

Transcribed Excerpt from Chapter XXV from "A History of the Irish Settlers in North America from the Earliest Period to the Census of 1850," 1852

The six states carved out of the north-western Indian territories since the beginning of this century, have been the favorite goals of all recent emigration. The facilities of transit offered by the canals and railroads leading from the old Atlantic States westward, and the adaptations of the west for agriculture, attracted and made easy the progress of the Celtic multitude. If, in our own age, this young nation has been able to export its superfluous breadstuffs to the other side of the Atlantic, one of the chief causes is to be found in the constant supply of cheap Irish labor, which, for fifty years, has been poured along all the avenues of the west. If, moreover, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and Iowa, have done much to increase the wealth and glory of the Union, a large share of the historical honor is due to Irish fugitives from British oppression, and their more fortunate sons, born as freemen.

A glance at the growth of the general population, since the reclamation of the North-west, will enable us to estimate, in one way, its importance to the Union. In 1800 the "Union" counted 5,305,625 souls; in 1810, 7,239,814; in 1820, 9,654,596; in 1830, 12,868,020; in 1840, 17,069,453; in 1850, about 23,250,000 ...

Who constitutes this host? In every case it has been nearly half Irish ... But the names of men and places, the number of Catholic churches erected in, and the Irish feelings represented by, the public men of the west, enable us to estimate the share of that people in the population of the six new states of that quarter* ...

**Certainly one half of the recent arrivals from Ireland has been added to the population of the Western States. How large a proportion these bear to all other settlers, may be conjectured by the following summary of the arrivals at New York alone, which we take from the Annual Reports of the Commissioners of Emigration for that State, for 1848, '49, '50.*

Iowa, the most recent of the states (except California), excels them all in her Irish predilections. In 1851, she gave the names of Matthew, O'Brien, Mitchel, and Emmett, to four of her newly surveyed counties. Her State Legislature has always had Irish members, and her Irish citizens exercise a controlling influence. The venerable pioneer, Patrick Quigley, Judge Corkery (a native of Cork), and others of the first brigade of emigrants, were mainly instrumental in producing this gratifying state of feeling in Iowa ...

In the older states, many obstacles exist to the successful establishment in life of emigrants. The best farms and trades are all taken up by the native inhabitants, whose capital and connexions (sic) give them some facilities denied to the foreigner. But there are not half a dozen states in the whole Union of which this is generally true. Let not indolence plead such an excuse. There are characters, homes and fortunes, still to be made, by honest labor, in America ... almost all were friendless and moneyless, on their first landing on these shores. Do you read this book to gratify vanity, or to furnish food for stump speeches? Alas! If so, friend, you do the book, the writer, and yourself a great wrong. It

was written with a far other and far higher object: to make us sensible that we had predecessors in America whose example was instructive, to induce us to compare what they did and were with what we are and ought to do. If it serves not this purpose in a degree, better it never was written or read.

This torrent of emigration from Ireland to America must, in a few years abate its force; it cannot go on as it has gone. Whatever we can do for ourselves, as a people, in North America, must be done before the close of this century, or the epitaph of our race will be written in the west with the single sentence

—
“Too Late!”