Tocqueville
Towards a New World
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TOWARDS A NEW WORLD

freely adapted from A Fortnight in the Wilderness,
by Alexis de Tocqueville.

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NEW YORK, SUMMER 1831

COME ON GUSTAVE, HURRY UP, THE STAGECOACH WON'T WAIT!

HUFF...PUFF... I'M EXHAUSTED!

COME ON, YOU CAN DO IT! YOU SEEMED TO BE IN BETTER SHAPE A FEW YEARS AGO!

YES, BUT... RUNNING LIKE THIS FROM THE CRACK OF DAWN... HUFF... WITHOUT ANY BREAKFAST...

WE'LL HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO EAT ON THE WAY! THINK ABOUT EVERYTHING WE'RE GOING TO DISCOVER!
The frontier, its forests, lakes, Indians… a new world is waiting for us!

Huff... puff... I know, but my sense of adventure would have been keener after some breakfast!

I can't wait to see what these famous Indians look like...

Do you think they're like in the stories we've read?

I hope so... imagine, naked, wild men, their bodies forged by the forest, hunting and war... real wolves!
HA HA...IN ANY CASE I DEFINITELY PLAN TO MAKE A FEW SKETCHES OF THE SAVAGES!

SAME HERE!

WE WERE OFF. OUR GREAT TRIP IN THE WEST WAS FINALLY GOING TO BEGIN.

WILD WEST, HERE WE COME! HA HA HA!!

BUT OUR ENTHUSIASM PROVED TO BE SHORT-LIVED, BECAUSE AS WE WERE ABOUT TO FIND OUT...

...FINDING THE WILDERNESS TODAY IS HARDER THAN YOU WOULD THINK.
As we travelled farther north-west, the goal of our journey seemed to escape us.

Oh, they’re somewhere beyond the great lakes…

It’s a dying race, you know…

We travelled through famous places in the history of the Indians, crossing valleys and rivers that still bore the names of their tribes.

But everywhere, the hut of the savage had given way to the house of the civilized man…

The woods had been felled, the wilderness took on life.

Here is where I felled the first tree of the forest…

Just there, where our beautiful church stands.

And that’s where the great council of the Iroquois confederation used to be held.

The Iroquois?!

And what has become of the Indians?

Oh, they’re somewhere beyond the great lakes…

They’re not made for civilization; it kills them.

It’s a dying race, you know…

And what has become of the Indians?
Man becomes accustomed to everything, and gets used to all sights.

Here, an ancient people, the first and legitimate master of the American continent, melts away daily like snow in the sun, and disappears before our eyes from the face of the earth.

On the same land, in its place, another race expands at an even more surprising speed...

By its hand forests are felled, swamps are dried out....

Lakes like seas, immense rivers, resist its triumphant march in vain.

The wilderness becomes villages, villages become towns.

A daily witness to these marvels, the American is unperturbed.

This unbelievable destruction is to him the usual course of events. He gets used to it as if to the immutable order of nature.
on july 19 at 10 o'clock in the morning, we boarded the steamboat ohio, headed for detroit.

a very strong breeze blew from the north-west giving the waters of lake erie the agitated appearance of ocean waves.

in france, and more generally in the old europe, i'd noticed that the extent to which a province or town was isolated, its wealth or its size, had an immense influence on the ideas, the morals, the entire civilization of its inhabitants...often separating the various parts of the same territory by several centuries.

in my traveller's illusions, i imagined this was even more true in the new world, and that a country, peopled so incompletely as america, must present all of the conditions of human existence...

according to me, this was the only country where you could see the image of society across all ages, from the opulent, urbane patricien to the savage of the wilderness.

that is where, in a word, i expected to find the history of all humanity, within a few degrees of longitude...
But nothing in this picture is true.

In America, there is no mid-way...

You go without transition from the wilderness to the street of a city. On turning from a woods you can see the spire of a steeple, dazzling white houses, shops, the most pleasant pictures of civilized life.

