

THE MUCH DISCUSSED QUESTION OF SETTLEMENT

(Continued from last week)

2. Again your correspondent asks, "Why should the Government be asked to do for the future or to make nurse-fed settlers more than was done for the Pioneer Settlers?" Here comes in his envious and jealous eye—"nurse-fed" (a contemptuous epithet) as if he had much to brag about. A man bearing a nam-de-plume for the sole purpose of attack and not for fair criticism in a matter associated with the general weal and the greatest industry of the country partakes largely of the coward or "bully"—a pronounced part of the German character—certainly not British fair play! I would recommend him to be "fearless, but fair." This question may be answered in several ways. The real reason is, because it is seen that there is not sufficient progress made with settlement under the Homestead Act, notwithstanding the amendment that has been made and the longer it goes on the worse it will appear. The practice is unsuited to the age which is one of rapid progress and activity. We have too many leaving their holdings, going west or elsewhere; but, in any case, they do not "stay with it." Now there is no harm in the Government making another amendment to the Act or making a new one altogether if it sees it is dutiful and necessary for the general good to do so. Those who have settled under the old Act and who may prefer to hold their settlements under it are welcome and ought to be free to do so without calling them by approbrious epithets but that need not hinder a better measure being introduced and adopted. In fact your correspondent by his remarks and statements acknowledges that the plan suggested is more favorable than the existing Act. It presumes to give a helping hand to future settlers more than the Pioneers got! Hence his envy. He thinks the Government would be giving more to the settlers if the suggestion were acted or than they gave to the Pioneers. He acts in a proverbially mean part of "dog in the manger."

Visit Black River.

If your correspondent really wants to see the results of the present Act I will point out to him that he ought to visit the Black River—commencing at Matheson and running northwards for say 20 miles (there are many other places.) On the banks of that river a couple of miles from the whole of the country is a strip of 16 or 20 acres in length and occupied

by settlers of the kind in question, cabins of the usual kind required by the Act were erected and some cleanances were affected. What is the case today? I will inform him. Commencing on the river about two miles from Matheson (and I meantime say nothing about the character of the bridge that crosses the river near Matheson), there is not now a settler on either side for about 12 miles (i. e. 14 from Matheson); then there there is still one solitary settler, passing him more vacancies follow. The settlers on the banks of this river have left their holdings, abandoned them, and their shanties remain as weird monuments of their industry and activity, and which now form shelters for the birds and beasts of the forest, because the settlers could not carry out the conditions imposed on them by the Act. Were all these men "back-farmers" or "poultry farmers" and "bird fanciers" and nothing more? I cannot believe it. I think they could be quite as capable, but perhaps they were not so tricky as your correspondent and as he admits possibly "90 per cent" of them had not "experience and capital"—especially I say capital and most of them probably had all the experience that would be required, as much as he had without my knowing him or them. Does this experience give any encouragement for the justification of the hypocritical skout, "stay with it," or rather does it not amply justify these settlers leaving until the Act is changed and made so that men through honest work and industry may be able to make the land productive, remunerative, and subservient to the use of the race—make it possible for settlers, even "nurse-fed" ones, to live comfortably and contentedly on the land of their adoption, rather than starve and die?

For and Against.

3. Your correspondent refers to Mr. Woods suggestion and gives it short shrift. Mr. Woods is, doubtless, well able to explain the meaning of his own words, but, as, in my reply (Nov. 2) to his letter I intended to refer to this matter, but it escaped me at the moment, I may here say that if, Mr. Woods meant that the Government should refund money to the settler which he paid them at his entry, then on this point there is something to be said what every person knows, namely *in pre and in contra*. Let us suppose a case for illustration. A man selects a lot of 160 acres, pays his first instalment of \$20 as the Act requires, he settles

on the land and builds his cabin, resides on the lot for six months of the year, works upon it, clears say 3 acres, and cuts time it is not unreasonable to suppose that he may have expended at least \$300. From whatever cause (ill-health of himself or one of his family, or possibly want of more ready cash to carry him along, or a brighter prospect perhaps occurring elsewhere, ect.) the settler may see it dutiful to consider the propriety of making a change, in short to leave the lot. He may not be able to sell or get anything for the outlay and work expended thereon. If this be the case and if Mr. Woods thinks the Government ought to refund him the money he expended, I confess I have some sympathy, under certain circumstances, with Mr. Woods' idea, if this is it—at least I sympathize with it to a certain extent. It is, however out of the question to think in such a case that the Government could return the \$20.00 and it is equally hard that the workingman should lose say \$300, worse still if he has been two years and spent say another \$300, if he has to lose say \$600 or more.

The actual money the Government receives is a mere bagatelle, but the actual money expended by the workingman is an item of importance to him, and while the Government would not be willing to refund the monies they receive they should make a law whereby the lot could be easily, safely, and legally transferred so that the workingman would get a proportion equivalent to the valuation of his tenant or holder of the lot. For, the settler enters on an improved farm (house, barn, and 10 acres of land ready for tillage) and a "tab" is kept on the nature of his work and occupation, his work and improvements are properly tabulated and entered up and these can be easily reckoned and valued. If he desires to leave, another settler will readily take his place and allow fair valuation for the improvements done. We know this from the New Zealand experience (see letter of Oct. 23.)