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PANAMA CANAL ENTERPRISE

History of the Many Schemes to Unite the Atlantic and Pacific.

HOW WATERWAY WAS TO USURP RAILWAY

Difficulties Attending the Work of Ditching the Isthmus—Commercial Confidence of the World Behind the Scheme—The Collapse—Contractors' Steals.

The political disturbances that have been wrought up in the last few weeks in France, and which at the present moment have fomented into such a white heat that the very existence of the republic itself is critical, are results that were not entirely unexpected by those who are familiar with the history of the company of the interoceanic canal of Panama, and cognizant of the fact that a scrutinous investigation was made last year into the affairs of that company.

The international importance of the enterprise, the prominence of the institutions and persons involved, and the enormous amount of money to be accounted for, are features of the affair that have naturally created the most intense interest in America as well as in Europe, and have revived the arguments regarding a ship canal across the American isthmus.

The project of such a canal across the isthmus which separates North and South America is one that was favorably discussed as early as the sixteenth century, and the money which has been expended since that time in investigations and surveys of the several suggested routes would probably amount to a sufficient sum to build any one of the proposed canals.

It was projected to pierce the Isthmus of Darien as early as 1520, and the Tehuantepec isthmus has been the subject of much exploration and discussion for 250 years. As a solution of the question one eminent man, who had gained fame and prestige by the success of his engineering accomplishments in this country, boldly suggested the transportation upon wheels of deep sea vessels of the largest size across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. The renown he had gained by his successful opening of the Mississippi river to deep sea vessels secured to Captain Eads wide spread attention and interest for his novel idea, but his project was finally dropped in 1881 as impracticable, and on account of the appalling cost of its construction and maintenance.

Long before this time the question of passenger transportation across the isthmus had been successfully solved by the construction of a railroad across the Isthmus of Panama. Stimulated by the sudden increase of traffic, caused by the California gold discoveries, the question of transportation across the Panama isthmus ultimately took tangible shape in 1849, when a company was organized under the leadership of William H. Aspinwall of New York, which commenced the construction of a railway from Colon to Panama. In spite of the almost insurmountable difficulties the road was completed in January, 1855, and a bronze statue of Aspinwall now stands at Colon, an appropriate tribute to the chief projector for his untiring zeal and energy.

The Panama Railroad.

The Panama railroad is only forty-seven miles in length, but it is undoubtedly one of the most important highways in the world. When one recollects the fact that the route via Panama shortens the distance by sea from Europe and the Atlantic points of the Americas to the Pacific slope and the occident more than 10,000 miles, and then computes the vast volume of traffic that is constantly passing between these points, he will attain some idea of the amount of business that is done by the Panama Railroad company. In many places the road is constructed over what seems to be miles of almost unfathomed swamps, and the difficulty that was encountered in securing suitable labor at the time of the construction made the undertaking exceedingly hazardous.

The initial cost of the Panama road was about $7,000,000, but it is probable that a great deal more than this was spent by the original company, and it is stated on good authority that the whole enterprise was a continued steal on the part of the contractors. The original company failed before the road was put into operation, and it is said that at that time the property could have been purchased for $3,000,000. If the Pacific Mail Steamship company, possessing as it then did a fleet both on the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, had availed itself of this opportunity to become masters of this vast interoceanic highway they would have been in a position to monopolize almost the entire commerce of the Pacific seas. They failed to purchase, however, and the entire property passed into the hands of a French company to whom it has proven a veritable Anaconda. It is probable that no property in the world has ever earned handsomer increments than the Panama Railroad company. From the time of its completion up to about three years ago every passenger that crossed the Isthmus of Panama paid $25.00 in gold to the Panama Railroad company. The freight rates were equally exorbitant and for every ton of freight transported across the isthmus, for forty years, the railroad company collected $160. Every stockholder of the enterprise has been made wealthy, and a position with the Panama Railroad company is one of the fattest jobs that a railroad man can ask for.

The annual government tax levied on the railroad by the Republic of Colombia amounts to $250,000, and of this amount the state of Panama, through which the road passes, received but $25,000.

The Estimated Cost.

During the period of the construction of the Panama railroad the idea of a canal across the American isthmus had not been lost sight of and another great man, one of the most illustrious of the century, who had successfully joined the waters of the Red and Mediterranean seas, took up the project of a sea level canal across the Isthmus of Panama. In 1878 the Colombian government granted his French company the exclusive right to construct the canal between the two oceans in the territory, and the first meeting of the new company was held in 1881. The capital necessary to complete the work was estimated at 620,000,000 francs, or $120,000,000, the estimated cost of excavation being 450,000,000 francs or $90,000,000. The eminent name of de Lesseps in connection with the affair imbued the people of the financial world with the utmost confidence in the enterprise, and straightway hundreds of millions of money, amounting to double the amount originally asked for by de Lesseps was immediately forthcoming.

