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THE PANAMA CANAL.

OPINIONS AS TO WHETHER IT WILL BE ABANDONED.

The Condition of the Great Enterprise and How the Canal Looks—A Ride from the Atlantic to the Pacific in an Hour.

[Special Correspondence.]

PANAMA, Jan. 14.—Over the short line of railway which forms the present connecting link between the Atlantic and the Pacific I rode today in a special train. The starting point was Aspinwall, the terminus Panama. The time consumed was one hour and thirty minutes, the distance forty-seven miles. The fare was \$5. I mention this circumstance as showing the steady march of improvement even at the isthmus. Two or three years ago the time taken in crossing was over three hours, the fare was \$30, and the service quite ordinary, if not dangerous.

The gross earnings of this little railway during the year just closed has been over \$4,000,000. Notwithstanding the reduction in fare and freight it pays over 20 per cent. dividends, and Col. Rives (father of the author of "The Quick and the Dead"), the general manager, told your correspondent that, even when the canal is completed, as he feels sure it will be, the road will be self supporting by its local business, and also pay a steady profit on the enormous cost. It is managed by American skill; has American engineers, conductors and clerks, but is owned by foreign capital.

One hears nothing but gossip, speculation and positive statement about the canal or the isthmus. It is health, wealth and almost existence to the people, and they are of course supremely interested in its welfare. But you grow very weary of the constant iteration, with the thermometer boiling forever up around the 100 mark. Still, life has its compensations, for the question is never asked here, "Is it hot enough for you?" No one knows precisely what is going to happen to the canal. The American consul feels sure that failure and abandonment will be its final and almost immediate outcome; the resident director general informs me that there will be no interruption of the work, and that it will be completed by French enterprise and French money within two years.

I have spent three days on the canal, but not being blessed with technical skill I cannot intelligently and clearly write of the precise condition of affairs. I have at this moment a confused idea of measurements, sea levels, deviations, meters, etc., which lead to nowhere in particular, but I have a profound impression based upon a sincere if superficial view and examination, that the excavations are much more than "a scratch upon the surface of the isthmus." An enormous amount of labor has been expended, and although here and there at Obispo and Colobra were seen evidences of sinful waste, the work accomplished is tremendous. To see scores of fine locomotives with the rank tropical vegetation growing out of the smokestacks, and dozens of unused and expensive machines abandoned, suggests vast losses and reckless management somewhere, while the fine boulevards and beautiful homes the managers have erected all over the isthmus for their personal comfort tell where much of the poor French peasants' money has gone. And yet, notwithstanding all these things, the Panama canal is well on to the end, and how it can be abandoned at this stage of the game I cannot see. The French nation as a nation can hardly afford to let the scheme end in disaster.

We Americans take it as a matter of course that the French government will not violate our beloved Monroe doctrine by taking official part in the great scheme. Of course it would never do to have a foreign power appear on the American continent, and the eagle screams in agony at the very thought. But really one can imagine France as

not overwhelmed with fear at the possible consequences. Diplomacy will probably prevent any rupture, and the chamber of deputies at Paris may not appear openly on the scene, but while the hand will be the hand of Jacob. It is clear as the sun at noonday that if the Panama canal is completed—and the signs all point to a certainty that it will be—not only will French capital construct the works, but France herself will be behind the enterprise. If Brother Jonathan doesn't like this what is he going to do about it? We are a great nation, a wonderful country, with a people quite unequalled on God's footstool, but all the same we cut a sorry figure in the world's naval history, and if trouble should come it is on the sea the disturbance would take place. Why France today, second, I think, among the naval forces of the earth, or rather the waters upon the earth, with her splendid and enormous battle ships, could close up every American seaport on the Atlantic coast and destroy millions of American treasure without our offering any serious defense. England, Germany, Italy, Russia and Austria of course far excel us on the seas, while insignificant Greece, and even South American Chili, are our superiors as naval powers.

Here in the old Spanish harbor of Colon, where the war ships of the world during their southern cruises occasionally gather, the American vessel is looked upon with something approaching derision, and the power of the American at sea is referred to with a politely veiled sneer. Happily it will not always be so. In a few years, when our twenty and odd great cruisers, now building or projected, are in service, the United States will hold a reasonably good position, but "while the grass grows the horse may starve."

