“RAMBLES OF A DAM BUILDER”

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least harmed by the breaking of the dam. He said that the moral to be drawn from this is “Don’t believe a newspaper story that deals with technical matters.”

“A dam,” the speaker said, “is theoretically a wall of masonry of triangular cross-section so constructed that when water is at the top of the dam the heel of the dam has zero pressure.” But it is always assumed in a dam that the water is acting under the base of the dam at the full pressure, which makes it necessary to have the base of the dam much broader than would otherwise warrant. A dam so constructed will resist any overturning force that it will ever be subjected to. It may break or it may slide, but it will not overturn. On the Westfield river there is a dam which is probably subjected to as severe conditions as exist anywhere.

One time during an overflow, the railroad on the riverbank, portions of the surrounding country including bridges, etc., were completely washed away, but the dam withstood the pressure.

The description of these structures was made much more vivid by the excellent lantern slides. One picture showed a dam in Colorado where there was no room for the power house anywhere within several miles, so that it was found convenient to build the power house under the dam itself. Another power house similarly situated, received its light through windows in the dam over which four feet of water were pouring.

The speaker next took up the subject of dams that have failed. In the case of the Johnstown Flood, a dam that had once been in use had been abandoned and the power house was used for a hunting club. The structure began to disintegrate, and when the water rose over the top, it cut down through seventy-five feet of masonry in no less than forty-five minutes.

The failure of the West Virginia dam was due largely to carelessness. The engineer’s son was left to watch the dam and to report any leak that might occur. One morning he noticed a leak but did not say anything about it. The leakage grew worse from day to day. After about three days the engineer at the mill phoned to his son instructing him to open the gate and let him have more water. His son replied that there was enough leakage in the dam to supply all the water he needed. By this time it was too late to do anything to prevent the disaster.

Some very interesting pictures of wrecked dams were next shown. The speaker cited a case where a huge block forty feet square and five feet thick was lifted up and carried a thousand miles down the stream by the force of the flood. Another dam gave way in the middle on account of a spring under its foundations. The spring had been tapped off before construction began, but apparently this precaution was insufficient. The foundations were blown away after about two years.

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