

## A SAMPLE PIECE OF REPUBLICAN SKULDUGGERY.

[The Chicago Searchlight of November 1, makes public a letter from the secretary of the Kaweah co-operative colony in California to Attorney General Olney which shows the spirit that animates the two old parties, but more especially the republican party, in their dealings with the common people of the United States. It furnishes another link in the chain of testimony showing the approach of a military despotism. The letter is self-explanatory and is as follows.—Ed.]

LOS ANGELES, CAL., April 21, 1894.

To the Hon. Richard Olney, Attorney General of the United States, Washington, D. C.:

SIR:—On behalf of a number of industrious, law-abiding citizens, who earnestly desire to do what is lawful and right, I address you in your official capacity as attorney-general of the United States and respectfully ask, in the interest of law, order and justice, your advice and counsel in the premises which I briefly, conservatively and truthfully set forth as follows:

In the year 1885, a number of citizens, commonly known as the Kaweah colonists, mostly artisans, of the state of California, recognizing with much concern the alarming increase in the ranks of the unemployed, sought to relieve the strain which to them, even at that time, appeared to be approaching the danger line, by leaving the city and going out upon the land and inaugurating useful and self-sustaining co-operative industries. They accordingly sought unoccupied government land containing resources such as would afford the best opportunities for diversity of employment. They filed individually upon lands in Tulare county, California, in conformity with a general invitation extended by the government to its citizens, and fulfilled on their part all the requirement of the law in relation to their filings, which facts are admitted by the government. Their *bona fides*, however, being challenged, final title was withheld pending official investigation. In the meantime, to prove that they were not "dummies" as was suspected by the government, many of the filers settled upon the land; and as it was their aim and purpose to give employment to as many of their industrially inclined citizens as the resources of the region would conveniently and comfortably support, they invited a number of their friends and acquaintances to join them, permitting them to share equally with themselves in the benefits that might arise or accrue from the exercise of their labor upon these natural resources, usury and speculation being entirely barred from their operations. In good faith, improvements on a large scale were made, and several hundred colonists from various parts of the United States came to take part in the co-operative industries that were being established. Schools, a public library and a weekly paper were conspicuous features of this settlement, while on every hand evidence of social advancement and industrial success were abundant.

In 1889 an investigation was at length made by the government which fully established to its satisfaction the legality of the filings, and the *bona fide* intent and purpose of the filers. A mountain road twenty miles in length, which cost these colonists several thousand dollars in money, and several years of hard, unrequited toil to construct, was about this time completed, opening up valuable resources of timber, agricultural and grazing lands which had heretofore been inaccessible. At this juncture a bill was passed (H. R. 12187) reserving from settlement the townships in which these filings were made. Despite the pleadings and representations

of the colonists, the Interior department maintained that this bill was retroactive in its operation and that it annulled the filings made by these settlers five years prior to its enactment; and in accordance with this view, the then secretary of the interior (John W. Noble) arbitrarily and cruelly cancelled the filings, which cancellation carried with it the forfeiture to the government of the road and other improvements made by the colonists. Upon technicalities created solely by the passage of this bill, civil and criminal proceedings were at once commenced by the government against the officers of the colony. The first arrest was for the crime (?) of cutting "five pine trees which had been used to construct cabins for the men who had built the costly mountain road herein referred to, and which the government confiscated, cabins and all. They were likewise arrested for trespass, and also on a charge of using the mails for purposes of fraud. The latter proved to be an entire groundless indictment, instigated by vindictiveness and malice. After a four days' trial of this case, Judge Ross of the United States district court of Los Angeles ordered the jury to find a verdict of "Not Guilty" without leaving their seats.

The colonists having been thus evicted and persecuted, and being without money or resources, leased a saw mill upon patented land and proceeded once more to work. Here they were interfered with by United States troops and ordered to desist, in their peaceful and lawful attempts to earn a livelihood.

