

LETTER NO. IV.

To the Progress:

I suppose that every day during the sessions of Congress there are streams of visitors at the Capitol.

Though our day was only ordinary, hundreds of people, it seemed, were passing to and fro through the rotundas. This rotunda is, indeed, an interesting place. The interior top of the dome, adorned by a magnificent painting, reaches 180 feet above your head (which is nearly twice as high as our school house tower), while all the sides of the vast circular room are ornamented with costly statuary and historical paintings.

"The Departure of Columbus," "The Pilgrim Fathers," "The Surrender of Cornwallis,"

"The Marriage of Pocahontas,"

"The Signing of the Declaration,"

are some of the subjects of the great paintings there displayed on canvas as large, some of them, as the side of a small room. The statuary of historic personages is a good subject for attention. Some years ago Senator Justin S. Morrill, of Vermont, suggested that in the old Hall of Representatives each of the States be invited to place statues of two of their chosen sons, as historic memorials of the men, and worthy ornaments to the Capitol building. The suggestion was followed and many of the States have responded. The rotunda, also, holds some of these statues. Ohio is honored by the image of Garfield; Pennsylvania sends Robert Fulton with a model of his great invention in his hand; New York is represented in Geo. Clinton and Robert R. Livingston; Samuel Adams, the Father of the Revolution, stands for Massachusetts; Rhode Island rivals all her sister States when she presents, in fine marble, the image of Roger Williams, the first great martyr to freedom in America, the man who fought the battle for freedom of conscience in matters of religion. America has not seen many greater men than he; Vermont, another little State, recalls her own distinction by sending a statue of Jacob Collamer her distinguished and able Senator before and during the war, and in the times of Reconstruction, those stormy times which tried men's souls. Collamer was a leader among leaders. And opposite him from the same little State, stands an image of Ethan Allen, of Revolutionary fame. The Prep boys, or the boys and girls in No. 8, will recall the story which the name of this mountaineer soldier suggests. When he called to the British Commander at Ft. Ticonderoga to surrender the command of the fort, and was asked in whose name he made the demand, he gave to history his famous reply, "In the name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress!" As Allen did not believe in the Great Jehovah, and, as, at that time, there was no Continental Congress, some historical skeptics are denying that he ever said any such thing. We are losing some of our most romantic and interesting historical stories, sacrificed to the spirit of criticism which goes through our romances with no more reverence for myths or respect for our feelings than a Goth in an art gallery; and our lecturers in Historical Criticism say that what Allen actually did say on this memorable occasion was, "Come out of there, you damned rascals." And it may be true that when the boys are in a fiery charge on the field of battle or in storming a fort, their captain hasn't much chance to get up a fine speech for posterity.

But I was in the rotunda, before this digression, and I was thinking as I stood there, that Allen, though he was more impetuous than reverent, was a very worthy figure to record the glory of the Green Mountain State in revolutionary days. For Vermont is nothing if not patriotic.

I cannot refrain from mentioning the statue of E. D. Baker, placed there by order of Congress; for his name is one Americans should ever remember. Baker was a Senator from Oregon at the opening of the war, and was a burning patriot, a brave soldier and a brilliant orator. He gave his life—the last full measure of devotion to his country at Ba's Bluff '61. To read the story of his boyhood and his achievements is enough to fire up the heart of the school boy. The scene in which he uttered his ardent invective against treason in the national capital, when Breckinridge of Kentucky had just finished his violent denunciation and defiance of the government, is one of the most memorable in the annals of the Senate. He thought if such words of treason which he had just heard had been uttered against the Republic of Rome in the good days of old, the impious offender would have been hurled from the Tarpeian Rock. No doubt he was right; but we live in better times, in a different country and in a different age. And the people, instead of hurling the offenders against the Union from a "Tarpeian Rock," have called some of them again to high places in the federal cabinet.

It seems passing strange, at times, that there are many strange things in history, and one of the strangest, and to some, one of the most glorious—was the wonderful amnesty of the American people after they had conquered the Great Rebellion. But peace and union are children of mercy, not of vengeance. The restoration is one of men, only, not of ideas; for their ideas of disunion and secession is in the deep bosom of the ocean buried.

Many other interesting historic portraits are there in the Rotunda. But I did not notice that Indiana was represented. By all means we should place in one of Indiana's niches a worthy statue of the great war Governor, Oliver P. Morton; and by his side could stand,—who?

On the passage way between the two Houses we stepped in to see the Supreme Court in session. They were hearing arguments on the Bell Telephone case, and seven Justices in their robes of office were on the bench counting the Chief Justice.

We recognized from their portraits, Chief Justice Waite, and Justices Harlan and Field. We had pointed out to us Justice Blatchford, Stanley Mathews, and Gray or Clifford. They are a dignified stately body, indicating, in their appearance, great ability and legal attainmet.

