A COURTHOUSE GOING TO COURT.

The citizens of Boxbutte County in the State of Nebraska recently took a vote upon the question of moving the county seat from Hemingford, where it was then located, to Alliance. Both of these towns are, of course, in the county of Boxbutte, and the circumstances which rendered the move desirable were certain changes of population, etc., which rendered Alliance the more desirable location. But while a change of location was desirable there was no necessity for a change of courthouse, as the existing building at Hemingford contained ample accommodations for the business of the county; moreover, the distance from Hemingford to Alliance was only 19 miles, and the level country between the two was singularly propitious for a feat of house moving.

A COURTHOUSE GOING TO COURT.

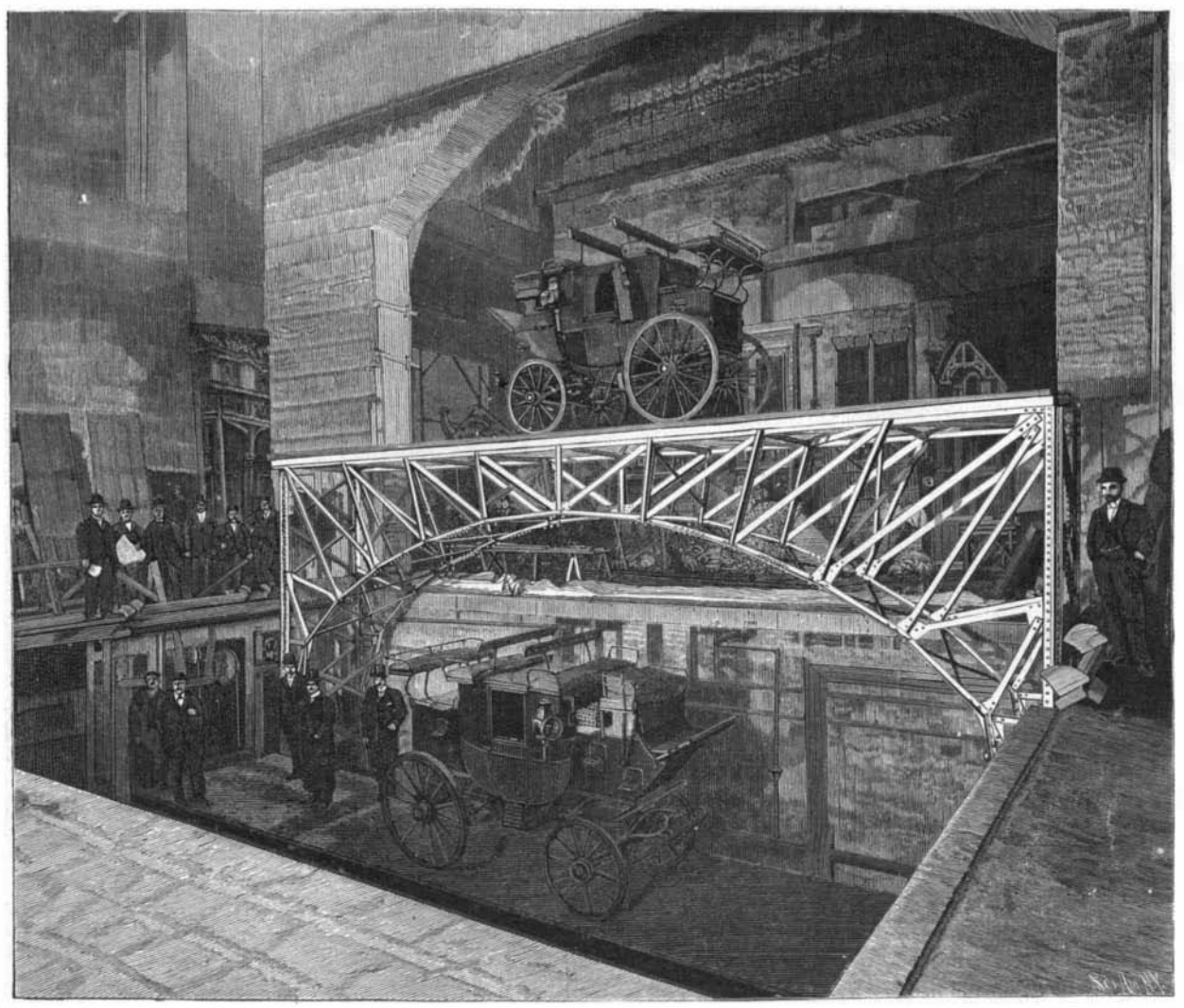
Accordingly a contract was let to a "house mover" at Lincoln, Nebraska, who, however, after jacking the building up and getting it on its trucks, found that his hauling machinery was not equal to the task, and canceled his contract. The citizens were thus again confronted with the alternative of voting $30,000 bonds for the construction of a new courthouse or making a further effort to move the old building. It is probable that the structure would have stayed in Hemingford but for the fact that the Burlington and Missouri Railroad runs through the county, and being a heavy taxpayer would have had to bear in the taxes levied the major portion of the cost of a new house. The company conceived the bold and certainly original idea of acting as a common carrier for the courthouse itself, and transporting it as so much freight over the 19 miles of track between the two towns in question. Accordingly the building, which measured 38 by 50 feet and towered 51 feet above the rails, was placed upon four 60,000-pound capacity trucks, heavy bridge timbers being interposed between the bottom sills of the building and the trucks to secure an even bearing and properly distribute the load.

