James Stanley Emery speeches

Section 26, Pages 751 - 780

Several addresses written and given by James Stanley Emery. He spoke to a number of audiences at Kansas universities and clubs on religion, history, and other similar topics. James Stanley Emery was born in Franklin County, Maine in 1826. Educated at Waterville College, he was admitted to the bar in New York in 1854. Involved with the New England Emigrant Aid Company, Emery came to Kansas with the second party of immigrants to ensure that it became an anti-slavery state when it entered the Union. He worked in numerous states for the cause through the following years. Emery was a member of the Leavenworth constitutional convention and served on the Kansas Legislature in 1862 and 1863. He was a lawyer and also worked as a journalist for the New York Daily Times. President Abraham Lincoln appointed Emery U.S. District Attorney for Kansas in 1864. In 1891 he was president of the Kansas State Historical Society. Emery died in Lawrence in 1899.

Creator: Emery, James S., 1826-1899

Date: 1876-1897

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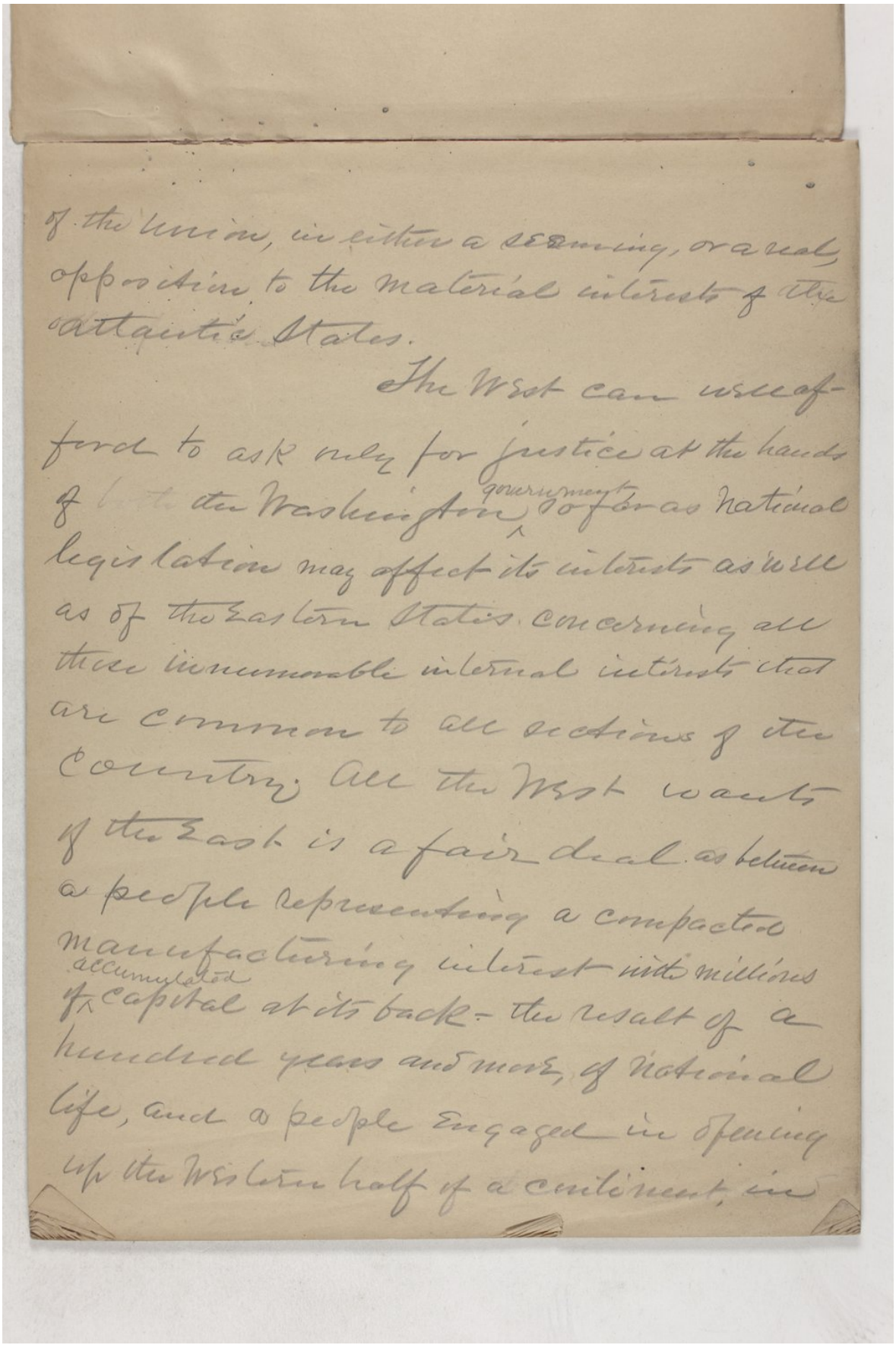
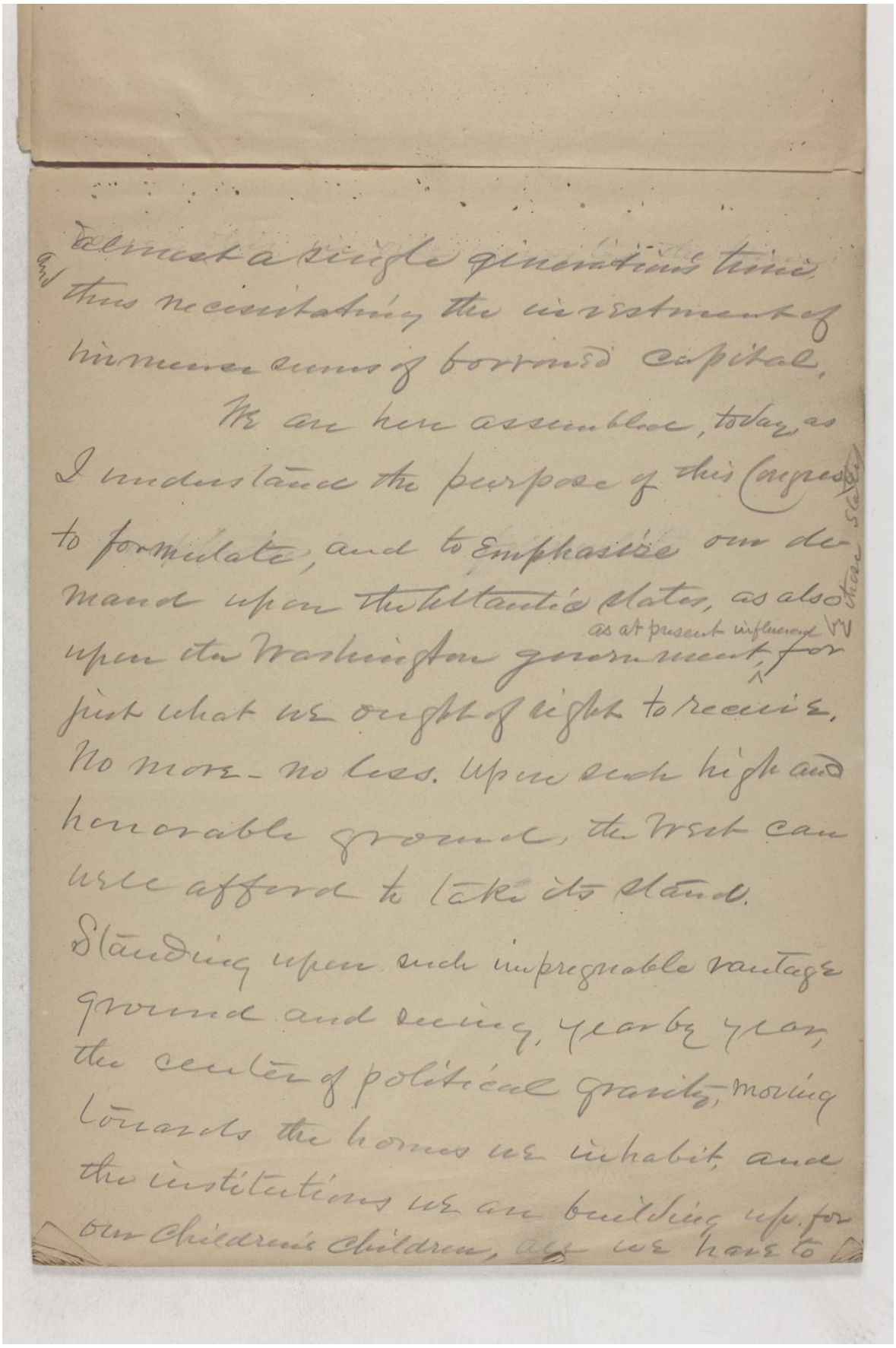


of the Union, in either a seeming, or a real, opposition to the material interests of the United States.

The West can well afford to ask only for justice at the hands of the United States Washington government, so far as National legislation may affect its interests as well as of the Eastern States. Concerning all those innumerable internal interests that are common to all sections of the country, All the West wants of the East is a fair deal as between a people representing a compacted manufacturing interest with millions accumulated of capital at its back - the result of a hundred years and more, of National life, and a people Engaged in opening up the Western half of a continent, in



almost a single generation's time, and thus necessitating the investment of immense sums of borrowed capital.

We are here assembled, today, as I understand the purpose of this Congress to formulate, and to Emphasize our demand upon the Atlantic States, as also upon the Washington government, for just what we ought of right to receive. No more - no less. Upon such high and honorable ground, the West can well afford to take its stand.

