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NEW RIVER COUNTRY

What Is Actually Being Done on the Desert.

THE IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

E. J. Swayne Talks of the Imperial Country and its Wonderful Possibilities

Under the above caption the San Diegan Sun publishes a series of letters from the pen of Mr. E. J. Swayne, who, with Mr. H. P. Wood, represented San Diego in the editorial party which visited the Colorado desert recently and investigated the soil of this country and the work being done to place water upon it. We make the following extracts from Mr. Swayne's letter under date of April 15:

"For many years past there has been awakening in the minds of some far-seeing men an interest in that portion of our country located in California, east of the coast range and immediately north of the Mexican line, and known as the Colorado desert. These men, beginning with Dr. O. M. Wozen-craft, as far back as 1856, have persistently declared that it was feasibly to place a great portion of these so-called desert lands under a good state of cultivation, by flowing upon them the waters of the Colorado river.

"Men come to the front, plan and begin to work out great undertakings, and are often thwarted by uncontrollable conditions, or called hence. Thus, as in this case, for many years the undertakings sleep. Men think ahead of their time, and endeavor sometimes to foster enterprises that belong to a future generation, the conditions not being ripe in their own.

"It has not been until within a few years that this great undertaking has been again revived. The time is undoubtedly ripe, and the men who, by their progress, have shown their capability, are now in the field. Such has been the progress that the people generally are seeking a deeper knowledge of the matter.

"The newspaper is, or ought to be, the conductor of information for the public good. It was, therefore, conceived that if a large number of representatives of the press should make a thorough inspection of this enterprise, a widespread knowledge of it might be had earlier than by any other process. The plan was adopted, and it was a jolly-good party of fifteen who met at the Arcade depot at 2 o'clock on the 8th inst., to make the trip—not only to inspect the great work of canal construction, but to examine, as well, the lands proposed to be irrigated.

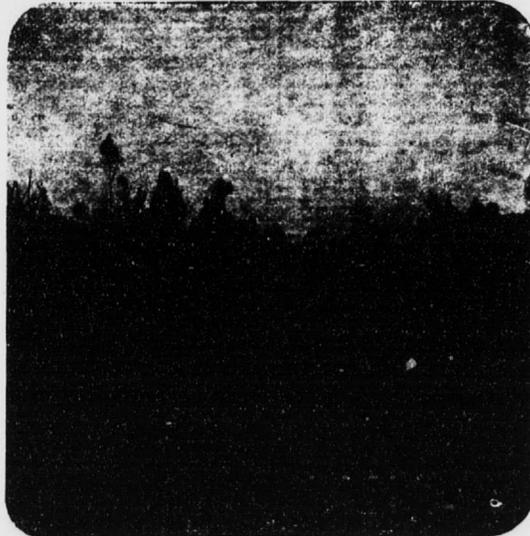
"As true Californians, indeed as true Americans, many of our people are seeking more complete information concerning these enterprises which are operating at our very door, and within our own county. No community should be more aroused concerning these developments than should the people of San Diego county and particularly the citizens of San Diego. To no part of

Southern California are the facts and workings of these companies as important as they are to our own people. Some of us have, it is true, in person and by representatives, been investigating the merits of the New River country, but such investigations have been quite limited to date. The time is surely ripe for a more critical examination of this enterprise, and this is the purpose of your two San Diego representatives."

The Intake of the Canal

Mr. Swayne continues his narrative of the Imperial country in the Sun of the 16th, from which we take the following extracts:

"Let it be understood that the rise and fall of the Colorado river are such that the ordinary provisions for an intake of water into the canal would be useless. There is, fortunately, at this point a bluff through which the permanent opening into the canal will be



IMPERIAL CANAL—in Lower California

cut, a temporary one being now used, coming in from below.

"Another feature of this heading of great importance must here be dealt with. Many persons have condemned the use of the waters of the Colorado to be carried any great distance through canals, because said water is impregnated with sediment or silt and would soon fill up any canal. It is not to be denied that these waters are heavily charged with silt and this very fact has caused a scientific study of and an adoption of a plan to overcome this objection.

"The plan adopted entailed a great expense, but is being constructed in a most substantial and painstaking manner, and consists of a series of large settling basins, through which the water passes into the canal.

