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CHAPTER II 11 caps

PEOPLING THE NATION 11 c & s.c. letters

The wealth over which the people of the United States were struggling in 1878 had been drawn from a magnificent estate of over three million square miles, not counting Alaska. Fully a third of this area still belonged to the federal government. The rest was in the hands of the states, corporations or individuals. Of this residue the farmers owned nearly half, ~~of it,~~ approximately five hundred and thirty-seven million acres, ~~out of the total of more than twelve hundred million.~~ The most densely inhabited section was that known as the North Atlantic division, embracing New England, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Here a land surface of 162,000 square miles accommodated fourteen and a half million people. The most sparsely settled was the Western division made up of eleven states and territories. There on a land surface of 1,176,000 square miles was scattered a population of a million and three quarters, about ~~slightly over~~ one to the square mile.[1] Outside of the Western division there was more unsettled land per man in Dakota Territory than elsewhere in the country. The center of population lay in Kentucky, eight miles ~~west by~~ southwest of Cincinnati; in twenty years it had moved a hundred and two miles. ~~The task before the country,~~

1 Bureau of the Census, Abstract of the Twelfth Census (1900), 32.

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~~if it was~~ to attain its ambition of rapid development, the nation must ~~was to~~ push this center farther westward, in other words, ~~that is,~~ fill in its waste places with people.

The national government led in the drive for settlers. The one million square miles it owned was what was left of an immense public domain originating in the eighteenth century in gifts by the states made on condition that these lands be held ~~(that is, for the development of roads, railroads and the like.~~ and used for "the common benefit of the United States."[2] How best to secure that benefit? The government had adopted the policy of distributing the land on easy terms and in small parcels to actual settlers,[1] but by 1878 it was apparent, as President Cleveland was to tell the country a few years later, that

> Laws which were intended for the "common benefit" have been perverted so that large quantities of land are resting in single ownerships. . . . It is not for the "common benefit of the United States" that a large area of the public lands should be acquired, directly or through fraud, in the hands of a single individual. . . . A rapidly increasing population creates a growing demand for homes, and the accumulation of wealth inspires an eager competition to obtain the public land for speculative purposes.

And Cleveland added this prophetic word: "In the future this collision of interest will be more marked than in the past . . . ."[2]

[1] C. R. Fish, The Rise of the Common Man (A History of American Life, VI), 126-131; A. C. Cole, The Irrepressible Conflict (same series, VII), 115-119; Allan Nevins, Emergence of Modern America (same series, VIII), 118-121.

[2] Message of December 9, 1885, J. D. Richardson, Comp., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents (Wash., 1896-1899), VIII, 359.

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The states went along with the federal government in its effort to entice settlers to the ~~then~~ unoccupied lands. As each had come into the Union, Congress had bestowed upon it as a dower a part of the public domain within its boundary, to be used "for the common benefit," ~~that is, for the development of schools, roads, railways and the like.~~ Where large tracts still remained in the states' possession, strenuous efforts were made to bring in settlers. Official immigration bureaus were set up for this purpose.[1] Missouri, for example, established a bureau charged with the duty of preparing maps, articles and pamphlets concerning the resources of the state, its undeveloped farm lands, its minerals and timber, its railroads and its waters.[2] Even some of the Eastern states were concerned with the problem. ~~Here~~ In their case, it was not, as in Missouri, "land which has never been brought under cultivation." It was a growing anxiety about an increasing exodus from disadvantaged farming districts.[3]

The railroads, particularly those west of the Mississippi, were among the most active of the land boosters. Their future prosperity depended on peopling the country and developing its resources. "Each mile of railroad constructed in a new country is a kind of

[1] A. M. Schlesinger, The Rise of the City (A History of American Life, X), 15-16, 28 n., 55-56.

[2] Appletons' Annual Cyclopaedia, n.s., IV (1879), ~~IV (1880),~~ 641-642.

[3] Schlesinger, Rise of the City, 67-72.

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centrifugal pump furnishing for exportation hundreds of tons of the products of such country."[1] The drive for settlers was conducted largely through, or in coöperation with, the steamship companies and land companies. At one time the Inman Steamship Company had thirty-five hundred agents in Europe and as many more in this country, selling ~~prepaid~~ tickets to friends and relatives of immigrants already settled ~~here~~.[2]

In 1880 there were about 6,700,000 foreign-born in the nation. Because of the depression following the Panic of 1873 the annual number of newcomers during the decade 1870-1880 had averaged but 280,000. In the single year 1878 only 138,500 had come, the smallest number since 1862. But with the turn to better times the tide began rapidly to mount again. The year 1882 saw 789,000 arrivals, nearly three times the average annual increment of the seventies and the greatest influx yet recorded in a single year. Of this number three out of every five were adults between fifteen and forty years of age, excellent brawn for the task of developing America's natural wealth.[3]

[1] M. F. Bernard in Journal des Économistes, quoted by D. A. Wells, Recent Economic Changes (N. Y., 1889), 176.

