

Topics of the Times

"Offensive partisanship" on the part of a postmaster is measured not by its activity but by its direction.

It seems a pity that Elijah Daw and King Solomon could not meet. They would have some very interesting reminiscences.

It has been found that the Sierra Nevada mountains are 3,000,000 years old. As far as can be learned they are still in first-class repair, too.

In the death of fourteen persons through the collapse of a new building New York has shown that Chicago is not alone as a violator of building laws.

A Texan man who was expelled from church thrashed two preachers. It is as difficult to take religion from a Texan man as it is to get him to take it.

"Are we a civilized people?" asks the Kansas City Journal. Speaking for the country generally, we are, but there are times when we don't seem to stay put, as it were.

Venezuela, too, is looking about the decision of The Hague arbitration tribunal. However, it was not expected Venezuela would be pleased with any sort of decision which involved the payment of money by that government.

Speaking of heart failure, a story comes of a boy who suffered from it and died while he was undergoing a perfectly just and well-merited spanking at the hands of a parent. Every boy should cut out this deplorable story of parental strictness and paste it on the vise of his little cap.

The commissary general of the army, having thoroughly investigated the subject, approves of hash as proper food for the soldiers. This judgment is justified by that of mankind generally, more unjustly and more unreasonably abused than good, sound hash. It deserves to be eliminated from the list of hyoids and decorated with the blue ribbon.

And now another backset is given to matrimony during the leap year of 1904. The London Lancet is urging that young men undergo an intellectual test before being allowed to marry. How many young men would present themselves for examination, and how many could stand the test! The girls are inquiring whether they will have to take the first on the eligible list and then the next, and what they will do when the eligible list is exhausted.

The Hawaiian national hymn is making progress round the world, and soon it will be like the British Empire, on which the sun never sets. It was introduced a few years ago at Yale University, where it is known as the "Boola" song. A Yale graduate took it to Japan, and taught it to the Japanese soldiers, who liked it, and may even now be trying to "boo" the Russian bear with it. Another Yale man set patriotic words to it, and the Macedonians use it as a war-song, to arouse enthusiasm in their fight against the Turk.

Jane Austen wrote to her sister in 1814, "I have determined to trim my lilac sarsenet with black satin ribbon, just as my China crape is, sixpenny width at the bottom, three-penny or fourpenny at top. Ribbon trimmings are all the fashion at Bath. With this addition it will be a very useful gown, happy to go anywhere." Emerson quotes, "with admiring submission," the experience of the lady who declared that "the sense of being perfectly well-dressed gives a feeling of inward tranquillity which religion is powerless to bestow." So the clever woman and the philosopher pay their tribute to the spell of dress. Any woman who has qualms of conscience at the amount of time and thought she must give to her clothes may gather cheer from the innocent pleasure so genuine a nature as Miss Austen's found in the simple task of making a gown "happy to go anywhere." The woman who has compassed the art of making that kind of a gown has done herself a large service and the world no small one. We should have "admired" to see Miss Austen attired in the lilac sarsenet with the black satin ribbon. We may be sure that not only was the gown happy to go anywhere, but that the wearer was happy in it, and that the company was happy to have her. A gentle word, a charitable act, a difficult sacrifice are each more easy in a well-fitting and becoming dress. Perhaps it may be a sign of our servitude to earth that this should be so, but while we live here we are bound to look facts in the face, and cherish the ideal of the "happy" gown.