Today France is on the isthmus, prepared and determined to stay. FREDERICK W. WHITE.

A LETTER FROM TEXAS.

Galveston's New Building—Senator Richard Coke.

[Special Correspondence.]

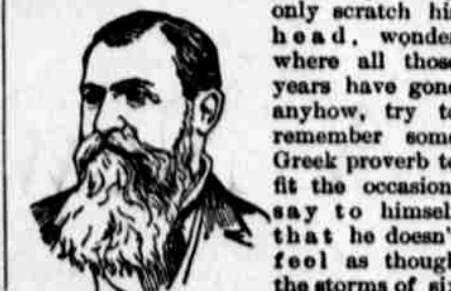
GALVESTON, Tex., Feb. 5.—One of the most prominent and undoubtedly finest architectural monuments of the south is the custom house and postoffice here. The architect very wisely selected the Italian Romanesque style of architecture, so well adapted to the sunny south. The beautiful lines, the correct proportions, the commanding tower, the selected material, all combined, compose a harmonious creation. The structure contains accommodations for the differ-



THE GALVESTON PUBLIC BUILDING.

ent Federal offices located at Galveston. The entire first floor is assigned to the postoffice department, with spacy lobbies for the public, while the custom house officers, the United States commissioner, land office, and marine hospital service officials, etc., have offices on the second and third floors. The court room, connected with offices for judge and clerk and jury rooms, is located on the second floor. Lofty, open galleries built around the building are not only ornamental, but useful. The exterior facings of walls are of pressed brick with terra cotta and stone trimmings, while the interior finish will be of hard wood. All modern improvements and sanitary plumbing are introduced, and when finished the United States court house and postoffice at Galveston will be one of the crowning achievements of American architecture. The building and site will cost about \$350,000.

When the sun rises, clouds permitting, on the morning of March 13, Senator Richard Coke, of Texas, will awaken to the astounding fact that in some way or other 60 years of life have slidden behind him, and that, strangely enough, it will only be a matter of ten years before he is 70. But he probably will not think much about it. He is too absent minded for that. He will probably only scratch his head, wonder where all those years have gone anyhow, try to remember some Greek proverb to fit the occasion, say to himself that he doesn't feel as though the storms of six decades had passed over his head, attire himself in that old fashioned black suit of his (the coat reaches below his knees), and forget all about it.



SENATOR COKE.

Senator Coke is a Virginian, and was educated at that famous old institution, William and Mary college. He was admitted to the bar when but 21 years of age, and has since practiced law constantly, when not in the public service. His home has been in Waco since 1850. He served in the Confederate army. In 1853 he was appointed district judge. He was nominated by the Democratic party for judge of the state supreme court in 1853 and elected. In 1867 he returned to the practice of law, and was elected governor of Texas in 1873 by a majority of 50,000. In 1878 he was re-elected by a majority of 102,000, resigning Dec. 1, 1877, after having been elected the previous April to the United States senate. He was re-elected in 1883, and was recently returned by the Texas legislature for another term of six years.

In pressing flat embroidery, lay the article wrong side up on a damp cloth.

NYE AT NIAGARA.

He Braves a Storm and Interviews Pocomoco.

We visited the falls on the day of the blizzard which wrecked Reading and which wound up by tipping the suspension foot bridge at Niagara into the river below. The falls have been visited in summer and in winter, in the broad glare of day and the soft and mellow moonlight, but very few people have gone there during a blizzard.

The day broke moist and measly at Buffalo, but at noon the gray and choppy clouds scattered a little and a patch of sky could now and then be discovered. Eating a hasty meal, our party, arrayed in alpenstocks and conscious reticence, began the ascent from Buffalo by a circuitous route. We reached Niagara Falls station, whence we proceeded by drosky to our chalet. Here we alighted. The chalet is kept by a native American, and after our long journey from Buffalo it was good to once more hear the music of our own language. Hastily eating a light lunch, we put on our topcoats, and in charge of a John Darn we proceeded by diligence towards the falls via the American side.

The storm now burst upon us in all its fury, and the rain descended in the wildest profusion, saturating the falls and rendering them well nigh impassable. Our muletoer covered himself with his poncho, wrapped his tarpaulin around his ears, and while our slender diligence swayed in the blast he drove us across to Goat Island. The thunder of the immense volume of water was now swallowed up by the mighty roar of the bursting tempest, and then, as it died away like the wail of a perishing soul, one would again hear the sullen thunder of the great American dam site.

