

8-1-1928

One Who Dissented

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Recommended Citation

"One Who Dissented." *The Palimpsest* 9 (1928), 311-313.
Available at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest/vol9/iss8/4>

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One Who Dissented

Stern winter is upon us in eastern Iowa. It commenced on the seventeenth of November, and has grown severer ever since. The ice is now *three* feet thick in the river, and it will require a fortnight of warm weather, aided by a "tall" rise of water, to remove it.

Since the first of March the thermometer has been generally below zero; and on several nights it sank to nine and ten below. It is not *fire* that we dread in these "diggings"; it is *freezing* that we fear, maugre the prediction of Mr. Miller! [William Miller had proclaimed the second advent of Christ in a blaze of glory and fixed the year 1843 as the date of the mil-
lenium]. Our people would deem it an especial favor, if the prophet referred to would send us all his spare fire — we could use it with advantage.

Heavy losses in cattle are being experienced in this country, owing to the great length and severity of the weather. The stock of hay is exhausted in several districts. Some of the Indians have lost all their horses by starvation. Heretofore, the opening of March brought mild weather; but March thus far has been more frigid than January.

[This letter, out of harmony with the general optimism of the frontier, was written in Davenport on March 19, 1843, and is here reprinted from *Niles' National Register*, Vol. 64, p. 121.—THE EDITOR]

The cold has been greatly increased by the immense snows that have fallen in the country north of us, and it still remains, chilling the atmosphere. The ground is still frozen to the depth of two or three feet. We have had the temperature here as low as *twenty-four degrees below zero*. You complain in Philadelphia, if it sinks to zero — we regard anything short of zero moderate weather.

Hundreds of persons, embracing all sexes and ages, are now, and have been all winter, living on our western border, in miserable log huts, patiently waiting for the Indians to remove from the country recently ceded to the government. The sufferings and privations these settlers have undergone must necessarily have been great. They could not, being strangers, have made suitable preparation for a Siberian winter, such as we have passed through. To reach their present location, they have passed over millions of acres of land, within the pale of civilization and unsurpassed in fertility by any country on the globe. But the cry is “westward ho!!”

Notwithstanding the severity of the weather, our people in the settled parts of Iowa Territory, have enjoyed good health. Locked up by ice as we have been, for four long and dreary months, it would have been insupportable, if health had been denied us. Let us hope that this special blessing may be still continued to us.

The “occupation of Oregon”, will inflict upon thousands much misery and distress. In the lan-

guage of Senator George McDuffie, would to heaven we had no claim to it. Our population is already scattered over too broad a surface: to extend the platform is positive madness. 'Twere better — aye, much better — if our entire population were restricted to the east bank of the Mississippi. We should then be a much happier people, while our personal comforts would be greatly multiplied.

This you may regard as a strange admission, coming from a western man, but it is nevertheless true. Just conceive if you can the sufferings, privations, and hardships of the women and children now huddled together in miserable huts, on the borders of the late Indian purchase, waiting for the first of May to arrive — the date fixed by the treaty for the surrender of the country. And when the *Ultima Thule* is reached, what is there in it to compensate these people for the toil and sacrifices they have made? Positively nothing.

But the cry is “westward ho!” And westward they will continue to go, reaping all the bitterness of a frontier life, until death shall close the scene upon them and their children. I would not ride out to the point alluded to for a fee simple in a “crack section” of this reputed El Dorado. I am far enough west already, and when I next move it will be on a line “due east”. The prairie wind is now raging, and the temperature is decidedly Laplandish.