Standing upon such impregnable vantage ground and seeing, year by year, the center of political gravity, moving towards the homes we inhabit, and the institutions we are building up, for our children's children, as we have to

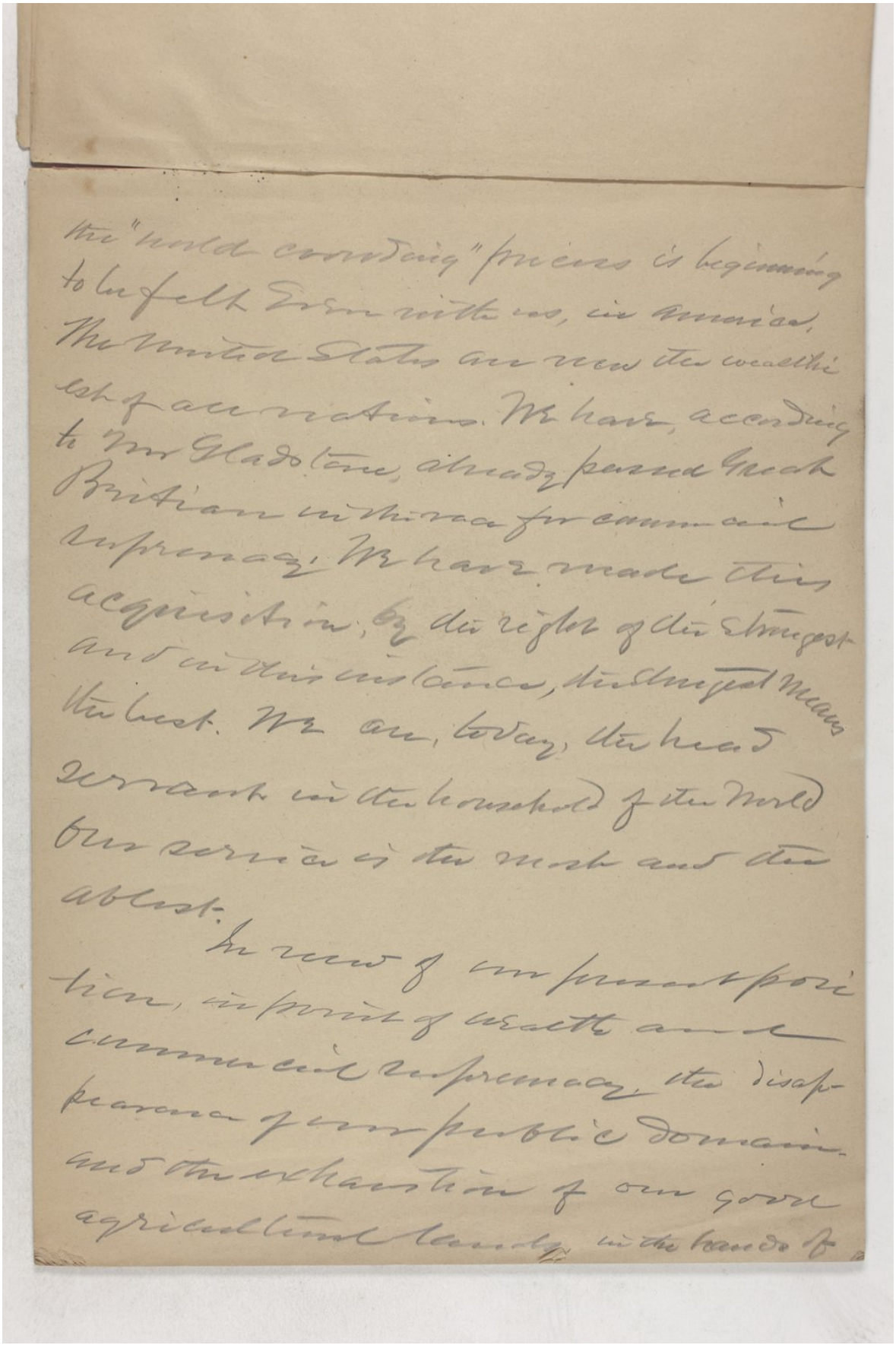
do, is to ask, to agitate, and to wait.

Your committee has been kind enough to indicate a topic for my own paper - "Irrigation" - to a brief consideration of which I will now address myself.

Two fifths of the total area of the U.S. excluding Alaska requires artificial irrigation to reclaim its soil to fertility [illegible]

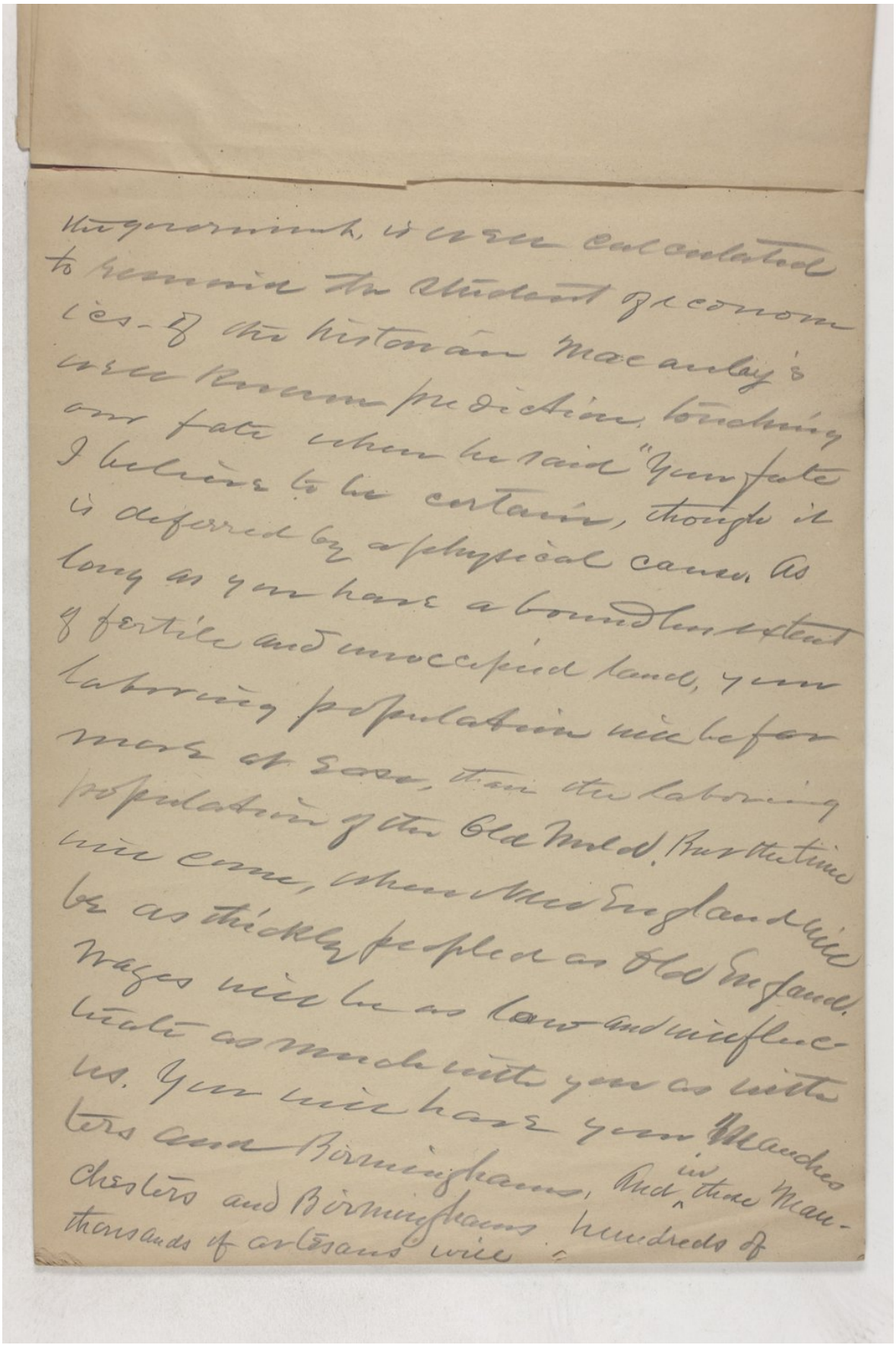
The irrigation of the arid lands of the West is one of its wants, which we think, the general government ought, promptly and speedily to meet, to the full extent of its constitutional limitations. This is not a demand of the West alone, but the certain exhaustion of our public domain, in the near future, lends emphasis to the call of the whole country for the utilization of every acre of land that can be rendered fit for agricultural purposes.

We have not yet reached anything like the "congested state", stag



the "world commerce" prizes is beginning to be felt even with us, in America. The United States are now the wealthiest of all nations. We have, according to Mr Gladstone, already passed Great Britian in this race for commercial supremacy. We have made this acquisition, by the right of the strongest and in this instance, the strongest means the best. We are, today, the head servant in the household of the World. Our service is the most and the ablest.

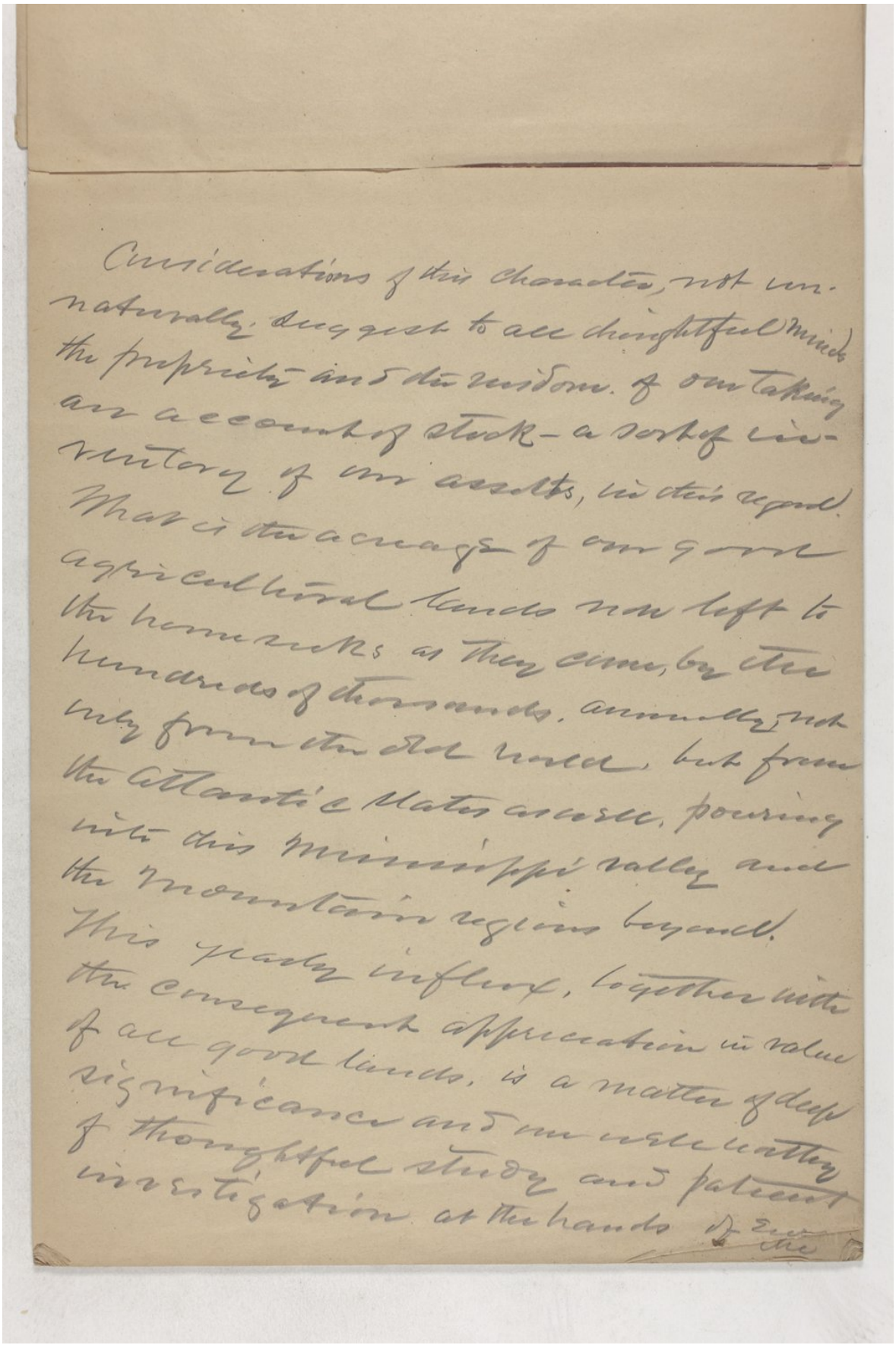
In view of our present position, in point of wealth and commercial supremacy, the disappearance from public domain and the exhaustion of our good agricultural lands, in the hands of