We now began the descent on the side of Goat Island looking towards the Great Horse Fall. The rain fell in torrents, and as our umbrellas had been turned wrong side out by the blast, we were soon wet to the skin. There we stood in the presence of the greatest spectacle America can produce, perhaps, outside of congress. Like an egotistical author Niagara for centuries has been pouring over its own works. It is really, however, beyond criticism. I went there thinking that if the Falls really deserved scathing, I would scath them through the press and injure their business; but I must say that, like Mr. Booth, they deserve their great success, and I do not blame them for respecting themselves and having their pictures taken every little while and getting their names in the papers. They deserve all the glory they have got, and far be it from me to put a straw in the way of the progress of Niagara Falls.

We next went down to the Whirlpool, and on the way a detachment of John Darns escorted us with an air of suspicion. Our drosky driver evidently watched us every moment like a cat. At the whirlpool we alighted again, being narrowly watched by the driver and a John Darn from Coboco.

Here as we reached the brink of the cliff the blizzard struck us amidship, and the great Niagara which has assisted so many temperance lecturers in scaring to death the moderate drinker seemed to become silent in the presence of old Mr. Blizzard, from the wild and unkempt west. Just then my high silk hat, which I wear in ascending the Alps and doing the tourist act generally, went up into a large blue hole in the sky, and while I was watching it the square red remark, "Keep off the grass," with an iron rod on one side, swatted me across the organ of alimentiveness.

The storm was now at its height. The roof of the hotel gently lifted with the breeze, and through the fast falling rain we could see a surprised gentleman in his room just emerging through the neck band of a bright new shirt. With a look of horror and wonder he tried to pull down the roof again and conceal himself, but he could not do so.

The storm now took off its coat and shrieked, while the Whirlpool was lashed to its greatest fury, and at the Whirlpool bazaar genuine Indian moccasins, made in Connecticut, went down to \$2 a pair. I made a movement towards the brink of the precipice, intending to peer down over it into the boiling waters, when I felt the grasp of a gendarme on my shoulder and I was jerked back with an oath which would have sworn in a whole precinct of non-residents at a presidential election.

"Monstere fool heemself!" said the John Darn in pure Buffalo French, with a slight patois of the Rue de Main street. Then grinding his teeth he managed to make me understand that I had stated in Buffalo that "I was going over the falls and through the whirlpool," but that a nemesis was on my trail. It is very disagreeable to have your trail stepped on by a nemesis, and so I explained that I meant to be figurative, and so, when the John Darn had opened my overcoat and found that I was not dressed in tights with double leaded bridge jumping shoes, he allowed me to pass. It was here at the bazaar that I met my old friend Pocomoco, of the Piute tribe of Indians. "And what are you doing here, so far away from home, Pocomoco?" I asked, in the light running domestic accents of the Piute tongue.

"I am here," he replied in the same language, "to procure our regular supply of Indian relics for the coming year. We cannot compete any longer with Connecticut in the manufacture of genuine Indian relics. So we come to Niagara Falls for them. We also get most of our ornamental bead work done in England, and our ornamental moccasins are done there too. The white man has facilities which we do not have, and so the red man's goose is practically cooked. We buy all our weapons and headstake sticks now at New York. We get our bows and arrows made at Waterbury, Conn., and Boston furnishes us with our lingo. We can buy arrow heads cheaper than we can make them, and why should we toil over a home made arrow head all day when he can steal a horse in ten minutes that will bring us nice new relics enough to last us a year? We have in our tribe favored free trade, and so we with our infant industries are thrown into direct competition with the pauper relic makers of the flowery. You can buy a good scalp at Chatham square for sixty-nine cents today, and so the war path is practically overgrown with grass. In a year or two men with sample cases will no doubt visit the Indian tribes and sell their year's supply of everything in that line. We are utterly discouraged. There has not been a warlike attitude among the Piutes since the Buck wheat Pancake Outbreak of '55."—Bill Nye in New York World.

PERSONS AND THINGS.

Ben Butler chews up twenty cigars a day. They are called "Widow Butler's weeds."

