

# Twenty-Five Thousand Pairs of Roller Skates for Omaha Children



THREE LITTLE MAIDS ON SKATES.



GIVING HER A LESSON.



GROUP OF SKATERS IN REMIS PARK.



READY FOR A "SKATE"

**B**ECAUSE the boys and girls of the west are always seeking an easier way of locomotion than walking, dealers of Omaha have sold almost 25,000 pairs of roller skates since March 1 and if the manufacturers had been able to make skates fast enough for all the boys and girls in the country the sales at Omaha would have been larger by 10,000 pairs.

Roller skates are a by-product of the cement era. Less than 10 per cent of the skates which have been sold in the cities of the west since their great popularity during the last three months have been for use at the rink. They are for travel. They take the place of automobiles and bicycles, tricycles and velocipedes, self-propelled wagons and coasters and are by far the most popular of all the things devised by children to "get over distance quick."

The walks and pavements of Omaha are the great inducement to roller skating. In years gone by it was impossible for the boys and girls to get over the board walks with the small rollers. They tried, years and years ago, but the walks made poor "tracks" and the attempt was given up, the bicycle and coasters taking the place of the skates.

But a change came in sidewalk and pavement construction. For "looks" many of the country towns resolved to have nothing but cement walks put down when the old board walks rotted. In many of the cities and towns the same at local elections was the order of cement sidewalks. One time in Elmer Clark O'Hanlon, follower of Bryan, was elected mayor of the village simply because he promised to have cement walks in the business district, and as fast as possible have them placed in the residence district. His republican rival, in a republican town, was defeated. Everyone wanted cement. It was so much more metropolitan and the boys and girls wanted it because it was "skatable."

All over Nebraska the popularity of cement walks has been increased by the children who wanted roller skating the year around without paying 10 to 25 cents for admission to a hall where a lot of adults were slipping over a polished floor on rollers when they should be dancing.

Anyway, boys and girls have been esta-

blished of easy means of locomotion since the world began. It is possible that many of those who have invented steamboats, steam engines, automobiles and bicycles have been inspired by the attempts of boys in the genius and inventor-stricken era when they were attempting to solve the problem of getting over the surface of the earth quicker than the other fellow and without disfigurement any more "tissue" in the human body than necessary.

Various manufacturers of the old style tricycles and velocipedes were by no means the first to appreciate the demand for such machines. The youth of the land worked on almost all the ingenious means of transportation before the manufacturers and inventors, who took the credit for the work, dreamed of covering distance by any other means than on teams, wild horses and on foot.

Within the memory of men yet living boys were working on the self-propelling toy wagon. The children devised all kinds of ways for getting the wagons over the ground without harnessing another boy to the wagons and having them pulled by direct force. The scheme was to have a system of treadles or something which would push the wagon forward without the assistance of the second boy. It mattered not if it took an equal amount of energy. The idea was to do something which was better than plain, ordinary walking.

From the scheme of a wagon with a "treadle wheel" and treadles, the automobile undoubtedly had its origin. Boys of two generations before the automobile era worked on a plan to propel a wagon or carriage before the gas engine or storage battery was ever heard of as a power with which to drive the vehicle.

Coasting down hills in spring wagons and carriages was no uncommon thing with the youth of the last generation. Horses and mules drew the carriages on level ground about as fast as the youngsters allowed the vehicles to run down hill, but it was highly satisfactory to ride behind horses when an invisible power like gravity would do the work.

Some of these old carriages evidently made an impression on the minds of those boys who have since become men and built automobiles. Frequently the carriages appropriated for coasting were fitted with a

wheel steering apparatus. It was no uncommon thing to see a coasting vehicle controlled by a shaft passed up in front of the driver or chauffeur, and on top of this an ingenious youngster would mount an old sewing machine wheel. All sorts of devices were also arranged for brakes. Whether the modern air brake is the outgrowth of some boy's attempt to stop a coasting carriage which he had started or not is veiled in mystery, but there were about as many brakes as there were steering devices.

Certain it is that from the experiments of the youth during the closing years of the nineteenth century, the modern "coaster," either on wheels or runners, has been the outcome. Coasters were popular before the roller skates and may be again. Because of the boys working to fit them up with the latest devices for stopping and starting, the coasters reached a degree of perfection which closely resembled the completeness of a modern Pullman car train. Guided by a steering apparatus as perfect as that used on automobiles, stopped at any point by several kinds of brakes, bells rang automatically as on a fire engine or patrol wagon and the whole fitted with Brussels carpet, laid in a vague way the elegance of the kids' coasters.