Nearly every nation of Europe and America commended the French engineer for his energy and enterprise, and the newspapers of the world heralded broadcast the good news that the long-talked-of Panama canal was soon to be a reality. The expenditure of such a vast amount of wealth in such a small space as the narrow Isthmus of Panama, naturally made the isthmus the cynosure of all the nations of the earth. Thousands of fortune hunters from every city and country in the world hasten to Panama, all eager to participate in the spoils of the great enterprise.

When Actual Work Began.

The date set for the actual commencement of the work was in the latter part of 1881, and in October of that year a French squadron, bearing de Lesseps and a large following of distinguished citizens of all nations anchored in the harbor of Colon. It had been intended that de Lessep should commence the operations of the great undertaking himself, and that he, individually, should turn the first spadeful of earth that was thrown.

October is naturally one of the rainiest months of the year at Panama, but it is probable that that state will never again see another October so wet as was the one of 1881. The agents of the French company had liberally prepared for the reception of de Lesseps and his party and the week of their stay at the isthmus was a carnival of drink and jollity from beginning to end. Every nation of the earth was probably represented in considerable numbers upon the isthmus at that time, and with the money that had been recklessly dispersed by the entertaining committee the people of the various nations celebrated the great event in their own peculiar fashion. A large portion of the people who had come to the isthmus were from the criminal and convict classes of other nations, and Panama at that time was a famous rendezvous for gamblers and adventurers of every ilk. I have been told by people who were on the isthmus at the time that the amount of champagne alone used on the isthmus in that week cost at a low estimate $200,000, and that probably three-fourths of the entire population were intoxicated for the whole week, all at the expense of the canal company.

Carried Mud to De Lesseps.

It happened that this week was a particularly wet one, and as de Lesseps and his party had come all the way from France to start the work, they decided to do it at once and return to a more favorable climate. The day set for the final ceremony was very wet and disagreeable, and as M. de Lesseps was somewhat indisposed that day, about half an acre of Panama mud was excavated and carried in an immense trough on board the flag ship squadron, where, under cover, with great pomp and ceremony de Lesseps turned the first spadeful of earth that was turned in the great Panama canal. The next day the newspapers of the world heralded the fact that the great enterprise had started at last, and that the illustrious de Lesseps himself had commenced the work in person, but I doubt if few of them related the particulars regarding the manner in which it was done.

The route selected by the French company as the best one adapted for the construction of the canal followed generally the line of the railroad, but kept somewhat closer to the bed of the Chagres river, which it was to cross seventy-eight times between Colon and Panama. The physical features of this route for a canal had been carefully and minutely studied in all their relations, and the brilliant corps of engineers who were in charge of the enterprise were confident of the success of the plan. Throughout the whole distance of the canal it was intended that the bottom should lie about twenty-eight feet below the mean level of the oceans, and the width of the canal in all places was to have been seventy-two feet at the bottom and 160 feet at the top. The two greatest physical difficulties connected with the undertaking were those caused by the height of land in the center of the isthmus and by the Chagres river; but it might be added that the greatest difficulty of all was to secure efficient and honest management of the enterprise. At about the center of the isthmus, for a considerable distance it was necessary to cut down through the solid strata for a depth of about 300 feet. The rock, however, was found to be of a soft character, easily removed.

The Largest Dyke in the World.

The fact that the canal was located at sea level and was to be fed by the waters of the two oceans, having no adequate supply of water at greater elevation to feed it; necessitated the bottom of the canal prism to be lowered to the depth mentioned, which made it a constant prey to the Chagres river and the enormous floods of water that rushed during the rainy seasons through that channel. It was intended to overcome this difficulty by constructing at Gamboa an enormous reservoir for the detention and storage of these flood waters. The dam that was to form this reservoir, if completed, would have been by far the largest dyke ever constructed in the world. Altogether it has been concluded that the excavation of the canal involved the removal of 3,531,000,000 of cubic feet of earth. At the beginning of 1884 there had been removed about 120,000,000 cubic feet, or, in other words, after more than two years of labor only one-thirtieth of the entire work had been completed. At this time nearly all the original capital of the company had been expended, but the people of France, realizing the vast importance of the enterprise and the enormous source of revenue it would make when completed, decided that the company was deserving of success even at a cost of $500,000,000, and more money was eagerly thrust into the hands of de Lesseps. The work proceeded rapidly from this time on, and all along the route workshops and settlements were formed; hundreds of dwelling houses, hospitals and storehouses were built at short intervals, and the whole distance along the forty-seven miles of the Panama railroad resembled a bustling city.

In 1880 the population of Panama and Colon was estimated at 30,000 people, these two towns being really the only two settlements of any importance on the isthmus. In 1885 the population of the isthmus between Panama and Colon is supposed to have been between 330,000 and 400,000 people, about 25,000 of whom were employed as laborers by the Panama Canal company, and all of whom were there for the purpose of getting the money which the canal company had to spend. They got it all, and after the expenditure of a vast amount of treasure, amounting to about 1,300,000,000 francs, and the sacrifice of thousands of human lives, work was discontinued on the canal in 1887 and less than one-third of the total work had been completed.