[2] Richmond Mayo-Smith, Emigration and Immigration (N. Y., 1890), 46, 186. See also Schlesinger, Rise of the City, 26-28, and J. B. Hedges, Henry Villard and the Railways of the Northwest (New Haven, 1930), chap. vi.

[3] Mayo-Smith, Emigration and Immigration, 28, 51.

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It is little wonder that Andrew Carnegie exclaimed in amazed approval at this addition to the nation's labor force. "These adults," he said,

> were surely worth $1,500 (£ 300) each -- for in former days an efficient slave sold for this sum -- making a money value of $710,000,000 (£ 142,000,000), to which may be safely added $1,000 (£ 200) each, or $315,000,000 (£ 63,000,000) for the remaining forty per cent. of the host. Further, it is estimated that every immigrant brings in cash an average of $125 (£ 25). The cash value of immigrants upon this basis for the year 1882 exceeded $1,125,000,000 (£ 225,000,000).

In a final word he calculated that the average yearly augmentation of the country's wealth from immigrants "is now more than twice as great as the total product of all the silver and gold mines in the world."[1] The decade 1880-1890 brought ~~a total of~~ nearly 3,000,000 foreigners to American shores.

Western Europe made the largest contribution to the incoming flood, over two thirds of the total during the 1880's. The country from which America drew most heavily in the early years of the decade was Germany. Nearly a third of all immigrants from 1880 to 1884 were Germans. Another third was recruited from the British Isles, Sweden and Norway. The remaining third consisted of "new immigrants," those from southern and eastern Europe, notably from Italy, Austria, Russia and Hungary. The banner immigration year 1882 -- when more came than in any year until 1903 -- witnessed the climax of the movement from western

[1] Andrew Carnegie, Triumphant Democracy (N. Y., 1886), 34-35.

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Europe and the advent of noticeable numbers from the southern and eastern nations. This shift in the sources of immigration became steadily more marked. ~~While~~ From 1885 to 1889 western Europe furnished 1,500,000 newcomers; from 1895 to 1899 it sent but 495,000. From the southern and eastern countries, on the other hand, came 493,000 in the former period and 747,000 in the latter.

The reasons for this change were many: the overcrowded conditions in southern and eastern Europe, anti-Semitic persecutions in Russia, the establishment of new steamship connections between Mediterranean ports and the United States, and the unexampled opportunities for employment in America. At the same time, the industrial advance of western Europe made it less worth while for the people ~~from~~ there to try their luck in a new land.[1]

However much a Carnegie might rejoice at the boundless extent of the ~~incoming tide~~ influx, others ~~elements among the people~~ were beginning to question the traditional national policy of welcoming all comers without discrimination or restriction. Organized labor was particularly alarmed because of the competition for jobs by ~~alien~~ immigrant workers used to a lower standard of living. As a result Congress began, somewhat haltingly, to apply tests of fitness to arriving aliens.[2] The first act of this kind, that

[1] H. P. Fairchild, Immigration (N. Y., 1913), chap. vii.

[2] Fairchild, Immigration, chap. vi; R. L. Garis, Immigration Restriction (N. Y., 1927), 87-102.

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of 1882, excluded lunatics, convicted criminals and persons likely to become public charges. Three years later a law was passed which prohibited employers from importing foreign workers under previous contract. This practice had contributed to the rapid increase of immigration from southern and eastern Europe. Subsequent statutes stiffened the administration of these provisions and added new restraints. As a special act of discrimination against immigrants of the new type, Congress in 1897 passed a bill for excluding aliens between the ages of fourteen and sixty who could not read and write English or some other language. Two days before his official retirement President Cleveland vetoed the measure on the ground that literacy was a test of youthful opportunity, not of mental capacity.[1] Enactment of this law had to await a later time.[2]

Meanwhile an immigration problem of a special kind had arisen on the Pacific Coast. Though Chinese coolies had earlier been welcomed in California and their right of free migration had been recognized by the Burlingame treaty of 1868, the hard times of the 1870's had excited increasing opposition to them on the part of white laborers.[3] The Workingmen's party, headed by Denis

[1] Richardson, comp., Messages and Papers, IX, 757-761.

[2] See P. W. Slosson, The Great Crusade and After (A History of American Life, XII), 299.

[3] Nevins, Emergence of Modern America, 150-152, 375-376.

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Kearney, an Irishman who owned a draying business, stood at the forefront of the agitation. In Sunday afternoon meetings on sand lots near the San Francisco city hall, Kearney delivered fiery harangues against Oriental cheap labor, always closing his address with the exhortation, "The Chinese must go!" So effective was the propaganda that a new state constitution in 1879 forbade corporations to hire Chinese, prohibited their employment on public works and directed the legislature to impose conditions on their residence.[1]

Though the agitation in its more violent form spent its force with the adoption of the constitution, organized labor kept alive the issue. In the eyes of labor leaders the question had a national bearing because of the employment of the Asiatics as strike breakers in some parts of the East. As the presidential election of 1880 approached, old-party leaders in Congress saw in the issue an opportunity to capture the electoral vote of California. As a result, the Democratic House and the Republican Senate in 1879 joined in passing a bill revoking the Burlingame treaty and restricting Chinese immigration.[2] Though President Hayes approved of the purpose, he could not approve of the method which Congress had chosen. He therefore vetoed the measure and sent a mission to China to sound out the Manchu government as to an alteration of the treaty of 1868.