A Boston expert has been making exhaustive researches into the home life of hundreds of families in all parts of the country. He wanted to know how the average family spent their income. He found folks who ate themselves into poverty; others who starved in order to dress; people who wasted hard-earned dollars, and one fact seems bigger than all the rest. According to his figures the average family of moderate means pays from 20 to 25 per cent of their gross income to the landlord. In other words, the breadwinner works nearly or quite one-fourth of his time for the privilege of a roof to cover his head. It is a wonder that more young married men do not buy homes. They can do it if they will. It only takes a little pluck, a little daring and some self-denial. Modern methods of easy payments have actually made it possible to pay for a home as you now pay rent. A home can never be anything more than a temporary place of abode. The question of moving comes up often. The man who owns a home wants to improve it. He has flowers and vines and a well-kept lawn. The sense of possession and ownership makes his chest stick out a bit. He is an actual part of the city in which he lives, and he and his wife and children are all interested in making it the city beautiful. There is another side to it. The purchase of a home is almost all profit. The head of the family saves money because he must save money or lose his home. He applies dollars to the mortgage, that would otherwise have been frittered away in a manner that even he couldn't account for. Money melts more easily than snow in July. He makes payments by cutting down on luxuries, cigars, theater tickets, drinks, street car rides, etc. There is more economy in the house, for often the wife saves better than the man. And saving for a home often brings husband and wife closer together. That is a fact. Where two persons are following the same idea and are imbued with the same ambition there has to be a community of interest and sympathy. If you will talk the matter over with your wife you will say: "That is just what I have been saying for years. We can own a home if we will make up our minds to do it." And she is right.

"Cotton is king" was once a familiar saying; but in the realm of business which the great white staple was supposed to govern there rose a rival claimant, a pretender it may be, but at any rate a strong one, and then it was proclaimed that "Iron is king." A writer in a New York newspaper, in reviewing the business situation and presenting some figures of the international commerce of the United States, declares that neither cotton nor iron is king, but that the real, the great monarch, is agriculture. The annual report of Secretary Wilson shows how true this is. It is only casually that the Secretary calls attention to the fact that the people of the United States—eighty millions of them—not only sustained themselves last year, but contributed food and the raw materials for manufactures by which many other millions of people in foreign countries were sustained. He quickly passes to a consideration of the so-called "balance of trade." This, as he shows, exhibits a peculiarity which "seems to have escaped the attention of the public," namely, that it is always a farmer's balance of trade. During the year 1903 the imports of the United States, other than of agricultural products, exceeded the exports by fifty-six million dollars. That is, there was a balance of trade unfavorable to the United States to that amount. But when the traffic in agricultural products is included, how different is the story! Instead of a balance of fifty-six million dollars against the United States, the figures become three hundred and sixty-seven million in favor. As if these figures were not impressive enough, Secretary Wilson goes on to give those of the last fourteen years in lump sums. Were agricultural products omitted, the nation during that time would have had an unfavorable balance of eight hundred and sixty-five million. The farmers not only wiped that out, but brought in a surplus of nearly four billion dollars. "These figures," Secretary Wilson adds, "terse-ly express the immense national reserve-sustaining power of the farmers of the country. It is the farmers who have paid the foreign bondholders."

FLYING REPTILES OF OLD.
Of Great Size, They Were Once More Common Than Birds.

We are apt to think of reptiles as crawling and crawling things, forgetting that there was a time when flying reptiles were more common than birds. These reptiles, the pterodactyls, or flying dragons, not only flew, but some of them reached a size much greater than that of any bird, for the largest birds do not fly. The South American condor sometimes measures as much as ten and one-half feet from tip to tip of outstretched wings, and it is quite possible that the finest examples of the albatross may measure a little more. But the great pterodactyls which flew about the sea that in the days of old reached from the Gulf of Mexico to the Rocky Mountains, measured as much as twenty feet, the width of an average city lot, across their wings.

Most of us have seen an eagle flying, and we can appreciate the size of this ancient dragon by remembering that it was nearly three times the size of an eagle. It was not, however, three times as heavy, for the body of this strange reptile was so small and its skeleton so wonderfully light that the entire animal is thought to have weighed not more than twenty-five pounds, or only about as much as a large condor. One of the largest bones of the wing, two feet long and two inches through, was, as Prof. Williston tells us, no thicker than a sheet of blotting paper, and the great head, with a beak over three feet long, was equally light. This great toothless beak is believed to have been used for snapping up fishes; and we can imagine this huge creature sailing swiftly over the sea, now and then swooping down to pick up a fish as deftly, for all its size, as a real swallow.

