WHY NOT BUILD A BICYCLE PATH ON BROADWAY?

Ex-Minister Roosevelt Writes to the Journal to Suggest a Great Public Improvement.

A Project Which, in a Large Measure, Would Solve New York's Rapid Transit Needs.

It has long been in my mind that the proposed rapid transit underground plan would not bring the relief which the public so eagerly seeks, and in my address the other evening before the Cyclists' Federation at the Lenox Lyceum I outlined briefly a plan which would, it appears to me, tend to rob the present condition of affairs, so far as transit is concerned, of half, or at least some, of its horrors.

I spoke of an elevated bicycle pathway, and gave in substance the claims which such a plan may be found to have to public attention. It is hardly necessary for me at this time to recite the many disadvantages which must suggest themselves to every thinker who has studied the proposed plan as outlined by the Rapid Transit Commissioners of New York.

In the first place these plans call for an outlay of $55,000,000, and I cannot see how they offer us more than mere temporary relief. The history of an underground railroad would be the same, I fear, as has been the history of the elevated road. This latter gave us what was at one time rapid transit, and now we have outgrown it, so that we merely have transportation with but the slightest semblance of rapid transit. And, too, if the city expends the enormous sum of $55,000,000 on an underground road and it should prove inadequate, the city would not be wealthy enough for a great many years to come to spend such a sum again in further efforts at solving this problem.

But one thing is evident: We must have rapid transit if the city would grow, and realizing this fact, I outlined the following plan:

MR. ROOSEVELT'S PLAN.

To start out with, we will assume that there are 200,000 bicycles in use in the city of New York alone. I have these figures from men who should, and probably do, know, and we will therefore assume that they are correct. It has been further estimated that the enormous sum of one hundred millions of dollars will be expended for bicycles this year. I merely quote these figures to show into what general use the bicycle is rapidly coming. Young and old alike are learning to ride the wheel. For my own part, I learned to ride at the age of sixty-five years, and now the wheel, under proper conditions, will provide rapid transit for short distances, as well as, if not better than, steam or electricity, or any other known motive power, and especially true is this when the wheel is ridden by young people. It is the young men and women who are in a hurry usually, in this work-a-day world, and so I venture to say that it is to them that a bicycle path would prove of the greatest benefit.

THE BROADWAY ROUTE.

Before I attempt to explain the somewhat nebulous plans in my mind for the building of the pathway, I would say that the preferable route for such a path would be from Fifty-ninth street and Central Park (known as the Columbus Circle), directly down Broadway to the Battery.

This is a distance of about five miles, and I have estimated that the structure could be built for a sum not to exceed $200,000 a mile, which would mean a total outlay of only $1,000,000, or one-fifty-fifth of the estimated cost of an underground railway system. Surely this is something to be considered.

There are two methods which suggest themselves for the construction of the elevated pathway I propose, but the more preferable, it seems to me, is to put pillars of steel on the sidewalks near the gutters of the street and throw a light steel framework across the thoroughfare, the central pathway to occupy, I should say, not more than sixteen feet of space above the street. This would, it will be seen, bring the pathway directly above the cable tracks, and extend beyond, on either side, say about two feet. I think a roadbed of wood should be first tried, although asphalt might be preferred. But bicycles would never wear out a good wooden roadway; that is, it would take so long to do so as to make the computation of time to bring about such a result worse than foolish to attempt.

A COVERED ROADWAY.

This roadway, as I have said before, would be about sixteen feet in width. It would, of necessity, have to be covered, in order to keep out snow and rain and render the structure practicable for use at all times and seasons. I would suggest as a covering a sort of peaked roof, beginning at either side at an elevation of perhaps seven feet above the bicycle path, and reaching an altitude of ten feet or so at the middle. This would give the cyclists plenty of room.

The structure could be at a height from the ground deemed most desirable. It would need sides to keep out wind and weather and keep in the cyclists, but would have an open space between it and the roof to let in sun and air, while keeping out snow and sleet in the Winter season; but all that is, of course, mere detail.

