as we had done when we sowed our first crop at Fountain City, with the result that to-day, when Denver occupies that place among the cities of the Union which we dreamed years ago she would occupy, the firm of "Middleton & Wagner" is remembered with credit.

My name no longer appears on any of the business houses, because when age crept upon me and I had gathered together as much of this world's goods as it seemed to me one person should be allowed to have, I stepped down to yield my place to younger men.

But although living at ease, with no worldly anxieties about the future, my pride in this city which I helped to found is as strong as on that day when I used my tongue mightily in the fight against merging our town of Auraria with that of Denver.

MY STORY IS DONE

I have told this story of how an orphan boy, without money and without worldly influence, can succeed in this country, or in any other, if he turns his face steadily toward the mark he has set, and never looks back.

I hope I have shown that a boy who is willing to work and is not easily cast down by obstacles, however great they may appear at the time, must, if God allows him his health, finally succeed in the battle of life. Perhaps I have made plain as well how strong is the love in my heart for this great state which I have helped to settle.

Even now, when I am far off from the battle of life, it cuts me deeply if a person speaks of me as having come from any other part of this glorious country. I would have myself as fully identified with Colorado as I was when it was little more than a wilderness, and whenever occasion arises for me to write down my name, I always do as I am doing now, so that there may be no mistake, and add as a sort of postscript to my signature, Seth of Colorado.

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