# Uncle Sam's Chief Engineer

Gossip and Stories of John Findley Wallace, Who Will Build the Panama Canal.



JOHN FINDLEY WALLACE,

The Eminent Engineer Who Will Build Uncle Sam's Big Ditch for Wedding of Atlantic and Pacific.

Special Correspondence of the Descret News by Frank G. Carpenter.)

taken charge of this, the biggest englneering job of the world, at a salary of 15,000 a year. Daniel Webster was call. dasteam engine in breeches. Mr. Walsee is a great power plant in flesh and blood which transmits its force to every ens with whom it comes in contact, He an originator. He plans things and is things. He unites commercial abily to technical training and experince. He knows how to handle men as well as how to handle machinery, and hie he was manager of the Illinois niral railroad his method was such at he could tell whether every man devery machine, locomotive and car a that vast system was doing its duty, d whether the man or thing paid

(Copyright, 1905, by Frank G. Carpen-ter.) ANAMA.—Uncle Sam has a big man in charge of the Panama ca-nal. I refer to the chief engineer, John Findley Wallace, who has then charge of this, the biggest engied him to take up Hebrew, but young Wallace said that his lifework lay outside the ministry and that he was bound to study engineering. His father replied that if so he would help him all he could, but that most of the money must be earned by himself. Like many preachers, Dr. Wallace was poor and he could only afford to educate his son through the support given to divinity students. This was denied to young men who took up other professions.
The change, however, did not bother young Wallace. He stayed out from school a month at the end of each year and another month at the beginning, and in these months and during his vacations he made enough. He could not go to a technical school, but the several professors of the college gave him special instruction along engineering lines, and in this way he formed the basis, which, added to his study thereafter, has put him at the head of the engineers of his time. How Wallace Looks, Acts and Works-His Treatment of the Unions and How He Handles His Men - His Early Life and the Secrets of His Success-Points For Boys Who Want to Make \$25,000 Salaries The Technical Engineer Versus the Business Engineer-The Chief's Nerve, and How He Pushed the Illinois Central Tracks in the Face of a Pistol.

railroad salaries, and there is no doubt but that Mr. Wallace could have held it for years to come. Connected with it were opportunities to make far more than he could expect to make at Panama. There was prospect of immediate promotion, and there was the surety of a pension at the close. Nevertheless the chief engineer threw up that place to take charge of the Panama canal work, and to come here to duties in-finitely more difficult and exhausting than any he would have had at Chicago.

Initiely more difficult and exhausting than any he would have had at Chicago. He comes to a bad climate and. I might say, to an almost thankless job. Why does he do it? It is as I have said, because he likes to fight and con-quer the biggest thing that can come to him. He did not come unknowing. He was here seven years ago, when the canal was in the hands of the French, and he wanted to be the American in charge of the great success where the French had failed. Indeed, it was that visit that spurred him on to accept the proposition of the commission at Wash-ington. Others who look below the surface of things say that Wallace is the one man best fitted to have charge of the canal and handle it. They be-lieve that Providence, working in His mysterious way, has put him here be-cause in this place he, of all others, can do the most for mankind. He is certainly as able as any of our United States engineers, and, in this age when the United States leads in all such States engineers, and, in this age when the United States leads in all such undertakings, this means that Wallace leads among the civil engineers of the world

WALLACE THE MAN.

WALLACE THE MAN. But what kind of a man is Mr. Wal-lace? How does he look, work and talk? Physically speaking he is of medium height and build, straight, well formed and full of vigor. He is 52 years old now, but he looks much younger and his step is as springy as that of a boy. He has rosy cheeks and all the aspects of a quiet conscience and good diges-tion. One of the striking things about the man is his personal magnetism. He has the ability of making everyone he meets his friend, and also that which emables him to refuse a man's request and still keep him in a good humor. Mr. Wallace is simple in his manner. He knows his men, goes about among them and talks to them. He has a won-

derful influence over them, and his chief subordinates are as enthusiastic in pushing their work as though the canal were a private enterprise, and each had a financial interest in it.

WALLACE AND THE UNIONS.

This enthusiasm for Wallace extends even to the common mechanics. Many of them are kickers, but none attributes his troubles to him. Indeed, several of them have told me that if labor matters are left to Wallace everything will be all right, and I find this to be the standing of the chief engineer with our labor, organized and unorganized. All his life he has been dealing with labor quea-tions and laboring men. During his railroad career he has had his troubles. with the unions, and has usually set with the unions, and has usually set-tled them without strikes. At such times he met with the men themselves, showed that he was willing to give as 'vell as take, and, when he could go no farther in his concessions, he brought

farther in his concessions, he brought his employes to time, by speaking some-thing like this: "Well, gentlemen, I have gone as far as I can, and now I want you to put yourselves in my place. I have more at stake in this matter than you. You can strike, but you all know that you can get back again. But as for me, if I give you what you ask. I shall lose my job. I am put here by the stockholder-to make this road pay and they won't keep me if it don't pay. I can't do that if I give you what you ask, for the road can't stand it. Now I leave the matter with you." vith you.'

