

tune in early getting possession of the material which showed the strength of the Panama case. It was lack of familiarity with this which made the American press and public so daft on the subject of Nicaragua. The latter word had a kind of sacred authority and blessedness. Panama was a thing of hissing and contempt. No wonder, therefore, that it was difficult, and took years, to get people to look calmly into the merits of the Panama Canal. Once attention and impartial investigation were obtained, fair-mindedness and the weight of argument did the rest. The result we now see.

We consider it one of the most gratifying triumphs of reason over prejudice that this country has ever seen. The Nicaragua route was not so much a project as a mania, a cult. We see, in the case of Senator Morgan, how it became bound up with the deepest religious beliefs. In his eyes, to-day, the American people stand convicted of national apostasy in having abandoned the true Nicaraguan faith. Yet his enthusiasm was only a little more extravagant than that which afflicted nine-tenths of our population but a little while ago. Nicaragua seemed impregnable intrenched. Both political parties were for it; the press was almost a unit in advocating it; a formidable array of engineers and military men stood for it, and it was backed by powerful financial interests. Yet the whole frowning fortress has now been battered down by simple common sense. Expert opinion was first won over. The International Technical Commission made a report in favor of Panama in 1898 which had a great effect on all engineers. Then followed our own Commission, whose researches on the spot first resulted in the conversion of some of its members—Admiral Walker notably—and slowly and in the end led to the great revulsion of sentiment which had its crowning demonstration in the vote of the Senate last week. It is a fine and inspiring example of what the persuasive power of truth can do with a democracy. We Americans have not, perhaps, that swift lucidity of which the French boast, but we have, at any rate, as the final choice of the Panama route proves, a practical love of the truth and a business capacity—a "horse sense," let us say—which work well in the long run. The success won by steady hammering in this affair of the Isthmian Canal should be an encouragement to every reformer with a good cause and sound arguments. They will come to their own with the American democracy, granted time and patience.

That the canal would be built was long ago assured; now, we have every reason to believe, it will be built at the best location and within the shortest time. We will not again go over the case for Panama superiority. It was stated admirably, and in a condensed

form, by Col. Hains of the Commission, in a communication to Senator Hanna which was read in the Senate on Wednesday, and which we reprint for its compact force:

"The considerations that determined my decision in favor of the Panama route are:

"(a) Shorter length of canal.

"(b) Fewer and less difficult obstacles to be overcome.

"(c) A more thorough knowledge of the physical difficulties.

"(d) The less total amount of curvature.

"(e) The more moderate degree of curvature—that is, the greater proportionate length of canal that approaches a straight line.

"(f) The lower summit level. It will be necessary on the Nicaragua route to raise and lower ships to a vertical height of 104 feet, while at Panama the lift is only 82 feet, an advantage of 22 feet in favor of Panama. Moreover, the height could be still further reduced at Panama, but it cannot be reduced at Nicaragua.

"(g) The greater ease with which the level of Lake Bohio can be regulated as compared with Lake Nicaragua. The level of Lake Bohio is regulated automatically, and water taken from it for regulation is taken at a distance from the sailing line, whereas in Nicaragua the regulation is necessarily effected by a system of sluices worked by man, and the water, instead of being taken from the lake direct, is taken through a long stretch of river which is used by navigation. This will produce currents in some of the bends, which navigators would prefer to avoid.

"(h) The largely diminished cost of maintenance.

"(i) The belief that, if the United States builds a canal at Panama, a canal in competition would never be built anywhere else.

"(j) Because the actual time of transit will be less.

"(k) Because the dangers of temporary obstruction are less in proportion to the length of the canal.

"(l) Because a railroad is already constructed and fully equipped."

These were the arguments which converted Col. Hains and all the other experts whose prepossessions were in favor of Nicaragua. It is reasoning which will satisfy the country. The Spooner substitute for the Hepburn bill was carefully and skilfully drawn, and there is every prospect that, under its terms, all the preliminary work of taking title from the Panama Company and ratifying the treaty with Colombia will speedily be got through with, and the actual digging of the canal under American control begun. Then will the dream of a hundred years take on the semblance of reality.

THE MINERS' DEFENCE.