The "treaders" used in winter also reached perfection. They only lacked a steam or hot air heating plant to make them models of comfort and elegance. Formerly two boys formed a partnership, one furnishing the front sled and the other the one to run in the rear. Then a raid was made on the county's bridge material or a plank picked up about the farm. Nailed to the rear sled and fastened to the front sled by a single bolt, the plank was the only seat offered to those who were invited to ride on the "treaders." But the old treader is as antiquated by the side of a modern coaster as the first railroad locomotive is to the modern ten-wheeler.

At various times in the past the burden

of putting boys and girls over the earth's surface and of covering distance has fallen on dumb animals. The fact of harnessing up the family dog either in a cart or sled struck a town or neighborhood and every boy was fitting up dog harness at the same time. The village harness maker took it quite a few pennies and the savings of childhood by sewing or riveting on the buckle, many times the only one on the entire harness. A few designing manufacturers made dog and goat carts, built them like carriages and finished them handsomely. But the self-respecting boy and dog spurned the attempt to make money by the dog cart industry. A soap box with two old wheels, whether made of mol, was a racing cart for any dog tournament, while a larger box with four wheels served either as a family carriage or gentleman's bookrack. Sometimes all the dogs in a city ran two hands high and over were pressed into the harness and citizens dreaded to pass the ordinary boy and his dog when they were taking the morning drive, as the dog sometimes read the compass different from what the boy thought of the direction and there was a clash of transportation interests that frequently caused a citizen to stop short and wait for an unconcerned dog driver to untangle the harness which had been wound around the legs of the person not lucky enough to own any other means of locomotion than his feet.

But the era of dog carts has passed. Some social settlement worker discovered that the dogs were leading the boys into wayward ways and taking the lead into all kinds of meanness. For years it had been supposed that boys got dogs into trouble, but the whole theory was disproved. The dogs were the real leaders. And not the drivers of the dogs allow the faithful animals to go wherever they pleased? Sometimes a boy would start to see a friend or on a mission of business for his parents. His desire to get over the ground without walking led to driving his dog. The boy's intentions were good when he started and his mother told him good-bye. But at the first corner the dog he was driving would think of a friend which he had in some part of town, probably in the opposite direction from where his master was going. But that made no difference. The dog's friend was always given the

preference and if the dog had a master whose company would ordinarily be secured by the first boy and likewise by his mother it made no difference to the dog. They frequently brought boys together who would have been better off apart, but it was none of the dog's business.

Such dog leadership influenced the disapproval of driving dogs through the streets. The "coasters" became more vigilant and many parents were converted to the belief that every town which has one boy's dog has too many dogs.

Just why the bicycle is not as popular with boys and girls as it was a few years ago is a matter which is hard to explain. The business man's explanation is that it is because the wheels over less and the boys do not want them as badly. When bicycles cost \$100 the boy who owned one was looked up to, but was not always popular. Now that bicycles cost \$20 and almost every boy can own one, especially since the plan of selling them "little cash down and balance like rent" was inaugurated.

Probably the bicycle was abandoned only for a time, that some genius might find a small storage battery or pocket gas-battery engine which can be attached to any bicycle. The motor cycles are becoming popular, but must always be expensive.

All of the changes in the means of travel which boys have devised are something better than walking have worked together to bring out the roller skate, and this device has been perfected to suit the requirements of boys and girls.

Formerly the roller skates were simply box-wood rollers fastened to a small, strong steel shaft with a "key." But now the skates are made with steel and aluminum rollers, many of the better ones having perfect ball bearings and running "like a watch." Others have but two rollers and are as difficult to learn to run as the skates. Some other roller skates are now being made with rubber tires and may be used on floors whether of wood or tile.

But by far the greatest demand for the roller skates is for use on the sidewalks and pavements, and every boy and girl is heartily in favor of patching the holes in the pavements, replacing every wooden and board walk with cement, forgetting that brick was ever used for paving and sidewalk and that some inventor will come along who will make motor skates.

## Quaint Features of Life

**A** Held Reception in Dark. RECEPTION without lights, and not one of the forty guests or the host and hostess at all perturbed by the fact was one of the features of St. Louis social affairs recently. There were music and beer and wine and there were songs and instrumental music and a lot of laughing and talking and story telling and cracking of jokes.

Nobody at the reception could see a wink, but they can't see at any time, so the absence of Chinese lanterns and chandeliers were not noticed except by the neighbors. The occasion was the anniversary of the wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Reever, both blind.

