

OUR RECORD AT PANAMA.

We know, for we have often been told, that the country ought to feel tremendously proud of its work on the Panama Canal. We were to make the French look like children. Their vacillation, delays, and changes of plan, with the cost running far beyond estimates, were to be things of the past when the Americans took hold. This was all very glorious, and we should now feel patriotic thrills, were it not for one thing—the ugly facts. Huxley called it a tragedy of science when a fact killed a beautiful hypothesis. Chauvinistic boasting has its tragedies, too, and the cold recital of our record at Panama discloses one of them.

First, take the figures of outlay. The Spooner Act of 1902 appropriated \$10,000,000 for construction, and authorized continuing appropriations, year by year, "not to exceed in the aggregate the additional sum of \$135,000,000." To date, Congress has appropriated for canal purposes the sum of \$170,000,000. That is to say, deducting the \$50,000,000 paid for canal rights and for the canal strip, we have already expended on construction \$120,000,000. In a word, all the money which was provided by the Spooner Act, and which was guaranteed to be sufficient, has now been practically expended, and the canal is one-third done. Three years ago, the minority of the board of consulting engineers, whose plans were adopted, assured Congress that the complete cost, not including sanitation and the expense of governing the Zone, would not exceed \$139,705,000. On this they staked their professional reputations. Yet in January, 1908, the chairman of the Canal Commission had to admit to Congress that the total would not be less than \$250,000,000, and might even be \$300,000,000. That was sufficiently staggering, but now comes Mr. Taft's board of engineers with the cool estimate of \$360,000,000!

To be entirely fair, we give the engineers' explanation of these enormous figures. The profession is not entirely to blame. The engineers show that the expense of actual construction, as severed from other expenses, will be "only \$143,000,000" in excess of the original estimate—that is, only 100 per cent. out of the way! But they justly point out that nearly one-half of the increase was due to changes of plan, made since the beginning, and to the "higher unit cost

of the different items of work." By this is meant that the employees have been given shorter hours of work and higher pay than had been calculated on. The engineers did not foresee this, but anybody who knows the waste and extravagance of government enterprises might have expected such a result. Yet whatever the explanation, the fact remains that the United States has started to build a canal which will cost four times the French estimates, and three times the sum which we were at first solemnly assured would suffice—and we shall be lucky if we get off with that. It is safe to say that if the Spooner Act had carried \$360,000,000, it could not have passed Congress.

On the technical side, President Roosevelt now seeks to stop the mouths of all critics, by asserting that any one who speaks against the present plans, as re-revised and once more made absolutely perfect, really shows that he is against any canal at all. But the thing cannot be disposed of thus cavalierly. When eminent engineers radically differ, laymen will have their doubts. Mr. Roosevelt himself refused to abide by the majority report of his international committee of engineers. Why should he now think that he has discovered infallibility? Sensible men have great respect for scientific experts. To set up an unskilled opinion against theirs would be folly. But the fact which the President ignores is that highly skilled opinion is disturbed about the present plans for the canal, or is positively hostile to them. It ought to be known, for example, that the sudden sinking of the toe of the Gatun Dam, a few weeks ago, was commented upon in engineering circles in Europe as "the catastrophe" at Panama. Nor is the dam at Gatun the only feature of the project which distinguished experts look upon with concern. In the flight of locks there they see a cause of grave disquiet. Both the possibility of safe construction, at that point, and safety of operation, if constructed, have been gravely called in question. In this connection, we may recall one ghastly blunder of Mr. Roosevelt's infallible experts which was exposed before the Senate committee. The plans called for locks of a usable length of 1,000 feet, but Lindon W. Bates demonstrated that, probably because there was not room to locate three such locks at the site chosen, the

engineers had really provided for locks of a usable length of only 820 feet. This was gravely passed off as "a draughtsman's error," but as one Senator asked: "If we are misled in an important matter like this, have we any security at all?"

It is, indeed, a little too absurd to try to make the canal engineers exempt from criticism. They have been their own chief critics. To write down their own condemnation of their own work, in the changes which they have successively ordered, would be to exhibit a sad record of uncertainty. They selected Bohio for the site of their great dam, but were driven to abandon it. They began to build a dam at La Boca, on the Pacific side, but afterwards carried it back to Miraflores. And just now, in this final and sacrosanct report, it is admitted that former equally sacred reports were all wrong as respects the channel and location of the breakwaters in the harbor at Colon, and a complete alteration of plan is announced, at a cost of \$10,000,000. Thus do messieurs the infallibles change from year to year.

We have not a word to say against the spirit in which the work on the Isthmus has been carried on. In sanitation and administration, we have commanded the admiration of the world. Nor is there any reason to doubt the fine organization of the laborers on the spot. But the facts we have cited show how serious is the problem yet before us, to which our best wits should be invited, instead of being warned away; and how little justification we now have, after seven years, for all our preliminary boasting.

THE CONSTITUTION FOR SOUTH AFRICA.

After four months of deliberation in secret at Cape Town, the National Convention to bring about the closer union of the British colonies in South Africa concluded its labors on February 9. It thereupon authorized the publication of the Constitution drafted, of which the full text is now at hand. It is, of course, in the form of an act, to be passed by the Imperial Parliament, after the colonies shall have assented to it; but in substance it is a great charter of government for that vast stretch of splendid country which holds so much of the future in fee. Hence it may properly be called the South African Constitution.

