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JAPAN'S SEAMY SIDE.

A Land of General and Grinding Poverty—Families Support Themselves on One-and-a-Quarter Acres of Ground—Morals Unutterably Bad, and Condition of Women Degrading—Hopeless Heathens—A Real "Yellow Peril."

The Seamy Side.

There is no country in the world about which there is, at present, as much false and misleading glamor as about Japan. Her recent astonishing victories over the great, lumbering giant of Russia; the hosts of books which have been written about the "Land of the Chrysanthemum" and the "Land of the Rising Sun;" the very popular comic opera of the Mikado; the fine wares which have been brought from that country, all have combined to produce the impression that Japan and Japanese people are something finer and better than the world has ever seen. Japan would seem to be a land of sunshine, happiness, politeness, modest, flower-like women, courteous, brave men, contentment, and so on. The country and its people have been exaggerated out of all reason. No country in the world to-day has as much unreality and glamor thrown about it as Japan. It has taken the place formerly occupied by Italy and Spain. The time has been when writers and painters could not say enough about Italy; about its handsome, courteous people, its wonderfully beautiful women, its music, flowers and art. We were never allowed to know that the great mass of the people of Italy were poverty-stricken to the last degree, ignorant and superstitious and far behind the world in all that we esteem necessary to make life worth living. Now Italy and Spain have both fallen, in our estimation, until we know that they are the abodes of poverty, squalor and degrading ignorance. It is the same way with Japan. While there is an undoubtedly brilliant upper class in Japan, which has been doing some very astonishing things, yet it must be remembered that nowhere in the world are class distinctions more sharply made than in Japan, and that the small upper class is farther removed from the great mass of the people than we in this country are from the negros. We only see the very best that Japan with her 48,000,000 of people can produce, and have little knowledge of the great hideous mass of superstition, ignorance, want and poverty upon which this glittering, gilded upper class floats.

In 1905 the census showed 47,812,138 people in Japan. The population has been increasing steadily at the rate of about 1.36 per annum, or something like half the increase of the population in the United States. Of these 48,000,000, possibly 2,000,000 are in the upper class. The remainder are peasants, or coolies, with far less to live upon than the plantation hands in the South. The Japanese recognize this great distinction, and call the mass of their countrymen "the flat people."

The Japanese Feudal System.

We must keep in mind that up until 1870, only 37 years ago, the Japanese were in the same condition that Europe was 500 years ago. That is, they had a complete and iron-clad feudal system, more rigid by far than any known in Europe in the Middle Ages. The great mass of the people were as far down in the social scale as the old "villeins" of the feudal period, who were literally "chained to the soil," as the serfs in Russia have been. The average amount of ground allowed to each man and head of the family was, and still is, about one and a quarter acres. Upon this he had to raise sufficient to support his family, after deducting a high rent in rice to be paid his feudal lord. So severe are the conditions in Japan that few of the tillers of the land are able to afford their families even rice. They can only have a limited amount of millet, a grain resembling corn, and similar coarse vegetables which can be raised in the greatest plenty on so small a farm. Meat they have none, and their religion prevents them eating it if they had it. It requires the hardest, the most grinding toil and the severest privations to produce enough to furnish actual food to the family and pay the taxes, to say nothing of securing shelter. The lords of the soil, the owners of all the land and who answered to the Dukes, Marquises, Lords and Barons of the old feudal times, were the damiaos. These were rulers of little principalities, say, about the size of Counties, and had the most absolute power of life and death over those beneath them. Between them and the common people were the Somurai, corresponding to the knights and men-at-arms of European feudalism. All honor, education, offices and other emoluments of life were confined exclusively to this class. They were the fighting men of Japan and taught from their very infancy to "regard life as dirt" compared with honor. Every one of them was taught that he must leave his house every morning with the expectation of never returning to it. They are the poetic, romantic class in Japan, about whom all the stories and all the higher interest in the country has centered. They were certainly a picturesque lot of rascals, and their badge of aristocracy were the double swords, which were called the Samurai's soul. Sword-making in Japan was carried to the highest pitch; the sword-makers had the greatest honors that could be conferred upon any of the flat people, and their weapons were of the highest temper and keenness. The Samurai were educated to the highest loyalty to their own particular chief. They must instantly fight to the death for any fancied wrong to him. They slaughtered the Samurai, who were adherents of the other Lords, without scruple, and, of course, killed off the flat people for the merest whims. The effect of this aristocracy upon the common people was oppressive to the last extent. No one was supposed to have any honor or any ideas of right and wrong except the Samurai. The merchant was regarded as a scoundrel and a swindler and among the lowest of the castes.

