

THE COURIER

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W. MORTON SMITH Editor and Manager
SARAH B. HARRIS Associate Editor
WILLA CATHER Associate Editor

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OBSERVATIONS

The other day there came to me a circular printed in red ink, with the red flag of socialism in one corner. It was addressed to the proletarian class of Lincoln. It was signed "The Socialists, of Lincoln, Neb." Let us see what the socialists of Lincoln, Neb., have to say for themselves: "At the present time you may be employed. If so, we congratulate you, but have you any guarantee that tomorrow you will not be discharged?" If the socialists have any sort of a scheme that will guarantee a permanent job to every man, let us find out what it is. These socialists condemn the republican party and the democratic party, and strange to state abuse these little brothers of the socialists, the populists. "Whenever and wherever this party has had a chance to demonstrate and carry out its pledges to the laboring people, investigation will show that all its acts have consisted of words, words, words, nothing but words." To this expression of the socialists I am not disposed to take any exception. The socialists' opinion of the populists is treated at length elsewhere in THE COURIER.

The socialists ask: "Is it not time for you to cast your lot with the only party in this country whose cardinal idea is the emancipation of the propertyless class, by revolutionizing or abolishing the existing social system, and which favors the establishment of one which will prevent economic class distinction?" Before answering this let us turn to the leaflet which accompanied the circular entitled, "What Shall We Do to Be Saved—A Sermon to Workingmen." Therein it is said: "The welfare of the

people demands that the land, the mines, the factories, the railroads and the ships be made the property of the whole people, so as to put a stop to starvation among plenty and misery amidst abundance. * * * When the people shall take hold of this, then the wheels of industry will run smoothly; everybody who has produced by his labor one dollar's worth will get 100 cents' worth of goods for it, because the people have no interest in taking anything away from him. Then there will be no big pile of goods in the way of prosperity. We will all work and we can all enjoy the fruits of our labor. No more idleness, nor over worked children or women, no more misery and dependence for one's bread and butter upon somebody else. Everybody will be everybody's peer, and true freedom will prevail."

Socialism, not the socialism of Webster, but the socialism of the brethren of the red flag, goes farther than populism, and is just so much more dangerous than populism. It presupposes the possibility of attainment of a condition made impossible by the fall of man. It argues on a presumption incompatible with the law of nature. It is idle in its promises, dangerous in its temptations. It appeals to credulity and cupidity, and insults the reason. "The people must own the land, the mines, the factories, the railroads and the ships." Why draw the line at these things? If the welfare of the whole people demands that the whole people own the land, mines, factories, etc., why does not the welfare of the whole people demand that the people own the grocery stores, barber shops, newspapers, drug stores, dry goods stores, banks, hardware stores—in fact everything? Why stop at land and mines and factories and railroads and ships? The answer to these questions disposes of the whole theory of red flag socialism. The minute all enterprises come into the possession of the people that minute would progress turn about face and go backward. The possession of all these things by the people would take away all individual ambition and personal profit, and the result would be that the people's railroads would cease to be operated, the people's mines would be closed, the people's grocery stores would be depleted and the doors closed; the barbers would desert their chairs; the newspapers would not issue. The one thing that keeps the world moving would be taken away. The people would have no use for railroads, no use for mines. They would lose all culture, all civilization. They would be little better than beasts of the field. They would go unshaven, and find their food like the beasts. They would be unread and unintelligent.

In this country, before the light of the new world entered it, there was a people living under conditions much the same as those advocated by the red flag socialists. The Indians owned the land, the

mines,—everything, and they were Indians, mere beasts of the field. They had freedom, but at what a cost? The socialists would make Indians, barbarians, savages of us. If the day will ever come when "the people" shall take hold of all industry, the wheels instead of running smoothly, will not run at all. A dollar's worth of labor would not be worth \$1, because there would be no labor, no dollar. There would, indeed, be no big pile of goods in the way of prosperity—or in the way of anything else.

No, it is not time to answer yes to the socialists' query. It is not time to undo all the progress the world has made and reduce civilization to a communism of savagery. I shall hardly send my name and address to "The Socialist, Box 1015, Lincoln, Neb."

