

THE KEY TO THE PACIFIC

Chairman Hitt on Hawaii's Strategic Importance.

PROTECT OUR WEST COAST

Secretary Long Opens Bids for Protecting the Government With an Armor Plant—Sixty-Nine Received.

Chicago, Feb. 1.—The Post's Washington correspondent sends this interesting letter from Chairman Hitt, of the house committee on foreign relations:

"The gist, in my opinion, in the Hawaiian situation lies in the strategic position of the little group of islands as a basis of operations for protecting our west coast. There is a strong resemblance in this case to the situation in the case of the Bermudas, except that the Bermudas are not so commanding. That is, there is a resemblance in the south of them to the Hawaiian islands, in that they would, in case of conflict, to a great extent take their place with European powers, even if they possessed the Bermudas. In the possession of the Hawaiian islands we would have a point which might be considered safety for the western coast against the naval operations, except Great Britain, which still get coal for her ships from the British Columbia ports and use that for her naval operations. The submarine features, the question of sugar, the character of the population, the question of government, etc., take up a great deal of attention, but I think are of minor importance.

"We have now by treaty certain exchange rights, but that is a terminable right. The Hawaiian republic is, essentially, an independent nation, and is wholly incapable of defending itself and preserving its independence, at the moment that we come into a conflict, any naval power presenting itself will take possession. Once it is possessed by a power like Japan, England or Germany, it will be the story of the Bermudas over again, only a stronger and more effective Bermuda on the western coast. With a coaling station 3,000 miles out, we could make the time and length of effective service of our warships going out from San Francisco. Having no neighboring islands, it leaves the immense expanse of the Northern Pacific utterly open to our opponents, if we are attacked. It is thus of great value as a base of defense or for an enemy to use against us.

"I have thought for many years that the islands were of essential importance to us. The impression that I got when in the state department in 1881 was with me. When the question of extending the reciprocity treaty was then under consideration, I was impressed with these facts. The sugar question and its branches is a matter of competing interests. Once incorporated, they all go into the hopper together, as completely as the beet root in Nebraska and the cane of Louisiana."

Armor Plant Bids.

Washington, Feb. 1.—Proposals were sent today in the office of Secretary of the Navy Long for the construction of a government armor plant. There are 60 bids, covering every phase of the advertisement. There were only bids to furnish a complete plant, only one of these named a figure. The Huntington, W. Va., chamber of commerce offered to follow specifications and build the complete plant for \$2,500,000.

Another offer to supply a complete armor plant came from the John P. Holland company, of New York, but no figure was named, the company simply offering to do this for a sum of money and in a period less than estimated by the armor board in its report. The bid was accompanied by the expression of opinion that armor should be extended in the construction contracts of vessels, by which policy congress would understand the need of ships and their protection, and that armor would be reduced, and delivery expedited.

Another proposal that commanded attention was the bid of the American Engineering Company, of Chicago, O. This was a very complete proposal to supply each of the armor buildings, furnaces, etc., and, as well as 150 acres of land, at a specified in each case. A special interest about the bid was an accompanying offer from the chamber of commerce of Columbus to donate \$100,000 to the government in the event the bid should be accepted.

It will take some time to schedule the bids, but as soon as they are arranged they will be sent to congress by Secretary Long for the information of that body in case it desires to back the government in the manufacture of armor.

Steamboat Inspection in Alaska.

Washington, Feb. 1.—Secretary Gage sent to the house a recommendation for steamboat inspections in Alaska. He points out that the tide of immigration to the Klondike fields has resulted in the establishment of an extensive steamboat service on the Yukon. He points out that the traveling public visiting the Klondike region, and he submits the recommendation that the government should accomplish that end.

SWEEP OF THE STORM.

A Fearful Blizzard Raging in the Atlantic States.

New York, Feb. 3.—The storm which began Sunday night swept over New York state with great fury, and today was central in the New England states. Northern New York is snowbound, and the extent of damage in New England cannot be approximated. Reports from Boston, with which place communication was established tonight under great difficulties, after that city had been shut off from New York for many hours, indicate some loss of life, and an immense amount of damage to property. Business has been at a standstill in many of the smaller towns; wires all over the country are down; roads are blocked, and railway traffic greatly impeded. The "up-the-state" residents have suffered with cold, which ranged as low as 20 degrees and more below zero. At Albany, Troy, Saratoga and many other places in the state, as much as two and three feet of snow has fallen, and reports tonight are that the blizzard is still blowing, the worst storm since the memorable one of 1888.