Bad Management and Fraud.

It is doubtful if scientists and engineers will ever decide the question of the practicability and possibility of a sea level canal at Panama among themselves, but it is certain that the people of the world have already decided that the failure of this gigantic undertaking was mainly due to the mismanagement and fraudulent motives of the persons in charge. Since the work on the canal was discontinued nine-tenths of the population of the isthmus have drifted to newer and more flourishing fields, but the stories of canal days, which are told to the traveller visiting the isthmus, sound more like fairy tales, or another Eldorado, than like actual facts.

As soon as the canal company was firmly on its feet agent were sent to all portions of Europe to select suitable machinery for the construction of the work. Never before did purchasing agents travel for a company of such gigantic means and probably never again will purchasing agents become rich so suddenly as did those of the Panama Canal company. Here was an opportunity for Europe to dispose of all its worn out and useless machinery at enormous figures, which she did with the utmost avidity, so that in a short time after the work was commenced on the excavation of the canal Aspinwall or Colon was the dumping ground for nine-tenths of the discarded machinery of the old world. So great indeed was the quantity of this old iron and steel that it was actually in the way, and early in 1882 the Panama Canal company designated a vast amount of the machinery then on the ground utterly worthless, and to put it out of the way and cover up their folly they ordered it dumped into the swamps near Colon.

Thousands of Wanderers.

A little later it was decided to build a new town on the Atlantic side, and the foundation of this town, Christopho Colomb, as it is called, is mainly composed of costly dredgers, piledrivers and like machinery. This new city was to be the dwelling place of de Lesseps and was laid off on a scale of royal magnificence; its broad avenues were lined with rows of cocoanut palms, which have now grown to a height of 100 feet and their broad fan-like leaves form an almost complete covering for the town. Two magnificent residences, costing about $100,000 each, were built and extravagantly furnished for the use of the senior and junior de Lesseps, neither of whom, however, ever set foot in either house. During the palmy days of the canal company the isthmus was indeed a busy place; thousands of wanderers, embracing every nationality and race, even to those of far distant India, had gathered there to participate in the great fraud and spoliation.

The Atlantic port of the isthmus, called either Colon or Aspinwall, was a port that rivaled the greatest sea marts in the world. I am informed by reliable authorities that scarcely a day passed for several years that did not bring fifty ships into the bay of Colon, and that from seventy-five to 100 vessels were constantly at anchor in that harbor. It is one of the most treacherous ports in the world, however, and ships anchoring there are obliged to pay about 4 per cent more insurance than if they did not touch at this port. Numbers of vessels and their entire crews have been lost during severe storms in the very harbor of Colon, and so much wreckage covers the bottom of the bay that it is seldom that an anchor can be raised without fouling. A few years ago in one northwester eighteen ships went down in one night and the loss of life was more than sixty persons.

He Knew His Business.

During the canal days the business of the Panama Railroad company was something almost incredible, and although enormous profits were derived by the company itself, by far the greatest interest made for the money and time invested was that made by the conductors. I know of one man alone who made $30,000 besides his salary and all his expenses during a twenty-eight months residence on the isthmus, all of which time he was constantly employed as a conductor on the Panama railway.

The Colombian government was entirely unable to exercise any authority of law over the various foreign colonies that had taken up residence there, and crime and depredation knew no bounds. The death rate, naturally great on account of the terrible climate, was probably greatly augmented by the fast life led by most of the people. The burying-ground of the Atlantic side of the isthmus was recklessly named Monkey Hill. Four funeral trains daily were scheduled to leave Colon for Monkey Hill, and there were but few men who expected to take any other route when leaving the isthmus for good.

The residents of the isthmus in canal times, being associated with the people of all nations and hearing almost every known language, became veritable polyglots, and even now a person who speaks only one language, no matter how well he may be educated in other branches, would be considered an absolute ignoramus by the wildest Irishman who works the brakes on a Panama railroad freight train.

The railroad company, having the only means of transportation across the isthmus, was of course of vast importance to the canal enterprise, but its importance was immeasurably less than that of the men who run the trains. Most of the employes of the company at that time were Irishmen, and they ruled the isthmus with a high and reckless hand. It was not a question of pay your money and demand a ride, but rather of pay your money and see whether the conductor wanted to let you ride.

Thought They Owned the Earth.

The history of the Panama Railroad company and its employes during canal times is one of exciting incidents that are exceedingly interesting to hear about now that they are all passed over. It is said that the civil revolution that took place in Colombia in 1886 was partly instigated and much abetted by the employes of the Panama Railroad company. It was during this revolution that the United States government sent troops to the isthmus to protect her commerce and keep the railway open to traffic. For over a month the railroad was operated with the assistance of United States marines, who, however, were altogether unneeded, as the employes of the railroad, to use their own terms, "could lick the whole Colombian army as well as everything else on the isthmus."

