

Houses, Lots and Lands--Saturday Review of Building and Development.

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FACT AND COMMENT.

AN EVENT took place at the Hollywood Hotel Saturday evening, October 9, which throws light upon the trend of events in California. The Security Land and Loan Company, represented by its executive officers and a number of shareholders, invited a couple of hundred friends to celebrate the return to the stockholders of the last cent of their original investment. It is about four years since this company began operations in what was then a wilderness in the midst of the San Joaquin Valley. The investment was heavy, the amount of land secured very large, and the enterprise had to be built up from the lowest foundations. The stockholders have received back all the money they put into the investment and there is property enough left around Corcoran to bring back at least 100 per cent. on the dollar net profits to the stockholders.

Perilous Times Encountered.

Half a score of the men who aided in carrying on the enterprise told by installments the story of the four years. This historical sketch developed the fact that unusual difficulties had been encountered in this project,

that these difficulties might well have appeared to less venturesome people insurmountable, that they were all overcome and marked success snatched from threatened failure. The company had scarcely got under way when the great earthquake shook the central part of the State, and San Francisco, the Coast metropolis, was left a heap of smouldering ashes after a four days' fire. This stopped operations for a full year. Again things were got under way at Corcoran when the water began to rise in the basin of Tulare Lake, and the warning cry went forth that the whole bottom of the valley was to be drowned out. This alarm lasted for many months and confidence was scarcely restored when the world-wide financial flurry came down and checked the onward course of everything, land investment being hit first and hardest and the effect of the blow lasting longest. In spite of these grave difficulties things have kept moving along most of the time and the fine results noted above were brought to pass, leaving Corcoran a promising city, with banks, a newspaper, mercantile houses and a great industry in a sugar factory costing \$1,000,000. The country around is all studded with prosperous farms. Dairying is one of the principal and most promising industries of the region. Raisin growing is scarcely less so. Asparagus development has been undertaken there which promises great things, and all sorts of deciduous fruit orchards are in a very flourishing condition.

The Reasons Why.

The head of this enterprise, the president and general manager of the company, H. J. Whitley, has as many monuments erected by his own hand to perpetuate his memory as Andrew Carnegie has libraries to hand him down to posterity. In Oklahoma, in Dakota and other places in the Northwest he has developed the wilderness into flourishing communities. It was he who in a practical way discovered the possibilities of Hollywood and made that beautiful suburb of Los Angeles so very memorable among the successful achievements of the last few years. Mr. Whitley is regarded by his associates and operators in real estate generally as an exceedingly capable manager and a very successful one. A cynic might say that the man was overestimated. The fact of the matter is, he picks out the choicest and most promising enterprises in the

section of country where he happens to be and thus insures success from the very start. It is rather unfair to compare his achievements with those of persons who tackle enterprises beset with almost insuperable obstacles. Selecting the very cream of everything in sight, the final success is plainly seen from the start. It was so at Hollywood. All one had to do was simply to undertake the job and the attractions of the place made the work easy. At Corcoran an immense area of country, rich, fat bottom lands with plenty of water obtainable, was selected, and this most important step once taken, all one needed was energy enough to keep the march right up, step by step, moment by moment, to the great success obtained there.

This San Joaquin Valley.

The Times has frequently in recent months dwelt upon the possibilities of the San Joaquin Valley. The achievements of Corcoran are typical of what may be done all over the great expanse of rich agricultural land. How few of us realize its vast proportions, the vast fertility of its soils, its close proximity to markets and therefore the vast possibilities of developing wealth in that central portion of California. Do you know, Mr. Intelligent Reader, that the San Joaquin Valley, beginning a little south of Bakersfield and extending up to where the Southern Pacific crosses the San Joaquin River, embraces a territory almost as large as the State of Indiana? You know how large that is. It is over 35,000 square miles. What does that mean? Do you realize that this is three times the area of the kingdom of Belgium; that you could take three realms like that over which old Leopold ruled and set them down in the San Joaquin Valley and have unoccupied lands left over? Can you fix in your mind's eye the Emerald Isle, the auld sod from which the Irish come? The island contains about 20,000,000 acres of land. The San Joaquin Valley contains some 3,000,000 acres more than Ireland. You could take green Erin up by the roots and float it across the ocean, transport it across the continent or bring it "the Horn around," and drop it in the San Joaquin Valley and there would be a great rim of unoccupied territory all around every edge.

Little Waste Land.