It is a coincidence that the subsidence of talk of free silver in this section should have been so quickly followed by the discovery of free gold. Whatever may have been the attractiveness of thoughts of free silver they are entirely overshadowed by the more potential delights of possible free gold. Going out on one's farm and finding free gold is infinitely more satisfactory than waiting for congress to grant free silver. Mr. Bryan has more hard luck than anybody. In fact, that old goblin Fate and all the little blue bottled devils of circumstance seem to be after him. Mr. Bryan confined himself for some years to telling of the great benefits of a low tariff. Then congress gave us a low tariff and Mr. Bryan immediately saw that low tariff was not what we wanted. Instead of being a prospective good thing, it is a very real bad thing, and Mr. Bryan has had to drop all talk of the tariff. Then he chased after the tail of the populist kite. He finally caught it. When he had once got his hands firmly on it the tail came off. Lately he has devoted himself to picturing the joys of free silver. Straightway the people of Nebraska begin to lose interest in the subject, and soon Destiny gives the silver orator a turn by uncovering gold almost under his feet. I notice that among those who are most interested in the reported gold findings at Milford and vicinity are many who were erstwhile torch bearers in the silver illumination. Hatred of gold in the abstract is one thing, and hatred of the tangible, present yellow metal is an entirely different thing. If there is any considerable amount of gold in the soil of Nebraska not all the silver tones of all the silver orators in the world can stay the development of the new mining industry. If there should be gold mines in Nebraska it would be like heaping coals of fire on Mr. Bryan. He would have to find another prejudice to appeal to. And of late years he has been kept busy jumping from one prejudice to another. Mr. Bryan is nimble, but enlightenment is giving him a hot chase.

Last Sunday Agent Bonnell, of the Burlington, took a personally conducted excursion to the Nebraska "gold fields." That excursion was unique in the history of this state. To many it seemed incongruous, anomalous, paradoxical, this looking for the precious metal in the prairie soil. There were a great many skeptics. Few were qualified to give an intelligent opinion as to the prospect of the production of gold in paying quantities. But the party tramped about over the Dillenbeck farm and adjacent territory, and dug many holes. At one time I saw fully three hundred men scattered about digging in the dirt or talking with the farmers. A hundred teams were hitched near by. Near the Dillenbeck farm house was a shaft ten feet deep and five feet wide. It was surrounded by a crowd. Within a hundred feet was the improvised rocker, in appearance something like a baby's cradle, which was reported to have sifted out \$10 worth of gold in one day. A good many had microscopes and were eagerly examining little piles of dirt and gravel. A little way off an enterprising Lincoln man was vending sandwiches and cigars, the "first store" in the gold fields, he called it. It was a strange scene, truly. For thirty years or more the people of Nebraska have tilled the fields, raising corn and wheat and rye and oats and fattening hogs and cattle, and the most imaginative Nebraskan never expected any other condition in this prairie country. But here within two or three weeks were many hundreds of people who believed that gold, much gold, lies in the soil, and who, with pick and penknife and glass, were looking for the shining metal. While there were many doubting Thomases, there were plenty who saw nothing unreasonable in the theory that there is good, paying gold, under the sod, to be had for the digging. In the crowd who came from Lincoln were not a few whom fortune has not treated kindly in recent years, and who wanted to believe in the story of hidden riches, who saw in the prospective excitement and development a possible short cut to former prosperity. Heaven knows many of us need to find gold. There is gold in the soil. This is true of many localities. A few weeks will determine whether there is a sufficient quantity to make its production profitable. On Mr. Dillenbeck's farm are some fat young pigs. There is gold in these, sure. It can be mined by merely taking the pigs to market. Whether Mr. Dillenbeck and the other farmers of that locality will be able to attain great wealth at one bound, as it were, through the discovery of paying gold, or whether they will have to depend on the slower but sure way of raising corn and alfalfa and sugar beets and fattening hogs and cattle will soon be determined. Whatever may be the result of the pending investigation there is one fact that cannot be disputed, a fact which THE COURIER is always ready to affirm, and that is that there is money and lots of it in the soil of Nebraska. And the careful farmers