[1] James Bryce, The American Commonwealth (London, 1888), II, 386, 394; Mary R. Coolidge, Chinese Immigration (N. Y., 1909), chap. viii.

[2] E. P. Oberholtzer, A History of the United States since the Civil War (N. Y., 1917, in progress), IV, 283-288.

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The outcome was the treaty of 1880 which permitted the United States to "regulate, limit, or suspend," but "not absolutely prohibit," future coolie immigration.[1] Under its terms Congress two years later adopted the first Chinese exclusion law, to remain in effect for ten years.[2] Subsequent acts renewed the suspension from time to time, and in 1902 Congress made the prohibition indefinite.[3] Although difficulties of enforcement were experienced, the shrill fears of the "yellow peril" were effectively silenced.

Meantime the dispersion of European immigrants through the country had been proceeding apace. While many of them settled in the industrial centers, others went into the new agricultural regions. There they were joined by countless numbers of disillusioned Eastern farmers, victims of the long depression of the seventies. These native folk came from the Western Reserve of Ohio, from middle and western New York, from New England, Virginia and Pennsylvania. Not always did they travel long distances: Missouri men sought the Red River of Minnesota; Kansans went to Colorado at the news of irrigation; people from North Carolina, South Carolina

[1] W. M. Malloy, comp., Treaties, Conventions, International Pacts . . . between the United States of America and Other Powers (Wash., 1910), I, 237-239.

[2] Oberholtzer, History of United States, IV, 298-305.

[3] U. S. Statutes at Large, XXXII, pt. i, 176.

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¶ and Georgia moved over into to Florida. ¶ Sometimes it was rocks that had caused their migration: "You pick 'em up one spring and the next there they are agin." Sometimes it was the lure of lands that did not need clearing: ~~hardship of clearing wooded lands.~~ "Nary a tree to grub out and I reckon a body could plow a furrer a mile long and not strike a rock as big as a hen's egg." [1] ~~was a characteristic reason Easterners gave for joining the westward trek.~~[1] Sometimes it was incorrigible optimism and love of change and adventure. More frequently, however, it was the saddening conviction that they ~~migrants~~ would never get on where they were. The explanations for their failure they found outside themselves: the "times," the banks, the trusts, the tariff. They would begin over. They did, and often with the same results.

¶ To assist ~~For~~ the ready movement of this mass of settlers four trans-continental railways were soon in operation and a fifth was under construction. The first of these, the Union Pacific, had been opened in 1869.[2] In 1881 the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé joined the Southern Pacific at Deming, New Mexico, forming a second somewhat ~~if~~ irregular route. Two years later it straightened itself out by running its line due west from Santa Fé to California, while the Southern Pacific reached eastward to New Orleans. This gave two roads ~~routes~~, roughly three hundred miles apart,

[1] Pick Overturf's opinion of the Red River Valley. Ramsey Benson, Hill Country (N. Y., 1928), 3.

[2] See Nevins, Emergence of Modern America, 53-56.

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south of the mid-continental route.[1] Another through line, lying north of the Union Pacific, was the Northern Pacific, opened, as we shall see, in 1883. The Great Northern, paralleling the Canadian border, was still in process of building under the direction of James J. Hill.

The ambition of each man at the head of one of these trans-continental arteries was to control as large a block of adjacent territory as he could reach before a rival entered. If a rival did come to contest his ambition, the usual procedure was to force him out of business or into the combination. The fact that a railroad had made a place for itself in a certain district did not protect it from attack. It was not so much along the tracks that the warfare was commonly carried on as in the field of finance. By 1878 railroad financing was largely in the hands of the men who had set out to develop transportation empires of which they would be the rulers. Four such domains were fairly well defined west of the Mississippi. The center of the first and oldest was San Francisco, the metropolis of the West Coast. In and out of it flowed the wealth of the mines and timberlands of the Coast. The men who owned the railroads centering in San Francisco controlled these vast resources. They were Leland Stanford, Collis P. Huntington, Charles Crocker and Mark Hopkins.[2]

[1]W. Z. Ripley, ed., Railway Problems (Boston, 1907), 417; L. H. Haney, A Congressional History of Railways in the United States, 1850-1887 (Univ. of Wis., Bull., no. 342), chap. ix.

[2]Gustavus Myers, History of the Great American Fortunes (Chicago, 1909-1910), III, 124.

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They were the builders of the Central and Southern Pacific lines which before the close of the century were to pass into the hands of one of the ablest railroad consolidators and operators the country has ever seen, E. H. Harriman.