One comment on the statement of the Mine Workers, published on Monday morning, must rise to every lip: it is inexcusably belated. Whatever else may be said of it, this may be said—it is six weeks overdue. President Mitchell is uneasily aware that he is too late with his defence, but his excuse for delaying it only heightens the awkwardness of his bringing it forward at this hour. If his "plain unvarnished facts" were at his command when the strike was ordered, why did he not then give them to the light? A decent regard for that public to the sympathy of which he appealed, and on which he was proceed-

ing to inflict so great inconvenience and loss, should have made him prompt and explicit with his statement of grievances. To-day it necessarily wears the air of an afterthought. Even as such, however, it requires candid examination, for it is certainly temperate in tone and plausible in sound. To the careful reader it will appear, we think, to be a mixture of a small amount of well-founded complaint, and no little confession and avoidance, with a great deal of fallacious reasoning and an inability to see, or unwillingness to admit, the real motive of the strike and the true explanation of the refusal of the operators to arbitrate.

To begin with the valid parts of the case, we are bound to concede, as in fact we have done from the first, that the increased cost of living during the year past might well have made the miners discontented with a stationary wage. This has been to very many the seamy side of our lauded prosperity. A fixed salary, combined with advancing prices of food and clothing, has been the unhappy lot of thousands during the "boom." One could have wished for a more exact miners' budget than Mr. Mitchell gives us. He states the increased cost of living at between 30 and 40 per cent., which is doubtless too high and certainly too vague; but we are prepared to believe that enhanced expenses have, in reality, fully eaten up the increase in wages and the steadier employment which the miners enjoyed last year. Nor can we doubt that the mixing up of the railroad business with that of mining does, as President Mitchell asserts, lead to a good deal of bookkeepers' juggling, and makes it very difficult to say just what the actual cost of production is in the case of anthracite coal. Finally, we believe that the miners have had a just though minor grievance in the method of weighing their coal at the pit's mouth, open as it is to abuses at their expense.

But when all this has been allowed, the strength of the miners' defence is exhausted; and even this strength has been practically destroyed by their reckless course in striking first and telling why six weeks afterwards. If the case of the miners, including only the points now mentioned, had been freely made public on May 1, we think it would have put the operators to their trumps. They would have had to make an absolutely crushing reply in order to carry popular sympathy with them in their refusal to arbitrate. At present, however, the statement comes too much as the despairing resort of alarmed leaders, who see their cause crumbling, and who have to say something to justify their conduct in forcing a strike which at least 40 per cent. of the employees were opposed to beginning. All this can but confirm the general conviction that this half-hearted strike was undertaken in

secret hopes that have proved delusive. The leaders really counted upon political influence to help them, as it did in 1900, or else upon uninstructed sentiment, or even popular hostility to Trusts. When all these fail them, they put out an explanation of their course which not only is fatally late, but has an unfortunate appearance of not being wholly sincere.

As to the statistics of coal-mining which President Mitchell proffers, we can only say that his averages, derived from Government reports, will not stand, in the judgment of the fair-minded, against the figures actually shown on the books of the companies. The latter were put at the service of the Union. Why did not President Mitchell accept the offer to inspect them, which he admits had a "reasonable" appearance? The skilled accountants in the employ of the Reading Company undoubtedly have the figures to justify President Baer's assertion that the individual efficiency of the coal-miner fell off 12 per cent. in 1901. To show, from the reports of the Geological Survey, that slightly more coal per man was mined does not at all meet the case. The Government's statistics cannot, in the first place, be held to be more accurate than the Reading's. It is a rule with careful statisticians to prefer, in many departments of production, the figures of private concerns to those gathered officially. Besides, an increase in labor-saving devices might account for the apparent increase of coal mined per capita, even with a really diminished efficiency by the individual miner. But none of these things are dreamed of in President Mitchell's philosophy.

Nor does he seem to be aware of the powerful motives the operators have for declining to submit to the dictation of his union. They wish to destroy organized labor, he cries. But there are organized labor and organized labor, good unions and bad. The evidence is overwhelming that the Mine-Workers' Union is one of the bad ones. It is a heterogeneous and unruly affair, not scrupulous in keeping its contracts, unable to control its own men. More than 100 strikes occurred during the past year of "peace" with the Union, and these President Mitchell had to confess himself powerless to prevent. Moreover, the Union has made anything like discipline at the mines impossible. The terror of "organized labor" was over the head of every foreman and owner. The reply, made to a distasteful order: "Go to —; you ain't my boss; John Mitchell of Indianapolis is my boss!" is not an imagined, but an actual one, writes Prof. R. W. Raymond, and it represents the general situation very fairly. To ask that the operators "recognize" such a union—and if they did not yield to its every demand, they would be accused of unwillingness to recognize it, and a determination to crush organized labor—is

the height of absurdity. First produce your union that is one—not an incoherent and uncontrollable mass—and it will be time to talk about hostility to trades-unionism as such.

