

AMERICAN BUILT STEEL STEAMER FOR THE RIVER MAGDALENA.

BY H. L. BRIDWELL.

We recently published an illustrated description of a light draught steel steamer built in England for the Government of the United States of Colombia, to ply on the River Magdalena. American mechanics have also been engaged in constructing light draught vessels for the Magdalena, and we herewith present a view of the last one built in this country, the Victoria, belonging to the Magdalena River Navigation Company. The Victoria was built at Pittsburg, Pa., by James Rees, Esq., of the Duquesne Engine Works, who also built the Francis Montoya for the same stream, and, like the English steamer, was shipped in pieces after being temporarily set up.

The Victoria differs materially from the boat of the Yarrows, which has practically no upper structure, and is shorn of cabins and other accessories, in order to attain extreme lightness of draught. The Rees steamer was intended for a regular freight and passenger traffic, to accommodate which she is provided with a full length cabin on the upper deck and an officers' cabin above on the hurricane deck. The upper works are complete with all the appointments and fixtures of a regular North American river vessel. The hull is 155 feet in length, 32½ feet beam, and 4½ feet depth hold, constructed of steel, in eight watertight compartments. The boiler, also of steel, is of the locomotive type, 18 feet long, 45 inches in diameter, and has forty-one 3½ inch tubes, furnishing steam at a working pressure of 150 lb. per square inch. The cylinders are 16 inches diameter, with 6 feet stroke, of the direct-acting high pressure type. The steamer has a capacity of 400 tons cargo, and yet draws but 22 inches with steam up, a splendid result for a vessel so complete in all particulars.

THE GECKO, OR WALL LIZARD.

Gecko is a name applied to a family of nocturnal lizards, numerous in species, found in all the warm regions of the globe. The name is said to be given them from the slight guttural cry which they make when pursuing their prey. In broad day they seem to be blinded by the rays of the sun, and repose half asleep, but when evening comes they regain all their agility.

Their appearance is quite repulsive; their bodies are flat, covered with a flabby skin, head large and flattened, a huge mouth armed with fine sharp teeth, their tongues short and fleshy, large eyes at the sides of the head, which are covered with transparent eyelids, the pupils narrow and vertical, like the cat and owl.

Considered as an impure animal by the Hebrews, the gecko is, in the extreme East, the object of great terror, and it is looked upon as impregnated with the most subtle poison. The ancient authors believed that the saliva of these animals was made use of to poison arrows. Bon-tius says that their bite is deadly, and another author relates that he saw at Cairo three ladies in great danger of death from having eaten some food upon which a gecko had stepped.

Although this animal is an object of repulsion and fear to the common people it appears to be absolutely inoffensive. M. Sauvage says, in *La Nature*, that he has often handled, without precaution, the different species of geckos, even the gecko of Egypt, so feared that it is named Abou-burz, or "father of leprosy," from the belief that it communicates that terrible disease to persons who partake of food with which it comes in contact.

Geckos are useful to man, as they feed upon insects, caterpillars, and flies, which they entrap by placing themselves in ambush. They are often found in considerable numbers within doors, concealing themselves upon the roofs or crawling about upon the walls and ceilings. Their toes have, for the

most part, a leaf-like expansion which enables them to walk even upon polished perpendicular surfaces, and they run noiselessly and with great rapidity in all directions. Their hooked claws, sometimes retractile like those of the cat, assist them to climb nimbly along the walls, where they hunt their prey from stone to stone, or by entering small crevices in the rocks into which their flat flexible bodies are able to penetrate.

Some geckos, as the platydactylus, have their toes widened the whole length, while the hemidactylus are expanded only at the base, and the phyllodactylus at the extremity of the toes.

These last, formerly supposed to inhabit only New Gui-

convex. The toes are all provided with claws, and are not united by a membrane. From the nape of the neck to the beginning of the tail the tubercles, like small nails, are arranged in longitudinal rows nearly approaching one another. The general color of the head is gray, sometimes reddish with brown marbling.

The Miocene Beds of Oregon and their Fossils.