the government, it was calculated to remind the student of economies. If the historian Macaulay's were known prediction, touching our fate when he said "Your fate I believe to be certain, though it is deferred by a physical cause. As long as you have a boundless extent of fertile and unoccupied land, your laboring population will be far more at ease, than the laboring population of the Old World. But the time will come, when New England will be as thickly peopled as Old England. Wages will be as low and influence will as much with you as with us. You will have your Manchesters and Birminghams, And in those Manchesters and Birminghams hundreds of thousands of artisans will

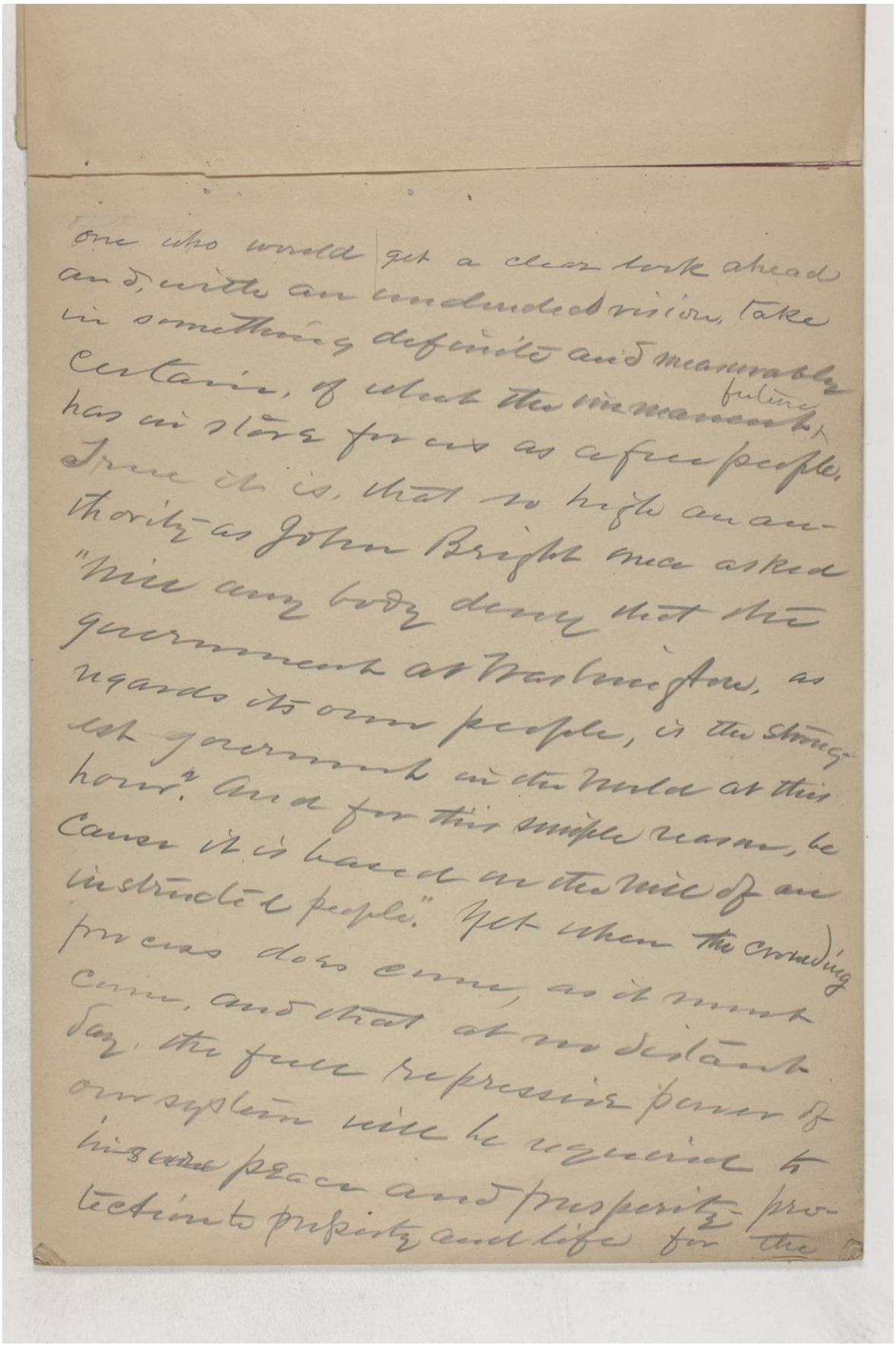
assuredly be sometime out quack. Then your institutions will be fairly brought to the test."

These words of that brilliant essayist, General Garfield declared, startled him "like an alarm bell at midnight." For so they the utterance of a pessimist. Carlisle said very much the same thing, and other commentators upon our institutions have followed the same line of thought. The idea, at bottom, is, of course, that we are soon to approximate European conditions of life. We are, by and by, to enter the "congested state" when America's hungry mouths will more than consume the products of our present farming lands.



Considerations of this character, not unnaturally suggest to all thoughtful minds the propriety and the wisdom of our taking an account of stock - a sort of inventory of our assets, in this regard. What is the acreage of our good agricultural lands now left to the homeseekers as they come, by the hundreds of thousands, annually not only from the Old World, but from the Atlantic States as well, pouring into this Mississippi valley and the mountain regions beyond.

This yearly influx, together with the consequent appreciation in value of all good lands, is a matter of deep significance and one well worthy of thoughtful study and patient investigation at the hands of

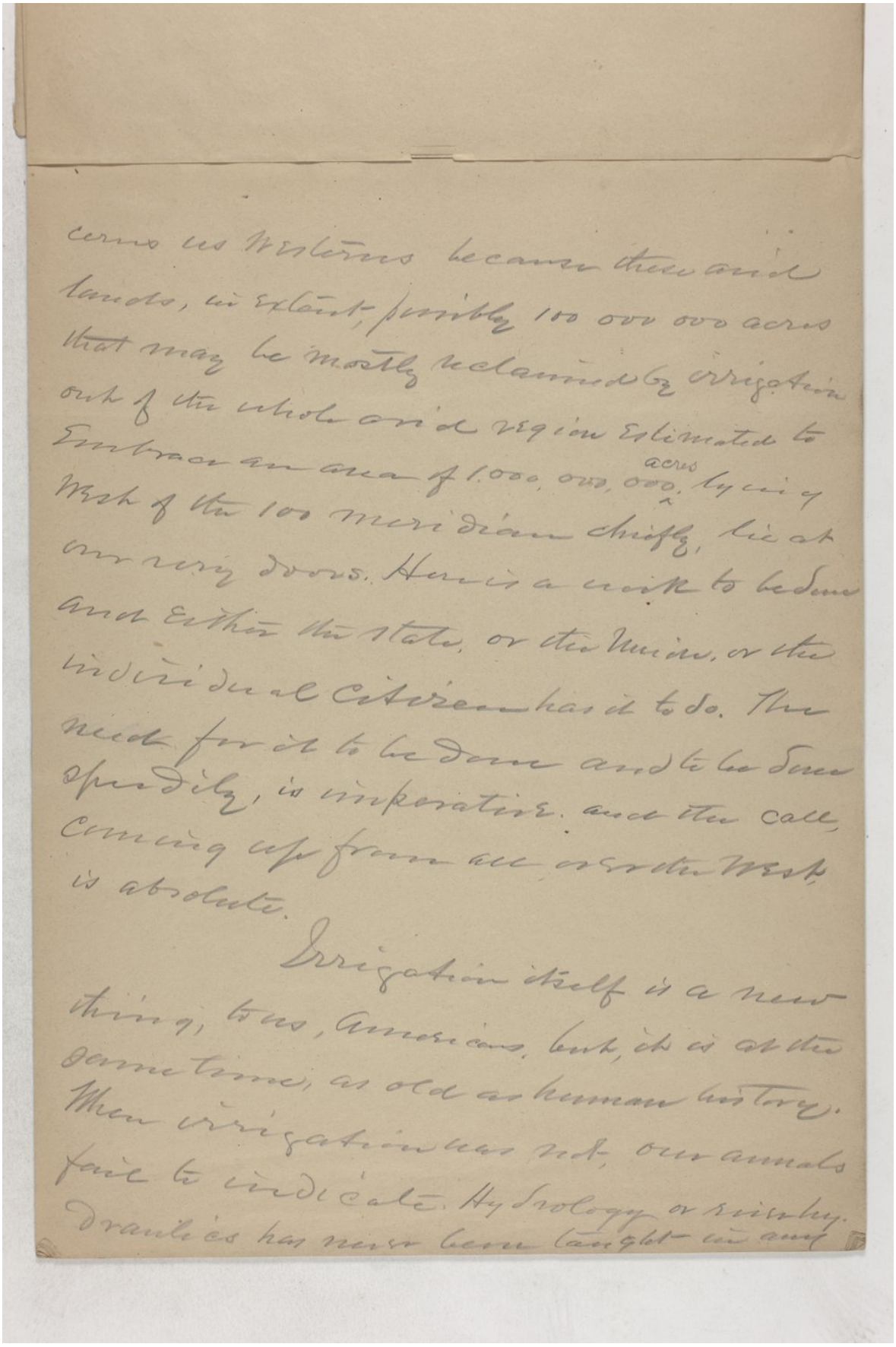


one who would get a clear look ahead and, with an undaunted vision, take in something definite and measurable certain, of what the immediate future has in store for us as a free people. True it is, that no high an authority as John Bright once asked "Who can look deep that the government at Washington, as regards its own people, is the strongest government in the world at this hour." And for this simple reason, because it is based on the will of an instructed people." Yet when the crowning process does come, as it must come, and that at no distant day, the full repressive power of our system will be required to insure peace and prosperity protection to property and life for the

uncounted millions that there will inhabit the Mississippi valley alone."

