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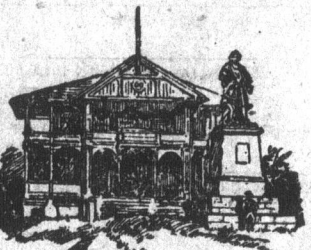
GRAND FRENCH MILLIONS AND FRENCH REPUTATIONS.

The Gigantic Undertaking, Now About One-third Completed, Which the United States is Expected to Bring to a Successful Termination—Present Status of the Big Ditch.

The eyes of the world have been for a long time on the Isthmus of Panama, but recent events have concentrated that gaze until the world is now apparently looking at nothing else. The birth of the republic of Panama is so intimately connected with the interoceanic canal project that the history and present status of the big ditch in which De Lesseps sank his reputation and which it is expected will likely be completed by the United States are of timely interest to "the great public which reads the news."

The idea of an isthmian canal is almost as old as American civilization. The Spanish conquerors dreamed of such a canal, and early in the last century the people of the United States were talking of linking the Atlantic with the Pacific at this point. Nearly forty years ago Ferdinand de Lesseps, flushed with the success of his Suez Canal and imbuing the people of France with his own enthusiasm, formed a company for the construction of a ship canal from Panama to Colon. Two years later, in 1878, he obtained a concession from the Government of Colombia. The money of France poured into the coffers of his company as the oceans were expected to pour into his completed waterway. He began with a capital of \$80,000,000, but increased his demands until \$800,000,000 had been wrung from his countrymen.

The financing of the company was a scandal so outrageous that it threatened to disrupt France. The Government was involved, and a national crisis was barely averted. The funds of the company were expended in bribes, vast "rake-offs" to capitalists and enormous salaries. Red tape, mismanagement and procrastination were universal. Expensive ma-



chine was allowed to fall into ruin. Floods wrecked the ill constructed work of weeks, and workmen died like flies. With its money all gone the company resorted to a lottery loan, but this failed. The collapse of the company and the indictment for fraud of Ferdinand de Lesseps, his son Charles and many of the directors followed. Ferdinand de Lesseps was stricken with paralysis and escaped the results of the disastrous "lottery" by being sentenced to imprisonment.

Work on the canal then lapsed until in 1895 a new French company took it up and with better management has succeeded in finishing a third of it. It is the assets of this company for which the United States is expected to pay \$40,000,000. It is estimated that it will cost \$144,000,000 more to complete the ditch and that the work can be done in ten years.

One of the greatest difficulties which the United States will have to overcome is that presented by the climate. The mortality among the employees of the old French company was appalling. During a period of five months the death rate among high officials was 83 per cent., while that of the cool laborers will never be known. Much of this mortality could have been averted by sanitary precautions, and the first thing the Yankees will have to do will be to clean up the isthmus. Waterworks and sewers, whitewash and disinfectants will put the one time cholera house into a fairly habitable condition. The cities of Colon and Panama will be American occupations.

The next problem is the harnessing of the Chagres, the demon of the isthmus, a stream that has been known to rise forty feet in almost as many hours. A great dam will be built and this flood turned from a menace into the useful reservoir. Another obstacle is the Culebra hill, which has already been cut partly through. The new French company has now about 1,000 men working on this cut. The Culebra cut will be 266 feet deep and 150 feet wide at the bottom. It will be 7.91 miles long. The total cost of the cut alone is estimated at \$77,000,000.

The completed canal will be forty-nine miles long from deep water in the Atlantic to deep water in the Pacific. The Walker Canal Commission figures that it will take a ship of average size, meeting an ordinary number of other ships, about eleven hours to pass through.

## SELECTIONS

A MACHINE THAT TALKS.

Ingenious Invention of a Frenchman Has Lips and Teeth.

A talking machine that has created no little sensation is that just produced by Dr. H. Marage, a well known member of the French Academy of Medicine. It is an interesting device, which reproduces with perfect accuracy the sounds of the human voice, not as in the case of the phonograph, by merely repeating words spoken by persons, but by a process which is purely mechanical from start to finish and in which no word is spoken by any human being. The sounds are produced by a system of vibration, says the London Sketch. Attached to the machine is a series of plaster bells, five in all, representing the five vowels, a, e, i, o, u. They are each a perfect model of a person's mouth, fitted with pliable lips and perfect teeth. Air currents set in motion by the machine are made to pass through the dummy mouths, which are fitted with sirens.

