

An Eyewitness Account of the Aurora Colony

Charles Nordhoff's book *The Communistic Societies of the United States*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1875, provided one of the earliest descriptions of the Aurora Colony. Most later historical studies of Aurora refer to it. The chapter on Aurora is reproduced here in its entirety.

THE AURORA AND BETHEL COMMUNES

Twenty-nine miles south of Portland, on the Oregon and California Railroad, lies the village of Aurora, more commonly known along the road as "Dutchtown." As you approach it on the train, you will notice on an eminence to the left a large wooden church; in the deep ravine which is spanned by a railroad-bridge, a saw-mill; and, scattered irregularly over the neighboring country, a number of houses, most of them differing from usual village dwellings in the United States, mainly because of their uncommon size, and the entire absence of ornament. They are three stories high, sometimes nearly a hundred feet deep, and look like factories.

Opposite the railroad station, upon elevated ground, stands one of these houses, which is called the hotel, and is an excellent, clean country inn, famous all over Oregon for good living. When I mentioned to an acquaintance in Portland my purpose to spend some days in Aurora, he replied, "Oh, yes -- Dutchtown; you'll feed better there than any where else in the state;" and on further inquiry I found that I might expect to see there also the best orchards in Oregon, the most ingenious expedients for drying fruits, and an excellent system of agriculture. Beyond these practical points, and the further statement that "these Dutch are a queer people," information about them is not general among Oregonians. The inn, or "hotel," however, at Aurora, is used as a summer resort by residents of Portland; the Aurora band is employed at festivities in Portland; the pleasure-grounds of the community are opened to Sunday-school and other picnics from the city in summer and fall; and at the State Agricultural Fair, held at Salem, the Aurora Community controls and manages the restaurant and owns the buildings in which food is prepared and sold. In these ways it comes into direct communication with the outside world.

I found the hotel a plainly furnished but scrupulously neat and clean house, and which I was received with very little ceremony. Nor did any one volunteer to guide me about or give me information concerning the society; curiosity does not seem to be a vice of the place. A note of introduction to that member of the society who acts as its purchasing agent, with which fortunately I was provided, secured me his attention after I had found him. He was just then at work as a carpenter, putting up a small house for a newly married couple.

The Aurora Commune is an offshoot of a society formed upon the same principles in Bethel, Shelby County, Missouri. Dr. Keil, the President of Aurora, was the founder of Bethel and still rules both communities. He removed from Missouri to Oregon because he imagined that there would be a larger field for his efforts in a new state; and also, I imagine, because of an innate restlessness of disposition.

Dr. Keil is a Prussian, born in 1811; and was a man-milliner in Germany. He became a mystic, and he seems to have dealt also in magnetism, and used this as a curative agent for diseases. After living for some time in New York, he came to Pittsburg, where he gave himself out as a physician, and showed, it is said, some knowledge of botany. He professed also to be the owner of a mysterious volume, written with human blood, and containing receipts for medicines which enabled him, as he professed, to cure various diseases. Presently he became a Methodist, and thereupon burned this book with certain awe-inspiring formalities. He seems to have been a fanatic in religious matters, for he soon left the Methodists to form a sect of his own; and it is related that he gathered a number of Germans about him, to whom he gave himself out as a being to be worshiped, and later as one of the two

witnesses in the Book of Revelation; and in this capacity he gave public notice that on a certain day, after a fast of forty days, he would be slain in the presence of his followers.

While he was thus engaged in forming a following for himself among the ignorant and simple-minded Germans, the rogue who called himself Count Leon came over and joined Rapp's colony at Economy; and when Leon, after quarreling with Rapp and removing to Phillipsburg, ran away from there to Louisiana, Keil managed to secure some of Leon's people as his adherents, and thereupon began to plan a communistic settlement, somewhat upon the plan of Rapp's, but with the celibate principle left out. In the year 1844, his followers, among whom were by good luck some of the seeders from Economy, began a settlement in accordance with these plans in Missouri. They were all either German or "Pennsylvania Dutch," and people of limited means. It is probable that Keil had nothing, for he appears for some years previously to have followed no regular business or profession. They removed to Bethel, a point forty-eight miles from Hannibal, in Missouri, and thirty-six miles from Quincy; and began in very humble style. Not all the colonists came out at once. He took with him at first two families and a number of young people. These broke ground in the new settlement, and others followed as they sold their property at home.