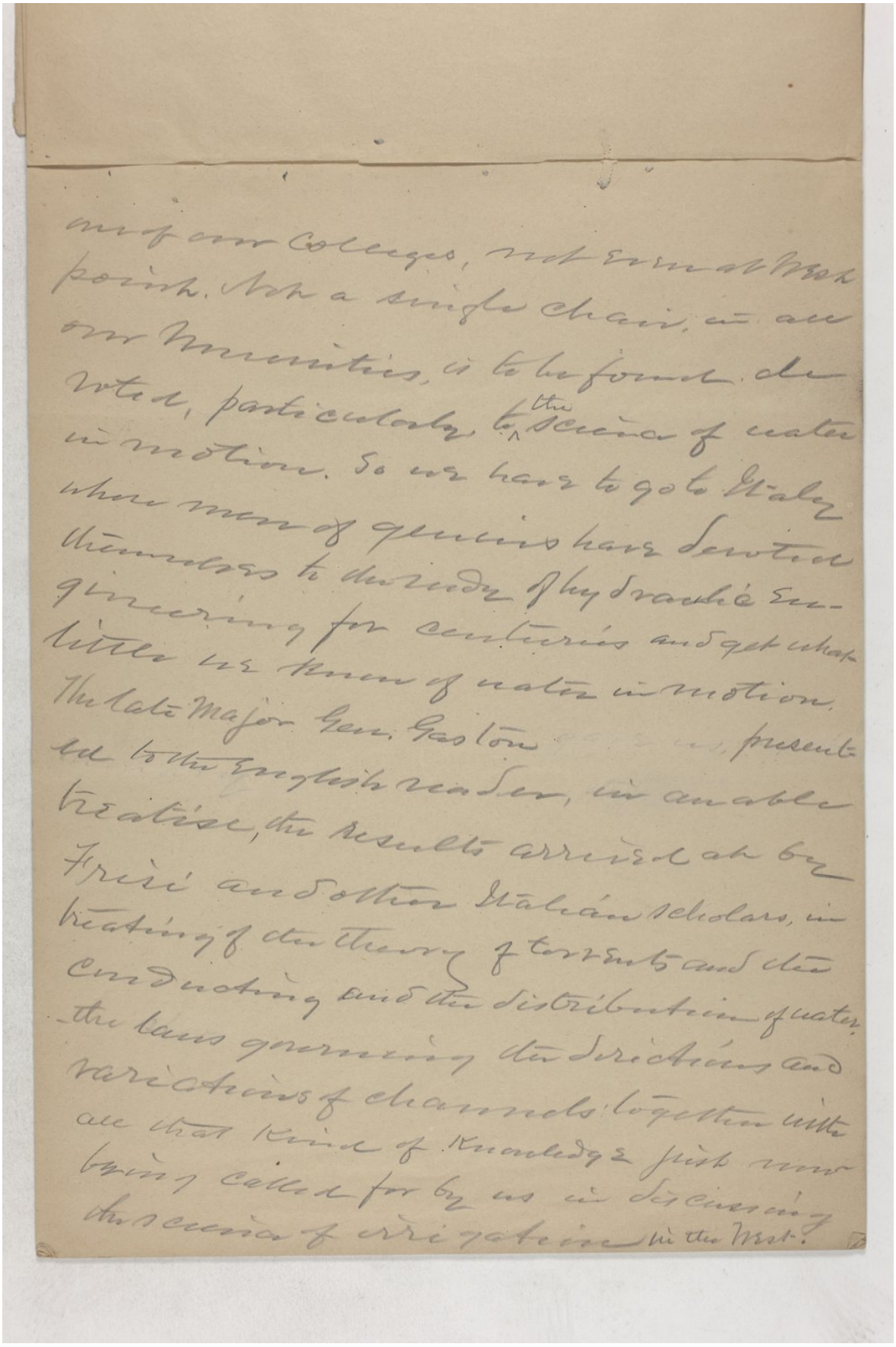
Senator Wade, some 25 years ago, said, that, by 1900, every acre of good agricultural land in the Union would be worth atleast fifty dollars. Though, this prediction is hardly likely to come true, in the time indicated, yet that we are on the eve of a rapid appreciation in the value of all good farming lands in the West, owing to the practical exhaustion of the more desirable portion of the public domain, will not be questioned — "2/3 of the World's agriculture today depends wholly or in part upon artificial irrigation processes."

In our own country the irrigation of our arid regions of the United States is the biggest question now lifting itself in the pathway of Western progress and development. It co

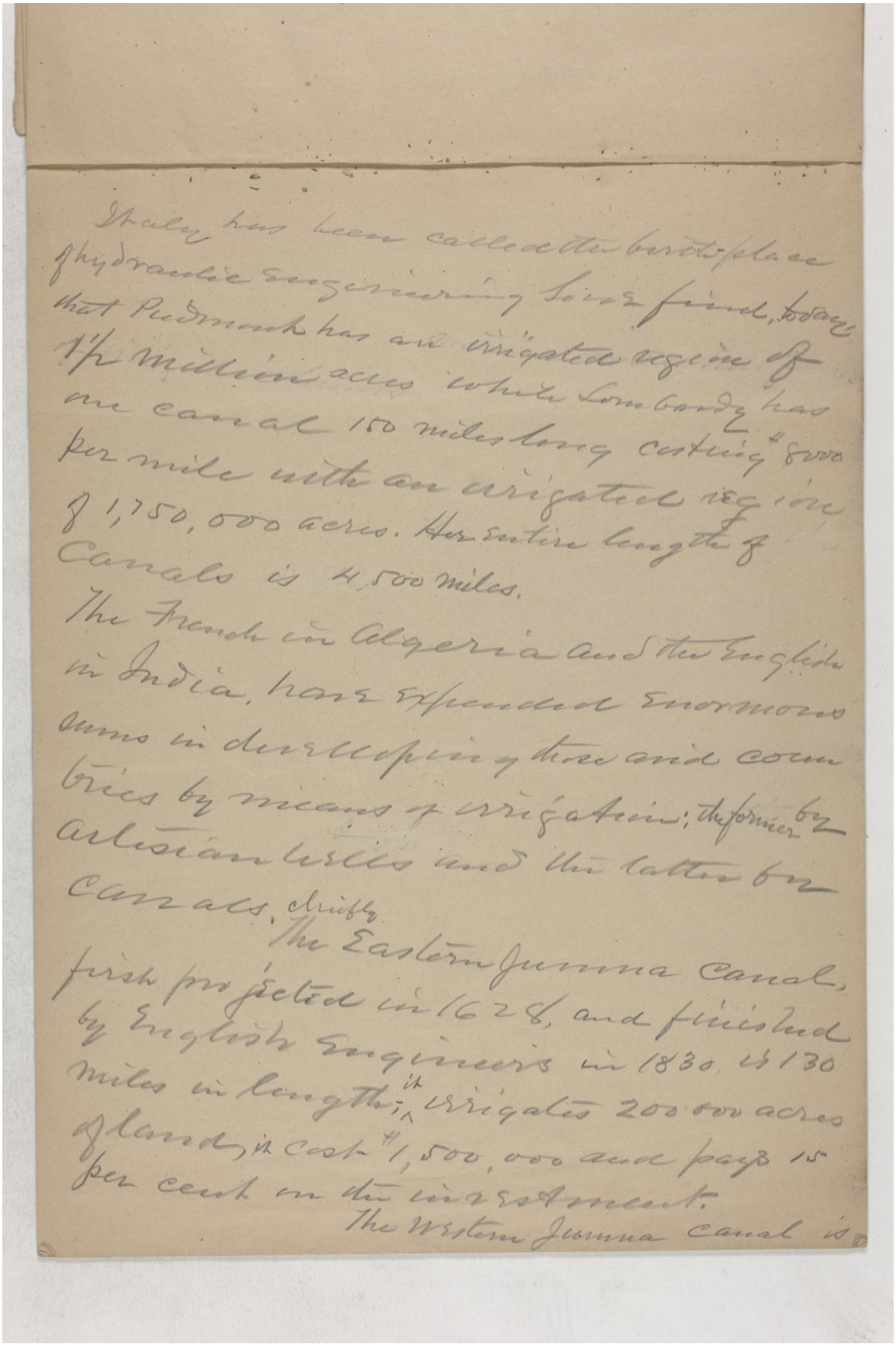


cerns us Westerners became these arid lands, in extent, possibly 100 000 000 acres that may be mostly reclaimed by irrigation out of the whole arid region Estimated to Embrace an area of 1.000, 000, 000 acres by a line West of the 100 meridian chiefly, lie at our very doors. Here is a work to be done and Either the State, or the Union, or the individual citizen has it to do. The need for it to be done and to be done speedily, is imperative. and the call, coming up from all over the West, is absolute.

Irrigation itself is a new thing, to us, Americans, but, it is at the same time, as old as human history. When irrigation was not, our annals fail to indicate. Hydrology or Hydraulics has never been taught in any



of our Colleges, not even at West Point. Not a single chair, in all our Universities, is to be found, devoted, particularly, to the science of water in motion. So we have to go to Italy where men of genius have devoted themselves to the study of hydraulic engineering for centuries and get what little we know of water in motion. The late Major Gen. Gaston [illegible], presented to the English reader, in an able treatise, the results arrived at by Frisi and other Italian scholars, in treating of the theory of torrents and the conducting and the distribution of water. The laws governing the directions and variations of channels together with all that kind of knowledge just now being called for by us in discovering the science of irrigation in the West.

