The Morning News

BELFAST, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 1869.

WESTWARD HO!—IMPORTANT TO INTENDING EMIGRANTS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BELFAST MORNING NEWS.

Wright County, Iowa, March 10, 1869.

SIR,—With the opening spring, no doubt many of my countrymen will be turning their faces Westward, and the object of this letter is to call their attention to one of the most prosperous and inviting States of the far West. I own no land for sale in Iowa, and have no interest in the matter other than the wish to tell struggling Ulstermen of a land where independence, and often wealth, is within the reach of every industrious man.

I have lived in Iowa for more than two years, and last autumn travelled a good deal in Wisconsin and Minnesota; and, while not wishing to breathe a word against those fine and prosperous States, I returned more firmly convinced than ever of the superior attraction of Iowa in soil, climate, and healthfulness.

Iowa is some 300 miles long, by 200 broad, and is considerably larger than Ireland, while there is hardly any land unfit for cultivation. The soil is the rich black mould of the prairies, varying in depth from a few inches to several feet. East and west she is bounded by the Mississippi and the Missouri, while five branches of the Pacific railroad traverse her entire length from east to west. Two of these lines are completed, the other three far advanced in construction, besides which there are several north and south lines completed and in progress. There are 1,500 miles of railroad in the State, and about one million inhabitants. She thus occupies a central position, and has markets on the east and on the west, and last autumn flour and herds of cattle were shipped from the western part of the State to the extreme end of the Pacific railroad. The country is a table land, elevated several hundred feet above the Mississippi, and the rivers and streams run in hollows, and are generally well fringed with timber.

Churches and school-houses dot the country on all sides, and the people are thoroughly Republican, progressive, and, for a young State, wonderfully free from rowdies and rowdyism—the latter probably due, in some measure, to the operation of the Maine Liquor Law.

The eastern part of the State being well settled up, land is dear, but in the western half there is still plenty of room, and good land can be bought for from three to five dollars per acre. Timber land can be had in most counties for from fifteen to fifty dollars per acre, and most men own a few acres for fuel, fencing, &c. The south-west corner of the State is exceedingly fertile, with abundance of timber and running water. In the north and west are vast open prairies, clad with the richest grass, and watered by ponds and streams of clear spring water; but the scarcity of timber and the absence of railroads have till now kept back the last-mentioned parts. Some counties are entirely unsettled, and land can be had at the Government price of a dollar and a quarter per acre, or is given to actual settlers on the payment of some small fees on condition of cultivating a certain number of acres. The Government land in this neighbourhood has all been taken up; but a few months since I stopped at the house of a man from Ballinasloe who five years ago had obtained his land under the homestead law. On the payment of ten dollars registry fee he became entitled to 160 acres of land, and commenced with a capital of 400 dollars (most of which he spent in building a house), a waggon, and a pair of horses. He now has fifty acres under fence and cultivation, a fair stock of cattle, and a clear title to the place. He had, besides, purchased some acres of timber, and his place was worth about 20 dollars per acre—say 3,000 dollars in all: no bad return for five years' labour with so little capital to start on. There are many such cases.

Where we live, in a small settlement by a grove on the Iowa river, there are open prairies for miles and miles on all sides, chiefly of good land (though some of it is marshy), which can be obtained for from three to five dollars per acre.

Improved farms can also be had, the terms varying with the locality and improvements. The following farm was recently for sale in this district:—One hundred and one acres in all, fifty acres under fence and cultivation, twenty-five acres of timber, a good log-house, and a barn; a station within three miles; price, 3,000 dollars. This county, which is as large as Armagh, has only about a thousand inhabitants, but population is everywhere rapidly increasing. The Indians have all been driven west of the Missouri, and the county is thoroughly quiet.

All our home crops, and several not known in Ireland, do well here. On new land thirty bushels of wheat is a common yield; on old land twenty bushels per acre is the average. Indian corn yields from 40 to 100 bushels per acre, according to soil and season. Prices are at present as follows:—Wheat, 3s per bushel; flour, 1d per pound; Indian corn, 1s 6d per bushel; potatoes, 2s per bushel; pork, 5d per lb.; beef and mutton, 4d per pound.

It must be remembered that we need no pasture fields or meadows here; our cattle can roam freely over the richly-grassed prairie, and when haying time comes we take out a mowing machine on the prairie and cut all we want. Hay is cured in a single day.

Farm hands get twenty dollars a month and their board, while tradesmen find ready employment in the towns at good wages. Now is the time to come; railroads are spreading in all directions, and land fast rising in value. Those coming to settle should arrive between April and October, and, if they want to open new farms, should come in spring, as breaking is best done in the early summer. We have hot summers and very cold winters, but the climate is healthy all the year round; there are few days when it is not pleasant to be out of doors; and from the dryness and purity of the air, consumption and lung diseases are almost unknown.—Forty dollars and seventy hours' railroad travelling will bring one from New York to the centre of Iowa, and it is quite possible to make the entire distance from Ireland to Iowa inside of fourteen days.—I remain, sir, yours truly,

FRANCIS E. PRENDERGAST.