

The Public

Before Bolivar's first concession for a Panama canal, the Central American republic, in 1825, invited the United States government to construct a canal across Nicaragua. Henry Clay, then secretary of state, accepted; and a company was formed under a charter from congress, with Dewitt Clinton, father of the Erie canal, at its head. Surveys were made, but failing to raise satisfactory capital the company dissolved. The project was revived in different forms, but without promise until after the ratification of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty between the United States and England.

England, upon establishing a protectorate over the Mosquito Indians along the north coast of Nicaragua, had taken possession of San Juan del Norte, now Greytown, the natural eastern terminus of any Nicaraguan canal that might be built; and the United States protested. It was in adjustment of this grievance that on the 19th of April, 1850, the Clayton-Bulwer treaty was made. That treaty provided that neither country should obtain control over or special commercial advantages in any ship canal between the two oceans. Its bearing at present will be seen when it is understood that the canal bill just passed by the senate assumes to place the canal under the exclusive control of the United States. The right to do this has for several years been claimed by the United States, and England has always heretofore diplomatically resisted the claim; but there appears to be a manifest disposition on her part now to agree with the United States in regarding the Clayton-Bulwer treaty as in this respect obsolete.

Several Nicaragua canal projects were set on foot after the making of this treaty; but no work was actually done until 1889. Work was then begun by the Maritime Canal Company of Nicaragua, under a concession from Nicaragua, ratified in 1887, upon the basis of which the United States congress, in 1889, had chartered the company. It is this charter that the bill just passed by the senate proposes to amend. Since 1893 work on the Maritime company's canal has been suspended.

The senate bill for amending the Maritime company's charter fixes the capital of the company at \$100,000,000. It then requires the company

to call in and cancel its stock, bonds, etc., and discharge all its liabilities and contracts, except stock reserved for the republics of Nicaragua and Costa Rica; whereupon the United States is to buy \$92,500,000 of the \$100,000,000 of stock. All the officers of the company, except such as represent Nicaragua and Costa Rica, are then to resign, and the company is to be reorganized with 11 directors, 1 for Nicaragua, 1 for Costa Rica, and 9 for the United States—the latter to be appointed by the president and confirmed by the senate. The bill thus puts the Nicaragua canal project not only under the control of the United States, but except as to \$7,500,000 of the stock, virtually within its ownership. The reorganized company is authorized by the bill to contract with responsible American citizens for the completion and equipment of the canal within six years at a cost not to exceed \$115,000,000, which amount is appropriated for the purpose. To secure this expenditure the government is to have upon all the property of the company a lien, which it may foreclose without judicial proceedings, in case of default in payment. With reference to the neutrality of the canal, the bill guarantees—

its innocent use by all maritime nations, on equal terms as to tolls and all the privileges of navigation.

But as the canal is a—

necessary connection between the eastern and western coast lines of the United States, the right to protect the same against all interruptions, and at all times, is reserved and excepted out of this declaration of the neutrality of said canal and its free use by other nations.

Topographically, the Nicaragua canal project has differed from that for Panama, in that the Panama project has heretofore contemplated a sea level canal—one without locks—while the Nicaragua project contemplates crossing the mountain by means of locks. A cut through a ridge 284 feet high was therefore necessary in the former project. The latter would utilize the San Juan river from Greytown on the Atlantic to Lake Nicaragua on the table land summit of the mountain, and then the lake to its western shore, whence it would descend to the Pacific at Brito. The elevation would be slightly more than 100 feet, and the whole distance about 180 miles. By far the greater part of the distance

would be along the river and across the lake.

New opposition to the Nicaragua canal bill just passed by the senate has sprung up. A syndicate in which William R. Grace of New York and Edward F. Cragin of Chicago are principals—known as the Grace-Cragin-Eyre syndicate—procured a concession last autumn from Nicaragua, to take effect upon the expiration of the Maritime company's concession. This expiration will occur, it is claimed by the syndicate, on the 9th of next October; and though by the terms of the grant the concession will be then renewable, the syndicate maintains that its renewability depends upon steady progress having been made in the work, a condition which has not been complied with by the Maritime company, no work having been done for six years or more. This syndicate aims to make the canal the property of private capitalists, whereas the senate bill passed on the 21st would to all intents and purposes make it government property.

Following the passage of the Nicaragua canal bill by the senate, the Paris treaty of peace receives more constant attention. Friends of the treaty claim a full two-thirds of the senate as in favor of ratification without amendment. On the 25th it was unanimously agreed in executive session to vote on the treaty and all amendments on Monday, February 6, at three o'clock in the afternoon. Meanwhile, senatorial speeches are being made from day to day on the fundamental principles of American government set forth especially in the declaration of independence, as bearing upon our relations to the Philippines.

