

MOUNT VERNON ARGUS.

December 10, 1909

LESSONS OF THE FLOOD.

The individual losses of the flood were its most pathetic features. Instances where the industry, frugality, self-denial and savings of a lifetime were swept away in a night. In the aggregate the losses to a county of such marvelous wealth-producing capacity as Skagit will, in a brief period of years be restored. There was no loss of human life. Soon the wreck of a night will be cleared away and with renewed courage a determined and resourceful people will undertake the task of restoring the productive capacity of the farm to its former efficiency. Invaluable lessons have been furnished by the flood. Lessons learned at a frightful cost. The lordly Skagit with its stupendous destructive possibilities cannot be removed. Yet it could be confined and the danger of a flood during high water periods could be practically eliminated. It is surely an engineering problem that ought easily to be solved. If during an excessively high water period there were a hundred million gallons of water poured down through the valley from the mountain reservoirs, and the natural basin of the river and its outlets could only carry away fifty million gallons, the surplus water is bound to find an outlet, and the moment the river banks are insufficient to accommodate the increased water flow, from that moment could be marked the beginning of a flood. If nature or man could provide sufficient sources of outlet to carry to the sea all of the surplus water that accumulates during a freshet, floods and the disastrous consequences of floods could be averted. Were these spillways or artificial basins

available during excessive high water periods dikes would be unnecessary.

The problem of controlling the flood waters of the Skagit is purely an engineering one. The engineer has figured out far more difficult problems. It ought not to be a question of impotent speculation. We all have theories. Some are doubtless good while others are impracticable.

The government has in progress the improvement of the river. The improvement contemplates the widening, deepening and straightening of the channel of the river. This will materially increase the capacity of the river to carry a greater quantity of flood water during flood periods. Yet it is seriously to be doubted if the river could then discharge the enormous volume of surplus water that demands an outlet during a freshet.

Millions are invested in the farms of the Skagit delta. The duty of protecting these farms from the ravages of a flood transcends in importance all other local public obligations. The future security of life, property and the general welfare of the community demand that the floodgates of the Cascades be controlled without unnecessary delay.