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GOSSIP.

THE BIGGEST DITCH IN AMERICA.

"I stopped at Calgary, just in the eastern shadow of the Canadian Rockies, to see the digging of the biggest irrigation project in America, excelled only by one in India and one in Egypt," writes Mark Sullivan in "The Boston Transcript." "I expected to see an army of men with shovels, and saw not one shovel. Instead, three colossal steam giants, with monstrous arms, which dipped down, took a huge bite out of the earth, rose slowly and dropped the earth to one side. Dipping and biting, these three machines advance just about 100 feet a day, leaving in their wake a ditch which is the size of a small river, sixty feet wide and from twelve to twenty feet deep. This ditch begins at the river, and crawls in a curving course some thing over a score of miles into the country. The biggest irrigation ditch on the continent is simplicity itself. There is nothing complicated about an irrigation plant. It's just an old-fashioned mill race on a big scale. You tap the river at a high level, run your ditch along that level, with just the slightest drop that will make the water flow at Then from the big ditch you run smaller lateral ditches, and from these still smaller ones, till every few acres has its little rivulet. The ditch at Calgary will supply an area of about 150 by 50 miles, and water nearly 2,000,000 acres-more territory than is included in some Eastern States. When the work is done-but what irrigation will do for a semi-arid country, is an old story. And yet, just the elements of it may bear retelling. Farming with irrigation is as different from ordinary farming as hothouse gardening is from raising wheat. Farming with irrigation comes very close to being an operation in chemistry. You have your sunlight, you have your soil, in fixed quantities and of known chemical constituents. You add your water in quantities as needed. And if you wish, you can put fertilizing elements, salts of potash, for example, in your water, and then farming is a matter of chemistry, indeed. And the results to the farmer are as different as a chemist's operations must be from the results to a farmer who lets the caprices of the weather govern the supply of one of his principal ingredients. If a piece of ground which depends for water on rain will raise a hundred bushels, the same piece irrigated will raise five hundred. Twenty acres irrigated will support a family in ample comfort, and forty acres irrigated is as large a farm as one man can well manage.

When one seeks for the broader significance of this big irrigation project here on the western plains of Canada, one wonders at first why such work should be done at all. Canada has literally millions of acres of fertile land which does not need irrigation. Canada is so rich and prodigal with fertile land that she gives it away-160 acres to any man who will merely settle upon it and improve it. The Canadian Pacific Railway is almost equally rich in land. It has millions of acres which it sells at \$4 and \$6 an acre. Why, then, this costly irrigation of waste land, as if land were scarce? It suggests, instead of the very sparse population, a country that teems with people-a land like India-where every square inch must be utilized, that life may be kept in the people. The explanation made by people here, which may be true, is this: The Canadian Government and the Canadian Pacific Railroad are absolutely sure of Canada's future. They are laying the foundations broad and deep for a population as dense as our own. They are preparing for the time when their free land will be all gone. The situation is like this: Winnipeg, with about eighty thousand, is Canada's Chicago; Vancouver, with about half as many, is Canada's San Francisco. In all the vast country between these two-it takes three days to cover on a railroad train-in all that country there is but one town of over ten thousand people. It is as if we were at home, had no Denver, no Omaha, no Minneapolis, no one of a score of cities. That, in a few decades Canada will have its Denver, its Omaha, its Kansas City, is as certain as the co-operation of Government, railroad and a tremendous stream of eager immigrants that jostle each other for an early chance can make it.

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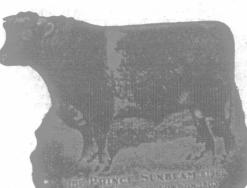
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