



From the Literary Digest.

**"Dominant Forces in Western Life."**

The importance of the old Northwest Territory—the present States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin—was brought sharply to view in the last Presidential election. Prof. Frederick J. Turner, of the University of Wisconsin, presents (*Atlantic Monthly*, April) a study of the growth of conditions which prevail in that section. The value of such a study is emphasized by these statements, showing the present power of the old Northwest:

"Since 1860 the center of population of the United States has rested within its limits, and the center of manufacturing in the nation lies eight miles from President McKinley's Ohio home. Of the seven men who have been elected to the Presidency of the United States since 1860, six have come from the old Northwest, and the seventh came from the kindred region of western New York. The congressional Representatives from these five States of the old Northwest already outnumber those from the old Middle States, and are three times as numerous as those from New England.

"The States of the old Northwest gave to McKinley a plurality of over 367,000 out of a total vote of about 3,784,000. New England and the Middle States together gave him a plurality of 979,000 in about the same vote, while the farther West gave to Bryan a decisive net plurality. It thus appears that the old Northwest occupied the position of a political middle region between East and West. The significance of this position is manifest when it is recalled that this section is the child of the East and the mother of the Populistic West."

In reviewing the social origins of these States, Professor Turner traces the currents of emigration during the formative period. He finds in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, prior to 1850, that the emigration from the South, adapting itself to natural conditions, took the foremost ground of influence. The streams from Northern States followed later industrial developments of the Erie Canal and railroad lines. Wisconsin received a very large number of Germans, who constitute a different element from the population coming from Eastern sources. It is pointed out, however, that the Eastern influx came from western New York and the pioneer sections of New England, and not from the seacoast.

After the middle of the century the old national turnpike, marked by the cities of Columbus, Indianapolis, St. Louis, and Vandalia, marked a kind of line between the Southern and Northern streams struggling for dominance in the territory, and the differences between the North and the South came to a head here. This time of trial gave to the region, eventually, much homogeneity and self-consciousness, but Professor Turner considers that the changes in social conditions since the war have been almost revolutionary in their rapidity and extent, hence of more social importance in many respects than those in the years

commonly referred to as the formative period. So that the Northwest today "finds herself again between contending forces, sharing the interests of East and West as once before those of North and South, and forced to give her voice on issues of equal significance for the destinies of the Republic."

Briefly, Ohio has leaped to a front rank among the manufacturing States of the Union, has no preponderant social center, and a third of her people are of foreign parentage. The New England element is strongly reflected in Cleveland. Indiana follows the industrial type of Ohio, with a Southern element to differentiate her. The Southern element also reveals itself in the Democratic southwest counties of Illinois, while northern Illinois holds a larger proportion of descendants of New England. About half of her population is of foreign parentage. Chicago stands as the type of Northwestern development for good and for evil, "the representative power and genius for acting of the middle West," and "the State of Illinois will be the battleground for social and economic ideals for the next generation." Michigan is two States. The lower peninsula is the daughter of New York, over twelve per cent of the present population having been born in that State. In Wisconsin nearly three fourths of the inhabitants are of foreign parentage, the Germans constituting the larger part, with Scandinavians second. The social history of the timber areas of this State presents the common phenomenon of position in wealth and politics attained by "captains of industry."

Professor Turner lays stress upon the difference between the story of the political leaders who remain in the place of their birth and share its economic changes, and that of those who, by moving to the West, continue on a new area the old social type. The typical Western politician has kept one stage ahead of the social transformation of the West:

"If the reader would see a picture of the representative Kansan Populist, let him examine the family portraits of the Ohio farmer in the middle of this century. In a word, the Populist is the American farmer who has kept in advance of the economic and social transformations that have overtaken those who remained behind. While, doubtless, investigation into the ancestry of the Populists and silver men who came to the prairies from the old Northwest would show some proportion of Southern origin, yet the center of discontent seems to have been among the men of the New England and western New York current. If New England looks with care at these men, she may recognize in them the familiar lineaments of the embattled farmers who fired the shot heard round the world. The continuous advance of this pioneer stock from New England has preserved for us the older type of the pioneer of frontier New England. I do not overlook the powerful transforming influences of the wilderness operating on this stock ever since it left the earlier frontier farms to follow up the valleys of western Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont, into western New York, and Ohio, into Iowa, and out to the arid plains of western Kansas and Nebraska; nor do I overlook the peculiar industrial conditions of the prairie States. But I desire to insist upon

the other truth, also, that these westward immigrants, keeping for generations in advance of the transforming industrial and social forces that have wrought so vast a revolution in the older regions of the East which they left, could not but preserve important aspects of the older farmer type. In the arid West these pioneers have halted and have turned to perceive an altered nation and changed social ideals. They see the sharp contrast between their traditional idea of America, as the land of opportunity, the land of the self-made man, free from class distinctions and from the power of wealth, and the existing America, so unlike the earlier ideal. If we follow back the line of march of the Puritan farmer, we shall see how responsive he has always been to *isms*, and how persistently he has resisted encroachments on his ideals of individual opportunity and democracy. He is the prophet of the 'higher law' in 'bleeding Kansas' before the Civil War. He is the prohibitionist of Iowa and Wisconsin, crying out against German customs as an invasion of his traditional ideals. He is the granger of Wisconsin, passing restrictive railroad legislation. He is the abolitionist, the anti-Mason, the Millerite, the woman-suffragist, the Spiritualist, the adherent of Joseph Smith, of western New York. Follow him to his New England home in the days of Shays's rebellion, paper money, stay and tender laws, and land banks. The radicals among these New England farmers hated lawyers and capitalists. 'I would not trust them,' said Abraham White, in the ratification convention of Massachusetts, in 1788, 'tho every one of them should be a Moses.' 'These lawyers,' cried Amos Singletary, 'and men of learning and moneyed men that talk so finely and gloss over matters so smoothly to make us poor illiterate people swallow the pill, expect to get into Congress themselves! They mean to get all the money into their hands, and then they will swallow up all us little folk, like the leviathan, Mr. President; yes, just as the whale swallowed up Jonah.'

"If the voice of Mary Ellen Lease sounds raucous to the New England man today, while it is sweet music in the ears of the Kansas farmer, let him ponder the utterances of these frontier farmers in the days of the Revolution; and if he is still doubtful of this spiritual kinship, let him read the words of the levelers and sectaries of Cromwell's army.

"Looking at the Northwest as a whole, one sees that, in the character of its industries and in the elements of its population, it is identified on the east with the zone of States including the middle region and New England. Cotton culture and the negro make a clear line of division between the old Northwest and the South. And yet in important historical ideals—in the movement of expansion, in the persistence of agricultural interests, in impulsiveness, in imperialistic ways of looking at the American destiny, in hero-worship, in the newness of its present social structure—the old Northwest has much in common with the South and the far West.

"Behind her is the old pioneer past of simple democratic conditions, and freedom of opportunity for all men. Before her is a superb industrial development, the brilliancy of success as evinced in a vast population, aggregate wealth, and sectional power."