Many are the interesting tales that might be told concerning the exciting incidents of this wonderful period. Several of the escapades of Americans residing there at that time resulted fatally to the residents of Colombia, and in one or two cases almost involved the governments in a national controversy. Perhaps some of the readers of this article will remember a long story that was published in the New York papers several years ago relating the history of a great plot on the part of the American residents of Panama to usurp the power of the Colombian government and establish a republic for themselves. The attempt was discovered, however, and many of the principal conspirators were obliged to flee from the isthmus.

The Government Called Time.

After the discontinuance of the work on the canal in 1887 the French government ordered the canal company to furnish them with a report of its affairs and explain to them the manner in which the enormous sums of treasure which had been placed in their hands had been disposed of. As this report was never forthcoming, the government took the matter into its own hands, appointed a committee to investigate the affair in all its particulars, and the report of this committee is what has stirred up all the purturberations which are now agitating the great European republic.

It is generally supposed that the greatest steals of the affair were in connection with the contractors who took time contracts for dredging, dyke building and similar work. It is said that one firm alone received $8,000,000 before the canal company found out that they were being robbed.

It is probable that a time will never again come in the history of any one state in the world that can be compared with the few years that Colombia saw the life of the Panama Canal company. No conglomeration of races will ever be confined again in such narrow limits, isolated from the rest of the world, living without law or order and all bent on the same purpose as were gathered on the Isthmus of Panama between 1881 and 1887.

It is to be hoped that the time will never again come when the people of any prudent nation will suffer to be perpetuated upon themselves such a gigantic fraud and swindle as was the Panama canal undertaking.

GEORGE W. MERCER.

FOR RUSSIA'S RELIEF.

Official Acknowledgment of the Contributions of Western States.

Ex-Governor John W. Hoyt, chairman of the Russian famine relief committee of the United States, has furnished to the press a report of the relief offered by America to the sufferers from the famine in Russia.

The first movement in the northwest was made by the milling interests of Minnesota, and by December 30, 1891, 1,500,000 pounds of flour had been subscribed.

In the states of Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska the work of canvassing steadily advanced during the month of January, with such results as made the sailing of at least one relief ship early in February seem possible. But the philanthropists of the northwest, gathering their flour from more than a hundred miles and their corn from thousands of cribs and storehouses widely scattered in many states, had a struggle not easily appreciated at the east.

"Millers of twenty four states, far and near, had contributed their flour and were pushing it forward. Nebraska, under inspiration of Governors Thayer and Boyd, had given her million pounds of corn, and the New York Chamber of Commerce had supplemented the whole with so much as $5,000 would buy, in addition to the $7,000 before contributed for like use. The Atlantic transport line had put the great Missouri in readiness for her generous service, and the warehouse, lighterage and coal companies had followed suit. And thus, on the 15th of March, the Missouri, with her burden of 5,900,000 pounds of flour and corn meal, left New York harbor for Libau.

"Iowa sent a great cargo of 96,656 bushels of corn, sacked at a cost of some $4,000 furnished by the Red Cross, with 21,301 bags of the same, 400 sacks of corn meal, 731 sacks of flour, and various miscellaneous stores. But there was no further offer of ships; add so with $12,651 more, advanced by Miss Barton from contributions sent to the Red Cross, a steamship was chartered; and on the 23d of May the Tynchead, gaily dressed with many flags, American, Russian and Red Cross, cleared from New York for Riga."

Five ship loads of food stuffs were sent to Russia, and the cash donations are estimated at $100,000. Of the latter over $7,000 came from Nebraska, over $5,000 from Iowa, $3,500 from South Dakota and $1,200 from Minnesota.

NEBRASKA GIRL IN GREECE

Merry Moments Spent at a Monastery in the Mountains Above Andros.

WHERE MONKS ARE COMELY AND CHEERFUL

Miss Manatt Writes of a Pleasant Journey to an Ancient Religious House—Good Liquor and Victuals—Rare Books and Embroideries.

ANDROS, Greece, Dec. 8.—[Correspondence of THE BEE.]—Our landlord told us we should on no account neglect to visit the ancient monastery of Andros, and he undertook to arrange for our going in this wise. He is proud of being an old crony of the hegoumenos, or head of the order, and to insure us a reception worthy of such distinguished foreigners he must send a messenger or Angelos, to give warning of our approach, that the fatted calf might be killed and all be put in readiness. We modestly object to what seems a good deal of an imposition, as we feel lucky indeed to see a real monastery in running order, and fancy quite as well, taking pot luck with them. But we submit to our friend's judgment when we find that this is the usual thing, and, moreover, that the government provides them 3,000 francs yearly for the entertainment of strangers.

