PRESIDENT ON PANAMA

Sends Special Message to Congress Giving Results of His Observations in Canal Zone--Replies to Critics and Makes Recommendations.

The following is the text of President Roosevelt's special message to congress on the subject of the Panama canal:

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

In the month of November I visited the Isthmus of Panama, going over the Canal Zone with considerable care; and also visited the cities of Panama and Colon, which are not in the zone or under the United States flag, but as to which the United States government, through its agents, exercises control for certain sanitary purposes. I chose the month of November for my visit partly because it is the rainest month of the year, the month in which the work goes forward at the greatest disadvantage, and one of the two months which the medical department of the French Canal company found most unhealthy.

Following the introduction to the message the president gives a resume of his programme during the days he was on the isthmus, and then says:

At the outset I wish to pay tribute to the amount of work done by the French Canal company under very difficult circumstances. Many of the buildings they put up were excellent and are still in use, though, naturally, the houses are now getting out of repair and are being used as dwellings only until other houses can be built, and much of the work they did in the Culebra cut, and some of the work they did in digging has been of direct and real benefit. This country has never made a better investment than the $40,000,000 which it paid to the French company for work and betterments, including especially the Panama railroad.

An inspection on the ground at the height of the rainy season served to convince me of the wisdom of congress in refusing to adopt either a high-level or a sea-level canal. There seems to be a universal agreement among all people competent to judge that the Panama route, the one actually chosen, is much superior to both the Nicaragua and Darien routes.

Preliminary Work Being Done.

The wisdom of the canal management has been shown in nothing more clearly than in the way in which the foundations of the work have been laid. To have yielded to the natural impatience of ill-informed outsiders and begun all kinds of experiments in work prior to a thorough sanitation of the isthmus, and to a fairly satisfactory working out of the problem of getting and keeping a sufficient labor supply, would have been disastrous. The various preliminary measures had to be taken first; and these could not be taken so as to allow us to begin the real work of construction prior to January 1 of the present year. It then became necessary to have the type of the canal decided, and the only delay has been the necessary delay until the 29th day of June, the date when the congress definitely and wisely settled that we should have an 85-foot level canal. Immediately after that the work began in hard earnest and has been continued with increasing vigor ever since; and it will continue so to progress in the future. When the contracts are let the conditions will be such as to insure a constantly increasing amount of performance.

Successful Sanitation.

The first great problem to be solved upon the solution of which the success of the rest of the work depended, was the problem of sanitation. This was from the outset under the direction of Dr. W. C. Gorgas, who is to be made a full member of the commission. It must be remembered that his work was not mere sanitation as the term is understood in our ordinary municipal work. Throughout the zone and in the two cities of Panama and Colon, in addition to the sanitation work proper, he has had to do all the work that the Marine hospital service does as regards the nation, that the health department officers do in the various states and cities, and that Col. Waring did in New York when he cleaned its streets. The results have been astounding. The isthmus had been a byword for deadly unhealthfulness. Now, after two years of our occupation the conditions as regards sickness and the death rate compare favorably with reasonably healthy localities in the United States. Especial care has been devoted to minimizing the risk due to the presence of those species of mosquitoes which have been found to propagate malarial and yellow fevers. In all the settlements, the little temporary towns or cities composed of the white and black employes, which grow up here and there in the tropic jungle as the needs of the work dictate, the utmost care is exercised to keep the conditions healthy. Everywhere are to be seen the drainage ditches which in removing the water have removed the breeding places of the mosquitoes, while the whole jungle is cut away for a considerable space around the habitations, thus destroying the places in which the mosquitoes take shelter. These drainage ditches and clearings are in evidence in every settlement, and, together with the invariable presence of mosquito screens around the plazzas, and of mosquito doors to the houses, not to speak of the careful fumigation that has gone on in all infected houses, doubtless explain the extraordinary absence of mosquitoes. As a matter of fact, but a single mosquito, and this not of the dangerous species, was seen by any member of our party during my three days on the isthmus. Equal care is taken by the inspectors of the health department to secure cleanliness in the houses and proper hygienic conditions of every kind. I inspected between 20 and 30 water-closets, both those used by the white employes and those used by the colored laborers. In almost every case I found the conditions perfect. In but one case did I find them really bad. In this case, affecting a settlement of unmarried white employes, I found them very bad indeed, but the buildings were all inherited from the French company and were being used temporarily while other buildings were in the course of construction; and right near the defective water closet a new and excellent closet with a good sewer pipe was in process of construction and nearly finished. Nevertheless this did not excuse the fact that the bad condition had been allowed to prevail. Temporary accommodations, even if only such as soldiers use when camped in the field, should have been provided. Orders to this effect were issued. I append the report of Dr. Gorgas on the incident. I was struck, however, by the fact that in this instance, as in almost every other where a complaint was made which proved to have any justification whatever, it appeared that steps had already been taken to remedy the evil complained of, and that the trouble was mainly due to the extreme difficulty, and often impossibility, of providing in every place for the constant increase in the numbers of employes. Generally the provision is made in advance, but it is not possible that this should always be the case; when it is not there ensues a period of time during which the conditions are unsatisfactory, until a remedy can be provided; but I never found a case where the remedy was not being provided as speedily as possible.

