

with impartial candor the respective advantages of the Panama and Nicaragua routes, and the grounds upon which it recommends the selection of the latter are sufficient and convincing. The Nicaragua Canal will have a length of 183.66 miles, while the Panama route is only 49.09 miles. The Nicaragua canal requires locks, while the other is at sea-level; there are good harbors at both ends of the Panama route, while harbor protection for shipping must be artificially provided upon both coasts of Nicaragua; the time of passage of deep-draft vessels through the Panama canal would be twelve hours, against thirty-three hours through the Nicaragua, and the annual cost of operating the Nicaragua will be \$1,350,000 greater than for the Panama canal.

"The advantages of the Nicaragua route, however, are a saving of from one to two days for all Gulf ports and Pacific coast trade, except for that originating on the west coast of South America; sailing-vessels will find more favorable winds in approaching the Nicaragua canal; hygienic conditions are better there than in Colombia, and the Nicaragua canal can be built in six years, while ten would be required for the Panama undertaking. But difference in cost is evidently the determining consideration. The estimate of the commission is that the Nicaragua canal can be built for \$189,864,062. The Panama Company offers to sell its rights and property for \$109,141,500, and it would cost \$144,233,358 to complete the work, making a total cost to the United States of \$253,374,858, a difference of \$63,510,796 in favor of the Nicaragua route.

"The facts submitted and the recommendations made by the commission will probably be accepted as decisive by Congress. There have been rumors of a 'Panama lobby,' which is said to have sought to obstruct Congressional action favorable to the Nicaraguan route in the interests of the French owners of the Panama Company's uncompleted canal, who have for some time been trying to sell out to the United States. It would seem probable that our Government will now decline to give further consideration to the Panama project."

TOPICS IN BRIEF.

As a boss, Mr. Platt is said to be getting easier and easier.—*The Washington Star*.

CURIOUS that the isthmian revolution should come to a full stop at Colon.—*The New York World*.

THE isthmus of Panama seems to be the vermiform appendix of the hemisphere.—*The Chicago News*.

NEXT year Buffalo will be quite content to worry along with her little Erie County fair.—*The Washington Post*.

AN isthmus these days is a small strip of fight connecting two larger bodies of trouble.—*The Baltimore American*.

ALL that remains is to set the Colombian revolution to music and produce it as a comic opera.—*The Baltimore American*.

It's quite another thing when China respectfully petitions for an open door to the United States.—*The Philadelphia Ledger*.

MANUFACTURERS are overwhelmed with orders for automobiles. The horseless carriage has come to go.—*The Chicago Tribune*.

WE don't know what is the underlying principle of Christian Science, unless it be that microbes are liable to get religion.—*Puck*.

AMERICAN business men appear to be conquering South Africa rather more rapidly than Kitchener is.—*The Philadelphia Ledger*.

POSSIBLY, the best way to suppress Bullerism in England would be to send Sir Redvers back to the front.—*The Philadelphia Ledger*.

CAPTAIN MAHAN finds that the British have gained prestige by the Boer war. Just see what a great strategist can ascertain.—*The Washington Post*.

If Secretary Gage is wise he will not take any Congressmen by the hands and lead them over to the treasury to see the surplus.—*The Chicago News*.

A New York negro is turning white. Evidently he is trying to meet the qualifications for voting in Alabama and Mississippi.—*The Detroit Free Press*.

MAKING GAME OF DEVERY.—The selection of Partridge for New York's police commissioner is likely to make Devery quail.—*The Boston Transcript*.

QUEEN WILHELMINA's consort and Abdul Hamid should form some kind of a syndicate and take the benefit of the bankruptcy law.—*The St. Louis Globe-Democrat*.

RICHARD CROKER's bulldog has taken a prize in Philadelphia. This delicate mark of sympathy comes in time to adorn a brief but pointed tale of the two cities.—*The Baltimore American*.

FRANK, ANYWAY.—Have you been shorn good and plenty in that fool's paradise, Wall Street? Yes? Then why not give horse-racing a chance?—From a racing tipster's advertisement in *The New York Sun*.

A CHICAGO COMMENT.—Before entering upon the construction of the Nicaragua canal the Government should find out whether St. Louis will or will not waive all possible damages to its water supply.—*The Chicago Inter-Ocean*.

