A NIGHT IN A ROTTEN BONGO

ONE WAY OF COASTING ALONG THE ISTHMUS OF PANAMA.

Jaguars and Wildcats Mounted in Indian Fashion—Escaping the Penalty for Crime—Horconcitas Looks Like a Lot of Haystacks—Not a First-class Bed.

Muleback travellers who have written and printed their experiences invariably complain of the varying estimates of distances they receive from the natives along their routes. In this respect I had very little trouble in the journey throughthe Isthmus of Panama. I cannot say positively that the men of intelligence never made a mistake in estimating the length of a day's journey, but if they did so it was in regard to the road from Remedios, a town that appears on all maps of the Isthmus, to Horconcitas, that does not appear even on the coast charts issued by the Americans or the British, although it is a port from which considerable produce is shipped, as THE SUN has told. They said in Remedios that it was eight leagues to Horconcitas, but we were just twelve hours in making the journey on strong, quick-stepping mules that for many miles at a stretch kept up a swinging pace that was at least good for four miles an hour on a trail as good as the one we were on. Indeed, we had but three miles of poor road in the whole day, and that was over a small mountain covered with broken rock.

The direct route from Remedios west—the old cattle trail—runs by the way of San Felix and San Lorenzo. It is said to be almost a good cart road for most of the distance, but I went by the way of Horconcitas because the latter stands on a stretch of water very much like the Albemarle Sound and is navigated by dugouts only.

The route taken was interesting in every respect, even though lacking in the magnificent scenery of the uplands. It wound through a region of detached hills and mountains, but was comparatively free from grades. The guide said it would be found alive with Indians and snakes. Not a snake did we see, but a plenty of what would be called in the States blanket Indians live in that region. Not that they wear blankets, as some United States Indians do—the weather is too warm for wool—but they live much as the Six Nations of New York used to do—on the uncultivated products of the wilderness, with a little corn and beans, which the squaws raise.

We stopped to talk to one group that we found camped on the bank of a creek. The men all wore shirts of blue or white cotton. They had little bunches of pink or red cotton ... sewed on one breast or the other, for the same reason that gentlemen in New York put bright-colored flowers on their lapels. Some of the men wore cotton trousers, too, but some had aprons only. The women all wore cotton dresses made on the model of a night gown.

Among the household goods were the skin of a jaguar and the skin of a tiger cat, mounted or set up taxidermist fashion. Nothing but the skin had been preserved, and there was no attempt to substitute artificial for the natural eyes. The beasts were posed as if climbing up a tree, and when I asked what they were used for they said "in the festival." Then a big buck picked up the jaguar by a strap fastened under its forelegs and suspended it on his back, with its head partly concealed in his long hair. The limbs were so well posed, and there was such a vicious curve in its back, it was so surprisingly like a live beast that had alighted on his back from a tree and was burying its teeth in his neck that I shivered involuntarily. Thereat the whole crowd laughed.

The guide said that these Indians gather by the hundred at their festivals in the villages along the coast. They form in line, with their vicious-looking beasts on their backs, and with reed flutes and ox-horn bugles in their hands, and then go marching about the plaza making such screaming noises as never were heard before. I got one Indian to blow his ox horn, along the Texas-steerlike plan. The sound was precisely like that made by a Congo war trumpet that I once heard used by an African traveller in Chickering Hall.

Half way to Horconcitas we came out of the woods and entered a lowland prairie region. These prairies had been fenced in for pastures, Yankee barbed wire being as abundant there as in Missouri. The grass grew luxuriantly, and the cattle seen in some of the fields were fit to make a stockman's eyes smack. Some of them ever came from Arkansas Valley. We rode for miles through this region without seeing a house. When I asked why that was so, the guide said the people all lived together in villages. He was surprised to learn that people elsewhere in the world preferred to live in houses scattered up and down the highways.

I did not see a single graveyard along this day's trail, but one lone cross stood on the edge of the wide prairie, on the further side of which was a village. The guide said it was erected over the blood of a man who had been hashed up with machetes. He had had trouble with three men whom he employed, and they had gone on strike in the most effectual way known to the Isthmus.

"Were they hanged?" said I.

"For God, no," he replied.

"To prison?"

"Jesus! To Costa Rica."

We were approaching the border line. There is no extradition of criminals between the so-called republics of the Spanish Main, and, once over the line, the worst character is safe and sure of a welcome from those gone before him.