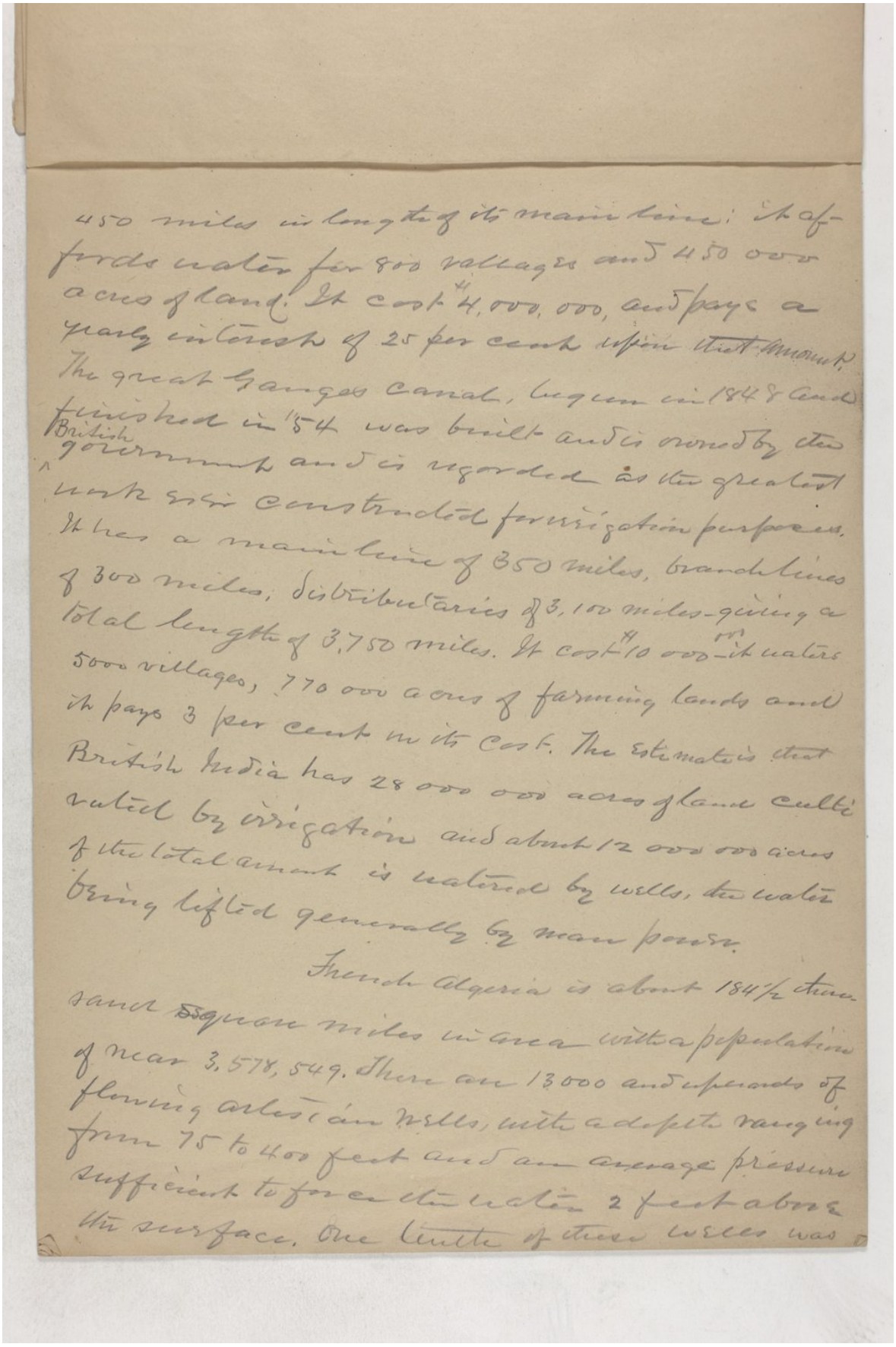


Italy has been called the birthplace of hydraulic engineering for in fact, today that Piedmont has an irrigated region of 1½ million acres while Lombardy has one canal 150 miles long costing $8000 per mile with an irrigated region of 1,750,000 acres. Her entire length of Canals is 4,500 miles.

The French in Algeria and the English in India, have expended enormous sums in developing those and countries by means of irrigation; the former by artesian wells and the latter by canals. Chiefly

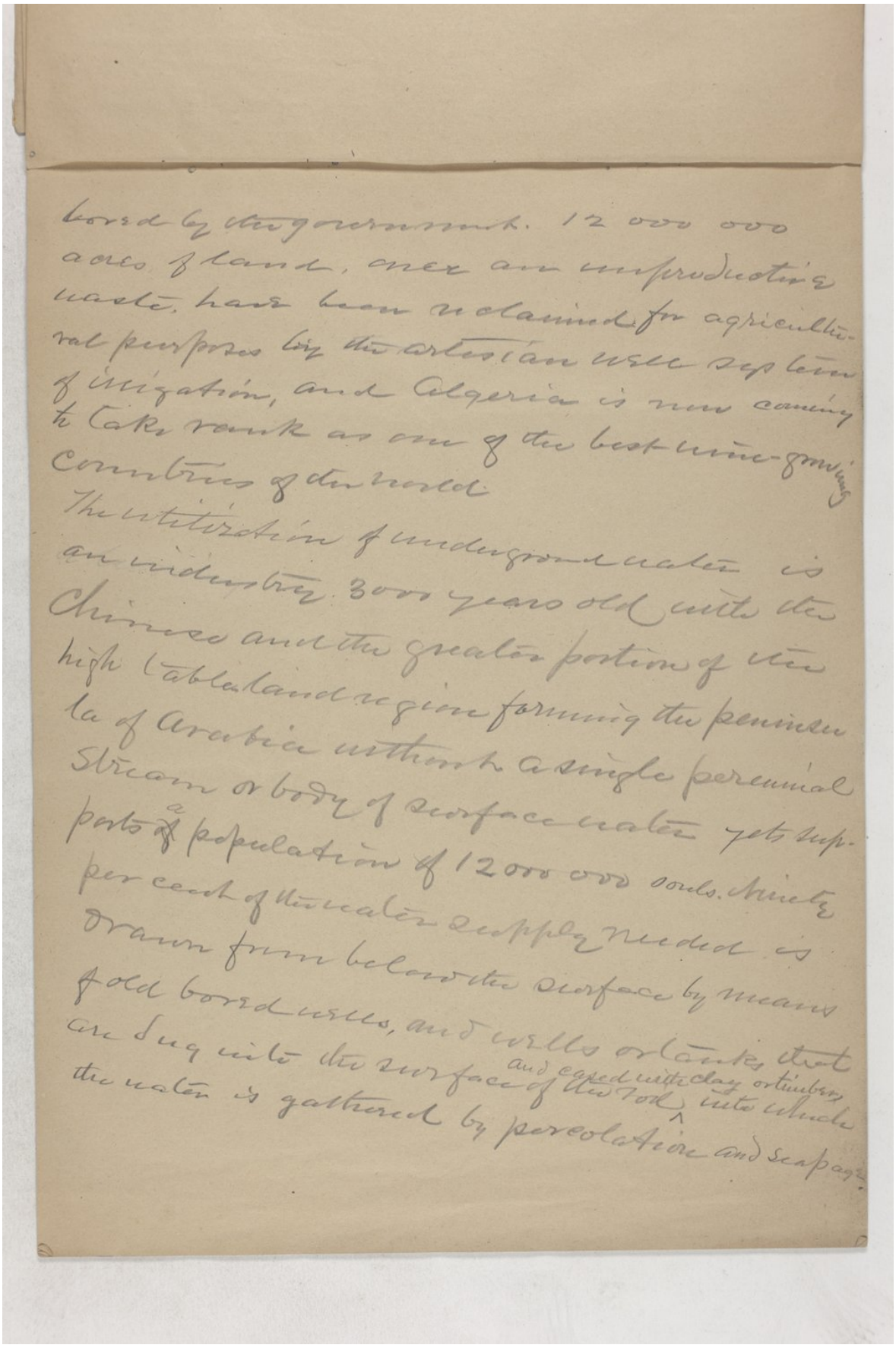
The Eastern Jumna Canal, first projected in 1628, and finished by English Engineers in 1830. It is 130 miles in length; it irrigates 200,000 acres of land, it cost $1,500,000 and pays 15 per cent on the investment.

The Western Jumna canal is



450 miles in length of its main line: it affords water for 800 villages and 450 000 acres of land. It cost £4,000,000, and pays a yearly interest of 25 per cent upon that amount. The great Ganges canal, begun in 1848 and finished in 1854 was built and is owned by the British government and is regarded as the greatest work ever constructed for irrigation purposes. It has a main line of 350 miles, branch lines of 300 miles, distributaries of 3,100 miles-giving a total length of 3,750 miles. It cost £10 000 000 - it waters 5000 villages, 770 000 acres of farming lands and it pays 3 per cent on its cost. The Estimate is that British India has 28 000 000 acres of land cultivated by irrigation and about 12 000 000 acres of the total amount is watered by wells, the water being lifted generally by man power.

French Algeria is about 184½ thousand square miles in area with a population of near 3,578,549. There are 13,000 and upwards of flowing artesian wells, with a depth ranging from 75 to 400 feet and an average pressure sufficient to force the water 2 feet above the surface. One limit of these wells was



bored by the government. 12 000 000 acres of land, once an unproductive waste, have been reclaimed for agricultural purposes by the artesian well system of irrigation, and Algeria is now coming to take rank as one of the best wine-growing countries of the world.