Through his invention Dr. Marage has discovered that the steam sirens used on board ships can be so constructed as to imitate certain sounds. Thus different phonetic syllables may be obtained which could be used to form an international alphabet. By an ingenious contrivance attached to this wonderful instrument it is possible to see reflected in a tiny mirror the vocal chords of a singer.

By the same device one can also trace their action and see how, as the note gets higher, the aperture between them becomes less and less, until when the top note is reached it is almost closed. As the force of air current expelled becomes stronger the opening decreases in size. It increases as the force becomes less. The smaller the aperture the greater the vibration. This is how human beings get their singing voices. "There is no mystery about it," declares Dr. Marage. "It is a purely mechanical process, based on known laws of higher mechanics."

### The New British Ambassador.

Sir Mortimer Durand, the new ambassador to Washington, has always been my beau ideal of an English gentleman and diplomatist, without fear and without reproach. Sir Mortimer is a tall, handsome man of superb physique and with the bearing of a well set up soldier. It has been said that he is one of the few men who can wear the diplomatic uniform without looking ridiculous in it. With strangers he has a grave, dignified and very polite, though somewhat distant, manner, but in reality he possesses a most genial disposition and is gentle and tender hearted as a woman. I have often thought he assumed this rather haughty demeanor in order to protect his too vulnerable good nature from being constantly assailed. In any case, it stood him in good stead in his relations with orientals of the first rank, who despite levity of manner in high officials. Sir Mortimer loves sport and outdoor exercise, but when he has important work in hand will devote himself to it for fifteen hours a day, if necessary, and for weeks together.—London M. A. P.

### Curious Collectors.

The Parisian ragpicker is a well known character to all who have traversed the streets of that capital at night, but he has a colleague concerning whom little is said or known—the dead dog and old cork collector. Why these two industries should go together is inexplicable even to the men themselves, but such is the case. Dead dogs are by no means bad property. The skin fetches from two pence to three pence when it has not become deteriorated by long residence in the water, the fat is worth five pence per two and one-third pounds, and the bones also sell for a trifle. The corks are by no means so valuable, as after they have been cleaned and pared they only sell for five pence a hundred. The profession is only sufficiently lucrative to maintain a few members, 2 francs a day being the average gain, who reside for the most part in that chiffoirier quarter, the Rue Petit, Cite Philippe.—Golden Penny.

### How Climate Affects Railroads.

There are three great railroad lines that show the climatic problems that engineers have to solve in building—the new transcanadian road, traversing high northern latitudes; the transatlantic road, running through an arid region, and the Uganda road, which traverses a tropical country. In high latitudes many difficulties have to be overcome, among them being the effects of mountain sickness on the workmen. In rainy regions floods and landslides must be provided against, and the early decay of ties, sleepers and bridge material. In dry countries it is necessary to provide water, to guard against fire, against sand storms and against many other things that the passengers, riding in the luxurious cars, never think of.

### Liquids Americans Consume.

Somebody who has been computing the quantity of the liquids consumed by the American people within a twelvemonth has found that we drank last year enough tea, coffee, wine, beer, liquors and other beverages to cover at area of ten feet—a lake large enough, it was suggested, to float several navies of the size of our own. The amount of alcoholic beverages alone which were necessary to satisfy the national thirst during this period would fill a canal 100 miles long, 100 feet wide and 10 feet deep.—Harper's Weekly.

## ABNER DANIEL...

Py WILL N. HARBEN

Author of "Westerfelt"

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"Oh, if you waste time noticing Al you'll become a beggar." And Adele gave another amused laugh. "Take my advice and let him alone." "I almost believe you know what he thinks of me," said Miller, eying her closely.

"I know what he thinks of me," the girl responded.

"And won't you tell me what—he thinks of me?"

"No, I couldn't do that," answered our young lady, with a knowing smile.



"Ah," she said seriously, "if you could only do it!"

"If you are ever any wiser on the subject, you will have to get your wisdom from him."

She turned to the piano and began to arrange some scattered pieces of music, and he remained on the hearth, his back to the fire, his brow wrinkled in pleased perplexity.

"I'll have to get my wisdom from him," repeated Miller, pronouncing each word with separate distinctness, as if one of them might prove the key to the mystery.

"Yes, I should think two wise men could settle a little thing like that. If not, you may call in the third—you know there were three of you, according to the Bible."

"Oh, so there were," smiled Miller; "but it's hard to tell when we three shall meet again. The last time I saw the other two they were having their sandals half soled for a tramp across the desert. I came this way to build a railroad, and I believe I'm going to do it. That's linking ancient and modern times together with a coupling pin, isn't it?"

She came from the piano and stood by him, looking down into the fire. "Ah," she said seriously, "if you could only do it!"

