

WORLD-GIRDLING RAILWAY.

RENEWED TALK OF A ROAD TO CROSS BEHRING STRAITS.

Possibilities of Railroads in Alaska Shown. Projects for a Line to Carry People from New York to Paris via Siberia.

From the New York Sun.

The successful operation of the Shagway-White Pass railroad, which though only a few dozen miles long, has broken the back of the terrible journey from the Lynn canal to the headwaters of the Yukon and the proposed invasion of Alaska by railroads from several widely separated points, have brought into more or less serious discussion again that engineering air castle, the possibility of a railway line over which one could travel continuously from New York by way of Alaska and Behring Strait, Northern Siberia, the Trans-Siberian railroad and St. Petersburg to Berlin—in short, with the exception of the break made by the Atlantic ocean, a world girdling railway.

The scheme has been talked of off and on for twenty five years. Hinton R. Helper, who won fame before the Civil War by his book "The Impending Crisis," is perhaps entitled to the credit of first broaching it. His plan was a three-Americas railway, which was to traverse the length of the Western Hemisphere from the Straits of Magellan to Behring Straits, having a branch to Hudson bay, and a connection beyond Behring Straits with a line that should cross Asia to join the railway lines of Europe.

That was long before the days of the Trans-Siberian railroad, which has filled in at least one long stretch of the dream. Eleven years ago the late Senator Stanford, of California, expressed the belief that within twenty-five years from that time an earth-encircling railroad would be in existence.

His prediction provoked wide comment and considerable derision from engineering experts and others. The supposed impassability of Behring Straits and the difficulty of building and maintaining a road through the frozen mountainous wastes of Alaska were pointed out as insuperable obstacles.

But engineering skill has made rapid progress within a decade, and it is significant that the engineering problems through Alaska and the barrier presented by Behring Straits are no longer considered the chief difficulties which the carrying out of the plan would encounter.

In the first place, the varied character and possibilities of Alaska are just beginning to be realized. Furs, gold and fish for many years to come will undoubtedly be the chief products of the country, but its stores of coal, copper, silver, lead and iron, its tremendous and valuable forests, even its grazing lands cannot remain long neglected.

Four railway enterprises are already on foot to develop these resources. The Skagway-White Pass road has already been mentioned. A preliminary reconnaissance for an all-American route from Valdez on Prince Wilhelm Sound to Eagle City or some nearby point on the Yukon was made last year. The proposed road would pass through the celebrated Copper river country, which prospectors say is destined to be one of the greatest mineral districts in the world.

Away around to the northward from Unalaklik, about sixty miles north of St. Michael on Norton Sound, a road has already been surveyed along the Kalgat river to its junction with the Yukon, following the trail used by the Yukon river Indians for many years in making the overland journey to the coast of Behring sea. At present Yukon river boats start from St. Michael, cover eighty-five miles of ocean travel to the mouth of the river and thence go up stream.

The proposed road, though only eighty miles long, would cut off 500 miles of river travel and mean a saving of from six to eight days in reaching the mining region, together with a material reduction in the cost of supplies at the mining camps. Since the construction and equipment of this eighty-mile line will cost not much short of half a million dollars, it is pretty evident that the ultimate end

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We will give one hundred dollars for any case of deafness (caused by catarrh) that cannot be cured by Hall's Catarrh Cure. Send for circulars, free. F. J. CHENEY & CO., Sold by druggists, 75c. Toledo, O. Hall's Family Pills are the best.

of its promoters is not the saving of half a dozen days in the trip to the Klondike mining regions.

By another projected road it is proposed to join points on the Mackenzie in British Columbia and the Yukon.

It is worthy of remark that the experts who have been in Alaska looking after these railroad enterprises are unanimous in the opinion that the builders of a railway through the length of Alaska up to Cape Prince of Wales on Behring Straits would encounter no greater difficulties than were met in the construction of parts of the Northern Pacific. The trouble would be to get over the coast range of mountains.

Once that was accomplished the task, it is declared, would be no more difficult than the building of a railway in Colorado or Montana. The physical contour of the interior of Alaska presents few obstacles and the valleys of the confluents of the Yukon offer natural avenues.

As for climbing the coast mountains, it should be remembered that the Skagway and White Pass road has already done this and is in successful operation. It is probable that this road would be incorporated in a through-Alaska line.

The greater obstacle in the operation of an Alaskan road would be the snow, but this would be in a great measure overcome by snow sheds and snow fences and the rotary snow plows, which cut their way through practically the heaviest drifts and without which the Canadian Pacific and Northern Pacific would be put out of business for two months in every year.