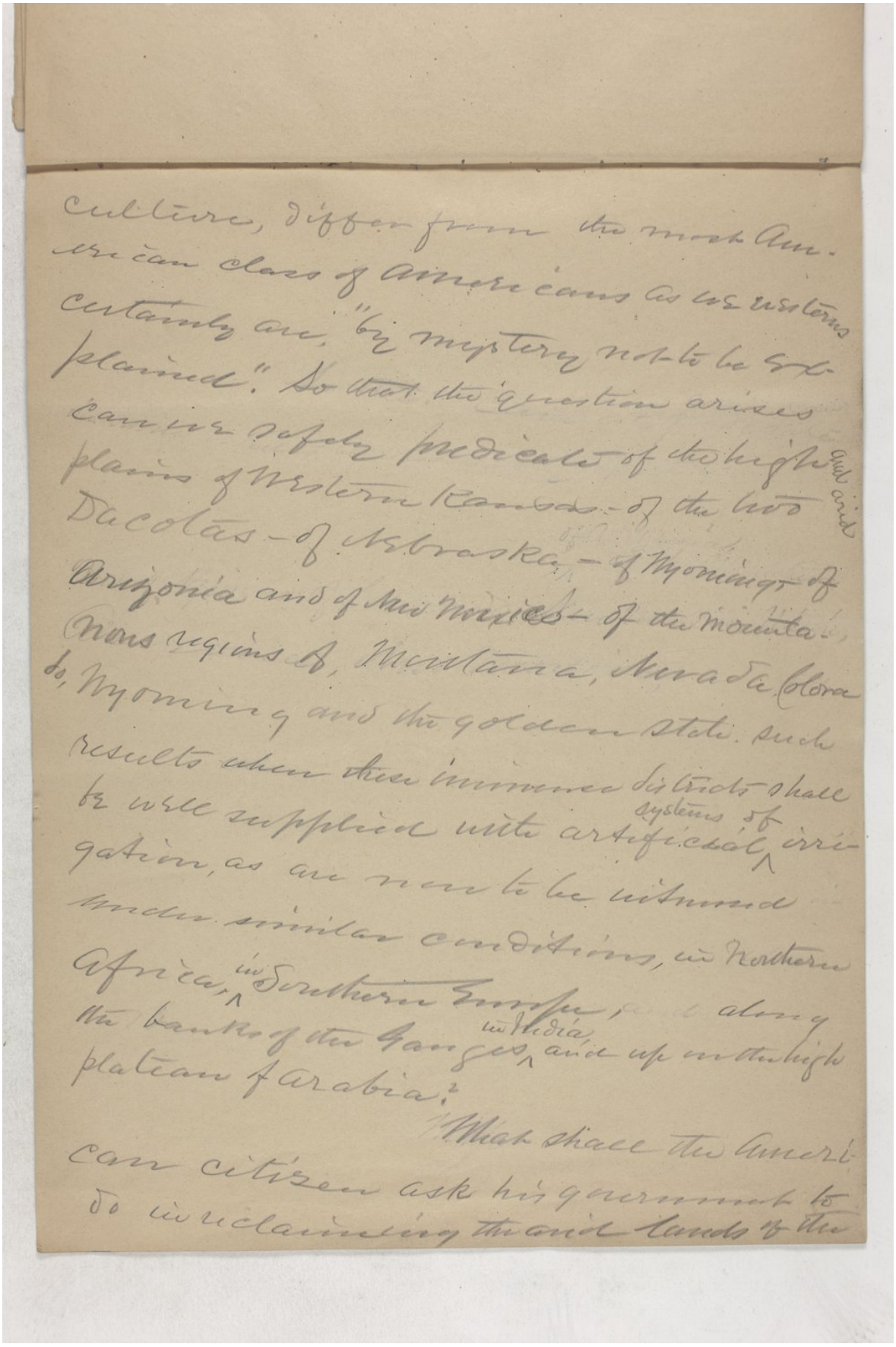
The utilization of underground water is an industry 3000 years old with the Chinese and the greater portion of the high tableland region forming the peninsula of Arabia without a single perennial stream or body of surface water yets supports a population of 12 000 000 souls. Ninety per cent of the water supply needed is drawn from below the surface by means of old bored wells, and wells or tanks that are dug into the surface and cased with clay or timber, into which the water is gathered by percolation and seepage.

Now then with all this vast system of irrigation to be much with, now in full operation, in the old world and yielding satisfactory results, it ought not be difficult for us to ascertain just what can be done on our Western plains and among our mountain States and territories by way of watering our arid lands. and thereby opening up a region of possible illimitable wealth where now only absolute sterility and barrenness prevail.

In recently undertaking to inaugurate the irrigation work, by ordering certain surveys to be made, the Washington government wisely provides that nothing, now being done, shall commit the government to any plan of irrigation or the construction of works thereunder. The practical thing before this Congress is, therefore, in view of this provision of law just quoted, is, what do the public interests de-

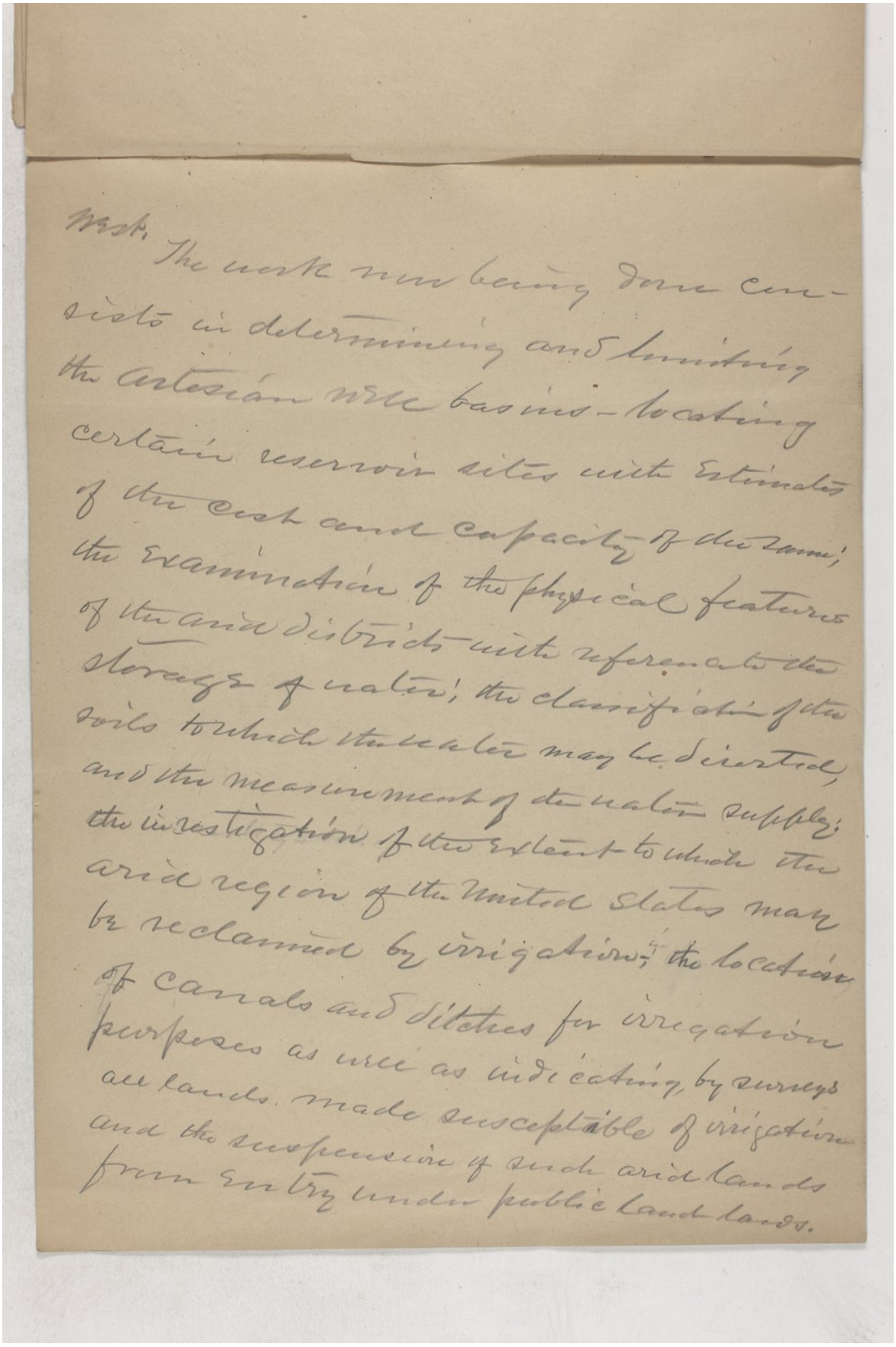
mand of the federal authority in this regard, and what formulation of such demands shall be here made and put forth as the deliverance of this assembly on the irrigation question in general.

The historical references I have already instanced and called up, occur under forms of government much unlike our own, being more or less kingly and monarchical as also among a dense population wholly dissimilar to the intelligent and ambitious average American citizen who, whilst he is opening up a farm made productive by artificial irrigation, "hopes to rise in life". In other words, the populations of French Algeria, of Italy, of British India and Mohamedan Arabia as well as of all oriental nations who subsist by means, largely, of artificially watered agri-



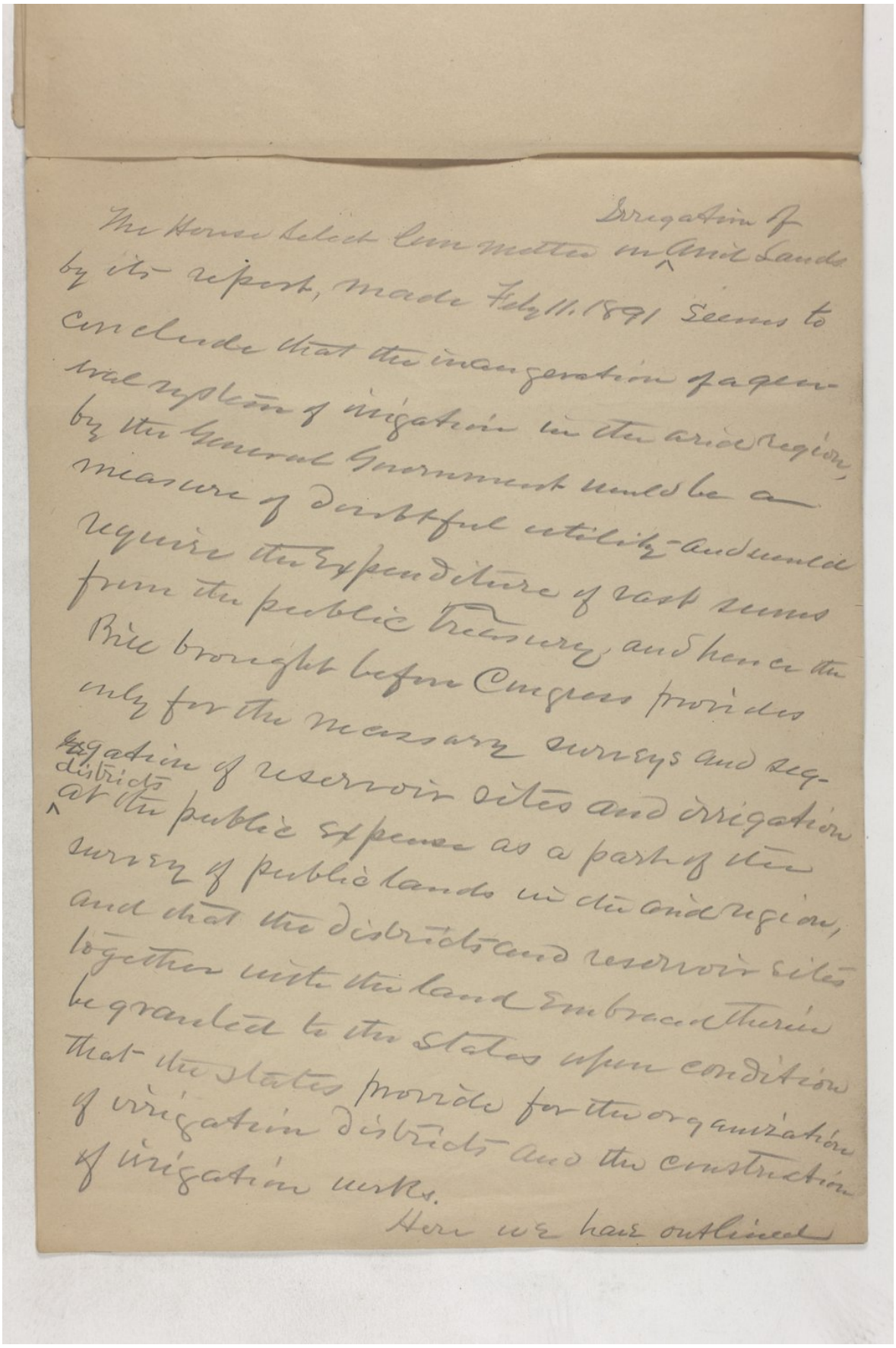
culture, differ from the most American class of Americans as the westerns certainly are, "by mystery not to be explained". So that the question arises can we safely predicate of the high and arid plains of Western Kansas - of the two Dacolas - of Nebraska - of Wyoming - of Arizonia and of New Mexico - of the mountainous regions of Montana, Nevada, Colorado, Wyoming and the golden state. such results when these immense districts shall be well supplied with artificial systems of irrigation, as are now to be witnessed under similar conditions, in Northern Africa, in Southern Europe, along the banks of the Ganges in India, and up on the high plateau of Arabia?