Residents of this city have had to battle their way to business against a gale of wind that at times swept along at 40 miles an hour and carried sheets of snow with it.

Much delay was caused to the railroad mail service, so that the northern part of the state has been practically cut off, and trains on the New York Central were from four to five hours late. From 10,000 to 20,000 men have been at work with thousands of teams on the streets clearing away the snow, yet there has been no appreciable decrease in the amount piled up in every direction.

Portions of Long Island suffered almost as much from the storm as the towns far up the state. The east end of the island has been blockaded by the drifting snow. The Long Island railroad was completely closed today. Snow plows, driven by five of the most powerful engines of the road, are now battling with the drifts on the eastern section of the road, which may be clear by tomorrow.

SERIOUS HOTEL FIRE.

New York Hotel Burned, With Probably Fatal Results.

Gloversville, Feb. 3.—The Alvord house, a five-story brick building, was destroyed by fire between 7 and 8 o'clock this morning. Six persons perished in the flames, and a dozen others were more or less injured in making their escape. The dead are:

E. C. Kimball, of Indianapolis, his wife and daughter; Benjamin F. Strickland; Henry C. Day; Charles C. Rupert.

Mr. Kimball was an agent for a glove factory of this city, and Mr. Strickland and Mr. Day were business men. Rupert was a bellboy in the hotel.

The firemen searched all day in the ruins for the remains of the victims, but their effort was unrewarded. Electric lights have been strung over the ruins, and a large force will continue the search all night. The two traveling men reported missing were accounted for late tonight, leaving six victims. Dr. Davis, of Westfield, N. Y., jumped from the third story. He struck the wires opposite the second story and was thrown to the ground, and was not seriously hurt. J. H. Barry, of Troy, jumped from the third story, and was only slightly injured. Elwood Delong, a fireman, was seriously frozen, and Andrew Watson, of Toronto, Ont., jumped from the fourth floor to a shed and was slightly hurt.

The fire started on the ground floor, about 7 o'clock and shot up through the broad stairs and hallways, which acted as flues to the stories above with lightning-like speed. Almost immediately after the flames were discovered the alarm was sounded through the house, and the big hotel was soon the scene of the wildest confusion. There was a wild scramble on the part of the guests to escape with their personal property, but many were forced to flee without saving anything. A few of the guests made their escape by the stairways, but the smoke soon cut off this retreat.

The next resort of the imprisoned people was the windows. As their terror-stricken faces appeared, the little crowd below watched breathlessly, hoping against hope that all would be saved. The guests who were thus entrapped did not long hesitate to take the risk of jumping, though some were rescued from their perilous positions by the firemen. Others leaped from the windows, several being more or less injured.

Head Struck a Post.

Rosalia, Wash., Feb. 3.—The 4-year-old son of Judge Schurra was killed this morning while coasting. At a sharp turn his sled left the road and pitched down the hill. Its progress was stopped at a fence, a post of which the boy struck with his head. His skull was fractured and the barbed wire penetrated his scalp. He lived about 20 minutes.

Wages Increased Ten Per Cent.

Ashland, Wis., Feb. 3.—The Carnegie-Oliver Mining Company, operating four of the largest iron mines on the Gogebic range, and employing 1,500 men, today announced an increase of 10 per cent in the wages of all their employees.

CAUSED BY BRUTALITY.

Sailor Taken Off the Stetson a Raving Maniac.

Portland, Or., Feb. 2.—If the story of John Burke, who came around the Horn on the American ship Geo. Stetson in the capacity of sailor, can be believed, the officers of this ship are guilty of the most barbaric cruelties that have been reported at this port in many a day. The Stetson arrived at Astoria with a cargo of coal Thursday, being 74 days out from Baltimore, where she took on cargo. Captain Murphy is in command, and George Harvey is first officer.

