



Dreamers of
The American Dream

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Part Four

GOD MADE THE LAND FOR USE

so much of Vermont's land was based, was not settled for one hundred forty-one years after the state was admitted to the Union, when the United States Supreme Court found that the jurisdiction of New Hampshire never extended west of the Connecticut River. "Thus was demolished," wrote Matt B. Jones, a native of Vermont and one of the great legal minds of New England, "thus was demolished the legal theory by which the claimants under New Hampshire grants west of the Connecticut River sought to justify their appeal to force." One can only muse whether this region would not today be a part of New York State if it had not been for the Onion River Land Company and the genius of its head man. One hesitates to call it a "reform" of land distribution. It was a land jobbers' war, with the honors going to the more determined jobbers.

3.

REBELLIONS ON THE MANORS

THE agreement of 1790, by which Vermont paid a modest indemnity to New York, settled the business of the New Hampshire Grants except, as indicated, as a matter of academic interest. Yet New York was not done with internal troubles relating to land. The great manors of the Hudson River Valley and adjacent counties remained. Not all of them, for many of the patroons, or manor lords, had guessed wrong and stayed Loyalist. But a few of the greatest landowners fought with the patriots and came out of the war with their estates intact. In several instances, indeed, the estates were larger than before by addition of the confiscated lands of the Tories.

As the new Republic of the United States came into being, none of its basic legislation affected the manors. The medieval patroon system survived to saddle the valley with a hoary anachronism, a threat to the principle of equal rights for all. For instance, the lands of the Van Rensselaer family embraced all of Albany and Rensselaer counties and part of Columbia. By 1838 somewhere between sixty thousand and one hundred thousand tenant farmers lived on Van Rensselaer lands. The Livingston Manor covered most of Columbia County. Other immense estates belonged to families named Morris, Jay, Van Cortlandt, and Schuyler. During more than a century there had been considerable intermarriage of patroon sons and daughters, although one of the Schuyler girls saw fit to marry outside the landed gentry. Her husband

was Alexander Hamilton, who thus became a kinsman not only of the landed Schuylers but also of the Livingstons and Van Rensselaers.

Hamilton was one of the young republic's most brilliant statesmen who, among other things, had helped to frame the new constitution; and it was only natural that one of his in-laws, Stephen Van Rensselaer, should turn to him for help in drawing up a suitable contract for his thousands of tenants to sign. This seemed necessary in view of the fact that New York State had in 1782 outlawed feudalism by abolishing entail and primogeniture.

Young Hamilton was glad to oblige. He drew up a "lease" that would bind all new tenants permanently to the estate. In effect it differed little from the leases given back in colonial days by the original Van Rensselaer to his tenants. Yet the new lease made it appear that the patroon *sold* the property to the farmer and his heirs and assigns forever. Indeed, the contract Hamilton drew up was on the face of it described as an instrument of "Incomplete Sale." Generations of attorneys have been unable to conjure up a finer euphemism for perpetual lease. Hamilton's incomplete sale meant that the tenant could not sell his property, but only his contract with its terms unaltered. The land remained in the ownership of the patroon.

The contract stipulated that the so-called "purchase" price of the title and the use of the soil was "ten bushels of winter wheat and four fat fowls" annually. In addition, the tenant was to give one day's work each year with horse and wagon. The ironclad instrument specified that the tenant must have his grain made into flour only at the mill of the manor, for which the usual grist was charged. The tenant was to pay all taxes. He was to use the land for agricultural purposes only. The patroon reserved for himself all wood, mineral, and water rights.

This remarkable contract, as historian Henry Christman observed, "was an expression of Hamilton's theory of government." He proposed to save the nation from democracy by putting the wealthy in a position to check the "unsteadiness and imprudence" of the common people. He wanted to "preserve the old class distinctions by preserving the institutions which made them possible." To this end nothing could have been more purposeful than the incomplete sale, devised by Alexander Hamilton and quickly plagiarized by other patroons, which was still in effect more than half a century after Yorktown.

That in fifty years the tenants had not revolted did not mean they were content with their lot. The fresh winds of the Revolution had fanned through the great estates and stirred great hope in the minds of the more imaginative tenants. Many of these men had fought at Saratoga or suffered at Valley Forge. They believed the war had been fought as much for them as for the men of property. But now time had passed.

