

The Trans-Siberian Railway.

Generals January, February and March were the commanders who were credited with having been the conquerors of Bonaparte's army of invasion in Russia. Now it is said that a general thaw will be the ablest commander on the Japanese side. Trustworthy information from Russian sources describes the Siberian railway as certain to break down and become useless at innumerable places as soon as the spring weather loosens the frost that now holds the road together. There is blocking everywhere now owing to the inadequacy of the road for the service demand of it. What will result from subsidences of the roadway can only be looked forward to with apprehension. Russian officers engaged in forwarding troops and supplies to the seat of war are reported to be in despair over conditions that seem to them to make certain the impossibility of keeping the railway in operation. The number of troops that can be sent over the line now, while it is in its best condition, consists of mere dribbles to what should be on the move, and these must in every case be accompanied with sufficient supplies for present and future maintenance.

The Trans-Siberian Railway was begun on May 19, 1891, and is the longest railway in the world. It extends eastward from Moscow to a station over the Manchurian border, called Manchuria. There the rails merge into those of the Chinese Eastern Railway and continue across the province of Manchuria in a south-easterly direction to Harbin, where the line branches, one section proceeding in a generally southerly direction to Port Arthur, on the point known as Regent's Sword. The other branch continues eastward to Nikolok, or Nikolokoe, where it joins the section of road running from Khabarovka, on the Amur river, to Vladivostok. The white terminal railway station at Moscow, or the Koursky Vokal, as it is called in Russia, is 5,388 miles from Port Arthur, 5,368 miles from Dalny, about 5,180 miles from Vladivostok, 4,780 miles from Harbin, and 4,197 miles from Manchuria. Yet all these lines were laid by Russia in ten and a half years, or in about the time that it took the Canadian Pacific to lay 2,921 miles of track. In consequence of Russia's haste, however, the work was badly done, and it was found necessary practically to rebuild the road. Originally, rails weighing only twelve pounds to the foot had been put down, and wherever possible wooden bridges had been built; the switches for passing trains had been placed far apart, the curves were sharp, the grading carelessly done, and short ties were used. Consequently, it was impossible to travel except at a crawl; twenty miles an hour was the extreme for the so-called fast trains, and it was only possible to operate one passenger and two freight trains a day.

So soon as this was recognized, however, the government went smartly to work and immediately regraded the line, put down heavier rails, and replaced the wooden bridges with steel. At the present time the schedule rate of speed for passenger trains is thirteen and a half miles an hour, so that the 'fast' through expresses from Moscow and Dalny, which before the war used to leave these points of departure four times a week, require about two weeks to complete their journey, compared with the Canadian Pacific's 'Imperial Limited' run of 97 hours from Montreal to Vancouver, a distance of 2,900 miles, or an average of nearly 30 miles an hour, which is more than double the speed of the Russian trains under the most favorable circumstances. The report that six hundred Russian soldiers have been frozen to death at Lake Baikal, while marching across the ice, has served to call increased attention to the weakest link in this line. Lake Baikal is about 1,500 feet above the level of the sea, and one of the highest altitudes reached by the railway in Siberia. Lake Baikal covers an area of more than thirteen thousand square miles, is three hundred and ninety miles long and from twenty to fifty miles wide, and is set among hills rising from three to four thousand feet above the lake's surface. Because of the exceedingly broken character of the country, the engineers decided that the early opening of the road was possible only by carrying the line along the banks of the Angara river, the outlet of Lake Baikal, to the shore of the lake, and then transporting the cars and passengers across to Mysovaya, on the opposite shore, the route across the lake being about forty miles.

The boat which carries the cars makes about twelve knots an hour in summer when the weather is fine, but in winter, when it has to break through ice averaging about two feet thick, it travels at a speed of three knots which means that at this season of the year the journey across the lake and back by boat would occupy from twenty-seven to twenty-eight hours. Recently, however, the rail-

way has been continued across the lake on the ice, and the ice continues until the latter part of April. When the ice breaks up great delays occur, and it will not be, so it is said, until 1905 at the earliest that the connecting line will be completed which is being built around the southern end of the lake. The section through the mountains about Lake Baikal includes a tunnel several miles long, and there are rivers flowing across Siberia from south to north, otherwise there were no great engineering difficulties in the construction of the road. When the railroad was first projected, it was intended to carry it down the Shilka and the Amur to Khabarovka, and thence south to the valley of the Ussuri to Vladivostok. It was constructed to Sretensk, on the Shilka river, and the branch from Khabarovka to Vladivostok was also built, the two points being connected by means of light draught steamboats operated on the Shilka and Amur rivers. Shortly after this had been accomplished, the Russians had secured the right to build across Manchuria the branch leading down through Harbin to Vladivostok, and so the road about line was abandoned. Later they secured the privilege of carrying a branch from Harbin to Port Arthur. The cost of the railway has exceeded \$200,000,000 to the present time, and it will cost a good deal more before it is completed and put in first-class condition.

THE ALBATROSS.