The feudal system was broken up by the revolution of 1870 and what is claimed to be a representative Government organized. This, however, like many of the so-called representative Governments of Europe, is a mere name. The representation really only goes as far as the privileged classes. While the Samurai were abolished and apparently all of their old rights and privileges taken away from them, the Government passed completely into their hands. They are the officials, the officers of the army, professors, teachers and even policemen. It would be impossible for any people to rise very high in the 37 years since the revolution, and the Japanese, being Asiatic, have made far less progress in reality than we might expect from even such retarded people as the Russians, Hungarians and Slavs. With all the showy progress that has been made the condition of the common people remains very much what it was before the revolution.

The Religion of Japan.

We hear much of the religion of Japan, and have a great deal of misinformation as to the beauty of Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintoism. These are the three so-called religions of the country. None of them, in fact, is a religion. Confucianism is merely a set of moral precepts of no binding character, being simply recommendations that the following of certain rules will bring good fortune. Buddhism is still a lower order, where the priesthood appeals to the people to give money, rice, etc., and get merits. That is, the givers will be lucky in proportion to their merits in giving to the priests and the support of the temples.

A BUDDHIST PRIEST—THE INVETERATE FOE OF CHRISTIANITY.

Shintoism is a still lower form of religion which believes in charms, magic and incantations to avert evil. The upper classes profess to believe in Confucianism, the middle classes in Buddhism and the peasants in Shintoism. In fact, every Japanese believes more or less in all three, and selects from them whatever feature suits his purpose and ideas. The priests are cunning, sensual, ease-loving rascals, who are striving to get the most out of the poor people, who have no respect for them, and only give because they believe that they will have bad luck if they do not. The only good feature of these religions is the worship of ancestry and reverence and service which is paid to one's parents. This comes the nearest to the virtues of Christianity of anything in their so-called religions. They are now tolerant of Christianity, not because they believe or can be made to believe in Christianity, but because of their selfishness and their fears. They think that there possibly may be something in Christianity, and it is well not to run any risks by unnecessary opposition to the Christian's God.

The peasant's life of daily drudgery and its degrading effects are vividly described by W. W. Knox in his "Imperial Japan." The average size of a peasant's farm is one and a fourth acres, and four-tenths of the product of this pocket-handkerchief ranch must be paid in rent, which means that the peasant's family must be supported on six-tenths of the product of an acre and a fourth. Knox says that the average income from a farm of this size as the result of a year's work is about $20, out of which must be paid all of the expenses. The arduous toil, the debasing drudgery in which practically the entire family must partake in order to make both ends meet, gives a gross income of less than $2 a month.

THE "SILENT BUDDHA"—THE REAL ANTI-CHRIST.

Cannot Afford Rice.

So abject is the poverty of the peasant that he cannot even eat the rice which is his principal crop. He is forced to sell it and buy cheaper food, such as rye and millet. Only on the occasion of high festivals can he and his family indulge in the luxury of rice, which, to the Anglo-Saxon laborer, is synonymous with poverty. The houses of the peasant, his clothing, furniture, etc., are of necessity of the same low standard, and with such an environment, under such conditions of existence, it is no wonder that debased standards should be reflected in the moral life of the peasant. It is the effect of monotonous toil and scanty remuneration.

Knox states that the morality of the peasant class is of a very low standard. The rate of infanticide is very high, and many of the infant daughters are sold into lives of infamy. Women are made a drudge of the fields, like horses and mules in America, and the men have none of that respect for them that Occidental civilization demands. The men themselves, out of the poverty of their lives, have no time to cultivate high ideals for themselves. But it is probably this very lack of high ideals and ambitions that makes the submissive peasant content in his poverty and toil and keeps him happy in his ignorance.

