

While commending most cordially this project we must declare that the City Council has failed in its duty in this matter. For several years the aldermen have kept up a desultory discussion over this serious matter, the gravity of which, and their responsibility in regard to which they have never realized. The Hospital ought to have been erected by the City long ago and maintained in full efficiency.

Power to spend an adequate sum on such a building should have been obtained from the Quebec Legislature. This journal has repeatedly urged the erection of a contagious diseases Hospital by the City to be a civic institution. The City Council having shirked its manifest duty in this matter it is a source of gratification that a movement has been inaugurated by which the needs of the suffering will be provided by private liberality.

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Expropriations again! The very word is a reproach to this city and the revival of another effort to squander public money by this means is most deplorable. For the scheme projected there is no urgency and little need, while for the better roadways and sidewalks and other civic services there is the most pressing urgency and universally admitted necessity. Why cannot what is absolutely needful be done first, and fanciful, dubious improvements be left over until the finances of the City are better able to bear such a needless additional burthen. Expropriation expenditures always swell enormously beyond original estimates, and the condition of several streets on which expropriation work has been done proves that it is no uncommon result of "improving" a street to seriously decrease its attractions to tenants.

CANADA'S OPPORTUNITY.

THE PUBLIC LANDS OF THE UNITED STATES WILL BE EXHAUSTED IN FIVE YEARS.

The United States Senate Committee on Public Lands last week made a report which contains information of vast importance to the Dominion of Canada. The most significant paragraph of the report reads as follows:—"If our present system of land acts is continued five years longer the entire public domain, suitable for settlement, will be exhausted, and there will be no land left for our people, who desire to make homes upon it."

The United States Government has now but 500,000,000 acres of public lands left to dispose of, and during the first three months of the present fiscal year it disposed of 6,109,000 acres. Much of the land remaining the property of the Government can only be made available for settlement at vast expense for irrigation, and the rate at which it is being taken up is unprecedented. In 1895 eight million acres

were appropriated, in 1899 nine millions, in 1900 fourteen millions, in 1901 sixteen millions, in 1902 twenty millions. (We are indebted to the New York "Herald" for the figures). The rapid increase indicates the public realization of the fact that the period in which "Uncle Sam is rich enough to give us all a farm" is drawing to a close. From the prediction of the Senate Committee that all the lands available for homes will be exhausted in five years it may be inferred that a large proportion of the 500,000,000 acres is composed of arid land much of which can never be made available for settlement. This might also be inferred from the fact that over a third of the entire area of the United States publicly and privately owned is composed of naturally barren lands. Some 7,500,000 acres have been reclaimed by irrigation and it is said that from seventy to a hundred million acres more may be reclaimed by a great expenditure of money. But the greater part by far of the 1,300,000 square miles of arid lands in the United States will never pay for irrigation.

The facts as indicated by the report show that a period of keen and unscrupulous competition for the possession of the remaining public domain has commenced. That Congress will take steps to save some of these lands from falling into the hands of the great capitalists, speculators and ranchers, is naturally to be expected; but if experience is anything to go by, it will tax all the ingenuity of Congress to reserve any considerable proportion of these lands for the benefit of actual settlers.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance to Canada of the information contained in this report. To Canadians it matters very little what disposition Congress may make, or attempt to make, of the 500,000,000 acres; the significant fact is that within a very short time the United States Government will have no public lands to bestow upon settlers, capitalists, or ranchers. The effect must be to cause a rush to Canada's crown lands. As a matter of fact something like a rush has already commenced. Whatever extra restrictions are devised by Congress will only have the effect of increasing the immediate demand for Canadian lands. Whatever public money may be appropriated for irrigation purposes will add so much to the price of land in the United States and will make the free homesteads of the Canadian Northwest by comparison so much the more attractive. For colonization purposes the United States is nearly filled up and the Senate Committee's report marks the commencement of Canada's great opportunity. Judiciously administered the crown lands of Canada held by the Federal and Provincial Governments should produce enough money to pay off the Federal and Provincial debts and enormously develop those transportation facilities