

ONWARD: A LAY OF THE WEST

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Onward: a lay of the West by A. W. Patterson

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A. W. PATTERSON

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OF THE WEST**

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A Lay of the West.

"The Wilderness shall blossom as the Rose."—HUMPHREYS.

BY

A. W. PATTERSON.

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REMARKS.

THE object here has been, to sketch a hasty picture of our great and growing West, at this period of its magical progress, while the mighty strides of settlement being made are causing every frontier solitude to ring more than ever with the settler's ax, and the ever-Rising Village to greet the eye. As well, at the same time, while looking with wonder and admiration on the scene, to contemplate the true beginnings of a Government like ours, the rudimental sources of a people's greatness, and the consequent growing fortunes of our country.

SEPTEMBER, 1869.





ONWARD.

MIDST tangled wildwoods, or in prairie nook,
Beside some pleasant stream, or winding brook,
Mirrored with wild flower on the wavelets' breast,
Gladdening some fertile region of the West,
Where settler's cabin only late has been,
The beauteous RISING VILLAGE may be seen!

The curling smoke ascending through the trees—
The sounds of workmen coming on the breeze—
The clustering buildings busily rearing there—
The saw-mill grating on the troubled air—
The hum of voices—the occasional song—
The shout, the laugh among the merry throng—

With all the mingling tumult on the ear,
Proclaim, indeed, that village life is here!

Silence no longer o'er the valleys broods,
Echo reverb'rates through their solitudes;
Around is heard the ax-man's measured stroke,
And far prevails the awe of stillness broke!
The wild deer, startled, leaves the lowland brake—
Water-fowl, screaming, quit the marshy lake—
The bison bounds away with matchless might—
The wolf, dismayed, is skulking from the sight—
The Indian, too—no less a wild-like race—
Resigns, though more reluctantly, the place.
Saddened in heart, with mute and steadfast gaze,
He lingers mournfully o'er the wildering maze.
See! how with wonder in his troubled eye,
He marks that spire up-rising, strangely high;
Surveys the restless, creaking mill-wheel turn,
And strangers' curious skill with deep concern;
Around are closing in the white man's fields,
He, e'en in turn, at length dominion yields!

And goes, disturbed, the early hunter too;
 Following his game, he thrids the wilds anew!
 Beside yon springlet where the alder grows,
 His shapeless cabin unfrequented rose.
 The idling savage but his casual guest,
 He lived as loved the daring hunter best.
 But now more distant depths of solitude
 Are sought, where hum of life may not intrude;
 His dogs and gun, companions of his way,
 The restless LEATHER-STOCKING of his day!²

While here, perchance, where early Jesuit trod
 To tell the Indian of the Christian's God;
 Perchance, where resting on his toilsome tour,
 By gleaming camp-fire, sang the *voyageur*.
 The venturesome spirit of our people reigns,
 And crowds are gathering over hills and plains.
 Some from New England's joyous, purling rills—
 Some from the Alleghany's wide-spread hills—
 Some from more Western vales, or Southern slopes—
 Some where the high Canadian landscape opes;

Others, as well, from Europe's peopled shores,
 Where Rhine, or Rhone, his ancient current pours;
 Where Norway frowns, Italia's Summer smiles,
 The Celt and Saxon plow the British Isles:
 But vain to tell whence severally they hail,
 The wide world sends them from each hill and dale!³

"Ho! Westward, ho!"—From clime and kindred gone,
 Westward the Star of Promise guides them on!
 And whether from trans-oceanic strand,
 Or hills and valleys of our own broad Land,
 Whether their zeal in foreign accents rung,
 Or in the vigor of our Anglo tongue,
 Gathered beneath the blue, encircling skies,
 They sound the busy note of enterprise;
 Unite their labors, and, delighted, rear
 The prosperous village in the far wilds here!

Lured where adventure loves to bid them hie—
 Lured by the freedom of a frontier sky—
 With hearts of joy, enkindled, hopeful glance—
 The very heroes of a true romance!