Now as the width between rails is only 4 feet 8½ inches and the building was 38 feet wide, it was necessary to steady the structure to prevent it from rolling into the ditch. This was ingeniously done by placing two loaded 60,000-pound coal cars immediately in front and behind the building and guying it with ropes as shown in our illustration, which shows the strange procession under way.

The trip was made without any mishap at a speed which varied from 5 to 8 miles an hour, according to the grades. The only obstacles encountered were some small cuts which had to be reduced to allow the floor of the building to clear them. We are informed by Mr. J. R. Phelan, the superintendent of the road, to whom we are indebted for our particulars, that the building is larger than it appears to be in the picture—the upper story in which the courtroom is located having a 16-foot ceiling. It was aptly remarked by a spectator as the strange procession rolled by that this was "the first time that he ever saw a courthouse going to court."

MODERN STAGE MECHANISM.

The movement known by the name of "stage reform" has of late years received considerable attention in England and has awakened interest at least in the United States. It originated some twenty years ago in Austria with the primary object of encouraging the greatest possible imitation of nature in the mise-en-scène. The rudiments of art as understood by painters, sculptors, and architects were to be applied to the stage and true scenic art was to take the place of the nondescript mounting of plays. It was also considered essential to introduce modern methods of stage mechanism, lighting, etc., and special attention was to be paid to protection against fire, for the movement originated in Austria after the terrible "Ring" Theater fire in Vienna, and since this time the movement has not only surely and gradually developed throughout Austria and Germany, but also spread beyond the frontiers of those countries. The old methods of changing scenes and producing effects which have been in use for a hundred years have been done away with, and the mechanical engineer and the architect have been set to work to revolutionize stage mechanism. The most untiring worker in England is undoubtedly Mr. Edwin O. Sachs, who is the recognized authority on the subject, and our engraving represents a most useful improvement in manipulating the "bridge" of a modern theater stage which he designed. Hydraulic stages are in use in quite a number of places in the world and we have one in this country, but this method of manipulating stages does not appear to have met with very much approval either in England or in America.



ELECTRICALLY OPERATED BRIDGE, DRURY LANE THEATER, LONDON.

To those who are not familiar with stage construction, it may be said that a first-class stage consists of a number of sections termed "bridges" which are 30 or 40 feet long and 8 feet wide. These "bridges" can be raised or depressed to make mountains or caves as the case may be, and in fact, the uses to which they can be put are almost legion. There are usually five or six of these "bridges" separated by narrow flaps. The first theater to do away with the creaking old wooden drums and pulleys of two hundred years standing, worked by manual labor, and substituting electrical power instead, is the Theater Royal, Drury Lane, London, England.

