

There is not a work now in progress which so strongly commends itself to the support of the American Congress and people as this which so many of us went out to see. Without a shadow of dissent, and with all the earnestness and eloquence of which the distinguished excursionists were capable, they commended it to the country and its legislative representatives.

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LETTER V.—*Prairie Dogs—Rambling Observations—Enterprise of Chicago—Connection of Chicago with this State and Road.*

SALINA, KANSAS, June 13, 1867.

PRAIRIE DOGS.

EVERYBODY has heard of the curious little animals known by this name; but the term is altogether inapplicable, for the creature has not a single feature or characteristic of the canine race about it, except that it barks. Its bark, however, is that of the squirrel, not that of the dog. It, like the squirrel and marmot, belongs to the *genus rodentia*, and lives altogether upon vegetable food. Its color is a yellowish brown; its form and head resemble those of the gray squirrel; in size it is somewhat larger. Its ears look as if cropped off; its tail is short, and its paws are like those of the squirrel, but admirably adapted to burrowing in the ground. The expression of its countenance, if I may so talk, is that of the squirrel, and its manifestations of confidence, bordering on affection, when petted, are exactly like those of the squirrel. In eating, it grasps its food between its paws and nibbles it daintily, just as the squirrel does; and if corn is given, of which it is fond, it bites out the soft germinating part, and throws the flinty part away.

As our party came up the road, about halfway between Fort Riley and this place, while running over a broad prairie, we came to a place called Abeliene, a hamlet of three or four houses and a country store. The place is perhaps better known as Dogtown. Here the train stopped, and our attention was directed to about a hundred little mounds, in the top of each of which was a neat little hole running down, at an angle of about forty-five degrees, deep into the ground. On the top of each mound was one prairie-dog standing up on his haunches, as erect as a grenadier, apparently on the lookout to see what was coming. We all got out and approached the cluster of mounds, which were all comprehended within a space of less than half an acre. On our approach, all the "dogs" at once dived down into their burrows with the speed of arrows, and disappeared. Presently