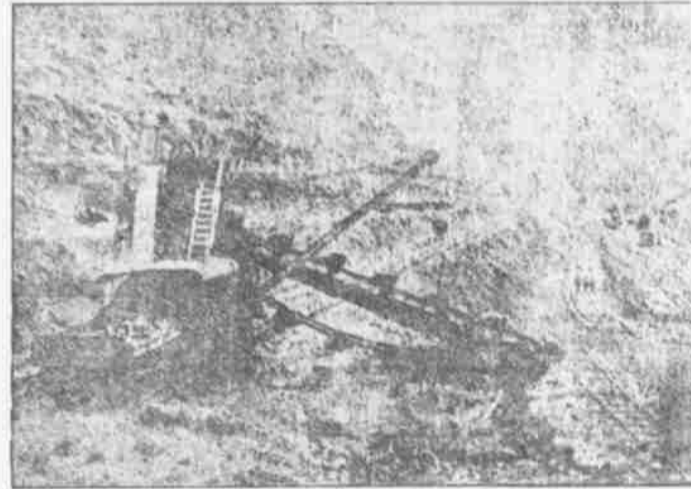
But what did Ornithostoma—this is the animal's name—do with his wings and beak when he made an occasional visit to the land? One would think they must have been very much in his way, and that the animal was as awkward on the shore as he was graceful in the air. And how did he start to fly? With such enormous wings, we think Ornithostoma must have dived on cliffs about the sea and launched off them as the gannets do from Bird Rock. This great flying reptile lived some six million years ago; the sea over which it flew long ago disappeared, and the mud into which its bones sank became chalk, and from the formation of these great chalk beds the time at which Ornithostoma existed is called the Cretaceous Period.—St. Nicholas.

Far-seeing Providence.
Jaggies—The liking for terrapin is said to be an acquired taste.
Waggies—That's another of the wise provisions of nature. Terrapin now cost \$100 a dozen.—Town Topics.
The average man either boasts of his good health or howls about his aches and pains.
Most books appearing now are written to please the people, and not the writers of the books.

THE PANAMA CANAL

Most Stupendous Engineering Enterprise of Modern Times—Will Revolutionize the World's Sea Routes—History of the Undertaking.

THE treaty between the new Republic of Panama and the United States and the enactment of the legislation by the latter necessary to commence the work of construction terminated all contention over the relative value of routes, concessions, the policy, etc., which have stood in the way of the construction of an isthmian canal for at least twenty-five years, and opens the way for a vigorous prosecution of the great maritime enterprise. "No single great material work which remains to be undertaken on this continent," said President Roosevelt in a message to Congress, "is of such consequence to the American people as the building of a canal across the Isthmus connecting North and South America."

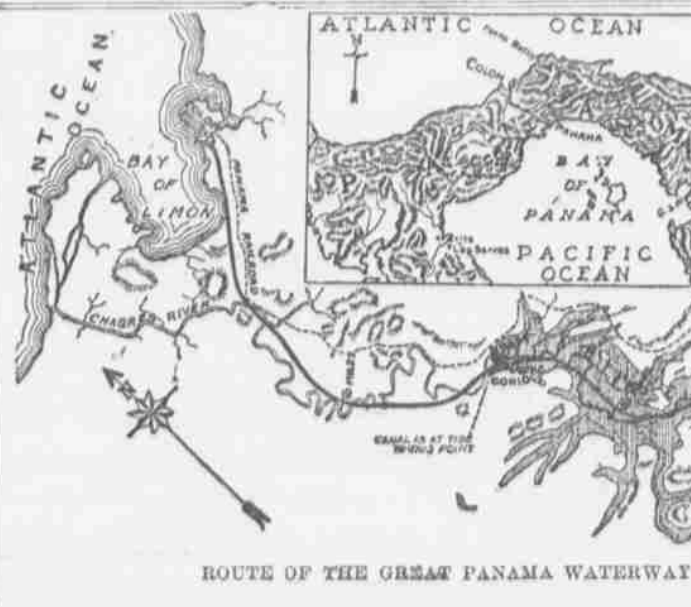


WEST END OF CUZCERRA CUT.

