

SOCIAL RELATIONS

--from

notes by H. C. Bailey

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The settlement of our vacant lands during the forties and fifties was a different proposition to the settlement of the last twenty or thirty years, when there had been many more persons wanting homes than there had been territory to make them. In many things the latter had a decided preference. Though robbed of much of the romance, the loss was more than repaid for in many ways.

There are many unpleasant features in making a home from ten to twenty miles from any of our fellows. It is much harder on women than on men as there are many more ways open to men to ward off lonesomeness than to women who are confined to house and household duties. She is barred the scrub horse races and informal gatherings that frontier men enjoy so highly, not only on the race course, but in anticipation for days before, and for days after in discussion of the results. But it is claimed by some, and I accept it as a correct fact that there is no unmitigated evil or any unalloyed pleasure.

The two predominating and consoling ideas of the isolated settler are hope and expectancy. Hope makes the burdens of life light, assists in submitting to the many inconveniencies that are unavoidable and must be met cheerfully or otherwise. Under the most trying conditions, hope points to a speedy change and promises most if not all things desired; convenient houses, nice yards, gardens and fruits in abundance; plenty of neighbors, churches and schools. I don't care how a man may criticize the church and church people, he is ever ready on the border to help build them and his first question in making a new location is about churches and schools.

The anticipation of a bright, restful future makes life cheer-

ful and happy; life that would be miserable drudgery with out this hope. It is in reality an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast for it will abide until death if not fulfilled. But in most cases it is, in a measure, fulfilled.

Expectancy is ever on the alert for good of any manner of addition at settlements to be made in the near future. There is an ever present suppressed excitement of desire, expectancy and anxiety. The longing desire for fellowship and communion with our fellow is known alone by experience.

Few if any are unacquainted with the feeling of expectancy and the ratio of its force as regulated by the estimate we put on its consumation. Desire, expectancy and anxiety were residents of every frontier cabin build west of the Alleghany Mountains and were cordially welcome till the desire was fulfilled and expectation died and anxiety minimized. In numbers there is always felt a greater degree of security than to individuals.

We will now go back to Grand Island and note the process of the growth and development of, I suppose the prototype of thousands before.

In the first settlement of Colusa the advent of a woman was somewhat of a sensation throughout the county. In the fall of 53, some families from Kentucky settled sixteen miles above the town of Colusa. They were followed by others in 54. In 54 several additions to the female population were added to the island twelve miles below the town by ranchers sending for their wives. From that date those additions steadily increased.

In 56 by scouring the valley for thirty miles up and down the river, we collected enough ladies to have our first dance. It was the outcome of the first wedding and given at the principal hotel; the bills footed by the groom.

We had a very respectable company, enough to keep two cotillions on the floor. Though all the ladies were married, they made good partners and seemed to have a preference for butchers.

There is some redeeming and happy features in the building up of a frontier settlement that passes with the dense population. There is a far more kindly feeling of comradeship, a cohesiveness that brings strangers into the communion and fellowship of life long friends.

There was absence of all attempts at display or the fictitious part of life. Life was real with all its duties and responsibilities every day demanding service. All realized and recognized their dependence on each other for all that was best in life. Without regards to form stations in life all were on a level on the frontier.

All travel was done in two-horse lumber wagons, or on horseback. The visiting was done as much in the kitchen as the parlor, if such a thing existed. The visitor did a full share of all household duties, helped cook and wash dishes and there was no more restraint in one's neighbors home than in ones own.

For lack of something better on Sundays, most all received or made calls. Sometimes by previous agreement a number would meet at an appointed place and have a jolly time. Such only can be had under similar conditions. Men and women are like children; the less restraint, the more happiness.

Women as well as men have a tendency to get wild in a wild county and the wilder they get the lovelier, happier and more interesting they are.

I doubt if there ever was a happier better contented community than on our frontiers till they reached the second stage and some got ahead of others and there began jealousies and bickerings about roads, school houses, and various other sources of friction. Then some began to put on airs and what free lovers call affinities begin to appear.

Affinities beget, jealousies and form clicks and happy comradeship is exchanged for the second or advanced stage which is superior in all things except the happy loyal comradeship that must pass from active life to be stored in memory for future happy remembrances of joys past.

June 17, 1902

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