"Would you like it very much?" "Very, very much. It means the world to me to see you, to father and mother and—yes, to me, I hunger for independence."

"Then it shall be done," he said fervently.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

As the elevator in the big building was taking Rayburn Miller up to the offices of the Southern Land and Timber company many reflections passed hurriedly through his mind.

"You are going to get the usual cold shoulder from Wilson," he mused, "but he'll put it up against something about as warm as he's touched in many a day. If you don't make him squirm, it will be only because you don't want to."

Wilson was busy at his desk looking over bills of lading, receipts and other papers and now and then giving instructions to a typewriter in the corner of the room.

"Ah, how are you, Miller?" he said indifferently, giving the caller his hand without rising. "Down to see the city again, eh?"

Rayburn leaned on the top of the desk and knocked the ashes from his cigar with the tip of his little finger. "Partly that and partly business," he returned carelessly.

"Two birds, eh?"

"That's about it. I concluded you were not coming up our way soon, and so I decided to drop in on you."

"Yes, glad you did," Wilson glanced at the papers on his desk and frowned. "I had more time at my disposal. I'd run up to the club with you and show you my Kentucky thoroughbreds, but I really am rushed, today particularly."

"Oh, I haven't a bit of time to spare myself! I take the afternoon train home. The truth is I came to see you for my clients, the Bishops."

"Ah, I see," Wilson's face clouded over by some mechanical arrangement known only to himself. "Well, I can't really report any progress in that matter," he said. "All the company think Bishop's figures are away out of reason, and the truth is right now we are over head and ears in operations in other quarters, and—well, you see how it is!"

"Yes, I think I do," Miller smoked a moment. "In fact, I told my clients last month that the matter was not absorbing your attention, and so they gave up counting on you."

Wilson so far forgot his pose that he looked up in a startled sort of way and began to study Miller's smoke wrapped profile.

"You say they are not—have not been counting on my company—to buy their land?"

"Why, no," said Miller in accents well remembering those of slow and genuine surprise. "Why, you have not shown the slightest interest in the matter since the day you made the loan, and naturally they ceased to think you wanted the land. The only reason I called was that the note is payable today, and—"

"Oh, yes, by Jove! That was careless of me. The interest is due. I knew it would be all right, and I had no idea you would bother to run down for that. Why, my boy, we could have drawn for it, you know."

Miller smiled inwardly as he looked calmly and fixedly through his smoke into the unsuspecting visage upturned to him.

"But the note itself is payable today," he said, closely on the alert for a facial collapse, "and, while you or I might take up a paper for \$25,000 through a bank, old fashioned people like Mr. and Mrs. Bishop would feel safer to have it done by an agent. That's why I came."

Miller in silent satisfaction saw the face of his antagonist fall to pieces like an artificial flower suddenly shattered.

"Pay the note!" gasped Wilson.

"Miller puffed at his cigar and gazed at his victim as if slightly surprised over the assumption that his clients had not all along intended to avail themselves of that condition in their contract."

"You mean that the Bishops are ready to—"

"Wilson began again on another breath—"to pay us the \$25,000?"

"And the interest for six months," quietly added Miller, reaching for a match on the desk. "I reckon you've got the note here. I don't want to miss my train."

Wilson was a good business man, but his Puritanical training in New England had not fitted him for wily diplomacy.

"Of course they can take up their note today if they wish," he said, with alarmed frankness. "I was not counting on it, though." He rose to his feet. Miller's watchful eye detected a certain trembling of his lower lip. He thrust his hands into his pockets nervously, and in a tone of open irritation he said to the young man at the typewriter: "Brown, I wish you'd let up on that infernal clicking. Sometimes I can stand it, and then again I can't. You can do those letters in the next room."

When the young man had gone out, carrying his machine, Wilson turned to Miller. "As I understand it, you personally have no interest in the Bishop property?"

"Oh, not a dollar!" smiled the lawyer. "I'm only acting for them."

"Then—Wilson drove his hands into his pockets again—"perhaps you wouldn't mind telling me if the Bishops are on trade with other parties. Are they?"

Miller smiled and shook his head. "As their lawyer, Mr. Wilson, I simply couldn't answer that question."

The blow was well directed, and it struck a vulnerable spot.

"I beg your pardon," Wilson stammered. "I did not mean to suggest that you would betray confidence." He reflected a moment, and then he said in a hurried tone, "They have not actually sold out, have they?"

To Be Continued.

To Be Continued.

To Be Continued.

To Be Continued.

To Be Continued.

To Be Continued.

To Be Continued.

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