

tors came from Scandinavia to England. They emigrated to America about 1636 in the little ship Mary Anne, and the first Thurstons landed at Newburyport. Some of the family took part in the revolutionary war, and they were, I believe, very respectable people. By the time my father appeared on the scene they had drifted as far west as Vermont, and it was in that state that I was born.

"What did your father do, Senator?" I asked.

"He was a farmer, as his father and grandfather had been before him. There were, in fact, seven generations of farmers in my line before my father tried to make a living out of the poor land on the Vermont mountains. He added, however, the tanning of leather to the tilling of the soil, and in time he saved a few thousand dollars. This he took with him and went west to invest it in real estate and to grow up with the country. I was just seven years old at the time my father appeared on the scene. We first settled at Madison, Wis., and thence went to Beaver Dam, where by a series of unsuccessful investments my father lost all he had."

"Where did you go to school, Senator?"

"I had a hard time to get an education," replied Senator Thurston. "I went to the common schools at Madison and Beaver Dam, and afterward worked my way through a small college in Wisconsin. The most of my schooling was during the spring and fall. My summers and winters were devoted to work."

"What kind of work, Senator?"

"All kinds," was the reply. "I did anything I could get to do. I worked with my father on the farm, and I remember I once made a lot of money making a fence. I got twelve cents a rod, and I have made as high as forty rods a day; which any fence maker will tell you is pretty good work. The fence was of boards. The posts had to be sunken in the ground, and four boards nailed on to them and another board on top. The posts must be of an even length and most of them had to be sawed off after they were set. I made considerable in this way, but the chief part of my income came from hunting and fishing, which I carried on in the winter."

"How could you fish in the winter?" I asked.

"We fished through the ice," was the reply. There is a large lake near the town of Beaver Dam, and at the time I lived there this was full of fish. Hundreds of tons were caught every winter, and I remember one winter when I shipped 100 tons of fish myself. I caught a great many of these and bought others, and I made that winter just about \$1000. Have you ever seen how they fish through the ice?"

"No," said I. "How did you do it?"

"We built little houses on the ice," replied the Senator. "Each of these houses was just about four and a half feet square and five feet high. They were entirely closed, and had doors, but no windows. In the back of the house there was a little sheet iron stove, the pipe of which went out of the top, and which kept us warm. We would cut a hole in the ice in front of the stove, and, owing to the comparative darkness, were able to look down into it and see the fish as they swam about beneath. We used decoy baits of wood, with tin

wings fixed to them. These were so fastened to the line that they twisted and turned as we pulled at it. The fish would nose about the bait, and we would catch them by driving spears into them. Our best fish were pickerel, and those we caught weighed all the way from two and one-half to twenty-five pounds. When the weather was warm we often cut holes in the ice outside the houses and fished with genuine bait."

"You spoke about hunting, Senator."

"I should have said trapping," was the reply. "This lake at Beaver Dam was surrounded by marshes and these were the natural homes of muskrats and minks. I used to set traps about the edge of the lake, and I would visit them every morning to see what I had caught. I had as many as forty traps some winters, and have many times caught twenty rats in a single morning. When the ice was good I could skate around from one trap to another, and visit all of my traps before breakfast."

"Was there much money in it?"

"Yes," replied the United States Senator. "There was a good deal in it for a boy. I used to get forty cents for a muskrat skin, and a haul of twenty skins meant \$8. to me."

"How did you come to study law?"

"I can't tell that," replied Senator Thurston. "When I was quite a small boy I said I was bound to be two things. One was to be a lawyer and the other was to go to the United States Senate. I suppose my father put the law idea into my head. At least, I studied law as soon as I got out of school and I was admitted to practice at Beaver Dam."

"Do you remember your first case, Senator?"

"Yes," was the reply. "It was a justice of the peace case. A man had been arrested for whipping a boy. The prosecuting attorney was called away and he asked me to try it. When the town learned that I was to plead the case they crowded about the office. The justice complimented me on my speech, but he gave the verdict to the other side. This was so with nearly all the cases of my earlier practice. I did not seem to succeed, and it was a long time before I made anything to speak of."

"How did you happen to go to Omaha?"

"I wanted to find a new city and grow up with it," replied Senator Thurston. "I took a map of the United States and studied the towns of the west, wavering a long time between Omaha and Kansas City. Omaha had then 15,000 people, and I finally chose it."

"How much money had you when you got there?"

"Just forty dollars, which I had made cradling wheat."

"That was not much to start out life with, was it, Senator?" said I.

"It seemed a great deal then," replied the man who is now getting more than four hundred dollars a month from Uncle Sam. "It was more than my partner had, and he, by the way, had gotten married and brought his wife with him using the journey as a wedding trip."

"How did you spend your forty dollars?"

"The most of it went into furniture and food. My partner and his wife had nothing, and as I boarded with them my money had to supply the kitchen. We waited for some time, expecting to get

practice, and finally matters became so desperate that my partner had to send his wife back to Beaver Dam, and he left Omaha and went further west. He stopped in Denver, and he is now a very successful lawyer there. I stayed in Omaha."

"But how did you get along?"

"Oh, I managed to make a little now and then," replied Senator Thurston. "I had an office with another firm, and they gave me a little ante-room, which I used for my private office and sleeping room. I brought a buffalo robe and a quilt with me, and I made up a bed on the floor. I had to try all sorts of shifts to get along, and one time, I remember, when the financial skies were very black, I bought a box of crackers at wholesale and lived on them until the silver lining came out from behind the clouds. This silver lining usually appeared in the shape of a five-dollar fee, which sometimes lasted me for weeks. After a time, however, I did better. My practice gradually grew and I had all that I could do. I then became the counsel of the Union Pacific railroad, which I held until after my election to the Senate."

"Senator, you have been a successful lawyer. Do you think the chances for making a success at the law are as good today as they have been in the past?"

"Yes; the field is a large one, and there will be always room for the right men."

"Will you drop your practice, now that you are in the Senate?"

"To a large extent, yes," was the reply. "I have resigned from the Union Pacific, though in doing so it is with the statement that there would be no impropriety in my continuing my connection with it, excepting the need of my time for my public duties. The Union Pacific railroad is in the hands of receivers, which were appointed almost directly by President Cleveland and Secretary Olney. In acting for it I would be acting for the United States."

"Tell me something about your work in the United States Senate, Mr. Thurston. Along what lines do you propose to move?"

"I can't say as to that," was the reply.

"I shall probably not make any speeches for some time. The position is a new one to me, and without there is some special demand for it I do not expect to push myself forward."

"How about the silver sentiment of the west, Senator? How do the people feel in Nebraska?"

"The best sentiment in Nebraska," replied Senator Thurston, "is in favor of some sort of bimetallism, which will not unsettle values nor impair the relations of the two metals. I don't think our people want free coinage, though they would be glad to see any legislation enacted which would produce a larger use of silver upon the proper basis."

"How about Venezuela?"

"I have not studied the question sufficiently to express an opinion," was the reply. "We people in Nebraska have a very hazy idea of the situation. We have not, as a general thing, a definite idea of just what the Monroe doctrine is; but I believe the people of this country are ready to stand by the Monroe doctrine, and to say that they will fight for their rights concerning it."

"How about a war with England?"

"There is no danger of that. England cannot afford to risk a war with us. She remembers the damage which we did to