

SEEK NATIONAL AID

National Irrigation Congress and Its Purposes—Uncle Sam Owns Much Reclaimable Land—Advantage of Having Work Done by Government—Great Desert a Thing of the Past

Special Correspondence.

Chicago, Nov. 27.—Nature has done very much for the United States in giving to us so large a variety of climate and soil, and inventive man has done much in improving the natural opportunities that he scattered so profusely over most sections of our country. Much, however, still remains to be accomplished, and it is the purpose of the National Irrigation congress, just held here, to see that some of it is done.

The United States still owns nearly 1,000,000 square miles of unoccupied territory outside of Alaska and the newly acquired lands. Most of this has been rejected by settlers because of its aridity, but so far as the soil is concerned nothing is lacking to make it fruitful but a plentiful supply of water. Those interested in irrigation—and they are many—who have been gathered here believe that this can be supplied and have devoted their time to discussing the ways and means.

Although the subject of irrigation has attracted some attention in a few of the Eastern States, the land where it is needed lies chiefly in the West. It must be understood that the trouble with this arid land does not lie in many localities in a lack of rainfall. There is a sufficiency of the latter, but the nature of the soil does not permit of its retention. From this and other causes the arid region is almost without lakes or other natural reservoirs. The topography of the country is, however, such that the construction of artificial reservoirs would be comparatively easy if undertaken under proper direction and supervision.

In many instances the arid land of the West has been reclaimed and made fertile by irrigation secured by private individuals and corporations. The disadvantage to the nation at large is that this important work to be done by private parties is that they thereby secure control of the water supply. They then forever afterward hold the key to the future of the country, only to their immediate benefit, the work is not done as well as if carried out by the government on a comprehensive, well balanced plan. Private irrigation

is apt to become a monopoly and the preservation of forests. Unless the work of irrigation is done by the government, local state or national, it is more apt to be a hindrance than a benefit to a locality. For this reason those interested in irrigation are seeking the aid of the national government.

Both of the great parties in their national platforms are committed to the support of measures looking to the extension of the department of agriculture has already done much work in the way of preliminary surveys of reservoir sites and forest preservation. It is hardly necessary to explain that the preservation of forests exercises a correspondingly beneficial effect on the water supply of a region.

The arid region of the United States lies in Arizona, southern California, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming and the portions of Oregon and Washington lying east of the Cascade range. It is much smaller than formerly, for there have been thousands of attempts, more or less successful, at irrigation and the sinking of artesian wells.

The motto of the irrigation congress is "Save the forests and store the floods." The circular which was sent to the forty delegates reads: "The magic touch of water will work this transformation. The conservation of the water supplies must therefore be first accomplished. The forests, which are nature's storage reservoirs, must be preserved and the waters that now go to waste in destructive floods must be stored in great reservoirs and saved for beneficial use. The national government is the only agency through which this can be accomplished."

The program of the congress, though ambitious, bids fair to be fully carried out. The work is clearly one of necessity and will amply repay the government for the time and labor expended on it. The Great American desert, the bugbear of early travelers, is already to a large extent a matter of memory, and if the plans of the congress are carried out it will become entirely so. The successful experiments in irrigation when carefully done by private parties assure success by the government.

FORTUNES IN SINGLE GOLD NUGGETS.

Probably the largest piece of gold ever seen in one lump was the giant nugget received at the assay office, in Wall street, a few days ago from a mining company. It was in the shape of a cone, standing about two feet high, containing over 750 pounds of the yellow metal and valued at \$154,000. Four men carried it with difficulty.

Nevertheless, some very large chunks of gold have been picked up in various parts of the world at different times—lumps formed by nature, and not composed, like the one above mentioned, by melting together the yield of thousands of tons of crushed rock. For some reason not well understood Australia has been the chief producer of great nuggets, and nearly all of the exceptionally large masses of the precious metal in a "native state" have been found in that part of the world. Also, the Australian nuggets have been noted for their purity, many of them running over twenty-three carats "fine," while some of them have been of almost absolute purity—the virgin stuff—that is to say, with hardly any appreciable alloy.