But it is the position of women in the civilization of Japan that brings the sharpest clash with Occidental ideals. According to Knox and a host of other writers, the two great evils of Japan are commercial dishonesty and the degraded position of Japanese women. A girl is viewed as the property of her father, and with her he can do as he pleases. When she marries, which is scarcely or never for love as understood in America, the property right passes to the husband. Until recently, at least, she had no property rights in herself, and could be killed for permitting the attentions of other men without her husband's consent. Marriage, however, puts no bar upon the husband's pleasures, and if he adds a concubine to his family, the wife must look pleased and be politely submissive. The wife becomes little better than a servant, and is always under the tender mercies of her mother-in-law.

Trial Marriages Allowed.

The only act required to make a marriage legal is the withdrawal of the bride's name from the list of her father's family and its registry among those of her husband's family. But the marriage relation is by no means of a necessity permanent. The husband's right of divorce is only slightly limited, and it is not unusual for a man to send two or three wives back to their fathers before he finds the woman who suits him. And the wife is also permitted a similar freedom in trial matrimony, but in all cases the children remain in the husband's family.

The American idea of chastity is unknown, particularly among the lower classes. The ideal of obedience and submission takes its place. Instead of being considered a disgrace, as among Western Nations, the girl or wife who sells herself to relieve the financial or other difficulties of father, brother or husband is considered a heroine, a theme which is idealized in several Japanese dramas.

The Japanese in Hawaii.

The Japanese idea is seen working out in its fullest in Hawaii. There there is none of the glamor and misconception which blind travelers who visit the cities of Japan. It is from this object lesson that the Californians get their intense dread of a Japanese invasion. Tho the immigration into Hawaii began only a few years ago, it is estimated that there are now about five times as many Japs in the islands as there are whites. The men take readily a thin veneer of Americanism, but at heart they are as stubbornly Japanese as ever, and this is particularly shown with regard to their religion.

When they first came to Hawaii the island was dotted with little churches built by the missionaries from New England, who had done a great work in Christianizing the natives. About 10 years ago a Buddhist priest arrived in Hawaii, and now Buddhist temples are scattered all over the island, and there is pretty sure to be one alongside of the missionary meeting house and far more largely attended than the Christian church. The Japanese are intensely clannish, and while their children may go to the American schools to get a smattering of English their real education is in Japanese. They are leagued together against the Americans, and it is practically impossible to find out a murderer or criminal if he happens to be a Japanese and his victim has been a white man. The police run up against an absolute stone wall of ignorance and immovable obstinacy. More than half of the saloons in Hawaii are run by Japanee, and they are rapidly driving out the retail dealers in all branches of merchandise. While they make good laborers on the sugar plantations, they are untrustworthy, disregard their contracts, cannot be believed in any statement they may make, and it is all the time felt that they are at heart inimical to their employers. The Chinese are regarded as far more faithful and trustworthy. Many of them have accumulated property, and some are quite successful merchants.

A Yellow Peril, Indeed.

The Californians and others of the Pacific Coast have the gravest reasons to fear a flood of undesirable immigrants from Japan. Men who have managed to support a family on $20 a year must necessarily look upon a land where they can get $1.50 a day as a veritable Ophir, where gold can be had almost for the gathering up. As the population of Japan is now 48,000,000, it will be seen that the number of coolies that would flock hither if there were no restrictions would be practically limitless. These men must necessarily be as widely separated from our ideas as are the poles from one another. They are heathens and will always remain so in spite of any amount of Christian teaching. Their ideals are diametrically opposed to ours, and can never be made otherwise. There is hardly a virtue which we esteem that they hold in high regard. They are notoriously unfaithful to their promises and even written contracts, they are dishonest when the slightest advantage can be secured by dishonesty, and they look with amazement upon the American idea of the equality of women and of female virtue. However superficially refined and polite the educated class, the specimens of whom we see in this country, may be, the coolies, who constitute 23 out of every 24 Japanese, are in the lowest slums in almost all that Americans regard as morality and decency.

THE ISTHMIAN CANAL.

Another Surprising Whirl of the Cards. Chief Engineer Stevens Out, and Army Engineers in Charge.