The next morning, therefore, after our coming is heralded, as it were, with a flourish of trumpets, the donkey train of quite imposing length is seen wending its way over the steep mountain path, for the monastery is set far up and away from the haunts of men in the wildest mountain fastnesses. And such is usually the case, I believe, I'm sure the old kings wished for naught better than their mule teams before chariots came in, and someway donkeys and rocks seem made for each other—the little fellows are so entirely at home, much preferring a steep path of hairbreadth width; and these rocks and donkeys are exactly the same dull gray color. I might go on with my comparisons such as in firmness and durability, but here I would need to illustrate, which might reveal secrets of struggles not meant for unsympathizing readers. To tell the truth, however, the Greek donkey has a very good temper, and when properly understood can be perfectly managed.

The Monk Was Comely.

Some of our party pride themselves on their walking and scoff at the donkeys, who don't mind it in the least and are glad enough of the rest. But these scoffers are either too long or too broad and don't fit the dapper little beasts. There's nothing the matter with the donkey—oh, no! The non-growlers are enraptured with the superb views as they look back, the panorama growing broader and finer as we ascend. Our own little hamlet of Batsi lies nestled between bay and mountain like a white cameo, with the sea of shimmering gold at its feet. And some one who never is mixed in his topography points out the many islands, each with its memories of poets who had sung there, as Keos Simonides isle, or of old-time sages, as Gavrion, the pretty little port of Paleopolis, which Thimistocles stormed with his Athenian hordes. Lyra was very distinct, the center of the present eastern trading ports, and away off westward the faintly delicate coast line of Attica. And how fair were the valleys below us, with their olives and figs just ripening, and fields of waving Indian corn! The beauty of these islands lies chiefly in their irregularity of outline, reminding one of linen embroidery, with countless little bays, capes and promontories. It is a scene of delight, let the eye turn whither it will. But away to the monastery, whose white steeples and towers have just appeared to our eager-waching eyes, for all this beauteous landscape is for you but poorly conveyed on black and white.

I spurred my brave steed on ahead at the last, too impatient to await those dallying folk who never were quite content, either afoot or on muleback, and lost so much time getting on and off. So I rather startled the monk delegated to welcome us at the gate as much as he surprised me by his fresh and youthful beauty, enhanced by the long black robes he wore with such grace. However, his easy and cordial greeting were anything but embarrassed, and we were fast making friends when the others came trotting up, alarmed at what the holy friars might think of a young lady who would run at will and unattended.

Merry Monks of a Modern Monastery.

Soon there were more monks, who gathered around with unmistakable warmth of welcome, and servants led off the much tried donkeys, while we were conducted in triumph to the visitors' apartments, an entry room and large, pleasant salon, with a wonderful outlook from its small grated windows. But the old arched corridors with marble floors and fine carvings, all sufficiently old and ruined, which we passed on the way, were quite up to our ideals of the monasteries we had read of. In one nook a quaint old well provided the clearest of water drawn up by a friar for thirsty travelers. And no end of black-looking doorways furnished food for our fancy, leading to underground passages, dungeons—who knows where?

The monks were each of them a study, and twere difficult to say which type was most interesting—the slender, pale-faced young fellows with their big pathetic eyes encircled with black, telling of fasts and long devotions, or the jolly round old fathers, whose jovial good humor and round cheeks like apples and amply-filled gowns betokened plenty of the flowing bowl and easy going-lives, such as are brought before us in story and song. One of these last was the farmer hegrumenos, and his beaming face, round as a ball, was good medicine for dyspeptics, while his plump soft hands, like puffballs, seemed specially made for the holy kiss imprinted there so often by his devoted flock. It was quite too funny to keep a sober face when he raised one hand at table to ask the blessing, with greatest effort setting two fat fingers upright and keeping the rest doubled under.

We were refreshed as soon as the introductions were through by the serving of Turkish coffe and sweets, with water borne in on a silver tray by a gigantic fellow in splendid costume, though shabbier than the rest. His dark face, heavy beard and magnificent physique seemed more Egyptian than Greek. He proved to be a Dorian of the Peloponnese, which accounts, perhaps, for his majestic air, and his manner of passing the cups, with the pretty phrase, "Long may you live," or "To your health and happiness," etc., dignified the humble service to twice its usual value.

They Know Good Liquor.

As the knowledge of Greek was confined mostly to the ladies of our party, the monks were obliged to devote themselves to them, though it is quite out of the Greek order of things, as they deem that women should be "seen and not heard." The young unmarried one must interpret for all—that amused them greatly. We test their raki, a white liquor resembling firewater, one taste of which seems to burn the mouth, but one must be polite. The good missionary's wife looks on in horror, but shall we offend our hosts to begin with? Besides her discomfiture rather makes up for the burning taste with the viciously inclined young folks, who affect to empty their glasses with greatest relish and wicked winks.