Three cities of the Southwest and Far West, St. Louis, Kansas City and Denver, were the feeding points of a second immense railroad kingdom. Its satrap, Jay Gould, had come into the Western country after a long and successful career of plundering the Erie.[1] By 1880, having gained control of the Union Pacific, he undertook a grandiose scheme of consolidation which eventually was to embrace what was called the Gould group: the Missouri Pacific, the Texas and Pacific, the St. Louis and Southwestern, the International and Great Northern, the Denver and Rio Grande, the Missouri, Kansas and Texas, the Rio Grande, Western and the Wabash -- a trackage of over sixteen thousand miles.[2] Throughout the eighties Gould was working steadily toward the realization of his ambitions. His business methods and his financial maneuvers were such as to make him both the most feared and the most hated man in the Southwest.

In the far Northwest the young state of Oregon and its adjacent territory, forming a third smaller but extremely promising transportation empire, had been staked out by Henry Villard. He had gone to the Coast in the seventies to represent a group of

[1] See Nevins, Emergence of Modern America, 194-199.

[2] U. S. Industrial Commission, Report (Wash., 1900-1902), XIX, 308.

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German clients who held bonds in certain small lines from which they were getting no interest and no reports. In the course of his examination of the properties he was greatly impressed by the fertility of the Columbia Valley and its tributaries, the endless stretches of timber, the possible mineral wealth. He dreamed of a transportation system which would be a "benevolent monopoly," by means of which he might direct settlers in producing what he alone would carry. He did not rest until he had collected all the small water and rail transportation companies of the region into what was called the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company.

In spite of the fact that he was neither a railroad man nor a financier, Villard had no trouble in getting money for his consolidation. He had won the admiration of Wall Street by a recent handling of Jay Gould ~~in an attempted~~ who had been attempting a raid on the Kansas and Pacific, of which Villard was then receiver. Though it had been a long fight, it had ended in Villard securing a fair value for the property intrusted to him. His triumph over "that most unscrupulous and most dreaded machinator" gave him a position in American financial circles which enabled him to ~~put over in 1881~~ achieve one of the most spectacular coups of the time, the "blind pool," as it is called in Wall Street history.[1]

The Northern Pacific had come into money, having sold $40,000,000 worth of bonds. Villard, fearing it would invade his territory by continuing its line down the Columbia to the

[1] Hedges, Henry Villard and Railways of Northwest, chap. iv.

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sea, decided to control the situation by buying into the Northern Pacific and assuring himself a place on its board. This must be done secretly. In February, 1881, he sent a confidential circular to fifty persons, asking them to subscribe to a fund of $8,000,000 for an object which he would disclose later. Within twenty-four hours twice the amount was assured. When the plan was finally revealed to the chosen fifty they at once subscribed an extra $12,000,000. As Villard was now able to buy a controlling interest, the Northern Pacific management was obliged to allow him the representation that he sought. The president resigned and in September, 1881, Villard succeeded to the office. He at once proceeded with great energy to spend the money in the treasury to complete the Northern Pacific, ~~and~~ In 1883 the ceremony of driving the last spike took place in Western Montana.[1]

The completion of the Northern Pacific might well have shattered James J. Hill's dream of a route to Puget Sound, but Hill was not perturbed. To one of his partners he wrote, "I think the time is at hand when railway property generally will be tested by its capacity to pay net earnings. . . . I think the Northern Pacific will have its greatest trial when . . . its finances are no longer sustained by sales of bonds, but all payments must be made from earnings . . . ."[2]

[1]Henry Villard, Memoirs (Boston, 1904), II, 300, 309-312.

[2]J. G. Pyle, The Life of James J. Hill (Garden City, 1917), I, 337.

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now ¶) ← The man who uttered this true prophecy headed the fourth transportation realm, that centering in St. Paul. A born transportation man, he was a new type of railroad leader, one who held that "earnings and not stock quotations make a road great." Hill -- "that Hill," as he was called in the Northwest -- was an Irish-Canadian's son who as a boy had aspired to make India his home and establish a steamship line on the Brahmaputra. In 1856, when he was eighteen, he started from his home in Ontario, but got no farther than St. Paul, then a town of scarcely five thousand, where he took a job in a firm handling Mississippi River freight. ~~Before~~ In less than twenty years ~~were over~~ he became one of the influential business men in the American Northwest, and certainly no one equaled him in a knowledge of its resources.