A writer in the *Kansas City Review*, who has for some time been making collections of fossil remains for Professor Cope, says that although the miocene beds of the John Day River, Oregon, have been explored for nine or ten years, each year an equally rich harvest has been gathered. In none of his explorations in the fossil beds of the Northwest had he ever found such perfect specimens as those that he gathered in this region. One of his finds proved to be the type of a new genus, and was named by Professor Cope *Boocheirus humerosus*, the specific name being given in allusion to a huge projection on the humerus. The skeleton was that of a mammal as large as a rhinoceros, and with great pillar-like limbs.

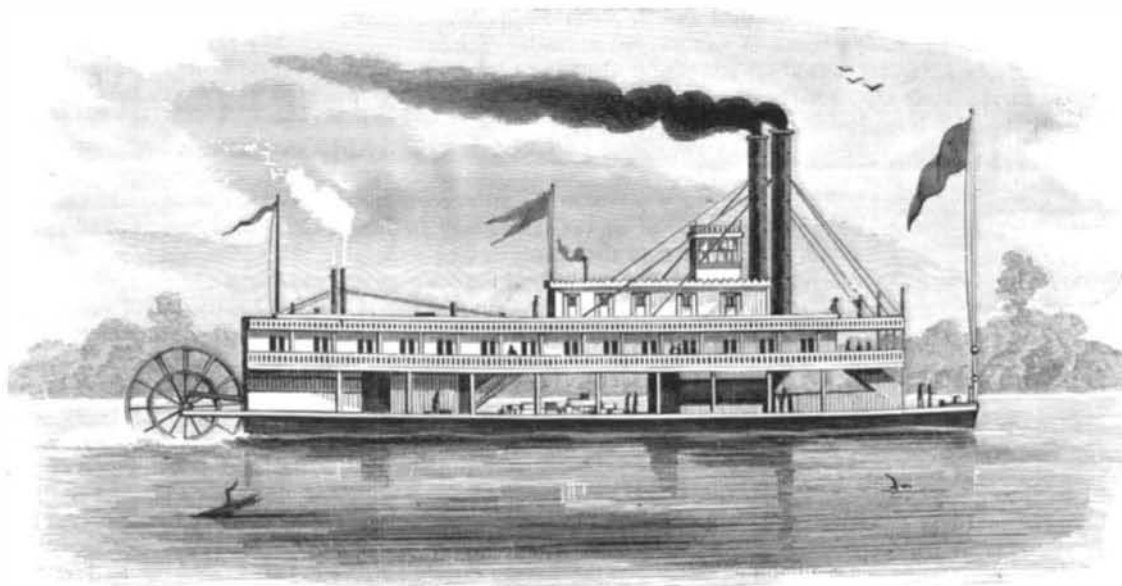
The most abundant fossil remains found have been those of the *Oreodon*, or extinct hog. Three or four species have been detected, some about the size of the Texan peccary, and others as large as the wild boar of Europe. These animals belong to tropical countries. The rhinoceros is quite common in these beds, three or more species being represented, one

of them having a horn on each side of the end of the nose. The *Hipparion* and other ancestors of the horse are also found here. One peculiar genus discovered was an ancestor of the South American llama, and has been named by Prof. Cope *Probothrium Sternbergii*. Among the carnivora over ten species of dogs and tigers have been discovered. One large dog had terrible fangs, longer than those of a tiger, and which were sharply serrate-edged like the teeth of a shark. Another peculiar species had a shoulder on the lower canine, against which the point of the upper struck. This large number of carnivorous animals shows that herbivora were also abundant; and that such was the case has been proved, too, by the abundance of the remains of the latter that has been found. Of the rodents, a great number of species have been discovered, ranging from the size of a mouse to that of a beaver. Hard-shelled turtles were the only reptiles obtained; and these varied in size from six inches to two feet in diameter. One of the great difficulties in the way of working these beds lies in the dazzling color of the surface, which soon causes the eye to tire, and gives the explorer a sensation like that of snow-blindness. Hence, five hours' constant search has to be counted a good day's work.