In general terms, the instrument follows the Australian model, which in turn was powerfully influenced by American experience. There is to be no unitary republic in South Africa. A federal government of large powers is to be erected, but the local government of the constituent provinces will continue to be nearest to the citizen in many of the relations of life, and will retain functions not unlike those of our States. There is to be a Parliament of the federation, but the power to determine the right of suffrage is to be left, under certain general safeguards, in the hands of the separate colonies as before. It is provided that "no person who is registered as a voter shall be removed from the register by reason only of any disqualification based on race or color." This does not mean indiscriminate enfranchisement of the natives, but only that, where they have been admitted to the suffrage, as in Cape Colony, it cannot be taken away from them. It is hoped, however, that in time the Cape franchise will be extended to the whole of South Africa.

With so many diverse and conflicting interests to harmonize, it was inevitable that compromise should be written plainly upon several parts of the Constitution. There was, naturally, a warm contest over the seat of the new government. Each local capital wanted it. The upshot was an agreement whereby "the seat of the government of the Union shall be at Pretoria, and the seat of the Legislature, Cape Town." On the other hand, the Supreme Court is to sit in Bloemfontein. These provisions remind one of the struggles over the location of the capitals, penitentiaries, and insane asylums, at the formation of some of our Western States. The South Africans may, at least, be glad, as *Punch* suggests, that their new government is not to be at Pretoria on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, at Cape Town on Tuesdays and Saturdays, and at Bloemfontein on Thursday and Sundays. More important differences were those over the basis of representation in the new Parliament. As with us, the equality of the provinces in the Senate was determined upon; each is to have eight Senators elected by the Legislatures of the colonies; and eight Senators are to be nominated by the governor-general. All Senators are to hold their seats for ten years. Of the eight nominated,

it is provided that "one-half shall be selected on the ground mainly of their thorough acquaintance with the wants and wishes of the colored races." This speaks for itself. In the new Legislative Assembly, Cape Colony is to have fifty-one members; Transvaal, thirty-six, and Natal and Orange each seventeen. Strictly on the basis of population, the representation should have been: Cape Colony, fifty-eight; Transvaal, thirty-seven; Orange, fourteen; and Natal, twelve; but the larger provinces gave up eight members to the smaller. Provision is made for the increase of representation with the growth in population, but the total number of members in the lower house shall not exceed 150.

The temptation to try experiments in government-making was obviously before the delegates at Cape Town, but they have introduced few novelties. The chief innovation is the provision that "the election of members of the Legislative Assembly shall be according to the principle of proportional representation, with the single transferable vote." This seems to be an echo of recent discussions of that method of voting, and informal demonstrations of its results, in England. Another thing strange to our practice is the arrangement made to break a deadlock between the Senate and the Assembly. The Governor-General may convene them in joint sitting, when the disputed legislation may be carried by a majority of all present. This plan obviously favors the Assembly, with its larger membership, in any case where it is practically united against the Senate. The scheme is a modification of that already provided for Australia. It would be interesting to know how it has worked there.

One of the general provisions is that "both the English and Dutch languages shall be official languages of the Union, and shall be treated on a footing of equality." The adoption of such a Constitution for Dutch and English, within nine years after Dutch and English were fighting each other in a desperate and lamentable war, will be a remarkable triumph of peaceful statesmanship; and that the whole instrument should be conceived in a spirit of such large amity, with so brave and keen a look to the coming years, is a wonderful tribute to the capacity and patriotism of the men who did the work. In this, the

Dutch were not behind the English. High praise has been given to Gen. Botha for his statesmanlike attitude, while the conciliatory and self-sacrificing position taken by ex-President Steyn has been such as to lead to his being called the Washington of the South African Constitution. We are ready, then, to believe that the government which is thus to be set up will be one of the finest, as it is certainly one of the most extraordinary, proofs of the British genius for administration.

MAKING SCHOLARSHIP ATTRACTIVE.

The *Yale Alumni Weekly* and the *Yale Courant* have been discussing ways and means of fixing the attention of undergraduates "on the value of success in scholarship." The trouble seems to have begun when President Woodrow Wilson of Princeton—as a bishop *in partibus infidelium*, so to speak—gave a Phi Beta Kappa address at Yale last year. "I have heard," he said, "sounded once or twice to-night, a note of apology for the intellectual side of the university"; and he added:

You hear it at all universities. Learning is on the defensive, is actually on the defensive among college men, and they are being asked by way of concession to bring that also into the circle of their interests. Is it not time we stopped asking indulgence for learning and proclaimed its sovereignty? Is it not time we reminded the college men of this country that they have no right to any distinctive place in any community unless they can show it by intellectual achievement? that if a university is a place for distinction at all, it must be distinguished by the conquests of the mind?

These be bitter words. They must come home to the heart of all university men. "Here at Yale," says the *Courant*, "scholarship *per se* has no social attractions, is hardly known and rarely discussed." The *Weekly* is even more severe: "Probably only a handful of the undergraduates of any one class could name their chief scholarship or prize-winner or half the philosophical-orator men." But we would not imply that Yale undergraduates are sinners above all men that dwell in our academic Jerusalem, President Wilson has found the note of apology "everywhere."

The *Alumni Weekly* has suggested an Honor Day in which the winners of prizes, scholarships, and the like shall publicly come into their own. This plan has been tried in various schools and colleges—at Harvard, for example—and