It occurred to us, as we watched them, and the thought was a consolation, that here, at least, in one department of our government removed from the influences of corrupt politics and protected, by the personnel of the body and their tenure of office, from the power and blight of boodle. The purity of the Judiciary is the safe guard of the State. Quite a crowd was in attendance on the Telephone case, and the argument of the Boston attorney seemed to be quite interesting to the audience. The room in which they sat is the old Senate Chamber, the scene of many an historic rencontre. It was there Haynes and Webster met in that great debate which prepared the people of America to resist, a generation later, the heresy of secession. Clay and Calhoun and Benton and Silas Wright, and Marx and other great contemporaries of Webster, were the prominent figures there a half century ago. And I think, too, before the Senate moved into its new and larger home, the great anti-slavery contest was raging, and the second Triumvirate had appeared, Seward, Sumner and Chase. And by them, or opposed to them, in the great struggle, stood Wilson, Wade, Fessenden, Trumbull, Benjamin, Wigfall, Toombs, Breckinridge and Davis, and other giants whom these piping times of peace seem to magnify into great men indeed. It was there Sumner was struck for his defense of freedom, a blow which helped to rouse the nation to realize the cruel spirit of slavery. That little room will always call to mind many exciting reminiscences, and one cannot stand there with the knowledge that he is in the old Senate Chamber, without visions of the past rising before him.

But a long law argument before the Supreme Court is sleepy old business, and without waiting long for the "visions of the past" to haunt us, we passed to the House of Representatives at the south end of the Capitol.

[Concluded next week.]

DECATUR,
The Gateway of Alabama.

LOCATION.

Decatur is the chief town in Morgan County, and for twenty-five years has been the most important commercial place, with one exception, in the northern division of the Commonwealth. The county has an area of 150 square miles. The Valley of the Tennessee, which makes up the northern part of this county, is from twenty to forty miles in width. The lands in this valley are in general character, elevated, and without swamp. Coal, white oaks, hickory, potatoes, tobacco, cotton, and all the cereals and grasses grow luxuriantly, and are cultivated to perfection. Blue limestone, brown stone, iron ore, coal beds, and mineral waters exist in great abundance throughout the hilly portions of the county. Several streams, which afford unexcelled fishing advantages, course their serpentine way across its length and breadth.

Decatur is situated in the northwestern part of the county, on an elevation that overlooks the Tennessee River, whose waters flow gently on its northern confines. The river here is one-half mile wide, and is spanned by a magnificent iron railroad bridge. Standing on the bridge, midway from the north and south shores, the eye rests on a broad, smooth surface, and westward, about fifteen miles, to the northern bank, some miles above the city, high bluffs rise up in romantic grandeur, and contain nearly 1 per cent of phosphorus. The company's mineral lands, too, are heavily timbered with the finest oak, chestnut, walnut, and poplar timber.

CAPITAL.

Besides these lands, which are fully paid for, the company has a cash capital in the amount of over four hundred thousand dollars. This money has been well invested, but for untoward circumstances that could not sooner be obviated or overcome. The poverty of her citizens, as a result of the war, tended much to keep the town in the back-ground, while other places with not half the natural advantages have come into prominence, invited capitalists, and started out in advance of it on a career of prosperity and usefulness.

RAILROAD FACILITIES.

This town, as has been said, on the junction of the Tennessee River at the head of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad and the great East Tennessee, Virginia & Georgia system. Thus, it has already an admirable railroad system, her trunk lines running to all cardinal points of the compass. In addition to these great trunk lines of road, the Rome & Decatur Railroad, from Rome, Ga., northward to Decatur, is being rapidly built, and will soon be completed.

Charters for two other roads have been granted, one running southwest to Abbeville, Ga., to connect with the Illinois Central system, the other running south and west to Selma, Ala., to connect with the

Mobile & Ohio at Columbus, Miss. Work will be commenced on these roads this spring, and when completed, they will make five railroads centering at this point.

RIVER ADVANTAGES.

Decatur lies on the south bank of the Tennessee River.

For 300 miles above this point the river is navigable all the year. The country on the Tennessee River above is a rich agricultural region for 100 miles, and the soil is good, and can be easily cultivated on the higher miles.

This deposites it along the river front, and are situated that products of the mines can be floated down the river and landed at the furnace door in Decatur at a nominal cost.

Twelve miles below commences the Muscle Shoals. The Government has already spent more than \$100,000,000 in opening these shoals. The engineer in charge has promised that in the fall of this year the river will be navigable all the year.

The Secretary of the company is another Northern man—Dr. W. E. Forest, of New York City.

The President of the company, Mr. W. Littlejohn, is Cashier of the Bank of Decatur.

The Directors of the Decatur Land, Improvement, and Furnace Company are all men well known for their business success and financial standing. We have not space to notice each one of them.

Mr. E. S. Brodix, of Crane & Brodix, Decatur, Ala., General Selling and Soliciting Agents for Decatur Land, Improvement and Furnace Co., arrived in the city last week, and has completed arrangements to take an excursion down the river, and to call on us.