There has been another overturning in canal management. It came almost like a bolt out of the blue. The most alert newspaper correspondents in Washington were "scooped" by the President. And the overturning had actually been decided upon for 10 days before it "leaked out" from the White House offices. The "leak," by the way, was not a leak, but a formal announcement that Chief Engineer John F. Stevens had resigned, that his resignation had been accepted, and the President had determined to turn the building of the Panama Canal over to Army engineers, with Lieut.-Col. George W. Goethals in command, having Majs. David DuB. Gaillard and William L. Sibert as his assistants.

Tongues have been wagging ever since. It turns out that Chief Engineer Stevens had simply grown a little "chesty." He is doing excellent work, making the dirt fly very satisfactorily to the President. He has a good administrative force on the Isthmus; he likewise has a good excavating force, and all in all things are getting on nicely. But the Chief thought he held all the cards. He never dreamed that the President could get along without him. Mr. Stevens reasoned that he could be as dictatorial as he pleased, and the President would have to accede. Therein he erred.

Stevens Too "Chesty."

An impertinent letter, based on jealousy of contractors, led to his downfall. There has been much talk around Washington about being the man "who built the canal." The big contractors who came down to Washington to bid on the titanic project filled the newspapers with comment about their patriotic motives. They wanted to "help poor Uncle Sam out." Of course, the money for doing the work would be some consideration, but the Government was getting in a tight snarl, and they were willing to come forward and help out with their practical experience. They would be as proud to have their names go down the ages as having built the canal as to be President of the United States.

The engineers and Chairmen of Commissions who have been appointed by President Roosevelt seem to have been imbued with a like idea. All along the line one has heard it. First, Admiral Walker was going to be the master canal builder of all ages. But he failed even to grasp the outline of the mammoth enterprise, was more interested in having salaries adjusted than in getting around to the big questions, and finally had to give way. Theodore Shonts, a crony of ex-Secretary of the Navy Paul Morton, was brought forward. He would do big things. Morton had recommended him as a wonder. The President could make no mistake in naming him. A humorous recommendation for Shonts was that his first name is "Theodore." And Shonts was going to write his name large across the Isthmus of Panama. He swelled around Washington, would not go to the Isthmus, unless he was driven there and then would not stay there.

Shonts had not been holding down his job long before the public began to tire of the idea that any Chairman of the Commission would dig. It began to trickle thru the popular mind that the Chief Engineer was the man whose name would be written large as canal builder. There had been hopes of Wallace, John F. Wallace, who was the first Chief Engineer and who made a good impression. But he became weary of residence on the Isthmus, plodding along with the work while a Chairman of the Commission lolled around Washington, attended pink teas and sat at swell dinners. How Wallace resigned conditionally and had a wrathful interview with Secretary Taft in New York is ancient history. Wallace wanted to brand the canal maverick with his initials, but he did not like Shonts, did not like the red tape, did not like the way the Administration was doing. He wanted to get out in an honorable way, but Secretary Taft insisted on kicking him out.

Chief Engineer Stevens, succeeding him, became enamored of the same ambition to be the canal builder. The President said a few days ago that Wallace left nothing of much value behind him as a monument to his efforts on the Isthmus. Stevens labored better. He did secure the good will of the people up in the States who are footing the bills. Shonts to the popular mind was not much of a man, but Stevens went to work on the Isthmus and was giving some return for the money expended. The prospects seemed bright. At last Shonts, after having done the social stunt prominently and, to judicious-minded people, disgustingly, was lifted out of his place. Mr. Paul Morton had again found him a nice berth. He could go over to New York to head the Interborough Railway Company.

The President was glad to have Shonts out of the way. He was willing to appoint Mr. Stevens as Chairman of the Commission. It was promptly arranged that Mr. Stevens should be "the whole cheese" on the Isthmus. No more gilded functionaries to stay in Washington and lord it around, while the real workers occupied subordinate positions along the big ditch. The excavation reports were glowing. Mr. Stevens was the right man in the right place.

His Eye Too Much On Washington.