ONE DISTINCT ADVANTAGE.

There is at least one advantage which such a structure for the purpose of rapid transit possesses over any other plan which can now be suggested. There would be absolutely no noise, no smoke, no dirt and no dust, and little, if any, chance for accidents. It could not, so far as I can determine, be in any way deemed a nuisance, and therefore there would be no damages to pay property owners. It would not shut out light from stores or dwellings. It would in no way work harm to the real estate interests along the Broadway or any other route which might be proposed.

On the contrary, it would bring benefits in its wake. It would bring, at a fair calculation, one hundred thousand people past the Broadway stores each day, most of whom do not pass them now. Real estate for mercantile purposes is valued largely by the number of persons who pass such property, and this being true, the pathway would enhance the value of realty holdings all along the line.

IT WOULD PAY AN INCOME.

Now let us see how the pathway could be made not only to pay for itself in a very brief space of time, but should be made to be a source of considerable revenue to the city if desirable. Suppose 20,000 people used the pathway each day and each one paid for this privilege what he now pays in railroad fares, namely, ten cents for the round trip. That would be 200,000 cents, or $2,000 a day, and, if this income were derived for 300 days each year it would mean a revenue of $600,000 per annum.

This I believe to be a low estimate. But even with these figures (assuming my estimate of the cost of the structure to be correct), the pathway will have paid for itself from its own earnings in less than two years' time.

IT WOULD BE BEAUTIFUL.

Now there are a dozen or more minor details which I will set down here at random as they suggest themselves to my mind. The structure, instead of marring the beauty of Broadway, or any other thoroughfare, could be made to beautify the street. It could and should be constructed of iron, or steel, or wood, handsomely ornamented, while at night time it could be brilliantly illuminated with electric or other lights. It would certainly make a pleasant and attractive promenade, or, if you prefer, a bicycle-ade.

OTHER POSSIBLE ROUTES.

It is true that I have only suggested a pathway from Fifty-ninth street to the Battery, which is only half a loaf of bread, some may say. But if such a structure were erected, and should prove a success, it would be a simple matter to extend it up the Boulevard as far north as needed, while similar structures could be put up on the East Side. Of course, too, if there should be any serious objection to Broadway, Seventh avenue, or Eighth avenue and Hudson street, might be utilized. But I believe Broadway, being the centre of trade, would be decidedly preferable.

Assuming that Fifty-ninth street be the northern terminus of the structure, the pathway, even so, would be a means of rapid ransit. People living above that point could either ride down on their wheels or they could have them stored near the terminus. Thousands of wheels could be stored there without utilizing very much space.

THE UNDERGROUND SCHEME.

Now, to get back briefly to the underground railway plan of rapid transit. I cannot see how it means rapid transit at all. It is proposed that trains stop at Fourteenth street, and not again until Wall street is reached. This may mean rapid transit to the persons going to Fourteenth street or to Wall street, but does it to the thousands of people whose destination would be between these two points?

I do not think so. The elevated bicycle path, however, would get around this difficulty easily, for stations could be placed, say, every four blocks. I do not pretend to suggest any definite plan for the raising and lowering of wheels, but I see nothing impracticable in having ordinary stairways, on either side of which would be gutters, and in these gutters the wheels could be easily raised or lowered by the riders themselves, who would also ride them directly to and from their destinations.

Now, to see whether my plan would mean rapid transit. Elderly, as I am, I have no difficulty in riding along ordinary country roads at an average speed of twelve miles an hour. This being so, no one, young or old, ought to experience the slightest difficulty in making fifteen miles an hour on a well-constructed, level, wooden or asphalt pathway. The distance from Fifty-ninth street to Wall street is four miles and a half. Therefore, at a rate of fifteen miles an hour, the distance should be made in eighteen minutes. No one can do this on the elevated or cable cars, that is certain.

