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"THE REPUBLIC OF IRRIGATION."

Since Thomas Moore wrote his famous work describing the imaginary island of Utopia, where the enjoyment of the greatest perfection in politics, laws and the like was depicted as bringing men to the highest pinnacle of human happiness, the schemes to bring about this ideal condition probably have increased rather than decreased. Some of these have been of the most impractical character, while others have contained a measure of useful ideas; some have sought to do away with a large proportion of human toil, like the Fourierites who are now looking toward Hawaii as the place to form a colony where men and women may dwell and subsist on the fruits, vegetables and grasses that nature produces unasked, and clothe themselves only in nature's garb, while others have sought to utilize all the energy of brain life and physical effort available. But as yet the land of utopian bliss is an "undiscovered country" even in prospective to those who work with human forces alone.

The latest scheme containing suggestions of a practical nature that has been put forth as a means of attaining independence and equality, and at the same time securing to all its beneficiaries a competency of the life's necessities, is by William E. Smythe, editor of the *Irrigation Age*, in what he designates "The Republic of Irrigation." Mr. Smythe does not lay claim to being the originator of the chief idea which underlies his plan, but gives credit for the suggestion as coming from what he designates the industrial system of President Brigham Young as it was followed in Utah in early days, when the small farm of 20 acres was settled upon and made, by irrigation and careful cultivation, to produce that which its occupants consumed and also a surplus exchangeable for other property. Mr. Smythe's humor in this connection is his plan for making that system applicable to the Great West, or Arid America as he styles it.

This arid region as he describes it he divides into four sections which present four different phases of the problem. These sections are: First—Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, eastern Colorado and Wyoming; second—western Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, Idaho and Montana; third—eastern Washington and Oregon; fourth—California and Arizona. The problem of securing the greatest productiveness from each of these sections he holds has been fully and satisfactorily solved in a process of irrigation suited to each. Within the area described there is to be found, he considers, the remedy for industrial ills that afflict the country, "the one broad field remaining on this continent for agricultural and industrial expansion," where labor may not be only adequate but rewarded with the means of living, and where "the problem of how to find the highest average prosperity for the common people may be solved."

The details of Mr. Smythe's plan are far from being perfected, though the general plan is outlined. The task of working out these details is yet future, but secondary to the design that is set forth. Some of it is to be accomplished at the next National Irrigation Congress. It is proposed to there map out a number of systems of diversified farming, applicable to different localities, forms of administration for proposed model colonies, plans for economical and attractive architecture, and the best manner of training settlers in methods of scientific and intensive cultivation under irrigation. Mr. Smythe himself gives line to outline to "marshal the brains and the heart of Arid America in order to hasten by downright practical means the making of the new civilization," and will leave it to be determined "how the results of these labors shall be applied, whether by giving them common publicity or by the creation of model colonies under a business administration to be hereafter devised."

The scheme in brief is to form a vast cooperative movement formed by the sympathy and capital of the country, and the practical experience of the farming community, to locate colonies all over Arid America, and to establish systems of irrigation whereby the land may be brought into cultivation and be made to yield its strength under careful treatment and diversified crops. The farm unit is to be twenty or forty acres, as may be agreed upon, probably the former, and none are to be allowed more. On this amount each man may become the owner, with all the privileges of water therefrom. Taking this general scheme for a basis, Mr. Smythe goes on to say:

> No man will ever accomplish a great fortune upon twenty acres, but no man who needs the fortune desires it. On the contrary, he will stop the game on twenty acres of irrigated land unmolested and contented. The settlement areas will be densely populated. The result will be near neighbors and social, educational and religious advantages which contrast so with the farmers of Arid America who enjoy the poorest land in the country at the best and yet must live under the most disastrous surroundings of neighborhood association. This proves a revolution in country life. It will be more like the best society of the ancient Greeks than the lonely, miserable life of the farming population in the older parts of the United States.

As an argument for the imperative necessity of farm ownership to be with the occupants, and to guard against a monopoly of the soil, it is pointed out that "for more than a hundred years this republic has offered an asylum to those oppressed by yoke and king, and yet we are very far from a realization of that quality of independence dear to the human heart. This is scarcely in the support of one's family. The sharp and sudden business convulsion of last summer, followed by the long period of depression, again taught the world that no man is independent who does not live under his own roof, and support his family from the products of his own acres. In the best sense to man is independent who works for another. He cannot tell at what moment a threat of tariff tinkering at Washington, the cessation of silver coinage in India, or the collapse of a boom in Argentina or Australia, may render his fancied security to employment a precarious dependence for the support of his family."