The perpetual rents remained. A new generation of tenants found themselves no better off than their fathers before them, or their grandfathers. That they continued serf-like to work their rented acres with no more than an occasional mild protest was due to apathy and fear. The more aged among the tenants could remember the time when, just before the Revolution, William Prendergast had organized an anti-rent movement that swept the manors like fire, and was put down only by General Gage and his redcoats. Yet, when the excitement was over, the whipped tenants returned to their leases, rebel Prendergast was in prison, and everything was the same as it had been before.

But not quite everything. The Cromwellian Levelers, as Prendergast liked to call his anti-rent army, had left more than a residue of resentment among tenants. It smoldered until the 1840s, when another rebel appeared to lead the manor serfs in what went into New York history as the Tin-Horn Rebellion.

This new hope of the tenants was young, soft-spoken Dr. Smith Boughton, born in 1810 on his father's leasehold in Rensselaer County but, surprisingly enough, sent to be educated at Middlebury College in Vermont. He set up in medical practice at Delhi in the Catskill Mountains of New York's Delaware County, much of which was held under semi-feudal leases, a condition he had been familiar with since boyhood in the East Manor of the Rensselaer estate. He often recalled the sight of his father driving once a year to the manor seat "with his load of wheat to ransom his right to live on the land and cultivate it."

Young Boughton was not to be the first rebel in his family. His Huguenot forebears fled France in the seventeenth century. His father and two uncles fought in the American Revolution. The young man himself had displayed insurgency at Middlebury College, where students were required to attend Congregational services until Boughton led some forty-odd of his mates on a march of protest to authorities and argued that they had no right to impose theological tenets. He won his case. Even after he had settled down to medical practice the fires of revolt still burned within him. In 1837 he dropped everything and went to Canada to enlist on the side of Louis Papineau and William Lyon Mackenzie in the so-called Patriots' War against the government. Boughton got into the shooting too, and was captured, imprisoned, then deported.

On return to his native region Dr. Boughton married and settled in the village of Alps in Rensselaer County. During his absence in Canada several of his boyhood companions, including blood cousins, had been sent to jail for anti-rent riots on the West Manor of the Rensselaer estate in Albany County. Boughton visited them and returned home convinced that, though the American Revolution had done nothing to

unfetter tenants from the thrall of Hamilton's incomplete-sale illusion, it might be possible to stage a home-grown rebellion in the manor counties.

At this period the still-young Dr. Boughton was a tall, slender man, with fine eyes, a reflective face, and white hair. He also possessed a quiet eloquence. Having made up his mind that the only hope for an effective revolt was first to bring all tenants into a group pledged to pay no more rents, he made use of his professional rounds to instill the idea among patients. He presently met up with Thomas Devyr, a warm-hearted, fiery agitator who had battled landlords in his native Ireland, from which he fled to England and there became embroiled in the abortive revolt of the Chartist radicals. Fleeing again, this time to America, Devyr almost automatically was attracted to Albany by the anti-rent troubles in the West Manor. Boughton liked him instantly.

With Devyr's help Boughton drew up a formal "Statement of Grievances and Proposed Redress," which, after recounting the wrongs of the tenants, expressed grave doubts that the titles to the large estates were legal and demanded a constitutional amendment to end the leasehold system. The signers of his bold document pledged themselves to pay rent no longer. They committed themselves, if need be, to "a ten-year war for justice."

On the first day of January, 1844, Dr. Boughton rode down from the hills and across the Hudson to Albany and the Capitol, to present the Anti-Rent association's petition, which had been signed by several thousand manor farmers. By a slim majority the Assembly voted to refer it to a judiciary committee, and Boughton was asked to supply legal opinions in support of his contention that a legislature had the power to interfere with the tenures. Boughton took off for Boston and there had a talk with the aging but still formidable Daniel Webster, whom he found to have the mouth of a mastiff, a brow like a mountain, and "eyes burning like anthracite." The great man encouraged Boughton. "If I had the time," he rumbled, "I would tear that manor apart." He sent Boughton to New York City to see Ambrose L. Jordan, known in legal circles for his corrosive skill as Old Aqua-fortis (nitric acid). We shall meet him again.

With supporting opinions from both Webster and Jordan, Boughton returned to Albany to bolster the anti-rent case. The committee was notably impressed. All appeared to be going well when suddenly the committee voted to defer action of the matter until the state comptroller had time to look into it. This meant a long delay. It meant to Dr. Boughton that the petition had been scuttled by "a handsome sum" paid certain committee members by agents of the Rensselaers.

As Dr. Boughton saw it, only one course was left to the anti-renters. They had sought relief by legal means. Now they would seek relief by whatever means seemed most effective.

