

THE SENATE PHILIPPINE BILL.

The Lodge bill for the government of the Philippines has been made the unfinished business of the Senate, and will accordingly be considered from day to day until disposed of. It is of colossal proportions, embracing one hundred printed pages. A large part of it relates to the locating of mining claims and other technical matters very difficult to unravel, and which will probably not be understood by five men in the entire Congress of the United States, even after the bill is passed. It contains provisions for issuing bonds of the Philippine Government to buy out the land claims of the religious orders, and a multitude of other things which will be looked upon by the great majority of Senators as a burden and a bore, to be disposed of as hastily as possible in order to reach the more interesting private pension bills, river and harbor jobs, and other measures affecting the American people for better or for worse. It is but a single illustration of the waste of energy in attempting to govern countries on the other side of the globe when we have not time enough to attend properly to our own affairs.

The bill embraces almost as many subjects as the President's annual message. It is too voluminous to be treated as a whole in one article. We shall, therefore, confine our present examination of it to the provisions relating to the coinage question. This part of the bill has engaged the attention of the American press more closely than any other—for the reason, probably, that it has a more direct bearing than any other on our politics and on our trade relations with the islands. It must have been made already clear to Senators that the Republican press of the country frowns upon the proposal to establish the silver standard in the Philippines, and that the Democratic newspapers have not extended to it a very cordial welcome. This cold reception of the project may not deter the Senate from passing the bill, but it will strengthen the House in its purpose to strike out that part of the Senate bill and substitute the one already agreed to by its Committee on Insular Affairs.

The Senate bill authorizes the establishment of a mint at Manila to be operated under laws enacted by the Philippine Government, which Government is authorized to coin a silver dollar of 416 grains of that metal, nine-tenths fine. All bullion brought to the mint by private persons is to be coined into such dollars, which are to be unlimited legal tender. One cent per dollar is to be charged, however, for the cost of coinage. Section 83 of the bill embraces an original conception in the matter of coinage, for which a patent ought to be issued to the Committee on the ground of novelty. It provides:

"That the dollar hereinbefore authorized

may be coined at the mint of the United States at San Francisco, in California, upon the request of the Government of the Philippine Islands, with the approval of the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States; and the owners of silver bullion may deposit the same for coinage at such mint under regulations to be made by the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States as respects deposits, coinage, and transfer to the Philippine Islands, and a charge shall be made therefor at the rate of one cent for each dollar coined and the cost of transfer to the Philippine Islands in addition thereto: Provided, that such deposits at the San Francisco mint shall be confined to silver produced in the United States."

The concluding paragraph of this section, which restricts the coinage of dollars at San Francisco to silver produced in the United States, is manifestly a sop to the silver-mine owners and to the Senators representing their States. It is not impossible that the silverites made this provision a condition of their support of the measure. However that may be, it is a barefaced exhibition of greed, and it ought to be rejected for very shame. The silver-mine owners will get nothing out of it except the world's contempt, and the United States Government will be elevated to the dunce block in consequence of it if the bill becomes a law.

The other parts of the coinage provisions are mere details for the establishment of the single silver standard in the Philippines. The education that the American people have received during the past quarter of a century has enabled them to understand what this means. It is true that the silver standard already prevails in the Philippines, and that some difficulties must be encountered in changing it. Yet it is the part of statesmanship to face such difficulties, and to put the Philippines in harmony with India and Japan and other civilized nations as regards their medium of exchange. To link our Asiatic possessions to the dead corpse of Chinese currency, after excluding the Chinese themselves from the islands, would be a mark of incompetency almost ludicrous to contemplate.

CONGRESS AGAIN DEBATING.

An unusual interest has been manifest in the proceedings of either house of Congress for the past few days. One sure sign of this is the increased space which the newspapers have given to Washington dispatches. Congressmen sometimes complain that the press does not report their debates as it formerly did. The fault is in themselves. Let them make their debates interesting, and the newspapers, which always search for interesting reading as they do for hidden treasure, will jump at the chance of printing them. Consider the columns gladly give up to the Cuban debate in the House, and to the arguments on the Chinese Exclusion Bill in the Senate. They show how press reports increase directly as the square of public interest in the doings of Congress.

