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The Daily Record

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SCRAPING THE CLOUDS.

When Nast, the famous American cartoonist, late in the eighties adorned the pages of a New York newspaper with one of his inimitable caricatures, representing a fifteen-storied building as the final effort of the skyscraping cult, he was believed to have pictured the wildest flight of fancy. But compared with the buildings which now adorn Manhattan island and make the approach to New York harbour one of the most imposing sights in the world, Nast's conception fades into utter insignificance. At the moment the massive structure known as the Metropolitan Life Insurance building is the loftiest, but plans are now in course of preparation for erections which will dwarf even this architectural giant. The Metropolitan building has fifty storeys, with a total height of 700 feet. Then comes the Singer Company's tower, with 47 storeys and a height of 612 feet. A bad third is represented by the City Investing building, with 32 storeys and a total height of over 500 feet. The proposed skyscrapers are: the Equitable Life, with 62 storeys and a height of 909 feet, exclusive of a 150-foot flagpole, and a building to replace the old Tower edifice, the plans for which provide 38 storeys with a height of 1,000 feet! These projects have not yet received municipal sanction; but no serious difficulties are anticipated by their promoters. The ever increasing importance of that limited tract of land, which, situated at the extreme end of the narrow island forming the metropolis of Gotham, runs the famous Mansion House area of London very closely as regards value per square foot, renders it absolutely necessary for a solution of the housing problem to be speedily found; and the sky-scraper advocates logically contend that, since horizontal expansion is out of the question, the aerial blue offers the only outlet for the expansive forces which are making such heavy demands on the ingenuity of New York builders. As an indication of what may reasonably be expected in the immediate future, it may be recalled that under the New York municipal regulations now in force, a 150-storied building at least 2,000 feet high is quite feasible. A recent report on the subject said that it seemed almost vain today to look for any limits either on the height or size of buildings if their future usefulness and earning capacity can be demonstrated, assuming of course that municipal regulations will impose no further restrictions than at present.

It is becoming recognised that the time is past for restrictions based solely on height. In fact, one architect has proposed that so long as the entire plot is not covered there should be no limit to the height of a tower on a specified part. Should the owner of the plot not wish to wrench the stars apart, his right to do so might be transferred to owners of adjoining plots. That is to say, on each block there might be one or two towers rising to extreme height, but restricted in ground area. In the construction of a sky-scraper the engineer appears to be a more important person than the architect, for the modern sky-scraper is a steel cage with columns, beams, girders, and trusses, just like those of a cantilever bridge. With its extreme height, its foundation, to be firm, must go down to bed-rock; floors and partitions and exterior walls must be of brick, terra-cotta, or stone; and the framework must be wind-braced so as to be able to withstand winds far higher than any likely to be experienced, the standard being 30-lb. pressure to the square foot. Then a tall building must be absolutely fireproof, and all parts covered with tile or concrete, so that the heat cannot reach the quantity of steel used and cause it to expand. Every building over ten storeys in height must supply its own fire protection, as it is beyond the reach of fire-engines, or even of the vast columns of water shot forth from the high-power mains which are rapidly replacing the fire-engine in New York. By the New York building code the walls of a steel skeleton for a tall building must be 12 inches thick for the uppermost 75 feet, and below that an extra four inches for each 60 feet. Another essential to a sky-scraper is a rapid elevator, but today the speed of elevators is limited to 600 feet per minute. Again, the large halls not only give access to these elevators, but are often public passages from one street to another or to elevated or underground railroads. These halls also generally contain telegraph bureaux, restaurants, news-stands, and sta-



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tionery and other stores, such as tabacconists, haberdashers, tailors, and confectioners; and shoe-blacks are also available in them. To the stranger landing in New York and straining his neck to catch a glimpse of the topmost storey of such a mighty edifice, an impression of unspeakable peril inevitably invades his thoughts. The denizens of the sky-scraper district have long since become accustomed to the somewhat awe-inspiring effect of its weird architectural characteristics, and would probably laugh to scorn the forebodings of the newcomer. But the fact remains that a visitation similar to that which recently laid the proud city of San Francisco in ruins would produce results in the metropolis before which the most vivid imagination must perforce remain impotent. The collapse of even one sky-scraper must inevitably assume the proportions of a terrific catastrophe, but it is to be hoped that eventualities of this description have been made as impossible as anything in this amazing universe of ours can be. To those who have watched the slender structure of the "Flatiron" building perceptibly swaying during a heavy gale, and have dodged the coping stones which on more than one occasion have crashed down on to the street several hundred feet below, the sky-scraper must ever remain an awesome thing, a Frankenstein whose potentialities should never be ignored.