None of the manor lords lacked casual informers or active spies. Someone or another who served the Rensselaers came in to report that Dr. Boughton was not only a dreamer of dangerous and quite impossible dreams, but also a sort of cloak-and-dagger romantic. He was organizing a secret order of renters called simply "The Indians" or "The Natives," complete with passwords, countersigns, outlandish titles for its officers, and fantastic disguises. If all this sounded to the patroons like little more than rustic horseplay, foolish yet harmless, they changed their minds soon enough when a spy related what he had seen and heard with his own eyes and ears.

While riding a back road in Taghanick Township, said the informer, he heard the sound of fife and drums, and soon came to a scene that staggered his imagination. Marching up and down, in military formation, were hundreds of men, all masked. The masks covered head and neck, and were hideously painted with popeyes, cockeyes, clown noses, and contorted mouths. The uniforms were a sort of smock of brilliant calico of garish stripes, bold designs, or solid colors to match the rainbow. From every belt hung a bright tin horn. In the hands of each marching man was a weapon—spear, tomahawk, club, pitchfork, pistol, or gun.

When the astounded spy could take his eyes from the marching men, he looked around to note that a crowd of spectators in everyday dress and numbering more than a thousand had gathered at one end of the field near a raised platform. The parade of the masked army came to a stop fronting the platform, onto which presently climbed a masked figure. The calico soldiers greeted him with a shout. "Big Thunder!" they yelled.

Big Thunder responded with what seemed a war cry: "Down with the rent!" The lurking spy bent his ears to hear Big Thunder say a shocking thing. "The Livingstons and the Van Rensselaers," he cried, "have taken from us and our fathers in manor rents many times what the land is worth." The voice was calm, yet had an undertone of suppressed emotion. It continued: "It is treason to pay rents to robbers who forfeit citizenship by calling themselves lords and refuse honest citizens the right to own their own homes." The calico soldiers shouted and blew a blast on their tin horns. The speaker went on: "Do not pay the rents," he admonished. "Be still and do nothing. The Natives you see here will take care of you." (More shouts.) "When the sheriffs come to take your farms, the Natives will come out of the rocky glens and caves in the mountains and drive them off. They will come in the night and de-

part before day. No one will know whence they came or where they went."

In Big Thunder's harangue was more than an echo of Ethan Allen, who, on one occasion said he was "determined to defend the independence of Vermont" and that, rather than fail, "I will retire with hardy Green Mountain Boys into the desolate caverns of the mountains, and wage war with human nature at large." It is improbable that Big Thunder's audience recognized the echo, but if Big Thunder was Dr. Smith Boughton, then he was surely acquainted with Colonel Allen's famous defiance, which was still a popular quotation in the Green Mountains, where the doctor had been educated at Middlebury.

When Big Thunder had finished, the calico men blew their horns, waved their weapons, and chanted, "Down-with-the-rent . . . down-with-the-rent." Then they and the spectators joined to sing a doggerel song that had something to do with tarring and feathering sheriffs. Sensing "the rise of a more dangerous mood" in the immense crowd, the spy took off to report to his patroon employer.

The spies and informers of all the manor lords were to have a busy year, for the Anti-Rent association grew almost as fast as members could be listed on the protest petitions. The secret bands of Indians or Natives multiplied. The time was ripe. What was called agrarianism was in the air, not only the air of the manors but of the country at large. Reformer Albert Brisbane was helping to establish socialist communities advocated by the Frenchman Fourier. The influential Horace Greeley was whooping up this idea. And George Henry Evans, who for two decades had been advocating free homesteads for all, along with a system much like what later was called the Single Tax, revived his *Working Man's Advocate*, specifically to support Dr. Boughton's anti-rent war.

The Van Rensselaers and Livingstons went into action almost simultaneously. The former, toting up rents in arrears, discovered that their renters of the East Manor alone owed them more than two hundred thousand dollars. Sheriffs were given a stupendous number of writs to dispossess, but were met along the way by masked men blowing tin horns and finally by a small army of masked Indians. One officer was tarred and feathered, the others told to begone. In Columbia County, Sheriff Henry Miller and deputies set forth to evict leasehold farmers Steve Decker and Abe Vosburgh. They, too, were met by a long column of The Natives, masked, decked out in bright calico, and accompanied by possibly "two thousand undisguised spectators." The entire crowd followed the officers to the Vosburgh place.

Just as Sheriff Miller started the legal process of eviction and sale, Big Thunder appeared. He ignored the officers, but addressed the Indians.

