

Digging the Panama Canal

How Colonel Goethals and His Army of Workers Are Shoveling Out Landscapes and Blowing Up Mountain Sides. Present Condition of the Lock Type Waterway That Is to Wed Two Mighty Oceans.

By JAMES A. EDGERTON.

At last it is settled. It is to be a lock canal, and there are to be no more changes of plans or uncertainties. The enterprise is to be pushed through with all possible energy and speed. If there are further slips and sinkings in the Gatun dam foundations they will be accepted as a part of the day's work, and operations will proceed. If there are criticisms at home or abroad they will be allowed to pass as wind, and no more attention will be paid to them. If the cost springs up to \$400,000,000, which it probably will, though the amount is twice the original estimate, Uncle Sam will be expected to dig down in his pocket without even a wry face, for what is a little matter of expense that it should stand in the way of wedding the two oceans? A lock canal it is, and that is all about it. Those of us who held different opinions may as well swallow twice and prepare as good Americans to cheer for the officially adopted program. The lake, the dam, the three levels and all the rest of it for ours! Let Colonel "Vanilla-Bean," a few windy congressmen and the "yellows" rave as they will. The president, the president elect and the engineers say that the lock type goes, and the remainder of our 90,000,000 "sovereigns," more or less, must wheel into line. Moreover, Colonel Goethals, the man on the job, states that the canal will positively be finished by Jan. 1, 1915, and Taft, who is to be the man on the bigger job and who has just been down at Panama to see for

Be good. Everything is over at Panama except putting up the money and sailing the ships. People who insist on getting windy and advertising themselves at the expense of the canal will be severely ignored or if they grow too noisy will be sent to jail. As for the ditch itself, it is as good as finished. So there you are.

Speaking privately, I know nothing against the Panama canal program, I desire to know nothing against the Panama canal program, and if I did know anything against the Panama canal program I would not tell it. I have no yearning to be Joe-pulitzerized and tried for libeling "the government and its brother-in-law." Moreover, the lock type is good enough for me. All the ships I have to send through the canal will gladly, even eagerly, go up three flights of locks or even seven flights if that accords with the collective wisdom of those who are doing the trick. They are welcome to make this thing a regular water stairway without any protest of mine. I do not pine for a District of Columbia jail or a membership in the Ananias club. As for that Gatun dam foundation, it may be mud all the way down, the bottom may fall out of it, it may suddenly subside throughout its more than a mile of length and half mile of thickness, and as a consequence the blue clay may erupt all over the free and independent republic of Panama. It may do all these things, and more, and never get an "I told you so" from me. I never said it. My own opinion is that it is as solid as the rock of ages. That

had awakened in some future century, had invaded some Utopia that is to be. Everybody is well paid, so that there is no danger of labor troubles. All are well housed, well fed, protected from disease and made to behave themselves. They live in a forced state of happiness and decency. And they seem to like it. If there was ever paternalism in this world it is in Uncle Sam's ten mile wide strip across Panama. Even the supply ships that bob in and out of the ports on the Pacific and Atlantic are run by the government. It is as nearly a law made paradise as can be got up on short notice in such a God forsaken climate. There are schools, churches and even women's clubs. The suffragette has not yet appeared, but give her time. All the other luxuries of civilization are on hand except grand opera and divorce courts. These can be depended on to follow the flag. And the beauty of the whole strip is that it is American. The workmen are of all colors and nationalities, but the hustle, the confidence, the system and the humor are United States. That is the reason the canal is as certain to be built as the world is to turn. The people that have made a nation out of raw materials are not going to be stopped by a little forty-eight mile strip. America is to dominate the Pacific, and the Panama canal is the key to the Pacific. The dream of 300 years is to come true, and the water path sought by Columbus is to be cut from the east to the west. Whether it is to be done by locks or sea level is a mere detail. The great thing is that it is to be done, and speedily. It is but fitting that this work which is to open the gate to a new civilization should be done under industrial conditions so ideal that they themselves seem a foretaste of that new civilization. Brotherhood is becoming ever more of a reality in the world, and who knows but that organized industry is to be one of the aspects of brotherhood!

When Goethals Orders.

Colonel George Washington Goethals, the man in charge at Panama, is worth a story in himself. Rather, he is worth several stories, and here are two of them. Before Goethals' arrival the civilian engineers had not kept the strictest discipline. Orders were given, but some of the subordinates had other ideas. There was consequent discussion, and maybe the orders were carried out and maybe they were not. Well, Goethals gave an order. An underofficial undertook to show him how dead wrong that order was. Goethals listened quietly, saying nothing until the official paused, out of breath, and added, "I hope you see the point of my argument."

"But," said the colonel, speaking for the first time, "I was not arguing. I was giving orders. Please see that they are carried out."

They were.

At another time a house was to be built for one of the officials, and it seemed that there was to be several months' delay. The official complained to Goethals.

"Get into my carriage," said the colonel, "and we will go over and see about it."

Arrived on the ground, the foreman was called up and informed that the house was to be ready for occupancy on Nov. 15. He started to explain that it would not be possible to finish it within a year, when something in Goethals' eye disconcerted him, and he wound up lamely that he would do the best he could.

"You did not understand me," quietly said the colonel. "What I said was that the house is to be ready on Nov. 15."

And the house was ready.