Shelby County, Missouri, was then a new country. The colonists took up four sections, or two thousand five hundred and sixty acres of land, to which they added from time to time until they possessed four thousand acres. Upon a part of this estate they gradually established a distillery, grist-mill, sawmill, carding machinery, a woolen-mill, and all the mechanical trades needed by the farmers in their neighborhood, and thus they made a town. As soon as they were able they set up a general store, and a post-office was of course established by the government. Among their first buildings was a church; for Dr. Keil was their spiritual as well as temporal head.

At Bethel they prospered; and there four hundred of these communists still live. I shall give an account of them later.

Keil's ideas grew with the increasing wealth of the people; and his unrestful spirit longed for a new and broader field of labor. He imagined that on the Pacific coast he might find a larger communistic society upon a broader domain; and he did not find it difficult to persuade his people that the attempt ought to be made.

In 1855, accordingly, Dr. Keil set out with ten or twelve families, eighty persons in all, across the plains, carrying along household utensils and some cattle. A few families started later and crossed the Isthmus; and all gathered at Shoalwater Bay, north of the mouth of the Columbia River, and in Washington Territory. There a few families belonging to Aurora still live, managing farms of the community; but in June, 1856, the main body of the society removed to Aurora, and began there, with tedious and severe labor, a clearing among the firs.

The upper part of the Willamette Valley is a broad, open plain, easy to till, and inviting to the farmer. Dr. Keil and his companions avoided this plain; they chose to settle in a region pretty densely grown over with timber. I asked him why he did so. He replied that, meaning to establish a sawmill, they wished to use the trees cut down in clearing the land to make into lumber for houses and fences. There was at that time no railroad, and lumber in the open prairie was expensive. "The end proved that we were right," said he; "for though we had to work hard at first, and got ahead slowly, we were soon able to buy out the prairie farmers, who had got into debt and were shiftless, while we prudent Germans were building our place." He added a characteristic story of their early days -- that when they first settled at Aurora, having no fruit of their own, he used to buy summer apples for his people from the nearest farmers for a dollar a bushel. These were eaten in the families; but he taught them to save the apple-parings and make them into vinegar, which he then sold to the wives of his American

farming neighbors at a dollar and a half per gallon.

In order to make intelligible the means as well as the ways of their success, I must here explain what are the social principles to which they agree, and in accordance with which they have worked since 1844. They are remarkable chiefly for their simplicity. Dr. Keil teaches, and they hold that --

1st. All government should be parental, to imitate, as they say, the parental government of God.

2nd. That therefore societies should be formed upon the model of the family, having all interests and all property absolutely in common; all the members laboring faithfully for the general welfare and support, and drawing the means of living from the general treasury.

3rd. That, however, neither religion nor the harmony of nature teaches community in anything further than property and labor. Hence the family life is strictly maintained; and the Aurora Communists marry and are given in marriage, and raise and train children precisely as do their neighbors the Pike farmers. They reject absolutely all sexual irregularities, and inculcate marriage and support the family relation as religious duties, as the outside world does. Each family has its own house, or separate apartments in one of the large buildings.

4th. Dr. Keil, who is not only their president, but also their preacher, holds the fundamental truth of Christianity to be, "Love one another," and interprets this in so broad and literal a sense as requires a community of goods and effects. His sermons are exhortations and illustrations of this principle, and warnings against "selfishness" and praise of self-sacrifice. Service is held in a very commodious and well-built church twice a month, and after the Lutheran style: opening with singing, prayer, and reading of the Scriptures; after which the president preaches from a chosen text.

To me he spoke with some vehemence against sects and creeds as anti-Christian. Sunday is usually a day of recreation and quiet amusement, with music and visiting among the people.