In 1878 Hill, grasping his chance, entered railroading. In association with N. W. Kittson and two other Canadians (later Lord Strathcona and Lord Mount Stephen) he bought up the St. Paul & Pacific Railroad, a short Minnesota line which started from St. Paul and ended in the northern prairies. Under Hill's management the road was virtually reconstructed, and its lines were developed into an integrated system. Before the end of 1878 it reached the international border where it connected with a Canadian ~~line~~ road to Winnipeg. By 1887 it had penetrated westward to Great Falls, Montana. Two years later the system, renamed the Great Northern, had 2770 miles in operation across Minnesota, North Dakota and Montana. In 1893 Hill realized his ambition

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by extending the road over the Cascade Range to the Pacific tidewater.[1]

Under his management the Great Northern alone among the transcontinental lines weathered every financial storm. Moreover, while the other ~~railroads~~ roads in that section had been given land grants or governmental financial assistance, Hill had no such aid. At the outset practical ~~railroad~~ men had ridiculed the notion of a railroad traversing the far northern country, climbing mountain ranges, crossing hundreds of rivers and extending for great stretches through wild and uninhabited regions. But Hill was more farseeing than his critics. The strength of the Great Northern lay in its low first cost, its conservative financial structure and the shrewdness of its management. He personally supervised the construction; he selected the routes with favorable grades; he saw to it that the cost of operation should be less than that of any other railroad in the section.

Last but not least, he knew that his line was not worth a penny more than the Northwest itself. "Make it desirable for people to come here, make it easy for them to carry on their business, and we will get the freight," he said. "We consider ourselves and the people along our line as copartners in the ~~property in~~ prosperity of the country we both occupy; and the prosperity of the one should mean the prosperity of both, and their adversity will be quickly followed by ours."[2] Hence the settlers of the

[1]Pyle, Life of James J. Hill, I, chaps. vii-xx.

[2]Pyle, Life of James J. Hill, I, 297.

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Northwest had his real concern. He helped in the building of communities; he opened banks and made possible the erection of schools and churches; he guided agricultural projects and taught cattle breeding, soil replenishment and the drainage of lands. It was largely due to his unceasing interest in all that pertained to getting the most out of the soil that the "Hill country" developed more evenly and with fewer tragedies than any other large-scale land enterprise of these years. It added to the country's resources a vast new zone of production.

Equally notable, though not immediately so successful, were the attempts made to rehabilitate public lands hitherto classified as waste. The area affected comprised the Mountain and Pacific region, aggregating fully two fifths of the entire country, Alaska excluded. The inhabitants of these eleven states and territories numbered 1,751,000 in 1880, nearly half of them in California. The second most populous state was Colorado, and the most thinly settled section was the territory of Wyoming, where there were but 16,500 over ten years of age. Hitherto the miner and the cattleman had been the principal ones to profit by the resources of this great region. In 1877 Congress had passed a somewhat ambiguously worded act by which tracts of 640 acres of desert land were offered at $1.25 an acre to individuals on condition that irrigation be attempted within three years.[1] No one perceived the inadequacies of the

[1] Thomas Donaldson, comp., The Public Domain (Wash., 1884), 415.

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legislation and the need for constructive action more clearly than John Wesley Powell, head of the federal geological survey of the Rocky Mountain region, who in 1878 submitted an official report on the possibilities of developing the arid public lands.[1] Already famed for his exploration of the Colorado River and his thrilling descent of the Grand Canyon, Major Powell was a man who spoke with authority.[2]

He pointed out that the so-called desert country contained a goodly percentage of public lands which could be made arable by appropriate treatment. Too much attention, he said, had heretofore been paid to the chemical comstituents of soils, too little to those physical conditions by which moisture and air are supplied to the roots of growing plants. He insisted that nearly all soils are suitable for agriculture when properly supplied with water. This went against a popular superstition that alkalines permanently ruined land; Powell claimed that they could be washed out. Illustrations already existed, he said, of what could be done. The most important undertakings were in the Mormon settlements of Utah where, through what he termed "co-operative labor," great tracts had been artificially watered and were producing abundantly.[3] An equally noteworthy example

[1] J. W. Powell, Report on the Lands of the Arid Region of the United States (2d edn., Wash., 1879).

[2] See Nevins, Emergence of Modern America, 284.

[3] For the early development of irrigation in Utah, see Cole, Irrepressible Conflict, 91-92.

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was Union Colony, near Greeley, Colorado, which under the direction of a board of trustees had successfully irrigated a ~~large~~ wide area.

If such enterprises were to be conducted on a large scale and without severe losses and delays, Powell believed that Congress should enact regulations which would give would-be settlers the advantage of accumulated experience. To this end he outlined legislation which embodied suggestions for the scientific and orderly development of the public lands and also gave attention ~~also~~ to the social and educational necessities of settlers. If, he said in part, the irrigable lands could be offered ~~taken~~ in quantities to suit purchasers and a colony system were provided for poor men who wished to coöperate; if the timberlands should be opened in ways that he proposed, and pasturage lands were offered under a colony plan, a land system would be provided for the arid region, adapted to the wants of all persons desiring to become actual settlers.

