

America's Trusted Goddess

Her Surroundings on Bedloe's Island Hardly More Than Ruins, After Twenty Years of Neglect.

AFTER nearly twenty years of practical neglect it has at last been decided to paint the Statue of Liberty. They are going to do this in the hope that the bronze made by a too long exposure to the salt steeped air of the Upper Bay may be checked and the total ruin of the statue stayed.

Despite the fact that the authorities now in charge of the statue and Bedloe's Island emphatically deny the report which has been circulated, to the effect that the stairways and very walls of the statue itself are unsafe, it is certain that a great deal of damage has been done dur-

to make out the names of the visitors who had gone before him. Maybe he thought the inscriptions were in the nature of prayers to the goddess—maybe. Anyhow, the carelessness of those in authority was plain enough for even him to read. It stands out boldly in the statue, round the statue and on the statue. And nobody seems to give a thought.

Down in the area of the fort also it is to be marked. There the massive brick walls are rapidly crumbling to decay, the huge stones of the steps leading to the top of the facade are all awry, and grass is growing everywhere. But the most ha-

zard any questions as to what had been done before his regime, because no records had been turned over to him. He knew nothing save that in 1908, when he assumed command, the condition of affairs was just about as it is now. He had reported this to the department, which had immediately set about procuring the funds with which to put the statue in repair. After a long wait Congress, at its last session, came to the rescue with \$22,500—\$22,500 for the renovation of the national goddess after twenty years of neglect. Wish this money what is to be done? The bill which appropriates it reads in part as follows:—

The Wireless Station

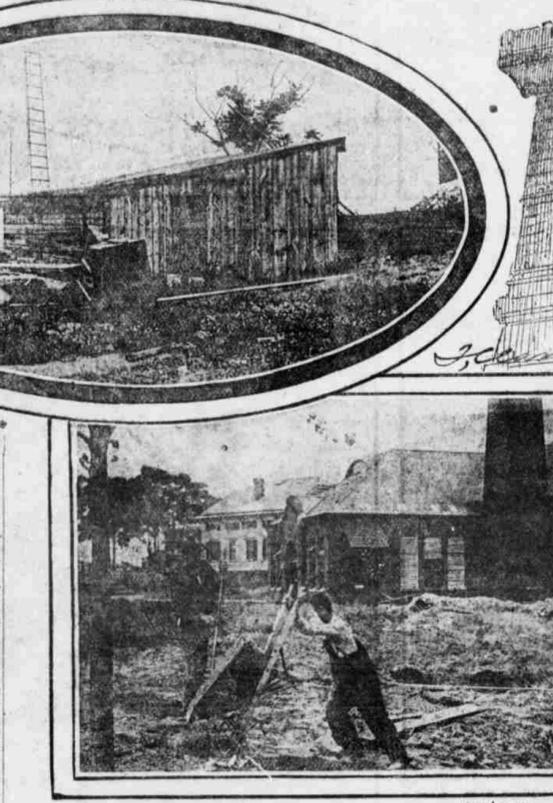
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And this is not all. Inside the statue the salt air has been even more ravaging, pitting the structural steel which forms the skeleton of the figure and rendering the cast iron stairway more or less uncertain. That it is absolutely unsafe Captain George C. Burnell, of the United States Signal Corps, who is the commandant of the military post on the island, denies emphatically. Captain Burnell has had charge of the statue ever since it was turned over to the War Department for safe keeping by the government, who received the American Statue Committee of its labor in that respect. It is said the men composing this committee did everything in their power to obtain enough money to maintain the statue in the way they conceived it should be, but were not successful in their endeavors.

The effect of this lack of money is plainly discernible everywhere about the statue as soon as the visitor puts his foot on the island. The very spirit of ruin hangs over the place. It meets one on the wharf where the boat lands, for that matter it is to be seen on the boat itself before you land; it is in the walls leading up to the pedestal, which are weather beaten and rotten planks that give as the foot or hand touches them. The old cannon on the facade of the fort have not escaped, but are peck marked by the flying spray and increased salt of the bay. Even the big concrete base of the statue has come in for its share of the general dilapidation and is marked by great star shaped seams and cracks showing vividly against the white walls.