Although Horconcitas has over 1,000 inhabitants, according to its merchants, there was very little of the appearance of a town about it. There was a wide street rather than a regular plaza, and this street forked at both ends. The plan of the town might be called an elongated X. Near the centre the walls of a huge church in the form of a cross 150 feet long, had been carried up five feet from the ground and then abandoned, and the nearest place of worship was in a suburban settlement about three miles back. There were a few houses with adobe walls, but the rest of the town was like a mile-long collection of hay stacks; that is, it was built of poles and grass. It stood on a small flat prairie surrounded by dense brush. There was an opening through the brush at one end of the town that led down a slight declivity to an arm of the sea, such as can be found in the swamps along the Great South Bay of Long Island—a tidal ditch that was full and twenty feet deep at high tide and empty at low. But instead of the small grass and tiny brush to be found along the tidal ditches of the Great South Bay there was a remarkable tangle of trees—trees that were all roots and branches. There was not a tree trunk to be distinguished, nor could one be sure that any stem he looked at was either root or branch until he followed it for some distance with the eye, for every root rose high in stem fashion from the mud to join some other root in forming a branch which in turn divided at once into other branches, and from these branches the roots reached down to the mud again. In fact the banks of this ditch presented the nearest approach to a natural growth not I have ever seen, but the same trees grow in all the swamps of the Pacific coast of Central America.

At Horconcitas I stopped with Señor Don Emelio Olave, whose house was built of adobes neatly whitewashed, and whose roof was a very good thatch. Of the town and country around, he said that ague prevailed the year through, but in December, when the season changed from wet to dry, everybody became affected. The month of September was the height of the rainy season, and for four weeks the rain fell incessantly day and night. The months of July and August were only a little better. The picture that he drew of the inhabitants of the place huddled together in their grass-covered huts beside smoky fires of wet wood, over which they shivered with the chills of disease while the rain fell remorselessly without, was one of utter wretchedness. But everything was pleasant and cheerful about the place in March (I was there in March), and the town was growing. A man was building a new shack at the end of the street toward the landing.

On the day after my arrival in town I was obliged to wait until 4 o'clock before starting on the journey to David. It was flood tide at 4:30. A grizzled old man, who looked like a story-book pirate and carried a four-foot paddle with a bear-shaped blade came after me and we soon reached the landing on the tidal ditch, where a number of bongos or dugout canoes lay. The boatman drew one that was 12 feet long, 16 inches wide, 12 inches deep, and had the model of a saw log chopped from a tree, to the back. It was half full of water, but he bailed it out and then built up a pile of sticks fit for stove wood in the centre and thereon placed my baggage. Then he cut five more lengths of stove wood from a crooked pole and put them on the bottom in the bow.

"Seat yourself there," said he to me.

"Good," said I. "But cut two more to put across on top, so I can sit upon them part of the time."

He shook his head, humped his shoulders, and spread the palms of his hand upward.

"Why not?" said I.

He put the point of his machete against the side of the boat near the top and pushed gently. The blade slid through the wood as it might have done through soft cheese.

"It is too rotten to bear my weight up there, eh?"

"Why not?"

"But it will carry us to David?"

"To be sure."

I got in and sat down partly cross-legged on the five crooked round sticks. The pirate took off his shirt and placed it on the poop deck of the canoe, so to speak, as the boat a shove, stepped lightly in, sat down on his shirt, and began to swing his paddle and drive the boat through the glass-smooth water.

In a minute a turn in the channel hid the landing from view, and we were gliding along between the net-like walls of the gray-green brush. There was a continual snapping on both sides as of the breaking of twigs. One would have thought some animals were fleeing from the canoe but for the fact that the water had overflowed both banks to an unmeasured depth, and no animals, and but here and there a heron could be seen anywhere. A few minutes later we saw a rocky promontory protruding through the swamp, and on this was a very fair imitation of the cattle-shipping platform to be found at any plains railway station in the States, save that it was made of poles and the chute led down instead of up. It was to this chute that cattle schooners came to get fat steers for the Costa Rican market. Another was found further on, and then the ditch opened out into what looked like a lake.

We had now been about ten minutes afloat and the boatman ceased paddling. I looked around and found him about to begin bailing out the canoe. The water was two inches deep at least in the deepest part of the canoe, which was afloat the baggage. It seemed to me to be a tolerably good leakage for ten minutes, and I said so.

"Wait till we reach the wide water," said he.

I waited, though I would just then have much preferred going ashore and walking the rest of the distance.

The wide water was reached an hour later through a strait that led into a sound that was more like the Albemarle than any I have seen—a shallow stretch, with low sand dunes toward the sea and masses of vegetation shoreward.

A lump of a swell was coming in from the ocean, bearing a rippling breeze on its back, and the canoe began to roll and jump in a way that would have been pleasing in a craft approved as a cruiser by the American Canoe Club; but where one sits on five crooked round sticks on the bottom of a leaky dugout the case is different. Moreover, the water was coming in the canoe rapidly now, and the pitching made it slush around until it swamped the sticks on which I sat. That is to say, I took a sitz bath at every plunge.

I turned to the man with the paddle and told him I did not need any sitz bath, and he stopped paddling to bail out, but the canoe immediately broached to, and we narrowly escaped taking a bath of another kind.

Then he passed the gourd scoop to me and invited me to work my passage, which I felt obliged to do. The water was not deep—he showed me that he could reach bottom with his paddle—and there was no immediate danger of drowning if we did swamp. But the walking was bad and the trail under water to the shore indistinct. I bailed till we got out of the seaway. By that time the sun was sinking out of sight in a gorgeous red blaze, and yet the point of land toward which we were heading was at least five miles away. I said:

"When will we reach our landing?"