Whatever may become of the scheme, and its probable failure or success because of the interest that may be aroused in it and the human element to be operated with, there is much in it to afford thought for philanthropists and statesmen. Arid America is a vast field for intelligent combined labor and satisfactory returns therefor. How it is to be utilized is a problem whose importance has not dawned yet upon the mind of the nation at large. If Mr. Smythe can secure for it a thorough comprehension on the part of the country's leading men he will have accomplished a mighty work. The practical and beneficial nature of many of his suggestions has been established by experience in the arid region. The solidifying of sufficient interest in his scheme to enlist it to perfect practicability and the securing of aid and material to carry it out are something wholly different in the present temper of politicians, philanthropists, the laboring classes and people generally.

LET US REASON TOGETHER.

These men who have banded together for the purpose of petitioning Congress for certain legislation have done so, they say, with the object of obtaining work. They are unemployed and hope by legislative enactments to create a condition of industrial prosperity that will benefit the working men all over the country. They believe that the government is at fault, and propose, by imposing conditions, to enforce their views and effect a change.

In the blind enthusiasm prevailing among the "industrials", led by the frequent harangues of their leaders, the chances for a calm consideration of the proposition are, we fear, but slim; yet it would seem unkind not to endeavor to point out some of the fallacies that underlie the whole movement.

In the first place, it is a matter of doubt, to say the least, whether Congress has it in its power to provide work for a portion of the country's unemployed, virtually at the expense of the rest of the people. If the government should engage a number of unemployed, establishing industries of various kinds, the result would most likely be the depression of the various private industries, crippled by a competition of gigantic proportions. There would soon be more unemployed to provide for and the number would increase until the government, at last, would be converted into a vast employment agency. The effect we have felt in places where contract labor has been employed in competition with free labor. To work in Washington, long with demand for work as the mode of the government is at the very best in such a country is shifting the burden from one shoulder to another, with the petition added that laborers of this kind be paid—those people would be often work at the expense of depriving others of their daily bread.

In the country legislation is suggested to introduce and regulate and administrate to working and adjusting means of employment. Those who are out of employment are supposed to utilize the vast resources of the country and become self-supporting by their own industry, thrift and economy. A free country in which every citizen is a sovereign means the universal recognition of this principle. It is the foundation and chief cornerstone on which it is established and maintained. It follows that when men look to the government for paternal legislation, they virtually abandon the foundation of liberty and inaugurate a regime foreign to our institutions. In the present movement, therefore, the germ of a revolution can plainly be discerned, inasmuch as it is proposed to substitute for the existing individualistic conditions one of socialism. It is quite likely that nevertheless that the followers of Coxey and the other "generals" are revolutionists in their own way, for they have engaged in the business of directing the affairs of the country by means unknown to the Constitution and the laws founded thereon.

In the next place, the scheme they pursue is entirely contrary to their own interests, provided their object is to obtain work and a living. Corporations have provided more labor for the unemployed than the railroad companies, both direct and indirect. Vast armies of workingmen have found profitable employment in constructing the lines, building the rolling stock, operating the roads, etc. Through these iron highways vast tracts of land have been made valuable for cultivation and the products of the mines that but been available except for the railroads. On these the material prosperity of this country depends to a large extent. And yet these "armies," pretending to petition the country for work, go about interfering with trains, stealing expensive engines, threatening to tear up tracks and causing the lawful owners of the property irreparable loss in various ways. Can anybody for a moment imagine that either the government or private corporations under the circumstances will invest in railroads, extending or building new lines for the sake of developing new regions and finding new resources? It should be evident to the colonist—it is that the course pursued by the "industrials" in this matter is counter to their own interests. If the rule to established that railroad property is to be subject to the pillage of any band of unemployed, then capital must necessarily withdraw from such investments, and the chances of obtaining work thereby must become correspondingly less.

From whatever point of view this strange movement is considered, it is indefensible, and no real friend of the workingmen can encourage it. As revolutionary in its tendencies it must at last bring the strong arm of the law down upon it, and even if but the effort of destroying instead of creating resources of work and subsistence, the sooner it is brought to an end the better. The country needs peace and union of effort to pull through the wave of depression from which it is suffering, in common with the rest of the world. Revolutionary unrest and violent agitation among the industrial forces can only delay the era of prosperity which, until these evidences of lawlessness appeared, was just about to burst upon us.

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MISCELLANEOUS.

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