What should the American citizen ask his government to do in reclaiming the arid lands of the



Wash.

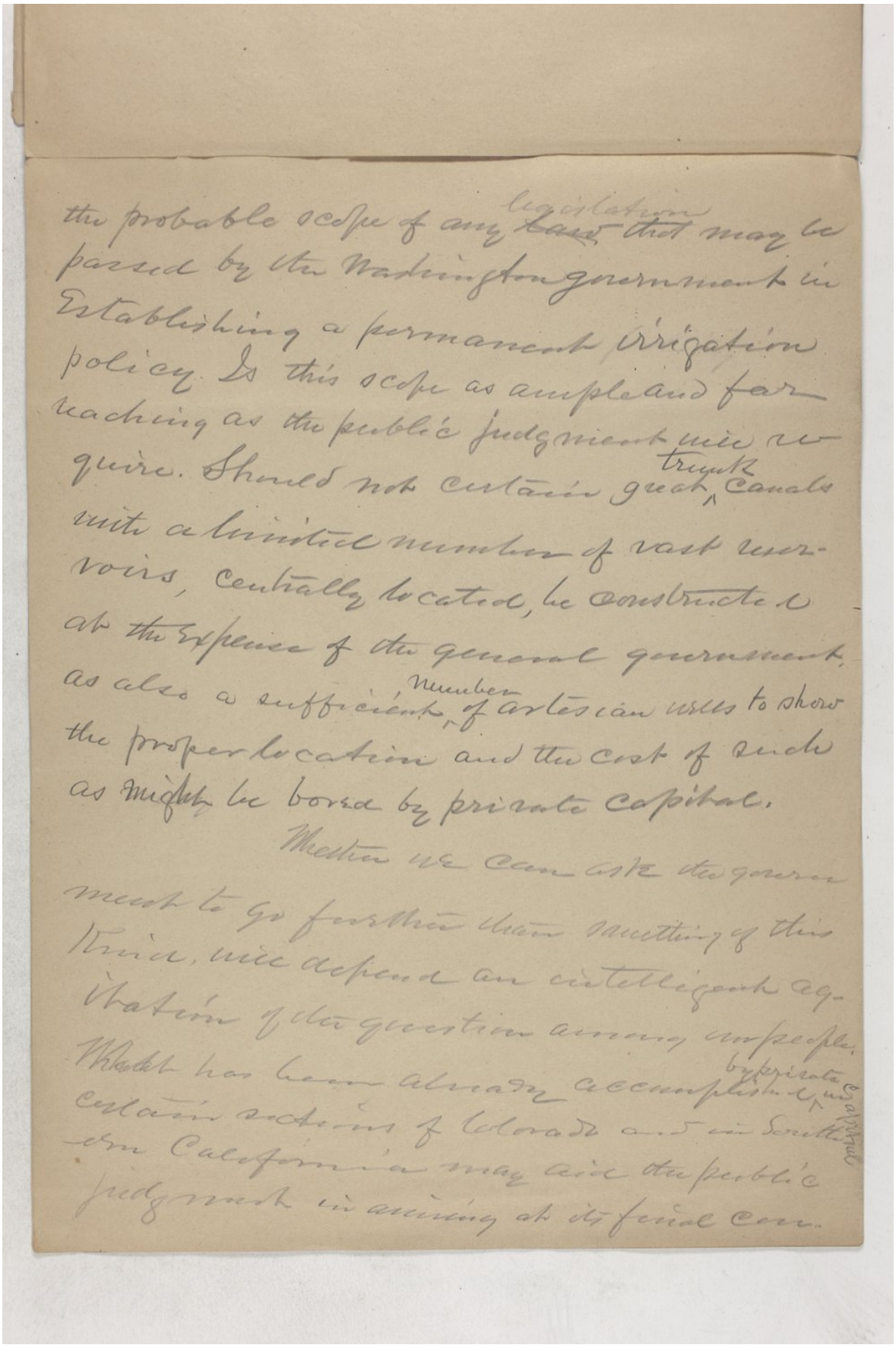
The work now being done consists in determining and limiting the artesian well basins - locating certain reservoir sites with estimates of the cost and capacity of the same; the examination of the physical features of the arid districts with reference to the storage of water; the classification of the soils to which the water may be diverted, and the measurement of the water supply; the investigation of the extent to which the arid region of the United States may be reclaimed by irrigation; the location of canals and ditches for irrigation purposes as well as indicating by surveys all lands made susceptible of irrigation and the suspension of such arid lands from entry under public land laws.



Irrigation of

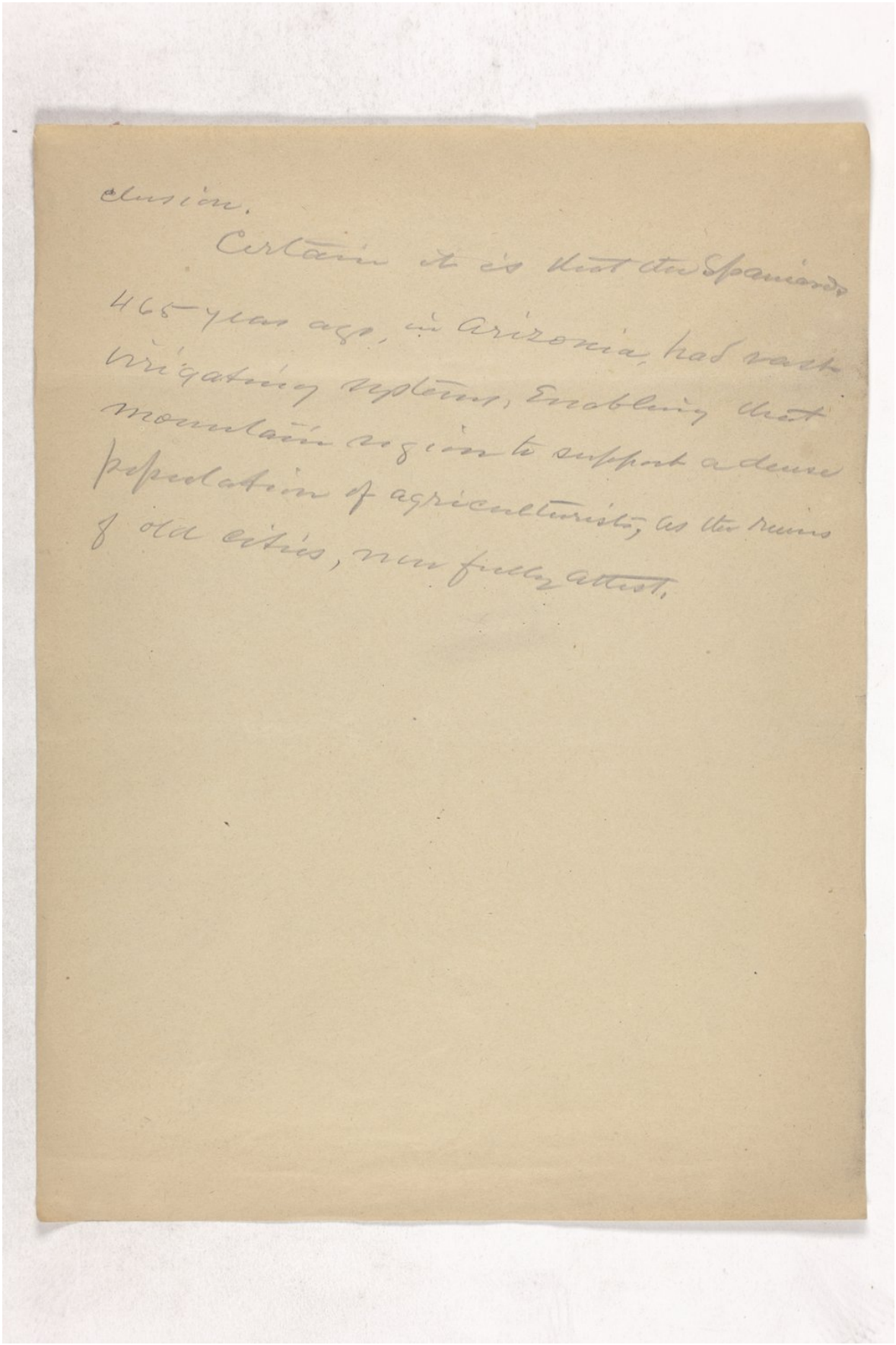
The House Select Committee on Arid Lands by its report, made Feb 11, 1891 seems to conclude that the inauguration of a general system of irrigation in the arid region, by the General Government would be a measure of doubtful utility - and would require the expenditure of vast sums from the public treasury, and hence the Bill brought before Congress provides only for the necessary surveys and segregation of reservoir sites and irrigation districts at the public expense as a part of the survey of public lands in the arid region, and that the districts and reservoir sites together with the land embraced therein be granted to the States upon condition that the states provide for the organization of irrigation districts and the construction of irrigation works.