The effect of these acts of persecution on the part of the government has been to transform a once prosperous settlement of industrious American citizens into a wilderness inhabited only by wild beasts; to wreck the homes and fortunes of a number of law-abiding people; to close their schools, stop their industries, and cruelly and inhumanly force them into the ranks of the unemployed in a time of great business depression. This infliction is more aggravating from the fact that the condition into which they are thus forced is the one they prudently and intelligently sought to escape and from which they would have escaped and assisted others to escape from, were it not for the ruthless denial of their natural and legal rights.

Against these acts of the government numerous protests and appeals were sent from time to time by citizens of California and elsewhere to congress, to President Harrison and Secretary Noble, all practically without avail. Urgent appeals have also been sent to the present congress, but action in the matter is forever deferred.

Thus have a number of citizens been brought to destitution and despair by the deliberate and conscious action of the government; while the resources to which they are legally and naturally entitled are going to waste and valuable improvements made by them are going to destruction. Notwithstanding that it is only access to the resources of nature for actual use, or not money or subsidies they ask, they are, nevertheless, without tangible excuse or reason, still deprived and denied this means of existence.

I send herewith copy of testimony in verification of the statements made herein and respectfully refer you for further details, or for corroboration, to the chairman of the select committee of the senate forest reservations in California, and to Senators James H. Kyle and George C. Perkins.

Our case is properly before congress,

the fullest investigation having been made thereto, and the desires of the colonists presented in bills for relief; but notwithstanding its extreme urgency, action is put off from time to time and the soul-wearing agony of suspense is added to the injuries already inflicted.

Having exhausted all our means in an unavailing attempt to secure and defend by legal process our natural and legal right of access to the unoccupied and undeveloped resources of nature, and finding ourselves beaten, despoiled and overridden at every turn, we respectfully ask of you what further steps destitute, despairing, but nevertheless, peaceable and patriotic citizens can make to secure to themselves the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," which right the founders of our government declare shall be "inalienable?"

That our colonists are industrious, law-abiding citizens, and that they have been actually subjected to the indignities and injustice mentioned herein, is clearly and fully attested in a statement subscribed and sworn to by the full board of supervisors of Tulare county, California, a copy of which I attach hereto. That they fully complied with the law in the matter of their filings has been certified to under oath by officers of the government. That they are industrious, enterprising and public-spirited is shown by the fact that they dug and blasted from the side of a precipitous and rocky mountain a costly highway twenty miles in length, which Captain James Parker, of the Fourth United States cavalry, in his report to the secretary of the interior, dated August 4, 1893, says, "was laid out with rare engineering skill" and which, he also reports, since its confiscation by the government (without compensation to builders) has been allowed to go to ruin.

Being self-respecting citizens, they are "ashamed to beg" and are too conscientious and law-abiding to confiscate by stealth or otherwise the property of others. The case is a desperate one, involving the question of life or death with many of our colonists. I cannot, therefore, too strongly impress you with its seriousness and the necessity of calling the attention of the government to its responsibility in the matter,—it having deliberately and with full knowledge of its acts brought these citizens to this condition.

We wish to leave no stone unturned to, in a peaceful manner, secure a proper recognition of our rights; hence this appeal to you for advice.

I respectfully request that you will officially inform the president and congress of the circumstances detailed herein and will make such recommendations as your sense of justice, respect of law, and your love and duty to your fellow man may prompt you to suggest.

I would further respectfully suggest that the value of the advice you may be pleased to give us will be enhanced by a due consideration of the fact that having been rendered homeless and penniless by the action of the government we have no means left with which to prosecute our case; that our experience thus far has demonstrated the unpleasant fact the case of the poor in congress and in the courts is practically a hopeless one where their interests happen in any way even remotely, to interfere or clash with those of the rich and influential; that we depend entirely upon labor for our subsistence, that the opportunity for the exercise of our labor was cut off by the wilful act of the government, and that we have been thrust out cruelly and unmercifully to starve or compete

with thousands of unemployed in a congested labor market.

I have the honor to subscribe myself,  
Yours respectfully,

J. J. MARTIN.

Secretary Kaweah Co-operative Colony

Olney replied under date of July 12, 1894: "It is not within the province of the attorney general to advise or lend assistance in this case."

Letter was signed by Richard Olney himself.

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