Unfortunately, Powell's recommendations won no immediate response from Congress. A painful experience under the act of 1877 proved necessary before the federal government adopted a more adequate policy in regard to land redemption. The eighties witnessed a veritable irrigation boom in the arid region. Companies were formed to take up land, irrigate it and invite settlement. The country was flooded with agents offering securities in this or that scheme. The rosiest possibilities

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were presented: sure wealth for investors, quick prosperity for settlers. There were no warnings that time, money and courage were needed; that the best of the projects were freighted with difficulties, many of them incalculable. In response to the offerings not only were large amounts of stock sold, but throngs of people were soon finding their way across the plains -- sometimes hundreds of miles from a railroad -- to land which they expected at once to see blossoming like the rose.

These coöperative undertakings, as they were misleadingly called, quickly showed the same weaknesses as stock companies in many other economic fields of the time. Just as in oil, coal, ore and certain manufacturing industries, the promoters often had little knowledge of how to put their undertakings on a solid basis and frequently little desire to do anything more than to reap profits from stock sales. And just as in ~~all~~ other undertakings, many rushed in not as bona-fide farmers but as speculators, eager to make a quick turnover. Every unsound and dishonest exhibit in the use of capital, common in the country, manifested itself in these irrigation schemes.[1] ~~In~~ Weld County, Colorado, where the success of the Greeley colony naturally attracted capital, ~~the county~~ soon became threaded with more

[1] F. H. Newell, Report on Agriculture by Irrigation in the Western Part of the United States, at the Eleventh Census: 1890 (Wash., 1894), 91.

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canals than the water supply could take care of. Grave disturbances, intense bitterness of feeling and large losses of crops resulted.

It was not until the great drought of 1890, however, that the one-sided character of many of the contracts for water held by farmers was demonstrated. These contracts contained a clause which could be interpreted as relieving the company from responsibility if it failed to furnish the quantity of water agreed upon. Such a failure might, and did when the great drought came, mean not only the destruction of entire crops, but also the impoverishment of farmers who had mortgaged their lands to pay for water rights. This default sometimes involved a foreclosure by the company. "Apparently," said Frederick Haynes Newell, who at that time was studying irrigation for the federal government, "it is in the power of a company failing to furnish water to foreclose a mortgage and obtain possession of the land."[1] The overdevelopment, bad management, unsound and sometimes dishonest financing in a great number of the irrigation schemes resulted, in the ten years following Powell's report, in giving irrigation companies as bad a reputation as gold and silver mining companies had.

Though Congress was not yet stirred to action, the experience of the 1880's led the several states and territories

[1] Newell, Report on Agriculture, 95.

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to attempt to develop more adequate legislation. Thus, California in 1887 passed a law for establishing irrigation districts. These districts could be formed on petition of the people. They were to be governed by a board of directors which had a right to sell bonds for development. Each district was to work out its own system of selling and controlling water. But of the forty-some districts formed between 1887 and 1892, only two were really successful. The chief difficulty was that the local men chosen to raise and supervise the spending of money had little or no business judgment; there was less of dishonesty than of inexperience. As Newell said, the districts, as a rule, had been as well managed as other corporations conducted by untried officials.[1] It was the story familiar all over the country in every line of endeavor -- of a few men undertaking hopefully to launch enterprises of whose nature they knew nothing, and of innocent people who had no idea what qualifications they should demand of those who conducted the enterprises in which they invested.

Wyoming dealt more successfully with the problem. Her law of 1890, founded on the experience of other commonwealths, was generally considered the best and most practical which had been so far adopted. It recognized what virtually ~~practically~~ no state up to this time had recognized: that the first step in any sound

[1] Newell, Report on Agriculture, 37-39.

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irrigation scheme is to know how much water is available for a given territory. It further took into account what was called the "duty of water," that is, how much land, say, an inch of water could be expected to irrigate.[1] The statute required that it be decided who had a right to water and provided agents to see that the proper persons were served. Every settler had a paper showing the order of his priority, just how much he was to receive, and the number of acres on which the water was to be used.

Meanwhile, in 1888, the federal government had begun a series of surveys of the arid region. The purpose was to measure the flow of streams, big and little, and to estimate the volume of water that could be depended upon over a given period. The work was in charge of Frederick Haynes Newell, a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who had had large field experience in the Southwest under Major Powell's direction and who had just been appointed assistant hydraulic engineer of the United States geological survey. Under Newell's direction the investigation went on for a number of years, winning for him the title of the "Father of Irrigation." His first and most important report, that of 1894, to which reference has already been made, embodied all the experience of the settlers, favorable and unfavorable. It showed that, if there had been exploitation and

[1] Newell, Report on Agriculture, 12.

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injustice, there had also been an accumulation of important practical knowledge. It showed too that, whatever the failures and difficulties, there had been a good deal of real achievement. The number of bona-fide irrigators by 1890 had increased to 52,584, and the number of irrigated acres from less than ~~a~~ one million in 1880 to over three and a half ~~million~~.

The discussions in Congress during these years, often bitter and highly contentious, and the interest stirred up by a succession of irrigation conventions, beginning with one at Salt Lake City in September, 1891, led in 1894 to the passage of what is known as the Carey act.[1] By its terms a state in the arid region could make a contract with the United States, by which the latter bound itself to grant, free of cost, up to a million acres of desert land if the state would see to it that this land was irrigated, reclaimed and occupied within ten years after the passage of the act. The engineering plans for each enterprise must be approved by an official state commission, ~~as well as~~ also the charge which was to be made for water rights.