Here we have outlined



the probable scope of any legislation that may be passed by the Washington government in Establishing a permanent irrigation policy. Is this scope as ample and far reaching as the public judgment will require. Should not certain great trunk Canals with a limited number of vast reservoirs, centrally located, be constructed at the expence of the general government, as also a sufficient number of artesian wells to show the proper location and the cost of such as might be bored by private capital.

Whether we can ask the government to go further than meeting of this kind, will depend an intelligent agitation of the question among our people. What has been already accomplished by private enterprise in certain sections of Colorado and in Southern California may aid the public judgment in arriving at its final con-



clusion.

Certain it is that the Spaniards 466 years ago, in Arizonia, had such irrigating systems, Enabling that mountain region to support a dense population of agriculturists, as the ruins of old cities, now fully attest.

a paper on
Irrigation
prepared by
request to be read
before "First Western States
Commercial Congress"
held in Kansas City
Mo. Apl 14 & 18 1891.
at the present time
known as the Trans-Mississippi
Comercial Congress to be held
in 1899 at Wichita.

J. S. Emery
Apl 1, 1899

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History and Historical composition.
Address of James S. Emery before the Kansas State
Historical Society Jan. 19, 1892.

Gentlemen,--

We bring to the services of this annual gathering a bitter sorrow. Since our last meeting the high and the low have fallen. Many of those whose names were indissolubly connected with our Society, either as active or honorary members have passed beyond the boundary of this earthly life. Several of these were active as founders of our organization. All of them were good and true men, and their memories are left to be treasured up in the archives of this Society. Most of them, crowned with years, have gone down to the grave in the calm decay of their autumnal season. But one, notably, had hardly passed the bright Summer of his high career: he whose auspicious prime held out the flattering promise that his past busy years of work for the state, were only the pledge of a still ampler, if not, a higher service. We cannot bury these many co-laborers with us in the founding and upbuilding of Kansas in utter silence. We are moved to the proper commemoration of their services by allthe better instincts of our nature, and hence I am glad to announce here on the threshold of this discourse, that appropriate provisions have already been made by this Society to properly commemorate the lives of these men, and to commit their memories to enduring forms.

I wish to say something about our work, and therefore I will call

my subject:

History and Historical Composition.

Ours is a young state, and hence we are chiefly concerned in all we are doing in the State Historical Society, with the beginnings and the origins of things. So, for some thirty years since this Society was founded we have listened at all our annual meetings to papers and speeches about the first things which Kansas did as she started out in her territorial career in 1854. These papers, these speeches, and unnumberer printed documents, numerous personal recitals of individual experiences in the first settlement of the territory, together with a collection of portraits, drawings, and paintings of both men and things, all crowned with an immense newspaper bureau---tucked away in quarters all too narrow and circumscribed---all these accumulations of the past thirty years, go to the credit account of our work as a society. This feature of our doings seems now quite complete. When we shall have catalogued what we have gotten together so that the student may gain ready access to the various sources of the particular information he may be in quest of, then this Society will have securely laid the corner stone of that splendid edifice which those who shall come after us, are to carry on to completion. This Society is to-day a gatherer; it will sometime become a builder.

Historical work is never done and finished up, ready to be laid away as a job completed. Just as long as human society goes on, just so long historical material accumulates and piles up, so to speak. And this is only saying that "Politics to-day becomes history tomorrow

The State Historical Society of Kansas will not have completed its legitimate work, and will not have finally discharged its trust to our people and to the state, when it shall have garnered up and safely deposited in its archives, full and exhaustive data of all that has been done in Kansas in the last generation and a quarter. We are yet in the infancy of things in our state, and this Society is enlisted in a work that has no end.

It is destined to lead in stimulating historical studies in the entire Missouri valley. It is to help do for this vast mediterranean region of country we inhabit, what like organizations have aided in accomplishing elsewhere. It is said that "in the number, variety, extent, and attractions of historical work now offered at Harvard University, that institution rivals the great schools of the old world." The American student need no longer go adroad for his instruction in either our own or European history. The first Historical Society in the United States had its home in Boston, hard by this venerable institution, and the influence of that pioneer society upon advanced historical study and original research has been most marked.

A similar work for the Mississippi Valley is to be done through some agency. What organization is as well equipped as ours to do its full share in that work. We, settlers in the trans-Mississippi region, are a people largely interested in economic questions. History is with us to become more economic, and economics to become more historical, both in object and method.

The chair of American history is the foremost one in all our great schools which are kept up fully abreast of the times. You who are college men before me to-night, can go back to the time you recited annals of ancient Grecian and Roman history during your college courses for a few weeks, and were afterwards turned out into the world as liberally educated men. History held the back seat in those days. But all this kind of thing is past in our present educational methods. Those teachers whose names are on the lips of men oftenest as advanced scholars, at Ann Arbor, at Cornell, at Harvard, and Johns Hopkins, are the professors in historical study at these several institutions.

Nor can we be at all surprised at this high rank historical pursuits have gained in popular regard and esteem. That brilliant essayest---Macaulay, has said "to be a really great historian is perhaps the rarest of intellectual distinctions."

We note also, in this connection ,that the Bureau of Education at Washington is devoting much study and attention to American educational history in the different states, and some dozen circulars of information by way of contributions to this history, have already been issued by the commissioner in charge, but edited by the distinguished professor of history in the Johls Hopkins University, Mr. Adams.

Kindred to this interest manifested by the Washington government in our educational history, I may notice the revival of archaeological studies, and the present popular interest awakened in excavating for lost cities, and in bringing to light the buried secrets of the past.

"Everything that pertains to the past occupancy by man of our planet, is now being dug up--turned over--studied--classified and stored away for reference and instruction. Moved by what I like to designate as the historical sentiment of our nature, no limit is being placed upon the outlay of both brain and money to discover and find out what man has been doing in all the past.

Since the time that the childlike races, high up in the table lands of central Asia, first looked out upon the objects of their senses, and naturally fell to inspecting whatever was most noticeable in the skies above them, or in the forces of nature about them, there has been no hour when mankind has seemed so anxious to peer in to the past, and also to gain a glimpse of the future, as now.

Two hundred and one years ago, the first local historical association was founded in the United States. I need not say this was on the shores of Massachusetts Bay. It marked the beginning of a new phase in American history--a beginning that has since grown, till today all the foremost states have local organizations similar to our own. The uplifting influence of that local historical society has been most significant. If we direct attention to what has been regarded as the classical period of American historical literature--the the early part of the present century--"we find ourselves confronted with a striking fact of geographical distribution. If we tried to name the ten principal historical writers of that period we should find that seven or eight of them were Massachusetts men of old New England famlies, born in, or near, Boston, and graduates at Harvard University,

"There is one spot of a few acres in Cambridge," says Prof. Jameson in his new book, "The History of Historical Writers in America," "upon which three of the most eminent historical scholars of the last generation dwelt, and upon which have dwelt three of the most prominent historical writers of our time."

The thought at bottom, in the literary pursuits and historical studies of those who achieved this high distinction for the state of Massachusetts, has been a study of our national life. That result that manifested itself in the great anti-slavery struggle in New England, was in the light of these facts, an entirely natural result. They had kept the lights burning, and when the great war came on in 1861, a company of men and women too, arose in the at section of our common country, who made history and wrote it too, in a sense so striking and peculiar as to have attracted the attention of the critical world. These people intrenched the lesson of Americal history--which is a lesson of love of liberty--in poetry, in art, and in--song.

What may be considered the beginning of organized efforts in the study of our own history, centers in and about local societies in the various states, like our own in Kansas. Certain of these organizations have achieved little, while others have done much. "Some are lifeless, or, like Pope and Pagan in Bunyan's Allegory, are toothlessly mumbling over and over again the same innutritious materials; some that seem full of activity direct that activity toward any but the most scientific ends." But they have, each and all, been school masters to lead the popular mind in the various states, to a consideration of the claims of historical culture,

as useful to the state, and as calculated to foster real patriotism among all classes of our citizens.

But what is history--one may most pertinently ask, and what is correct historical composition.

This query is not an unimportant one to be made in this hasty discussion, Most people have their notions as to what history is, and they have a common idea as to how it is generallly made up and put into books and other enduring forms; and yet in truth history is not the simple matter we commonly conceive it to be, and historical composition exacts the highest art and the rarest of scholarly attainments of every one who would write history so as to please, to instruct, and to be read.

"It is a science" says one. It is "a fiction agreed upon" said Napoleon. To his friend who wished to while away the enforced leisure of Sir Rob't Walpole, by reading history aloud to him, the premier exclaimed" Read me anything except history, I know that isn't true". This was the opinion of a man who (who had been for 12 years the prime minister of England.

Now-a-days it is in order to speak of history as a science and in our higher institutions of learning it is put in the curriculum along side of political economy, or sociology, to use a newer term, to be studied together. But Mr. Froude ridicules the idea of joining together the words science and history. He thinks history is like a child's box of letters, with which we can spell any word we please. He thinks history should be written like a drama, for he says it is nature's drama.

It repeats one lesson and only one, with entire distinctness, and that lesson is that the world is built somehow on moral foundations; that in the long run, it is well with the good; in the long run, it is ill with the wicked, and all this is no more science than it was when taught as an old doctrine by the Hebrew prophets. With him history addresses the understanding less than the higher emotions; by its study we learn to sympathize with the what is good, and to hate what is base. It is a voice forever sounding across the centuries the laws of right and wrong. But we can draw no horoscopes from its lesson, nor assume to predict what fruits, reformations, and revolutions will bear. He would have no philosophy of history, and he intimates the best way to write history is to make a book containing only premises, leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions and gather up his own lessons. He closes his brilliant essay by saying that the riddle of man's nature will forever remain unsolved. Mr. Froude is no pessimist, and yet the world would derive but small benefit from a study of the past were his views and methods our sole guide. Because the riddle of human life may never be understood fully here, the lessons of that life can be none the less instructive.

The historian Macaulay declared for the dramatic style of historical composition. With that brilliant writer, the art of historical narration is the art of interesting the affections of the reader and of presenting pictures to his imagination. Perfectly and absolutely true, history cannot be, " A history in which every particular instance may be true, may on the whole be false." It "begins in novel and