It takes \$20,000 a year to dine the officers of Queen Victoria's guard, on duty at St. James' palace.

Professor Graham Bell says that the congenital deaf mutes of the country are increasing at a greater rate than the general population.

European manufacturers of electric lights are being visited for the purpose of finding a light to be used by the pearl fishers when at work under water.

The New York Prison association, after long investigation, decided that the women convicts should be cared for in a separate institution, with rules and regulations of its own.

During our civil war city bred men stood long marches better, were subject to less disorders, and recovered from gunshot wounds more readily than country bred men.

F. C. Phillips, the author of the novel "As in a Looking Glass," has been a soldier, a journalist, and a theatrical manager, and he is now a successful barrister. He has been more than once asked to stand for parliament.

A German scientific journal informs us that electricity is used in India to prevent snakes from going into dwellings. Shouldn't wonder now if it wouldn't prove effectual with boots under peculiar circumstances.

Moses Jacobs is probably the richest newsboy in the world. He is 18 years old and has sold newspapers for the last fourteen years on the streets of Des Moines, Ia., during which time he has acquired \$4,000 worth of real estate from his savings.

The courts of California have decided that a Chinaman's queue must not be cut off when he is sent to prison; but they are cut off just the same. No warden will allow that a heathen pig tail is more sacred than American unplaited hair.

The emperor of Germany receives a salary of \$750,000, and wants it increased to a million. For a man who has not been in the business not much more than six months the young emperor has remarkable confidence in his ability and a good estimate of his own personal worth.

Miss Adele Aus der Ohe is said to have played on the piano with both hands at the tender age of 3. She heard some one playing "Il Bacio," and seating herself at the instrument, rattled off that brilliant waltz in a manner that made every one who heard her stand agape with wonder.

Students before being admitted to the university of Mississippi are required to appear before a board of professors and answer whether they have any firearms about them or whether some person or persons had any in keeping for them. If so, they must be delivered up before the applicants are declared full students.

Some of the leading citizens of Washington have determined to found a national park in the Rock Creek valley, one of the most picturesque localities in the environs of the capital. The site has been selected, and legislation will be asked by congress while the land can be had at a reasonable price.

The northern limits of the culture of the silk worm are being steadily extended. Experiments made last summer at Astrakhan showed that it could easily be carried on at the mouth of the Volga. Notwithstanding the age of the mulberry trees which were planted at Astrakhan thirty-five years since, the results of the experiments proved satisfactory, and 20,000 cocoons were received this year.

Old Silver.

A great deal of fossil history is sealed up in genuine old silver. Here is an example of it, dating back to the first third of the Eighteenth century, guaranteed by the only test which indisputably proves the quality and date of sterling silver, the English "hall mark." This is a two handled "loving cup," which at feasts was grasped by its two handles and was so passed, literally, from hand to hand and mouth to mouth around the circle of the "goodie company." This cup is of the year 1727. Here is a tankard dated 1733, another fine old English piece. In marked contrast to the plainness of the rest, here is a highly ornamented tankard—a modern work in reproduction. Its body is a solid piece of ivory covered with intricate carvings of war scenes; the top and base are silver, and the cover is crowned with an ivory warrior.—New York Times.

Red Tape in Austria.

A Vienna correspondent of The London Times writes that "American couples about to travel in Austria ought to take with them their marriage certificates. An American lady recently gave birth to a child here, and the father, accompanied by witnesses, went to register the birth. Owing to the absence of a marriage certificate, the clerk said that he must record the birth as illegitimate, and the only concession made, after much expostulation, was the substitution of the word 'doubtful' for 'illegitimate.' Further on being told that the parents belonged to the Anglican church, the clerk wrote down, 'No religion.'—Frank Leslie's Newspaper.

Queensland's Rich Mine.

The Mount Morgan gold mine of Queensland has proved to be the richest mine in the world. It is situated on the range of a sleep ranch. It is an iron stone hill in the midst of green grass. A public road runs over the mountain, and it was while repairing it that the gold was discovered. It was purchased for \$3,200, just \$5 an acre, and the shares are now worth \$75,000,000. It is supposed to be an old geyser impregnated with gold. The metal is extracted by the chlorination process and costs but \$7.50 a ton.—Brooklyn Eagle.

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