

THE PRAIRIE CROCUS.

By Will Truckenmiller.
While yet the snow in drifts is deep,
And strong and cold the March winds sweep,
In every slightly sheltered place
The prairie crocus shows its face.
Oh! first brave flowers of the spring,
What promise to us you do bring
Of balmy, summer days to be
With all their floral pageantry.
Sweet roses blooming everywhere,
And stately lillies, tall and fair
While gentians blue and goldenrod,
To passing breezes, wave and nod.
But none, however gay they be,
And sweet and fair, can give to me
The pleasure that you always bring,
Oh! first brave flowers of the spring.

NATURE'S BRIDGES.

The best known of all natural bridges is that found in the southwestern part of Virginia. This strange rock formation has been visited by good geologists and tourists from all parts of the world. It is not so very far from a railroad station of the same name, and a short drive brings the visitor to it. As the road winds around over the hills and through forests of spruce pine, one comes upon the Natural Bridge quite unexpectedly. In fact, if one were not on the lookout, it would be possible to pass over it and not be aware of its proximity. The walls are almost fifty feet apart, and the arch has a thickness of forty-four feet. The sides of the road adjoining the bridge are strewn with spruce pines, which find sustenance in the scant covering of soil. There is also a beautiful tangle of vines and creepers growing all about.

Natural Bridge crosses in an oblique direction a chasm which is several hundred feet long, and through which flows Cedar brook. The walls of this chasm are almost perpendicular, and they rise above the bed of the stream about two hundred feet. In some places they are overhanging. The sides are bare. The arch of the bridge is two hundred feet above the stream, which in itself distinguishes this from the other natural bridges of the world. The top of the span is ninety-three feet across, but it contracts considerably near the bottom.

It has been left to man's ingenuity to provide suspended roadways, although natural bridges do exist in several parts of the world. Their origin is variously explained, but the most generally accepted theory is that they have been formed by the erosion of water, whereby an outlet has been forced through a rocky ledge, thus forming a bridge. Another theory states that Natural Bridge, of Virginia, was once a gigantic cavern, and that its roof and walls, destroyed by some convulsion of nature, left standing the present-day wonder.

Visitors to Mackinack Island see in the famous Arch Rock a kind of natural bridge, although it is not so situated that it ever was valuable as a roadway. Formerly people walked over it at will, but in recent years this has been forbidden, for fear of the danger of the arch breaking. At the best, it simply formed an artistic frame for a beautiful picture.

In the Jordan Valley, near Pella, is found a fine specimen of natural bridge across the little watercourse known as Wadi Hammet Abu Dhableh. The banks of this deeply sunken wadi, which means watercourse or valley, are very steep. Across it stands an overhanging arch of conglomerate limestone which is nearly three hundred feet long. It is thirty feet in width, and it is about one hundred feet from the bed of the wadi to the roadway. The great broad, flat arch itself is thirty feet high, and much greater in span.

In the very heart of the Andes, and on the Argentine side, is the Puente del Inca, the Bridge of the Incas. Not many miles away, the lofty volcano, Aconcagua, seems to cleave the very blue of the heavens, while Cerro del Mercedario and Tupungato, scarcely less impressive, kiss the clouds with their snow-covered summits. It would be difficult to find a scene in nature more majestic or imposing than meets the eyes from the bridge. This bridge has a span of one hundred and fifty feet, with a width of one hundred and twenty feet, and the top of the arch is fully sixty feet above the Mendoza River which flows beneath.