What has been the secret of this revived attention to Congressional oratory? It is not far to seek. In the first place, these animated discussions of public policy have been free from the deadening influence of a foregone decision on strict party lines. There has been an open give-and-take of argument, and votes have been changed by it. We have not seen a party leader, beaten in his logical contentions, rise and taunt the master of the better reasons with the fact that the heavier battalions were against him, and say, "Well, talk as you will, you are bound to lose when the roll-call comes." Now it is the very breath of life for public debate to have this possibility of persuasion in it. Merely to apply "a fine brute majority" is the way not simply to crush your opponents, but to destroy the interest and real significance of debating at all. When men can feel compelled to say, as the honest English Squire did to the able Parliamentary orator of the other party, "You have changed my opinion by your speech, but no man can change my vote," then we need no longer inquire why Congressional debates have decayed, or why public interest in them has declined.

It is obvious that the discussion of the Chinese Exclusion Bill actually brought about a vote in the Senate very different from what would have been cast but for the searching analysis of the measure. Undebated, it would have gone through triumphantly. But it could not stand exposure. Its improprieties and indecencies, its illegalities and absurdities, its lack of business sense and of humanity alike, were so driven in upon the general conviction that it was beaten off the field. The New England conscience rose in revolt, every Senator from that section voting against it except Mr. Lodge. He preferred to side with Tillman and the other advocates of barbarous methods in dealing with the Chinese; but that only confirms what we said, that the reason and conscience of New England—indeed, we may say of the Republican party—were against the bill as it passed the House. One could wish for no more complete demonstration of the value of free debate by legislators whose minds are open, and whose votes are at liberty to follow their judgment.

In the House the case has been different, but there, too, we have been given a vivid illustration of the cause of public interest in Congressional proceedings. It is not simply that the subject under discussion is large and important. So was the Philippine Tariff Bill, but it went through amid universal indifference. The reason was that then we had the certainty of a party majority at the end, while debate was limited, and a rigid rule shut out the possibility of so much as offering an amendment. That is the sure way to kill a debate. Of course, men in the Opposition

will present their views for the sake of a "record," and in order to put the party in power "in a hole"; but argument for such purposes only is obviously a dead-and-alive affair, and can never have the directness, the fire, the power and point of a speech which may change votes and really affect the course of legislation. Note the great contrast offered by the progress of the Cuban Bill through the House. It was attended by the stir and interest of an uncertain result. Party lines were broken up. Amendments could be and were offered. Tactical positions were eagerly manoeuvred for. Far-reaching indirect results might follow in national politics. Hence the kindling and continuous interest with which the debate was followed by press and public; hence the new appeal to the debating power of the members themselves, with the discovery, in some cases, of an unexpected talent; and hence the restoration to the House of a measure of that national attention which used to be fixed upon it as the theatre of great debate.

The example ought not to be lost on those leaders of the House who have the shaping of its methods in their hands. Let them abolish some of their hard-and-fast rules for stifling debate, or else making it perfunctory. Let them take the sense of the House freely on all great subjects, instead of so hedging it about that the conquered cause is too often the one really pleasing to the majority, if it could find free expression, as well as to Cato. Let them open the true parliamentary career for talent by showing the aspiring orator that it is within his power to produce conviction and lead to action. In a word, let them make Congressional debate what debate ought to be everywhere—a means of bringing out the better reason and the wiser policy—and we shall hear much less of the decadence of Congress, or the growing indifference of the people to what goes on in the Capitol at Washington.

THE STEAMSHIP COMBINE.

From time to time during the past four months hints have been dropped, or facts have leaked out and found their way to the press, implying that a great steamship combination was on foot, and that it would embrace a large share of the Atlantic fleets, both English and American, plying between the United States and Great Britain. It was commonly supposed that the facts were held back by the parties in interest in order to see what chance there might be of passing a ship-subsidy bill in Congress, and how far the revenues from it might be available for the joint concern. An authorized statement was made public on Saturday. It confirms the rumors that had been afloat as to the fact of the combination, and as to the number

and names of the fleets combined. These are the White Star, Dominion, Leyland, Atlantic Transport, American, and Red Star lines, whose aggregate tonnage is said to be nearly 850,000 tons. The relations of the combine to the Ship-Subsidy Bill are frankly stated by Mr. B. N. Baker, the President of the Atlantic Transport Company, in an interview published in the morning papers. He said:

"that the completion of the deal had been postponed from time to time because of the desire to see what kind of a ship-subsidy bill would be passed by Congress. 'It has become evident,' continued Mr. Baker, 'that the public and the newspapers do not want a ship-subsidy bill, and we have been compelled to proceed with our plans.'"