"After ten hours."

"What? You told me it was a passage of but two (*dos*) hours from Horconcitas."

"No, señor, I said five (*cinco*) hours.

That was true. I had misunderstood the Spanish word, and had practically a whole night ahead of me. I have seen men catch short naps in the saddle. I have seen them sleep well in a lumber wagon on a corduroy road in the swamps of the Maumee, but for hard luck in lodgings I have never seen the equal of those five crooked, wet, round sticks in the bottom of the leaky dugout. Besides, having supposed we would arrive in two hours, I had brought nothing to eat.

If I can ever afford it I'll go back there and make that voyage over again in a flat-bottomed cruiser, well supplied with cushions. That would have had the elements of a delightful night as well as the elements of complete misery. The salt air drifted in from the sea in a way to at once soothe and refresh. Fish of many sizes leaped and played about the boat. As the night fell lights twinkled on the far-away shore and the sound of human voices came out to us marvellously clear and distinct. Then, when the night wore on and these voices were hushed, the screams of night birds, and possibly of wild animals, were heard. And through all this I was constantly between times with the picture of that naked-onested, dark-skinned boatman sitting on the stern of the boat, wielding the paddle with tireless stroke. We read with admiration of the *coureur des bois* who could drive his birch bark canoe from the good dark of the setting of the sun over the streams of Canada. The *coureur* was a mighty man with the paddle. But here was this Ladino, of the race whom all travellers call unutterably lazy, driving without rest a waterlogged log during more than eleven weary hours in the phosphorescent sea.

By 2 o'clock in the morning we were paddling up a river that was bordered by rich pastures, where many fine cattle were feeding and lolling about. We saw no sign of human habitation, however, until at about 3:30 o'clock, when a dim light showed on the left bank, and then some timbers for another house were passed. Here a man was seen asleep on the ground with slight covering, and the canoe was brought to the bank under the roots of a big tree, up which we climbed to land.

A mile or four miles, I now learned, was still before me.

"Do I carry your baggage for you?" asked the canoe man after we landed. I would not have carried that sixty pounds of stuff four miles after such a night for its weight in gold, but I said:

"I thought you were to take me to David."

"Yes; why not?"

"Do you want more pay for carrying the baggage? I gave you $2.50 to take me, baggage and all, to David."

"Sir, it was for the canoe—the bongo."

"How much do you want?"

"Sir, it is a long road. It is a league and a half to the hotel. The baggage weighs much. I want 18 cents if I carry it."

He had paddled a heavy dugout for eleven and a half hours, he had trotted away under the load of sixty pounds at a speed that took us to the hotel in one hour and ten minutes. When I gave him ten cents more than I had agreed to do and told him to get a drink, he was very much surprised. I do not know whether he was disgusted or not. I fancy he wished he'd charged me twenty-one cents instead of eighteen for carrying the baggage.

The first streak of light was showing in the east when the man knocked at the door of a house over the veranda of which was the sign "Hotel." And there was no hotel within said, "Friends—one an American." The door opened and an old woman peered out. Then a well-built and well-armed man, Señor Don Nicolas Delgado, the most noted revolutionist west of Panama, came out and conducted me to a room at the other end of the block, where I was made comfortable and was soon asleep.

JOHN R. SPEARS.

WORK ON A CELERY FARM.

A 2,000-ACRE GARDEN PATCH NEAR THE DELAWARE WATER GAP.

The Season's Round of Severe Toil—Why Hollanders Are Employed—Preparing the Soil, Sowing Seed, Transplanting, Handling, Banking Up, and Bunching.

On the east bank of the Delaware River, nine miles from Delaware Water Gap, and about fifty miles from this city, may be seen one of the most interesting of the many curious places that exist solely by producing goods for the New York market. At this spot Mr. J. B. La Rue of this city bought several thousand acres of black swamp land eight or ten years ago, drained it, and set about making what has since become the largest celery farm in the Middle States. Last year he planted 2,000 acres in celery, and this year he will plant more, for every season he adds from 50 to 100 acres to his mammoth celery patch.

The product of this novel farm is celery and nothing else. Other growers make celery a second crop, letting it follow their peas, beans, beets, or early cabbages; but Mr. La Rue raises celery alone, and the greater part of his vast crop is sold in New York. Last year he raised 1,500,000 bunches of celery, which required the labor of seventy-five men throughout the season. Occasionally, when the market is overstocked, part of a day's shipment remains unsold, and he utilizes this surplus by making several preparations in which celery is the principal ingredient combined with stimulants and tonics.