The victim of the brutality of the officers, and especially that of First Mate Harvey, is a seaman named Amos Stone, son of a wealthy jewelry merchant of Boston. Stone is said to have been taken off the Stetson at Astoria, a raving maniac, having arrived at this condition as a result of the treatment he received on the voyage.

"Stone was singled out as the special object of Harvey's brutality soon after we left Baltimore," said Burke in narrating his story. "Harvey, for some reason, knocked him insensible with an iron top maul, and as the rest of us feared we would be treated likewise we were at the point of turning back four hours after we left port. As soon as we saw what had happened, we scampered up the masts to turn to. The mate, however, informed the captain, who bullied us into remaining with the ship.

Stone, as a result of the injury he received, was laid up for some days, during which time he was given but little to eat. As soon as he had recovered sufficiently to venture out and report for duty, Harvey kicked him off the fore-castle. From that time on Stone was unable to leave his cabin. He was starved and beaten almost daily and by the time we reached Astoria he was skin and bones and a raving maniac. As we were rounding the Horn, where the seas were very bad, Harvey would open the door of Stone's cabin so as to let the water in to soak his clothes and bedding. I have also seen Harvey open the door to Stone's cabin and with a heavy leather strap beat him until big welts stood out on his legs and back. Stone, who was already losing his reason, would not wince under this scourging and stood like a statue, without saying a word in remonstrance. An effort was made to obliterate the marks on Stone's body before the ship reached Astoria, but without success, and he will carry the marks with him to the grave. During much of the time that Stone was cooped up in his cabin he had nothing but refuse to eat and the place was the most foul smelling I was ever in. He was abused like a dog even during the time he was in irons. It made me sick to look at him, even as accustomed as I am to see displays of brutality on the high seas."

Burke's story is corroborated in every detail by Ernest Weyl, Ira Dierks and Charles Russell, three others of the crew.

DYING BY HUNDREDS.

A Harrowing Tale Comes From the Newfoundland Coast.

New York, Feb. 2.—The Red Cross line steamship Portia arrived today four days overdue from St. John's, N. F., and Halifax, after a desperate encounter with a pack of ice off the Newfoundland coast, and with a harrowing tale of blizzards and destitution in the coast section of that country. Hundreds of men, women, and children dead or dying from exposure and starvation with abundance close by and hundreds more threatened with a like fate are the conditions reported by the Portia.

The Portia was penned in by huge Arctic floes in plain sight of St. John's unable to move. She managed to escape by the merest accident.

Many other craft, several of them relief vessels sent by the Canadian government to succor destitute fishermen, had to abandon their errands of mercy and return to St. John's, where they were still in the ice when the Portia struggled into clear water.

Among the detained fleet at St. John's were a dozen or more sailing vessels loaded with codfish for England and Brazil.

The city of St. John's was in a terrible condition on account of the blizzard, the streets being rendered impassable. Railroads had suspended work and the poor were suffering through hunger and cold. The price of food advanced until beyond the reach of the poor.

Several miles off shore the Portia passed the steamer Grandland, fast in the ice, and in a perilous condition.

TO GO TO SAMOA.

Warship Will Be Sent There to Protect Our Interests.

New York, Feb. 2.—The American flag will soon be displayed in Samoan waters by a man-of-war says a Herald correspondent. The vessel will be the Mohican, which has been converted into a training ship. Since the arrival in Washington of ex-Consul-General Churchill, the president and assistant secretary of state have been convinced that American interests demand that an American man-of-war shall visit Samoa.

MILLS WILL BE BUILT

To Cut Lumber for Boats Along the Lakes in Alaska.

The last obstacle has been removed in the matter of the establishment of the saw mills of the Canadian Mill Company at the lakes on the lines of routes from Wrangel, Skagway and Dyea, to Dawson and the Klondike. The scheme is one of the most interesting yet launched in connection with the increase of trade to the north, and contemplates saw mills at different points along the chain of lakes that lie in the direct path of all routes leading across the mountains from tidewater to Dawson. The principal business of the saw mills will be to cut lumber for the boats to be used by prospectors and miners going down to the gold fields. When running to full capacity the mills will be able to turn out 80 completed boats daily.