As a result the men would go off and confer and soon return abandoning their demand, or making some small compromise by which they could go back to work.

LITTLE CHANCE FOR GRAFT.

LITTLE CHANCE FOR GRAFT. Indeed, it is the absolute honesty which shines out of everything con-nected with Mr. Wallace that makes him a successful handler of men. I have heard a good deal about graft at Panama. So far I have not seen enough boodle here to pay the cigar expenses of a government clerk. There are con-tractors at Panama, but, only a few contracts have been let and everyone is treated impartially. Ordinary con-tracts are placed by the various depart-ments, and only the biggest things come ments, and only the biggest things co

before the chief engineer. To show ho

before the chief engineer. To show how he deals with such men, the other day a contractor slipped past the doorkeeper and entering his private office, said: "Mr. Wallace, my name is Smith. I am a friend of your friend Blank of Chicago and I called to see if we could not sell you certain building supplies." "Ah!" replied the chief engineer. "I am indeed giad to see a friend of Mr. Blank, but I have nothing to do with such purchases. I do not bother with details. The person you want to see is Mr. Johnson, the supervising architect, and whatever he says, goes. I am glad to see you, however, and hope you will remember me kindly to Mr. Blank. My messenger will show you where to find Mr. Johnson."

The man left, and that, strange to say, not displeased. Whether he placed his contract or not I do not know.

AT THE POINT OF THE PISTOL.

AT THE POINT OF THE PISTOL. I have just one more story, and that is to illustrate the nerve of Uncle Sam's chief engineer. The incident occurred in the extensi-n of the Illinois Central railroad. There was much opposition from the property owners, and on one farm where the track was to cross, the owner, a drunken fellow, protested that he would shoot the first railroad man who climbed his fence to begin work. The track was laid almost to the fence when Chief Engineer Wallace, who had not heard the man's threat, came up to look over the ground. He went right ahead, jumped the fence, and had tak-en about three steps beyond it when he found himself facing the barrel of a loaded revolver held by a man who was evidently drunk. The drunkard's hand was trembling and his finger was on the trigger. He said with an oath: "I told them I would shoot the first railroad man who crossed that fence, and I am glad you are the man. You are the engineer and you are the cause of all this trouble "

and I am glad you are the man, You are the engineer and you are the cause of all this trouble." Mr. Wallace looked the man in the eye and as he did so recognized him as one who had worked for him before. His face did not change, but in a quiet tone of authority he said, as he took a clear from his pocket and yout it to his cigar from his pocket and put it to his mouth

"Jim, give me a match." The drunkard dropped his pistol and handed out a match. He fell at once

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IN THE CULEBRA CUT. Chief Engineer Wallace and Mr. Carpenter the "News" Correspondent, in the

Foreground.

into his old place as one of Mr. Wal- | they came out they found the track "Now, Jim, what is the matter with you? I know you are a good fellow, and I also know that you and I are not was already laid clear across the field and the man was at once surrounded and the man was at once surrounded by his family and friends and denounc-ed for permitting it. He stuck to his promise, however, although it was only a few hours before that he had said that he would demand several thous-and dollars damages. This occurred on Saturday. That same night this man, still drunk, tried to break into a saloon and was shot at through the door by and I also know that you and I are not going to have any trouble. Let's go off and talk this over." With that the man put up his pistol and walked with Mr. Wallace to a shanty nearby. They chatted a while and the man finally told Mr. Wallace that he could put the road through his farm if he would give him a job. When



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mpany to keep him or it at work

A BUSINESS ENGINEER.

Mr. Wallace is the prince of our busngineers. He has been dealing usiness undertakings all his life with business undertakings all his jife and has had to figure them out to prof-lable conclusions. As manager of the Minois Central he was handling a prop-eliton capitalized at hundreds of mil-bons of dollars and made it pay divi-dends. He spent \$30,000,000 and upward 4 year; his employes were more than \$450, and his territory covered 14 of the busiest states of the Union. His ex-prime there fits him for the Panama anal, which might be called the big-set business undertaking in existence. It will probably be something like a \$500,000 job; and the American peo-je want it done in the quickest possi-be time and at the lowest possible cost. Vetime and at the lowest possible cost. Every year's delay means just that much loss in interest, and income, and there is a business end to every propo-dim connected with it. With unlimit-ef time and unlimited money any engi-ther could do it. We have able engi-bers in the army who could construct that way, but the army engineer usu-ly lacks the business point of view, he very point of view which Mr. Walace has to an extraordinary degree, and the point of view that is absolutely ssary to a job like this.

THE TWO ENGINEERS.