Improvements in Cities.

The sanitation work in the cities of Panama and Colon has been just as important as in the zone itself, and in many respects much more difficult, because it was necessary to deal with the already existing population, which naturally had scant sympathy with revolutionary changes, the value of which they were for a long time not able to perceive. In Colon the population consists largely of colored laborers who, having come over from the West Indies to work on the canal, abandon the work and either take to the brush or lie idle in Colon itself; thus peopling Colon with the least desirable among the imported laborers, for the good and steady men of course continue at the work. Yet astonishing progress has been made in both cities. In Panama 90 per cent of the streets that are to be paved at all are already paved with an excellent brick pavement laid in heavy concrete, a few of the streets being still in process of paving. The sewer and water services in the city are of the most modern hygienic type, some of the service having just been completed.

In Colon the conditions are peculiar, and it is as regards Colon that most of the very bitter complaint has been made. Colon is built on a low coral island, covered at more or less shallow depths with vegetable accumulations or mold, which affords sustenance and strength to many varieties of low-lying tropical plants. One-half of the surface of the island is covered with water at high tide, the average height of the land being 1½ feet above low tide. The slight undulations furnish shallow, natural reservoirs or fresh-water breeding places for every variety of mosquito, and the ground tends to be lowest in the middle. When the town was originally built no attempt was made to fill the low ground, either in the streets or on the building sites, so that the entire surface was practically a quagmire; when the quagmire became impassable certain of the streets were crudely improved by filling especially bad mud holes with soft rock or other material. In September, 1905, a systematic effort was begun to formulate a general plan for the proper sanitation of the city; in February last temporary relief measures were taken, while in July the prosecution of the work was begun in good earnest. The results are already visible in the sewering, draining, guttering and paving of the streets. Some four months will be required before the work of sewerage and street improvement will be completed, but the progress already made is very marked. Ditches have been dug through the town, connecting the salt water on both sides, and into these the ponds, which have served as breeding places for the mosquitoes, are drained. These ditches have answered their purpose, for they are probably the chief cause of the astonishing diminution of mosquitoes. More ditches of the kind are being constructed.

Colon Water Supply.

It was not practicable, with the force at the commission's disposal, and in view of the need that the force should be used in the larger town of Panama, to begin this work before early last winter. Water mains were then laid in the town and water was furnished to the people early in March from a temporary reservoir. This reservoir proved to be of insufficient capacity before the end of the dry season and the shortage was made up by hauling water over the Panama railroad, so that there was at all times an ample supply of the very best water. Since that time the new reservoir back of Mount Hope has been practically completed. I visited this reservoir. It is a lake over a mile long and half a mile broad. It now carries some 500,000,000 gallons of first-class water. I forward herewith a photograph of this lake, together with certain other photographs of what I saw while I was on the isthmus. Nothing but a cataclysm will hereafter render it necessary in the dry season to haul water for the use of Colon and Cristobal.

Colon Pavements.

I rode through the streets of Colon, seeing them at the height of the rainy season, after two days of almost unexampled downpour, when they were at their very worst. Taken as a whole they were undoubtedly very bad; as bad as Pennsylvania avenue in Washington before Grant's administration. Front street is already in thoroughly satisfactory shape, however. Some of the side streets are also in good condition, in others the change in the streets is rapidly going on. Through three-fourths of the town it is now possible to walk, even during the period of tremendous rain, in low shoes without wetting one's feet, owing to the rapidity with which the surface water is carried away in the ditches. In the remaining one-fourth of the streets the mud is very deep—about as deep as in the ordinary street of a low-lying prairie river town of the same size in the United States during early spring. All men to whom I spoke were a unit in saying that the conditions of the Colon streets were 100 per cent better than a year ago. The most superficial examination of the town shows the progress that has been made and is being made in macadamizing the streets. Complaint was made to me by an entirely reputable man as to the character of some of the material used for repairing certain streets. On investigation the complaint proved well founded, but it also appeared that the use of the material in question had been abandoned, the commission after having tried it in one or two streets finding it not appropriate.