Mr. Baker threw additional light on the subsidy question by saying, in answer to an interrogatory, that the stock of his company would be taken in at a valuation of \$300 to \$325 per share. This cannot be considered an extravagant valuation, as things go in this fast age. The stock of the Atlantic Transport Company sells at \$240 to \$250 per share, independently of any combination or governmental subsidy, and the Company is building six or eight new ships at the present time. The Company is a remarkable success. It is almost wholly American, and its prosperity in the face of the competition of older and more famous lines is a striking commentary on the statement, so often repeated, that an American merchant marine is impossible without subsidies. It is aside from the purpose to say that these ships fly the British flag, since we can change all that by a joint resolution of Congress admitting them to American registry. As Mr. Baker is now building new ships in our own yards to add to his fleet, it is plain that he can see a way to sail them under the American flag and still make a fair profit.

It is not exactly certain that this giant consolidation will cause the defeat of the Subsidy Bill, now pending in the House, but it will considerably lessen its chances of passage. The declared object of the consolidation is to prevent rate-cutting. The more immediate purpose is to bring about a stock merger, by which the shares of the united companies can be put into a pool, and be made the basis of a new issue, of much larger nominal amount, to be sold to the public whenever the public is in a mood to buy such securities. Now the voters in the Western States, particularly, are becoming very restive on the subject of these mergers. Many persons who have been counted as supporters of the Ship-Subsidy Bill will be startled when they find themselves confronted with a gigantic shipping Trust, and discover that the American Line, for whose special behoof the Subsidy Bill was drawn and passed by the Senate, is a part of the combine, if not the head of it. "It is possible, though by no means certain," says the President of this line, Mr. Clem-

ent A. Griscom, "that the International Navigation Company [the American Line], whose chartered powers are very broad, will be made the parent company." The Western Congressman who reads these words, and discovers suddenly that in his fight for reelection this fall he must carry not only the odium of a ship-subsidy bill, but of a \$200,000,000 Trust in addition, will begin to think that it is best to divest himself of such a handicap. The only way to do this is to have the pending bill reported from the Committee adversely, and voted down now. If this is not done, it will be charged and believed that the bill is merely held back till after the election, and that it is to be passed next winter for the benefit of the combine. Of course, all the subsidy that the bill provides for the American Line will, if it passes, go into the treasury of the consolidated company.

Although the new combination looks formidable on paper, it does not follow that it will be able to control the rates for transatlantic freight and passage. There are powerful and independent lines not in the combination, the Cunard, North German Lloyd, Hamburg-American, Holland-America, and the French Line, besides the so-called tramp steamers, which will always be a competing force even if all the regular lines should combine. Moreover, a large number of competitors may be put into the transatlantic service at any time by the termination of the Boer war in South Africa. So there is no immediate danger of extortionate rates for European travel or freight service by reason of the present combination.

A REFERENCE LIBRARY OF ART REPRODUCTIONS.

Public attention has been frequently called of late to the work which the public libraries may do for art education, by making choice collections of art reproductions, giving periodic exhibitions, and supplying facilities for lectures and conferences. The time is evidently come for this kind of work, and all such efforts will meet with an aroused public interest. This is shown most significantly in the great success of the various series of cheap art reproductions. Many are in the field. They constantly increase their scope, and, at a price ranging from one cent to five, these reproductions of great works of art make their way into school and home. All these series appear to succeed, and success is gained only through an enormous circulation. The service which such enterprises render, and which the art departments of the smaller libraries may aspire to, is akin to that of the circulating library. The aim is to convey information and to cultivate taste concerning all matters of art. There is another service which the greater libraries may render—namely, that of