

IS THE TRANS-SIBERIAN LINE A FAILURE? The Truth About Russia's Strategic Railway.

(A. J. Barry, in London Mail.) It is popularly thought that the completion of the Trans-Siberian railway will so enable Russia to pour troops into the far east that the balance of power on the Pacific coast will be completely altered.

A. J. Barry, who has recently returned from China, via Siberia, thinks differently. Mr. Barry bases his views mainly on engineering grounds, and on engineering matters he speaks with authority, for he is a member of the great firm of which Sir John Wolfe Barry is the head.

"The main ideas that governed the minds of the Russian engineers in constructing the Trans-Balkal section of the Siberian railway have been cheapness and rapidity. To get the line built with the utmost speed and for the lowest cost they have sacrificed everything. The single line of rails starting from Lake Balkal eastward is so badly laid that it can accommodate neither fast nor heavy traffic. It is a series of sharp curves and steep gradients. A rise of one in sixty is frequent; and even if the line were a good one, the steep gradients and sharp curves would prevent anything like a fast service of good trains. While the line remains in good order, its carrying capacity is strictly limited. But it will not long remain in good working order. It will want continual repairing, and I would not sleep very sound at nights if I were the traffic manager responsible for the safety of the trains."

WILL NOT TAKE HEAVY TRAFFIC "The line has been laid with 48 lb. rails, and that alone prevents heavy traffic over it. In India we have rails of as low as 75 lb. rails, but found even then too light; and they are quickly being replaced by heavier. The Russian authorities will find that the whole of their 48 lb. rails must go.

"If you have light rails, the one thing you must do is to have very long and heavy sleepers. On the Trans-Balkal railway it was impossible to import sleepers, on account of cost, and the timber growing along the line of route had to be used. This is short, scrubby, and makes green, sappy sleepers, the very worst kind.

"When your lines are light and your sleepers are bad, have a thoroughly well ballasted road. On the Trans-Balkal railway it was impossible to import ballast, on account of cost, and the timber growing along the line of route had to be used. This is short, scrubby, and makes green, sappy sleepers, the very worst kind.

WHERE IS THE STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE? "But after the Trans-Balkal line is finished, what then? With Russia's advantages in consequence? It is impossible, I believe, to carry more than two thousand men a day over the line. There is not enough transport steamers on Lake Balkal to do more and there is not enough stock on the other side of the lake to convey them on. Remember, it is a single line only, and there is no return line of rails on which the empty carriages can easily and uninterruptedly come back.

ENGLAND'S STRENGTH IN THE EAST. "The truth is that England is really much stronger in the far east than Russia is. Russia would find it most difficult to keep an army of 20,000 men long in the field, when dependent on a base many thousands of miles away, and connected with that base only by a single line of rails. England could draw an almost unlimited supply of splendid fighting men from India, and could maintain them with ease. Nothing would be more practicable than to plant down 20,000 of our Indian soldiers in Wel-hai-wel, to the great benefit of their health, and the enormous increase of our prestige throughout the far east. China would prefer to work with us rather than with Russia. If we would only take a firm stand. But we allow Russia to bluff us, time after time. The Russians know the truth about the comparative strength of our two nations. They know that their one hope is to bluff, and they have bluffed with magnificent success. From their point of view, I do not blame them."

Mr. Barry does not recommend a trip across Siberia for a holiday jaunt just now. "It is not the fault of the railway," he says. "It is not finished yet, and it is overladen with passengers." But many are his resolutions that the Siberian railways shall not see him again for some time, if he can possibly avoid it. For there is little fun in being cooped up for some weeks in overcrowded carriages among a cosmopolitan crowd, and in trains of boasted luxury and comfort is mainly imaginary. Mr. Barry was able to cross the country under much more advantageous circumstances than the vast majority of travellers. For the ordinary man the Siberian trip is the most effective via dolorosa to be found in the last year of this century.

WORLD'S NEWS. Child Killed by Bite of a House Fly.

General Election to be Held in Cuba -Primes of Monsoe Snubbed by the Queen of Portugal.

Rev. Edmund Lounsbury, a superannuated Methodist minister, died last week at Hamilton, Ontario.

Richard D. Yelland, a prominent landscape artist on the Pacific coast of the United States, is dead.

Comparison of the cost of municipal government shows that foreign cities are governed much more economically than New York.

Elizabeth G. Shaw, a Huntsville, Ont., widow, committed suicide by cutting her throat while in a state of mental derangement.

A Chatham, Ontario, young man named Fred Currie, was drowned recently while bathing at Rondeau, Lake Erie.

George Fair, a farmer living near Millbrook, Ont., lost his life by accidentally cutting an artery in his leg while taking the hide off a calf.

United States treasury department statistics show that for 1900 the balance of trade in the country's favor is \$644,471,701, the most prosperous year in its history.