Before the guests arrived Mrs. Reever and her blind assistant went over the house carefully and put it in order. They swept every inch of the floors and hung sweet smelling flowers where they would do the most good.

"Sweet? How do blind women sweep?" It's easy to hear one of these tell it. They just take off their shoes and feel the floor with their feet. If there is any dirt they will find it and use the broom on it.

One of the most unusual blowouts that ever occurred in the Humble oil field in Texas happened last week, when a well drilled by Harry E. Decker blew out and brought from the depth of 20 feet below the surface of the earth a whole tree. Pieces of the tree were collected and are now being kept for verification of the remarkable occurrence.

The wood is in a good state of preservation, notwithstanding its many years in the earth.

The well that blew out is the fifth that has suffered this experience in this tract of land. The pressure here seems to be much greater than in any other part of the oil bearing territory.

**A** Unique Grandstand Incident. Among the spectators at a recent baseball game on the south side, Chicago, was a young man who never misses a game if he can help it. He knows the players by their first names and is an expert in all matters pertaining to the sport. He was accompanied on this occasion by a blind young woman who never had seen a professional game before, and the two occupied seats in the reserved section.

One of the players had gone to first base on a called ball. The man at the hot hit to short field. The shortstop picked up the ball, stopped on second base, and by a quick throw in first relieved the batter. There was a loud yell of applause at this point double play. The blind girl turned to the inevitable question.

"Well," she said, "who is that girl down there in front, with the initiation charms on her hair?"

**A** Thunder Causes Inequality and Death. Robert Williamson of Mansfield, Mass., aged 64, for a dozen years monthly deranged by the approach of thunderstorms, failed to recover as soon as the atmospheric disturbances had passed, at last he lost his life because of one of them. His body was found in a ditch ditch four miles from town.

Friday a severe electrical storm arose. At the first rumbling sound of the thunder he disappeared from his home. As soon as he was missed a search was instituted, more than 20 citizens taking part. Whether Williamson was struck by lightning or became exhausted and died from exposure has not been determined.

**N** This Looks Like the Record. NICHOLAS VANN, the colored cemetery of the town of Mount Hope, Orange county, N. Y., was 98 years old, last month and is looking around for his fifteenth wife. Mr. Vann is hale and hearty and says he never felt better in his life. He buried his fourteenth wife on December 23, last, and now says that he is getting lonely and believes with the Good Book that it is not good to live alone.

Although he has had fourteen wives and many children, all have passed away. Mr. Vann says that all the people of the town of Mount Hope with whom he was friendly have passed away and the bears, wolves, and wild animals which furnished him adventure and employment in hunting have also vanished.

Mr. Vann was born in the town of Mount Hope, April 22, 1810. Slavery then existed in New York state, and he took the name of his master. He has had a varied career, acting as a body waiter to some of the most prominent men of Orange county. He has preached, doctoring and practiced law, and is said to have a law library of over 100 volumes.

**A** Matrimonial Paradise. It is quite evident that Panama is a matrimonial paradise. We are told by the organizer of the women's club on the island that little Pan Canal is really overworked charity. It is impossible, according to this authority, for a woman to remain single. She cites as an instance of the matrimonial demand that one of the hospitals last seventeen nurses by marriage in three months, and so disorganize the hospital, and consequently never showed up at the hospital. It appears that matrimony is made particularly easy in his favored section. The government provides all the necessities for the married quarters, the house, the furniture, the drinking water, everything, in fact, except the food and clothes. And it should be remembered that in Panama a barber receives nearly twice the wages he would get in the states, and the ways for spending money are few and not alluring. There are no bargain sales and even the most credulous feminine financiers are obliged to save their money. Thus, in the chronic remarks, make it a hard place for many women, but there doesn't seem to be any perceptible amount of sleeping with matrimony is suggested.

**Cure for Appendicitis.** Quinine, tonics and operating tables may be good for the system, but love is better. That much has been proved in the case of Miss Eda Luby of St. Louis, who, on a rainy day, was married to her husband, Saturday afternoon, to Edward C. Campbell. She was almost well the next day.

The Rev. Dr. W. F. Andrews of the Centenary Methodist Episcopal church happened to be in the city, and, naturally attracted by the devotion of the doctor, joyously attended the ceremony, and with his fiancée's pale hand in his own, the pastor, his marriage vows. The doctor returned to the room just as the ceremony was finished, and in the calm that succeeded, looked in wonder at the smiling, freshened face of the patient.

When the physician saw his patient on Sunday morning, all necessity for the operation had vanished, to his astonishment.