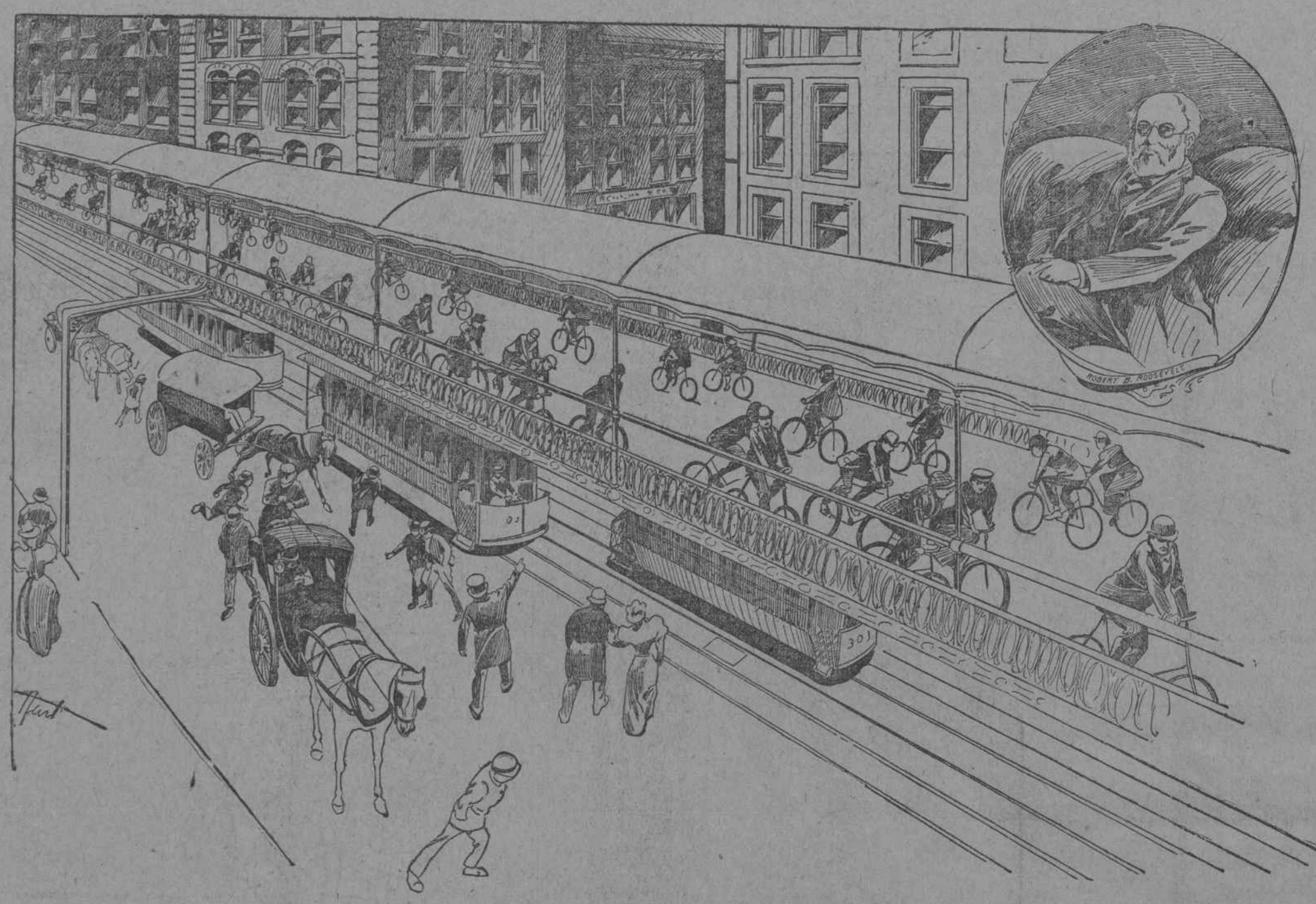
By taking the route suggested—the Broadway route—it would be necessary to cross the elevated railroad tracks but twice—once at Fifty-third street and once at Thirty-fourth street. A gentle grade at both places would surmount this difficulty and would not trouble the cyclists in the least degree.

