

The Mail Bag

WASTING NATURAL RESOURCES

Editor, Guide:—Now and then, when the systematic study of economics is proposed, somebody asks, "What does it amount to?" A quick glance over the economic history of the United States will show, I think, even to the most casual observer, that it amounts to everything worth while. I have not the data at hand relating to the parallel course that Canada has run, but all that is necessary to make the same story apply to Canada is to change the names and slightly alter the figures. The American republic had the fortune of having thrown into its lap an empire of virgin territory of such extent and productiveness as has come to no other nation in history. Besides this heritage came just at the time when mechanical inventions were coming into use that would multiply many fold the utility of these resources. And the American republic has thrown away those resources with a prodigal carelessness and a reckless abandon that has never been equalled in history. Not only thrown them away, but permitted them to be utilized to fasten upon its people an economic slavery that will continue until those resources are recovered. And Canada is repeating the economic history of the United States in all of its essential features.

The public domain of the United States originally amounted to about three million square miles—considerably over one and three fourths billion acres. In the average this land surpasses that of Europe in fertility. Settled as densely as Germany it would support a population of 50,000,000. What was done with it? Up to 1890 there had been given to corporations land amounting to ten times the area of Iowa, or three times that of France, which supports 40,000,000 people. One of the incidental effects of the process of this giving has been an intimate association between the grantor and the grantee that has corrupted the whole fabric of government. Following close on these grants the lumbermen and ranchers, sometimes legally, sometimes illegally, have carved out holdings some single estates of which now amount to double the size of Belgium. The exact total of all these grants and appropriations is not known, for a becoming modesty characterizes many of the recipients, but it is variously estimated at from 250 to 350 million acres, or from two to three times the total amount taken up by homestead entry.

But a statement of the number of acres engrossed by individuals and corporations does not begin to convey an idea of the extent of the wasting of the people's heritage. The anthracite coal beds of western Pennsylvania constitute almost the entire fuel supply of Eastern United States and a very important share of the supply for the middle West. The annual output is 70 million tons. The entire source of supply is controlled by eight railway companies. The production of petroleum exceeds in value the national budget, and the business from the well to the consumer is almost entirely in the hands of one corporation. The supplies of flax seed are in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota have been capitalized at two billion dollars. This is practically all under the control of the Steel Trust, and with it most of the ore deposits of the south and west and the coking coal, natural gas and limestone necessary for the production of steel. The annual copper output of the United States before the war was valued at \$175,000,000, but the present figures would probably be double this amount. This is in the hands of a single corporation. The water power trust is at the present moment seeking franchise rights in the rivers remaining under public control, thus to become dictator of the main source of mechanical power in the future. Similarly the natural supplies of zinc, lead, borax, phosphate and many other useful products have been monopolized. The rights of way of 200,000 miles of railway have been acquired at farm-value rates or less. These are estimated now to be worth nine billion dollars. Figures are not available for the value of franchises of street railway, electric light and other public service corporations of the cities, not for the value of city lands which in many cases run up to millions of dollars per acre.

EDUCATION

(From Address by Dr. J. W. Robertson.)

Education is not primarily for the purpose of developing power to acquire property, or power because of the possession of property, or power thru the use of property; it is for the development of human powers and to make property minister to human life. For what shall it profit a nation if it gain the whole world and lose its own soul thru the absence of education? There is no greater deprivation than that—the prevention of the development of human powers thru the absence of sound education.

The interesting part of this story is that of all these sources of supply and all these service monopolies, not one dollar of the value is the direct creation of the owners, but are caused by the needs of a producing and consuming industrial community. In some cases a slight compensation has been made, but even there the payment was so ridiculously inadequate that for all practical purposes we may say the values have been a gracious gift. The great



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Regiments of heroes, defenders of Verdun, parade before General Joffre.