5th. The children of the community are sent to school, there being at Aurora a common or free school, in which an old man, a member of the society, who bears a remarkable resemblance to Horace Greeley, is teacher. The school is supported as other free schools of the state are; but it is open all the year round, which is not the case generally with country schools. They aim to teach only the rudimentary studies -- reading, writing, and arithmetic.

6th. The system of government is as simple as possible. Dr. Keil, the founder, is president of the community, and autocrat. He has for his advisers four of the older members, who are selected by himself. In the management of affairs he consults those whose opinions, I imagine, usually agree with his. When any vitally important change or experiment is contemplated, the matter is discussed by the whole community, and nothing is done then without a general assent.

7th. Every man is expected to labor for the general good, but there are no established hours or work, nor is any one compelled to labor at any special pursuit.

8th. Plain living and rigid economy are inculcated as duties from each to the whole; and to labor regularly, and to waste nothing, are important parts of the "whole duty of man."

9th. Each workshop has its foreman, who comes, it would seem, by natural selection. That is to say, here, as elsewhere, the fittest man comes to the front. But it is a principle of their polity that men should not be confined to one kind of labor. If brick makers are needed, and shoemakers are not

busy, the shoe shop is closed, and the shoemakers go out and make brick. During the spring and summer months a large proportion of the people are engaged in the cultivation of crops. After harvest these are drawn into the town, and find winter employment in the saw-mill and the different shops. It is to accommodate these temporary sojourners that the large houses are built. Here they have apartments allotted to them, and the young people board with different families, the young girls being employed chiefly in household duties.

These are the extremely simple principles and practical rules which guide the Aurora Community. Their further application I will show in detail hereafter. I wish first to show the dollar-and-cent results. Coming to Aurora in 1856, they have held together, with some outside gains, and some additions from the Bethel Society, until there are now nearly four hundred people in the settlement, who own about eighteen thousand acres of land, scattered over several counties. They have established a saw-mill, a tan-yard, and cabinet-maker's, blacksmith's, wagon-maker's, tailor's, shoemaker's, carpenter's, and tin shops. Also a grist-mill, carding machinery, some looms for weaving wool; drying houses for fruit; and there is a supply store for the community, a drug store kept by the doctor of the society, and a general country store, at which the neighboring farmers, not Communists, deal for cash.

They have besides the most extensive orchards in the state, in which are apples, pears of all kinds, plums, prunes, which do admirably here, and all the commoner large and small fruits. There is also a large vegetable garden, for the use of those who have none at their houses. The orchards are in fine order, and were laden with fruit when I saw them in June, 1873. Near the orchard is a large, neatly-kept house, in which the people gather during the fruit harvest to prepare it for market, and to pare that which is to be dried. Beyond the orchard is a public ground of a dozen acres, for Sunday assemblies; and here, too, are houses for eating and dancing, with a kitchen and bake-ovens commodious enough to cook a meal for the whole settlement, or for a large picnic party.

Thus far they have brought their affairs in seventeen years, without any peculiar religious belief, any interference with the marriage or family relation, without a peculiar dress, or any other habit to mark them as Separatists, or "Come-outers," to use a New England phrase. It must be admitted also that they have achieved thus much without long or exhausting or enforced labor.

Their living is extremely plain. The houses and apartments are without carpets; the women wear calico on Sunday as well as during the week, and the sun-bonnet is their head covering. The men wear ready-made clothing of no particular style. Cleanliness is, so far as I saw, a conspicuous virtue of the society. Dr. Keil, the president, was the only person with whom I came in contact who was not very neat. He is a snuff-taker; and he walked over the orchard with me in an untidy pair of carpet slippers.

They appear to be people of few ceremonies. On a Sunday I attended a wedding; the marriage took place in the schoolhouse, and was witnessed by a small congregation of young people, friends of the bride and groom. The young girls came to the wedding in clean calico dresses and sun-bonnets; and I noticed that even the bride wore only a very plain woolen dress, with a bit of bright ribbon around her neck. The ceremony was performed by the schoolmaster, who is also a justice of the peace; when it was over, the company quietly and somewhat shyly walked up to congratulate the newly married, some of the young women kissing the bride. Then there was an immediate adjournment to the house of the bride's father, a mile off in the country. I was hospitably invited to go to the feast; and found a small log cabin, with kitchen and bedroom below, and a loft above, standing near a deep ravine, and with a neat garden and small orchard back of it.