GOOD HEALTH FOR THOUSANDS.

And lastly, I cannot refrain from speaking of the advantages all this possesses as a medium for the health of the community. Take the people who live in Harlem and spend anywhere from one-half to two hours each day in the ill-ventilated elevated trains, or who, it is proposed, shall spend nearly as long in a worse ventilated tunnel by the underground plan of rapid transit. Slowly, but just as surely, their constitutions are undermined by these daily rides. They get little or no exercise and they are compelled to breath a foul atmosphere.

As to the numbers that could be accommodated, I merely call attention to the fact that 20,000 wheelmen, going over five miles, would give 4,000 to a mile, or, as the busy hours would be from 7 to 10 in the morning and from half-past 3 to half-past 6 in the evening, this would be again divided by three, which would leave about one to four feet in length of track, so that they need not go two abreast, even at the busiest hours, until the number of those using the track should exceed 20,000. But all such minor matters could be readily determined the moment that the general scheme were approved.

ROBERT B. ROOSEVELT.



IF WE HAD A BICYCLE BOULEVARD ON BROADWAY.

EASY FOR ENGINEERS.

It Is a Very Simple Undertaking, Says Chief Engineer Parsons.

"From an engineering standpoint," said Chief Engineer Parsons, of the Board of Rapid Transit Commissioners, "Mr. Roosevelt's plan is entirely feasible, but as to its practicability—well, that is another story. I am as enthusiastic a wheelman as Mr. Roosevelt himself, and I would welcome such a structure as heartily as he, but I am not sufficiently sanguine to believe that such a pathway will become a reality; at least, not for a good many years."

"In the first place the opposition of property owners would be too strong to be quickly overcome, and in the second place I fail to see how it would give rapid transit to any considerable number of people. I do not say that it would not, but I certainly do not think it would.

"Again, I doubt very much if Mr. Roosevelt could make the distance between Fifty-ninth street and Wall street in fifteen minutes at a time when the pathway is crowded. I cast no aspersions on his skill as a cyclist, and I am duly impressed with the vigor of his splendid old age, but I am afraid that he would be too fatigued to transact much business after he had made the four miles and a half in fifteen minutes.

"As for engineering difficulties, there are none, practically. Engineering science has reached that stage where nothing, one might say, is too great for accomplishment. If elevated structures to carry trains can be successfully erected and operated, surely an elevated bicycle road can be built. One of the greatest difficulties would be to devise means of raising and lowering the bicycles. To carry up a wheel would be a good deal like bringing up a ton of coal from the cellar, and no cyclist would relish such a task.

SURE TO COME SOME DAY.

If Not Mr. Roosevelt's Plan, Some Other Public Pathway, Says President Coleman.

"Mr. Roosevelt's plans," said President R. L. Coleman, of the National Board of Trade of Cycle Manufacturers, to a Sunday Journal reporter, "open up a new field of usefulness for the bicycle, and while the plan may be deemed in some respects almost Utopian, I believe that some such plan will ultimately be adopted. It would not surprise me, in fact, if Mr. Roosevelt's plan, in many and perhaps all of its features, were put into execution sooner than most of us now expect. It is true, as he says, that no less than 200,000 bicycles are in use in this city to-day, and I think this estimate too low, if anything. As an evidence of how rapidly the bicycle business is growing I need only add that the sales from January 1 to April 1, 1896, are three times as great as those for the corresponding period of last year.

"The only possible objection likely to arise would be on the part of property owners to such a structure as Mr. Roosevelt proposes. It is true that such a structure would not hide the light anything like so great an extent as do the elevated roads, yet I presume that a howl would go up from merchants just the same. Another feature of the plan as outlined by Mr. Roosevelt, to which I demur, is the width of the pathway. I do not think that sixteen feet would be sufficient. I am of the opinion that it should be twice as wide, and that the riders going north should be separated from the riders going south, otherwise collisions might occur.