The result of the investigation of this honest complaint was typical of what occurred when I investigated most of the other honest complaints made to me. That is, where the complaints were not made wantonly or maliciously, they almost always proved due to failure to appreciate the fact that time was necessary in the creation and completion of this titanic work in a tropic wilderness. It is impossible to avoid some mistakes in building a giant canal through jungle-covered mountains and swamps, while at the same time sanitating tropic cities, and providing for the feeding and general care of from 20,000 to 30,000 workers. The complaints brought to me, either of insufficient provision in caring for some of the laborers, or of failure to finish the pavements of Colon, or of failure to supply water, or of failure to build wooden sidewalks for the use of the laborers in the rainy season, on investigation proved, almost without exception, to be due merely to the utter inability of the commission to do everything at once.

Unjust Criticism.

Care and forethought have been exercised by the commission, and nothing has reflected more credit upon them than their refusal either to go ahead too fast or to be deterred by the fear of criticism from not going ahead fast enough. It is curious to note the fact that many of the most severe critics of the commission criticise them for precisely opposite reasons, some complaining bitterly that the work is not in a more advanced condition, while the others complain that it has been rushed with such haste that there has been insufficient preparation for the hygiene and comfort of the employes. As a matter of fact neither criticism is just. It would have been impossible to go quicker than the commission has gone, for such quickness would have meant insufficient preparation. On the other hand, to refuse to do anything until every possible future contingency had been met would have caused wholly unwarranted delay. The right course to follow was exactly the course which has been followed. Every reasonable preparation was made in advance, the hygienic conditions in especial being made as nearly perfect as possible; while on the other hand there has been no timid refusal to push forward the work because of inability to anticipate every possible emergency, for, of course, many defects can only be shown by the working of the system in actual practice.

In addition to attending to the health of the employes, it is of course necessary to provide for policing the zone. This is done by a police force which at present numbers over 200 men, under Capt. Shanton. About one-fifth of the men are white and the others black. In different places I questioned some 20 or 30 of these men, taking them at random. They were a fine set, physically and in discipline. With one exception all the white men I questioned had served in the American army, usually in the Philippines, and belonged to the best type of American soldier. Without exception the black policemen whom I questioned had served either in the British army or in the Jamaica or Barbados police. They were evidently contented, and were doing their work well. Where possible the policemen are used to control people of their own color, but in any emergency no hesitation is felt in using them indiscriminately.

Inasmuch as so many both of the white and colored employes have brought their families with them, schools have been established, the school service being under Mr. O'Connor. For the white pupils white American teachers are employed; for the colored pupils there are also some white American teachers, one Spanish teacher, and one colored American teacher, most of them being colored teachers from Jamaica, Barbados and St. Lucia. The schoolrooms were good, and it was a pleasant thing to see the pride that the teachers were taking in their work and their pupils.

Care of Employes.

Next in importance to the problem of sanitation, and indeed now of equal importance, is the problem of securing and caring for the mechanics, laborers and other employes who actually do the work on the canal and the railroad. This great task has been under the control of Mr. Jackson Smith, and on the whole has been well done. At present there are some 6,000 white employes and some 19,000 colored employes on the isthmus. I went over the different places where the different kinds of employes were working! I think I saw representatives of every type both at their work and in their homes; and I conversed with probably a couple of hundred of them all told, choosing them at random from every class and including those who came especially to present certain grievances olmost invariably expressed far greater content and satisfaction with the conditions than did those who called to make complaint.

Nearly 5,000 of the white employes had come from the United States. No man can see these young, vigorous men energetically doing their duty without a thrill of pride in them as Americans. They represent on the average a high class. Doubtless to congress the wages paid them will seem high, but as a matter of fact the only general complaint which I found had any real basis among the complaints made to me upon the isthmus was that, owing to the peculiar surroundings, the cost of living, and the distance from home, the wages were really not as high as they should be. In fact, almost every man I spoke to felt that he ought to be receiving more money—a view, however, which the average man who stays at home in the United States probably likewise holds as regards himself. I append figures of the wages paid, so that the congress can judge the matter for itself. Later I shall confer on the subject with certain representative labor men here in the United States, as well as going over with Mr. Stevens, the comparative wages paid on the zone and at home; and I may then communicate my findings to the canal committees of the two houses.