But it seems that Mr. Stevens, while he was doing good work, began to keep his eye too much on Washington and to attach too much importance to the brag talk around the hotel corridors. He disliked Mr. Shonts heartily, probably with reason, and Mr. Shonts disliked him. Along last November the Canal Commission began to draw plans for awarding the work to private contractors. Mr. Stevens had recommended it. He was consulted in drawing the specifications—a bulky document on which many days of valuable legal and professional time was spent. The contractors by long and laborious processes brought themselves to the point of bidding, and at last the bids were opened. W. J. Oliver, of Knoxville, Tenn., was the lowest at 6.75 per cent on the estimated cost of the work. To an outsider it looked like a "cinch" for Mr. Oliver. He thought he had responsible people associated with him. He thought he had the money and the facilities at command to do the work. It would require a small volume to detail all that was done in investigating and consulting at the White House, at the War Department and elsewhere over Mr. Oliver's bid.

But the impression grew that Mr. Oliver would get the bid, even after his associate, Mr. Anson M. Bangs, was rejected, and Mr. Oliver was given 10 days in which to gather new associates. But Mr. Oliver had been growing a little "chesty." The canal germ seemed to be working in his gray matter. "Oliver" was to be embalmed in the pages of history.

Altho he was many thousand miles away Mr. Stevens was not in ignorance of what was going on in Washington. Mrs. Stevens, a Yankee woman, smart as a steel trap, was here, and she had ways of finding out things. Mr. Stevens also had other friends here, alert to his interests. By cable and by letter all the information was conveyed to him. He knew that Oliver was bragging. And if Oliver's boasts came true what would the country remember about Stevens?

Apparently there was never much prospect that Oliver would get the contract. Old and substantial men in the contracting business asserted from the start that his qualifications were not as good as the public had been led to believe. He had done much contract work, chiefly plain railway building and under a sort of protectorate from the Southern Railway. He had had none of the severe tests which the constructors of great Northern projects have. Neither the President nor Secretary Taft were aware of this at first, and they probably gave Mr. Oliver more encouragement from the very beginning than he ought to have been given. At one time they thought he was going to qualify for the undertaking, but the more they investigated the more they saw that the original statements of the older contractors were true.

Oliver's Too Facile Mouth.

In the meantime, however, Oliver had done a little bragging, his friends in the South had done more, and it had all reached Chief Engineer Stevens. He forthwith cabled the day after the President decided to give Oliver 10 days in which to gather about him some new associates that he could not work with Oliver. It would be impossible for him to continue as Chief Engineer if Oliver were awarded the contract. The President might have overlooked that, for it was becoming apparent to him that Oliver could not win, but Mr. Stevens followed his cablegram with an impertinent letter. He reiterated his determination not to work with Oliver, criticized the President's policy, said he was too hostile to the railroads with which Stevens had been associated much of his working life, that he was tired of residence on the Isthmus any way and was willing to be relieved.

President Roosevelt simply called the bluff. He rang for Secretary Loeb and dictated a reply, accepting Mr. Stevens's resignation. This was not done until after he had reread the letter three times, and taken in fully the meaning of the Chief Engineer's remarkable statements.

And so it turned out that Mr. Stevens, soon to enter, as it had seemed, upon the full fruition of his ambition to be the chief man on the canal—Chairman of the Commission, Chief Engineer, complete master of the job—was as much surprised as any one on the American continent. He thought the bluff would work, that the President would never consent to his resignation, and that he would be more than ever a dictator in the construction of the ditch.

Mr. Stevens will not quit immediately. The President is carrying out his original intention of making Mr. Stevens Chairman of the Commission, and he will remain in that capacity temporarily, while Army engineers hasten to the Isthmus under directions to familiarize themselves with the work as rapidly as possible. General expressions of regret at Mr. Stevens's action are heard. Employes on the canal have petitioned him not to leave them. Commercial bodies have reiterated their confidence in him. His associates, the civil engineers of the country, are disgusted with his course. They had great professional pride in him; in fact, depended upon him to vindicate the reputation of the profession by showing that a civil engineer could build the canal, and to show that it was unnecessary to call in the Army. There is much jealousy of Army engineers. It is stated here that the Engineers' Club in New York will send Mr. Stevens to coventry, and that he will never more be welcome in that organization.

The Army Is Jubilant.