"It is remarkable how quickly the heavier silt precipitates when the water is relieved of the momentum of the river. Of course, these settling basins would soon fill with the canal in full activity, but to relieve them a huge hydraulic dredger has been constructed, and is now in operation forcing

this deposit out over the banks to find its way back to the Colorado.

"True, the silt does not all settle; the finer particles flow on down the canal, and fortunately so, as, instead of a nuisance this fine silt pays out a two-fold blessing to the water taker. It furnishes (according to actual tests made by Mr. Blaisdell, a successful farmer living below Yuma) some \$3.40 worth of fertilizer to every acre foot of water, and in time lines the ditches, so that a large proportion of the absorption is prevented."

The Water Supply

From Mr. Swayne's third letter, published on the 18th, we take the following paragraphs:

"Before leaving Yuma, I must answer a very important inquiry, frequently made—'is there a sufficient water supply for this great undertaking?' Every vestige of doubt on this subject has been absolutely removed

Well, I am pleased to tell you, as it was for the critical examination of the lands and water system that we were on the journey. For three miles after leaving Flowingwell, the land is sandy, and such lands as we are accustomed to class "desert land," and such land as I expected to find covering a very large area of this vast plain. For this reason I have been critical as to the result of pouring water upon such ground. I soon found my impressions erroneous, as, with the exception of the Salton river bed (a narrow channel), the remaining 25 miles south to Imperial was over land mostly of good character and requiring little work to bring it under cultivation.

"I cannot pass from here without first making reference to one Mr. W. F. Holt, a man of money from Globe, Arizona. Mr. Holt came here some months ago, canvassed the situation critically, saw the evident outcome, grasped his opportunity, and is hard at work building for ultimate success. He has almost completed a telephone line along the railroad three miles to Flowingwell, and across the desert 28 miles to Imperial; has a stock of merchandise in the said new city, and purposes a bank just as soon as the case will warrant. Such as he are the men who make a prosperous country, and who leave the snails to spin around in a circle and end where they started."

The Soil is Deep and Rich

We take the following extracts from Mr. Swayne's fourth letter, published in the Sun the 20th:

"As our party goes forward, surprises great and small are of daily occurrence. The great proposition (a word so familiar to California) grows in magnitude and importance as we continue our investigations. The vast amount of fertile soil, deep and rich, ready for the plow, requiring little or no preparation, and practically graded for irrigation, is among the surprises.

"The territory to be irrigated is simply immense; 500,000 acres is said to be a conservative estimate of the good land in our own county under this system of irrigation. Some of your readers will ask, 'is there not a great quantity of sandy waste?' The amount is surprisingly small.

"The second day of our travel by team covered some 45 miles. It is safe to state that 35 miles of this trip covered territory first class in character, and upon the major portion of which there is no sand or grit. I believe there is a much less number of waste acres to the square miles on the desert, south from Flowingwell, in San Diego county, than there is in the county between the coast range and the sea, and that it averages better in quality. It costs comparatively little to possess this land with a permanent and an abundant supply of water.

"In 1867 I crossed by team from the Missouri river to the Rocky mountains over what was then called the "Great American Plains." The name has passed from use, as the major portion of that great territory has been transformed from a seeming desert plain to agricultural and horticultural districts. I look as surely toward the early transformation of the so-called desert in our own county.

"In the former case, much of the territory is today dependent upon rains, which sometimes fail. In the latter case, there is water abundant and to spare, and every purchaser under the system can have four feet deep upon every acre he buys, if he wants it."

from my mind. Why? The Colorado river, now at its minimum, is 9 feet deep by about 200 feet wide. About the first of May it annually begins to rise, reaching its maximum depth of some 20 feet, with a greatly increased width, in August, then receding until October. The capacity of the great Imperial canal, with its volume of water at the intake 45 feet wide and 6 feet deep, coupled with the two Arizona canals, cannot carry one-twentieth of even the surplus flow. The river is at its highest when the most water is needed. It is simply needless to question the supply of water.

"Imperial city is 28 miles south by 5 miles west from the Southern Pacific railroad at Flowingwell. It is new, necessarily small as yet, but inviting. Contains hotel, with separate eating house, store, blacksmith shop, three cottages, lumber on the ground for a church, and a printing establishment, from which the first "IMPERIAL PRESS" will issue on April 20th.

"What character of land did we pass over on this 28-mile drive to Imperial?"