material interests, but standing monuments to its constructive ability." As early as 1827 the use of the Isthmus for commercial transit was discussed and steps taken to secure that end. In that year President Bolivar gave a commission to J. A. Lloyd to survey the Isthmus of Panama in order to ascertain the most eligible line of communication across it, whether by road or canal. Nothing came of this commission beyond making surveys and formulating a report in which a new line of travel across the Isthmus was recommended. In 1828 the Republic of Colombia made a grant to a French company authorizing the construction of macadamized roads, railroads and canals across the Isthmus, with the Pacific terminus at Panama. Several years were spent in exploration, and reports were made which encouraged that undertaking, and it was decided to make further investigation, with a view of cutting through the Isthmus to join the two oceans by a canal. An elaborate report was the result of this investigation by Napoleon Garofa, who recommended the construction of a canal, but nothing was done.

Genesis of the Canal.
Events that occurred about the middle of the last century made it clear to sagacious statesmen that a maritime connection between the two oceans at the Isthmus of Panama was of the very highest importance to the United States. The dispute with Great Britain as to the boundary line west of the Rocky Mountains was settled by the treaty of 1846, and Oregon became an organized territory in 1848. By the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, in 1848, following the war with Mexico, California was ceded to the United States. The discovery of gold in that State induced many thousands of people of this country to seek the mining regions, and to avoid the hardships of travel across the plains, lines of steamships were established between New York and San Juan del Norte and San Francisco and Panama. This stream of travel led to the construction of a railroad across the Isthmus, and was the means of attracting general attention to the value and importance of communication by that route, and gave fresh interest to the question of constructing a canal. The matter was taken up by Congress and a report made, in 1849, by a committee recommending surveys from points on the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean.

Nothing came from this investigation in the way of promoting a canal, but it may be said that the construction of the railroad was the result. On the completion of the road appropriations were made by Congress for carrying the mail across the Isthmus. Various efforts followed to secure concessions from New Granada and Nicaragua for citizens of the United States to construct a canal, some of which were successful, but none of which accomplished anything practical. In 1878 the Colombian Government made a concession to a provisional company formed in France, for a period of thirty years, for the construction of a canal across its territory, and this concession was subsequently transferred to the Panama Canal Company, which undertook the work of construction, but failed and went into liquidation. Ferdinand de Lesseps was president of this company. Following the failure of De Lesseps, a new organization was perfected, and the work of construction was continued merely to preserve the concession, in the hope that the property and concession would be purchased by the United States. The price at which the property was offered was so large that the Walker Commission, which had investigated the general question, recommended the Nicaragua route; but subsequently the Panama Company offered the entire property for \$40,000,000, and the property was taken by the United States at that figure. It is



ROUTE OF THE GREAT PANAMA WATERWAY LINKING THE ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC OCEANS.



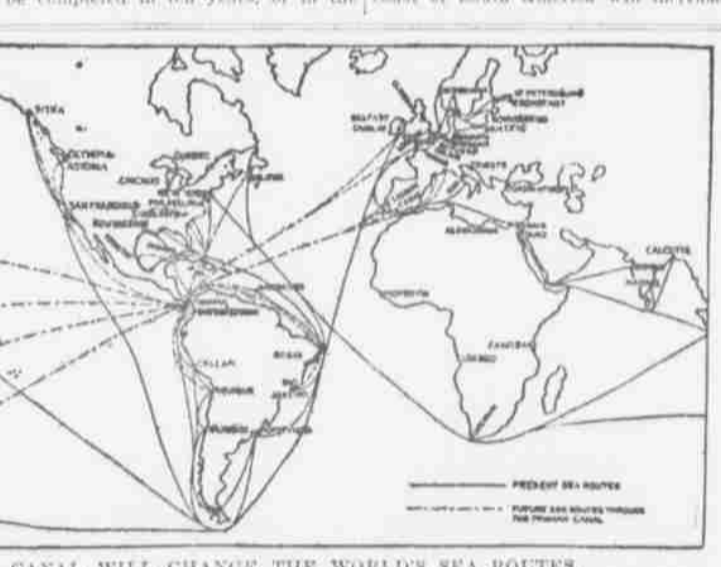
PIER OF THE PANAMA RAILWAY.