The first use that the saw mills will be put to, however, will be cutting lumber to build two stern-wheel steamers, which are to ply on the lakes. Each will be 75 feet long, 18 feet beam and will draw 18 inches of water. After the completion of the steamers the mills will be started cutting boat lumber and the daily capacity will be 40,000 feet. The mills will have electric light plants and run during the dark hours of the short days or on a night shift if necessary. The boats will be delivered at the head of Lake Bennett, and the steamers can take long strings of loaded boats and tow them a distance of 72 miles. This will be much to the advantage of those owning the boats, as the peculiar topographical conditions are such that head winds prevail during the greater part of the season when lake navigation is open. Each steamer will have a capacity of 125 passengers. The tow of the small boats will do away with the necessity of sails. Navigation opens on the lakes about April 15, and the mills are expected to cut for the steamers early in March. A general freight business by barges will be conducted on the lakes, the barges as well as the boats to be towed by the steamers.

Sale of Klondike Claims.

One of the biggest deals on record in Klondike mining properties was consummated in Seattle last week. Six claims, located on Bonanza, Sulphur, Dominion, All-Gold creeks and French gulch changed hands. The total amount involved in the transaction was between \$150,000 and \$200,000. No definite terms have been made public, both parties to the deal withholding this information.

The purchasers are E. J. McCune, of Salt Lake, Utah, and Eugene J. Short, of Spokane. They are acting for themselves and for Spokane and New York parties. Mr. McCune is a brother of A. W. McCune, the millionaire Montana and British Columbia mining man, owner of the Payne silver mine, in British Columbia. He is also associated in a number of mining properties with Marcus Daly and W. L. Hoge, well known in mining circles in Butte and Anaconda.

Chris Neebur and Carl Hunt are the sellers. Neebur is an Iowa boy, and Hunt mined for several years in the Kootenay and Oregon before going to Alaska. Neebur was four years in the Yukon country, and Hunt spent three years there. Both were in the Klondike early in the spring of 1897, before the stampede from the states. They secured a number of valuable claims on the principal gold-bearing streams in the camp. After taking out a large quantity of gold from No. 9, above discovery on Bonanza, they sold a half interest in the claim for \$20,000.

Suggets of Klondike News.

The Alaska Mining Record has the following "suggets" of Klondikers passing through Juneau:

Frank Swanson, who is now in Juneau, made the first sluice box that was ever used in the Klondike district. This was on Gold Bottom creek. He is a young man with a clear complexion and a clear record, and is not a millionaire yet, but has a fair prospect of becoming one this year. He brought out about \$20,000 in checks.

"Nigger Jim" came out with these last Yukoners, but stayed at Skagway for a few days. He is said to be the whitest man in Dawson and hence his nickname. His real name is James Daugherty or in the aristocratic past D'Aughtre. He was in with Alex McDonald on several recent deals and brings with him in checks about \$160,000.

Sam Stanley, of Juneau, has not done so badly in the interior. He comes out with about \$10,000 in gold, and has an interest in two of the finest claims on the Eldorado.

Fred Stevens sold out the Dawson opera house just before the big fire for, it is said, \$20,000, but he did not bring all this out with him.

George Miller had sold, when he left Dawson, about 800 of his 1,000 head of sheep, and cleared about \$20,000 out of the transaction.

George Apple had the biggest chance in his life to make a fortune when candles went up to \$1 each, and then became unpurchasable at any price. He made moulds for the making of tallow candles—and there was plenty of tallow, but he gave his ingenuity to the benefit of the community. Still he need not fear the grocery bill for another 20 years.

WEEKLY MARKET LETTER.

Trade Conditions in the Leading Cities of the World.