"Shall we take their papers and burn them?" he asked. The calico maskers raised their left arms in a silent vote. Big Thunder turned to the spectators. "Do you Palefaces agree?" he asked, and was answered by a shout of approval. There was a mean quality to the shout. Sheriff Miller turned the papers over to Big Thunder, who thereupon led the entire mob down the road to Sweet's Tavern, where a barrel of tar was blazing in the yard. He tossed the offending papers into the fire. The officers could hear talk in the crowd of tar and feathers, but they were allowed to depart, to "ride disconsolantly back to the town of Hudson," the seat of Columbia County.

For reasons not clear no arrests followed the affair at Sweet's Tavern, but the anti-rent agitation was spreading. The fiery Irish radical, Thomas Devyr, who had helped Boughton to draw up the "Statement of Grievances," was loose on the manors, shouting "For the Land is Mine, Saith the Lord," moving swiftly through Rensselaer, Albany, and Green counties, then over the hills into Schoharie and Delaware counties. When one day calico Indians attempted to halt the carriage of General Jacob Livingston, he drew two pistols and shot at the masked riders.

The Indians were growing bolder everywhere, and in Columbia County they distributed handbills announcing that Big Thunder was to speak at a rally of renters on "the faulty titles of Livingston Manor." This time a monstrous crowd, described by informers as "thousands of people" gathered at Bam's Tavern. To warm up the crowd, several hundred calico Indians staged a wild performance of leaping, yelling, blowing horns, and discharging firearms. During this preliminary some careless Indian fired a gun that held not a blank charge but a bullet. It killed young Bill Rifenburg, son of a nearby renter. Big Thunder hastened to the tavern's upper veranda to explain that the fatal shot was a regrettable accident, and that the meeting was dismissed. The vast crowd, shocked at the tragedy, milled around and started to drift away in silence. Big Thunder and a few other leaders of the Indians gathered within the tavern to discuss what to do next.

They were still talking when Sheriff Henry Miller with four deputies and the district attorney of Hudson entered the taproom. "You are under arrest, Dr. Boughton," Miller said. Boughton made no protest, and left the room with the sheriff's party. Before they could enter the sheriff's carriage, however, a good dozen of the Indians came tearing out and attacked the officers. The sheriff's men prevailed, and drove off with Boughton and also Little Thunder, who was Mort Belding. Though no attempt was made to halt the sheriff and his prisoners, the carriage was trailed to the outskirts of Hudson by a growing band of calico men blowing the daylights out of their tin horns.

The citizens of Hudson had no sympathy for the anti-renters. They

were elated when their sheriff returned to lock up the two Indian leaders in the town jail. With nightfall, however, came a feeling of unease brought on, perhaps, by the sound of horns from the surrounding countryside. The sounds rose and fell on the changing winds, but they were almost continuous. Across the Hudson River, too, torches could be seen moving, as if in an endless parade, in the vicinity of Athens. Coupled with Sheriff Miller's report of "several thousands" in the anti-rent mob from which he had taken the two leaders, plus the moving torches and the far-off but repeated blowing of horns, Hudson people had an ominous feeling they could not shake off.

Into the town next morning came a messenger from the Indians bearing a demand that Boughton be released. Otherwise a thousand calico soldiers would march in to put the town to the torch. Mayor Cyrus Curtis and his councilmen panicked. A horseman was sent flying upriver with an appeal to the governor for immediate troops. The men of the Albany Burgesses Corps were mustered, put aboard a railroad train, and dispatched to Hudson, to make a splendid entry in their handsome uniforms, flags waving, drums beating. After conferring with the mayor their colonel and a detail of the corps set out to find and arrest the most dangerous of the calico leaders still at large. This was White Chief—born Walter Hutchins—who was believed to be hiding in a tavern south of Hudson. After a night of futile wandering in the field the detail returned to find Hudson loaded with four more companies of Albany militia, while before long, a steamboat hove in from New York City bearing the men and horses of Captain Krack's Cavalry.

Even these gallant troopers were not enough to stem the fear that seemed to have taken firm hold of Hudson, for the townsmen mustered a large company of home guards, a couple of pieces of artillery that were paraded with field music, then busied themselves by patrolling what was virtually a town in siege.

Captain Krack's troopers meant business. They dashed out to run the elusive White Chief to earth, and found him hiding in a house in Minkville. The astute captain knew how to deliver a notorious criminal. He loaded White Chief Walter Hutchins into a requisitioned farm wagon, took pains to send a courier ahead to alert Hudson to the wonderful news, then rode into the waiting town with his prisoner riding in the midst of twenty superb horsemen.