The Army, of course, is jubilant. Its engineers, likewise proud of their profession and entertaining no very high opinion of civilian engineers as compared with themselves, are now girding their loins. They are very confident that military methods will be successful. The engineers whom the President sends to the Isthmus will go there as a matter of duty. It is in line with their Army ideas to go where they are told to go, and to stay there till relieved. The big problems of the canal construction have now been met in large part. It ought to be fairly smooth sailing for the Army men from now on. They have some very competent engineers, and now that the work is placed in their hands it is not likely to be taken from them. It almost certainly will not be while Theodore Roosevelt is President. And if the Army engineers succeed they and their successors will have a feather for every engineer's cap for the next 200 years. "We built the canal" will be enough to silence criticism long after the names of Walker, Stevens, Wallace and Shonts have passed into oblivion. It is little wonder that the Army engineers are duly mindful of the great opportunities the President has given them.

Lieut.-Col. Goethals has started for the Isthmus, and in a few days will be "on the job." His assistants will follow him. The President is determined to build up an organization of competent Army engineers there just as rapidly as possible. He is going to draw from among the best men of the 150-odd officers of the Engineer Corps. "The swelled head," or weariness of residence on the Isthmus, or disgust with transactions in Washington will no longer annoy the President in directing the enterprise. If Lieut.-Col. Goethals falls sick, or cannot endure the climate, or needs a few months of rest, the engineer next in command will take his place, just as happens when a General is killed or wounded in battle. The President is going to have competent subordinates on the ground, trained in the work and familiar with its details. The plan will be the same as that by which the War Department digs a canal along the Ohio River, or dredges New York Harbor, or builds an enormous breakwater on Lake Erie.

Uneasiness over the larger salaries paid in private employment will be eliminated. Wallace and Stevens thought they were not paid enough. Shonts thought his $30,000 a year was too small, altho he never earned a quarter of it. The temptation of big salaries will not tempt the Army engineers as it did civil engineers. They have an assured salary for life, conditioned only on good behavior, and can retire on three-fourths pay at 62 years of age. But the President is going to pay the Army engineers on the Isthmus good pay. He has ample authority to fix the salaries, Congress having given him a free hand in that particular. Chief Engineer Goethals will have $15,600 a year, which is about three times his pay as a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Army. His Army subordinates will also have increased compensation.

No More Insubordination and Discontent.

Accordingly, the President has eliminated the factors of insubordination and discontent. In a few weeks or a few months Mr. Stevens will leave the Isthmus, Col. Goethals will become Chairman of the Commission, Maj. Gaillard and Maj. Sibert will become members of the Commission, and the Army will be in command all the way from Colon to Panama. Congress has given the President a freer hand than ever in appropriations, practically told him to go ahead and spend as much as he thinks necessary, without regard to the original estimates.

But there is another phase. With everything now in his hands the President must get results. There is a deep undercurrent of dissatisfaction in Congress with what has been happening. The critics say there have been too many changes. It is freely predicted that these changes will arouse popular suspicion; that people will begin to believe if the canal is ever built it will be only in the course of 20 or 30 or even 50 years; that the cost will be many times the original estimates, and that the task is one upon which the Government should have entered with greater caution and more thorough preparation. He has no serious hindrances now in the matter of personnel, and, the critics add, "if he does not make the dirt fly in enormous quantities—in hundreds of thousands of cubic yards weekly—we shall know just where to place the blame. Theodore Roosevelt will be the responsible party."

The President himself is confident. He has felt some discouragement because of the frequent changes and the incapable hands into which the work has at times fallen. What he most deprecates is the popular criticism. This was very galling to the civil engineers—to Wallace and to Stevens. It was odious to Shonts. Civil engineers, having spent their time on private contracts, are unused to the Government's methods of careful scrutiny and free criticism. It is a wholesome plan and altogether indispensable. Even unfair criticism, while not justifiable, often is to a good purpose, because it makes Government employes and officials careful. The Army engineers are used to it, and will not mind as much as did the civil engineers. Mr. Stevens often was greatly enraged at the criticism in Congress about the canal, altho few of these criticisms were leveled at him.