Chinese and Other Labor.

Of the 19,000 or 20,000 day laborers employed on the canal a few hundred are Spaniards. These do excellent work. Their foreman told me that they did twice as well as the West Indian laborers. They keep healthy and no difficulty is experienced with them in any way. Some Italian laborers are also employed in connection with the drilling. As might be expected, with labor as high priced as at present in the United States, it has not so far proved practicable to get any ordinary laborers from the United States. The American wage-workers on the isthmus are the highly paid skilled mechanics of the types mentioned previously. A steady effort is being made to secure Italians, and especially to procure more Spaniards, because of the very satisfactory results that have come from their employment and their numbers will be increased as far as possible. It has not proved possible, however, to get them in anything like the numbers needed for the work, and from present appearances we shall in the main have to rely, for the ordinary unskilled work, partly upon colored laborers from the West Indies, partly upon Chinese labor. It certainly ought to be unnecessary to point out that the American workingman in the United States has no concern whatever in the question as to whether the rough work on the isthmus, which is performed by aliens in any event, is done by aliens from one country with a black skin or by aliens from another country with a yellow skin. Our business is to dig the canal as efficiently and as quickly as possible; provided always that nothing is done that is inhumane to any laborers, and nothing that interferes with the wages of or lowers the standard of living of our own workmen. Having in view this principle, I have arranged to try several thousand Chinese laborers. This is desirable both because we must try to find out what laborers are most efficient, and, furthermore, because we should not leave ourselves at the mercy of any one type of foreign labor. At present the great bulk of the unskilled labor on the isthmus is done by West India negroes, chiefly from Jamaica, Barbados, and the other English possessions. One of the governors of the lands in question has shown an unfriedly disposition to our work and has thrown obstacles in the way of our getting the labor needed; and it is highly undesirable to give any outsiders the impression, however ill founded, that they are indispensable and can dictate terms to us.

The West India laborers are fairly, but only fairly, satisfactory. Some of the men do very well indeed; the better class, who are to be found as foremen, as skilled mechanics, as policemen, are good men; and many of the ordinary day laborers are also good.

Work of Construction.

But thousands of those who are brought over under contract (at our expense) go off into the jungle to live, or loaf around Colon, or work so badly after the first three or four days as to cause a serious diminution of the amount of labor performed on Friday and Saturday of each week. I questioned many of these Jamaica laborers as to the conditions of their work and what, if any changes, they wished. I received many complaints from them, but as regards most of these complaints they themselves contradicted one another. In all cases where the complaint was as to their treatment by any individual it proved on examination that this individual was himself a West India man of color, either a policeman, a storekeeper, or an assistant storekeeper. Doubtless there must be many complaints against Americans; but those to whom I spoke did not happen to make any such complaint to me.

The work is now going on with a vigor and efficiency pleasant to witness. The three big problems of the canal are the La Boca dams, the Gatun dam, and the Culebra cut. The Culebra cut must be made, anyhow; but of course changes as to the dams, or at least as to the locks adjacent to the dams, may still occur. The La Boca dams offer no particular problem, the bottom material being so good that there is a practical certainty, not merely as to what can be achieved, but as to the time of achievement. The Gatun dam offers the most serious problem which we have to solve; and yet the ablest men on the isthmus believe that this problem is certain of solution along the lines proposed; although, of course, it necessitates great toil, energy, and intelligence, and although equally, of course, there will be some little risk in connection with the work. The risk arises from the fact that some of the material near the bottom is not so good as could be desired. If the huge earth dam now contemplated is thrown across from one foothill to the other we will have what is practically a low, broad, mountain ridge behind which will rise the inland lake. This artificial mountain will probably show less seepage, that is, will have greater restraining capacity than the average natural mountain range. The exact locality of the locks at this dam—as at the other dams—is now being determined. In April next Secretary Taft, with three of the ablest engineers of the country—Messrs. Noble, Stearns and Ripley—will visit the isthmus, and the three engineers will make the final and conclusive examinations as to the exact site for each lock. Meanwhile the work is going ahead without a break.