In front a bower had been formed of the boughs of evergreens, beneath which were two or three tables, which were presently spread with a plain but wholesome and bountiful feast, to which the

strangers present and the older people were first invited to sit down, the younger ones waiting on the table, and with laughter and joking taking their places afterward. Meantime the village band played; after dinner we all walked into the garden, and in a pretty little summer-house discussed orchards, bees, and other country living, and by and by returned to the village. The young people were to have some dancing, and altogether it was a very pretty, rather quiet country wedding. It struck me that the young women were under-sized, and did not look robust or strong; there were no rosy cheeks, and there was a very subdued air upon all the congregation. The poor little bride looked pale and scared; but the bridegroom, a stout young fellow, looked proud and happy, as was proper. Dr. Keil was not present, but drove out in a very plain country wagon as the weddingers entered the schoolroom. The community occasionally employs outside laborers; and when a man or woman applies to join the society, he or she is at first employed at wages, and at some trade. "We will employ and pay you as long as we need your labor," the council says in such a case; "if after a while you re thoroughly satisfied that this is the best life, and if we approve of you, we will take you in." It is not necessary that the new-comer should bring money with him; but if he has means, he is required to put them into the common treasury, for he must believe that "all selfish accumulation is wrong, contrary to god's law and to natural laws."

Occasionally, I was told, they have had as members idle or drunken men. Such are admonished of their wrong courses; and if they are incorrigible, they always, I was assured, leave the place. "An idler or dissolute person has not the sympathies of our people; he has no connection with the industries of the society; as he does not work, he can hardly be so brazen as to ask for supplies. The practical result is that presently he disappears from among us."

"Do you have no disagreements from envy or jealousy among you," I asked Dr. Keil; who replied, "Very seldom now; the people have been too long and too thoroughly trained; they are too well satisfied of the wisdom of our plan of life; they are practiced in self-sacrifice, and know that selfishness is evil and the source of unhappiness. In the early days we used sometimes to have trouble. Thus a man would say, 'I brought money into the society, and this other man brought none; why should he have as much as I,' but my replay was, 'here is your money - take it; it is not necessary; but while you remain, remember that you are no better than he.' Again, another might say, 'My labor brings one thousand dollars a year to the society, his only two hundred and fifty;' but my answer was, 'Thank God that he made you so much abler, stronger, to help your brother; but take care lest your poorer brother do not someday have to help you, when you are crippled, or ill, or disabled!'"

The children

who have in these years, since 1844, grown up in the community generally remain. I spoke with a number of men who had thus passed all but their earliest years in the society, and who were content. Men sometimes return, repentant, after leaving the society. "The boys and girls know that they can leave at any time; there is no compulsion upon any one; hence no one cares to go. But they generally see that this is the best place. We are as prosperous and as happy as any one; we have here all we need."

As all work for the common good, so all are supplied from the common stores. I asked the purchasing agent about the book-keeping of the place; he replied, "As there is no trading, few accounts are needed. Much of what we raise is consumed on the place, and of what the people use no account is kept. Thus, if a family needs flour, it goes freely to the mill and gets what is requires. If butter, it goes to the store in the same way. We need only to keep account of what we sell of our own products, and of what we buy from abroad, and these accounts check each other. When we make money, we invest it in land." Further, I was told that tea, coffee, and sugar are roughly allowed to each family. Each family has either a house, or apartments in one of the large houses. Each has a garden patch,

and keeps chickens; and every year a number of pigs are set apart for each household, according to its number. They are fed with the leavings of the table, and are fattened and killed in the winter, and salted down. Fresh beef is not commonly used. If any one needs vegetables, he can get them in the large garden. There seemed to be an abundance of good plain food every where.