Mr. Sachs divided the main stage into six sections, which are arranged to be moved vertically either 12 feet above the stage level or 8 feet below it, while the fifth and sixth sections were to be built to be moved vertically only, being the most distant from the audience and only to move as a whole; the third and fourth were also to move in a sloping direction, while the first and second sections, besides allowing for a sloping movement, were also to be cut up into moving subsections for traps and the like. For the third and fourth sections hydraulic bridges were used. The fifth and sixth sections were built according to Mr. Sachs' plan and in time the others will also be reconstructed. The bridges are 40 feet long by 6 feet 9 inches wide and an 8-inch flap intervenes between them. The two sections which are worked by electric power embody a new principle for stage mechanism, namely, the principle of the suspended lift partially counterweighted frame taking the form of a bridge, so that what is known technically as a "bridge" on the stage literally becomes a latticework bridge from the engineer's point of view.

The lattice and girders are 38 feet 10 inches long, 5 feet 6 inches wide. They are well braced together as shown in our engraving and form a rigid structure on the top of which is the floor forming a part of the stage. The steel portion of each lift weighs a little more than 4¾ tons and the platform 1½ tons more, so that the total weight is not far from 6 tons. About two-thirds of this weight is taken off from

the hoisting apparatus by counterweights. In order to prevent the bridges from binding, they are provided with long legs which slide in angle guides attached to steel stanchions. The mechanism which operates the lifts is placed entirely below them in order to allow an unencumbered floor when the top of the lift is flush with the stage. Each bridge has an independent electric motor with drums and cables. Each motor is of 7½ horse power and is of a four-pole inclosed type, the motor being shunt wound. The motors make 520 revolutions per minute. The speed is reduced to the ratio of 104 to 1 through a worm and worm wheel, the worm wheel being geared to a shaft which carries two winding drums which make five revolutions per minute. Upon these drums are wound steel wire ropes which pass over guide pulleys and are connected at four places on the legs of the lift near each corner. The speed of lifting corresponding to the full speed of the motor is 16 feet per minute, but this can be reduced to 6 feet per minute, as desired. Equalizing devices are provided so that the tension on the ropes is rendered uniform. The movement of the lift is controlled by a combined starting and reversing switch which is operated from below the level of the stage from a position by which the operation of the machinery can be observed. Hand gear is provided for working each lift, in case the electric power should fail. Devices are fitted for holding the lifts stationary in case the ropes should break. Very often as many as thirty people would have to be carried on it, or a "tally-ho," as shown in our engraving.

Automatic switches are provided for cutting off the current in case the operator should be derelict in his duty, so that the drums cannot overwind. Appliances are also provided for stopping the bridges at a certain fixed place. The lifts have been tested thoroughly and they have worked with smoothness and without jarring. The new installation may be regarded as a most important advance in stage mechanism, and the subject is so interesting that we publish additional illustrations showing the working of the bridges in greater detail in the current number of the SUPPLEMENT.

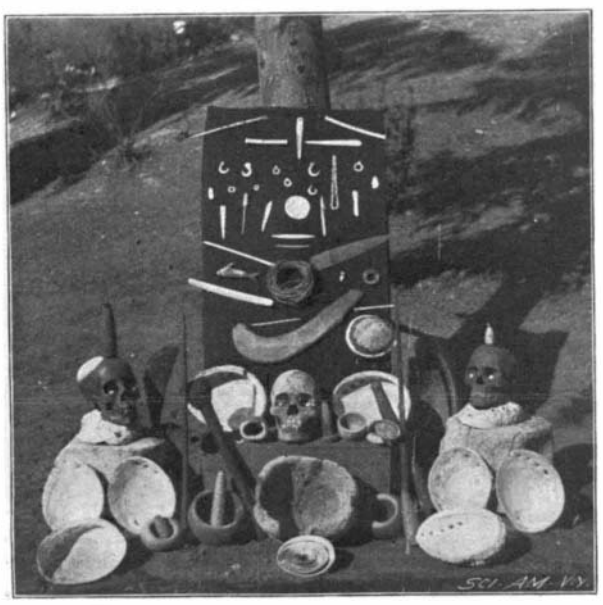
THE WIND-SWEPT ISLAND OF SAN NICOLAS.

