

UNCLE SAM'S BIG GUNS.

Uncle Sam, says the Oregonian, is not giving away nor otherwise disposing of information concerning his new coast defenses, and the fortification at Fort Stevens are not excepted from this rule. But it is generally known that at least three big guns, of the latest and most approved type, and provided with disappearing carriages, have been added to the battery there. No more definite information is as yet obtainable about them, but it is pretty certain that they would be able to discourage the approach of bigger craft than a Columbia fishing fleet. They are probably of 12-inch caliber, and equipped with disappearing carriage, the great feature of the improvement in modern coast defense or other fortification science.

The modern 12-inch gun is constructed of a tube of nickel-steel, enveloped from end to end by four steel hoops. The enlargement of the gun toward the base is greatly increased by the "jacket," an outer hoop, very thick and powerful, to strengthen the breech, or that part of the gun which stands the greatest pressure from the discharge. A more formidable-looking weapon would be hard to imagine. It is probably 40 feet long, and the weight of the gun alone is about 60 tons. The maximum diameter at the breech is nearly four feet, at the muzzle less than half that. The tube is rifled with 72 grooves, about .37 of an inch wide and .06 inch deep. It takes a charge of about 500 pounds of powder, and throws a filled projectile weighing 1,000 pounds, which will penetrate at the muzzle nearly 2 1/2 feet of solid steel, at 1,000 yards an inch or two over two feet, at 2,500 yards a little less than two feet, and at 3,500 yards, or about two miles, this projectile with the charge named will penetrate over 20 inches of steel.

The construction of a disappearing carriage for the 12-inch gun presented many difficulties, owing to the great weight. Until recently but two forms of carriage had been adopted for 12-inch guns, the barbette and the gun-lift. In neither of these forms is it possible to raise the entire gun. The movements are allowed by depressing the breech and thereby raising the muzzle, or turning the gun from side to side, as is permitted by all carriages. The raising and lowering of the gun, with the disappearing carriage, is accomplished by hydraulic power. The advantage of this form of carriage is obvious. No embrasure is needed, and the gun may be reloaded in comparative safety from the enemy. Fortifications with disappearing gun carriages have the great advantage over others in that they are not weakened by being pierced for embrasures.

The problem of the recoil has been one of the most difficult to solve in the science of gunnery. With big guns, now, the force of the recoils have been utilized in a variety of ways, generally to facilitate the reloading with the heavy projectiles. In the case of the disappearing carriage, the power which makes the gun "disappear" again after having been raised and fired is the recoil, which drops the gun back into a position for reloading. In the improved disappearing carriage, the elevating device is attached to the top carriage, and is independent of any other part of the construction. The gun, as it is raised, remains constantly parallel to its original position, and the system is so accurately counterpoised that the recoil produces no motion of the center of gravity, and therefore, the carriage as a whole is not moved by the discharge.

The county court again continued the closing of the tax roll till October. The only things that is particularly unfair about such long continuance of the tax roll is the fact that the man who pays his taxes, perhaps at a sacrifice, soon after the roll is opened for payment is discriminated against to the extent of the interest on his money in favor of the man who holds off until fall. It also acts as an inducement to slow taxpaying. If there is law for it, the court should declare the roll delinquent about the first of June of each year and impose a penalty of 8 per cent per annum until, say October. Then those who delayed paying their taxes would only pay the same rate of interest the county pays on the warrants it issues in lieu of his taxes, and it would equalize matters between the late and the early taxpayers.

Within a week the entire road of the Astoria & Columbia River railroad will be lined with workmen. The company is determined to have the road finished at the earliest possible moment, and will have the trains running to Knappa in time for the regatta, if such a thing is possible. In a short time rail-laying will be carried on from both ends, and the regatta will be a double celebration. A contract has just been closed with the Columbia iron works for all the bolts, 20 tons, to be used in the trestling between Knappa and Goble, and Contractor Wakefield will start a large force of men to work in a few days.—Oregonian.

Binger Hermann is in Oregon again. His avowed purpose is to "take a rest" from the arduous labors that have beset him during the past six months, but there are a whole lot of republican politicians in Oregon that will feel easier when Binger gets rested and returns to his job at Washington. The general impression prevails that Hermann is laying his plans for the senatorship vacancy, or that he wants to be the next governor of Oregon. It is quite certain that Hermann is not going to be satisfied with a mere clerkship, and that is about all that the office he occupies amounts to.

County Assessor Lutz has not yet assessed the O. C. & E. railroad. Last year and the year before the road bed was assessed at the rate of \$400 per mile. This was entirely too low. Three thousand dollars per mile would not be an unreasonable assessment, and in no case ought it go below \$2,500 per mile. It is perhaps true, as claimed, that the road is not making much more than expenses, but neither are nine-tenths of the other taxpayers of the county, especially those upon the farms and ranches.

Binger Hermann's name is being mentioned quite frequently in connection with the nomination for governor next year. To be honest about it Hermann is one of the very few republicans that can be elected next year. If the republicans renominates the present incumbent the prohibition party will probably lose its place on the tail end of the vote as far as governor is concerned.

The city council of Seattle has passed an ordinance to prevent the wearing of high hats at theatrical performances. The penalty is not less than \$5 nor more than \$10 fine. Toledo's city council should follow the lead of other first-class cities in this matter.

A Oakland, California, man is trying to establish a balloon service to Klondike. He claims the trip from Juneau to Dawson can be made in twenty-four hours by balloon.

H. DENLINGER,

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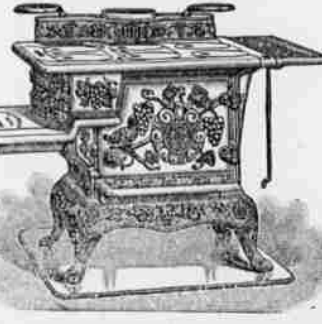
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