Curious Diversions of Courtly Birds.

(Detroit News.)

In the Laysan Islands of the Pacific the albatross is very tame and very abundant. A naturalist, in an exchange, thus describes the so-called dance or "cack walk," as the sailors call it, of these interesting birds: "Two albatrosses approach each other bowing profoundly and stepping rather heavily. They circle around each other, nodding solemnly all the time. Next they fence a little, crossing bills and whetting them together, pecking meanwhile, and dropping stiff little bows. Suddenly one lifts its closed wing and nibbles at the feathers underneath, or, rarely, if in a hurry, merely turns its head and tucks its bill under its wing. The other bird during this short performance assumes a statuesque pose and either hooks mechanically from side to side or snaps its bill loudly a few times. Then the first bird bows once and, pointing its head and beak straight upward, rises on its toes, puffs out its breast and utters a prolonged nasal groan, the other bird snapping its bill loudly and rapidly at the same time. When they have finished they begin bowing at each other again, almost always rapidly and alternately, and presently repeat the performance.

Sometimes three of the birds will engage in the play, one dividing its attention between two. They are always most polite, never losing their temper or offering any violence. They begin bowing and walking about as if their very lives depended upon it. If one stands where albatrosses are reasonably abundant he can see as many as twenty couples hard at work bowing and groaning on all sides, and paying not the slightest attention to his presence.

Should one enter a group of albatrosses which have been recently engaged in this diversion and begin to bow very low the birds will sometimes walk around in a puzzled sort of way, bowing in return, a curious fact, which F. H. von Kittlitz thus recorded as early as 1834: "When Herr Isenbeck met one, he used to bow to it, and the albatrosses were polite enough to answer, bowing and cackling."

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A Novelist's Philosophy.

(Quotations from "Cap'n Erl," by Joseph C. Lincoln.)

"It beats all what a woman can do when she's that kind of a woman."
"He's like the fellow that ate all the apple dumplings so's his children wouldn't have the stomach ache."
"If you're fishing for eels their ain't no use usin' a mackrel jig."
"Seems as if some folks would 'bout as soon give up the hopes of Heaven for themselves as they would the satisfaction of knowin' 'twas 't'other place for the other feller."
"Seems to me some kinds of religion is like whisky, mighty bad for weak head."
"It's like taking wormwood tea—easy enough if you been brought up that way."
"Love is like the measles; it goes hard with a man past 50."

WOODSTOCK, N. B., MARCH 16, 1904.

A Frosty Adieu.

Good-bye, Winter! Linger not
Round each chilled and barren spot;
Quite enough of you've we've got,
Good-bye, Winter! Linger not.

Good-bye, Winter! Please get out.
We are sick of snow and gait,
"Rheumatiz" and grippy bout,
Good-bye, Winter! Do get out.

Good-bye, Winter! Hang it all!
You possess a fearful gall.
Don't you know how long to call?
Good-bye, Winter! Hang it all!

Good-bye, Winter! Say adieu.
We are cold and mad and blue—
We've no further use for you,
Woody Winter! Here's adieu.

A Stolen Treasure.

In these days of treasure seeking it is odd that enterprising heads have not conceived the idea of hunting for some of the treasure which can be proved to exist; and if one only knew where to locate it fame as well as fortune would be secured. To mention one instance, there is the property stolen from Mme. du Barri in 1791, valued at tens of thousands of pounds. The inventory of the jewels reads like a page torn from the "Arabian Nights." Girandoles set with diamonds, diamond earrings weighing 100 grains each, bracelets set with twenty-four large diamonds round "table emeralds" with a cipher in diamonds above; bandeaux of diamonds, shoe-buckles of rubies, and shoe-buckles set with bouffettes, the center diamonds in each weighing twenty grains. And these are only a few of the items.

Thieves broke into the Countess's chateau at Louveciennes, and carried off this spoil. They were traced to London, where they offered a diamond for sale, asking about a third of its value. The jeweler bought it, and enquired if they had others. They brought him twenty stones, which he purchased for £1,500, and then he went to inform the Lord Mayor. The thieves were arrested, and information sent to Mme. de Barri, who had notified her loss in all the large towns of Europe. She took her own jeweler with her, a man named Rouen, and they identified most of the spoil, Rouen pointing out much of his own work in the settings. But the London lawyers did not think themselves authorized to hand over the jewels. There were complex formalities to go through, and the unfortunate lady, after fighting the question for three or four months in the courts, had to return to Paris without them.

The jewels were enclosed in a strong box, sealed with the municipal seal, and deposited with Messrs. Ransom, Morland & Co., the bankers in "Pall Mall street, opposite Marlborough signed by (among others) Lord Queensberry, who undertook to keep it in safe custody until a definite conclusion had been reached.