One of the oddest features about this celery farm is the dwelling house in which the workmen live. These men are nearly all Hollanders, because the soil is too swampy for Americans to thrive upon; but the Hollanders find it so much like the soil of their own country that there is rarely any sickness among them, and they have built for themselves a house of many gables and overhanging stories that looks as if it might have been brought over from their native land. The name of Garden City has been given to the settlement. The soil is very much like that found on the Disston purchase in Florida, in the bottoms of lakes that have been drained, though this is somewhat heavier. It is black as ink, and exceedingly rich. Unlike most soils, it becomes richer every year without fertilizing, and must continue to do so for many years, because every foot of it contains thousands of minute roots of plants that formerly grew in the water, and as these gradually decay they make the land richer and richer.

Mr. La Rue gives an exceedingly interesting account of the methods in use for raising celery on so large a scale. All the old methods are completely done away with, and economy of labor is looked for at every turn. It is not long since we tried to imitate the English methods of raising celery for market, but the system has been so much improved that our market gardeners now laugh at the slow English ways. The chief peculiarity of the English method is to dig trenches ten inches deep, in which the plants are set at four to six inches apart in the rows. As the plants grow, these trenches are gradually filled in with earth; and the celery, with light and air thus excluded, becomes whitened and fit for use. If this method were followed by American market gardeners we should have to pay fully double prices for all the celery we use.

At this time of year, when New Yorkers are looking suspiciously at the somewhat rusty and corky bunches of celery that have been preserved through the winter, the first preparations are making for next fall's crop. Celery seed is one of the earliest things the market gardeners sow, though the crop is one of the latest. Every housewife is familiar with the appearance of the tiny seeds, because she uses them to flavor soups, or feeds them to her canary. As soon as the ground is dry enough in spring to be ploughed with safety the work begins. This year it began much earlier than usual because of the three weeks of warm, dry weather in March. Consequently, we shall see new celery in the markets fully a month earlier than usual, toward the end of summer.

The preparation of the seed bed is a very delicate matter, for the seeds are so small that the earth must be pulverized as much as possible. It must also be level, or the heavy rains will wash the seeds away. A seed bed no larger than a city lot is more than sufficient to supply all the plants required even for a 2,000-acre celery farm. The land is first ploughed, then harrowed, and afterward "lined down" to the last degree with hand rakes. A "marker" then runs across the bed to mark the places in which the seed is to be sown. This marker is on the principle of a big wooden hay rake, but much heavier, with the teeth set twelve inches apart. When the whole bed has been thus marked, every ninth mark is "rubbed out," leaving a footpath two feet wide for the use of the workmen. The seed is drilled in the lines, sometimes by hand and sometimes with a seed drill, and the back of a garden rake is drawn lightly over the whole, lengthwise of the rows, to cover the seed up. Then a heavy wooden roller is run over the whole, leaving the surface firm within said, firm.

By the middle of June this seed bed is one beautiful green mass of celery plants, in which neither rows nor walks can be distinguished, provided proper attention has been given it in the matters of frequent hoeing and raking to keep down the weeds. The plants look so fresh and strong that an inexperienced grower would think them all ready to set out; but the market gardener, who has nearly always paid many dollars for his experience, knows better. He sets a man at work with a scythe to mow on the bed, and has the tops of all the plants ruthlessly mown off. The vitality of the plant that would be wasted in making more leaves is thus thrown into the stalks, making them thicker and stronger and more likely to stand the shock of transplanting.

A week or two after the tops have been cut off, work on the real celery beds begins. This may be anywhere from the middle of June till the end of July, or even later, all depending upon whether the crop is destined to be early or late. Everything in this work has to do with the date of gathering the crop. But the growers are generally shy of early crops. The demand for celery is not as great toward the close of summer as it is late in the fall, when other vegetables are scarce; and early celery does not keep so well.

On the Garden City farm, where each bed is 50 feet wide by 250 feet long, with deep ditches between them to carry the drainage into the Delaware River, work on the main crop begins about the middle of July. On almost any other land stable manure would have to be thrown until it lay four or five inches deep, and then ploughed in; but the Garden City land is rich enough without this, and the great beds, each as large as fifteen city lots, are ploughed and harrowed. There is no digging of trenches, no making of ridges or hillocks. The land is simply harrowed till it is fine and smooth, and then the marker is run over it. For this purpose the marker's teeth are set from three to five feet apart: three feet between the rows for the dwarf kinds of celery, and five feet for the larger sorts.

Now begins the killing work for the laborers. It is a common saying on the truck farms that a gardener must have nine joints in his back and two in his neck, and nothing brings all these joints into play more thoroughly than "setting out" celery plants. All day long, frequently until it is too dark to see the rows, the workman must walk and work with both hands and feet on the ground. For five hours at a stretch he hardly has a chance to straighten his back. No one not bred to the work could stand the strain for half an hour. A good example of it may be had by trying to walk across a room with both hands and feet on the floor. The gardener always tries to select a fine day for this trying work, but the gardener's fine day is not what other people consider satisfactory. He wants a day, if possible, when a fine drizzling rain is falling and no sun shines. This keeps the workmen wringing wet, of course, but that is a small matter in the eyes of the boss, who looks only to the state of the soil, and considers how nicely the transplanted roots will begin to throw out little rootlets before the hot sun has a chance to wither and kill them. It takes about forty-eight hours for the young rootlets to start, and in that time the less sun the better.