The results fell short of the expectations. Less than a million two hundred thousand acres in all were applied for, and only the state of Wyoming so carried out the agreement that it actually received the patent for the lands.[2] Despite the

[1] U. S. Statutes at Large, XXVIII, pt. i, 422-423; Loomis Havemeyer, ed., Conservation of Our Natural Resources (N. Y., 1930), 152-154.

[2] This patent was for only eleven thousand three hundred acres. Institute for Government Research, The U. S. Reclamation Service (Service Monographs, no. 2), ~~1919~~, 6.

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disappointing results of the Carey act interest in irrigation continued to increase in the Great West. According to the census of 1900, which was taken in 1899, both the number of irrigators and the amount of irrigated land had doubled in the years since 1890.

The great achievement of this twenty-year period was that it taught the thoughtful and intelligent among legislators, developers and settlers what was necessary to establish and conduct irrigation projects. This knowledge had come mainly from two sources. One was the successful demonstration made by men, singly or in groups, who had redeemed a few desert acres by continuous effort. The other was the scientific work done under the direction of such men as Powell and Newell. It was this work which gradually convinced Congress that, if any great stretches of the arid region were to be redeemed by irrigation, larger undertakings than those possible through cooperative labor or private capital were necessary. It was gradually becoming clear to those who were studying the problem that the federal government itself must go into the business of irrigation.[1]

Quite apart from the problems involved in administering the desert lands, the government at Washington encountered many other difficulties in its disposition of the public domain.

[1] For the action later taken, see H. U. Faulkner, The Quest for Social Justice (A History of American Life, IX), 4.

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Surveyors, paid at exhorbitant rates, often gave the government dishonest service. Instances occurred of the willful destruction of monuments in order to make resurveys necessary. The land laws were not scrupulously observed. Homestead and bounty lands were alienated with little attention to either the spirit or the letter of the law. Railroads, which had been granted a total of over one hundred million acres, failed to live up to their contracts. Cattlemen pastured their herds upon the public lands; they even fenced them and endeavored to keep homesteaders off with force. The country was denuded of timber by lawless lumber companies, and valuable minerals were extracted from the public domain without shadow of right and sometimes in collusion with government officials. Bold attempts were constantly made to seize tracts consigned by treaty to the Indians.

These and other abuses were bluntly disclosed in 1885 by W. A. J. Sparks of Illinois, President Cleveland's appointee as commissioner of the general land office.[1] With characteristic vigor Cleveland proceeded to deal with these evils. The general land office established the practice of carefully scrutinizing applications to see whether homestead and preemption claims were well founded. In a proclamation of August 7, 1885, the President ordered the removal of all unlawful fences and he

[1] Secretary of the Interior, Annual Report for 1885, I, esp. 90-91, 167-178, 182-183.

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commanded the military to see that the order was obeyed. Within a year enough fences were taken down to restore to the open country more than a million acres.[1] He also directed prosecutions against some of the more flagrant instances in which railroads had not lived up to their contracts.

In a similar manner Cleveland bestirred himself to protect the Indians from encroachments by land-hungry whites. On March 13, 1885, he warned the motley crowd of "individuals, associations of persons, and corporations," which had organized to enter and settle the Oklahoma lands in the Indian Territory, to give up their enterprise on pain of being removed by military force.[2] A month later he returned to the Indians certain tracts of the Old Winnebago reservation and the Sioux reservation in Dakota Territory, which his predecessor, Chester A. Arthur had restored to the public domain. Arthur's order, he declared, had been "illegal and in violation of the plighted faith and obligations of the United States."[3] In July he commanded all whites who were grazing cattle on the Cheyenne and Arapaho lands in Indian Territory to "depart and entirely remove therefrom with

1 Richardson, comp., Messages and Papers, VIII, 308-309; Secretary of the Interior, Annual Report for 1886, I, 30.

2 Richardson, comp., Messages and Papers, VIII, 303-304.

3 Richardson, comp., Messages and Papers, VIII, 305-307.

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their cattle, horses, and other property."[1]

Cleveland, however, recognized the need of a more constructive solution of the problem of Indian lands. The upshot was the passage of the Dawes severalty act in 1887 which, among other things, opened much reservation land to white occupancy.[2] In other respects also his protective oversight of the public land brought desirable results. With just pride he reported to Congress on December 3, 1888, that "over 80,000,000 acres have been arrested from illegal usurpation, improvident grants, and fraudulent entries and claims, to be taken for the homesteads of honest industry . . . / it is a recompense for the labor and struggles of the recovery."[3]

While the principal attention of this generation was devoted to making the Great West habitable for white settlers, in some of the older states attempts were also made to turn waste land into productive acreage. The largest undertaking, and the one which from the point of view of the future ~~was~~ proves the most significant, was in Florida. Under a federal statute of 1850 Florida had been given title to all the overflowed public lands which it might drain.[4] To carry on the work an internal-

[1]Richardson, comp., Messages and Papers, VIII, 307.