On asking to see the library we are led thither with great ceremony, and that sacred precinct, opened for us with a mammoth key, proves to be but a tiny closet, but it is packed full with such treasures as have never before been our good fortune to see. How we gloated over the primitive bibles, many of them 800 and 900 years old, and other evangelical books, printed on finest parchment, yellowed with age, cover of gold and silver inlaid with precious stones! What a bonanza for the relic hunters! And how much lovers of such things would envy us! The illuminated texts we had always heard of but had no idea of, we here found in abundance, and fascinating they were, indeed. The old Greek text of almost 1,000 years ago, you may imagine, differs greatly from the modern, and it was highly interesting trying to puzzle out the strange letters. I managed to read along quite smoothly, much to the amazement of the friars, who, I suppose, didn't expect it of a woman who read common, everyday newspapers. Where the covers were wooden or the furry skins of animals they were old and moth-eaten enough.

Treasures in Books and Embroideries.

Many of the volumes came from Constantinople in the old Byzantine times. I doubt if anything more intensely interesting in the book line could be found, and I longed one day a sufficient time to copy some of the exquisite designs at the headings of the chapters. Such lovely colorings, blues and reds and gold! We begged them to send these gems on to the exposition but they seemed to think it quite as absurd as to pack off the Nike temple, on the Acropolis or some of the originals in the museum, from which cuts are now being made. The finery lovers, (not all ladies either) were carried away in wonder at the splendidly embroidered vestments in fulest cloth of gold and heavier of brocade all handwoven and destined for fete occasions, heirlooms likewise handed down from generations.

What shall I say of the richly carved gold communion cups dazzling with diamonds, emeralds and rubies and adorned with finely painted pictures of the virgin and saints and angels in enamel work encircled by pearls or brilliants! There were silver goblets too almost as rich. We were assured that 'twas a great favor to have these sacred treasures partly revealed to our profane eyes. There were golden candlesticks with figures in relief and all sorts of things for use in the religious processions which I couldn't name except in Greek. The arch bishop's jeweled crown was a marvel of costly splendor. In fact the cabinet containing all these festal habiliments and jeweled crosses was shown to a few of us after the rest had gone by a kindly disposed young monk whose folly and weakness we sincerly hope will be forgiven.

Next we visited one of the private cells, or rather dwellings, for each monk lives by himself and independent of the rest, works his own little vegetable patch and flower garden, makes his own wine, dries his figs for winter and rides his special donkey to the village. Only in the chapel they all meet together—for prayers, morning and evening. Our host was a lovely old fellow with flowing gray beard and long hair twisted into a knot behind, as is the custom, except on state occasions, when it is loosened and thus adds not a little to the effect of gorgeous robes and glittering vestments. In his now threadbare draperies and with his deep-set eyes he would make an admirable study of a hermit. At the same time he has the sunniness of homelike rooms and is as snug as any spinster. He quietly opens his inviting cupboard and produces another "round" of sweets preserved, lemon-blossoms being the treat this time, and as delicious as it sounds. We ask for his recipe, but he says the process of treating this perfumed blossom is quite too elaborate for our comprehension. His hospitality could not be excelled and we ladies were obliged to admit that here at least they get along very well without us.

Anxious to Hear of America.

All the brother monks had followed us and as they were on the qui vive to hear all about our far-away America I undertook to give them some idea of the size and wealth of that new land, of the enormous cities and railroads, and my figures quite took away their breaths. They couldn't begin to realize in their untraveled simplicity the great distance we had come to visit them. Formerly America meant New York to foreigners, but since the World's fair has been "noised abroad" their geographical knowledge has extended to Chicago. Our old monk, thinking to air his superior wisdom, inquired for the Mississippi, whether city or mountain or bay, he knew not. And he had heard of Chili, so he concluded it must be on the Mississippi. It was great fun to see them open their eyes at the (to them) fabulous accounts, but quite as entertaining to me to hear one of themselves, the Greek missionary lately returned from New York, draw glowing pictures of his travels; and indeed we feel we have a sufficiently eloquent champion, as with ready tongue and telling gestures he rouses the quiet monks to their greatest enthusiasm. For he has been everywhere from California to Boston and knows our country better than we.

Meanwhile I glean many interesting details of monastic life from my talkative neighbor, who is glad of an opportunity to converse a little. He says their visitors are few and far between. He is the young hegoumenos, and I am partial to him, as who would not be? If you could see him, an Apollo-like figure posing in unconscious grace, wrapped in a purple chiton, his ideally classic face and high white forehead, crowned by a mass of curls such as one sees in the best age of Greek art, such as Praxiteles chiseled so fondly for his Hermes. And his smile is captivating, while one is struck by the repose and dignity of his bearing. How his face lights up as he enlarges upon the peaceful charms of this free life, as he calls it, in contrast to the tramels of the caged city birds (meaning ourselves). I confessed it hadn't come to me in that light before, but I felt the truth of it when he said he spent a day or two in Athens last week and could scarcely wait till he got back to his mountain home, so distasteful was the noise of the world to him. So either visiting or being visited by people from the world, it seems, doesn't make them any less contented and serene.

A Memorable Dinner.