A parliamentary paper has been issued showing that the Emperor of China's first appeal for assistance and mediation was made to the British government.

The first cargo of American coal imported into Russia has arrived at Revel for the use of the railroad. Three thousand tons of New River coal has also reached Cronstadt.

The London Daily Express publishes letters from a correspondent who decries that on arriving at the barge office and Ellis Island, New York, European steerage emigrants are fed and treated worse than cattle.

Robert Giger and wife, citizens of the United States, sent to jail from Meril Kent Co., Ontario, several weeks ago as vagrants, have been liberated through communications between Washington and Ottawa.

Achilles Dionne was one of ten men on a handcar which was over taken by a locomotive on the line of the Quebec Railway, Light & Power Co. The other nine jumped, but Dionne was killed instantly.

Principal T. C. Smith of Central School, Chatham, Ont., has pleaded guilty to tampering with examination papers that on Thursday last. He was given his own pupils thereon, and has had his certificate suspended until December 31, 1900.

The government of Nicaragua has taken possession of the property of the Maritime Canal Co. and removed the company's cars, rails and property to the interior from Greytown, under article fifty-four of the concession.

Owing to the great demand for lumber to rebuild the burned sections of Hull and Ottawa, the mills there are running day and night, and an Ottawa dispatch states that the output of the large mills near that city should reach nearly 500,000,000 feet.

Peter Hawley, who lived on the north shore of Loon Lake, near Filinton, Ont., was accidentally shot and killed on Thursday last. He was showing the boat off the shore, when a gun, which was lying therein, was discharged by the jarring of the boat on the bottom.

T. A. Code of Perth, Ontario, has issued an order for a general election to be held in Cuba on the third Saturday of September to elect delegates to a convention to be held in Havana on the first Monday of November. This convention is to frame and adopt a constitution for the people of Cuba.

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MAIL ORDERS RECEIVE SPECIAL ATTENTION. HENRY MORGAN & CO. Montreal.

DON'T NEED A SWITCH-BACK. "You don't seem to have a switch-back railway among your sources of amusement," said the Tourist to the citizen.

"No," replied the citizen. "What kind of a thing is it—anyhow?" "Oh, it's a zig-zag line, full of knolls and hollows. The car starts from the top of a little elevation and goes like a streak to the end of the line and back again. It gives you a jolt every three seconds and nearly scares you to death. But it's exhilarating."

"We don't need it," said the citizen proudly. "Whenever our people want to be jolted they call a coach and ask the driver to lay on the switch. The streets do the rest. One man got such a jolt the other day that he gasped and swallowed his teeth."

A HAPPY ISLANDER. George Le-Britton, said to be a native of P. E. Island, ran up against the Maine prohibitory law on Monday last, and was suddenly filled with a fierce desire to go home. He calmly appropriated a delivery team and started. To some one who tried to stop him George said he was in haste and proposed to drive to the island. He was overtaken by a man on a bicycle and detained until the officers arrived. The case was to have come up in the municipal court yesterday. The Bangor News observes:

"'Twas all in a dream. That he took the team. In a daze that he drove away. In fact, Le Britton is still asleep. But they'll wake him up today."

A GREAT N. S. ORCHARD. Mr. Hodson, commissioner of agriculture for Ontario, who recently visited the fruit farms at Canard, N. S., and vicinity, said he had never seen a finer apple orchard than Hillcrest Orchard, owned by R. S. Eaton, where he spent about two hours. The Kentville Advertiser, commenting thereon, remarks: "With Mr. Hodson's knowledge of Ontario, it is very gratifying to us to know that we have in Kings Co. something better than in the larger province, which most are disposed to regard as an ideal province in horticulture. It is but thirteen years since

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THE GREAT STAKE-UP IN THE HISTORY OF THE NEW YORK FIRE DEPARTMENT HAS JUST TAKEN PLACE.

Word comes from a town in Kansas of a man who possesses the petrified body of his first wife. His name is Likies. He buried his wife about 25 years ago while he was living in the "bad lands" of Dakota. Later he had the body removed and discovered that it had turned to stone. Two feet are said to be broken off at the ankles, otherwise the stone image is nearly perfect.

It was the bite of an ordinary housefly that killed 15-month-old Joseph Boke, according to the opinion of Coroner's Physician Donlin of New York, who has examined the body of the baby's death. Dr. Donlin said that it is wrong to suppose that a common fly is not a dangerous insect. "I do not want to appear in the light of an alarmist," said the coroner's physician, "but the popular impression that an ordinary fly is harmless has resulted in the death of more than one person who has been bitten. These insects can effect enough poison into the blood to kill not only a baby but an adult. They live on putrid material, carry it on their legs and bodies and are very attractive, that some of it gets into the system when a fly bites a person."

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