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IRRIGATION SENTIMENT.

Government Construction of Reservoirs the only Practical Method.

The session of Congress just closed showed more live, practical interest in irrigation work for the West than any previous Congress in its history, and it appears to be a fact that public men are waking up to the possibilities of developing the West through this means, and also that the development of the West will benefit every eastern interest. Although the attempt to secure a governmental appropriation for the building of reservoirs was finally defeated, yet the Senate, by its vote has committed itself in favor of the policy, and the fight for the recognition of western rights will be vigorously prosecuted in the next Congress. Moreover, some very interesting facts have been brought to light upon the subject in the Senate and House, and eastern men have learned a good deal about irrigation.

For the information of Senators in this connection a resolution was passed directing the Secretary of Interior to furnish a general statement of the origin, character, and extent of the surveys of reservoir sites made by the U. S. Geological Survey, with brief memoranda as to present conditions of water storage and the more important facts, in each large hydrographic basin, with a summary of estimates as to probable costs of constructing dams etc.

In response to this Dr. F. H. Newell, the Government Hydrographer, submitted a report upon reservoir surveys, which was printed as Senate Document No. 116, 55th Congress, 2d session. While Mr. Newell's report comprises only about twenty pages, it contains such a comprehensive and able account of surveys of reservoir sites as to be highly valuable to interested parties.

Although comparatively little has been done in the construction of reservoirs by private enterprise and no Government work whatever has been undertaken in this line yet the value of the surveys made and the withdrawal of these sites from public entry against the time when they will be utilized as reservoirs is apparent. Whether dams are to be constructed by individuals, by States, or by the national Government, the value of the knowledge arising from these surveys is equally great. They enable each citizen to determine for himself where reservoir sites exist, and, in a general way, whether a dam can be constructed to advantage. Although, as stated, a large number of these sites have been accurately surveyed, in but a comparatively few instances have dams been constructed and are reservoir now supplying the needed water to lands under irrigation. This is

true particularly of the more valuable of the sites.

One fact, Mr. Newell states has come prominently forward during the last ten years, since the inauguration of the reservoir work, and that is that water storage on a large scale can rarely be made profitable to individuals or corporations: Water conservation is expensive at best, and existing conditions, laws, and customs are such that the person who builds a dam on the headwaters of a stream is seldom in a position to be benefited financially by the water he impounds. The capitalist who has put his money into such enterprises have involuntarily become philanthropists—benefactors of their fellow-men, but not gainers themselves to a notable degree. The community as a whole has been unquestionably enriched, directly or indirectly, to an extent many times the first cost of the works, but these benefits cannot redound wholly to the constructors.

The one great demand, Mr. Newell states in his report, of the western half of the United States is for more water during the times of scarcity. This has been particularly accentuated by the draughts of 1898, when millions of dollars were lost through lack of ordinary supply. Could these losses have been put into the form of works for conserving flood water, they would doubtless have repaid the cost of all such work. Such losses are far-reaching, and they are, moreover, of such character that only the community as a whole is competent to guard against them, individual or even corporate action not being possible. Testimony generally goes to show that the Government, either State or National, must provide means by which disasters of this kind, as well as floods, may in the future be avoided. Their control is not possible for the individual.

The Government, too, is better conditioned to build suitable and safe dams than are individuals or private investment enterprises. With an ample building fund available the constructor would look to stability and thoroughness of workmanship; if limited in capital he would adopt the cheaper devices and assume certain risks, with the thought that from year to year the temporary imperfections could be remedied, until a time when the project became a paying one and larger funds might be obtainable. In the first case he might, and probably would, construct the dam of solid masonry; in the second, he might make it of loose rock or even largely of wood a dirt, with the intention of renewing parts in five or ten years, whenever portions of material showed signs of decay. A cloud-burst or general storm may send down a flood of such dimensions as to fill the reservoir and overtop the dam, washing it away if of earth, as was the case at the time of Johnson's flood. The Sweet-water dam of Southern California

is an example of such substantial construction and practical indestructibility that water can pour over the top without damage to it.

With Government construction, then, dams would be erected which while entailing a greater original cost, would from the first be safe, substantial, and in the end prove cheaper than any private or temporary work.

A Big Battle Expected Soon.