This turned out to end the siege of Hudson. The excitement died almost as suddenly as it began. The swarming militia returned to their homes; and the town, which for more than a week had been in the national spotlight, returned to its usual quiet. It is likely that the townsmen thought they would hear no more of Dr. Smith Boughton. They were mistaken.

While Boughton remained without recourse to bail in Hudson, his allies, George Henry Evans and Thomas Devyr, worked valiantly to build the doctor into a martyr-symbol of some stature. At his first trial the jury did not believe he had been properly identified as being the Big Thunder of the riots. They disagreed as to his guilt. He was released on bail. By the time Boughton came to trial again, in the autumn, he was a national character, talked about from Maine to Illinois.

Two days before the trial was to start Hudson filled again, this time with the wagons and buggies of anti-renters come to town for what was widely heralded as the greatest struggle to date between the patroons and the leaseholders. The little courthouse seemed lost in a crowd of silent and sullen farmers.

The trial was considered so important that the attorney general himself, who was handsome John Van Buren, the son of a recent president of the United States, came to prosecute. In charge of the defense was white-haired and crusty old Ambrose L. Jordan. When Jordan learned that the judge was to be John W. Edmunds, a close personal friend of the Van Burens, he knew well enough that this was to be no impartial court; he expected Edmunds to prove himself as "effective a landlord's agent" as could be found. "Judge Edmunds," wrote historian Christman, "knew almost everybody in the county and used this knowledge freely to help Prince John [Van Buren] to hand-pick the jury."

The long trial was enlivened by forensic bouts between Jordan and the prosecutor, and once turned into a brawl when Jordan remarked that "Van Buren has not contended for justice, but is here to exhibit himself, to pander to the miserable ambition which was the curse of his father," then went on to compare the two Van Burens. "Though the father," he said, "had brains to temper his wild ambition to some degree, the son has none to temper his, and it breaks out everywhere in puerility and slush."

Attorney General Van Buren swung and caught Jordan full in the face. Jordan shook his white head and tore into the younger man furiously. Officers broke it up before much damage was done. Otherwise the affair proceeded evenly to its foreordained conclusion. Dr. Boughton was convicted. The charge against him was robbery. Yet when Judge Edmunds delivered sentence, he remarked that "the offense in fact is high treason, rebellion against your government, and armed insurrection." He termed Boughton "the leader, the principal fomenter of all these disturbances." Then he declared to the prisoner that he "should be confined to prison for the term of your natural life."

The hardness of the sentence staggered almost everybody except the patroons, their agents, and their friends, personal and political. Boughton, however, agreed with counsel Jordan that it would be useless to

appeal. "By submitting to my fate," said the prisoner, "I will win public opinion and help our cause."

The more than five thousand leasehold farmers who crowded the square around the courthouse made no demonstration. They had lost their incomparable leader. They were discouraged beyond telling. Grim, many of them weeping, they made their way back to their homes and the unpaid rents that had steadily been mounting. That same night Dr. Boughton, heavily ironed, started the first lap of the journey that ended at Clinton Prison, in Dannemora, Clinton County.

Meanwhile other courts of the manor counties were convicting local leaders of the Anti-rent association. In Delaware County, anti-renters O'Connor and Van Steenbergh were sentenced to be hanged in connection with the killing of a sheriff. Four more were given life, and nine others sent up to serve from two to ten years. The death sentences were commuted to life imprisonment. Dr. Boughton was to have company in Dannemora.

Still at large were Boughton's two staunch friends, Thomas Devyr, now editing a new paper, *The Anti-Renter*, and George Henry Evans, editing *Young America*, the new style of his pioneer *Workingman's Advocate*. Remarking that Dr. Boughton had "committed no sin against morality or the principles of the American Revolution," Evans declared that henceforth his paper would carry on its masthead a line in boldface: "Liberation of Dr. Boughton." Editor Devyr reminded his readers that there was never a great reform that didn't demand its victim. He bid them to be of good cheer. He advised them to "Keep within the bounds of the law. But be up and onward."

The savagery of the sentences put an end to the calico Indians. They quietly disbanded, and most just as quietly got rid of their uniforms. Many years later John Burroughs, the naturalist, recalled discovering, as a youth on his father's leasehold in Delaware County, a "hideous mask of stained leather with horns" buried under a stone pile.