Those who have travelled across the United States will find therein a striking emblem of American society. Everything is haphazard, unexpected...

Everywhere, extreme civilization and nature abandoned to itself are found together, face to face.

I began to realize that of all the countries in the world, America was perhaps the least able to provide the spectacle I had come to seek there...
The following day at three o'clock, we arrived in Detroit, a small town of two or three thousand inhabitants.

We had crossed the entire state of New York and steamed one hundred leagues on Lake Erie; we now touched on the limits of civilization.

But we still did not know which course to take, and finding information was not as easy as you might believe.

To cross almost impenetrable forests, to brave pestilential marshes and to expose oneself to the damp air of the woods, these are efforts which an American easily conceives, if a dime is to be gained.

It was impossible to find someone who could understand us…

But should you do so from curiosity, simply to admire great trees or find solitude, that is entirely beyond him…

You want to see woods? Go straight ahead and you’ll find what you’re looking for…

As for the Indians, you’ll see more than enough in our streets, you won’t need to go very far for that…

We soon saw that it would be impossible to get the truth from them in a straightforward manner. We would need to manoeuvre…

At least those ones are starting to become civilized and have a less savage appearance.
This part seems to me to be the best suited to your purpose. The land is good and large villages are already founded there.

Well, now we know where not to go...

Oh...this way, to the north-west, around Pontiac and its neighborhood some pretty fair establishments have recently been founded, but you must not think of settling farther off...

The country is covered by an almost impenetrable forest which extends endlessly to the north, full of nothing but wild beasts and Indians.

The road that takes you there is so well kept that public coaches run every day. For your project to buy land, you’ll find everything you need there!

And, eh, out of interest, where has emigration least made itself felt up to now?

The United States plan to open a road through it shortly, but it is only just begun and stops at Pontiac.

I repeat, it is a part that you must not think about.

Thank you for your advice. You can be sure that we’ll follow it to the letter...

The next day, we sped off to get horses, some provisions and guns, and set off, our hearts as light as if we had been skipping school.

We were beside ourselves with joy at finally knowing a place that the torrent of European civilization had not yet reached.
ONE MILE FROM THE TOWN, THE ROAD ENTERS THE FOREST, AND NEVER LEAVES IT.

SOON YOU HEAR THE AXE THAT FELLS THE TREES, AND AS YOU PROCEED, TRACES OF DESTRUCTION ANNOUNCE STILL MORE CLEARLY THE PRESENCE OF MAN.

THE LITTLE BELLS THAT THE PIONEERS HANG AROUND THE NECKS OF THEIR CATTLE ANNOUNCE FROM AFAR THE APPROACH TO A CLEARING.

CORN PLANTED HERE AND THERE IN A WOOD STRICKEN BY DEATH...

TRUNKS CALCINED BY FIRE OR MAIMED BY STEEL...

THEN, AFTER THESE FIRST STEPS OF CIVILIZATION IN THE WILDERNESS, YOU COME SUDDENLY UPON THE OWNER'S CABIN.
we thought we had finally reached the door of the American peasant…

Oi, that’s enough!

We thought we had finally reached the door of the American peasant…

O, that’s enough!

Heel!

He... Hello! We.....

Mistake.

There are no peasants in America.
THE INHABITANTS OF THESE ISOLATED PLACES ARRIVED YESTERDAY. THEY WEAR THE SAME CLOTHES AS US...

...BOOKS AND NEWSPAPERS LIE ON THEIR CRUDE TABLES.

THEY SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF THE CITIES.

THEY ARE THE SAME AS THOSE WE HAD LEFT IN THE STREETS OF NEW YORK: SAME SPIRIT, SAME HABITS, SAME PLEASURES.

AND WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

ERR, WELL...WE ARE GOING TO THE FRONTIER, TO THE NORTH-WEST.

OH, YOU'RE GOING TO SAGINAW?

SA...SAGINAW?