In talking one day with Mr. Wallace withis early life day with Mr. Wallace withis early life, he told me that a after he started out in his engl-hing work he began to study why is men succeeded and others, who med to be better equipped in the 7 of education, failed. The engl-its who were failures might be ex-ent draughtsmen and recharded. draughtsmen and rechnically arently superior to the engineers o succeeded. The latter, however, a climbed to the top and the beau-li workmen were bossed by them. He a learned that it was the man who omplished results non-tearned that it was the man who accomplished results who succeeded, and that results were the only criterion of success. He early learned that the mecessful engineer is he who, taking conditions as they are by the use of its forces he has, can work them out is a commercial success. There are, he ays, several sides to every engineer-he proposition. Every work must be constructed so that it will serve the purpose for which it is made, but it man also be constructed at such a cost and nucle are that it will pay the plished results and also be constructed at such a cost and a such a way that it will pay the men who are having it made. He li-lastrated the point by taking the case of two engineers. One lays out the line of a railroad, carrying it across a ra-viae over a bridge, which is a marvel of engineering construction. The other, the may not perhaps be able to build to besuiful a bridge, plans the road so that no bridge is needed and so that he change does not add to the operat-he greeness. Which is the better en-Enger

a same does not add to the operat-expenses. Which is the better en-mer? The latter, of course. As to Engineer Wallace, he has the allitis of both these engineers. Ho as technical ability and training of be highest order and at the same time atural business ability which has been evolved to the full by an extraordin-ty business education and business siness education and business

#### HOW ONE MAN SUCCEEDED.

How ONE MAN SUCCEEDED. Ike to write stories of successful the to write stories of successful the to write stories of successful the toware starting out toward suc-the the art Panama we have hum-the the art Panama we have hum-the toware starting out toward suc-the the toward successful the toware starting out toward suc-the toward successful to the toward successful to the toward to get an education the tok how how their \$25,000-the toward successful to get an education the toward to the toward to the toward the toward to the toward toward the toward to the toward toward toward the toward to the toward toward to the toward to educate all his sons for

HOW WALLACE LEARNED BUSI-NESS

I have referred to Mr. Wallace as a business engineer. I want to tell you how he got his business education. As soon as he began to work he saw that the successful engineer had to know business methods in order to succeed. He realized that he would have to deal with accounts all his life, and also with all maiters relating to corporations with accounts all his life, and also with all matters relating to corporations. The first thing he took up was ac-counts. While acting as surveyor he carried on a private course in book-keeping, learning singre and double en-try. He had a friend employed in A bank and through him he had access to the account books of the bank and learned that branch of the business. One of his first jobs was as assistant engineer on the Mississippi improve-ment at the Rock Island rapids. This engineer on the Mississippi Improve-ment at the Rock Island rapids. This was a government work, and in con-nection with it he studied the govern-ment methods of bookkeeping, as he did afterward those of the railroad com-panies with which he became connect-ed. Indeed he was soon so well posted on such matters that he was often called in and paid for acting as an ex-pert accountant. At the same time he took up the law.

At the same time he took up the law. He read Blackstone, Kent and Chitty, and made especial studies of contracts and corporations. This knowledge has since proved of great advantage to him.

THE SECRETS OF SUCCESS.

At the same time young Wallace kept up his engineering, going steadily onward, climbing over difficulties to-ward the top. Indeed, he courted the difficult and the disagreeable. In study-ing the secrets of success, he says, he soon saw that the men who rose were the men who took the hard jobs and mastered them.

"It is the man who moves along the line of the least resistance who must expect to go with the masses and to take the lower wages which belong to that class. The high-priced man is paid because he can do or will do what the others cannot or will not do."

This has been Mr. Wallace's policy throughout life-to court big things and do them. This is what has attracted him to Panama. This job is the big-gest of its kind in the world, and he wants to have a hand in mastering it.

HOW ONE ENGINEER ROSE. But I am ahead of my story. After leaving the government service Mr. Wallace was made chief engineer of the lewa Central rational, and construct-ed that line from Peorla to the Mis-sissippi river. When it was finished he operated it, then beginning his first he operated it, then beginning his that studies in railroad managing. Later on he went into bridge building. He aided in making the big bridge over the Mississippi at Keithsburg, and later be-came bridge engineer for the Atchison. Topeka & Santa Fe. He was also con-

Topeka & Santa Fe. He was also con-nected with Mr. E. L. Corthell, the wellnected with Mr. E. L. Corthell, the well-known civil engineer, in terminal rall-way works at Chicago, in making the Merchants' bridge at St. Louis, in building belt railroads at New Orleans and Memphis and in other engineering projects. All this work was done by Mr. Wallare before he reached 40, and during this time he kept up his studies of the outside things connected with

of the outside things connected with each work. He not only built railroads, but managed and operated them; and this, with his studies, has made him an all-around railroad man and a corpor-

all-around railroad man and a corpor-ation business man, with the grasp of details and the knowledge of executive organization which those terms imply. Mr. Wallace's work for the Illinois Central began about 13 years ago, when he constructed that railroad's termina-facilities for the world's fair at Chi-cago. About the same time he was made chief engineer of the system, and, five or six years ago, general manager five or six years ago, general manager with charge of all the constructing and operating departments.

That position paid one of the best of

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