The real engineering problem of the undertaking would, of course, be the passage of Behring Straits. The straits are forty-eight miles wide, but the distance is broken by Little and Big Diomed islands near the middle. The islands are two miles apart and the line of demarcation between Alaska and Siberia runs midway between them. The straits average about twenty-seven fathoms in depth.

Several plans of varying practicability have been suggested for crossing this stretch between Cape Prince of Wales and East Cape. A bridge would be out of the question owing to the swift current and the winter ice flow which would speedily demolish such a structure.

A tunnel has been advocated, but the mind faints at the magnitude of the proposition. Minor Bruce in his volume "Alaska," suggests that a line across the straits would be filled in with rocks allowing sufficient openings for the water to flow through and for vessels to pass, thus forming an adamant roadway between the extreme West and East. The mountains at Cape Prince of Wales, Mr. Bruce points out, would supply endless quantities of rock, and their gradual slope toward the straits would render it feasible to get the stone to the water's edge.

This also would be a Titanic project, requiring unlimited capital and labor, even though, as Mr. Bruce suggests, 25,000 Esquimaux from Alaska and Siberia and Russia's Siberian convicts were impressed in the work. A plan that would probably receive more serious attention from scientific men is that recently outlined by Paul Heinze, a civil engineer, who helped to build the Northern Pacific road through the mountains of Montana and in the summer of 1900 made a partial reconnaissance on behalf of some English capitalists for a railroad in Alaska. Mr. Heinze proposes that gigantic ferry boats and ice boats combined, somewhat on the plan of the ice breaker Yermak, be run between the two shores.

Such boats could make the passage at any time of the year and carry over a train expeditiously and safely. Their cost would be inconsiderable compared with every other plan proposed.

The real, and the present, final obstacle to a world-girdling railway by way of Behring Straits is a commercial one. Leaving the Western wastes of British Columbia out of the question, after the southern borders of Alaska are reached there is yet a thousand miles to be traversed before Cape Prince of Wales is reached. In this vast stretch in its present stage of development there is practically nothing to support a railroad.

The population of Alaska is a floating one of adventurers, fortune seekers, whose strongest desire is to make their pile and get out. It is true that the presence of a railroad that connected with civilization would in itself tend to supplement this unstable population with a class of immigrants which should develop the undeniably wonderful resources of the country.

But such a railroad would not fling itself to Behring Straits at one move. Railways do not work that way unless there is some tremendous inducement at the other end. The road into Alaska would first make its way step by step across British Columbia and when Alaska was finally reached would extend itself up faster than the necessarily slow development of the country northward warranted.

The same reasoning holds good on the Siberian side. Russia has many a job to get off her hands in the Far

East before she will find time to extend her trans-Siberian road up over those thousands of miles to the East Cape.

To the conservative mind it would seem that the necessarily mutual project, from the East and from the West, will scarcely be one of this century's undertakings. But the world moves rapidly nowadays. Here is Mr. Heinze's opinion:

"The child is now in pinafores and the young man is in collage who will yet rush through Alaska in a palace car, across the bleak expanse of Behring Straits on an iceboat ferry and go sweeping over the steppes of Russia on the rail route from Chicago to Paris."

Power of Health Officers.

They Can Close Churches, Schools, Theatres and Stop Public Gatherings.

Dr Benjamin Lee, secretary of the state board of health, gave authorities of Shamokin some information the other day which seems to be needed in many parts of the state. The Burgess of the place, together with a couple of the health officials, went to Philadelphia to see Dr. Lee regarding their authority to deal with a small-pox epidemic. They reported that a quarantine had been established, the effectiveness of which depended upon the honor of the people. They were told to employ a sufficient number of competent officers and depend upon them for an effective quarantine. In response to questions, Dr. Lee instructed them that they had authority to close the schools, and churches, Sunday schools and theatres as well, and stop all public gatherings. In case their orders were not complied with they had the power to immediately make arrests and fine the offenders. He also instructed the board to spare no expense in stamping out the contagion. These things should be known and understood in all parts of the state. The kind of quarantine that is established in some places is merely a farce. This is sometimes due to the carelessness and indifference of the authorities; sometimes because there is objection to spending money in this way, but in a great many cases it is due to the fact that the legal authorities have no real knowledge of the responsibility entrusted to them and the power given them to act. Contagious disease would have small chance of spreading in Pennsylvania if all authority of the law were exercised promptly and effectively.