When the beds are ready for planting one man is at work in the seed bed, loosening the young plants with a spading fork. After this loosening the plants are readily drawn out of the earth and thrown into a heap. There are very few leaves on them, for these have been clipped off with the scythe. As they come out they are just three or four slender green stems growing from a delicate root. Each man who is to set out the plants is accompanied by a boy, and the boy is provided with a basket. The boy goes to the head of plants and fills his basket and starts along the row ahead of the man, dropping the plants one by one on the line, so that they lie about six inches apart.

The man who is to do the setting out (and there may be fifty of them at work at once) is provided with a curious little implement called a dibber. This is a piece of wood about a foot long and an inch or more thick, curved at one end like a pistol handle, and shod at the other end with a sharp iron point. When the man bends over to begin work at one end of a row, he will not straighten his back again till the other end of the row is reached, whether it be fifty feet away or half a mile. With his right hand he jabs the dibber into the earth, making a small round hole directly on the line made by the marker, and with the other he picks up the plant and inserts the root in the hole. Then with both hands, but without dropping the dibber, he presses the earth around it. It is all done with three quick motions, and in a second or so he is making the next hole, six inches further on. To jab holes and stick plants in them sounds very simple, but the gardeners have reduced the work to a science. With both feet flat on the ground and both hands busy on a level with the feet their motions are as regular and as rapid as those of a compositor setting type, or of an expert lather nailing on laths.

When the end of a row is reached the workman "turns back on it," as he expresses it, and walks back to the starting point, making short steps, and taking care that with each step one foot shall be close on each side of a plant. Thus he "firms" the soil around the roots, a process which keeps out the air and keeps in the moisture. Plants firmed in this way have many more chances of living, or "catching on," as the gardener puts it, than plants that are not firmed. The man might reasonably be expected to straighten his back while walking thus along the row, but usually he does not. He generally contents himself rests his hands upon his legs above the knees, this position seeming to give his feet a greater pressure. While the man firms down the row the boy refills his basket with plants, and the next row is begun without intermission.

When the two thousand acres are set out full of plants in this back-breaking way, but not all at one time or all with the same variety of celery, each bed stands for about two weeks before it needs any further attention, beyond going over it two or three days after planting, and replacing any roots that may have died. In two weeks a cultivator is run in between the rows; not to kill the weeds, for no weeds have yet appeared, but to turn under and destroy the weed germs, which would appear in a few days more. A good gardener never waits for the weeds to appear, but by frequently stirring the ground prevents their ever appearing at all. This is the theory of all gardeners, but the practice is sometimes slightly different.

As the plants grow in height earth is thrown up against the rows with plough and cultivator, and after this has been done two or three times, increasing the height of the village each time, the process of "handling" begins. If it were not for this "handling" our celery would not come to us in upright bunches as it does, but in wide-spreading, ill-shaped stalks—for celery left to itself prefers to spread out later-ally, like most other plants. In "handling" the workman begins at the end of the row, when the soil is somewhat moist, and with both hands draws the earth up around each plant, pressing it up firmly. This gives all the little branches the straight upward tendency that we see when they come to market.

Before the plants attain their full growth, earth is thrown up against them several times more. But even after they are fully grown and ripe they are not ready to be marketed. The stalks are still green, and the buyer demands that they be white and crisp. To whiten the stalks they have to be "banked up," and this is one of the most laborious of all the celery processes. For this work two men are assigned to each row, one on one side and one on the other, each armed with a spade. They dig out enough earth from between the rows to make an embankment as high as the very tips of the plants, and with the backs of their spades pat it down till they make a ridge as smooth and straight as a brick wall, and from two to three feet high. This, like all the other work, is done rapidly. The private gardeners who dawdle over their work and spend much time in cogitating, might learn a useful lesson by seeing the market gardeners at their rapid and unceasing work.

The "banked-up" celery must stand for two weeks before it is sufficiently white and crisp for market. When it comes out of its long grave it is discolored with earth, and is by no means ready for sale. It is dug out with spading forks, and carried by the wagon load to the vegetable house. There it is first washed clean, and then bunched. The mere bunching of celery is almost a trade by itself, and requires great dexterity. Three or four "roots" or stalks are put into a bunch, according to their size. With a sharp knife the buncher cuts down each root into a smooth square, lays the three or four of these roots side by side, and with two or three dexterous motions twines a strong cord about them, binding them securely together, and making at last the bunch of celery as we see it in the market. It must, after all this labor, be fully worth the 10 cents or 15 or 25 cents a bunch that the household buyer pays for it; but if the grower clears $250 an acre on his crop, he pats himself on his back and thanks heaven for its manifold blessings. He is in luck if year in and year out he averages $150 profit to the acre.

It is only the early celery that goes direct from the fields to market. The winter celery, that is, celery that can go to market any time between December and April, remains under the banking up, because it is preserved in pits and trenches and has plenty of time to blanch itself before it is taken out. Winter celery brings better prices than the earlier kinds, but the profit is about the same, because celery stored in pits or trenches is in a precarious way of freezing or rotting; and it has to be taken out, not when the market is at its best, but when the ground is soft enough to dig.