The Culebra cut does not offer such great risks; that is, the damage liable to occur from occasional land slips will not represent what may be called major disasters. The work will merely call for intelligence, perseverance, and executive capacity. It is, however, the work upon which most labor will have to be spent. The dams will be composed of the earth taken out of the cut and very possibly the building of the locks and dams will take even longer than the cutting in Culebra itself.

In Culebra Cut.

The main work is now being done in the Culebra cut. It was striking and impressive to see the huge steam shovels in full play, the dumping trains carrying away the rock and earth they dislodged. The implements of French excavating machinery, which often stand a little way from the line of work, though of excellent construction, look like the veriest toys when compared with these new steam shovels, just as the French dumping cars seem like toy cars when compared with the long trains of huge cars, dumped by steam plows, which are now in use. This represents the enormous advance that has been made in machinery during the past quarter of a century. No doubt a quarter of a century hence this new machinery, of which we are now so proud, will similarly seem out of date, but it is certainly serving its purpose well now. The old French cars had to be entirely discarded. We still have in use a few of the more modern, but not most modern, cars, which hold but 12 yards of earth. They can be employed on certain lines with sharp curves. But the recent cars hold from 25 to 30 yards apiece, and instead of the old clumsy methods of unloading them, a steam plow is drawn from end to end of the whole vestibuled train, thus immensely economizing labor. In the rainy reason the steam shovels can do but little in dirt, but they work steadily in rock and in the harder ground. There were some 25 at work during the time I was on the isthmus, and their tremendous power and efficiency were most impressive.

New Records for Excavation.

As soon as the type of canal was decided this work began in good earnest. The rainy season will shortly be over and then there will be an immense increase in the amount taken out; but even during the last three months, in the rainy season, steady progress is shown by the figures: In August, 242,000 cubic yards; in September, 291,000 cubic yards, and in October, 325,000 cubic yards. In October new records were established for the output of individual shovels as well as for the tonnage haul of individual locomotives. I hope to see the growth of a healthy spirit of emulation between the different shovel and locomotive crews, just such a spirit as has grown on our battle ships between the different gun crews in matters of marksmanship. Passing through the cut the amount of new work can be seen at a glance. In one place the entire side of a hill had been taken out recently by 27 tons of dynamite, which were exploded at one blast. At another place I was given a presidential salute of 21 charges of dynamite. On the top notch of the Culebra cut the prism is now as wide as it will be; all told, the canal bed at this point has now been sunk about 200 feet below what it originally was. It will have to be sunk about 120 feet farther. Throughout the cut the drilling, blasting, shoveling and hauling are going on with constantly increasing energy, the huge shovels being pressed up, as if they were mountain howitzers, into the most unlikely looking places, where they eat their way into the hillsides.

Railway Improvements.

The most advanced methods, not only in construction, but in railroad management, have been applied in the zone, with corresponding economies in time and cost. This has been shown in the handling of the tonnage from ships into cars, and from cars into ships on the Panama railroad, where, thanks largely to the efficiency of General Manager Bierd, the saving in time and cost, has been noteworthy. My examination tended to show that some of the departments had (doubtless necessarily) become overdeveloped, and could now be reduced or subordinated without impairment of efficiency and with a saving of cost. The chairman of the commission, Mr. Shonts, has all matters of this kind constantly in view, and is now reorganizing the government of the zone, so as to make the form of administration both more flexible and less expensive, subordinating everything to direct efficiency with a view to the work of the canal commission. From time to time changes of this kind will undoubtedly have to be made, for it must be remembered that in this giant work of construction, it is continually necessary to develop departments or bureaus, which are vital for the time being, but which soon become useless; just as it will be continually necessary to put up buildings, and even to erect towns, which in ten years will once more give place to jungle, or will then be at the bottom of the great lakes at the ends of the canal.

Critics and Doubting Thomases.