How the Mistletoe Comes to Be.

The Seeds Stick to the Birds' Bills, and They Wipe Them Off on the Tree-Branches.

The story of how the mistletoe gets on the trees is a most interesting one. Covering the mistletoe twigs are pearly white berries. These come in the winter season, when food is comparatively scarce, and hence some of our birds eat them freely. Now when a robin eats a cherry he swallows simply the meat and flips the stone away. The seed of the mistletoe the bird cannot flip. It is sticky and holds to his bill. His only resource is to wipe it off, and he does so, leaving it sticking to the branches of the trees on which he is sitting at the time. This seed sprouts after a time, and not finding earth—which indeed its ancestral habit has made it cease wanting—it sinks its roots into the bark of the tree and hunts there for the pipes that carry the sap. Now the sap in the bark is the very richest in the wood, and the mistletoe gets from its host the choicest of food. With a strange foresight it does not throw its leaves away, as do most parasites, but keeps them to use in winter, when the tree is leafless.—Professor S. C. Schmucker, in the December Ladies' Home Journal.

The Point of View.

Much in this life depends upon the point of view. Here is a story which aptly illustrates this:

At one of the reunions of the Army of the Cumberland several ex-officers of the Union army fell to discussing the wounds they had received during Civil War. At last one of their number turned to Colonel B—, a tall, fine, soldierly looking man, who had remained silent during the discussion, and said—

"Well, Colonel, you seem to be the only one of the party who escaped unscathed."

"Oh, no, I didn't," answered the Colonel quickly; "I was shot at Antietam. A bullet went through my nose, taking the gristle out." He wiggled his nose from side to side to prove the truth of his statement.

"Ah, well, you were quite fortunate, after all," said Major M—, consolingly; "if the bullet had struck a half-inch farther in your soul would have been launched into eternity."

"Yes," said the Colonel, "and if the blamed thing had gone a half-inch farther out it wouldn't have hit me at all."—V. F. HOWARD, in January Lippincott's Magazine.

How the Pope is Elected.

The following details regarding the making of a new Pope are quoted from Mrs. Belloc-Lowndes's paper in the January Lippincott's Magazine:

"Let us pass the Jesuit gaily barriers and place ourselves in the vast Pauline Chapel, where, morning and evening, the Cardinals come to vote until the Pontiff is chosen by the necessary two-thirds majority. See, there are the three preside of the ballot, a Cardinal-Bishop, a Cardinal-Priest, and a Cardinal-Deacon. At the altar is a Cardinal, making oath that he will cast his vote without intrigue or favor of man, but on his conscience for the greatest glory of God and the best welfare of the Church. Rising from his knees, he passes to the center of the chapel, and there before the three preside places his vote in a chalice, and so do all the other Cardinals present in turn. Each ballot paper bears in a feigned hand the name of the Cardinal for whom the vote is cast, while on the corner is written the name of the voter. The latter is carefully folded over and sealed, not to be published unless an election is made."

Barnum's Monkeys

"All well—all happy—lots of fun". That is the regular report from the monkey cage of Barnum's Circus ever since the keepers began dosing the monkeys with Scott's Emulsion. Consumption was carrying off two thirds of them every year and the circus had to buy new ones.

One day a keeper accidentally broke a bottle of Scott's Emulsion near the monkey cage and the monkeys eagerly lapped it up from the floor. This suggested the idea that it might do them good. Since then the monkeys have received regular doses and the keepers report very few deaths from consumption. Of course it's cheaper to buy Scott's Emulsion than new monkeys—and that suits the circus men.

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Table with columns for stations (Scranton, Pottsville, etc.) and times for various routes.

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Cousins Cannot Marry.—The time is fast approaching in the state when first cousins cannot marry. Last winter the state legislature passed a law forbidding first cousins to marry each other. The Governor did not sign the bill, and it became a law without his signature on June 24, 1901. The bill takes effect on January 1, 1902, and after that time the register and recorders of the various counties will not be permitted to issue licenses to persons so related.

Leader's MEAT MARKET

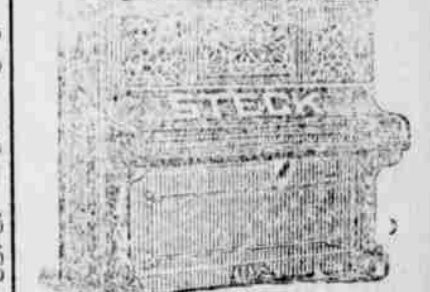
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