

Nor is it any answer to say that the alien peoples are incapable of self-government. No one is capable of self-government, in the eyes of those who wish to govern him. What is our warrant for declaring a people incapable of self-government? Any people are far better able to govern themselves than are any other people to govern them. Super-imposed government may exterminate a people; it cannot elevate them.

One of the greatest as well as most delightful of American writers, a man who in the guise of a humorist has given us much sound philosophy—we refer to Mark Twain—satirizes the assumption of superior ability to govern, in "A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur," and then moralizes in this admirable way:

There is a phrase which has grown so common in the world's mouth that it has come to seem to have sense and meaning—the sense and meaning implied when it is used; that is the phrase which refers to this or that or the other nation as possibly being "capable of self-government;" and the implied sense of it is, that there has been a nation somewhere, sometime or other, which wasn't capable of it—wasn't as able to govern itself as some self-appointed specialists were or would be to govern it. The masterminds of all nations, in all ages, have sprung in affluent multitude from the mass of the nation, and from the mass of the nation only—not from its privileged classes; and so, no matter what the nation's intellectual grade was, whether high or low, the bulk of its ability was in the long ranks of its nameless and its poor, and so it never saw the day that it had not the material in abundance whereby to govern itself. Which is to assert an always self-proven fact: that even the best governed and most free and most enlightened monarchy is still behind the best condition attainable by its people; and that the same is true of kindred governments of lower grades, all the way down to the lowest.

Neither is it an answer to the objection to American imperial colonization to cite American precedents in its favor. As we have already said, they prove nothing at the worst but that we have been at times indifferent to our ideals. Their best use is to show, by those we have set aside, how far we have advanced toward our ideals.

It is not now with us a question of indifferently allowing old national customs or laws to prevail against our

national ideals, nor even of clinging stubbornly to those questions. We are proceeding with knowledge, with deliberation, with intention, to set up a new policy which is confessedly hostile; and in doing so we seek justification not in an attempt to elevate the policy to the level of the ideals, but in an attempt to pull down the ideals to the level of the policy.

It is true that heretofore we have permitted government by consent of only some of the governed, while asserting the broad principle of government by consent of all the governed. But we are now about to amend the principle itself, and establish government by consent of some of the governed as the American ideal. This is also the Russian ideal.

We cannot make that decision under existing circumstances without going backward in the path of democracy. With a nation, as with an individual, it were better that it have no ideals than that having them it should deliberately cast them aside. Let us in this crisis but choose to substitute the Russian ideal of government for the American, and we shall not be long in descending to the Russian mode. It is not only the liberties of our "subjects" that are at stake; the liberties of our citizens also hang in the balance.

But if we decide for our ideals instead of against them, if at this crisis we determine to be true to the principle of self-government, we may then be grateful for the temptation which will have made it possible for us to become stronger in our love of liberty and to draw closer to our national ideals. For we may be sure that even in so far as by disregarding the liberties of others we imperil our own, we shall by recognizing theirs make ours more secure and perfect.

## NEWS

Most important among the events of the week was the passage by the United States senate, on the 21st, of the Morgan bill for the construction of the Nicaragua canal. This bill is in the form of an amendment to the act of congress approved February 20, 1889, entitled "An Act to incorporate the Maritime Canal Company

of Nicaragua;" and it provides for the immediate construction of a ship canal across Nicaragua.

The passage of the Nicaragua canal bill by the senate appears to be the beginning of the end of a series of events which connects the problems of the present with those of the time of Columbus. It is matter of school-boy knowledge that when Columbus discovered the American continent he was in search of a passage westward to Asia; and that navigators who succeeded him sought diligently for a natural waterway through the continent. When it had been demonstrated that there was none, propositions were made to pierce the isthmus of Panama with a canal. These propositions are traced back as far as 1513. In 1550 four different routes were suggested, one being across the Isthmus of Panama and another across Nicaragua. The second was recommended as most practicable. An actual attempt was made late in the seventeenth century by an English company to cut through the Isthmus of Panama, but Spain interfered; and for one cause or another all the plans proposed prior to the present century were dropped.

The subject was revived in 1827 by Simon Bolivar, president of New Granada, now the United States of Colombia; and in 1838 New Granada gave a concession to a French company to cut a canal through the Isthmus of Panama. That company did nothing more than to make a survey; but at the time of the gold excitement in California a company under the leadership of Gen. Aspinwall built a railroad across the isthmus along the line of a canal survey that had been made under the auspices of President Bolivar. In the early '80s the United States of Colombia granted another concession for a canal across the isthmus—this time to a French company under the management of Ferdinand de Lesseps, the father of the Suez canal. Work was begun, but was soon suspended. It was out of this enterprise that the French Panama scandals grew. The United States had opposed this enterprise as calculated to infringe upon the Monroe doctrine by giving control of the waterway to France, and that had caused the French government to withdraw its aid. The company was reorganized, however, and it now claims to own valuable concessions and property, with a half-finished canal.

# 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-