

A. Introduction: The Norwegian-American Centennial in 1925.

In 1925 there will be held a Norwegian-American Centennial. No doubt the Norwegians of America will have commemorative celebrations here and there throughout the length and breadth of the United States and Canada, but the Centennial proper will be held at the Minnesota State Fair Grounds, at Hamline, Minnesota, on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, June 7th, 8th and 9th. The purpose of the Centennial is, in the first place, ^{to} commemorate the coming of the sloop "Restaurationen", which set sail from Stavanger, Norway, July 4, 1825, and arrived at New York, Oct. 9, with a cargo of Norwegian immigrants, ~~the~~ ~~American~~, the beginning of an uninterrupted stream of migration from Norway to America. The purpose of ^{the} Centennial is, in the second place, to pay a fitting tribute to the Norwegian pioneers in America, the 750,000 who came across from Norway, besides their children born here, who have for a whole century toiled faithfully and done their share in ~~making~~ the making of America.

1. The Sloopers.

The Sloopers were the 53 people, men, women and children, that came over in the sloop "Restaurationen", an old, crazy bark of only 400 tons, so poor that the captain was arrested when he landed in New York for having attempted to sail across the sea with so many souls on board. The story of these Sloopers is full of realism and romanticism, sure to instruct and inspire all who hear it and read it. The 53 who landed in New York 99 years ago are all dead and resting from their labors, but a number of the children of the first generation are still alive, besides children of the second, third and fourth generations, a handsome host, scattered from coast to coast.

2. A Century of Immigration and Pioneer Work.

1/ From Norway as a Land.

Norway has been the home~~land~~ of the Norwegians for 2000 years and more. It is a wonderful little land, beautiful and beloved, illustrious in story and song. The land is small, approximately 1/450 of the earth's land area. Siberia and Sahara are much larger, but count for less; Palestine and Greece are much smaller, but ^{have} ~~count~~ for more. Norway has great resources and marvellous scenery. It has a place in history that cannot be exactly measured in square miles. Norway occupies a larger place in history than on the map. It has bred a healthy, ~~and~~ strong, ~~and~~ intellectual, moral, religious, ~~and~~ industrious, thrifty, independent and democratic people. "Hardy Norsemen"; Edna Lyll calls them. "As fine a race, both physically and intellectually, as is found in any country", says Samuel J. Becket. We join with Björnson in singing of this land:

"There lies a fair land 'neath the old glacial snow,
The ~~spring~~ spring-life we find but in the narrow cleft low;
The ocean rolls on with its saga-roar, —
Than this land, no mother can loved be more".

2. From the Norwegians as a People.

The population of Norway is small—only 1/650 of the population of the earth. Just a handful. They ^{Norwegian} are not multitudinous as are their cousins, the Germans and the English. The immigration to Norway has always been small; the emmigration has always been great. Ethnographically, the Norwegians are of the same family as the English and the Germans, namely, Teutons. Physically, they are a hardy and vigorous race. Intellectually, they are like the other

Teutons, highly endowed, with a boundless capacity for civilization. Morally, they are a clean, chaste race, with the highest moral standards, the most tender conscience. They do not laugh at vice, but obey the law of the land. Crime is almost unknown in Norway and less liquor is consumed in Norway than any other country, except Finland. Religiously, they are God-fearing--in older days, according to their Norse Mythology, the highest type of natural religion recorded; and in our day, according to the Lutheran faith, the purest type of Christianity ever formulated. Socially, they are a friendly, hospitable, thrifty, home-loving race, reverencing ~~womanhood~~ and respecting conjugal ties. They are faithful unto death, as in Njall's Saga. Njall was besieged by his enemies, who threatened to burn him up in his house. They informed him that his wife could come out of the house and be safe, but she said no, she had stayed by him throughout a long life and therefore she would stay by him to the end, so they both laid down on their bed and were consumed in the flames. Industrially, they love to work at any honest calling, and, as R.L. Stevenson says, "They know what pleasure is, for they have done good work". Politically, they are extremely independent and democratic, anxious to make their own laws and willing to abide by them, loyal to their chosen rulers, patriotically living for their country in times of peace and dying for it in times of war. Linguistically, they are Teutons of the purest type, and their written language, as well as its dialects, is clear, strong, beautiful, very simple, yet fully adequate to express the widest range of thought and feeling. Culturally, they have from the dawn of their history been far advanced in civilization

and have contributed lavishly to art, science and literature, affecting the spiritual uplift and the material progress of the world.