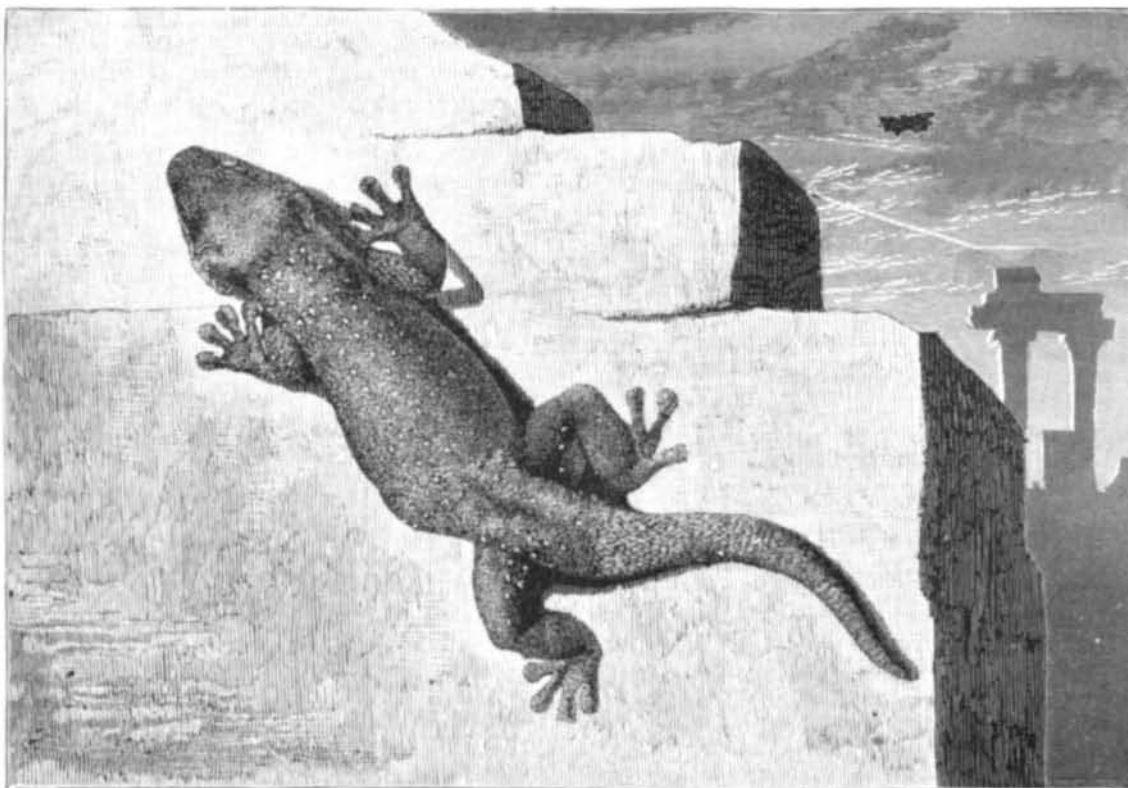
The miocene beds of Oregon extend over the greater part of the eastern part of the State. Thus far only the John Day and Crooked River have been explored. Rich harvests are in store for the future explorer. All the new genera and species found here are to be described and figured by Prof. Cope in one of the government publications.

The Composition of Serpents' Venom.

What a wonderful thing the venom of a serpent is! Chemical analysis fails to detect anything in it to account for its action. Water, a little albumen, some mineral salts, and traces of mucus, epithelial cells, etc., lumped together as "extractive." Nothing more—nothing specific about it, at all. Tasteless, colorless, and inodorous, it may be rubbed on the sound skin, or applied to the eye, or taken into the mouth without any result whatever. The bites of different kinds of snakes produce different effects; some act as a depressant to the vascular system, some as a powerful narcotic, some cause inflammation of the spine, while others seem to give rise to disorganization of the structural constituents of the blood. All are attended more or less with



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THE GECKO OR WALL LIZARD.

body; the skin which envelops it is transversely folded. The upper part of the skull is covered with small convex plates, the oval tubercles are strongly defined and are surrounded by other smaller tubercles, and with fine granulated scales, protecting the back. The upper part of the tail is provided with spines.

The geographical distribution of the hemidactylus is the same as that of the species just described. The head is short, the nose very blunt, the surface of the skull slightly