For example, the "Welcome" nugget, which was the largest on record, weighing 235 ounces and valued at \$41,000, was 99.2 per cent pure gold. It was found, in 1858, at the diggings of Ballarat, in Australia, under rather peculiar circumstances. The proprietors of a "hole" had gone away to lunch, leaving a hired man digging with a pick axe. Suddenly the pick struck something. The workman dug around it to see what it was, and then he fainted dead away. Presently the owners returned, and seeing the man lying in the hole they thought he was dead. One of them jumped in, turned him over to see what was the matter with him, and then he fainted also. Both of them were dragged out, and immediately digging was wildly begun for the nugget, which lay partly exposed. The mass was so great that at first they supposed they had come upon a reef of pure gold. It was discovered the greatest of all nuggets, and the discovery it attracted was so great that the finders sold it in Ballarat for \$52,500—considerably more than it was worth. After being exhibited for a time in Australia it was sent to Europe, and was finally melted. The "Precious," weighing 171 ounces and valued at \$30,340, was found at the Berlin diggings, was also the "Viscount Canterbury," which tipped the scales at 116 ounces and was 23 carats fine. Another great nugget, weighing 84 ounces and valued at \$16,000, was picked up in the same neighborhood and called the "Viscount Canterbury." The "Matthew Bar" was found at a place of that name in New South Wales, and weighed 34 ounces, containing 312 ounces of gold. Its value was \$4,120.

Two of the largest nuggets found in

Australia fell to Chinamen, from whom they took their names. One of these was the "Kum Toon," weighing 715 ounces and worth \$113,000. It came from the Berlin diggings, and the finders, the "Kum Toon," which weighed only 249 ounces in weight, sold for \$5,000, being very pure. Another Berlin nugget, weighing 246 ounces and brought \$4,500.

The Donnelly diggings, in Victoria, yielded some of the largest nuggets on record, one of which was the "Schlemm," weighing 538 ounces, but containing 90 ounces of quartz. It was dug up July 18, 1872, three feet below the surface of the ground. The "Schlemm No. 2," from the same neighborhood, was 487 ounces and sold for \$5,000. One of the most beautiful of nuggets, being almost perfectly pure gold, was the "Platypus," which was discovered March 5, 1861, in a pillar of earth in a deserted claim—one of the freaks which serve to illustrate the essentially gambling quality of gold hunting.

A nugget, which is claimed by some authorities to have been at least equal in size to the "Welcome," was found near Dunolly February 15, 1869, by two men named Richard Oates and John De 372, three feet below the surface of the ground. The "Schlemm No. 2," from the same neighborhood, was 487 ounces and sold for \$5,000. One of the most beautiful of nuggets, being almost perfectly pure gold, was the "Platypus," which was discovered March 5, 1861, in a pillar of earth in a deserted claim—one of the freaks which serve to illustrate the essentially gambling quality of gold hunting.

The largest nugget ever found in California was unearthed near the famous Camp Corona by a disheveled young fellow named Martin, while digging a grave for a companion who had been drowned. At a depth of two feet he struck the mass of yellow metal, which he was unable to carry to the camp, although it weighed only eighty pounds. Afterward he sold it for \$27,000, and was sensible enough to give up liquor from that time on, becoming an industrious miner. He died at New Orleans not long ago, having earned a fortune in the mining business and being rated a millionaire. If a bit of rock be thickly interlarded with gold veins and the rocky substance be dissolved away, the mass is left in a form known to miners as "mosaic gold," which is occasionally discovered in masses nearly a foot in diameter.

ONLY A SKIRMISH.

"Ready? I was not going to wait much longer."

"Sorry! I shall be later than you will. I have half a mile to go after I have dropped you, and I know the Vennekers expect me to be punctual."

The porter at Blossingham Chambers had a hansom at the door, and they got into it quickly and drove off—two men who had lived together for ten years and knew each other well enough to do without conversation on trivial topics. After a minute or two, however, one of them became unusually talkative. "Saw an old name of yours today, Dick."

"So did I."

"The dance you did? The Vennekers used to know her, didn't they? I don't know the girl till I got sick of her last season without asking all their friends. You'll meet her there tonight."

"Dick Venneker," said his friend, "you're a sensitive wretch. I suppose you worried me with your lamentations over the girl till I got sick of her last season without asking all their friends. You'll meet her there tonight."

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