After two or three of the early canal engineers and officials threw up their jobs President Roosevelt said, with a snap of the jaws:

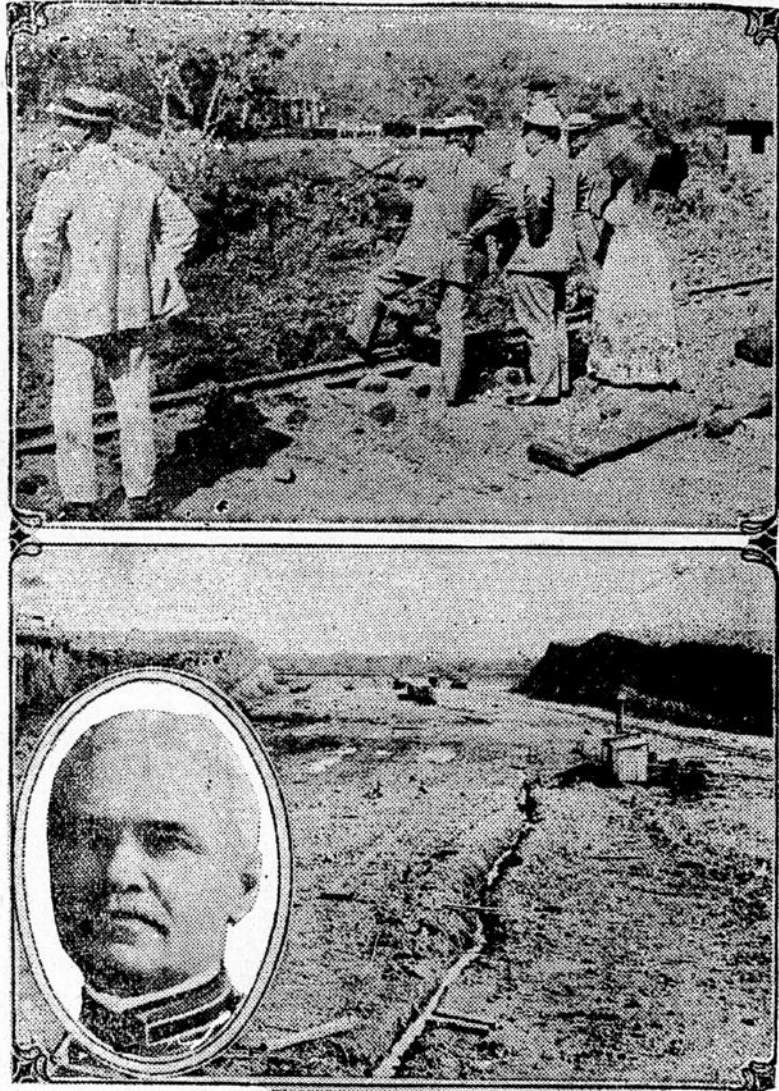
"I am going to send a man down there who will stay on the job until I say he can quit."

Hustling at the Isthmus.

He sent Goethals, and Goethals is staying. In the two years since he took charge things have been moving at Panama. President Elect Taft on his recent visit to the isthmus saw over a hundred steam shovels in operation, half a thousand drills preparing for dynamite blasts to eat away the sides of mountains, track lifters that moved whole sections of railway to new beds in almost the twinkling of an eye, two dredges cutting their way into the land from the Atlantic and Pacific sides, an immense new spillway being constructed for the Chagres river, cores being made for the immense dams, and all this work of excavation, construction and preparation going forward with more rapidity than any similar work was ever prosecuted in the history of the world. Moreover, he found a death rate as low as that of the average American city, and he also found 38,000 human beings in the canal organization, all of them imbued with one spirit and intent on one end, that of carrying through this greatest engineering feat of the centuries to success. In the highest sense of the term it was an army of peace, working with perfect military discipline to win a battle with nature, and behind it all was the quiet man who would stay until he was told to quit.

George Washington Goethals was born in Brooklyn in 1852. He graduated from West Point, where he was an instructor in military and civil engineering for many years. Afterward he was in charge of the Mussel shoals canal construction on the Tennessee river, member of the board of fortifications in the coast and harbor defense and chief of engineers during the Spanish-American war.

This is the man in charge at Panama, and when he gives his word that ships will be passing through the canal by Jan. 1, 1915, we can rest assured that he will make good.



WILLIAM H. TAFT INSPECTING THE PANAMA CANAL. A VIEW OF THE GATUN DAM FROM THE SPILLWAY AND COLONEL GEORGE W. GOETHALS, THE MAN ON THE JOB.

himself, has a secret hope that the first ship will go through by March 4, 1913. That sounds fine and may or may not come true. We can only wait and see. In the meantime this much is certain—that American efficiency, sanitation and spirit have transformed Panama and that the dirt is flying in the big ditch. Sufficient unto the day are the goods delivered thereby. Despite all natural obstacles and regardless of the walls of the pessimists, the Panama canal will be built, and the builder will be your Uncle Sam. That will be glory enough for us all.

The More Slides the Better.

It was that slip in the Gatun dam foundations which caused the trouble and sent Taft scurrying down there to see what it was all about. Arriving on the scene, he found the imperturbable Goethals and his army of helpers shoveling out landscape and blowing up mountain ranges as though nothing had happened. What was a little slip and squashing of mud to them? They had had four or five such slides before and expected others in future. The more the better. They would only make the dam foundations the more solid. So Taft and his engineers went back to the States in a gale of optimism. Everything is right and tight at Panama, they reported, and will you please stop setting back-fires? Join the boosters' brigade and quit knocking. Goethals is digging dirt, Uncle Sam is digging coin, and the wailers should dig for cover. Anybody that opposes the lock type is "agin the government" and an obstruction on the face of the universe generally.

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