The restlessness of laborers, their apparent willingness to strike without measuring properly either the reasons for the action or its consequences, have convinced us from the first that the anthracite operators must fight out their battle, and, for the time at any rate, settle the question at the mines. That its settlement there would settle also the exasperating annoyances inflicted on trade in other quarters, is too much to hope. But of this at least we are sure, that victory by the laborers, in a contest begun and carried on as the anthracite strike has been, would have the most serious reflex influence on the general trade situation. We believe, in short, that the kind of demonstrations in which labor has lately been indulging must be checked, unless the public wishes to see some very grave consequences in the future. There is nothing astonishing in the fact that the business men at Scranton should have organized "law and order committees" to resist the interferences of the strikers. With the Union not only forcing the bulk of these merchants' customers into idleness, but threatening business ruin on any merchant who should sell goods to an engineer or pumper still at work, the movement towards breaking down the safeguards of society was pretty far advanced. Had such application of the power of proscription been tamely submitted to, it is difficult to see where the mischievous work need stop. What, it may be asked, would deter the Union, in case of a sympathetic soft-coal strike, from extending the boycott indefinitely? If the mines could not all be closed, and if foreign soft coal kept coming in at our seaports, attacks of this sort on every one dealing with the miners, the importers, or the dock hands—or, indeed, with such misguided householders as should use "non-union coal"—would be a most logical suggestion. We leave the reader to trace out for himself the possible ramifications of such a movement. The public, it will be said, would rise, in the face of such provocation, and force the courts and legislatures to protect its rights to a peaceable existence. But it is not the part of wisdom to yield to continually increasing oppression until the yoke has become too much for human endurance.

LIQUOR LEGISLATION IN VERMONT.

The unusually spirited contest for the nomination for the office of Governor of the State of Vermont was in part the result of personal antagonisms. But its chief significance lay in its disclosure of very deep-seated and widespread discontent with the laws affecting the sale

of strong drink. Vermont has had a prohibitory law for fifty years, and it has been supposed that nowhere did such a law receive more unanimous support. There are few large towns in the State, and the Legislature is completely controlled by the representatives of the farmers—themselves generally farmers. The Republican party is the "respectable" party—in fact, the only party—and it has been identified with the prohibitionist element from the outset. Whatever laws the "temperance" people demanded were enacted, and their cause seemed to be triumphant. Hence the appearance on a platform opposed to prohibition of a candidate for the Governorship who in a few weeks, although spending little money and personally unpopular, won more than one-third of the delegates, and came near winning a majority of the convention, was a very startling occurrence.

Yet it by no means indicates that there has been a change of feeling, in regard to the sale of liquor, among the people at large. There are two or three considerable towns where a majority of the citizens would probably vote to license the sale; but this would have been true for many years. The habit of drinking, among reputable people, is not increasing; those who like to drink still think that the common people should be prevented from drinking. The explanation is to be found in the nature of the prohibitory law, which may properly be described as outrageous. It is probably unconstitutional in several respects. It violates the fundamental rights of citizenship. It promotes perjury. It demoralizes juries and prosecuting officers. It corrupts magistrates and constables. It burdens the counties with heavy costs; and, in towns of any size, it completely fails to stop the sale of drink. No town, it may be asserted positively, can maintain itself as a business community without an inn; and no inn, it may be said almost as broadly, can maintain itself unless it supplies the ordinary wants of its guests. The towns of Vermont, however, are as well supplied with inns as towns of equal size in other States. In one town of less than 2,000 inhabitants three or four men engaged in the hotel business lately fled from the State in one day because of the unexpected activity of a judge; but no one thinks that their business will not be carried on in the future as in the past.

The original prohibitory law was bad enough. It authorized constables to enter dwellings or other places without warrant, and seize liquors found there. It commanded persons arrested for being drunk to disclose under oath the name of the person from whom they obtained liquor, and empowered any justice of the peace to commit to jail a prisoner who refused to disclose it. These provisions cannot be reconciled