"It seemed as if providence had a hand in our marriage," said the young bride, as she lay propped with pillows in her bed, examining her wedding gifts. "We set the date of our marriage, before about seven months ago and I was taken with appendicitis and we were prevented. Then, as now, I became sick on the week before the ceremony was to have taken place. This time we really thought there was no reason why we should not fit off again."

**A** Gossip About Noted People. HAYTI'S Aged Ruler. CORRESPONDENT on the spot, in a letter to the New York Sun, gives this picture of the aged ruler of Hayti:

Imagine a typical Ethiopian, some 60 or 70 years of age, bloodshot and apparently only half civilized, a dealer of death to political enemies, a believer in voodooism, and you have a fair idea of what he is. For anything more one must come to Hayti and see for himself, presently somewhere in the jungles of Africa or perhaps in the mystic east on the planet Mars there is a president, potentate, khalif, sultan or some other sort of ruler who is a strange and grotesquely impossible as President Nord Alexis of Hayti, but certainly there is none to compare with him in this hemisphere. Castro of Venezuela, that "monkey of the Andes," comes close, perhaps, but Castro's style differs, and while he defies the great powers of the earth he does not approach in pure pithlessness the venerable old man who sits in the presidential palace here and runs this little black republic to suit himself.

For 36 years the country has been under the same sort of rule as now. The natives gained their independence from the French, and since that time the history of the country has been a record of strife and bloodshed.

Shot off from all the rest of the world, it has gone on a downward path until now it seems that nothing can save it from utter ruin unless intervened by the powers. No sign have recently been taken toward saving what is left and building upon it. The government rubs the people, and the people, thoroughly accustomed to this procedure, don't seem to care much.

When in his prime Alexis must have been over six feet tall and very fit from active life, but now he is the framework of what was formerly a splendid specimen of physical manhood.

His legs and body seem a mass of mere bone, shrunken until almost nothing is left. His hands are long and bony and themselves show great age. On one finger of his right hand he wore two tremendous diamonds in one setting. He had no other jewelry.

The face was as black as could be. It was far more Ethiopian than the average negro in the north. The profile was almost triangular, one side beginning with the low, sloping forehead and ending at the mouth, with his full lips concealing a

**M** Married in a Buggy. John Crealy of Rochester, Pa., and Miss Ivy Davis of Dover, Pa., were married while standing in a buggy on the street. The young couple met the Rev. Harvey I. Gilman, who was out walking, and produced a marriage license, which the preacher read by the aid of an arc light.

There were no witnesses, and after waiting a short time Mr. and Mrs. Crealy drove away in the same buggy.

With their husbands, Emil Hicking and Edward Wesner, the twins arrived in Manchester from Springfield, Mass., and confirmed the news of their wedding, which they conveyed by telegraph to their parents.

They left home Saturday night, saying they were going to visit in Hartford.

**A** Girl Twins Elope. Born on the same day and inseparable during their eighteen years of life, the Misses Eva and Ethel Dillon of Meriden, Conn., who look so much alike one can scarcely tell them apart, eloped. Each was married at the same time and they will have their first husbands, Emil Hicking and Edward Wesner, the twins arrived in Manchester from Springfield, Mass., and confirmed the news of their wedding, which they conveyed by telegraph to their parents.

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**A** St. Louis Elopement. A walk dinner at a downtown hotel, masculine logic, feminine protest, surrender, an auto, a friend, separate train connections and Niagara and peace sitting contentedly and unobtrusively at home going over the newspapers, were factors in the eloping of Miss Estelle H. Keeble, daughter of W. B. Keeble of No. 223 Wagoner place, St. Louis, and William Wassman, a young traveling man, which made the boldness of gay Lockhart pale in comparison.

"I just couldn't tell you, mamma," explained the young woman in a wire to her

father, who was in Chicago, James Harbison, aged 31, arrived in Washburn, Conn., from Long Island, N. Y., told his love to Mary E. Stearns, nurse, aged 23 years, and took her away as his promised bride. Turbitt never failed in his hope of winning the girl, who was a teacher in Chicago. She went east and Turbitt followed her as far as New York, where he secured a position as letter carrier. He lived in the vicinity of his love in Brooklyn for nearly five years and had seen her often and had made himself worthy, he said.

**A** Superstitious Landlord. The hunt of superstition has been tracked by Landlord Miller of the Johnston hotel, Logansport, Ind. For years this history has been known as the Johnston hotel. Recently a new electric sign appeared in front with the words: "Johnston Hotel." Many

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