Most unseemly of all is the state, bordering as it does on the dangerous, of the "temporary" stairway up which one must climb to the main entrance of the pedestal. This is of wood, weather seared wood, packed and stored in innumerable places by the signal corps people since they cannot get power, and was originally put up for the purpose of hastening the day when the statue could be thrown open to the public. It was meant for a week's or a month's use at the longest, but it has stood there for the best part of twenty years—the statue was thrown open October 28, 1886, and more and more disheveled, more and more unsightly and unsafe until today.

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Vandalism and carelessness have played their part in the present woful state of the goddess and her temple. From head to foot she is marked and marred. In the tiny room in the crown of her head there are several hundred names of various persons who, from time to time, have been smitten with a desire for cheap fame, to attain which they have scrawled their names in straggling letters wherever there was an inch of space. They have even reached outside, through the windows in the diadem, and done their worst. In the walls of the pedestal, in the fort, wherever they could, these persons have gone about disfiguring to the best of their ability. The only thing that has saved the place from every day a stream of visitors passing up the narrow iron stairway or pausing to gaze reverently at the statue itself, is the fact that there were a party of Germans, a couple of Frenchmen and—wonder of wonders—a Chinese, not one of the man-darins one hears so much about and whose exclusion caused the boycott, but just an ordinary "washie washie" man. He was enjoying himself, too, very much, trying



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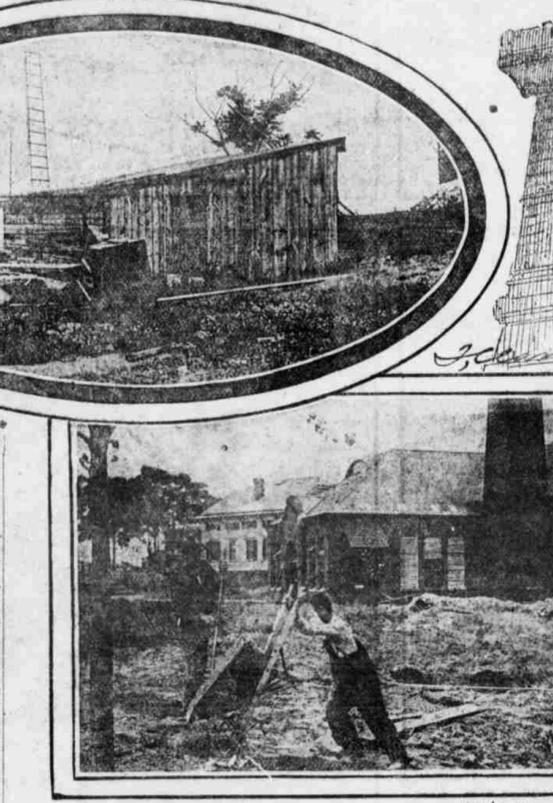
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The question as to whether or not the government proposed to grade the grounds around the statue to the level of the top of the walls of Fort Wood and fill in the "stairs" which the fort drew a laugh, added the query regarding the seams in the concrete base of the statue. Of the latter he said:—"Those cracks amount to nothing, they are merely on the surface. A neat cement face was put over the concrete for appearance sake, and that has cracked, but the base itself is unaffected. There is, however, plenty of work to be done in and around the area. The coping stones on a brick wall have long since disappeared; they were gone before my day, and the result is that the wall is pretty much a ruin. Grass has grown in and driven apart the bricks, and the whole wall is crumbling. That is to be repaired, a new facing put on the bricks, coping stones laid in place and the rumbled steps put back where they belong. Next in order will be the tearing down of the weather beaten stairway and the substitution of an ornamental one of wrought iron."

"We have patched and repaired that about as far as is safe, and it really needs replacing. It is safe enough as it stands, I suppose, but—don't you look at it!"

It doesn't, the picture shows that. Bedloe's Island, on which the Statue of Liberty stands, contains about twelve acres of land and was at one time the site of one of the subsidiary fortifications of New York Harbor. In 1800 the State of New York, through its Legislature, ceded the island to the United States for military purposes. When the French government announced its intention of presenting to this country Bartholomew's Feast, the island was, after much discussion, chosen as its future home. Originally the statue was placed in the custody of a body of government known as the American Statue Committee. This body was in charge until 1900, when the government assumed control. Since that time the officer in command of the Signal Corps station on the island has been held responsible not only for the condition of the post, but of the statue and its surroundings as well.