At the time of the Incas this bridge was a station on the great highway which led across the Andes, and it was by this road that the tax gatherers passed annually to collect the tribute due their sovereign. The last collection was made in 1885, when a partner of Pizarro in the subjection of the Inca empire, Don Diego de Almagro, met officers of the Inca emperor bearing the annual tribute near the bridge and seized a portion of it. Almagro with his followers crossed it, and in trying to go westward became lost in the mountains. Being without shelter from the stormy blasts that swept down from the peaks of the Andes, many of his soldiers were frozen, and others became blind from disease of the eyes which is caused by constant exposure to the glare of the sun on the snow. It was a melancholy and disastrous march, but Almagro finally succeeded in crossing the pass and reaching the Pacific. Tens of thousands of persons have crossed this bridge in the last four centuries since the feet of the white man first invaded these passes. Many tales are told in connection with this curious natural bridge. Some of them are probably true, but most of them have originated in the fertile brain of some dweller in these regions during the past several centuries. One story tells that the Bridge of the Incas was at one time the headquarters of a famous Italian bandit, named Farina, who robbed the ore trains that crossed the mountains. He was so successful that traffic was practically stopped, and after retiring from this business he opened a hotel in Valparaiso with his ill-gotten wealth.

Natural bridges are exceedingly rare. Our great and wondrous West, however, furnishes a number of such freaks of nature. The most remarkable natural bridges in the world have

but recently been reported by the United States Geological Survey in Utah, from fifty to one hundred miles from the nearest railroad. Several of these bridges are of almost gigantic dimensions, among them being the Augusta, the Carolina or Kachina, and the Edwin. They are remarkable not only for their dimensions, but their coloring. Formed of red sandstone, they are streaked with other shades of red and yellow, and have almost as vivid coloring as the Grand Canon. The Augusta, or Shipapu, bridge is two hundred and sixty-one feet long at the bottom, and the arch is more than three times as long, and twice as high, as Virginia's famous bridge. It is the greatest of these three bridges, for it combines massiveness with a gracefulness of proportions that give a satisfying effect. It is almost as wide as the average roadway. The Carolina is one hundred and fifty-six feet long, and two hundred and five feet from the underside of the arch to the water below. The arch is more than one hundred feet thick, so that the roadway is very lofty. The width on the top is almost fifty feet. The dimensions of the Edwin bridge are not so striking as the other two just described. Yet like all of these great stone miracles, it has a grandeur and a beauty seldom met with in nature.

The Nonnezoshie Natural Bridge, near the same locality, is another of these remarkable formations. It is rather an arch of stupendous size, since the top is not level, and was first reported in 1909 by the members of an archaeological expedition. It is more than three hundred feet in height, and almost the same distance from abutment to abutment. Its curve is nearly perfect, its lines architecturally beautiful. This remarkable arch has been wholly carved out of the cliff by wind, rain and water.

The section including this bridge was set aside by President Taft as Rainbow Bridge National Monument. The Indians had given the canon the name Nonnezoshieboka, the Great Arch Canon. The wild setting makes it one of the most attractive places in the United States.—By Nevin O. Winter, in The Forward.

American Negroes Put Fear in Huns.

With the American Army of Occupation.—Wherever American negroes have appeared in the area occupied by the Americans they have attracted great attention among the civilians. In Treves, Coblenz and other places, during the early days of the occupation, crowds assemble wherever any negro soldiers stopped in the streets, and it was necessary for the military police to enforce the orders prohibiting gatherings in the public thoroughfares. Even now in Coblenz and Treves, where there are a number of negro soldiers, they attract crowds of German children every time they appear in the streets.

The German soldier also regards the negro with great curiosity. According to a discharged German soldier in Rengsdorf, the German army, early in the war, offered a reward of 400 marks for the capture alive of each negro. The discharged German soldier said that throughout the war, German soldiers lived in great fear and even terror of the negroes, and it was in order to overcome this fear that rewards were offered.

One evening on the front a scouting party, consisting of ten Germans, including the discharged soldier, encountered two French negroes. In a fight which followed two of the scouting party were killed. One of the negroes escaped, the other being taken prisoner. During the fight two of the Germans left their comrades and ran to the protection of their own trenches, but these, it was explained, were young soldiers and untrained. The reward of 400 marks subsequently was divided among the remaining six Germans for capturing the French negro.

Zeppelins in the Animal World.