The varieties of celery are as the sands of the sea shore. Every seedsman has dozens of them, including the special kinds that are better than all others. Gardeners take most kindly to the dwarf and half dwarf varieties, because so many more bunches can be raised to the acre. Pink celery, which is the sweetest and nutliest of all the celery tribe, is comparatively scarce in our market, because the people are not accustomed to it. It is not the finest varieties of vegetables the market gardeners must raise, but the varieties their customers are used to and will buy.

It is only in the cities East that this Garden City celery farm of 2,000 acres would be considered a large plantation. In the Kalamazoo celery district, the greatest "celery belt" in the world, some of the farms are so much larger that their owners would consider this only a garden patch. Throughout the eight celery months of the year, the Kalamazoo district shipped between twenty and thirty tons of celery every day, except on the frequent occasions when the shipments ran up beyond fifty tons. But with all this the market is not supplied, and all the big growers are increasing their acreage every year.

TO IMPROVE OUR ROADWAYS.

The State League and Farmers' Clubs Working Together.

A meeting of the New York State League for Good Roads was held in this city on Friday afternoon. The following officers were elected: President, Gen. Benjamin F. Tracy; Vice-President, W. Austen Wadsworth; Treasurer, S. S. Howland; Secretary, John A. C. Wright. The Secretary submitted his annual report, and the work for the ensuing year was mapped out. The league is not committed to any form of legislation or any kind of road building. It aims primarily to interest people in the subject, to convince them of the great advantage of good highways, and to supply the voters with information which will enable them to form accurate judgment as to what legislation is for the best interests of the State and how good roads can be built in the most economical manner.

It was clear from the reports submitted to the meeting that the farmers throughout the State are taking a greatly increased interest in the subject. Farmers' clubs and granges are discussing it, and the State League is working in unison with these organizations.

The Episcopal Mission for Seamen.

Bishop Potter will preside to-night at the special service in the Church of the Holy Trinity to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the "Protestant Episcopal Church Missionary Society for Seamen in the City and Port of New York." Bishop Coxe will preach the sermon. The work of the society began with the establishment of a floating church at the foot of Pike street, East River. The first missionary was the Rev. B. C. C. Parker, a son of the Bishop of Massachusetts. A floating church has been maintained there since. In addition, the society maintains a reading room at West and Houston streets. The money for this work came from a legacy of $50,000 left by William H. Vanderbilt and from the society's share in the sale of the old St. George's chapel in Beekman street. There is a third section in Coenties slip, from which work is carried on among the canal boatmen and their families.

A Valet on the Syndicate Plan.

Valets are generally supposed to be a luxury for the wealthy, but there are not a few bachelors of moderate incomes in this town who have found a valet, if he is a syndicate valet, an economy as well as a luxury. In a large bachelor apartment house, not far from the intersection of Broadway by Sixth avenue, there are several of these syndicate valets, who administer comfort and well-pressed clothes to the men who employ them. Such a valet is not an extra expense. He shares the men, usually three or four, who employ him in common, he keeps their clothes in order, and he runs their errands. In this way each man of the syndicate pays no more than it would cost him if he had these things done by his tailor, his barber, and his messenger boys. Moreover, each man may speak carelessly of "my man."

Property Owners Want Their Money.

Comptroller Fitch still receives demands for money due the owners of property seized for Corlears Hook Park. The following note was received from Henry Keteltas, agent for the Gardner estate: "Can I be sure, with a peremptory mandamus dated Jan. 26 and not yet complied with, of securing my award and interest on April 26? I have given a note for $80,000 due on that day, and besides have borrowed $110,000."

The Comptroller replied that he could give no promise that the money would be paid by April 26. A few minutes later Mr. Fitch received the following telegram from Mr. Keteltas:

"No answer yet to my letter. Wish one at once. You are walking on very thin ice."

SOUTH CAH'LINA CRACKERS.

TILLMAN ADHERENTS DESCRIBED BY ONE WHO KNOWS THEM.

The Pirates Were Driven Ashore; the Convict Laborers of the Carolinas Served Their Time; and the Descendants of These Gentry Are the Crackers of To-day, Who Furnish the Populists.

When the average Northerner reads in the papers that Gov. Tillman's political strength in South Carolina comes mainly from the farming population, who are Populists, he thinks of the Populist party in that State as being composed of such honest, slow, hard-working, saving, church-going, side-hill farmers as make up the strength of the Republican party in the central, northern, and western part of this State. This is a mistake. The Palmetto State countryman bears about the same resemblance to the farmer of this region as a highwayman does to a peddler. The horny handed son of toil as portrayed in the Sunday school books of a generation back doesn't exist in South Carolina. The man who fills his place there is called a cracker. After you have heard a South Carolinian say that word "cracker" with the peculiar intonation invariably given to it, you will realize that it is by no means synonymous with honest farmer.

