

Open Rivers to the Interior.

The urgency for the improvement of the Upper Columbia and Snake rivers is so patent that the question does not admit of argument. Free navigation on these two important highways is absolutely essential for the up-building of the tributary country. Just so long as the rivers are closed, the development of the country will be slow. Once the rivers are opened, once there is through connection with the tide-water ports, the development will be tremendous for all the forces that go to make up a great forward movement are here, awaiting the signal, as it were, to go ahead. At the present time the Columbia is navigable from its mouth to Dalles City, by way of the Cascades Lock and Canal, a distance of 190 miles. Between Dalles City and Celilo the river is obstructed for thirteen miles. Between Celilo and the foot of Priest Rapids, a distance of 198 miles, the river is navigable under favorable conditions. The Snake is navigable from Riparia to Lewiston, a distance of 73 miles, and under favorable conditions, from Riparia to its mouth, a distance of 67 miles. With some improvement, the cost of which would be justified by the area that would be served, and its industries, the Columbia could be made freely navigable from Dalles City to the foot of Priest Rapids, a distance of 210 miles, and the Snake for the 140 miles of its course from its mouth to Lewiston. This would add 350 miles to the navigable waters of the Columbia and its tributaries. It would open a natural trade route for all of Northern Oregon, all of Southern Washington and the greater part of Eastern Washington, and nearly all of Western Idaho, particularly the rich Lewiston region. Some ill-informed persons have insisted that because no vast development of country, and no large increase of river carriers followed the opening of the locks at the Cascades, the government would not be warranted in spending the amount of money that would be required to make navigation free on the Upper Columbia and Snake. This is a narrow view to take of so important a project and one that has no foundation in fact. Prior to the completion of the Cascade Locks, the Columbia between the mouth of the Willamette and Dalles City, was navigable for all the distance that it is now navigable except the short stretch obstructed at the Cascades. In 1891 the state of Oregon built a portage railway around the Cascades obstruction and operated it until the government opened the locks in 1896. The portage railway gave the producers of the district tributary to Dalles City, the relief that they had long sought—water transportation for their products. The locks gave the same relief to the same region, but in greater degree, in that government service made an end of cargo breaking at the portage. Of the two reaches of the Columbia that are divided by the Dalles-Celilo obstructions—the stretch westward from Celilo to the Cascades, and the stretch eastward from Celilo—the last named is by far the more important. For it is not westward from Dalles City to the Cascades that the great food-producing fields of the Inland Empire lie, but eastward of Dalles City, in the region up to the foot of Priest Rapids on the Columbia, and up to Lewiston on the Snake. *Let's—in Oregon, Washington and*

Idaho, will originate the bulk of the traffic that will come down the Columbia when it is a free river. The Cascade Locks opened only 31 miles of river between the Cascades and Dalles City. The overcoming of the obstructions at Celilo would open 850 miles of river. This is the difference between the two projects. To bring about the opening of the Columbia and the Snake, the business men of Portland will have to unite in their own behalf and join hands with the producers and merchants of the Inland Empire.

Panama a Gold Brick.

The wonder is not that the new Panama Canal Company fell from \$110,000,000 to \$40,000,000, but that so many members of congress seemed inclined to accept the proposition. The Chicago Inter Ocean asks what the \$40,000,000 was to be paid for, and answers:

1. For a concession that binds us to pay the Colombian government \$16,000,000 in rents for the Panama railroad, and, at the very least, \$25,000,000 in rent for a canal that we are to build.
2. For a concession under which it is impossible for an American canal, owned and controlled by the United States, to be operated.
3. For a work on which French engineers spent seven years and \$262,000,000 and gave it up as impracticable after completing only two-fifths of the excavation.
4. For the privilege of trying to complete in eight years for \$200,000,000 a canal which, when completed, would not be under our control.
5. For antiquated machinery, which would be thrown aside for modern machinery similar to that used in constructing the Chicago drainage canal.
6. For the right to construct a canal on a route rejected by a score of American engineers and condemned as impracticable.

Portions of these specifications seem to be exaggerated. For example, the route, The Telegram thinks, has not been "rejected by a score of American engineers as impracticable." It is only difficult; so, for that matter, is the Nicaragua route.

As to the sums mentioned to be paid for rents and a concession to the Colombian government, it is not clear that the Chicago paper has the figures down just right, but they will serve, if even true in large part, to show what a gold brick the advocates of Panama are endeavoring to induce Uncle Sam to buy. In any event, when the matter is looked into, the economy of buying the Panama ruins is not apparent.

The American people have repeatedly declared for the Nicaragua Canal; the engineers and commissions have all reported in favor of the Nicaragua canal; the house, knowing that the eyes of the people were upon it, passed the Nicaragua canal bill by an almost unanimous vote, and the senate, though it will debate and deliberate and dully, will scarcely dare either to defeat the Nicaragua bill or to substitute Panama.—Telegram.

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