After some time the Countess returned to England, taking up her residence in Bruton street. She interested many great people in her cause, Pitt among them, but she did not get the diamonds. Events were marching rapidly in France. The Revolution broke out. Mme. du Barri, unluckily for herself, hastened home to look after her property at Louveciennes. Then came war between England and France. The mistress of Louis XV., the absorber of so much of the wealth of France, was seized upon by the people, who were raging wildly against anything and everything which had connection with royalty. Her visits to London were made the pretext for her arrest, and her condemnation was a foregone conclusion. Sentence was pronounced, and the next day she was executed.

The poor wretch fought for her life as she had fought for her jewels—and as uselessly. Years afterwards her nephew, an officer in Napoleon's Guard, made strenuous efforts to trace that glittering mass of treasure once stolen from Louveciennes. But that sealed box, with its jewels valued at 500,000 livres, has never been brought to light. Is it still lying in the banker's vaults at "Pall Mall, a Londres, en face la Maison Malbroux?"—"Modern Society."

Canadians are sometimes slow. The most recent example of the manner in which Canadians let the grass grow under their feet where Yankees and Englishmen are digging in and coining money has been brought out by the Russ-Jap war which the newspapers are conducting somewhere in the Orient. Long before hostilities had even been reported and therefore very long before they had actually started, English and Yankee photographers whose regular businesses had not been prosperous appreciated the opportunity of furnishing war pictures to the press of two continents. No more waiting and watching for moon-struck 'Arrys and 'Arriets for them. War pictures were the order of the day—and war pictures they would take. No photograph studio is so modern that it lacks three

or four "Mikado" and "Mandarin" scenes before which ladies of a certain uncertain age, with a weakness for "comic" opera matinees, may pose as coquettish "Geisha" girls. Out came these old distempers and the photographers whose businesses had hitherto permitted them to wait for sunny days had to install electric lights if they would keep up with their orders. The results of their labors we see in the daily papers. The merest suggestion of a Japanese hen-coop and a few paper fans stuck on the canvas will produce most astonishing results. "Street Scene in Tokio," it is labelled, and five thousand copies of the picture appear in as many newspapers within a week. The scene is then turned upside down, a Japanese tea-pot set up close to the camera, and "Japanese Imperial Arsenal" results. Another canvas, having three badly warped roofs supported by bamboo poles, is stuck up—and, lo, "Chenulpo" appears. The Chinese laundryman, whose account is something in arrears, is now brought in and made to carry his clothes basket in front of the distemper roofs. Snap! "Chinese Coolies Driven by their Russian Masters" arouses popular indignation a week later. Of course there is only one "coolie" visible, and no Russian, but where the imagination is called on for so much, this is a mere trifle. The Chinaman is then put into his basket, persuaded to blow from its depths a mouthful of spray, in his own inimitable manner—and "Chinese Junk Blown Up in Port Arthur Harbor by Japanese Torpedo" gives the reading public a terrible insight into the horrors of war. The possibilities of the laundryman are unlimited. With a cool scuttle he is "Chinese Ammunition Carrier Impressed by the Russians." With a crowbar he is "Japanese Officer disguised as Coolie, Attempting to Wreck a Russian Bridge." Turn a chopping bowl upside down on his head and he becomes "Korean Mourner in the Streets of Seoul." His tools may also be put to an almost unlimited number of uses. His clothes basket, besides serving for the blown-up junk, may be a "Fort at Port Arthur," "The Japanese Sacred Mountain of Fujiyama," or "One of the Russian Mines in Port Arthur Harbor." Detach the handle from a flat-iron and any unit of the rival fleets may be reproduced at leisure. In reality, the only essentials of Oriental war pictures, are lots of skyline and a very coarse engraving screen; the warped roofs and hen-coops assist by lending local color; something slightly suggesting the subject of the picture should be fastidious, be in the foreground; but just a skyline and the coarse screen will find a ready market, as a glance at any up-to-date newspaper will convince you. Why, when such a market exists, do not Canadians waken up and supply the demand for at least the local press? Yankee news agencies, representing Yankee photographers, are reaping a rich harvest right under the noses of local men quite as competent to supply the demand. Talk of protection! What is the use of protection if Canadians show no desire to supply the wants of their own country, but must needs buy their goods from foreigners or go without? Unquestionably, the Canadian is slow.

On the Witness Stand.

The cross-examiner was a smart man, whose object was to disconcert the witness and disconnect his testimony.

"What did you say your name was?" was the first question.

"Michael Doherty."

"Michael Doherty, eh? Now, Doherty, answer this question carefully. Are you a married man?"

"I think so. I was married."

"So you think because you got married that you are a married man, do you? Now tell me whom you married."

"Who I married? I married a woman."

"Now, don't you know better than to trifle with the court? Of course you married a woman; did you ever hear of anyone marrying a man?"

"Yes, my sister did."

Husband—Those biscuit we had for supper last evening were just like my dear old mother used to make.

Wife—How kind of you to say so, dear! Husband—I didn't notice the similarity at the time, but I recognized the old familiar nightmare that disturbed my slumbers.—Chicago News.

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By order,
FRED GELINAS,
Secretary.

Department of Public Works,
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