BY PROF. C. F. HOLDER.

About seventy miles off the coast of Southern California lies the island of San Nicolas—a veritable desert, wind-swept to such a degree that one might well imagine that the furies are guarding the island. San Nicolas, which is twelve miles long and four or five wide, has no harbors, the anchorage being merely a lee under the low hills; the fact that the wind blows directly offshore making it possible for vessels to anchor here at certain seasons.

On this island, which has been the central point of a romance and tragedy of much interest, deserted and alone, Maria Better Than Nothing, the wild woman of San Nicolas, lived twenty years—long enough to forget her people and even her language. The story is as follows:

For centuries the island was inhabited by a race of hardy mariners who have left their monuments in large shell heaps and mounds that cover many acres. Less than one hundred years ago, the Franciscan fathers determined to take the natives away from the inhospitable island and provide them with homes around the various missions, where they could also be comfortably converted. With this object in view, a vessel was sent to the island, and after much difficulty the Indians, now reduced to about one hundred, were collected, taken aboard, and deserting thousands of implements which their ancestors had used for centuries. When the vessel was about to sail, one of the women discovered that her child had been left behind. But it was blowing a gale and the vessel could not hold, so the captain sailed away, whereupon the frantic mother dashed into the sea and swam back to the shore, making her way successfully through the surf. The captain of the vessel promised to return for the woman, but soon after his vessel was wrecked, and no attempt was made to rescue the poor Indian woman until twenty years after, when a priest determined to make an effort to learn whether she was alive. He enlisted the services of an otter hunter and several Indians, who in a small schooner, known as "Better Than Nothing," set sail for San Nicolas.



IMPLEMENTS FOUND ON SAN NICOLAS ISLAND.

They landed on the island, and very soon found evidence that some one was living there, but avoiding them. To make the search perfect, the men formed a line across the island at certain distances apart, which resulted in the discovery of the wild woman. She was sitting by a brush hut in a cañon, about which was a windbreak of whalebones and various material. She smiled and spoke to the Indians in a language they did not understand, but they fell on their faces before her as though to worship her. She offered them food and readily consented to go with them, and was taken aboard the schooner with a tame otter. She was dressed in the skins of birds, over which was a garment of sealskin. She was named Better Than Nothing, after the vessel, and by signs succeeded in telling some Indians on the mainland something of her history. At first she had mourned the loss of her friends; then the dogs killed her baby, and she wished to die and was sick for a long time.

She was taken to Santa Barbara, where Indians from all about were brought to her to see if they could understand her language; but without avail. She lived with different families at Santa Barbara, but civilization proved disastrous to her, and in less than three months she died. Her remarkable dress of feathers was sent to Rome as a curiosity, and the remains of the unfortunate woman found a resting place in the sanctified ground of the mission.

