

The Japan Times.

TOKYO, WEDNESDAY, OCT. 9, 1907.

EMIGRATION AND COLONIZATION.

A MOVEMENT is afoot, it is reported, to establish a colonization company to be known as Tokyo Imin Kaisha or Oriental Colonization Company with Korea for its chief field of operation, and the project is supported by influential members of both Houses of the Diet and other persons of responsible position. It is said to be the purpose of the promoters to secure tracts of uncultivated arable land in Korea, to colonize them with Japanese farmers and otherwise start various lines of industry by the employment of Japanese labour so as to develop the natural resources of the country. We cannot but heartily endorse the proposal. The extent of land under cultivation in Korea is estimated roughly at 4,411,000 acres and this against the total area of 52,477,000 acres. Making full allowances for mountains and other unworkable lands, it seems obvious that Korea should have room for the inflow of millions of tillers of the soil, especially as the average per square mile population of the country is considerably less than 40 per cent of the average in Japan. Besides the country is fairly rich in natural products and where the land is arable it is said to be quite fertile. And this country is only about a night's voyage from Moji. Where else can there be a more ideal spot for our rapidly increasing population to colonize? The current of colonization by our people should indeed have long since set in, but for the fact that the class from which emigrants come are not those best equipped for the purpose by their own resources. The prospective company proposes to fill the need in the latter respect.

We have recently had occasion to write discouragingly of the work of numerous emigration companies in this country, as their aim is money-making pure and simple, a circumstance which tends for emigrants to be treated like so many articles of

trade. It is true that when the emigrants get work abroad, a portion of their savings generally finds its way into this country; but experience shows what little gained in this way is far outbalanced by the unpleasantness to which their presence in foreign lands leads.

The last named disadvantage might be avoided if emigrants were to be sent to countries where labour is not yet organised. But as we have said above our emigrants are so circumstanced that they can go no where but where work is waiting for them. It so happens that where work is waiting opposition is also facing them, and to support the emigration companies in the face of the opposition is only to complicate our foreign relations. If the diversion of the flow of emigration from one direction to another constitutes a blow to the dignity and prestige of this country we should certainly resist such action most strenuously. But as the fact stands it is only a question of enriching a set of money-making concerns which deal with emigrants as human exports. If, therefore, the real good name of the country is to be maintained these companies should be suppressed, and its true interest demands that the emigrants are colonized in countries where they will become an established influence, instead of remaining a threat to international good feeling. In so far as we understand its object the case is quite different with the colonization company under consideration. The different countries of Europe possess institutions of the kind either as official organizations or private undertakings and the need of their existence is undoubted. That need is even greater with us, faced as we are by the problem of over-population which is fast becoming a pressing one. We presume that the promoters of the concern are moved as much by patriotic motives as by the opportune idea to turn to account the wide extent of lands now lying waste in Korea. The success of their enterprise would contribute to the development of Korea as also largely to the solution of our national problem. Being beneficial both ways we should welcome the early formation of the company.