Thus, the river advantages give Decatur not only the means of landing raw material at its doors at a very low cost, but of transportation for its manufactured articles in bulk to the best markets in the country.

By means of this water transportation at hand, the railroads are obliged to give this point the very best competitive rates over their lines.

Thus, it is a settled fact that there is no city of 100,000 inhabitants, either in this country or in Europe, which is not located on navigable waters. Such a condition seems essential to the growth and sanitary welfare of large towns.

GEOPGRAPHICAL POSITION.

Decatur lies almost midway between Nashville on the north, Birmingham, Montgomery, and Selma on the south, Memphis on the west, and Chattanooga on the east. She is connected with all of these cities by rail, and has no formidable rival within nearly one hundred miles.

Thus both naturally and artificially she is peculiarly situated to be a great manufacturing and distributing point.

AN IRON MANUFACTURING CENTER.

Decatur has a superior iron. It gets its coke and charcoal, and ore, and limestone as cheap as Birmingham can, and it has water transportation as well as railroads to transport its products.

CLIMATE.

The winters in North Alabama are mild and pleasant. Most of the time the weather is in winter remains April to October. An occasional "cold snap," so called, prevails for a day or two, but they are of short duration, and occur about as frequently as warm spells in the winter months. Aside from this the winters are delightful. In this present season the cold-flowered were in blossom as early as the last day of January.

The heat in summer is not excessive,

the thermometer rarely going above 90°,

the average summer temperature being about 68° F. The summers are not sub-tropical, as are those in the Northern States. Thus, the summer climate is more like that of Northern Europe. The nights through the summer are invariably cool and comfortable.

HEALTHFULNESS.

Decatur is about 600 feet above sea-level. Its elevation is greater than most of the cities north of us on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, as the Tennessee has a fall below this point of some 150 feet through the Muscle Shoals, and then flows north for some 500 miles and empties at length into the Ohio River, through which it waters the Mississippi and the Gulf.

Thus this country in Northern Alabama is an elevated plateau considerably above the level of the Ohio River Valley. In

the winter the water of the

water-shed between the Gulf of Mexico

and the Ohio.

From Decatur is on the highest ridge of country between the Ohio River and the Gulf of Mexico. It is an excellent point for a summer home, and the summers are cool and pleasant, and the city is free from those miasmic influences that affect cities on a lower level.

THE DECATUR LAND, IMPROVEMENT AND FURNACE COMPANY.

was organized on the 1st of January, 1857. The leading spirit of the enterprise was Maj. E. C. Gordon, the well known and highly popular leader of the Mormon War.

He is the son of

W. C. Gordon, Governor of Georgia.

The company owns nearly 6,000 acres of land in and immediately around Decatur. This land is gently rolling grass land, every acre of which is admirably situated for town purposes. The land can be easily and thoroughly drained. Col. George Waring, the best sanitary engineer in the country, who has been here to lay out the town and put in a system of drainage, has said that the land is admirably suited for drainage, and there is no reason why it should not be one of the healthiest cities in the South.

In addition to the town lands, the company owns 50,000 acres of the finest coal land and iron lands in Tennessee and North Alabama. A large tract of this land is located on the bank of the Tennessee River, above Decatur, and so situated that the town can be easily and thoroughly drained. Col. George Waring, the best sanitary engineer in the country, who has been here to lay out the town and put in a system of drainage, has said that the land is admirably suited for drainage, and there is no reason why it should not be one of the healthiest cities in the South.

This is a wonderful country and a great many interesting things are to be seen, but it seems to me that one could not make a decent living trying to farm it. On the plains we can see great droves of cattle, and look like they could possibly live, but the most of them seem to be in as good order as the cattle we have been feeding all winter. Where they pretend to farm it they have to irrigate the land. This is done by going up a stream that has fallen enough, and digging a trench on the side of the hill or mountain, running it almost level until they reach a point where the water is available, and then the cattle are taken off in opposite directions through the fields. The soil is good, and where it can be kept moist enough, produces bountiful crops. My next stop will be Sacramento City for a short time only, then to San Francisco. I have not seen a person I ever met before, since I left Chicago, although I have formed some pleasant acquaintances on the trains.

I am now 205 miles from home, and am still in the same boat, but am now in the company of Mormons and Gentiles, who are going to enlarge the buildings and add more curiosities and make a good thing of it.

This is about all there is to be seen here, except the city, its business houses, restaurants, &c. The streets are very wide but are now muddy and sloppy. The Mormons have an immense store here—they keep everything that can be thought of, from the ordinary stove and iron to made-of-iron articles, and especially to stoves and iron ranges. I have seen their new church, built of granite, and finished in gothic style of architecture, and the ceilings ornamented with paintings representing different scenes in reference to their belief and religion. I was shown through by one of the Mormon Elders, who explained everything to me, and gave me an interesting lecture about Mormonism, the theory of world, &c. I am now in the same boat, but am now in the company of Mormons and Gentiles, who are going to enlarge the buildings and add more curiosities and make a good thing of it.

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