These regiments, which prevented the Germans from piercing the French lines and capturing Verdun were singled out and taken to St. James to rest from the terrible struggle in which they had been engaged. They were reviewed in the square at St. James in front of the monument which commemorates the battle of St. James which was besieged by the Germans in 1514.

bulk of this alienation of the people's heritage has taken place within the past fifty years and right under the gaze of a people priding themselves as being the most progressive and intelligent nation on earth, and possessing universal manhood suffrage. How is it possible that a people of such high average intelligence and with all the means of prevention in their hands should, almost without a protest, have given away resources of such vital necessity and such priceless value? It can only be explained by the fact that they were never

taught an appreciation of that value. They had placed such implicit faith in their free political institutions that they never dreamed of the possibility of their becoming enslaved by other means. They had never stopped to consider the difference between wealth that can be infinitely increased and natural resources that are strictly limited in quantity.

Canada, perhaps, has not gone so far as the United States in the alienation of her resources. But the difference is not enough to afford much grounds for boasting. In the main, the predicament of the United States is the predicament of Canada, and the salvation of the one country, if it comes, will be the salvation of the other. In the days of chattel slavery the question used to be asked: How long will it take a slave, working for nothing a day and boarding himself, to purchase his liberty? A parallel question for us to answer is: How shall we proceed to recover the resources that we have given away, and sometimes paid the recipient for taking, and which are now increasing in value faster than our ability to buy them back? The science of economics shows us where the mistake was made that brought about this situation, and the same science should show us how to proceed to correct it. But economics locked between the covers of printed books will never avail. It must be taught to an independent minded, liberty loving electorate and impel them to action along lines guided by a knowledge of the means necessary to recover their wasted heritage.

GEO. W. ATKINSON.

Ceylon, Sax's.

P.S.—For most of the facts and figures given above I am indebted to "Privilege and Democracy in America," by Frederick C. Howe, a book well worth anyone's perusal.—G.W.A.

THE USELESS DOG

Editor, Guide:—The writer of "Sheep or Dogs—Which?" in March 22 issue, surely is something of a philosopher in getting to the root of the real reason for not keeping sheep. I quite agree with his description of the dog question. How often you drive up to a farmer's place and are met with one, two or oftentimes three fierce dogs ready to devour you. Enquire why these dogs are kept and generally there is no reason only that they don't like to shoot them. Offer to shoot them and they are an old keep sake of some kind. Occasionally you will find that these dogs eat sufficient to raise the owner's own table from a very scanty one to a real good one. Then there is the old pet that the old maid won't allow to be shot, and so he looks up at you with the water running out of his mouth and eyes, too, as you endeavor to eat your meals. He is a little cross with children and strangers, and will allow no laughing or scuffling in the house, but he used to be a good dog, and tho his breath is a bit strong it would be too bad to turn him out. Several of these dogs have poor digestions too, and will eat nothing but cream of wheat and milk. To shoot or poison one of these miserable old disease-producers would be to make bad friends for a long time with your farm neighbor.

Continuing along this same line, you have the same condition in the rural school problem in dozens of the country schools. Notwithstanding the fine words of the public school inspectors at the convention in Regina to the contrary, the average back country school is about as poor and as inefficient and rough as it can be, and for the same reason as W.L.T. will not keep sheep, "Shoot the dog and you offend your neighbor." Take your stand for refinement and character in your rural school and you offend 75 per cent. of your neighbors. So you figure out which pays the best, and you average up that to have a bearable condition in the school and a bearable condition with your neighbors is preferable to pressing for any reasonable degree of refinement or culture in the country school and being set up for a prig and "better than your neighbors." The inspector makes perhaps one trip a year with his gun and two or three dogs, and is glad to get it over, and leaves a perhaps

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First boat thru the Panama Canal since the big slide.

The St. Veronica, of Liverpool, England, followed by scores of other vessels, passing thru the cut in the Panama Canal where the great slide of September 15-17 occurred. This steamer is the first vessel to go thru the canal since the slide from Calobra Hill blocked passage for all boats. It has taken many months to clear the cut the passage only having been declared navigable a few weeks ago. This photo was taken from the Calobra side of the slide for vessels being bound for the Atlantic.