

THE FIRST MORNING.

THE founding of Topeka was not a premeditated scheme, but rather an accident, as men count accidents. The little company of strangers, now appropriately styled the "Fathers of Topeka," for the first time exchanged greetings around the camp fire, on what is now the northwest corner of Kansas and First avenues.

It was just as the sun went down, on the 4th evening of December, 1854, and they busied themselves during the twilight in erecting barriers against the winds and frosts of approaching night, in gathering prairie grass to rest and sleep upon—if rest and sleep they might.

When the discomforts of the night were past, and the little party had broken fast upon such meager fragments of food as they chanced to have, they walked out upon the elevated divide separating the valleys of the Kaw and the Shunganunga, more fully to view the site of their briefly-considered enterprise.

No cloud was within the bounding horizon; the sky higher and broader than ever before; the atmosphere clear, cold and highly rarified, revealing to the astonished vision objects far beyond its

usual ken, and those at hand in strange expanse; the broad belt of timber emerging past the highlands from the unknown west, and stretching far away to the east, holding in its dark embraces the river of Kansas, its presence there anon revealed by vista-views of crystal ice, radiant with morning light.

The Shunganunga, past Burnett's Mound, and joined by Willett's creek, coursed its sinuous way through rich, alluvial meadows. Martin's, Deer, Stinson's and Tecumseh from the south; Soldier, Muddy, Half-Day and Indian from the north—silent little rivulets, by wooded borders made conspicuous on the scene—at equal distances bisecting the broad valley of the Kaw, to confluence with its gulf-bound waters.

The general topography—the limitless field of ever-varying, never-tiring undulations, symmetrical beauties every one—called forth devout gratulations, alike for faculties which find delight in form, and these natural objects to satisfy their cravings. The great sun poured its flood in genial rays of red askance the plain, dissolving frost to dewdrops on the seared grass, and inviting the perceptions to the pure and the picturesque. And over this varied scene of beauty, an all-pervading sense of solitude, deep and awful as eternity.

Memory turns to such a morning, and amid such surroundings beholds a little group of men standing against the sky on yonder plateau, exchanging glances of doubtful recognition, and contemplating with eager interest the scene of life's labors before them.