

Diplomats on the Isthmian Canal Question

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WASHINGTON, May 22.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—Where shall we build our great canal across the isthmus? The answer to this is given in the following interviews with the ministers from the countries of the principal routes. Each man thinks his government has the best proposition and each has little good to say of the scheme of the other. But I shall let the diplomats speak for themselves.

My first interview was with the minister from Nicaragua. His excellency's name is Senor Luis F. Corea. He is a highly educated Central American, who, during his residence in Washington, has acquired the English tongue, so that it was in English that our conversation was held. Said Senor Corea:

"There is no question but that the best route for the canal is the Nicaraguan route. Your engineers have so decided, and it seems to me that all the arguments, both sanitary and financial, are in its favor. By Nicaragua your Pacific and Atlantic states are nearer each other by two days than they would be at Panama. A canal there could be more easily maintained, and in the end it would be far cheaper than the Panama route."

"The Panama advocates make different claims," said I.

"Yes," replied Senor Corea. "It is easy to make any sort of a claim, but more difficult to support it by facts. Let us look at the facts. The Panama Canal company has already spent \$250,000,000 and it has completed about one-fourth of the undertaking. It is willing to sell that fourth to the United States for \$40,000,000, but after the United States has bought it it has three-fourths of the canal to make. At the same rate as the first fourth the expense would be \$720,000,000. It might be done for less, but the cost will be enormous."

Our Gold Goes to France.

"There is one thing," continued Senor Corea, "that I have not seen mentioned in the consideration of this Panama proposition. The United States is, I know, the richest country of the world, but can it afford to take \$40,000,000 right out of its circulation and give it to France. If this deal is made your government will have to pay \$40,000,000 to the French and you will have nothing in return for it but the chance to spend hundreds of millions more. If you take up the Nicaragua canal you will have to spend less money eventually and the greater part of the money will remain right here. It will all go toward the purchase of American machinery and supplies with the exception of the comparatively small amount paid out for wages."

"But the same will be true of the Panama canal, will it not?"

"To some extent, but nothing like the amount which will go into American pockets in the construction of the Nicaragua canal. The labor cost at Panama will be far greater than at Nicaragua. The extravagance of the French has ruined labor conditions there. You will not be able to get workmen for less than \$2 per day, while at Nicaragua they will not cost more than 50 cents per day. This means that we can save you three-fourths of the labor expense of the work. Our labor is better than that of Panama. We have the Indians, who are easily managed; they live upon little and consequently can work at low wages. They will not be walking delegates to incite trouble among the Jamaicans and other West Indians, whom you import to help along the work."

Nicaragua Ready for United States.

"But would it not take some time to prepare for work upon the Nicaraguan canal? You would have to build railroads and put up towns, would you not?"

"Not at all," replied Senor Corea. "There are towns and cities now along the route of the canal. Lake Nicaragua has many thriving settlements upon its banks, and the country about it is rich in plantations



SENOR LUIS F. COREA, MINISTER FROM NICARAGUA—Photo Taken for The Bee.

and grazing lands. We could easily feed all the workmen needed, and we have water and railroad communications which would put your supplies just where you want them. We have now one of the most progressive rulers of this hemisphere, General Jose Santos Zelaya. He was educated in Europe and has traveled widely. He is very broad in his views and he realizes that the canal will greatly help our country and people. He will do all that he can to aid your government and will grant all necessary concessions. At first it was proposed to create a neutral zone of three miles on each side of the canal. This or anything else that is necessary will be given, although by our constitution we cannot sell the land to a foreign power. We can, however, lease it in perpetuity, and this means the same thing."

"How about the health conditions along the line of the canal, Senor Corea?" said I.

"Can our people live and work there?"

"Certainly they can," replied the minister. "I have gone over the reports of your engineers and surveying parties. They state that Nicaragua is the healthiest of all tropical countries and not to be considered in the same class as Panama. Surgeon Bradford, who went over the route with sixty surveyors and 140 Jamaicans and natives in 1887, says that he did not have one case of serious illness in his whole party. He was there in the rainy season and was doing actual work along the line now proposed. Admiral Walker reports that he had 250 men with him while he was making his surveys through the swamps and that he had less sickness and malaria than he would have had had he been running a survey in Virginia at the same season of the year. I can give you similar quotations from every traveler and engineer who has been over the route. We are entirely free from the yellow fever and from malaria in any dangerous form."