It is not only natural, but inevitable, that a work as gigantic as this which has been undertaken on the isthmus should arouse every species of hostility and criticism. The conditions are so new and so trying, and the work so vast, that it would be absolutely out of the question that mistakes should not be made. Checks will occur. Unforeseen difficulties will arise. From time to time seemingly well-settled plans will have to be changed. At present 25,000 men are engaged on the task. After awhile the number will be doubled. In such a multitude it is inevitable that there should be here and there a scoundrel. Very many of the poorer class of laborers lack the mental development to protect themselves against either the rascality of others or their own folly, and it is not possible for human wisdom to devise a plan by which they can invariably be protected. In a place which has been for ages a byword for unhealthfulness, and with so large a congregation of strangers suddenly put down and set to hard work there will now and then be outbreaks of disease. There will now and then be shortcomings in administration; there will be unlooked-for accidents to delay the excavation of the cut or the building of the dams and locks. Each such incident will be entirely natural, and, even though serious, no one of them will mean more than a little extra delay or trouble. Yet each, when discovered by sensation mongers and retailed to timid folk of little faith, will serve as an excuse for the belief that the whole work is being badly managed. Experiments will continually be tried in housing, in hygiene, in street repairing, in dredging and in digging earth and rock. Now and then an experiment will be a failure; and among those who hear of it, a certain proportion of doubting Thomases will at once believe that the whole work is a failure. Doubtless here and there some minor rascality will be uncovered; but as to this, I have to say that after the most painstaking inquiry I have been unable to find a single reputable person who had so much as heard of any serious accusations affecting the honesty of the commission or of any responsible officer under it. I append a letter dealing with the most serious charge, that of the ownership of lots in Colon; the charge was not advanced by a reputable man, and is utterly baseless. It is not too much to say that the whole atmosphere of the commission breathes honesty as it breathes efficiency and energy. Above all, the work has been kept absolutely clear of politics. I have never heard even a suggestion of spoils politics in connection with it.

I have investigated every complaint brought to me for which there seemed to be any shadow of foundation. In two or three cases, all of which I have indicated in the course of this message, I came to the conclusion that there was foundation for the complaint, and that the methods of the commission in the respect complained of could be bettered. In the other instances the complaints proved absolutely baseless, save in two or three instances where they referred to mistakes which the commission had already found out and corrected.

Slanders and Libelers.

So much for honest criticism. There remains an immense amount of as reckless slander as has ever been published. Where the slanderers are of foreign origin I have no concern with them. Where they are Americans, I feel for them the heartiest contempt and indignation; because, in a spirit of wanton dishonesty and malice, they are trying to interfere with and hamper the execution of, the greatest work of the kind ever attempted, and are seeking to bring to naught the efforts of their countrymen to put to the credit of America one of the giant feats of the ages. The outrageous accusations of these slanderers constitute a gross libel upon a body of public servants who, for trained intelligence, expert ability, high characterr and devotion to duty, have never been excelled anywhere. There is not a man among those directing the work on the isthmus who has obtained his position on any other basis than merit alone, and not one who has used his position in any way for his own personal or pecuniary advantage.

Plan to Build by Contract.

After most careful consideration we have decided to let out most of the work by contract, if we can come to satisfactory terms with the contractors. The whole work is of a kind suited to the peculiar genius of our people; and our people have developed the type of contractor best fitted to grapple with it. It is of course much better to do the work in large part by contract than to do it all by the government, provided it is possible on the one hand to secure to the contractor a sufficient remuneration to make it worth while for responsible contractors of the best kind to undertake the work; and provided on the other hand it can be done on terms which will not give an excessive profit to the contractor at the expense of the government. After much consideration the plan already promulgated by the secretary of war was adopted. This plan in its essential features was drafted after careful and thorough study and consideration, by the chief engineer, Mr. Stevens, who, while in the employment of Mr. Hill, the president of the Great Northern railroad, had personal experience of this very type of contract. Mr. Stevens then submitted the plan to the chairman of the commission, Mr. Shonts, who went carefully over it with Mr. Rogers, the legal adviser of the commission, to see that all legal difficulties were met. He then submitted copies of the plan to both Secretary Taft and myself. Secretary Taft submitted it to some of the best counsel at the New York bar, and afterwards I went over it very carefully with Mr. Taft and Mr. Shonts, and we laid the plan in its general features before Mr. Root. My conclusion is that it combines the maximum of advantage with the minimum of disadvantage. Under it a premium will be put upon the speedy and economical construction of the canal, and a penalty imposed on delay and waste. The plan as promulgated is tentative; doubtless it will have to be changed in some respects before we can come to a satisfactory agreement with responsible contractors—perhaps even after the bids have been received; and of course it is possible that we can not come to a agreement, in which case the government will do the work itself. Meanwhile the work on the isthmus is progressing steadily and without any let up.

Single Commissioner Desired.

A seven-headed commission is of course a clumsy executive instrument. We should have but one commissioner, with such heads of departments and other officers under him as we may find necessary. We should be expressly permitted to employ the best engineers in the country as consulting engineers.

