

Assisted Immigration.

THE great international problem of Great Britain and her Colonies is how to bring to the surplus land of the new countries the surplus labour of the old. There is an element of irony in the thought that in the Colonies there is sufficient land lying idle to provide a maintenance for millions, while in Great Britain there are thousands of unemployed in the cities and labourers in the country without hope or prospect for the future, the victims of the evolution of machinery, who, though lacking the means to emigrate, possess the material to make successful colonists; that, while men are required to spread information and to organize in England, there are numbers, of statesmen, clergymen, editors, philanthropists and leaders of labour organizations ready to give their name, influence, and energies to the cause, whose usefulness is, to a great extent, lost from lack of organization; and that, although money is required to provide for transportation, the purchase of supplies and the early maintenance of settlers, sufficient for this purpose is spent every year by municipalities and charitable associations in a manner that has a tendency to pauperize the recipients, or at the best to afford only temporary relief.

Upon this problem many brains are now working; but it is impossible to arrive at a successful solution of the question until we realize the actual conditions that prevail in the Colonies and the lessons to be learnt from the experiences of the past, until we fully understand the axioms, upon which the problem is based.

It may, perhaps, then serve a useful purpose to enumerate some of the more important considerations bearing upon this subject, the truth of which may now be said to be generally recognized.

It is true that there is a demand for temporary labour both in Ontario and, during harvest time, in the North-West, which cannot always be readily supplied, but it is a common complaint that there are now too many farm labourers in the North-West working for their board during the greater part of the year. And in the last two years able-bodied men, unable to obtain work, have applied to the St. George's Society in Toronto for assistance to return home. It is also true that a good man entering into the competition of the ranks of those looking for permanent labour can generally find an opening, yet in all probability he may displace some native of weaker calibre, who must seek for employment elsewhere, and who, if he be successful, by the principle of social attraction, may draw others from the country. Again, assisted immigration is not generally looked upon with favour by the people of Canada, for statistics of all new countries show that the immigrant is, by nature, restless and a very uncertain quantity. And, though many of the most successful colonists have started without a dollar, poverty in purse, especially when drawn from a city population, is too often associated with poverty of character. Discrimination is difficult. Success depends not only on the capacity for work, but the power of adaptation to new conditions. The want of discrimination in the selection of settlers has contributed more than anything else to the failure of attempts at colonization by companies and individuals in the past, and it is not unnatural that the Colonies should be unwilling to assume the responsibility of a helpless population and the burden of a social problem which does not belong to them. It is on this ground that the projected Salvation Army Colony of General Booth has aroused so much hostile criticism; and we may presume that these reasons have been mainly responsible for the abandonment by the Canadian Government of the policy of giving assisted passages to immigrants to this country.

From this rough enumeration of facts, the truth of which, we think, all will admit, assisted by the reasoning of common sense, we may evolve the following axioms for our guidance:—

1. The risk entailed in the loaning of money for assisted immigration, generally speaking, must be borne by those, who are chiefly interested in lessening their contribution to charity and in providing employment for the families who are in want or dependent on the community.

2. Immigrants, who are thus assisted to emigrate, must not prejudice the labour market of the country, to which they are sent; they must be self-maintaining and make their living off the land.

3. Immigrants must be carefully selected, due regard being had to character and previous suitable training.

4. The immigrant must not come out as a pauper or a recipient of charity, for this is repugnant to the most desirable class and will attract those who are most likely to prove a failure, neither must he come out under Government auspices, for his energies will be stunted by the idea that the Government is bound, for its own credit, to see him through. The funds must therefore be provided from municipal and private sources, and, as far as possible, on a business basis.

5. It is evident that, for the convenience of those, who advance the money to immigrants, the families who come out in this manner must not be spread all over the country, but there must be some system of keeping them together.

The experience of Canada in the past, as we have said, has left a very general impression that assisted immigration is of necessity undesirable. If that is true, it would be useless further to discuss the question, but, we are bound to admit, we think this a mistaken idea. In the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the subject of the unemployed in the city of Liverpool, issued in 1894, the Liverpool unemployed are divided into two classes. Class A: "Those steady and capable men and women, who could, and would, really do work if they could find it"; and Class B: "Those who, from one cause or another, are incapable of doing, or refuse to do steady work up to the average standard in quality and quantity." Those who come under "Class A" are estimated at many thousands.

From the causes given for the lack of employment we quote the following: "The seasonal and fluctuating character of the bulk of the trade of the port results in the casual employment of large masses of unskilled labour at certain periods of the year, and thus attracts to the city a large influx of men for whom at ordinary times there is no work. . . . Many of these men are farm and other labourers in the prime of life."

Further, in a letter to the Hon. Secretary of the Unemployed Commission the Secretary of the Liverpool Central Relief Charity Organization Society writes as follows: "There is reason to believe that room may be found for able men in some of our Colonies. . . . Whether men were sent to other districts of our own country or to the Colonies, some knowledge of agricultural work would be an undoubted advantage. Our inquiries show that there are many men to be found in Liverpool who were formerly farm workers and who have come here within the past ten or fifteen years. If some of these could be induced to immigrate they would be the most likely class to do well, but failing this any other strong and willing man would have a good prospect of finding work, especially if they had some preliminary training in farm work. . . . A common objection to emigration is that it takes away the best men from the country. As to funds, a portion might be raised by public subscription, and in suitable cases, no doubt, the board of guardians, under the power they possess, might be willing to provide the cost. . . . It is worthy of consideration whether the parish authorities might not advantageously exercise their powers to take some land and establish a labour colony for the purpose of setting them to work, not only for their immediate relief, but with a view to their ultimate emigration."

We have quoted at length from this report not only to show that there is a large class of desirable immigrants, who cannot emigrate without assistance, but also to point out that three important principles are now recognized in England, viz.: that it is only the best men of the class who should be assisted to emigrate, that previous agricultural training in England is both desirable and practicable and that a fund for this purpose can be supplied by public subscription and municipal and parish authorities in Great Britain.

The question of self-maintenance off the land we have discussed before under the head of Government Colonies.

Our problem may then be narrowed down to three broad questions:—

1. Can money be advanced for the assistance of colonists upon a business basis?

2. To whom is to be entrusted the work of organization and selection of settlers in Great Britain?

3. To whom will be entrusted the no less important direction of settlers in Canada?

That money can be advanced for immigration purposes upon a business basis has been demonstrated by the experience