"Americans in Nicaragua."

"Is Nicaragua such a country that Americans could prosper in it?"

"I think so, without doubt," was the reply. "A fit answer to that question is that many Americans are now doing so. We have been having quite an immigration from your country. Three hundred and fifteen young Americans came in last month and I get at least fifty letters a week inquiring about the canal and the chances for securing land near it. Already a number of plantations have been set out by Americans who expect to make fortunes

there in raising bananas, pineapples, coconuts and rubber."

"What are the opportunities for such men?"

"They are very great if they can only wait a while for their crops to come into bearing. In rubber it takes about seven years to raise the trees, but after that time they pay very well. I am interested in a plantation which has 25,000 trees. They are now five years old and will produce rubber about 1904. The trees cost but a trifle to plant and care for. We grow the sprouts in nurseries and have the Indians set them out at 25 cents per task. A task means the setting out of a certain number of trees. The Indian may do it in three hours, four hours or eight hours, but he is paid by the task without regard to time. After the trees are once set out they receive but little attention until they are ready for cropping."

"There are a good many opportunities for making money in coconuts and bananas, and also in coffee. About one-third of our coffee estates are now in the hands of the Germans, but if the United States builds this canal we expect to see many American planters come in. We raise a very fine coffee, as good as can be raised in any part of the world, and it brings high prices."

New Railroads and Mines.

"The mineral resources of Nicaragua are great," continued Senor Corea. "We have some very rich gold mines and we are now building railroads to open up the mineral parts of the country. We have also large areas fitted for cattle raising. There are now hundreds of thousands of cattle upon these lands, but there might be millions. We export many hides and of late have been exporting meat to Cuba and others of the West India Islands."

"Our people realize that the canal would benefit them. They believe it will double the value of their lands and greatly increase the prosperity of the country. We have no doubt but that it will eventually be built through our territory."

I had an interview on the same subject with Senor Carlos Martinez Silva, the minister from Colombia, who left Washington some weeks ago. He told me that Colombia was very anxious that the canal should be built and that it was willing to give any concessions which would lead to the choice of the Panama route. Said he:

"We feel that a canal will eventually go



SENOR CARLOS MARTINEZ SILVA, MINISTER FROM COLOMBIA—Photo Taken for The Bee.

through the Isthmus of Panama and that if your country does not make it some other parties will. What we want is to see the United States buy out the French, and we believe that you will find it to your interest to do so."

Panama Versus Nicaragua.

"Suppose the United States does that, Senor Silva," said I, "what will it get that it would not have on the Nicaragua route?"

"It would have the difference between something and nothing. All the advantages are with the Panama route. It is the shortest route, the most economical route, the route with the fewest locks and the route that could be maintained at the lowest cost. It is a route that has been tested by experiments and actual work."

"The Nicaragua line is absolutely undeveloped. Surveys have been made, but no practical experiments have shown the possible expense of construction. You know of the railroad tunnel which they are now making in New York. Before that tunnel was dug all sorts of borings and experiments were made, and upon the basis of these an estimate was formed of its probable cost."

"When the work was done it was found that the estimate was \$10,000,000 below the figures of the engineers. The railroad tunnel was very short. The Nicaragua canal survey extends over many miles. It has been made in an unknown country, and you can't tell how far the figures of the engineers will be from the actual cost. They can figure as to what they can see, but they cannot calculate all the difficulties that may come up."

"On the Panama canal work has been done along the whole line. A great part of it has been dredged, and the mountains have been actually cut down. Already two-fifths of the canal has been completed, and you can figure out the cost of the remainder almost to a cent. A large force has been at work for the last five years and hundreds of men are there working today. The property is in a good working condition. One set of managers can easily step out and another begin their labor on a few weeks' notice."