I accompany this paper with a map showing substantially what the canal will be like when it is finished. When the Culebra cut has been made and the dams built (if they are built as at present proposed) there will then be at both the Pacific and Atlantic ends of the canal two great fresh-water lakes, connected by a broad channel running at the bottom of a ravine, across the backbone of the Western Hemisphere. Those best informed believe that the work will be completed in about eight years; but it is never safe to prophesy about such a work as this, especially in the tropics.

Confident of Ultimate Success.

Of the success of the enterprise I am as well convinced as one can be of any enterprise that is human. It is a stupendous work upon which our fellow countrymen are engaged down there on the isthmus, and while we should hold them to a strict accountability for the way in which they perform it, we should recognize, with frank generosity, the epic nature of the task upon which they are engaged and its world-wide importance. They are doing something which will redound immeasurably to the credit of America, which will benefit all the world, and which will last for ages to come. Under Mr. Shonts and Mr. Stevens and Dr. Gorgas this work has started with every omen of good fortune. They and their worthy associates, from the highest to the lowest, are entitled to the same credit that we would give to the picked men of a victorious army; for this conquest of peace will, in its great and far-reaching effect, stand as among the very greatest conquests, whether of peace or of war, which have ever been won by any of the peoples of mankind. A badge is to be given to every American citizen who for a specified time has taken part in this work; for participation in it will hereafter be held to reflect honor upon the man participating just as it reflects honor upon a soldier to have belonged to a mighty army in a great war for righteousness. Our fellow countrymen on the isthmus are working for our interest and for the national renown in the same spirit and with the same efficiency that the men of the army and navy work in time of war. It behooves us in our turn to do all we can to hold up their hands and to aid them in every way to bring their great work to a triumphant conclusion.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

The White House, December 17, 1906.

PRESIDENT ON A STEAM SHOVEL

From stereograph, copyright, by Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.

At Pedro Miguel, Culebra Cut, President Roosevelt was photographed seated on one of the immense steam shovels used in the work of excavating.

PRESIDENTIAL PARTY LEAVING HOTEL

From stereograph, copyright, by Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.

Photograph of the President and Mrs. Roosevelt and party leaving the Tivoli hotel at Colon taken during the recent inspection of the canal by the chief executive.

MARIETTA'S PA

Marietta got tired of school. She was 17 and there was no use that she could see in going to school forever, as she didn't propose to teach. She declared that she would be anything rather than a teacher.

"Then you'll have to do something," said Marietta's pa, firmly. "I can't afford to buy clothes for you and furnish you with spending money. Your mother hasn't had a new suit this year. She would be willing to wear her old rags and give the money to you and you'd be willing—what's that? 'You hope you're not selfish?' I never saw a 17-year-old that wasn't selfish. That's the nature of youth. 'Was I that way?' Of course I was. But the point is that you'll have to go to work and earn your keep."

This was a long speech for Marietta's pa. He is a quiet and subdued man, who works fathfully for his $1,500 a year. He has reached the top and is expecting within a year or two to start on the long, downward road which leads to the shelf. Perhaps this accounted for his touch of bitterness. Marietta, who is a good girl as often as she happens to remember in time, promised to go to work.

"I can get a job down at the bindery, where Mayme works," she declared. "She gets so much a thousand—I think it's ten cents, for folding books and papers and things."

"I'm not going to let you be a bindery girl," said Marietta's pa, gruffly. "You'd make $6 a week after you learned the trade—besides—well, that won't do."

He hurried away to work and Marietta began to look around and make inquiries. That evening she met her pa at the door, gleefully.

"I've got a place, pa. All I've got to do is to address envelopes and I get $1.25 a thousand. I am a fast writer and I can make lots of money. Sadie works down there and she hardly ever gets less than $10 a week. They've got about 50 girls and are needing more. Sadie's promised to take me with her in the morning. She knows the manager real well."

"I'm not going to have any girl of mine work in any such place," said Marietta's pa, frowning, as he took off his hat and overcoat in the hall.

"What's the matter with that place, pa?"

"There's lots the matter with it," he said, evasively. "How do we know but what some of those 50 girls—anyway that's just like regular factory work. I'm not going to let you do it. It's a back-breaking thing to write names all day."

Marietta smiled to herself, but said nothing more as her pa went into the dining room. She was beginning to understand.

After supper, while he was looking over the paper she got the advertisement section and studied it diligently. Presently she went over and pulled her pa's paper out of his hand and sat on his knee.