Originally, and until 1872, all the property stood in Dr. Keil's name; but in that year he, finding himself growing old, and urged too, I imagine, by some of the leading men, made a division of the whole estate, and gave a title deed to each head of a family of a suitable piece of property - so to a farmer a farm, to a carpenter a house and shop, and so on. If there was any heart-burning over this division, I could not hear of it; and it appears to have made no difference in the conduct of the society, which labors on as before for the common welfare.

I asked, "What, then, if you have divided all the property, will you do for the young people as they grow up?"

Dr. Keil replied, "Dear me! - in the beginning we had nothing, now we have a good deal: where did it all come from? We earned and saved it. Very well; we are working just the same - we shall go on earning money and laying it by for those who are growing up; we shall have enough for all." I give below some further details, which I elicited from Dr. Keil, preferring to give them in the form of questions and answers:

Question. I have noticed that when young girls grow up they usually manifest a taste for ribbons and finery. How do you manage with such cases?

Answer. Well, they get what they want. They have only to task at the supply store; only if they go too far - if it amounts to vanity - they are admonished that they are not acting according to the principles of love and temperance; they are putting undue expense on the society; they are making themselves different from their neighbors. It is not necessary to say this, however, for our people are now all trained in sound principles, and there is but little need for admonition.

Q. But suppose such a warning as you speak of were not taken?

A. Well, then they have leave to go into the world. If they want to be like the world, that is the place for them. And don't you see that if they are so headstrong and full of vanity they would not stay with us anyhow? They would not feel at home with us.

Q. Suppose one of your young men has the curiosity to see the world, as young men often have?

A. We give him money; he has only to ask the council. We say to him: "You want to live in the world; well, you must earn your own living there; here is money, however, for your journey." And we give him according to his character and worth in the society.

Q. Suppose a young man wanted to go to college?

A. If any one of our people wanted to train himself in some practical knowledge or skill for the service of the community, and if were a proper person in stability of character and capacity, we should send him, and support him while he was learning. This we have repeatedly done. In such cases our experience is that when such young men return to us they bring back, not only all the money we have advanced for their support, but generally more besides. Suppose, for instance, one wanted to learn how to dye woolens; we would give him sufficient means to learn his calling thoroughly. But he would

probably soon be receiving wages; and, as our people are economical, he would say aside from his wages most likely more even than we had advanced him; and this he would be proud to bring into the common treasury on his return. [Dr. Keil gave me several instances of such conduct; and then proceeded, with a contemptuous air.] But if a young man wants to study languages, he may do so here, as much as he likes - no one will object; but if he wanted to go to college for that - well, we don't labor here to support persons in such undertakings, which have no bearing on the general welfare of the society.

In fact there is little room for poetry or for the imagination in the life of Aurora. What is not directly useful is sternly left out. There are no carpets, even in Dr. Keil's house; no sofas or easy chairs, but hard wooden settles; and immense kitchen in which women were laboring, with short gowns tucked up; a big common room, where apparently the Doctor lives with the dozen unmarried old men who form part of his household; a wide hall full of provision safes, flour-bins, barrels, etc.; but no books except a Bible and a hymn-book, and a few medical works; no pictures - nothing to please the taste; no pretty outlook, for the house lies somewhat low down. Such was the house of the founder and president of the community; and the other houses were neither better nor much worse. There is evidently plenty of scrubbing in-doors, plenty of plain cooking, plenty of every thing that is absolutely necessary to support life - and nothing superfluous.

When I remarked upon this to some of the men, and urged them to lay out the village in a somewhat picturesque style, to which the ground would readily lend itself, and explained that a cottage might be plain and yet not ugly, the reply invariable came: "We have all that is necessary now; by and by, if we are able and want them, we may have luxuries." "For the present," said one, "we have duties to do: we must support our widows, our orphans, our old people who can no longer produce. No man is allowed to want here amongst us; we all work for the helpless." It was droll illustration of their devotion to the useful, to find in the borders of the garden, where flowers had been planted, those flowers alternating with lettuce, radishes, and other small vegetables.