A gentleman who has lived in South Carolina for fifteen years, during which time he has kept eyes and ears very wide open, told a SUN reporter, a few days ago, some things about the crackers, their origin, ways, and the significance of the situation in reference to them.

"It ought to be generally known, and I don't think it is," said he, "that the Populist party in South Carolina doesn't include, as it does, I am told, in some States, the good country farming element. The fact is we haven't enough of the good farming element to make a showing on. We have a class of people who own what were once farms, but they don't deserve the name of farmers. They're the crackers. There is something more than ignorance and uncleanliness, and lax morality in the real cracker. There's deep-seated devilishness, a natural love for liquor, and a great aptitude for murder and other crimes. The cracker hasn't evolved these things out of his own inner consciousness; he's come by them honestly—if a cracker ever does come by anything honestly—by heredity. He has a fine lot of ancestors back of him.

"These ancestors are of two kinds. You can take your pick; there's mighty little choice between 'em. If you go back some centuries in your history you will find that at one time the Caribbean Sea was so infested with pirates that some of the countries having an interest in the New World decided to clean them out. They cleaned them out of the sea and drove them north. The pirates landed and pushed up through the country, finally settling down to lives of something rather worse than usefulness. There is the germ of the cracker, or, at least, one of the germs. Now for the other part. When the English settled in South Carolina they were, in the language of to-day, too strong to work. But the work had to be done, so they imported slaves from England—convicts for various crimes, who were to serve out their terms as part of their punishment. Many died in the process; others served out, became free, and having nothing else to do, settled. There's your other germ. Unite the two, and you have the cracker in his first stage.

"How and where he lived for some generations thereafter matters little, or rather that matter. But he did live, probably by hunting and doing odd jobs, and he became known as 'poor white trash.' Even the niggers looked down on the poor whites, and up to the time of the war he was the most despised in the country. He was poor and the most worthless. The blood of the pirate and the criminal was still there, unmixed with any better strain, for none but poor white would marry with poor white. But it was weakened and thinned by laziness and inaction and drink and the climate. Then came the war and a change for the poor white. No longer having slaves to work their farms and plantations for them, the Bourbons, as the good families were called, drifted away from their country places to the towns. They could not sell their lands with spades or hoes, and so they only other resort, they went into business. Mark the result. The farms fell into the hands of the poor whites, being first divided up into small portions.

"There you have your poor white becoming a land owner. You might suppose that he would develop honesty and thrift and ambition to improve his opportunities to become a decent citizen. He doesn't. The pirate and criminal strain is in him, emasculated by generations of contempt and degradation, but still there, and ready to show itself. Your cracker makes his wife and children work the farm while he hunts or fishes at such times as he isn't too lazy. When he gets money he goes for moonshine whiskey and gets it. Why, the North Carolina moonshiners run their blockade wagons in the cracker country, and they sell their moonshine, and they run the Government blockade and Tillman's blockade to do it. And when the cracker gets full of whiskey he isn't 'poor white trash' any more. He goes right back two or three centuries and becomes that mixture of pirate and English convict, and he is murderous, lawless, foul brute he is. Every cracker carries his gun and a knife back of him. He uses the gun first, but the knife is his favorite. That's the pirate in him. Jackknife slashers, we call 'em. I've seen two of them after a knife fight, and—well, it is worth a great deal to see such a sight.

"If necessary the cracker will stand up and fight face to face. Most of 'em are dead shots, for they have lots of practice hunting. But their favorite game is to lie in ambush and shoot a man down as he passes. When a man is found out on the lonely road with a bullet through him and his pockets stripped we call it a 'cracker killing.' They're killers all of 'em, those fellows, but they'd rather do their killing from a safe cover. As long as it's only cracker that kills cracker, nobody cares much, nothing is said about it. When a cracker kills a decent man he does it in such a way that he leaves no tracks. He'll wait for years for his chance. So there isn't much chance for the law to come in there, either. In two of the northern South Carolina counties, Chesterfield and Marlboro, they average about thirty murders a year together, and you can bet that a cracker is the murderer every time. Yet there hasn't been a hanging in either county for fifteen years. It's either cracker kill cracker, and nobody cares, or it's a cracker kill a negro, or a respectable victim and no clue to the killer.

"There was a case a couple of years ago up in Lancaster county. A prominent man of some means up there ran across two drunken crackers who had come in to town on a bat one evening. They were lying in front of the Post Office. One of them slapped him on the shoulder and said with a maudlin laugh:

"'How are y', Judge? Are y' reckonin' to find us some licker?'

"The Judge, who was a very dignified man, drew himself up, shook the cracker's hand from his shoulder, and started on, when the other cracker stepped in front of him with an ugly look.

"'You can't shake us off so easy,' said he. 'We're as good as you now, an' you can't call it nigh on us. You ain't any too good yourself.'

"'You're a drunken ruffian,' exclaimed the Judge, pushing the man aside. 'Pass on or I'll have you locked up.'