"Look there, pa," she exclaimed, pointing a slim finger at the female help wanted column. "One department store is advertising for girls in the cloak department, and another wants girls in the notions, and there are four others all—"

Marietta's pa, who had thrown his arm fondly about her waist when she first came over, now interrupted her rudely. He pushed the paper away and made her get up.

"Would you let this little innocent child go to work in one of those department stores? Would you, I say?" He glared across the table savagely at Marietta's ma. That good woman looked at him in astonishment, but before she could reply Marietta's pa got up and left the room. They could hear him slam the front door as he went out.

There were tears in ma's eyes, but Marietta laughed as she put her arms around the woman's neck.

"You needn't think pa's gone crazy, for he hasn't ma. You just don't understand him."

"What does the man mean?"

"He was just bluffing about wanting me to go to work," said Marietta, laughing again, with a suspicion of tears in her voice. "Pa's such a goose. He thinks I'm too precious to go out into the cruel world and work. Bless his heart. He'd like to have me take a job as princess somewhere if there was one open in some good Christian kingdom where I wouldn't be exposed to any giddy temptations."

The next day Marietta offered to go to work in a candy factory and at a mail order house and her pa was so mad that he went to bed right after supper. Then she pretended to find a place in a chorus, just to tease him, and the poor man nearly died of indignation.

"How can I work when you won't let me, pa?" she asked at last.

"I guess we'll try to worry through a little longer," he said, grinning sheepishly. "Your ma needs you to help her, anyway. As long as we don't keep a girl the housework's too hard for her to do alone."—Chicago Tribune.

Toad's Disposal of Overcoat.

The toad sheds its skin at certain periods, the old one coming off, and leaving a new one, which has been formed underneath, in its stead. It does not give its cast-off coat away to any poorer toad, and there are no toads dealing in second-hand raiment. Neither does it leave its cast-off jacket on the ground after the fashion of the shiftless snake. It swallows its overcoat at one mouthful, converting its stomach into a portmanteau.

Please Tell Us.

Standing in line before the money order window at the post office yesterday were two men. One of them was "next," but as his turn came he permitted a woman to step in ahead of him to get an order. When she came through the man let another woman in ahead of him. This made the other man mad. "Say," he said to the man ahead, "please don't be a gentleman at my expense. I'm in a hurry." Was he right or not?—Denver Post.

HE FOOLED THE HOLDUP MEN.

Intended Victim Dumps His Money Into Mailbox and Thus Saves It.

A West end man had an experience recently that made his hair stand on end and had it not been for his quick wit in devising a means of getting out of the difficulty it might have cost him dearly, says the Duluth News-Tribune. He is the treasurer of a local lodge and was returning home from a meeting with a considerable amount of money in his possession, fortunately the greater part of which was in currency.

He got off a car quite a distance out in the West end and turned off a side street toward his home, when he noticed that he was being followed by two suspicious looking men. Quick as a flash he pulled an envelope out of his pocket, addressed it to himself, stamped it, put the currency inside it and dropped it in the mail box. Then he started on a brisk walk.

Suddenly there came a command from behind him.

"Hands up!"

Up went his hands and the robbers went through his pockets. He smiled grimly as the holdups secured only a few dollars in silver, and he thought with pleasure of the money he had put in the mail box in Uncle Sam's care. The robbers went away complaining of the small amount they secured, and the treasurer went home. Next day the letter containing the money was delivered safely to his office.

Poor Mother!

"I saw the doctor at your house this morning," said Naybor.

"Yes," replied Popley, "that boy of mine climbed out on the back roof when we told him not to—"

"And fell off and broke his—"

"Nary a fall! but my wife tried to whip him for it, and now she's a nervous and physical wreck."

Frogs March to Winter Quarters.

For the first time in years the residents of northern Chester county today saw a frog parade. Fully 100 frogs of all ages, ranging from frogs a score of years old to this spring's youngsters, left the schoolhouse pond in Warwick township this morning and marched along the road to the falls of French creek, where they took up their winter quarters.

Migrations of frogs in large bodies are seldom seen, especially at this season of the year. It is believed by old residents that the frogs deserted the pond, which has been their breeding place for years, because the water is too low.—Pottstown Correspondence Philadelphia Press.

In Bad Shape.

"I heard your new stenographer boasting that he can work the typewriter like lightning."

"That's about right. When he gets through with the job it looks very much as if lightning had got its work in on it."