Dr. Keil is a short, burly man, with blue eyes, whitish hair, and white beard. I took him to be a Swiss from his appearance, but his language - he spoke German with me - showed him to be a Prussian. He seemed excitable and somewhat suspicious; gave no tokens whatever of having studied any book but the Bible, and that only as it helped him to enforce his own philosophy. He was very quick to turn every thought toward the one subject of community life; took his illustrations mostly from the New Testament; and evidently laid much stress on the parental character of God. As he discussed, his eyes lighted up with a somewhat fierce fire; and I thought I could perceive a fanatic, certainly a person of a very determined, imperious will, united to a narrow creed.

As to that creed: He said it was desirable and needful so to arrange our lives as to bring them into harmony with natural laws and with God's laws; that we must all trust in Him for strength and wisdom; that we all needed his protection - and as he thus spoke we turned suddenly into a little enclosure where I saw an uncommon sight, five graves close together, as sometimes children's are made; but these were evidently the graves of grown persons. "Here," he said, "lie my children - all I had, five; they all died after they were men and women, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one. One after the other I laid them here. It was hard to bear; but now I can thank God for that too. He gave them, and I thanked him; he took them, and now I can thank him too." Then, after a minute's silence, he turned upon me with somber eyes and said: "To bear all that comes upon us in silence, in quiet, without noise, or outcry, or excitement, or useless repining - that is to be a man, and that we can do only with God's help."

As we walked along through the vegetable garden and vineyard, I saw some elderly women hoeing the vines and clearing the ground of weeds. I must not forget to say that the culture of their orchards, vineyards and gardens is thorough and admirable. Dr Keil said, nodding to the women, "They like this work; it is their choice to spend the afternoon thus. If I should tell them to go and put on fine clothes and lounge around, they would be very much aggrieved."

The members are all Germans or Pennsylvanians. They are of several Protestant sects; and there is even one Jew, but no Roman Catholics.

The band played on Sunday evening for an hour or more, but did not attract many people. Boys were playing ball in the street at the same time. Some *bought* tobacco; which led me to ask again about the use of money. The questions was not in any case satisfactorily answered; but I have reason to believe that a little selfish earning of private spending money is winked at. For instance, the man whose daughter's wedding I attended kept a few hives of bees; and in answer to a question I was told he did not turn their honey into the general treasury; what he did not consume he was allowed to sell. "In such ways we get a little finery for our daughters," said one. Again, when apples are very abundant, and a sufficient supply has been dried for market, the remainder of the crop is divided among the householders, with the understanding that they may eat or sell them as they prefer.

There is an air of untidiness about the streets of the settlement which is displeasing. There is a piece of water, which might easily be made very pretty, but it is allowed to turn into a quagmire. But few of the door-yards are neatly kept. The village seems to have been laid out at haphazard. Moreover, their stock is of poor breeds; the pigs especially being wretched razor-backed creatures.

As to the people - there can be no doubt that they are happy and contented. In a country where labor is scarce and highly paid, and where the rewards of patient industry in any calling are sure and large, it is not to be supposed that such a society as Aurora would have held together nineteen years if its members were not in every way satisfied with their plan of life, and with the results they have attained under it.

What puzzled me was to find a considerable number of people in the United States satisfied with so little. What they have secured is neighbors, sufficient food probably of a better kind than is enjoyed by the ordinary Oregon farmer, and a distinct and certain provision for their old age, or for helplessness. The last seemed, in all their minds, a source of great comfort. Peculiarly their success has not been brilliant, for if the property were sold out and the money divided, the eighty or ninety families would not receive more than three thousand or thirty-five hundred dollars each; and a farmer in Oregon must have been a very unfortunate man, who, coming here nineteen years ago with nothing, should not be worth more than this sum now, if he had labored as steadily and industriously, and lived as economically as the Aurora people have.

It is probable, however, that in the minds of most of them, the value of united action, the value to each of the example of the others, and the security against absolute poverty and helplessness in the first years of hard struggle, as well as the comfort of social ties, has counted for a great deal.