What French Have at Panama.

"But does the work of the French amount to much, your excellency?" I asked.

"I think it does," replied Senor Silva. "Those who have not been over the line of the canal do not appreciate its value. When the canal was started an enormous amount

of preliminary work had to be done before the real operations could commence. Houses had to be built for the officials and workmen. There was no timber to speak of and the most of the lumber was brought from the United States. Some of the houses were finished in the United States and sent in pieces to Panama and there put together. Hospitals had to be erected, and you find these now at both ends of the line. A city grew up at Colon and that at Panama increased in size, so that today you have houses, hospitals, offices and cities with which to do your work."

"You have also the Panama railroad ready to transport materials and to lay them down along the line of the canal. This road is well equipped and running. It was constructed in the early 50's, when the present sanitary arrangements had not been made, and it consequently cost an enormous loss of life. A similar road will have to be built along the line of the Nicaragua canal if you choose that route and it will cost many lives to construct it. The Panama road and canal have led to settlements along the line and the excavations have aided in draining the lowlands so that the country there is healthful today. We have had no yellow fever to speak of for some years and I feel safe in saying that there is now no danger to the health of Americans at Panama."

Labor Question.

"But, suppose we buy the canal, senor, can you supply the labor needed to complete it?"

"Yes. There will be no trouble in getting good workmen. You can bring them over from Jamaica and others of the West Indies islands and we can supply much from Colombia itself. We have a large number of idle people who would seek work of you, and the employment of these would take away a part of our revolutionary forces. It would render the government secure and would gradually make Colombia the richest and most important of the South American states."

"But the Isthmus of Panama is thinly populated, is it not?" said I.

"No. It has more inhabitants than most people think," replied Senor Silva. "The Isthmus of Panama belongs to a province which has an area four times as big as Massachusetts. There are parts of it which have great natural resources, and, together with the rest of Colombia, it will furnish an enormous field for American capital."

"Suppose the Panama canal is chosen, will Americans have any special advantages in Colombia?"

"I should think so," replied the Colombian minister. "The canal would bring our countries closer together. It would cement the friendly relations which now obtain between us and we should naturally favor American capital and American immigration."

"I suppose you know," continued Senor Silva, "that Colombia is an empire in its natural resources. It is of great size. You could put ten states the size of New York into it and have space to spare. The most of the land is high and healthful, and we have vast areas which will raise coffee, sugar, cacao and other crops. We have some of the best grazing lands of the world and the Cauva valley might easily be made the garden of the universe. This valley lies between the mountains not far below Panama, extending, roughly speaking, north and south. It has an area as great as Texas and its climate is well suited to your people. The canal will develop it."

"You know something of our minerals. My country has already produced more than \$700,000,000 worth of the precious metals, and we now stand fourth among the great gold-producing countries. We are led only by the United States, Australia and South Africa. Large amounts of American capital are already invested in Colombia, and if you complete this canal we shall probably be partners in the development of the richest parts of all South America."

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

How Music Soothes Angry Nerves

IT WAS the incomparable Plato who first suggested the treatment of the sick with music, yet a year or two ago a Paris physician offered the idea as his very own. Perhaps the latter was the first to make a practical application of the theory in the case of hospital patients, relates the Philadelphia Record, but with what measure of success has not been reported in the newspaper press. Although when asked by what means he rendered his patient insensible to pain a Texas dentist pointed to a club in a convenient corner, there are western medical men who are more disposed to keep step with modern progress. It was from the Paris example, and not from the great philosopher of antiquity, that an alert St. Louis hospital physician got his inspiration to try musical therapeutics.