Last week was a very important one in the Chicago wheat market. May wheat advanced 8 cents per bushel and January 13 cents. Statistics were all in favor of high prices, but the main feature is the Leiter corner. He claims to be able to put May wheat to \$1.25. The exports from both coasts to Europe were very large—5,110,624 bushels, and the visible supply showed a very good decrease. The foreign news situation is as bewildering as it usually is on wheat. Speculators have their eyes on Argentine, not because it contributes so much, but because it sells so furiously the 25,000,000 bushels it has to contribute. The Englishmen at Liverpool learned something during the week to make them nervous about the South American supplies, yet direct Rosario cables reported nothing more serious than a cessation of deliveries because of rains, and the Argentine shipments for the week were 328,000 bushels, a big start so soon after harvesting. The flour people talked dolorously of the demand and of the demoralizing effect of the corn adulteration going on; and then, to make this as puzzling as every other feature, Minneapolis reported 200,000 barrels of flour sold in two days. The winter wheat condition so far is high, and recent heavy snows have minimized the danger for the present. Exports keep large, and new purchases for foreign account small. The movement from first hands is away over any expectation, but the supplies of contract wheat everywhere are in such few hands as to be unavailable and in most markets at startling premiums. January wheat at New York for a few minutes was 12 cents cash at Chicago and 12 cents over the May price at New York. All of which should be new proof that no one can tell very much with any certainty about a subject which involves the supplies and needs of the whole world.

Portland Market.

Wheat—Walla Walla, 75¢; Valley and Bluestem, 78¢; 79¢ per bushel. Flour—Best grades, \$3.75; graham, \$3.30; superfine, \$2.25 per barrel. Oats—Choice white, 35¢; choice gray, 33¢; 34¢ per bushel. Barley—Feed barley, \$19@20; brewing, \$20 per ton. Millstuffs—Bran, \$19 per ton; middlings, \$24; shorts, \$20. Hay—Timothy, \$12.50; clover, \$10@11; California wheat, \$10; do oat, \$11; Oregon wild hay, \$9@10 per ton. Eggs—20¢ per dozen. Butter—Fancy creamery, 55¢; fair to good, 45¢; dairy, 40¢; 50¢ per roll. Cheese—Oregon, 12¢; Young America, 12¢; California, 9¢; 10¢ per pound. Poultry—Chickens, mixed, \$2.75@3.00 per dozen; hens, \$3.00@3.50; geese, \$5.50@6.00; ducks, \$4.50@5.00 per dozen; turkeys, live, 10¢@11¢ per pound. Potatoes—Oregon Burbanks, 45¢; 50¢ per sack; sweets, \$1.75@2 per cental. Onions—Oregon, \$1.75@2.25 per sack. Hops—4@16¢ per pound for new crop; 1896 crop, 4@6¢. Wool—Valley, 14@16¢ per pound; Eastern Oregon, 7@12¢; mohair, 20¢@22¢ per pound. Mutton—Gross, best sheep, wethers and ewes, 4¢; dressed mutton, 7¢; spring lambs, 5¢ per pound. Hogs—Gross, choice heavy, \$4.00; light and feeders, \$3.00@4.00; dressed, \$4.50@5.00 per 100 pounds. Beef—Gross, top steers, \$3.00@3.25; cows, \$3.00; dressed beef, 4¢@6¢ per pound. Veal—Large, 5@5½¢; small, 6@6½¢ per pound.

Seattle Market.

Butter—Fancy native creamery, brick, 27¢; ranch, 22¢@23¢. Cheese—Native Washington, 13¢; California, 9¢. Eggs—Fresh ranch, 23¢. Poultry—Chickens, live, per pound, 10¢; spring chickens, \$2.50@3.00; ducks, \$3.50@3.75. Wheat—Feed wheat, \$22 per ton. Oats—Choice, per ton, \$31. Corn—Whole, \$23; cracked, per ton, \$23; feed meal, \$23 per ton. Barley—Rolled or ground, per ton, \$22; whole, \$22. Hay—Puget sound, new, per ton, \$11@12; Eastern Washington timothy, \$17@18; alfalfa, \$12. Fresh Meats—Choice dressed beef, steers, 7¢; cows, 6½¢; mutton sheep, 8¢; pork, 6¢; veal, small, 7¢. Fresh Fish—Halibut, 5@6¢; salmon, 3¢; salmon trout, 10¢; flounders and sole, 3¢@4¢; ling cod, 4¢@5¢; rock cod, 5¢; smelt, 2½¢@4¢. Fresh Fruit—Apples, 40¢@\$1 per box; pears, 25¢@75¢ per box; oranges, navel, \$2.25@2.75 per box.