GENERAL NEWS.

NEWS FROM AMERICA.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

Washington, December 8.

President Roosevelt's message to Congress, issued today, is to the following effect:

"The financial situation of the country is excellent, the financial policy of the Government in the past seven years having produced the most satisfactory results. The currency system, however, is imperfect, and it is to be earnestly hoped that the Currency Commission will be able to propose a thoroughly good system that will supply existing deficiencies. In the period from the 1st of July, 1901, to the 30th of September, 1908, the ordinary revenue has shown a surplus over the ordinary expenditure in the four years 1902, 1903, 1906, and 1907; but a deficit in 1904, 1905, 1908, and for a part of 1909. On the whole, in those seven years and three months there has been a surplus of nearly one hundred million dollars, and a diminution of the public debt by ninety millions, in spite of the

extraordinary expenditure on the Panama canal; further, a saving of nearly nine millions in annual interest. That is a very satisfactory result, particularly when the fact is borne in mind that the country has never hesitated to spend money when the necessity for doing so was recognized. During the period referred to no new taxes had been imposed, no existing tax had been raised; on the contrary some taxes had been reduced.

With regard to the large companies engaged in inter-State trade, particularly the railways, "I can only," writes the President, "repeat what I have said again and again in my messages to Congress. I consider it worse than foolish to attempt to prevent all combinations as the Sherman Anti-Trust law does, since such a law can only be applied incompletely and unequally, and because the operation of such a law may produce almost as much hardship as good. Instead of an unwise attempt to prevent all combinations, a law should, in my opinion, be made, expressly authorising all combinations that are for the public interest but at the same time giving full power to any department of the Government to control and supervise those combinations. One of the first conditions of such control must be that full publicity is assured in all matters of which the public has a right to know; further the controlling authority must have power to prevent or put a stop to every form of unseemly favouritism or any such bad business, and that not through a Court of law but by administrative regulations or decisions. The railways of the country should be entirely under the supervision of the Inter-State Traffic Commission and be removed from the jurisdiction of the Courts. The telegraph and telephone Companies engaged in inter-State communication should also be subject to the control of the Inter-State Traffic Commission. It is earnestly to be hoped that our people will deal with these matters through their representatives."

With regard to wage-earners, the message states the President's view that the workers, whether they contribute bodily or mental work, whether they produce for the market or seek a market for the article produced, should have a far larger share than at present in the wealth they create, and that they should be placed in a position to invest that share in the apparatus and tools with which they work; further that child labour should be forbidden and female labour reduced, and that the hours of labour for all manual workers should be shortened.

The watering of share capital should be prevented, and gambling in shares on the Exchange discouraged as far as possible; a progressive legacy duty should be imposed on large fortunes; industrial education should be promoted. So far as possible, the burden of taxes on the small man should be lightened. Prizes should be awarded for economy, hard work, and business energy. If that is only a hasty summary of the reforms that should be kept in view, it affords material to which Congress may devote its energies in the present Session. "In no particular," runs the message, "is our legislation, in the individual States as well as the Union, so far behind the whole civilised world as in the matter of liability and compensation for accidents. It is discouraging that the United States should have to stand aside at all European international conferences at which insurance against accidents is discussed."

After alluding to the Judges and the administration of the law; to the maintenance of the forests, as one of the chief natural resources of the country; to the need for the improvement of the water-ways of the interior, on which hundreds of millions have been expended and which ought to be not only navigable but navigated; to PostOffice Savings Banks, which, with the security of the Government behind them, would encourage thrift among the classes with small means—in 14 States the deposits in the Savings Banks amount, the message notes, to 3,590,245,402 dollars or 98.4 per cent. of all deposits, whereas in the other 32 States the percentage of Savings bank to other deposits is only 1.6 per cent.; to education, and to the public health, both subjects that require the attention of Congress; the President turns to the subject of Foreign Affairs.

The foreign policy of the United States is based on the theory that law and right should govern the relations of peoples as of persons. The Union has in the last ten years acted and will continue to act towards other nations as in private life one

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