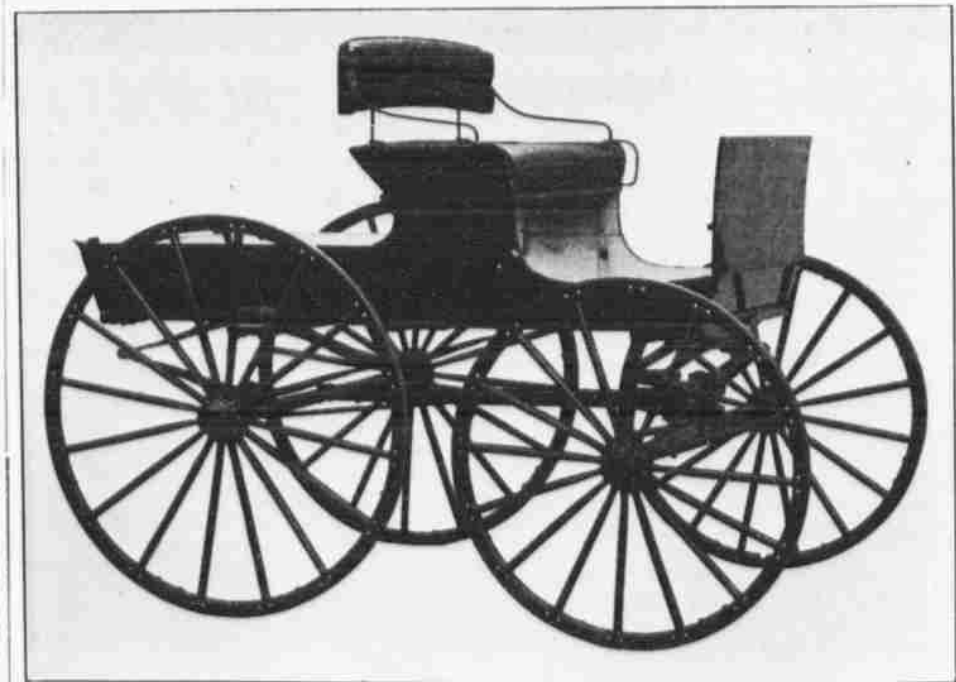
The western physician realized that for the proper or best influence of music it is essential that the surroundings and all the conditions should be helpful. It is the misfortune of the public that the divine musicians must be heard only in a great hall, where glaring lights may flash on the priceless gems which adorn the crowd of fashionable women and where it is impossible that the hearer should be able to shut out all earthly sights and sounds, save only

music, and be borne away on the wings of melody to realms of purest bliss. The man in the next seat fidgets or hums an irritating accompaniment to the instruments, or does something else which proves disturbing. The doctor resolved that in his test of the influence of music on the disordered human system the conditions should be as favorable as he could make them. He could not command stained glass windows and fluted columns and vaulted arches and a cathedral atmosphere, but he subdued the light of the room with effective window drapery and he burned some josshouse incense and put a few mothballs about the cot. In this chamber he installed his grumbling patient—a newspaper man who suffered from neurasthenia (in common speech nervous exhaustion)—which is of all nervous maladies the most vague and obstinate and presumably the one in which the victim must be most responsive to musical treatment. The patient, like all sufferers of his kind, was afflicted by insomnia. When he did sleep from exhaustion it was to awaken in a most irritable state of mind.

The sick man slept as the physician quietly led the violinist into the room and placed him in a remote corner, himself retreating into the corridor. Softly the sweet

strains, as tender as the vibrations of an aeolian harp, wandered through the chamber. Gradually the notes came stronger and clearer, rising and falling and dispersing in the perfumed air, more like dream music than the product of human skill. The patient stirred, and as the sounds grew in volume he turned his head. "Scat! you beast!" he exclaimed. The musician was spurred to greater effort, and harmonic sweetness poured from the instrument like nectar from the cup of Ganymede. The patient, startled into wakefulness, sat up. After one wild, frightened look about the dim-lighted room he leaped upon the unprepared musician and bore him to the floor. The doctor in the corridor listened. "Help! help! leggo my hair, you darned lunatic!" were words which mingled with the shocking language of the sick man as he bumped the doctor's hairy head against the floor. "Wake me up with your cat concert, will you? You blamed wood-chopper!" cried the indignant invalid as he smashed the costly instrument over the head of its owner.

"You never said the man was crazy," complained the musician when the doctor dragged the infuriated patient from his prostrate foe. No explanations could satisfy either.



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