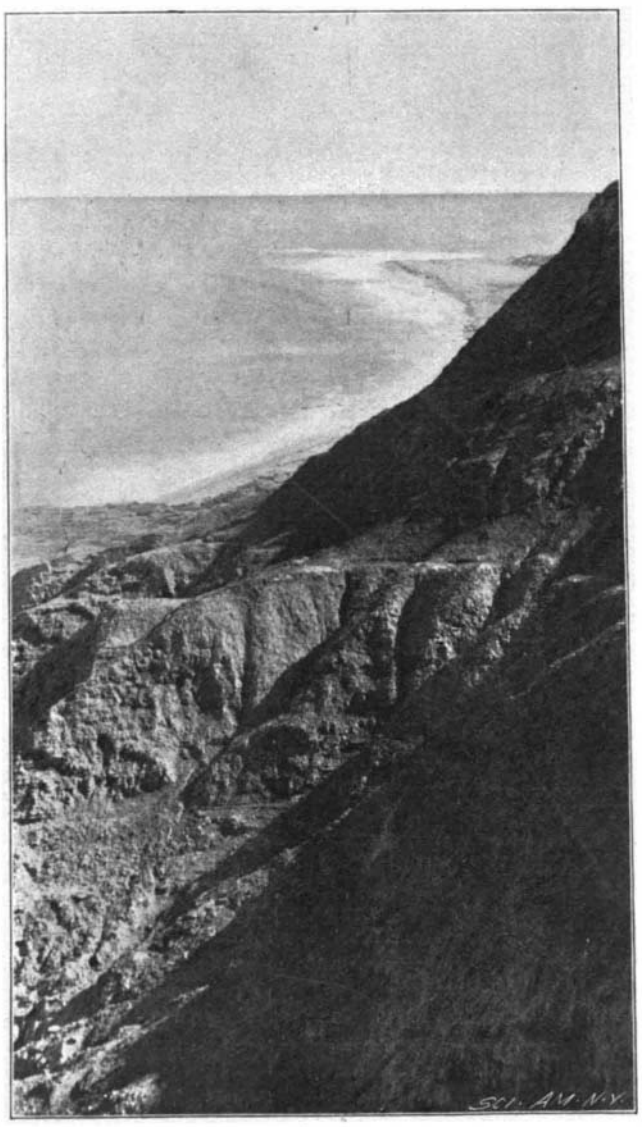
San Nicolas has proved a veritable treasure house for the archæologist, and tons of stone implements have been taken from various mounds on the island. One of the most remarkable shell mounds in the world is found here, being it is said nearly a mile long and ten feet in average height. On its wind-swept surface innumerable objects have been found, exposed during previous hurricanes, with the bodies of Indians facing each other, having been buried in a sitting position with hands clasped over the head. With many remains were buried such personal effects as mortars, ollas, flutes, jewel boxes, charms, flint spearheads, and almost every article needed by a hunting and fishing people, all formed from shell, bone or wood. Fishing lines were made of kelp; sinkers of stone with a groove worn around or a hole in the center; the hook was of elegant design and bore the barb upon the outside.

One of the greatest curiosities on San Nicolas, after all, is the wind. It tosses the sand dunes into the air like wraiths and keeps them continually moving and shifting. It has buried a stone house and so threatened another that the lone herder on the island often deserts it for shelter among the rocks near the sea-lion rookeries, fearing that it will be blown into the sea. For two successive years the writer as guest of Commodore Burnham, of the Santa Catalina Yacht Club, made the attempt to reach this inhospitable island. The first time the yacht was blown away; the second the party was able to land, but owing to the terrific wind was glad to leave. Approaching the island presented a flat and barren appearance, and the yacht finally came to under the lee of strange cliffs that rise from the sea, while to the north a long spit of sand extends to the east. In some places the cliff is worn by the combined forces of water and wind into marvelous shapes and is everywhere difficult of ascent. Some sailors have a superstition that the strange wind that blows from the island is from the souls of the natives, who resent this intrusion and the robbing of their graves.

The yacht's party soon had an experience with the wind. A black fog cloud came sweeping down over the island and the wind blew a hurricane, dissipating the fog and blowing until two o'clock in the morning. The landing was made in a heavy sea—a dangerous operation. The single inhabitant, a French herder, was standing on the sands, looking a typical Robinson Crusoe. He had a big hat strapped on under his chin, an old-fashioned shot gun over his shoulder, a cane in his other hand. Two half-breed shepherd dogs crouched near him. He evidenced no desire to hear from the outer world; his one wish was for beans, which, unfortunately, could not be gratified. He had a small fortune at hand in the antiquities which he could pick up, but he was undoubtedly loath to despoil the graves, though not averse to pointing out the skeletons which had been uncovered here and there. Everywhere the wonderful evidences of the wind were apparent. In one cañon the writer photographed a section that seemed to have almost been carved by Titanic hands. There were great faces, impossible forms of animals, delicate lacelike tracery, all creating a weird effect.

Reaching the summit after a hard climb over cliffs of yellow, blue, white, green and other shades a mesa was found, almost perfectly level, extending for five or six miles. Not an object broke the level that appeared to be

STONE FOREST, SAN NICOLAS ISLAND.



SAN NICOLAS ISLAND LOOKING EAST.