Nor ought I to forget the moral advantages, which appear to me immense and not to be underrated. Since the foundation of the colony, it has not had a criminal among its members; it has sent no man to jail; it has not had a lawsuit, neither among the members nor with outside people; it has not an insane person, nor one blind or deaf and dumb; nor has there been any case of deformity. It has no poor; and the support of its own helpless persons is a part of its plan.

This means that the Aurora community has not once in nineteen years of its existence used the courts, the jails, or the asylums of the state; that it has contributed nothing to the criminal or the pauper parts of the population.

The result in a newly settled state, and among a rude society, will appear not less remarkable when I had that the community has no library; that its members, so far as I could see, lack even the most common and moderate literary culture, aspiring to nothing further than the ability to read, write and cipher; that from the president down it is absolutely without intellectual life. Moreover, it has very few amusements. Dancing is very little practiced; there is so little social life that there is not even a hall for public meetings in the village; apple-parings and occasional picnics in the summer, the playing of a band, a sermon twice a month, and visiting among the families, are the chief, indeed the only excitements in their monotonous lives. With all this there is singularly little merely animal enjoyment among them: they do not drink liquor; the majority, I was told, do not even smoke tobacco; there is no gayety among the people. Doubtless the winter, which brings them all together in the village, leads to some amusements; but I could hear of nothing set, or looked forward to, or elaborately planned. "The women talk, more or less," said one man to me, when I asked if there were never disagreements and family jars; "but we have learned to bear that, and it makes no trouble."

It seemed to me that I saw in the faces and forms of the people the results of this too monotonous existence. The young women are mostly pale, flat-chested, and somewhat thin. The young men look good-natured but aimless. The older women and men are slow in their movements, placid, very quiet, and apparently satisfied with their lives.

I suppose the lack of smart dress and fiery among the young people on Sunday, and at the wedding, gave a somewhat monotonous and dreary impression of the assemblage. This was probably strengthened in my mind by the fact that the somewhat shabby appearance of the people was only of a piece with the shabby and neglected look of their village, so that the whole conveyed an impression of carelessness and decay. Nineteen years of steady labor ought to have brought them, I could not but think, a little further: ought to have given them tastefully ornamented grounds, pretty houses, a public bath, a library and assembly-room, and neat Sunday clothing. It appeared to me that the stern repression of the whole intellectual side of life by their leader had borne this evil fruit. But it may be that the people themselves were to blame: they are Germans of a low class, and "Pennsylvania Dutch" - people, too often, who do not aim high. Then, too, it must be admitted that farm-life in Oregon is not, in general, above the plane of Aurora. Dutchtown is an Oregon paradise; and the Aurora people are commonly said to "have every thing very nice about them."

Moreover, I could see that such a community must, unless it has for its head a person of strong intellectual life, advance more slowly and with greater difficulty than its members might, if they were living in the great world and thrown upon their individual resources.

Economically, I think there is no doubt that in the clearing up of their land, and the establishment of orchards and other productive industries, these Communists had a decided and important advantage over farmers undertaking similar enterprises with the help of laborers to whom they must have paid wages. For, though the wages of a day-laborer nowhere yield much more than his support and that of his family, they yield this in an uneconomical manner, a part of the sum earned being dropped on the way to middlemen, and a part going for whisky sprees, blue Mondays, and illness arising out of bad situation, improper food, etc. The Aurora colonists labored without money wages; they could economize to the last possible degree in order to tide over a difficult place; they at all times measured their outlay by their means on hand; and I do not doubt that they made Aurora, with its orchards other

valuable improvements, for half what it would have cost by individual effort.

Nor can it be safely asserted that there is no higher future for Aurora. Dr. Keil can not carry them further - but he is sixty-four years old; if, when he dies, the presidency should fall into the hands of a person who, with tact enough to keep the people together, should have also intellectual culture enough to desire to lift them up to a higher plane of living, I can see nothing to prevent his success. The difficulty is that Dr. Keil's system produces no such man. Moses was brought up at Pharaoh's court, and not among the Israelites who he liberated, and who made his whole life miserable for him.