THE New York *World* declares that the demand for tariff revision comes from the Republican farmer. But the *World* neglects to publish the farmer's name, possibly out of regard for the feelings of his family.—*The Kansas City Journal*.

AN American syndicate is reported to have bought the English "Shell" line of steamers. If this game continues much longer John Bull should be able to put his finger right on the place where the little ball is hidden.—*The Chicago Evening Post*.

ATTENTION is called to the fact that the conscience fund is being swelled this year as never before. The explanation undoubtedly is that when times are good the awakened conscience doesn't miss the cash so much.—*The Cleveland Plain-Dealer*.

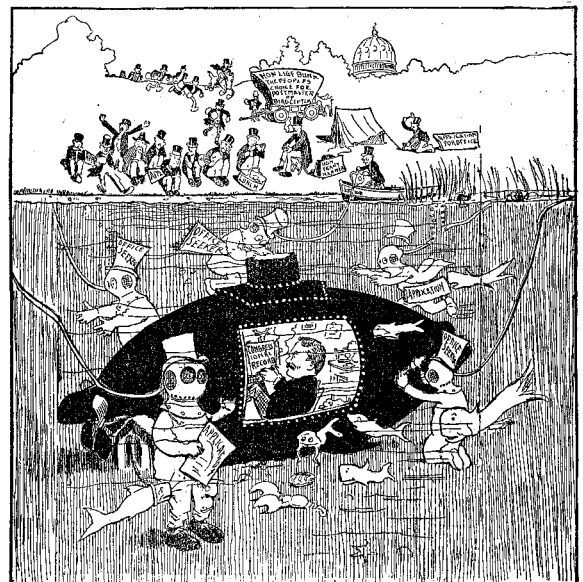
AN exchange laments that Niagara, one of nature's great spectacles, a wonder of the ages, has become the propeller of base machinery and the exploiter of sensation seekers. It has been noticed for some time that Niagara was going down hill.—*The Kansas City Journal*.

A CORRESPONDENT wants to know why the American Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are not read in the schools of Manila. As a matter of fact we do not know whether these very sound political documents are read or not read in the schools; but we can imagine that there might be times when it would be mighty awkward for a teacher to read the Declaration before a class of thoughtful and logically minded boys and girls.—*The Manila American*.



THE AWAKENING OF RIP VAN BULL.

"Oh! Oh! Mine back, vat is the matter mit me? Hello, vat country is dat?"
—*The Indianapolis Journal*.



THE NEW SUBMARINE BOAT "FULTON" HAS BEEN ORDERED TO WASHINGTON.

Is it possible that Present Roosevelt expects to escape the office-seekers?
—*The Chicago Record-Herald*

AMERICAN IDEAS IN CARTOON.

LETTERS AND ART.

DO WOMEN WRITE THE BEST NOVELS?

A RECENT writer, Mr. Frank Norris, looking over the rank and file of achievements in recorded history, observes that of all the occupations at first exclusively followed by men, that of writing has been one of the very first to be invaded successfully by women. If it is the first, Mr. Norris thinks, that must be because it is the easiest. At any rate, he says, in our present day and time it should be easier for women to write well than for men; and since writing to-day means the writing of fiction, women should be able to write better novels than men. He gives the reasons for his conclusion (*Boston Transcript*, November 13) in this way:

"The average man, who must work for a living, has no time to write novels, much less to get into that frame of mind or to assume that mental attitude by means of which he is able to see possibilities for fictitious narrative in the life around him. But as yet few women (compared with the armies of male workers) have to work for a living and it is an unusual state of affairs in which the average woman of moderate circumstances could not, if she would, take from three to four hours a day from her household duties to devote to any occupation she deemed desirable.

"Another reason is found, one believes, in the nature of women's education. From almost the very first the young man studies with an eye to business, or to a profession. In many state colleges nowadays all literary courses, except the most elementary—which indeed have no place in collegiate curriculums—are optional. But what girls' seminary does not prescribe the study of literature through all its three or four years, making of this study a matter of all importance? and while the courses of literature do not, by any manner of means, make a novelist, they familiarize the student with style and the means by which words are put together. The more one reads, the easier one writes.