"'Not by a damn sight,' shouted the cracker. 'I'll fix you,' and drawing a knife he lunged at the Judge, but missed him.

"Instantly he was covered by a dozen revolvers in the hands of a crowd who were at the Post Office and who had seen the whole thing. They would have tarred and feathered those crackers but for the Judge begging them off. Ten months later the Judge had occasion to drive to a neighboring town. His buggy and horse came back without him. We found him dead in the road at the edge of the woods, a charge of buckshot had struck him in the back of the head. We couldn't find those two crackers to lynch them. That was a cracker killing, and it's only one of many.

"You see the men that make up the strength of the Tillmanite party. They're the Populists. Tillman makes them constables and gives them guns, and they're just longing for murder. They are the liquor spies that come to search our homes and to shoot us down if we object. Can you wonder that the people of Darlington fired on these offspring of criminal convicts and pirates, these scum of the country, these worthless, treacherous, murderous crackers? As long as Tillman uses them as dogs to set on the people South Carolina so long he will find the people ready to resort to armed resistance."

A Monkey's Politeness.

From the Globe-Democrat.

"I was amused at an act of politeness I once witnessed on the part of a monkey that had a very peculiar effect on my dog," said Stephen L. Warner yesterday. "One day an Italian organ grinder accompanied by a trained monkey wandered into our town, and the man stopped before my house to play. The monkey was an intelligent little fellow, and was attired in a jacket and cap. While his master was grinding out the music the monkey hopped down from the organ where he had been sitting, and, jumping the fence, came up into my yard. He was at once spied by a fox terrier of mine, and the dog made a rush at him. The monkey awaited the onset with such undisturbed tranquillity that the dog halted within a few feet of him to reconnoitre. Both animals took a long, steady stare at each other, when suddenly the monkey raised his paw and gracefully saluted his enemy by raising his hat. The effect was magical. The dog's head and tail dropped, and he sneaked off into the house and would not leave it until satisfied that his polite but mysterious guest had departed."

UNDER THE GUNS OF A FORTRESS.

Another Hotel at Old Point Which Must Be Torn Down in Case of War.

OLD POINT COMFORT, April 20.—There stands here, towering above every other object in front of the fort on the hilltop, a gigantic new hotel whose owners know that in case of war and a threat of attack on the fortress the building will be torn to the ground. With that understanding the Hygeia was put up many years ago; but that hotel is of wood, while the new Chamberlin Hotel is of solid masonry. It is evident that the men who invest in hotel property here have little fear that any foreign power will have the temerity to attack our shores. All the land at this all-the-year-round watering place is a Government reservation, and hotels can only be put up here with the Government's permission. This has been difficult to obtain, and it is safe to say that it will not be got again for any other hotel than the Hygeia and the Chamberlin, since the only available locations are now occupied. Workmen are now putting the finishing touches on the Chamberlin Hotel, and it is to be opened to the public within a few weeks. It is the fashion for tourists who come here to get permits to see the new hotel, which especially attracts the Southern contingent here, as it is more costly and modern than any other hotel south of Mason and Dixon's line. The building covers 129,000 square feet of ground, and Mr. John F. Chamberlin, the famous Washington hotel man, for whom the house is named, says that the frontage on Hampton roads is greater in length than the façade of the Capitol at Washington.

The fact that the house is of brick and iron, has elevators and electric lights and iron stairs and all the latest improvements and novelties of a modern city hotel, excites the curiosity of the habitués of Old Point Comfort, who can scarcely credit the idea that a place which has so long depended on its natural attractions is to be enhanced by what they call "a regular city hotel." They look with curiosity upon the great number of bathrooms in the building, and are never tired of pointing out to one another the four faucets over each tub—one for hot water, one for cold, and one each for hot and cold sea water. The elevators run in iron shafts, the stairs are of iron, and the inner walls are of brick from cellar to roof. There is an ice machine in the hotel, not only to make ice, but to send chilled air to all the numerous refrigerators in the building. There is also apparatus for filtering rain water and for condensing salt water to make the drinking water for the guests.

A thousand persons can be sheltered in the 554 rooms of the hotel, many of which are arranged in suites, consisting of a parlor, bedroom, bathroom, and clothes closet. There is a triple parlor 182 feet long and fifty-one feet wide and a ballroom nearly 100 feet square. There are several private dining rooms and a restaurant, but a distinct peculiarity of the hotel is that it has no bar, rathskeller, separate from the wine and barroom, for those who like lager beer. There is provision for six bowling alleys, and there will be a large billiard room in the house. The building is wired for 3,000 electric lights, to be supplied by five dynamos, which are in a separate building with the battery of boilers and the laundry.

Mr. Chamberlin says he has received 1,200 letters, from all over the country, asking when the hotel will be open. It will be opened in July, positively, he says. He thinks there is business enough at Old Point for three or four such hotels nine months in the year. During the remaining three months he expects to pay expenses. The Chamberlin has cost more than $900,000. The forced sale of the property and its purchase by the original owners leaves