

APPENDIX

“ Our own people, whose mineral resources will by that time have greatly diminished, must find themselves thrown back upon the soil for a living. If continued abuse of the land should mark the next fifty years as it has the last, what must be our outlook? . . . Not only the economic but the political future is involved. No people ever felt the want of work or the pinch of poverty for a long time without reaching out violent hands against their political institutions, believing that they might find in a change some relief from their distress. Although there have been moments of such restlessness in our country, the trial has never been so severe or so prolonged as to put us to the test. It is interesting that one of the ablest men in England during the last century, a historian of high merit, a statesman who saw active service, and a profound student of men and things, put on record his prophecy of such a future ordeal. Writing to an American correspondent fifty years ago, Lord Macaulay used these words :

“ As long as you have a boundless extent of fertile and unoccupied land your labouring population will be found more at ease than the labouring population of the Old World ; but the time will come when wages will be as low and will fluctuate as much with you as they do with us. Then your institutions will be brought to the test. Distress everywhere makes the labourer mutinous and discontented and inclines him to listen with eagerness to agitators who tell him that

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it is a monstrous iniquity that one man should have a million and another cannot get a full meal. . . . The day will come when the multitude of people, none of whom has had more than half a breakfast or expects to have more than half a dinner, will choose a legislature. Is it possible to doubt what sort of legislature will be chosen? . . . There will be, I fear, spoliation. The spoliation will increase the distress; the distress will produce fresh spoliation. . . . Either civilization or liberty will perish. Either some Caesar or Napoleon will seize the reins of government with a strong hand, or your Republic will be as fearfully plundered and laid waste by barbarians in the twentieth century as the Roman Empire in the fifth."

"We need not accept this gloomy picture too literally, but we have been already sufficiently warned to prevent us from dismissing the subject as unworthy of attention. Every nation finds its hour of peril when there is no longer free access to the land, or when the land will no longer support the people. Disturbances within are more to be feared than attacks from without. Our Government is built upon the assumption of a fairly contented, happy, and prosperous people, ruling their passions, with power to change their institutions when such change is generally desired. It would not be strange if they should in their desire for change attempt to pull down the pillars of their national temple. Far may this day be from us! But since the unnecessary destruction of our land will bring new conditions of danger, its conservation, its improvement to the highest point of productivity promised by scientific intelligence and practical experiment, appears to be a first command of any political economy worthy of the name."—JAMES J. HILL, *The Natural Wealth of the Land and its Conservation*, Conference of Governors, 1908, Record of Proceedings.

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