Another thing worth attention is that of these 23,000,000 acres of land

about, there is less waste in the San Joaquin Valley than in Belgium or in Ireland. The greater part of the San Joaquin will run 90 to 95 per cent good land, in fact the best land for agricultural purposes in the world. Taking the whole area of Ireland, it is known that 25 per cent. of the country is either bog or mountain, practically useless for agricultural purposes. This leaves only 15,000,000 acres of good tillable land in the island. There is no such amount of waste land in the San Joaquin Valley. In Belgium a dense population makes it necessary to cultivate to the utmost every rod of land. But the country lies very low, with surface water coming almost to the grass roots. Much drainage has to be used to raise crops at all, and then every effort arrives at only partial success. Another thing in favor of the San Joaquin Valley is that nearly all this soil is of virgin richness, none of the productive elements exhausted calling for continued, heavy, expensive fertilizing such as must be practiced upon exhausted soils like those of Belgium and Ireland.

Possibilities Here.

Land, however vast in its expanse, however rich in its fertility, is worth little or nothing per square mile, unless human beings take it up and make use of it. The value of the lands depends directly upon the number of human beings subsisting upon it. Four years ago the wilderness around Corcoran lay neglected at about \$15 or \$20 an acre, being used mostly for grazing purposes. Fenced, cultivated, irrigated and cropped, the lands have risen in value to \$50, \$100 and \$150 per acre and upward. In the townsite the property has risen from a value of a few dollars an acre to many hundreds of dollars for building lots. The intrinsic value of the best lands here and at other points in the San Joaquin Valley is today not less than \$500 an acre, and that will be the market value of them before long. The kingdom of Belgium, with a third of the area of the San Joaquin Valley, supports a population of 6,500,000 human beings. Ireland, with 15,000,000 acres of good arable land, sustained sixty years ago, a population of nearly 9,000,000 human beings. Until the potato blight came about the time we are speaking of and produced a famine, driving half the inhabitants out of the country in the two generations, the people lived well and happily, each acre supporting its man, at least in

the richest portions of the island. At the present time Ireland supports a population of 4,500,000. Ten years ago there were not much more than 10,000 people in the San Joaquin Valley. There are ten times as many today, or thereabouts. The multiplying of the population by ten has developed the resources of the land, and the unproductive stretches of wilderness with productive farms under intense cultivation. But the work is only begun, the enhancement of values only started. It is not an impossibility that ten more years may see close to a million human beings in the San Joaquin Valley. When that number of people are there and the possibilities of the farming lands have been thoroughly proved, the best of these lands will be selling at \$500 an acre, where they are used for the production of alfalfa and the feeding of dairy cattle. The fruit orchards are likely to sell at a very considerably higher figure. In considering these matters we must always remember that the population of the United States is now nearly 90,000,000, of North America over 100,000,000; that all points in the continent are connected by lines of railroads opening up an accessible market for all our products; that this population is growing at the rate of one and a half to two million a year; that when there are a million people in the San Joaquin Valley there will be something like 120,000,000 people in the United States, and crowding 150,000,000 on the North American continent. The branch railroads will be extended. The train service will be much improved. The better markets will be much more accessible and the marketing of the products of California soils much easier and less expensive than at present. The Panama Canal will be open, giving us access to the markets of our Eastern States at less cost, and opening up new markets all through Western Europe.

We Are Showing No Favors.

The San Joaquin Valley is selected for these comments, not with any invidious thought in mind nor because of any interest had there by The Times or friends of this journal. The comment of the newspaper is generally founded upon some interest of the moment. The banquet at Hollywood called forth the remarks. The

possibilities of the San Joaquin Valley are dwelt upon here not because there is anything exclusive about that valley. It is the largest body of fine land within easy reach of Los Angeles, developed mainly by Los Angeles capital, furnishing our markets with its products and inter-related with this city by many ties of trade. That is all. We have had to say and will have to say similar things about the great Imperial Valley on this side of the Colorado, and about the bottom lands on the other side in Arizona, where a budding empire is coming forth with promise of a very great future. We might come closer home and dwell upon smaller bodies of land as good as any in any valley in the State or out of it. But we cannot cover the whole of California every week. The reader may project his thoughts here, there and yonder throughout the southern part of the State and over into the farming lands in Arizona and build up pictures by his own mind where he will see many Corcorans springing from the wilderness and becoming promising, prosperous, growing communities in spaces of time measured by a few years. It is the opinion of the Fact and Comment writer that there be before us from five to ten years, beginning from today, of the greatest growth in population, the greatest progress in development, the greatest prosperity in the accumulation of wealth, we have ever known here yet, and one of the most astonishing periods of growth and development the world has ever known.