the Orient. It will place Europe and the United States on a basis of equality in distance for the trade of the Far East and Australia, the advantages of present being greatly in favor of Europe.

The report of the Walker Commission points out that the canal will have an especially direct and important effect upon the market for American coal. Vessels engaged in our own or European commerce through the canal will find it to their advantage to purchase American fuel on our Atlantic or Gulf seaboard, or in West Indian or Central American stations. The larger commerce which the canal will cause to move across the North Pacific will increase the demand for the product of the Puget Sound mines. The low cost at which coal can be placed at tidewater on the Gulf and Atlantic seaboard, and the fact that there will be a considerable movement of vessels in ballast or with part cargoes westward through the canal, makes it probable that the coal required for industrial purposes on the west coast of South and Central America, and for commercial uses in those regions, and to some extent in the coaling stations of the Pacific, will be supplied from the mines in the southern and eastern sections of the United States. The demands at home for the coal of all the mining centers of the United States will be enlarged by the canal in proportion to its effect upon the development of American industries.

The effect of the canal upon the railroads in the eastern and southern sections of the United States will be favorable. The lines in the central West will feel the competition in rates somewhat more than will the Eastern and Southern roads, but the only business that can be diverted from them is the low-class transcontinental traffic, and this will be fully compensated for by the larger traffic due to the canal's effect upon the development and diversification of the manufacturing and other industries of the section they serve. The railways connecting the Missouri Valley with the Pacific ports are the roads with which the canal's competition will be strongest, and the rates on a large share of their through business will be regulated by the water route.

It is calculated that the canal will be completed in ten years, or in the



HOW THE PANAMA CANAL WILL CHANGE THE WORLD'S SEA ROUTES.

value to the industrial and commercial interests of every section of the country. The expense and delay now incurred in commercial intercourse between the Atlantic and Pacific sections of the United States and in the trade between the Pacific States with Europe impose a serious limitation upon the progress of our industries. Cheaper and more expeditious access to the Pacific markets will benefit not only the Northwestern States by furnishing cheaper raw materials and larger markets for their industrial products, and the Southern States by increasing their exports of cotton and its manufactures, forest products, iron and steel manufactures, but also the Central West, which is now manufacturing extensively for the foreign and domestic trade. The canal will benefit all these sections by furnishing a larger business with the Pacific coast, and enhance their ability to compete with Europe in Western South America and

more rapidly, as will also the volume of our trade with the Orient. An Isthmian canal will strengthen the unity of the national and political interests of the United States, develop its Pacific territory and promote the commerce and industries of the entire country. The benefits which Europe will derive from the canal will be commercial. In addition to this, ours will be political and industrial.

Approval.
"Are you fond of golf?"
"Yes, indeed," answered Mrs. Cumrox. "I regard the game as a very clever way of enabling people to walk without being suspected of trying to save the cost of a carriage."—Washington Star.

Bread and Rice.
Only one-third of the world's population use bread as a daily article of food. Nearly one-half of the people of the world subsist chiefly on rice.

IDEAL HOUSEWIVES.

Dorothea von Hellegel, the clever wife of a great man, was often urged to lay down her knitting needles and take up her pen. She replied, "There are far too few ink-blottings." Mrs. Louise J. Mills, in "Widows and Weddings of Many Climes," says that this remark illustrates the point of view of many German women.