All the foretaste of sweets and fine beverages did not in the least spoil our appetites for dinner, and returning to the guests' room we found a "groaning board" awaiting us. Five of the head marks joined us at the table. Note the order of seating. The propenus, or consul, as first in rank was honored with a chair at the head; next came the protestant priest (missionary) and the professor and other gentlemen, after which the ladies were disposed of all in a row, while our hosts were ranged around the lower end of the table, where they could survey us to best advantage, and quaint figures they were. All stood while the patriarch asked grace, rattled off at such lightning rate that one would think its virtue depended on the rate of speed.

That right royal spread will always be vivid in our memory, not only for the uniqueness of its convives, but the dishes themselves I'm sure were unrivaled even in Aristophanes' time, when the cooks were lords of creation and cookbooks more in demand than are novels nowadays. From the dainty arrangements of the table-services one might suspect a feminine hand. The fresh, flaky white cheese in pretty patterns lay in a bed of grape leaves. The olives, also a home product, were unsurpassed, not to mention the numerous Greek vegetables cooked a la monastery or served fresh from their garden. And as healths without number were proposed—to the peerless Columbia and its representative present, to the noble hegoumenos, and to the modern Helen (as one gallant monk made bold to dub one among us, rather more to extricate himself from trouble than anything else, as the story of the Odyssey had come up and he was rather "misty," that not being in his line) and to the prodigal son, as they chose to call their Protestant brother, a native of Andros, and all the healths were quaffed in the richest of old wine; we called it nector of the gods, which pleased them immensely, and indeed it fully came up to our expectations of the contents of a monastery cellar.

Our hosts, while merry, were very temperate, and mildly astonished when our good missionaries declined to join us. Altogether our symposium was a success, and we chatted and joked indefinitely over the after dinner coffee. They thought every word we uttered so very clear, which is, you know, most stimulating, and we on our side agreed never to have happened upon more genial, benevolent and all around entertaining dinner companions.

With the Monks at Prayers.

A fitting close to the day's festivities was the vespers in the old, old chapel, which we were invited to attend. Our interest was divided between the service (responsive), in which about a dozen monks took part, and the most antique and richly ornamented interior. Around the stiff Byzantine paintings of the Virgin were hung dozens of charms and votive offerings, a relic in reality of Esculapius' worship, hands and feet of tin, hearts, bloodred, and ghastly eyes, ears, etc., each devotee presenting an image of the ailing member. One monk swung far and wide a censor of fine filigree goldwork, scattering as blessings the sweetest of incense among the worshipers, while others chanted the liturgy, for once most harmonious, and uplifting, thanks to the handsome hegoumenos, with his deep, sonorous voice. Rarely does one meet with a musical Greek, and one old priest here, who bawled like a distressed cow, came near ruining the otherwise deeply affecting solemnity of all. The congregation consisted, besides ourselves, of a boy of seven summers on thereabouts, whose skillful and businesslike performance of all the various forms required in the service excited our honest admiration. He must cross himself continually, kiss the feet of Christ and hands of the Virgin, as well as numerous monks, bowing, standing and prostrating himself completely, besides rattling off what we should judge to be whole books of the bible. When we could spare no more time we left him still at it, with no prospect of any "let up," and thought if our ministers required so much of us, we would be missing oftener from the Sunday pew than is now the case.

Perhaps I may be forgiven if I whisper in closing, a word, brought down to us by a Greek friend, who visited the monastery a week after we had been so royally feasted. An intimate friend of his among the friars (wise, grayheaded, too) confided to him that if he had known what these women of the world were like he never would have taken the cowl. He was sure there were no such girls in his younger days. Why, these American ladies were goddesses! Now, I'm sure you will agree with me that this most valuable tribute to our womanhood deserved to wind up my letter. And so, till another say, adieu!

WINIFRED A. MANATT.

RELIGION.

A commodious Baptist church has been completed on the site of the one destroyed by fire in Deadwood, three months ago.

A woman in the western part of New York wants to have her pastor dismissed on the ground that he rides a bicycle and studied medicine in his early years.

In about 100 of the synagogues in this country Sunday meetings are now held, at which lectures are delivered by the rabbis who had conducted the regular Jewish service on the previous day.

Rev. Mary T. Whitney has been installed as pastor of the Unitarian church of West Somerville, Mass. She is a New Yorker, her maiden name was Traffarn, and she is descended from an old Huguenot family.

In France the government pays the pastors, not only of the Catholic but of the Protestant denominations. This rule obtains also in the colonies, so that Mohammedan mosques are maintained by the state. It costs millions of francs.

A Utica, N. Y., preacher has risen up to criticise the "prodigal son" parable. He holds that it is an injustice to the other boys who remain at home and keep their noses to the grindstone while the prodigal is "blowing in" his substance down the line.

Bishop Paret of the Protestant Episcopal diocese of Maryland and the district of Columbia will soon have built a steamer which will be fitted as a church. The boat will carry the bishop and his assistants to the oyster dredging grounds Sundays, where services will be held.