Every mouse in the fields and meadows, every rabbit that crouches under the thicket, every grouse and pheasant, even fish and frogs and muskrats in the waters and the squirrels and song-birds of the forest, live under a menace from above, no less terrible to them than the Zeppelins have been to London, and far less effectively combated. They live under the menace of the raptors, or birds of prey—the eagles, hawks, falcons, and owls—certain species of which are still far commoner than the ordinary person supposes, even in the settled sections of our northeastern States. The terror comes to them out of the air; it drops with the speed of lightning and kills with extraordinary strength and ferocity. Size in itself is little protection, for a goshawk will easily kill a rooster and even carry him off. That menacing shadow over the henyard which causes such a commotion on a still summer day hovers in reality over all the land of the little wild folk, by night as well as by day, and tragedy falls like the traditional bolt from the blue in open field and sedge marsh and silent forest.—Walter Prichard Eaton, in Harper's Magazine.

—Immigration into the United States from Europe has ceased. The immense station at Ellis Island in New York harbor, through which the newcomers used at times to pass at the rate of 3,000 a day, is put to other uses connected with the war. Last year more Europeans left the country than entered it, perhaps the first year since 1492, certainly the first since 1776, that the balance of migration has been on the debit side. But according to official figures, Africans led the list of immigrants in the last six months of 1917. These Negroes settled mostly in Northern cities, adding to the problem already created for the Christian forces by the large migration from the Southern fields and cities to the Northern industrial centers.

The Statesmanlike View.

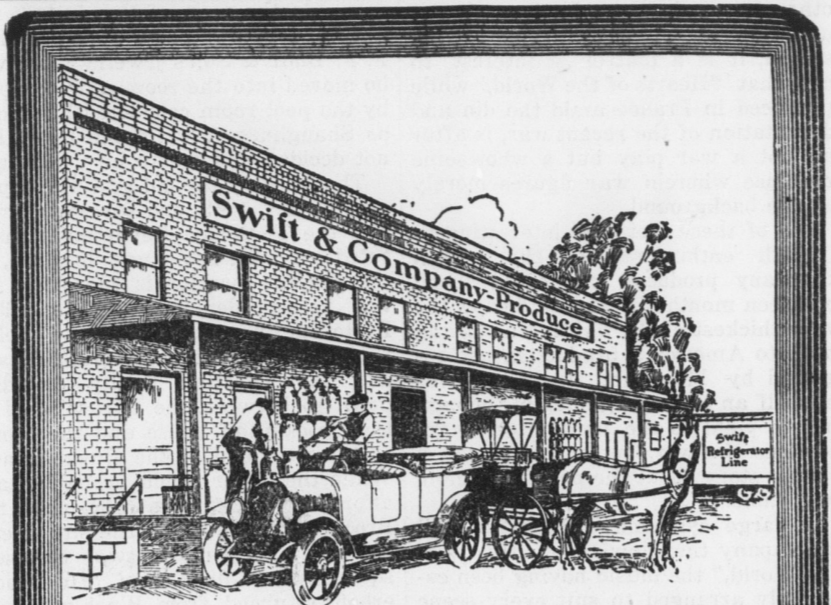
Another reason why we are sure of woman's grasp of public matters is, when we asked Sister Smith what she thought of President Wilson's going to Europe to attend the Peace Conference she said she thought it was grand, as his wife would enjoy the trip so much.—Houston Post.

Big Grocery Store Plan Starts March 1st.

Chicago.—It is planned to put the retail grocery business on a per capita basis in Chicago, New York, Philadelphia and St. Louis by the Piggly Wiggly Merchandising company, just organized with a capital of \$2,000,000. The new company, which is a development of the Piggly Wiggly system of self-serving, cash-and-carry retail grocery stores operating in seventy-

eight cities throughout the United States, plans to open 5000 stores in New York, 3000 in Chicago, 2000 in Philadelphia and 1000 in St. Louis. This number will be at the rate of 1000 stores to every million of population in the four cities. The company will open its central headquarters in Chicago March 1.

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