The President feels that the canal should be built with a minimum of criticism. He has recently asked his newspaper friends to combat this tendency to criticize the canal as much as possible. He feels that it is doing harm rather than good. Probably some well-intentioned people would differ with him on that. His trip to Panama last November was designed chiefly to check the prevalent criticisms. He thought that if he looked into everything he possibly could, pronounced it all right, and came away, telling the American people so, they would believe him. Hence the care with which he disseminated his views on what he saw. It was really a gigantic reportorial journey, only the President went with facilities to report such as no reporter or correspondent ever had. He sailed on a ship of war, sent stenographers and assistants and photographers on ahead to gather material, and all that he gathered was embodied in that illustrated message to Congress which is still talked of in the corner groceries.

Since the President published his story—which is the newspaper term for an article—there has been less criticism of the canal than ever before. It remains to be seen, however, how long the press will remain silent. It is impossible that in such a tremendous undertaking everything should be above criticism. Numerous Congressmen are preparing to make jaunts to the Isthmus this Spring with the closing of the session. They will see things, and it is very likely they will criticize. Newspapers will send trained men to the Isthmus during the Spring and Summer—men trained by years of experience in observing and judging. They will write their articles and the millions of readers will have chance to form conclusions.

There has been little debate this winter about the canal, but all this material will be available at the long session of Congress next Winter. The minority party will be ready to criticize, for their assertions, if well established, will be good campaign material. Secretary Taft, too, greatest of Cabinet travelers, is going to Panama. He will have some observations, made on the spot, with which to uphold the program of the Administration. Incidentally he is also going to Cuba and to the Philippines, so that by the time of the next Congress he will be a repository of fresh information about all the insular possessions.

Will the Government Do the Work?

Will the Government dig the canal? That has not been determined. The weeks of work in securing bids from private contractors has gone to naught, for the President has rejected all the bids. For the present the Government will do the digging. Encouraging reports are made of the progress in taking out dirt. Maj. Goethals goes to the Isthmus under instructions from the President to make very careful inquiries and to spend five or six months in forming his recommendations as to whether bids shall again be invited. In his own mind the President is undetermined. He recently said that the canal would probably be dug by private contract. It is thought unlikely that the entire project will be let out to one contractor or association of contractors, as was planned under the recent scheme of bidding. It is more likely that sections of the work will be let out to contractors, and this will be much as work on rivers and harbors has been let out. The contractors will get an award for removing a certain amount of clay or rock or other kind of earth, at so much per cubic foot, or will agree to build concrete structures or to erect a dam or a portion of a dam at so much.

The President has thought about employing the contractors in a capacity of supervisors, and that may be done eventually. The Government would furnish the material and the men and foot all the bills for a given portion of the project and pay the contractor five per cent of the cost, for example. This idea was commended to the President as the result of his investigations into the Oliver bid and into the qualifications of Mr. Oliver and his associates. It would do away with the necessity of the contractor furnishing a large guarantee. In a responsible bid it seems that this matter of guarantee is an important factor of the cost. A successful bidder was required to furnish a bond for $2,000,000, not to mention other financial considerations, which made imperative an enormous interest charge that would go to bankers.

There is much in the air about scandal in connection with the recent rejection of all bids. It is apparently unfounded. Perhaps the President did not give Mr. W. J. Oliver the embodiment of a square deal. The latter spent close to $40,000 in perfecting an organization which he was led to believe the President would regard as responsible and reliable and capable. The MacArthur-Gillespie combination, which entered a bid of 12½ per cent for the work, had connections in Wall Street. Trust lawyers were engaged—among them Paul Cravath, an associate of Secretary Root, who took over his corporation work for Ryan and others when Mr. Root came back into the Cabinet. It is charged that they worked for the undoing of Mr. Oliver, and unduly influenced the President against him. Probably there is some foundation for that, but it still remains that Mr. Oliver and his associates were apparently unable to make good to the extent the President was warranted in requiring of them. A failure on their part to execute the work would have been denounced by the country, and the President would have had to bear the brunt of the criticism.

Mr. Oliver's Little Story.

Mr. Oliver has been making picturesque talk. He likened himself the other day to a sucker who sat in a poker game and held four aces. The pot, a large one, seemed to be his, and he reached for the money as the betting closed. One of the players halted him, however, announcing that he held

Uncle Sam's Good-by to Congress.

(Continued on page three.)