WOULD SOLVE RAPID TRANS

A. G. Spalding Would Favor the Broadway Route, but Property Owners Would Object.

A. G. Spalding said that while it sounded well, and he would welcome its consummation, yet he thought it would be many years before it could be put into operation. "No one can deny," Mr. Spalding said, "that Broadway would be the most convenient route, but I fear the objections on the part of property owners would be so numerous that Broadway could never be selected, and what is true of Broadway is probably true of the other thoroughfares leading downtown.

"One thing is certain, and that is that such a pathway would do much to solve the rapid transit problem, and would receive the most earnest and cordial support of cycle manufacturers and wheelmen alike. But I am afraid that to utilize Broadway for such a purpose is almost an impossibility. Seventh or Eighth avenue might, perhaps, be used, but I am inclined to the belief that the entire scheme is more a question of the remote future. I should think that a more feasible plan at the present time would be the setting aside of some street running north and south through the city, for the exclusive use of wheelmen and light vehicles. This is done in Chicago and ought to be done in New York.

"I do not favor the plan of a bicycle pathway above the elevated railroad tracks. The smoke from the engines would prove an abomination, and the average cyclist would rather walk a mile than climb to such a height as such a plan would necessitate.

"While I am by no means sanguine that Mr. Roosevelt's suggestion will be speedily adopted, I think that the rapid transit commissioners, bicycle manufacturers and cyclists in general ought to give it careful and intelligent consideration, and it is quite likely that many of the objections which now appear may be overcome."

IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

Mr. Roosevelt's Plan Should Have Serious Consideration, Says Secretary McKee.

"Mr. Roosevelt's suggestion is in the right direction," said Joseph McKee, the secretary of the National Board of Trade of Cycle Manufacturers. "As to its feasibility, time and the education of public sentiment to the recognition of the bicycle as the future motive force for man will probably have to work a change in the public point of view. Almost anything becomes feasible if enough people demand it. Any one who, forty years ago, would have suggested the present bridge structure over the East River, would have been called a dreamer. The bicycle has been winning friends and beating down prejudice for years, and it was only a few years ago that a city ordinance prohibited wheeling in Central Park and on the Riverside Drive.

"I believe some sort of bicycle roadway uptown and downtown will some day be build. I think, however, that the scope of Mr. Roosevelt's plan could be improved by enlarging the roadway so that pedestrians might use it. Then, again, it might be worth the experiment for the Manhattan Elevated Road to build a cycle path between the railroad tracks and charge a toll for its use. It would certainly yield a handsome income, especially if well lighted at night. The possibilities for health, with any sort of public highway for wheels, are so enormous that the scheme proposed by Mr. Roosevelt should receive the most serious consideration. Its rapid transit features would certainly commend themselves to thousands of New Yorkers, who already know how easy it is to annihilate distance on a bicycle."

"IT DOESN'T HURT AT ALL NOW, TO SPEAK OF."

THE BRAVEST WOMAN IN ALL NEW YORK.

She Smiled and Made No Outcry When Her Arm Was Torn from Her Body by Machinery.

At the Hospital She Was Ready to Submit to the Surgeons Without Taking Ether.

Certainly the pluckiest girl in New York is Mary Ann Farrell. Miss Mary lies in ward No. 11, Bellevue Hospital, a cripple for life. She has undergone ten days of the most tremendous agony, yet she has never once lost her cheerful smile. Her laugh rings out fresh and hearty, and she is the light and sunshine of all the poor, suffering sick about her.

As far as the records show, and the memories of physicians travel, there has never before been a human being like Mary Ann Farrell. A week ago last Tuesday she lost her arm in a steam wringer at the Gerard House in West Forty-fourth street. The newspapers at the time said that the hand and forearm had merely been crushed, rendering amputation necessary. As a matter of fact, the entire forearm and part of the upper arm were torn away by the wringer. When the machinery was stopped the mutilated arm was left sticking in the cogs.

