

T1 American Progress – Description by George A. Crofutt (1872)

AMERICAN PROGRESS – This beautiful picture, which will be found opposite the title page, is purely national in design, and represents the United States' portion of the American Continent in its beauty and variety, from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, illustrating at a glance the grand drama of Progress in the civilization, settlement and history of this country.

In the foreground, the central and principal figure, a beautiful and charming female, is floating westward through the air, bearing on her forehead the "Star of Empire." She has left the cities of the east far behind, crossed the Alleghenies and the "Father of Waters," and still her march is westward. In her right hand she carries

a book – common schools – the emblem of education and the testimonial of our national enlightenment, while with the left hand she unfolds and stretches the slender wires of the telegraph, that are to flash intelligence throughout the land. On the right of the picture, is a city, steamships, manufactories, schools and churches, over which beams of light are streaming and filling the air – indicative of civilization. The general tone of the picture on the left, declares darkness, waste and confusion. From the city proceed the three great continental lines of railway, passing the frontier settlers' rude cabin and tending toward the Western Ocean. Next to these are the transportation wagons, overland stage, hunters, gold-seekers, pony-express, the pioneer emigrant and the war-dance of the "noble red man." Fleeing from "Progress," and towards the blue waters of the Pacific, which shows itself on the left of the picture beyond the snow-capped summits of the Sierra Nevadas, are the Indians, buffaloes, wild horses, bears, and other game, moving westward – ever westward – the Indians with their squaws, papooses, and "pony-lodges," turn their despairing faces towards, as they flee from, the presence of the



wondrous vision. The "Star" is too much for them.

What American man, woman or child, does not feel a heart-throb of exultation as they think of the glorious achievements of PROGRESS since the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers, on stanch old Plymouth Rock! [...]

Is there a home, from the miner's humble cabin to the stately marble mansion of the capitalist, that can afford to be without this GREAT National picture, which illustrates in the most artistic manner all the gigantic results of American brains and hands? Who would not have such a beautiful token to remind them of our country's grandeur and enterprise, which have caused the mighty wilderness to blossom like the rose!

<http://twain.lib.virginia.edu/roughingit/map/westmap.html>

The original description featured the following beginning:

This rich and wonderful country – the progress of which at the present time, is the wonder of the old world – was until recently, inhabited exclusively by the lurking savage and wild beasts of prey. If the rapid progress of the "Great West" has surprised our people, what will those of other countries

think of the "Far West," which was destined at an early day, to be the vast granary [grain producing region], as it is now the treasure chamber of our country?

text: <http://www.colorado.edu/AmStudies/lewis/west/gastap.ht> – „American Progress“ (Painting by John Gast, 1872)

ANNOTATIONS

Alleghenies – part of the Appalachians, a mountain range in the East
beam – a line of light, electric waves or particles

to bear sth. – to show something; to carry something so that it can be seen
beast of prey – an animal, especially one that is large or dangerous, or one that is unusual, and kills for food

to blossom – to come into flower; to develop

cabin – a small house or shelter, usually made of wood

to cause – to make something happen
despairing – showing or feeling the loss of all hope

destined – having a future which has been decided or planned at an earlier time, especially by fate