The late Cardinal Lavigerie, the "Grand Old Missionary of Biskra," used to wear a Florentine cap such as Dante wore, half covering his ears and falling to his neck. The walls of his simple apartments were absolutely bare except for a small statue of the Virgin which faced the crucifix over the mantelpiece.

The Hiram Bingham, the smallest missionary vessel in the world, has just been fitted out in San Francisco horbor, and is now ready to start for Hawaii on her way to the Gilbert islands. She is fifty feet long, fourteen feet wide and six feet deep. Her rig is that of a two-masted schooner. The Brigham was built for the American board of foreign missions of Boston.

The American Society of Church History will hold its fifth annual meeting in the reception room of Columbian university, Washington, D. C. There will be three sessions, the first on Tuesday evening, December 27, at 8 o'clock; the second on Wednesday morning, December 28, at 10 o'clock; the third on Wednesday afternoon at 3 o'clock. Prof. Philip Schaff will make the opening address.

Those who do not pay close attention to the development and advance of religious methods have probably failed to notice the decided improvement in the standing of the Salvation Army in this country. To many people this organization is more or less grotesque and fanatical, but the sober truth is that it is getting the respectful attention and even the cordial commendation of some of the ablest of the church leaders.

A papyrus manuscript found in the den of an old hermit in a cave near Jerusalem in the year 1880, and which experts have all along believed to have been the handiwork of St. Peter, "the friend of Christ," was submitted to a committee of the Biblical Society of London in 1890. They have arrived at the conclusion that the work is in reality exactly what it purports to be—the last literary work of the great apostle. It has not been ascertained exactly who has charge of the relic, but it is said that a "society of British literary voluptuaries" has offered $100,000 for the document.

Susan B. Anthony is of the opinion that we are on the verge of an era of unmarried women. Our civilization, she says, is changing. Daughters cannot be supported at home and there is nothing there to busy them. The women used to spin and weave, make carpets and soap, but now all that is done for them in factories. Young men do not make enough money to support their wives, and there is such a craze for dissipation among them that the women had rather go into a store for almost nothing than to marry.

The engagement is now announced of Miss Fannie Stevens, sister of Mrs. Adolph Ladenburg, and cousin of Mrs. Frederick H. Allen, to Captain Harrington Swann of England. Miss Fannie Stevens is a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Alexander H. Stevens, who have a seat at Lawrence, L. I., and the wedding of the couple will be celebrated in the spring.

"How did you come to break off your engagement with Twilling?" "He told me he wanted to get married."

MASSIVE AND MAJESTIC

Projected Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

MONUMENT TO RELIGION AND TO ART

History of the Movement and Description of the Plans—The Largest Edifice on the Continent—Laying the Corner Stone.

Next Tuesday, December 27, will be a memorable day in the religious history of New York City and of the United States. On that day, with appropriate ceremonies, will be laid the cornerstone of the grandest church edifice in the western hemisphere—the Protestant Episcopal cathedral of St. John the Divine.

The project of building an edifice of magnificent proportions was discussed as early as 1870, but it was not until 1887 that the plans took definite shape. During these intervening years the heads of the Protestant Episcopal church had talked of a cathedral rivaling the great Catholic edifice, St. Patrick's cathedral, but it remained for Miss Catherine Wolf, the wealthy philanthropist, to expand upon this necessity and feasibility of providing a temple or worship that should surpass any building devoted to a similar purpose on this continent. To give the scheme a practical basis she set aside the sum of $1,000,000 as a part of the amount to be used for it. Other wealthy Episcopalians contributed to the fund, among them being the Vanderbilt and Astor families, each of which gave $100,000. Last spring the late Mrs. E. N. Cole bequeathed $50,000, and recently some unknown friend contributed $500,000.

The Site.

A place between Sixth and Seventh avenues and Fifty-seventh and Fifty-ninth streets was at first decided upon; but the price was far beyond all possibility, and the trustees agreed that it would be best to look far north for a sight. In November, 1887, the old Lake and Watts' Orphan Home grounds were bought for $850,030, and the new cathedral will stand in perhaps the most picturesque spot on Manhattan island. Its towers will look down on the Hudson and the Palisades will be within view. Far off the busy cities of Hoboken and Jersey City will be seen from the towers of the edifice, and its great spire will, on the east, be in sight of all Harlem and the hills of Long Island.

It is a spot hallowed by history as well, for it was here that the famous Leake lived in the early days of the municipality.

The Building.

The plans for the building were prepared by Messrs. Heins & La Farge of New York City. They provide a general ground plan for the cathedral in the shape of a cross, the arms of which, forming nave, chancel and transepts, have each a central and two outside aisles. The general exterior design is that of a large central lantern or tower, against the four sides of which are the four arms of the cross. In the four angles of the cross are four flanking towers with entrances. At the south front are two larger towers, the central tower being crowned by a spire dominating the group. The front towers will have no spires. The total external length of the cathedral will be 520 feet. The width across the front is to be 190 feet; width across the transepts, 290 feet; height of central spire, 425 feet from floor of cathedral and from level of the city, 525 feet