[2]See Schlesinger, Rise of the City, 371-372.

[3]Richardson, comp., Messages and Papers, VIII, 795.

[4]Caroline M. Brevard, A History of Florida (J. A. Robertson, ed., Fla. State Hist. Soc., Publs., no. 4), ~~1924-1925~~, II, 180.

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improvement fund had been set up. Steady progress was made, but the Civil War wrecked much that had been accomplished. For eight years after the war the fund had averaged only a bit more than thirteen thousand dollars a year from the sale of lands.

The nation-wide recovery from the hard times of the 1870's enabled Florida to resume the work with redoubled energy. In 1880 the state elected a new governor, William D. Bloxham. Bloxham's slogan was "drainage." He joined forces with a millionaire, Hamilton Disston, a Philadelphia saw manufacturer, who had gone to Florida to fish and hunt and had become fascinated by the problem of developing the country. Particularly did the draining of the Everglades attract him. Bloxham made a bargain with Disston: that, if he and his associates would construct a system of drainage around Lake Okeechobee, the huge shallow lake on the north side of the Everglades, alternate sections of the land reclaimed would be deeded to them. At the same time the Governor persuaded Disston to buy outright four million acres of swamp land north of Okeechobee for a million dollars, most of it in cash. By this means he saved the internal-improvement fund from bankruptcy.[1]

Disston proceeded to work out a colonization scheme for his tract. Half of the land he sold to foreigners, principally Englishmen. When the settlers arrived, they found that little more had been done than to stake out their water-soaked acres.

[1]Brevard, History of Florida, II, 182-186.

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As a result only a few remained, in and around Lake Kissimmee, to struggle with the drainage problem. Gradually they succeeded in reclaiming extensive tracts. The rest of the two million acres Disston sold through land companies. Various grades of land were offered: twenty-five cents an acre for the overflowed, ten dollars for the dry.

A more substantial development resulted from the enterprise of H. A. DeLand, who had made a fortune in soda and saleratus in Fairport, New York. During a sight-seeing trip to Florida in 1876 he had been captivated by what is now Volusia County. Here he bought a great tract from the internal-improvement fund, laid out a town with streets sixty feet wide, planted trees, started an academy and sold land to settlers. They arrived in great numbers, many of them Swedes. Like all newcomers to Florida in that day, they planted a single crop: oranges. In 1885, just as their trees were about to bear, there came a killing frost, ruining most of the plantings and ruining DeLand himself, for he had guaranteed settlers ten per cent on their investment as soon as the groves came into bearing. Unlike most promoters, he met the obligation though it took nearly everything he had.[1] Notwithstanding this catastrophe a considerable number of the sturdy Swedes remained. They replanted their groves, setting their trees deeper and devising methods of fighting frost; and while the trees were growing they sought for a paying supplementary

[1] Information given the author in an interview in 1926 with Dr. Lincoln Hulley, President of John B. Stetson University at DeLand, Florida.

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crop. This they found in celery, which soon became one of Florida's most profitable vegetable ~~crops.~~ products.

Discouraging as the results of Disston's speculative and DeLand's sound undertakings were, they did not stop drainage or development in Florida. Orange groves continued to be planted, and by 1893 Florida was shipping five million boxes of oranges a year. It was not agriculture alone that attracted people, however. Many came to work the phosphate deposits lying east of Tampa. A tract which turned out to be about forty by twenty-five miles in extent was opened in the late eighties. But, as was characteristic of all pioneer undertakings in the country, many of the first comers knew nothing about the business they were entering. People rushed to the phosphate mines as they did to the irrigation projects of the West and the drainage ventures of Florida. A large number were ruined in "the phosphate boom," but, as always, a few of the more sturdy stuck. The period of trial and experiment passed, the miners and manufacturers learned their business, and phosphates became another of Florida's important products. As a result of this varied development the state's population grew by a hundred thousand from 1880 to 1890. By the end of another decade Florida contained nearly three hundred thousand inhabitants.

The degree of success resulting from these ~~combined~~ varied efforts to people the sparsely settled parts of the country was in part reflected

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in a growth of the total population of the United States from fifty million in 1880 to seventy-six million at the century's close. The Great West became organized into self-governing commonwealths. Washington, Montana and the Dakotas entered the Union in 1889, Idaho and Wyoming in 1890, and Utah, her case prejudiced by the Mormon practice of polygamy, finally in 1896.[1] With the system of states extending in an almost solid ~~mass~~ array from sea to sea, with railroads and other means of communication binding them together, with a vast population undivided by tariff barriers or other political barriers to free exchanges of goods, the stage was set for a gigantic industrial development such as the United States had never before known.

[1] F. L. Paxson, History of the American Frontier (Boston, 1924), chap. lviii.

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