It seems improbable that all save the most ignorant of the anti-rent men had realized from the first that they could not win against the government by violence. They had resorted to violence in desperation. It had seemingly failed. Only the ballot was left to them. Yet the calico tribes had not been in vain. They kept the sheriffs and other agents of the landlords at bay until the movement could grow into a powerful political force. The national publicity attendant to the riots, and shootings and trials over much of New York during several years, had focused attention on a condition that was shocking to most Americans. The patroons could respond to every attack of the anti-rent army with a reprisal. But the patroons were not equal to defending their status as feudal lords.

In his paper George Henry Evans spoke of the "inordinate stupidity" of anyone who still believed that "Patroon law and Landlord judges" had a leg left to stand on. The way was clear now. The bloodless but effective weapon of the ballot would soon remedy the wrongs of two centuries.

That was the way things worked out. At a convention called to revise the state constitution, none of the great names of New York was in dominance. For the first time in state history more than fifty of the delegates were either farmers or "mechanics," as factory operatives were known. They were there to take care of a number of things, including feudalism. After weeks of powerful and often bitter debate the framers of the new constitution agreed on a clause providing that no more "incomplete sale" leaseholds could be issued. Many of the worst features of existing leases also were eliminated. All restrictions on the transfer of titles were outlawed.

The anti-renters had meanwhile been working to replace Governor Silas Wright, long the villain in the calico army's doggerel songs, with John Young, who took office on the first day of 1847. One of the first acts was to pardon Smith Boughton and a score more anti-renters who were still in prison. Not all of the patroons were yet giving in, but John A. King, one of the great landlords of Schoharie County, accepted \$25,000 as a cash settlement from leaseholders of Blenheim, for fifteen thousand acres. It was a cheering omen, yet the manor walls were going to crumble slowly under the constant pressure of laws and courts.

On the counsel of Samuel J. Tilden, a young lawyer, tenants brought suit against the Van Rensselaers, charging that their titles were invalid, and won. In 1852 counsel for the Van Rensselaers admitted that the end had come. They gave up the struggle. So did the Livingston lawyers. There were troubles ahead, and a few more riots, and at least one shooting, because of speculators who bought manor lands and tried to make fortunes. It was not until 1880 that the great majority of leaseholds passed into the hands of farmers. In that very year Dr. Smith Boughton, aged seventy and still making his rounds as a country physician, decided to retire from practice. "It is time," he told his friends, "not to mix any more in the turmoils and busy scenes of life." He had known more than his share of turmoil, but he had the great good fortune, not given to many dreamers, to live out his dream, to see it set down in hard legal phrases. The patroons had passed.

In his retirement at his old home in the village of Alps, on what once was the great East Manor of the Rensselaers, Dr. Boughton liked often to take his cane and walk across the meadow, to look up at Pikes Hill and recall the exciting times when, wrapped in the calico smock of flaming colors, he had become Big Thunder and told his neighbors to

"strike for the green graves of their sires." He lived on to die at the age of seventy-eight, in 1888, a time when to a new generation the days of the patroons seemed to be as far in the past as those of the Bible. By then, too, thousands of men and women who had been born and reared on manorial leaseholds were rearing their own families on lands acquired through the national Homestead Act, a law, incidentally, which Dr. Boughton's good friend and agitator, George Henry Evans, had been the first to propose.

4.

FREE HOMESTEADS FOR ALL

THE two Evans brothers would have been given notable dreams in any age, but because they grew to manhood in the United States during the early nineteenth century their dreams almost automatically called for some reform or other, or at least a radical departure from established ways. The lure of the untried has perhaps been never so general, or so urgent, as in that period.

New homemade religious sects were offering new routes to heaven. The United States Patent Office was deluged with drawings and models of new machines. The whole country was fairly yeasting with ideas for improving him called the common man. No little of this abounding optimism came with the realization of the unlimited resources of virgin land.

It is astonishing still to reflect, in so young a nation, how assured and widespread was the belief of Americans, no matter where born, that they were the hope of the world, that their institutions were based on the laws of Nature, which was always written with a capital, and that they were engaged in perfecting a refuge for the oppressed everywhere. It was their plain duty to live up to the ideals that had been so eloquently declared by the Founding Fathers. Not only to live up to them, but also, if any of these magnificent promises seemed to be corroding from the abuse of self-interest, to act. Among the more idealistic of these Americans were the English-born Evans boys, George Henry, born in 1805, and Frederick William, born in 1808, who had migrated to central New York in 1820.

Both lads were omnivorous readers. George was apprenticed to a printer, Frederick to a hatter, and both continued to read. At this time Thomas Paine was their favorite author as well as authority on matters