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No 8.639

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THE PRAIRIE:

1898

A Tale.

BY J. FENIMORE COOPER.

Mark his condition and the event, then
Tell me if this be a brother.—*Tempest.*

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

NEW EDITION.

NEW YORK:
STRINGER AND TOWNSEND.

1856.

THE PRAIRIE

THE PRAIRIE.

Eastern District of Pennsylvania, to wit:

* BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the seventh
* L. S. * day of February, in the fifty-first year of the Independ-
* * * * * dence of the United States of America, A. D. 1827.
* * * * * H. C. CAREY & I. LEA, of the said district, have
deposited in this office, the title of a book, the right whereof
they claim as proprietors, in the words following, to wit:

“The Prairie; a Tale, by the author of the *Pioneers and the Last of the Mohicans*.

“Mark his condition and the event; then
Tell me if this be a brother.”—*Tempest*.

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, “An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned.” And also to the Act, entitled, “An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, ‘An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned,’ and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints.”

D CALDWELL, *Clerk of the
Eastern District of Pennsylvania.*

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PREFACE.

THE manner in which the writer of this book came into possession of most of its materials, is mentioned in the work itself. Any well bred reader will readily conceive that there may exist a thousand reasons, why he should not reveal any more of his private sources of information. He will only say, on his own responsibility, that the portions of the tale for which no authorities are given, are quite as true as those which are not destitute of this peculiar advantage, and that all may be believed alike.

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There is, however, to be found in the following pages an occasional departure from strict historical veracity, which it may be well to mention. In the endless confusion of names, customs, opinions, and languages, which exists among the tribes of the west, the Author has paid much more attention to sound and convenience than to literal truth. He has uniformly called the Great Spirit, for instance, the Wahcondah, though he was not ignorant that there were different names for that Being among the nations he has introduced. So, in other matters he has rather adhered to simplicity, than sought to make his narrative strictly correct at the expense of all order and clearness. It was enough for his purpose that the picture should possess the general features of the original: in the shading, attitude, and disposition of the

figures, a little liberty has been taken. Even this brief explanation would have been spared, did not the Author know that there is a certain class of learned Thebans who are just as fit to read a work of the imagination, as they are qualified to write one.

It may be necessary to meet much graver and less easily explained objections, in the minds of a far higher class of readers. The introduction of one and the same character, as a principal actor in no less than three books, and the selection of a comparative desert, which is aided by no historical recollections, and embellished by few or no poetical associations, for the scene of a legend, in these times of perilous adventure in works of this description, may need more vindication. If the first objection can be removed, the latter must fall

of course, as it would become the duty of a faithful chronicler to follow his hero wherever he might choose to go.

It is quite probable that the narrator of these simple events has deceived himself as to the importance they may have in the eyes of other people. But he has seen, or thought he has seen, something sufficiently instructive and touching in the life of a veteran of the forest, who, having commenced his career near the Atlantic, had been driven by the increasing and unparalleled advance of population, to seek a final refuge against society in the broad and tenantless plains of the west, to induce him to hazard the experiment of publication. That the changes which might have driven a man so constituted to such an expedient have actually occurred within a single life, is a matter of undeniable history; that they

did produce such an effect on the Scout of the Mohicans, the Leatherstocking of the Pioneers, and the Trapper of the Prairie, rests on an authority no less imposing than those veritable pages, from which the reader shall no longer be detained, if he still be disposed to peruse them, after this frank avowal of the poverty of their contents.

THE PRAIRIE.

CHAPTER I.

"I pray thee, shepherd, if that love, or gold
Can in this desert place buy entertainment,
Bring us where we may rest ourselves and feed."
As you like it.

MUCH was said and written, at the time, concerning the policy of adding the vast regions of Louisiana, to the, already, immense and but half-tenanted territories of the United States. As the warmth of controversy, however, subsided, and personal considerations gave place to more liberal views, the wisdom of the measure began to be, generally, conceded. It soon became apparent to the meanest capacity, that, while nature had placed a barrier of desert to the extension of our population in the west, the measure had made us the masters of a belt of fertile country, which, in the revolutions of the day, might have become the property of a rival nation. It gave us the sole command of the great thoroughfare of the interior, and placed the countless tribes of savages, who lay along our borders, entirely, within our control; it reconciled conflicting rights, and quieted national distrusts, it opened a thousand avenues to the inland trade, and to the waters of the Pacific; and, if ever time or necessity should require a peaceful division of this vast empire, it assures us of a neighbour that would possess our language, our religion, our institutions, and it is also to be hoped, our sense of political justice.

Although the purchase was made in 1803, the spring of the succeeding year was permitted to open, before the official prudence of the Spaniard, who held the province for his European master, admitted the authority or even of the entrance, of its new proprie-

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