News from the Philippines is scanty and unreliable, owing to the censorship which the American war department has established. Reports from Washington indicate that considerable alarm is felt by the administration over the situation at Manila and Iloilo, but reliable particulars are not forthcoming. It is said, however, on the authority of Secretary Alger, that Gen. Miller has effected a landing on Guimaras island, which is about 10 miles distant to the southeast from the Island of Panay, on which Iloilo is situated. But no attempt to land at Iloilo is to be made. The Filipino junta at Hong-Kong issued a statement on the 24th in which they com-

plained of "the purchase by the American authorities of steam launches for river work in the Philippine islands" as "high-handed, unnecessary and vexatious," and spoke of American "domiciliary visits" throughout Manila as exasperating. The dispatch of reinforcements from the United States is described in the statement as "incompatible with peace," and the appointment of a United States commission is referred to as a ruse to gain time. The same statement announces that the Filipino congress has unanimously voted against American annexation. Through other sources it is reported that Gen. Otis has been arresting Filipinos, a report which has disturbed the Filipino junta at London, lest the natives may be thereby irritated to the point of making hostile attacks; and the London junta cabled to Manila on the 24th, urging the Filipinos "not to start hostilities if there is the remotest possibility of averting trouble."

The United States commission, referred to in the Filipino statement, quoted above, as a ruse to gain time, consists of five members appointed by President McKinley to act as an advisory board. They are to live in the Philippines and advise him as to each new step in the American occupation. The members are Admiral Dewey; Gen. Otis; Charles Denby, formerly minister to China; President Schurman, of Cornell university; and Prof. Worcester, of Michigan university. Messrs. Schurman, Worcester and Denby had a conference with the president on the 19th, and on the 20th received their commissions, Schurman being designated president of the commission.

While President McKinley's commission was preparing to leave for the Philippines, Aguinaldo's commission from the Philippines arrived in Washington. It consists of Jose Lazada, Marti Burgos, and Juan Luna. They say they have established a free and independent government, which is recognized throughout the island, except in Manila, where the Americans are in power; that they have a postal and telegraph system; that they issue postage stamps, coin money, collect taxes, and in other ways perform the functions of government. This commission brought with it Agoncillo's credentials as envoy from the Philippine republic; and on the 24th Agoncillo delivered an official communica-

tion at the state department at Washington, calling for official recognition, and asking for assurances regarding the warlike attitude of the United States toward the republic he represents. His express request in this connection is for a disclaimer of any intention to attack the liberties and independence of the Filipinos. Agoncillo's American legal adviser is Jackson N. Ralston.

Among the American protests of the week against an aggressive policy in the Philippines, one is put forth by the directors of the American Peace society, and another by a mass meeting at Cooper Union, New York. The mass meeting was addressed by James B. Eustis, formerly ambassador to France; by Samuel Gompers, president of the Federation of Labor; and by Bourke Cockran. Letters were read from Grover Cleveland, William J. Bryan and Bishop Potter; and the resolutions declared unalterable opposition "to the abandonment by this republic of the American ideal of national growth in favor of the European ideal of colonial conquest."

From Samoa nothing further has been heard of the outbreak over the election of a new king, which we reported last week. But it is understood that the government at Washington is in communication with the German government relative to the reported assumption of authority by the German representatives in Samoa.

In American domestic affairs, senatorial elections claim first place. Ex-Gov. Charles A. Culberson, democrat, has been elected by the Texas legislature to succeed Roger Q. Mills; Porter J. McCumber, by the legislature of North Dakota to succeed William N. Roach; and John Kean, republican, by the legislature of New Jersey, to succeed James Smith, Jr. Clarence D. Clark, republican, has been reelected by the legislature of Wyoming, and William M. Stewart, silver republican, by the legislature of Nevada. There are deadlocks in the legislatures of Delaware, Washington, Montana, Nebraska, Utah, California, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. In Pennsylvania the deadlock is due to the determination of a large number of republican members to defeat Senator Quay's reelection.

The governor of West Virginia has at last recognized the organization of the lower house, and though the sen-

ate continued to refuse for a time, the two bodies came together in joint session on the 25th when Nathan B. Scott, republican, was declared elected by a majority of 1. The vote stood, for Scott 48, for McGraw, democrat, 46, and for Goff, 1. A contest will be made on the ground that two of the state senators who voted for Scott were legally disqualified because they hold lucrative positions in the federal army.

The court-martial for the trial of Gen. Eagan, for having used the language regarding Gen. Miles, which we reported last week, began its sittings at Washington on the 25th. The formal charges are conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, and conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline. Gen. Eagan claims immunity under the promise of the president that witnesses before the investigating committee should not be held responsible by court-martial for their testimony.

The industrial event of the week is the conclusion of the joint convention of coal operators and coal miners, at Allegheny, Pa. As reported last week, the miners had determined to demand an advance in wages and the operators to insist upon a reduction; and over this and other issues a great coal strike was feared. But before the joint convention adjourned, on the 24th, an agreement was reached and the strike averted. Wages were neither raised nor reduced.

Turning from affairs that immediately concern the United States, to those of European concern, we find that England has taken another long stride in the direction of permanent occupation of Egypt. A treaty between Great Britain and the khedive of Egypt was made public on the 19th, in which joint control of the Soudan is agreed upon. The Soudan is described to mean—

all the territories south of the 22d parallel of latitude, which have never been evacuated by the Egyptian troops since 1882, or which, having been administered by the khedive's government prior to the late rebellion were temporarily lost to Egypt and have been reconquered by the British and Egyptian governments acting in concert, or which may hereafter be reconquered by the two governments acting in concert.

Throughout this territory the British and Egyptian flags are to be used together, on both land and water, ex-