3. From their Place in History.

The history of the Norwegians really begins with the Viking Age. This lasted approximately from 800 to 1100 A.D. During this time Norway was the most conspicuous land in Europe. It established colonies to the East, South and West, in Finland, Russia, Greece, *Palestine*, Italy, France, Spain, Scotland, England, Ireland, Wales, the Shetlands, Orkneys, Hebrides, Faroes, Iceland, Greenland and Vinland. It did not keep these colonies as a colonial empire, but gave them to the races of Europe; and wherever these Norwegian colonists got a footing, ^{there} ~~and~~ sprang up on ~~some~~ ^{that} soil a new and vigorous civilization, in which individual freedom, democratic government, protection of fundamental institutions, ^{and} loyal obedience to constitutions were conspicuous. Says Boyesen of these early Vikings: "It is these conquering Vikings who have demonstrated the historical ^{mission} ~~life~~ of Norway, and indemnified the world for the misery brought upon it. The ability to endure discipline without loss of self-respect, voluntary subordination for mutual benefit, and the power of orderly organization based upon these questions. These are the contributions of the Norse Vikings to the political life of Europe. The breath of new life which the Vikings infused into history lives today in Norway, ~~In~~ England and in America.

II. That We May Better Appreciate Our Pioneer Fathers.

We live in the day of the steam boat, the railroad train, the auto, and airplane, the telegraph, telephone, radio and a thousand other conveniences at our door. Our pioneer fathers had

few, if any, of these ~~conveniences~~ and comforts. They did not ^{at first} ~~even~~ know the language of the land, came as strangers to a strange country, and set out as a rule, far into the wilderness to make their home. Yet they made good, and their story reads like a fairy tale, so wonderful is it, in heroic sacrifice and marvellous achievements.

1. Their Struggles to Conquer the Wilderness.

The crossing ^{of} the ocean in small sail boats often lasted three and four months. ~~B~~uffeted by wave and storm, ^{they were often} ~~A~~ short of food and water, with sickness and pestilence on board and without a doctor. Sometimes whole families would be wiped out before reaching American soil. Unfamiliar with the English language, and without any friends to meet them, their situation in ~~A~~merica at the very start ~~has not~~ seemed anything but favorable. They headed for the far Northwest, for Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota, and still further west, ~~decades before~~ there was any railroad to take them there. Yet they ^{eventually} ~~evidently~~ made their way to the west, obtained possession of a homestead, built themselves sod cellars and log huts, tilled the soil, defended themselves against the Indians ~~and~~ wild beasts, suffered from pestilence and prairie fires, established churches and schools, founded cities and markets, helping to make the laws of the land and obey ~~ed~~ them, learned the language of the land ~~and~~ took on its customs, furnished the country with soldiers in times of war and a hard working, thrifty citizenry in times of peace. In the days of the first pioneers some of the best land could be had ~~for~~ five cents an acre, land which now sells for \$500 and more. In those days farm products could not be marketed unless they were brought to some little town, perhaps 100 miles away, without

any real roads by which to get there. Now the land is dotted with cities and netted with railroads and macadamized highways. Instead of ^{driving in} heavy ox carts, each man now can afford his Ford. These are suggestive of a thousand changes which have taken place during the century, largely due to the struggles of the pioneer fathers ~~to~~ ⁱⁿ conquering the wilderness.

2. Their Labor in Preserving Their Heritage for their Children.

The Norwegian heritage, as already stated, was considerable. More precious than gold. The pioneer fathers considered their religion as the most precious part of their otherwise precious heritage. "God's Word is our great heritage our children shall inherit", was their motto and their daily song. In those days every Norwegian who set sail for America had placed in his strongbox or traveling bag a Bible, a hymn book, a catechism, a Church Postil and perhaps other religious books. He did not want to go into the wilderness without taking the Lord and His Word along with him. It is not strange to find then that on the first boat that came over here, namely the sloop "Restaurationen", even though there was no Pastor on board, one of the men was chosen to preach the Word of God. This was Ole Olson Hetlevedt, who spent his days in America chiefly in teaching the Word of God, preaching it as a lay preacher and acting as an agent for the American Bible Society. In the typical Norwegian home the reading of the Bible and the saying of grace before and after meat is daily practiced. Long before the Norwegian settlements could secure Norwegian Lutheran pastors of their own they began to have devotional meetings in which some lay man would expound the Word. Early in the '40's they began to secure

pastors and to organize congregations and in the period since that humble beginning over 7000 Norwegian Lutheran congregations have been organized, besides a number of congregations belonging to other denominations, and nearly 2500 men have devoted their lives to preaching the Gospel to these Norwegians, In order to establish their church and to preserve the heritage of these pioneer fathers soon realized that they would have to establish schools, presses, missions, charitable institutions, associations, and other institutions to carry on this great work and this they have done with remarkable vision and fidelity.