She was the coolest person in the place after the accident, and gave directions as to what should be done for her welfare. When her companions began to shriek hysterically, Mary clamly asked them to keep their heads and to run for a doctor. Even an ugly scalp wound on top of her head did not stun her, and when the ambulance came she wore the same brave smile that she has now and that has always been hers. There was an ambulance from Roosevelt Hospital and another from the New York Hospital, but she would have neither of them.

"I want to go to Bellevue," she said.

"Why?" demanded the New York and Roosevelt surgeons.

"Because I know some of the doctors there. I used to be an attendant on Blackwell's Island, and some of the doctors who were there while I was are now at Bellevue."

The bones in the arm had been so badly mutilated that an amputation was necessary above the end of the lacerated stump. The doctors told her this almost as soon as she had been settled in her cot.

"All right, doctor," said the patient amiably, "go ahead. Cut it off."

They brought their knives and saws and all the rest of the cheerful paraphernalia and laid them out carefully and then offered Miss Mary ether.

"I don't want to take anything, doctor," this remarkable young woman protested.

"What?" demanded the astonished physicians in a chorus.

"I don't want any ether. I don't need it. I guess it wont hurt any more when you cut off what's left than it did when that wriggertore it off in the first place, and I would rather suffer the pain than take anything."

"You are crazy," declared the doctors, "to suggest such a thing. Why should we inflict any more pain on you than is necessary. You must take ether. It wont hurt you at all."

Despite her tremendous will power, Miss Mary is a very gentle and docily young person. Therefore, when the doctors insisted upon it she took the ether, but not enough to render her absolutely unconscious. When she felt that she had taken as much as she wanted to she said:

"That will do, doctor, "that's all I need."

They took her at her word and she sank into a sort of semi-doze, lasting perhaps ten minutes. During this time the operation had been performed, the stump of the arm bandaged up and ever since this wonderful girl has been improving and improving, until to-day she is about as well and healthy as she was before the accident.

She looks like De Maurier's heroine. Her features, though large, are fine and regular. Her lips are beautifully colored. Her teeth are as white as the spread that covers her bed. Her figure is above the average in height. Her remaining arm is full and round, and the flesh is white and clear and her hand is shapely.

"And now don't you feel dreadful to think that you are maimed for life?"

The idea seemed to rather amuse the young woman.

"No, I don't feel dreadful a bit. What's the use? What's to be gained by it? It's done, an dno amount of worrying will undo it. So I look on the bright side of it, and before so very long you will see me up and about again, very little the worse for wear. I'll get an artificial arm, and I daresay I'll manage to get through life having about as good a time as the average girl with two arms. I never did worry, and I don't mean to begin now."

"And the future, what are you going to do, going back to work?"

"Indeed, yes; I've got my old mother to look after as well as myself."

"Going to try laundry work again?"

"No, thank you; I've had enough of that. Mr. Gerard is going to give me a position in the office—a position for life he says—as a sort of a clerk. Then, too, I have got prospects." The smile broadened out at this "prospects of a fortune."

"How's that?"

"I am going to sue the man who owns the machinery in which I was injured for $50,000 damages. He had been frequently notified that it was out of order and needed repairs. He paid no attention to this, and my mangled arm is the result. Altogether, therefore, you see my future prospects are by no means very gloomy, and I don't think I shall fall a burden on the public.

"Did it hurt when the accident happened?"

"Well, I guess it did. It was the most terrible agony I ever endured, as you may well think. I never though it possible that anything could hurt me so. I thought I was being torn in two in the middle."

"Didn't you feel like fainting?"

"Well, I didn't want to. I simply gritted my teeth and wouldn't let myself go. My arm was carried into the machinery at the elbow, and almost before I realized what had happened I saw my hand torn from my body and sticking out of the machine. The pas as though a tremendous rock had been thrown upon the arm. It last. Oh, so long! but I tried to bear it as bravely as I could and saw no use in groaning, so I just smiles.