"Then, too (tho this reason lies not so much in modern conditions as in basic principles), there is the matter of temperament. The average man is a rectangular, square-cut, matter-of-fact, sober-minded animal who does not receive impressions easily, who is not troubled with emotions and has no overmastering desire to communicate his sensations to anybody. But the average woman is just the reverse of all these. She is impressionable, emotional, and communicative. And impressionableness, emotionality, and communicativeness are three very important qualities of mind that make for novel-writing."

The deduction which might reasonably follow is by no means a true one, says Mr. Norris. He asserts with positiveness that the modern woman, who, in a greater degree than her contemporaneous male, has the leisure, the education, and the temperament for novel-writing and should be able therefore to write better novels, as a matter of fact, does not do so:

"It is, of course, a conceded fact that there have been more great men novelists than women novelists, and that to-day the producers of the best fiction are men and not women. There are probably more women trying to write novels than there are men; but for all this it must be admitted that the ranks of the 'arrived' are recruited from the razor-using contingent."

Why should this be so? asks the writer, and he replies as follows:

"Women who have all the other qualifications of good novelists are, because of the nature and character that invariably goes with these qualifications, shut away from the study of, and the association with, the most important thing of all for them—real life. Even making allowances for the emancipation of the new woman, the majority of women still lead, in comparison with men, secluded lives. The woman who is impressionable is by reason of this very thing sensitive (indeed, sensitiveness and impressionableness mean almost the same thing), and it is inconceivably hard for the sensitive woman to force herself into the midst of that great, grim complication of men's doings that we call life. And even admitting that she finds in herself the courage to do this, she lacks the knowledge to use knowledge

thus gained. The faculty of selection comes even to men only after many years of experience.

"So much for causes exterior to herself, and it is well to admit at once that the exterior causes are by far the most potent and the most important; but there are perhaps causes to be found in the make-up of the woman herself which keep her from success in fiction. Is it not a fact that protracted labor of the mind tells upon a woman quicker than upon a man? Be it understood that no disparagement, no invidious comparison is intended. Indeed it is quite possible that her speedier mental fatigue is due to the fact that the woman possesses the more highly specialized organ.

"A man may grind on steadily for an almost indefinite period, when a woman at the same task would begin, after a certain point, to 'feel her nerves,' to chafe, to fret, to try to do too much, to polish too highly, to develop more perfectly. Then come fatigue, harassing doubts, more nerves, a touch of hysteria occasionally, exhaustion, and in the end complete discouragement and a final abandonment of the enterprise; and who shall say how many good, even great, novels have remained half-written, to be burned in the end, because their women authors mistook lack of physical strength for lack of genuine ability?"

AMERICAN "ART FAKIRS" IN PARIS.

JULIAN RALPH, the well-known European correspondent of American journals, says that it is high time some one ordered a halt in the fashion of filling Paris with American art students who are hopelessly wanting in talent. He speaks bluntly of such as "art fakirs," in *Collier's Weekly* (November 16), and sets forth there "frank truths concerning a flourishing evil." He notices some changed conditions:

"Time was, and it was not more than forty years ago, when there was not an American art student in the Quartier Latin. Afterward, from twenty-five to thirty years ago, a few gifted, earnest young Americans went to Paris to obtain the magic of the few masters whose ateliers were

open to learners. These Americans were all men of the type of Charles Reinhardt, Cox, Weldon, Metcalfe, Mowbray, Sargeant, Du Maurier of England, George Boughton—with widely differing degrees of talent possessing them, yet all enthusiastic, earnest, full of art, promising brilliant futures. These men were of such kinship in every important impulse, so earnest, so able, and so high-minded that they all came together in intimate companionship. There were no drones among them, no block-heads, no mere faddists, no frauds, and no hopeless failures in the coterie.

"Now go to Paris as I have been obliged to do every few weeks, and look calmly and soberly at the results of the revolution by which every town of the size of Kankakee and every so-called art school or 'league' in places like Madison, Wis., is sending its annual quota of foredoomed failures to study art in that capital. The result is sad, almost and often quite tragical, sickening, shameful."

Mr. Ralph's description of the process by which he says most American art students are "sorted out for sacrifice upon this altar of folly" is amusing:

"Melonville, Ind., has a population of fifteen thousand souls.



JULIAN RALPH.