With most German women house-keeping is both a science and an art. The woman who is daily and hourly engaged in science and art is not a woman of stagnant mentality. Her kitchen is her laboratory. Her linen room is her studio.

The average German housewife does as much work as any, but she makes far less fuss about it than most. She does no dirty work. There is never any dirty work for her to do, for dirt is only matter out of place. The good German housekeeper never displaces anything, never allows anything to misplace itself. It is a fine lesson in good breeding to see a German woman make a cake or brew a cup.

In the early seventies, in Chicago, I knew a German family. From the baking of their bread to the soiling of their linen, every detail of their life for the child stranger within those simple German gates. Most of others women of Jewish wealth, but not one of them could ever hope to wear her diamonds with half the distinction with which this German woman wore her spotless cooking apron.

It was a sermon on high thinking and right living. She was so cool, so dainty, so unflinching, so self-possessed, so cheery, but so dignified, so everything that I had supposed it impossible to be in a kitchen. Although I was only a little girl, I realized that this simple German housewife had in both her mind and her manner many fine and high traits, which were often sadly lacking in the mothers of others.

HELD AN EXCELLENT HAND.

But the Old Card Player Thought It Wouldn't Count in the Game.

Things had progressed to a point where the young man had been practically received into the family circle. While he hadn't yet mastered up sufficient courage to ask the old man's consent, it was evident that he would in time.

Thus it happened that the old man, who liked nothing better than a good game of whist or cards or hearts, invited him to a little game one evening, and, of course, he didn't refuse that it would be policy to refuse.

"You and mother," said the old man, referring to his wife, "can play against Gladys and me. That will be fair. If you and Gladys sat opposite each other you would probably persist in looking into each other's eyes, to the great detriment of the game."

Naturally the young woman and the young man blushed, but they said nothing, and the game began.

It wasn't much of a game. While the young woman wasn't sitting opposite the young man, she was sitting next to him, and every few minutes one or the other of them forgot to play when it was his or her turn. Then, too, there were frequent inquiries as to who took the last trick and what was trumps and, altogether, the old man felt a good deal like swearing on one or two occasions.

Finally he made up his mind that patience had ceased to be a virtue. The game had come to a standstill while the young people exchanged confidences in a whisper. It was noticeable that each had one hand under the table.

"Young man," said the old man, sharply, "I should infer from the way you are playing that you haven't much of a hand."

"On the contrary, sir," protested the young man, "I think I have as good a hand as I ever held."

"Well, suppose you drop it for a few minutes and try to play the cards that are on the table," suggested the gentleman dryly.

He did. His missing hand appeared above the table almost instantly, and so did hers, and they both blushed.—New York Press.

After Wars, Male Children.
Statistics of population seem to show that after long and severe wars, in which many men are killed and the male part of a country's population is greatly decreased, there is for several years a preponderant birth of male children until the normal proportion between the sexes is restored. This seems to have been noted after the thirty years' war in Germany, after the Napoleonic war in France and even in more recent times after the siege of Paris.

Quite Right.
Little Marton's English teacher, while endeavoring to make plain to her the different notes-values, used an apple as an illustration. Cutting it in two, Marton announced, "Those pieces are halves." On bisecting the halves, she replied, "Quarters," but when it came to dividing one quarter, to bring out the idea of eighths, hers was the wise response, "That's a bite."—Woman's Home Companion.

Absent.
"Your new minister is quite tiresome, isn't he? Doesn't his preaching bother you?"
"Well, not at Wednesday night prayer meeting."
"Gracious! You must be pious, I only go to church on Sunday."
"That's all I do."—Philadelphia Press.

That is the Way of It.
"Judging from the price of eggs, every hen must think she is laying golden ones," said Snapper.
"And I am one of the geese that buys the golden eggs," answered Swayback.—Detroit Free Press.

We are in favor of a Real Reform: engaging paid pill bearers. Friends do not like to serve, and if they consent, it is unwillingly.