New York, March 24.—A dispatch to the World from Manila says: The rebels are heavily massed in the trenches opposite our lines on the north. This evidently comes from a belief on the part of Aguinaldo that a blow is to be struck very soon at Malolos, their capital.

Prisoners who have been brought in within the last 24 hours say that the rebels have the "last ditch" feeling and will make the most desperate stand they have yet taken. The second line of defense occupied by the rebel forces, is between San Mateo and Manggaliches. There are rows of trenches there and the advance of our troops can only be step by step with a resistance to be expected at every trench.

The weather now is most favorable and there are only 85 men reported in the hospital.

The troops under general McArthur holding the strong lines to the north are provided with shelter to keep off the sun and as they have no marching to do and are not exposed, they are generally very healthy.

REBELS ACTIVE.

Manila, March 24, noon.—The enemy is extremely active in the vicinity of Malolos, preparing defenses evidently anticipating an attack. They keep well under cover. A small body of rebels, however, emerged from the jungle on the extreme left and fired on the Kansas troops in the trenches, fatally wounding Privates Cohen and Murr.

The Oregon volunteers and the Twenty second infantry marched to the front today. The Third and Seventh regulars have disembarked from the Sherman. General H. G. Otis' brigade struck their tents this morning and an early move is probable.

Sixteen English regulars arrived here yesterday from Dagupan the railroad terminus, on board the steamer Saturnus. They report that natives are generally friendly and the officers invariably courteous. Mr. Curtis, manager of the railroad, and a dozen unmarried men in charge of various business interests, decline to take advantage of the opportunity to leave.

Nothing has been heard from the two American planters at Calumpit since hostilities began. According to Filipino accounts 1000 Americans have been killed, the fatalities being especially heavy

at Caloscan, where the United States troops "rushed like madmen against a storm of bullets."

WILL FIGHTS AT MALABON.

Manila, March 24, 5 p. m.—Two Spanish prisoners who have escaped from Polo to the lines of the Kansas regiment report that the Filipinos have concentrated their forces at Malabon and Polo. They add that only Aguinaldo's body guard is at Malolos and that the rebels leaders apparently intend to stake their fortunes at Malabon where it was expected an engagement would take place yesterday. If defeated it is further asserted, the rebels intend to disperse to the swamps and mountains.

The rebels were putting their holes in front, believing that the bullets' charms will avert the bullets. The holes of the Filipinos greatly outnumbered the rifle in their hands.

The rebels are further said to have admitted that they cannot stand the Americans' shells and bayonet charges.

The escaped Spanish corroborated the stories told of food shortage among the rebels and they also added that the hospitals are short of supplies.

Miss Viola Allen, the "star" of Hall Caine's dramatization of his popular novel, "The Christian," has always aspired to be an author. She has said that there are two things which she would rather do than act: write a book, or be a trained nurse. She will now make her literary debut in an article which she has written for The Ladies Home Journal, reciting and explaining fully "What the Life of an Actress Means."

Schley in the navy and Wheeler in the army are both upon their defense before the Government and the country. To do one's duty and to do it well seems to be a dangerous thing.

In April Miss Mary E. Wilkins' latest story, "The Jamesons in the Country," which is now running serially in The Ladies Home Journal, will be published in book form by the Doubleday & McClure Company, of New York.

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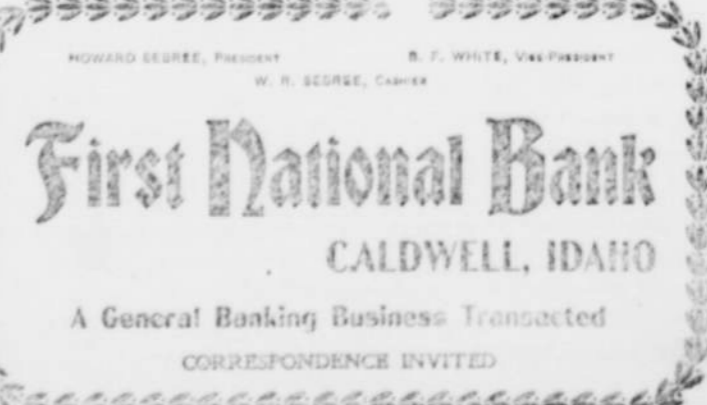
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